

Our Lady & Saint Anne, Caversham – 16 November 2013

THE MINISTRY OF READER Proclaiming the Word of God in the Liturgy

Your Ministry...Your Service!

The Lord GOD has given me a well-trained tongue that I might know how to answer the weary a word that will waken them!

Second Vatican Council - opening up of liturgical ministry

CHRIST IS PRESENT

The four Presences of Christ

- He is present in the gathered assembly.
- He is present in the presiding priest.
- **He is present in the Word – the sacred scripture.**
- He is present in the Eucharist – the consecrated bread and wine, his body and blood.

CHRIST SPEAKS!

The proclamation of the Scriptures in our liturgies is an expression of the presence of Christ in our midst. “He is present in his word since it is he himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church.” ([Sacrosanctum Concilium](#) (SC) 7, the Vatican II document on the Liturgy).

A PERSON OF PRAYER

- A Liturgical Minister is a person of prayer.
- How can you lead the prayer life of the parish if you are not a person of prayer yourself?

Come to your ministry through prayer!

Reader...

As a lector, you are not exalted at Mass but, rather, humbly serve this role and then blend back into oneness with the community. God calls you, precisely as you are, at this point in your life, to reach out to those assembled, precisely as they are, now. In this way, even though each passage has been read through Church history thousands upon thousands of times, each proclamation is yet completely new, and unique.

Reader...

The lector is one who proclaims the scriptures at Mass. While often referred to as a “reader”, the lector is so much more than this. Truly, the lector is proclaimer and prophet in ministry to the community assembled. For the reader merely recites words for the ear, but through a proclaimer the words come alive as God’s message to the heart. That is, words become the Word...Jesus Christ.

A love of Scripture...

LITURGICAL BOOKS

- The Lectionary
- The Book of the Gospels
- What are they?
- Symbol and Reality
- Alive and Dynamic
- How to handle and revere

The Readings at Mass

- **The First Reading: The Hebrew Scriptures:** The first reading is mostly chosen from the Old Testament and during some seasons (eg Easter) the Book of Acts might be read. This reading usually harmonises with the Gospel reading. This reveals the continuity between Israel and Jesus, who comes not to replace but to fulfil Israel.
- **The Responsorial Psalm:** The Psalm reflects themes in the readings. The Psalm consists of an antiphon. This is a vehicle of prayer and praise - an atmosphere of prayer within which the readings occur.
- **The Second Reading - The Christian Scriptures:** is usually from one of the letters in the New Testament which may also include the Book of Acts or the Book of

Revelations. While the letters address particular situations in the early Church, their message transcends the centuries to motivate contemporary Christians and deepen our appreciation of the mystery of Christ.

- **The Gospel Reading:** The Gospel is the climax of the liturgy of the word. Catholic faith teaches that in proclaiming the Gospel, Christ is truly present to the community. For this reason the community stands to witness to Christ's resurrection which allows him to be present to his people.

PREPARE TO PROCLAIM! EARLY!

Prepare about a week in advance of the liturgy with the Lectionary passage to be proclaimed, a pen and notebook or journal, and about 15-20 minutes of uninterrupted time.

Pray silently for about a minute or two, asking for God's grace and wisdom.

Read the passage aloud and return to silence, writing down a word, phrase, or idea that struck you.

Read the passage aloud a second time, this time asking, "What might God be saying to me in this?" Write down a sentence or two, even if there's nothing, and you have to write, "I have no earthly idea."

Read the passage aloud a third time, with the question: What message is there here for my parish? Write down another

sentence or two, even if you can only repeat the other sentence.

Only now, consult any notes or Biblical commentary.

Construct an oral presentation of this Scripture passage so that it can be clear where the core message is to be heard.

Continue daily prayer through the coming week.

Use the Web!

- Lectorprep.org
- Salfordliturgy.org.uk
- catholicmatters.com

MINDSET...prepare & be relaxed!

- In order to put yourself in the perfect frame of mind, you **should arrive at the church early** and leave the entire outside world behind you. Your cares, your problems, aspirations, anxieties, plans, hobbies, hopes, and what's for lunch - all must stay outside. Find a quiet spot and sit or kneel and pray to the Lord whatever is in your heart. You might ask that He make you a worthy vessel for proclaiming His message and that His people hear His voice and not yours.
- Then check the lectionary and the microphone!

