

St. James Catholic Church
Lector Guidelines and Procedures

Overview:

Lectors are proclaimers of the Word of God. They should both have perspective and the ability to understand the Word and must proclaim the sacred texts from a standpoint of faith. Therefore, preparation should include study and prayerful reflection of the Biblical texts. Good communication skills such as pauses, inflections, annunciation, phrasing, speed, and proper use of silence after the readings are essential. This ministry should also be an extension of one's spirituality and application of it.

Preparation:

Prepare your readings more than once and be very comfortable with the words as well as the sentence structure and meaning.

Prepare yourself for the ministry through prayer and reflection. This means keeping the readings in your thoughts and prayers from the first time you practice reading them.

While at home, read and be familiar with all of the Sunday readings since it is also possible that you could be the only reader.

To gain context, read before and after your particular section.

Use proper tools such as the Lector's Handbook, pronunciation guides, and your own personal Bible (The New American Translation – Revised Edition is the translation used in liturgy).

Continue to learn about and pray with Scripture as part of your daily devotional habits.

Look at all the words and proper names for correct pronunciation and use the pronunciation guide or the notes in the Lector's Handbook for reference.

Visualize the readings and picture them coming to life for you as a tool to help you to help them come alive for the hearers at Mass when you read.

Practice reading out loud. Again, articulate, slow down, speak loudly. As a rule of thumb, articulate more than you think necessary, read slower than you think is needed, put more emotion into it than you should be there, and speak louder than you are comfortable with. For most people, this is where they should be.

Even when you are not assigned, it is a good practice to be prepared to read and dressed appropriately in case you are needed.

Dress and Attire:

Acceptable Dress: Respectful, professional, neat, clean, modest, and professional dress is key. Jeans are acceptable as long as they are neat and clean. In addition, be well groomed and clean.

Not Acceptable Dress: shorts, low cut tops, t-shirts, graffiti writing on clothes, halter tops, tube tops, spaghetti string tops, midriffs exposed, sweat shirts or pants, low riding pants or mini skirts. Again, use good judgment and be well dressed and groomed.

Arrival Time:

You should be in the church and checked in no later than 15 minutes before Mass begins. There are two lectors. The first Lector carries in the Book of Gospels during the procession (unless a deacon is present), reads the first reading, and reads the Psalm if the choir does not sing it. The second Lector reads the second reading and the Universal Prayers (unless a deacon is present). All books and binders will be found in the sacristy before and after Mass for practice.

1. Notify the lead person you have arrived, that you are on the list or subbing, and sign the board.
2. Put on a medallion for Lectors if available.
3. Check the Lectionary. Make sure that the readings are marked correctly, and note how they are arranged in the book.
3. Check the Universal Prayers and make sure any Mass intentions are listed. Familiarize yourself with them.
4. Bring the Lectionary and Universal Prayers to the Ambo. Put the Lectionary on top with the correct page open and the Prayers underneath on the shelf of the ambo.
5. If you are the first Lector, bring the Book of the Gospels to the back of the church where the gifts are and be ready for the procession.
6. Sit close to where the readings will take place. Usually this is directly in front of the ambo.

During Mass:

1. If there is no music the first reader also proclaims the Responsorial Psalm. After the first reading, pause and then proceed with the Psalm. Do not announce the verse, just read it and when the verse is to be repeated, raise your hand for the community to join in. After the Psalm, pause and then return to your seat.
2. If you are the only reader, you will read all readings and prayers. Please remember to pause between the readings. If the Psalm is sung, step to the side and back during the singing of the Psalm and return for the second reading.
3. If you are processing in with the Book of the Gospels, elevate it and have the front of the book facing ahead of you. When you reach the altar don't stop, but keep walking and place the book on the back side of the altar face down.
4. The first reading takes place after the Opening Prayer or any dismissal of the Children's liturgy of the Word. In both cases, the priest will sit down first. At that time, come up for the first reading.
5. The second reading takes place after the Psalm is completed.
6. For the Universal Prayers, approach the ambo during the Creed when you hear the words, "I believe in the Holy Spirit..." Once at the ambo, wait for the priests' introduction to the Universal Prayers and begin after he is done. After the concluding prayer by the priest, place the binder on the shelf on the ambo, and return to your seat.
7. At the end of each reading, pause and then say only, "The Word of the Lord."
8. Do not carry the Book of the Gospels out at the end of Mass.
9. After Mass make sure the Book of the Gospels, Lectionary, and Binder are back in the sacristy.

