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# LECTOR INSTRUCTIONS

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Transfiguration Catholic Church



SEPTEMBER 8, 2017

**Purpose of the Lector Ministry:** Reading the Sacred Scriptures in the context of the Divine Liturgy of the Mass is part of the privilege and the responsibility of fully initiated members of the Body of Christ. Lectors speak the very Word of God. They are the voices which, in the here and now, communicate God's Son Jesus Christ's words to the Assembly of Christians. They minister the true Word of God.

**Requirements:** Lectors must be sixteen years of age, Baptized and Confirmed, able to worthily receive the Blessed Sacrament on a regular basis, exhibit good moral character with no Church impediments (i.e., be living a lifestyle in keeping with the teachings of the Catholic Church), and, if married, be living in the Sacrament of Matrimony as recognized by the Catholic Church.

**Summary of Responsibilities:** Lectors are responsible for reading and "living with" the text that they will proclaim at Mass several times prior to Mass, to become familiar with the text, with the pronunciation of difficult words, and with the cadence of the Reading – all to ensure that it is conveyed and received well by the congregation. Lectors are expected to attend periodic training offered by the parish and use the *Lectionary Workbook* which our parish provides to all Lectors as a resource for readings preparation. Remember that you are reading and proclaiming to the people of God the **very Word of God** addressed to them today as well as historically. You minister to the people by speaking to them God's side of the conversation between them and God. That conversation is what prayer and worship are all about. You Lectors have both a great privilege and a great responsibility. Preparation is the key to doing it well.

### Lectionary

For Sunday readings, we have a three-year cycle, years A, B and C, starting over annually with Advent. To find the correct set of readings, you need to know the title or number of the particular Sunday, and whether it is in Ordinary Time, Advent, the Christmas Season, Lent or the Easter Season. The Church Bulletin will always mention that information. Some special Sundays and Holy Days will have only one set of readings, no matter which of the three years (A, B or C) we are then in. For Weekday readings, we have a two-year cycle, years I and II. If the calendar year is "odd," e.g., 2016-17, then we are in weekday cycle I. If the calendar year is "even," e.g., 2017-18, then we are in weekday cycle II. Lectors should know the cycle and week of the year it is, e.g., the Third Sunday of Lent, Cycle A, or the Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C.



- 1. Dress:** Keeping in mind the dignity of your role in the Mass as Lector, you should dress neatly, modestly, and respectfully. In general, this means not wearing anything that would shift attention from the scripture to your appearance. The preference for men is at least dress slacks with a collared shirt; a jacket is preferable. The preference for women is a dress, pantsuit, or blouse and skirt/slacks.

## 2. *Prior to Mass:*

- Arrive at least 15 minutes prior to Mass, and sign in on the ministry schedule on the bulletin board in the gathering space of the Church so that the sacristan know you are ready.
- Then, go immediately to the ambo in order to check on the Lectionary, on your readings, on the placement of the ribbons, and to preview the Petitions-Prayers of the Faithful and the pronunciation of all names mentioned in them.
- If two Lectors are assigned, the Lectors will split responsibilities in the following way:
  - Lector 1: Greeting before Mass + the First Reading
  - Lector 2: the Second Reading + the Petitions (if a deacon is present, he will read the Petitions)
- If only one Lector is assigned to the Mass, that Lector will take care of all four responsibilities (unless a deacon is present as above).
- A choir member will usually come forward to chant the Responsorial Psalm. If the choir is not planning on singing the Psalm at a particular Mass, they will let the Lectors know and Lector 1 will read (or sing) the psalm after the first reading.
- Please plan on sitting somewhere near the front of church, so that everyone will not have a long wait as you make your way towards the altar.

## 3. *At the Start of Mass:*

- At about three minutes before Mass starts, the Sacristan will check to make sure the priest is ready and then will ring the bell. This is the cue for Lector 1 to go up to the left podium and read the opening greeting. **Do not wait for a sign from Father; begin the greeting immediately after the bell is rung.** Please make sure to be as cheerful as possible as you read the script, and make sure to look around carefully to see if new visitors stand up.
- **IF THERE IS NO DEACON PRESENT:** After reading the Greeting, Lector 1 comes back down the side aisle towards the entrance of the sanctuary, where the priest and servers will soon gather for the procession. In the procession, Lector 1 will carry the Book of the Gospels behind the altar servers. As you reach the front of the church, proceed straight to the altar (no need to bow at this point) and place the Book of the Gospels flat and centered on the altar. Then come back down and stand between the two altar servers on the left. Make a genuflection (or profound bow) when Father and the servers genuflect/bow, and then return to your seat.

## 4. *During Mass:*

- After the opening prayer is concluded, everyone will be seated. This is the cue for Lector 1 to come up to the front. In front of the steps leading up to the altar, make a reverent bow of the head (not a profound bow), and then walk directly up to the ambo. Do not bring anything with you to the ambo. After you have finished the reading, return to the same spot in front of the altar. Facing the altar, make another reverent bow of the head and then return to your seat.