Don't Rush

BODY LANGUAGE

- The moment you step forward you are sending signals to your listeners. Are you reverent, dignified and sincere, or hurried and anxious or cavalier? These signals come from how you carry yourself and what you wear.
- You should adopt a good posture, if physically able to do so, and walk with hands folded. Walk at a reverent pace, slower than usual. Move with dignity. Proper provision should be made for lectors who may be physically disabled.
- One can usually tell how a reading will go based on the lector's approach to the ambo (lectern). Those who race to the ambo will generally race through their reading. On the other hand, those who approach in a focused, deliberate manner will also proclaim that way.

POSTURE

- Upon reaching the ambo stand squarely behind it. Stand on two feet, not one. Place your hands lightly on the lectionary or ambo. It is as if you are caressing and embracing God's Word, just as He caresses and embraces us continually throughout scripture.
- Again, always strive to appear dignified, not nervous or casual. Do not put your hands anywhere other than on

the lectionary or ambo, or comfortably at your sides. Do not put your hands in your pockets, on your hips, behind your back or in folded arms. These gestures are cavalier, uninviting and distracting. Above all, do not use your hands at any point during the reading. It is theatrical, inappropriate and may annoy your listeners.

ANNOUNCEMENT LINE

- The lead-in or announcement line tells the listeners from whom or from where the reading comes, i.e. the prophet Isaiah or the Book of Psalms. Proclaim the announcement line loudly and clearly. You will get the assembly's attention if you start out in a positive, determined manner. Also, make sure your mind is one step ahead of your mouth. Mess up the announcement line and you're likely to be ill at ease for the rest of the proclamation. Why? Because quite often as goes the beginning, so goes the rest of the reading. Introduce the reading just as it is stated in the lectionary...not "our reading is taken from Chapter 52...."
- And always pause...for a few healthy seconds after the line is read. This will give the assembly a chance to place the prophet, era or Biblical location in their minds and prepare them to actively listen to the passage.

- Psalm: just announce the response...not "our response is"
- Ideally the psalm is SUNG by a Cantor/Choir or together

EYE CONTACT

- You may be doing everything else right - proper pace, effective pausing, speaking in a clear, engaging manner and so on, but if you do not look at your listeners, you will not connect with them. Anyone can stick his nose in a book and read, knees knocking together or not, but only those with the ability to look their assembly right in the eye will exude confidence and win credibility for the message they so urgently wish to convey.
- You need eye contact:
 - when you first get to the ambo
 - when you proclaim the announcement line
 - at the end of a sentence
 - during key words or phrases
 - when changing gears(e.g. changes in mood, time, place, character, relationship, etc.)
 - just before the closing line
(i.e. "The Word of the Lord" or "The Gospel of the Lord")
 - during and after the closing line.

PRONUNCIATION HELP

...those difficult words!

- There are basic pronunciation guides available that phonetically spell out the pronunciations of the Biblical names of people and places. For instance, Barrabus may be listed as buh-RAB-us or Capernaum as kuh-PER-num
- The congregation will appreciate your smooth handling of difficult words. On the other hand, lack of preparation is never as obvious as the lector who comes to a difficult word, stops, and then stumbles through it. This can be easily avoided with careful attention to detail in advance and practice!
- www.netministries.org/Bbasics/bwords.htm
- or just ask someone for help

ENUNCIATION

Enunciation is different from pronunciation. The latter involves using the tongue, lips and teeth to phonetically make the correct sounds of a word. Enunciation means that the speaker clearly articulates all the sounds that make up the word. For instance, a common mistake in enunciation is to drop the "d" or "t" sound from the end of a word. This is a dangerous practice in proclaiming because very often, it is precisely the inclusion of the "d" or "t" that separates one word from another. For instance, "mend" has a totally

different meaning than "men". Likewise "sent" without a clearly enunciated "t" might be interpreted by listeners as "sin".

PACE...READ SLOWLY!

The 2 biggest mistakes! One is pace and the other is volume, i.e. "They read too fast" and "I can't hear them."

- Pace refers to how quickly or slowly one speaks. (It does not mean how much time one takes between thoughts or phrases; that's pausing.)
- The best pace for a particular passage depends on the content of the reading but, as a general rule, lectors should proclaim at one-half their normal speaking voice.
- Slowing down accomplishes several things. First of all, people do not listen as fast as you may speak. People need time to digest what you are saying to them. Unless you slow down, they may not be able to keep up and will simply tune out. At that point, you've lost them, and all that practice and preparation would have been for naught.
- Secondly, slowing down helps achieve clearer pronunciation and enunciation.
- Very importantly, slowing down brings an added dimension of power to the reading.