Notes:

1. BEFORE AND AFTER MASS, the proper reverence is to bow to the altar and genuflect towards the tabernacle when crossing in front of them. DURING MASS, however, there is no need to genuflect or bow in front of the altar or tabernacle. In addition, there is no need to bow to the priest during Mass.
2. Keep movements simple and direct. Don't run or panic and be careful to avoid nervous twitches and habits.
3. Approach and leave the ambo in the most direct line to where you are sitting. Approach either through the left or right side of the ambo.
4. After Mass, make sure the Book of the Gospels, Lectionary, and binder are put back and your medallion is put back on the hook.
5. There are times when regularly scheduled lectors don't or can't make it. Therefore, even if you aren't scheduled, it is a good idea to be dressed appropriately and potentially ready to read if the need should arise.
6. If you feel sick, notify the lead person. If during Mass, discreetly have the other reader take over or notify the Lead Person.
7. If you have questions or are confused about something, ask the Lead Person or priest. Remember that the Lead Person or priest is the only one who makes decisions and changes things before and after Mass.
8. If at all possible, you should not do double duty such as being a Lector and Eucharistic minister at the same Mass. If it is necessary, however, let the Lead Person know.
9. Let the Lead Person know if you have address or phone number changes.

Things to do:

1. Take care of the books. If one is tattered or torn notify the lead person.
2. Check the equipment before Mass. Make sure the books and binders are ready, the microphone is working, and things are in place.
3. Take your time and do things smoothly and with purpose. Avoid panicked movements or distracting behaviors.
4. Be prayerful in appearance and in fact. It's not enough to "look" as if we are prayerfully aware of our ministry. "Be" prayerfully aware of what God is doing. In addition, be present and welcoming to those around you before, during, and after Mass.
5. Keep the focus on God's Word.

Things not to do:

1. Do not read from the Missalettes.
2. Don't read without checking the Lectionary or binder for proper working, punctuation, names, and page turning.
3. Don't carry the Book of the Gospels out at the end of Mass. The "Word" was proclaimed and received and therefore remains in the people to be sent out.
4. Don't change words in or add words to the Lectionary. Don't say anything at the end of a reading other than "The Word of the Lord".
5. Don't add additional words or commentary. There is no need to say things such as, "Today's first reading..." If you make a mistake, correct it if necessary and continue reading. There is no need to say, "Excuse me" or "I'm sorry", etc.

Lector Guidelines Outline

Lectors should arrive early and be dressed appropriately (refer to guidelines). Check in, get a medallion, check both readings in the Lectionary (in case the other Lector is absent and also for page turning, etc.), read over the Universal Prayers in the binder, place the Lectionary and Binder on the ambo. Carry the Book of the Gospels toward the back of the church where the gifts are.

The first Lector will be in the entrance procession carrying the Book of the Gospels unless a deacon is assisting with Mass. In that case, the Deacon would carry the Book of the Gospels and also read the Universal Prayers.

Proceed behind servers in the procession carrying the Book of the Gospels holding it elevated. With no bow, go straight to the back side of the altar, place the Book of the Gospels down flat on the altar (from the back side), and then go straight back to your seat (with no need to bow).

After the opening prayer and the Priest has sat down, the first Lector comes forward (no need to bow to the altar or priest), goes straight to the ambo, and proclaims the first reading. When finished, go back to your pew (again, no need for bows).

The choir will usually do the Responsorial Psalm. If not, refer to the procedures in the guidelines.

The second Lector comes forward, goes straight to the ambo, and proclaims the second reading. When done, close the Lectionary and place it on the shelf within the ambo, then return to your pew (again, no need for bows before or after reading).

Towards the end of the creed, the second Lector comes forward and waits until the Priest has done the introduction prayer for the Universal Prayers, then begins doing the prayers. Stay up there facing the people until the Priest finishes the conclusion prayer and all respond, "Amen", then return to your seat.

After Mass make sure that the Book of the Gospels, the Lectionary, and the binder are back in the sacristy for the Next Mass.

Take off the medallion and check the schedule for your next assignment and you are finished.

Training:

1. The “big picture”
2. Overall idea of ministry being “service”
3. The welcoming of people by those who do public ministry
4. What a Lector is truly doing (Hilkiah found during Josiah’s reign 623 BC)
5. Reading vs. proclaiming
6. Clear, slow, articulate, eye contact?, legitimate emotion. (human and divine)
7. Pray, practice, know the context, read before and after, be comfortable
8. Catholics in good standing
9. Behavior in and outside of church
10. Microphones – Don’t speak “into” the microphone but project through it.
11. Dress
12. Stick to the script (no “excuse me”)
13. Proper reverence (before and during Mass)
14. Lead Person’s role
15. Golden Rule of Liturgy: be smooth and deliberate
16. Explain Lector Guidelines