- If the choir is not singing the Psalm, Lector 1 will stay at the ambo and read the Responsorial Psalm.
- Once the Psalm has been completed, Lector 2 will come forward. In cases where Lector 1 has just read the Psalm, Lector 1 will be leaving the ambo while Lector 2 is walking forward towards the altar. In such a case, both Lectors should try to time their movements in such a way as both can bow towards the altar together before going their different ways.
- In Sunday Masses or other celebrations where the Gospel book will be carried over by the priest or deacon, the Lector reading the second reading should close the lectionary and put it on the lower shelf inside the ambo, so that the ambo will be clear for the Gospel book.
- **IF THERE IS NO DEACON PRESENT:** As the Creed is finishing, Lector 2 will come towards the front and approach the ambo in the normal manner described above (bow of the head, etc.). The Lector should be in position by the time Father is done introducing the Prayers of the Faithful. It is better to be up there early, waiting a few moments for Father to finish, rather than everyone wait for you to arrive at the ambo. This means you will begin your movement to the ambo during our Profession of Faith when we say currently, “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life...”. There will be a sheet in the ambo with the Prayers of the Faithful (“Petitions”). Read the petitions once Father has offered the introductory part, paying special attention to the portion at the end which is specific to each Mass. Then wait until Father finishes praying the concluding prayer and then return to your seat in the normal manner. This is the final task of the Lector in a normal Sunday Mass.

##### 5. *Tips for Proclaiming the Word:*

- It is important to take your time throughout all of the readings. Wait for all of the people to sit down, to get settled, and to become quiet before beginning any reading. Drama is important not only to the dignity of the occasion but also to assist the people in their understanding of the readings.
- You should make eye contact with the assembly as you say the introduction to the reading (“A reading from...”). This is the only part of the reading that might be memorized.
- Introduce the reading exactly as it is written in the Lectionary. (We do not say things like, “Our first/second reading is from...”)
- We conclude the reading exactly as it is written in the Lectionary, **SINGING** “The Word of the Lord,” (NOT “This is the Word of the Lord,” etc.), to which in response the congregation **sings**, “Thanks be to God.”
- While at the ambo, there should never be any hand gestures or bodily communication, apart from speaking and making eye contact. If you are reading the psalms in a Mass without a cantor, for example, there is no need to raise your arms to encourage everyone to respond. By reading the psalms with the proper emphasis and eye contact, people will automatically know when to say the antiphon even

without following in the Hymnal. Similarly, there is no need to use hand gestures to invite the congregation to respond during the Prayers of the Faithful.

- There should usually be no need to lift the lectionary off the ambo while reading. Likewise, when you finish the reading, please do not elevate the lectionary as you sing “The Word of the Lord.”
- You should speak clearly and with good volume, but without yelling into the microphone. Ideally, the microphone system simply augments slightly your natural voice, in such a way that it is not obvious to the hearers that a microphone system is even being used. If you can hear yourself booming over the speakers, it means you are speaking too loud.
- Be careful of your non-verbal communication (ah’s, uh’s, body language, dress, casual posture, attitude, reputation, etc.), so that the non-verbal language does not drown out the proclamation of the Word.
- It is most important to read slowly and distinctly (sloooowly and dis-tinct-ly), enunciating clearly both consonants and punctuation, pronouncing loudly and clearly even the difficult words, especially those pesky proper names sprinkled throughout the Bible. There is never, ever, any need to hurry. Sloooooow down! Recognize that in our congregations there are some for whom English is not their first language. Every man, woman and child present should be able to hear and understand the Word of God.
- Read with expression, fully expressing the meaning of the words, phrases and sentences, as you understand that meaning to be, so that the people may hear what the readings really mean, and so that they may not be subjected to listening to mere formulas of words lacking any clear meaning. If the meaning of the readings is unclear to you, then the solution to that problem is in your further preparation before Mass, and not in using a neutral, flat rendition of the mere words. Most Lectors err on the side of too little drama in their reading. Take some risks!
- While at the ambo, please avoid all unneeded touching of it, leaning on it, fingering it, drumming it, in order to minimize distracting audio and visual interference. Learn to use the microphone effectively, placing both it and yourself at an appropriate distance so as to carry your voice to the whole assembly.
- Remember that being a Lector is a ministry and a gift for the building up of the community. Take and give critiques with compassion, so that the ministry may be strengthened by the observations.
- St. Benedict wrote in the Rule of the Benedictine Order: “They should not presume to read who by mere chance take up the book. Only those are to discharge these duties who can do so to the edification of the hearers.”

**6. Scheduling:** The Lector schedule will be published monthly at the same time as the other ministry schedules.

- A call for unavailability will go out a week or so before the end of each month by the scheduler – it is the responsibility of each Lector to respond in time for their own absences.

- Lectors are responsible for finding their own replacements if they are not going to be able to fulfill their published schedule. Please update the schedule (or have your replacement update it) when you make arrangements for another Lector to read in your place.
- The parish office will reach out to Lectors for weddings, funeral, etc. if additional volunteers are needed.