VOLUME...I can't hear you!

The other of the two most common criticisms that listeners have of lectors is they cannot be heard. (The other one is reading too fast.) Sometimes, the problem is equipment-related but more often than not, it has to do with the lector's ability to project, voice quality and/or their use of the microphone.

- Not all lectors or aspiring proclaimers have the ability to create effective volume. Some have small or naturally soft voices; others do not breathe correctly and still others may not realise that the volume they hear in their own voice at the ambo is not nearly as loud beyond the first few pews as they may think.
- In addition, elements throughout the worship space will absorb sound, from carpeting to winter coats.
- The key to projecting effectively is
 - proper breathing
 - a natural gift of volume
 - correct microphone usage
 - confidence

MICROPHONE

- It is crucial to find just the right spot or zone that will enable you to maximize your volume without creating explosive or popping sounds. These distracting and unwelcome noises occur most often on "p" and "t" sounds and are created by speaking too closely to the head of the microphone. The rush of air that comes from your mouth on these consonants (and others as well) generates a strong force of air that is magnified unpleasantly through the sensitive head of the mike.
- This can be easily avoided by positioning the microphone head a little above your mouth (nose level) or a little below (chin level) so the rush of air goes above or below the head. You can also stand just to the right or left of the head or stand a little back, but not too far or your voice may fade out.
- Chin level is preferred to nose level because the microphone may block the view of your face, and facial expressions are an important component of proclaiming, but ultimately, you have to go with the mike position that best projects your voice. Remember some people need to lip read!
- Don't play or tap the microphone during the liturgy...check it is correctly set beforehand.

PAUSING

Silence is golden, at least in the right spots, and the proper use of pausing is essential to effective proclaiming. This is the one tool that eludes many a lector.

- Let's consider some obvious places to use the pause:
- to provide a pause when the reading is changing direction
- to allow listeners to absorb an important point
- to provide space between multiple thoughts in the same sentence
- to take a breath
- before and after quotes, to offset the quote from the character or narrator
- after the announcement line "A Reading from"
- before the closing line, "The Word of the Lord"
- Please keep in mind that pauses used too frequently within a sentence or paragraph will create a choppy effect. Strive for smoothness and fluidity. Pauses that interrupt a phrase, or grouping of words, in the wrong places can change the meaning or intended feeling. Pauses that are too long or too frequent can kill the pace of the reading and create drag.

"The Word of the Lord"

- The closing line is actually one of the most important lines in every reading because it reminds us that God is speaking directly to us. He may be using a human voice but the words and the message are His. Take care with this line. Speak it loudly and clearly. Please do not hurry through it or mutter it as an afterthought. As with the announcement line, separate it from the body of the reading with a strong, healthy pause...three to four seconds. Look the assembly in the eye when you proclaim the ending; do not rush away. Give its significance time to sink in. After all, this message that you proclaimed is directly from God. It should leave them with a sense of awe.

LECTOR DRESS

- Lector Dress
Ask yourself this question and be honest. How should you dress in the house of the King of Kings?
- If you went to Buckingham Palace, what would you wear? Why should you dress with any less respect for the only King that matters?
- Also, what you wear sends signals to the assembly about how seriously you take your ministry. Dress how you proclaim - with dignity and respect. Never wear

anything that will detract from the scripture. The focus must always be on the reading, not the reader.

you emphasise; if you choose everything to stress, the result is that nothing is stressed.

ACTION WORDS

- **Action Words**
When proclaiming, it should always be your goal to bring the Word to life. In order to do this you should, among other things, take advantage of action words. Action words have inherent life because people can generally envisage the actions indicated. However, action words will remain dormant if you gloss over them, mumble or rush past them. Let's give them the attention they deserve.
- Some words may require increased energy or force, others gentility or quietness; some may be drawn out, others hastened. Remember, action words are verbs (but not all verbs are action words, and not all verbs are worthy of emphasis). Try to find those words that will help paint a picture for your readers. Underline the key words and consider how you might emphasise them to help bring the passage to life. Be careful, though, not to ham it up in your attempt to add colour. Otherwise, you may appear theatrical or insincere and that would be distracting for the listener. Also, be selective in what

