

Guidelines and Reminders for Readers at Mass

You should ordinarily exercise only one ministry at a Mass:

- For example, if you are reading, normally you should not be ministering at Communion.
- Emergency situations happen, but each minister should be involved in only one ministry at the Mass if possible.

Dress and decorum should be appropriate for the occasion:

- Modest and in keeping with the dignity of the ministry.
- Never wear or do anything that would distract from the Word being proclaimed.

Before each Mass you are ministering at:

- Arrive at least ten minutes early. Readers who are not present by the start of Mass will be substituted.

Preparation

- To make the service of the Word effective, all readers are asked to be prepared for their ministry. Preparation should be spiritual, scriptural, and practical.
 - Spiritual preparation involves prayer over the text and reflection on its message.
 - Scriptural preparation involves understanding the meaning of the text in the context of the letter or book from which it is taken.
 - Practical preparation involves mastering difficult words, learning the right pronunciations and practicing the delivery of the text aloud.
- Arrive in ample time before the liturgy and locate the readings in the Lectionary on the lectern.
- Before Mass: the readers should verify that:
 - the Lectionary is in place on the lectern, open to the correct reading;
 - a copy of the Bidding Prayers are in place, either on the lectern (St Joachim's), or in the folder at the back of the church (St Anne's).
- Reader 1 normally proclaims the first reading, and normally leads the Responsorial Psalm.
- Reader 2 (second on schedule) proclaims the second reading, and then leads the Bidding Prayers (Prayers of the Faithful.)

Communication Skills ('the 7 Ps')

- Presence (eye-contact)
- Power / Projection (volume and audibility)
- Pronunciation (clarity of speech)
- Punctuation (grammatical emphasis)
- Pace (speed)
- Pitch (inflection of the voice)
- Pauses

Silence

- Each reader should pause momentarily before beginning the reading. This is especially important for the first reader, who should not speak until the assembly has settled in their pews.
- In order to enable the assembly to ponder and reflect on the Word proclaimed, a pause should be observed after each reading or psalm.

Useful Tips for Readers

- Readers begin by saying, "A reading from the book [letter] of".
- It is inappropriate, indeed incorrect, to add words such as: "The first reading is from..."
- The title of the reading such as "A reading from ..." and the ending, "The Word of the Lord" should be distinguished from the reading itself. Observe a short pause both after the former and before the latter.
- The actual text of the reading should begin on a new breath, with a different vocal inflection.
- It is preferred that the Responsorial Psalm be intoned or sung, but if it is recited it is not necessary to announce "Responsorial Psalm" – just proclaim the response.
- You should not modify any words in the text.
- While proclaiming the Word, you may find it helpful to rest your hands lightly on the Lectionary. Avoid anything that might distract from the proclaimed Word, such as leaning on the Ambo, hands in pockets, or shuffling from one foot to the other.
- The microphone should be adjusted for your height. Ideally the tip of the microphone should be parallel to the floor to avoid the "popping" that may occur if you turn it upwards.
- The Lectionary should not be lifted off the Ambo while saying, "The Word of the Lord."

Qualities of a Good Reader

- Someone who **practices**, comes **prepared**, and is dependable.
- **Presence**: has a pleasant bearing, walks with dignity, bows or genuflects with grace. Conveys enthusiasm and understanding of the reading.
- **Power/Projection**: the voice is sufficiently loud.
- **Pronunciation**: Correctly pronounces names and difficult words.
- **Punctuation**: Reads so clearly and deliberately that every word is clearly heard.
- **Pace**: the speed is correct.
- **Pitch**: uses correct pitch, and colour of voice. Avoids a monotone.
- **Pauses**: he/she takes sufficient pauses, and pauses at the right places.
- Continually learns, improves in reading. One who asks for feedback from other parishioners, and/or from the priest, on the qualities of their reading. Asks for constructive criticism, remembering that there is always room for improvement.
- Is willing to gently assist and advise other readers on how they are doing and how they might improve. Learns from watching and listening to others. Sees their good points and imitates them.
- The final challenge is to live what you proclaim. The reader should always do his or her utmost to ensure that the Word of God takes flesh in the minds and hearts of those who hear that Word.

Questions for personal reflection

These can be prayed over privately, or better, shared with a group. They can provide the basis for a good discussion or sharing during a day or evening of recollection.

1. What has been your most positive experience as a reader?
2. What are/have been the biggest problems you face as a reader?
3. What suggestions do you have for improving the quality of reading in your parish?
4. Do you have advice for the Priest, in order to improve the proclamation of the Word?
5. What do you find most troublesome about or in Holy Scripture?
6. What resources would help you to be a better reader?
7. What has being a reader meant for you personally, and possibly for your family?
8. What, in your own opinion, are the characteristics of a good reader?