Colouring Exercises

- Say: OH, YES, WELL, REALLY, using the following emotions: happiness, pride, fatigue, fright, anger, suspicion, innocence, pleading, and sorrow.
- *Tonal Exercises:*
- Reproduce the tonal colour of these words: BANG, CRACKLE, SWISH, GRUNT, ROAR, COO, THIN, WHEEZE, BUBBLE, BUZZ, SPLASH, CLANG, GURGLE

Pitch Exercises

- *Pitch/Inflection Exercises:*
- Say "OH" with the following meanings:
- That hurts!
- How lovely!
- So what
- Well, perhaps
- Look out!
- Don't be so rude
- Do you expect me to believe that?

Volume/Emphasis exercises

- **WAS** Dave going home? (You said so, but did he really?)
Was **DAVE** going home? (Or was it Bill?)
Was Dave **GOING** home? (Or was he returning from there?)
Was Dave going **HOME**? (Or someplace else?)
- *Pace:*
- Speak slowly enough to be understood and yet rapidly enough to keep the assembly's attention.
Rate = Pause + Duration
Pause gives emphasis to the word it follows or draws attention to the word it precedes.
Duration - vowels and consonants can be prolonged or clipped short.
- *Articulation:*
- It is more important to speak with clarity than to speak loudly.
It is impossible to articulate well with a half-closed mouth. Pay particular attention to the final consonants of words.

A few practical points...

- Please be faithful to the rota. What sign is given when a reader doesn't turn up and someone has to be recruited to read unprepared at the last moment? If you cannot be present then please secure a substitute, giving them as much notice as possible to enable them to prepare the readings. If you have a bad cough or are hoarse, please consider swapping with someone else
- Sit near to the front of the church when you are reading, do not rush to the Ambo. Wait for the Amen of the Opening prayer before moving. Don't bench hop during the Collect!
- Move with dignity. Do not bring pieces of paper from which to read. Always read from the lectionary. God's Word is holy and the documents of all the Liturgy documents speak of its proclamation as a moment of grace, of God's presence in the community. Reverence for this would suggest that reading Scripture in public from missalettes or scraps of paper is something to be avoided.

MISTAKES

We are never perfect.

If a mistake is made, stop and reread the verse. It is not necessary to say "Sorry" or "Excuse me". Continue with the reading with confidence, knowing that God expects faithful worship not perfect worship. If you accept that it is OK to make mistakes, this will lessen any nervousness.

Listener Appreciation

Good hearers of the Word of God

- Full, conscious, active participation in the liturgy
- Missalettes/Missals should only be used by those with hearing disabilities
- Become engaged in the proclamation
- Make eye contact with the reader
- Christ is present ...not in your book but in the Word PROCLAIMED!

Do not underestimate the congregation's appreciation of the lector who thoroughly and meticulously prepares his or her reading. They know that you have done this for them and they will be glad in their hearts, though they may not actually tell you or thank you personally. The Lord knows however, and He will smile down upon you for you have made him present to his people.

This Sunday's Readings - Prepare and Proclaim!

YOURS is a share in the work of the Lord's Spirit who opens our hearts to God's holy Word!

The Universal Prayer...Prayer of the Faithful

- In the Universal Prayer, or Prayer of the Faithful, the people respond in some sense to the Word of God which they have received in faith and, exercising the office of their baptismal Priesthood, offer prayers to God for the salvation of all. It is desirable that there usually be such a form of prayer in Masses celebrated with the people, so that petitions may be offered for holy Church, for those who govern with authority over us, for those weighed down by various needs, for all humanity, and for the salvation of the whole world.
- The series of intentions is usually to be:
 - a) for the needs of the Church;
 - b) for public authorities and the salvation of the whole world;
 - c) for those burdened by any kind of difficulty;
 - d) for the local community.

Nevertheless, in any particular celebration, such as a Confirmation, a Marriage, or at a Funeral, the series of intentions may be concerned more closely with the particular occasion. (GIRM)

The Ministry Prayer

**Lord, as I accept Your calling to be a Lector,
Bless me with passion that I may keep doing it with fervour,
Bless me with inspiration that I may keep doing it with excellence,
Bless me with wisdom that I may keep doing it with prudence,
Bless me with humility that I may keep doing it with servitude,
And bless me with love, that I may keep doing it for You.
Amen.**