

Lector/Commentator Helpful Hints

Pope Paul VI said, "Let the reader be aware of the office he has undertaken and make every effort and employ suitable means to acquire that increasingly warm and living, love and knowledge of Scripture that will make him a more perfect disciple of the Lord." 1972

When you become a lector, you are accepting the responsibility to do your best, to practice, to make frequent self-evaluations, and to continually look for ways to improve. Proclaiming the Word is personal. You are not performing for an audience, but speaking to peers and friends who share the same beliefs. The ministry of lector calls for a person to grow in a warm and loving knowledge of Scripture—the living Word of God. As a lector, you and the Heart of Jesus meet in the Scripture. Pray for the grace of the Holy Spirit to help you be open and respectful in this encounter. The intention is that you yield to inspiration given so that your proclamation may touch the hearts of the parishioners.

To do this:

READ THE SELECTION: Begin with a prayer asking that your heart, mind and soul be open to the Word of God. Read the selection, several times. Meditate on it. Read it again and then read it aloud, perhaps to a listener. This will help the Word to sink in to your heart and mind in a way that may help you understand its meaning.

UNDERSTAND THE SELECTION: Ask yourself if you understand the reading, where it takes place, what type of reading it is. Ask yourself if you understand the meaning of all of the words and how to say/pronounce them.

To answer these questions you will pay particular attention to:

Pronunciation: Look up the word in a dictionary if you need to.

Meaning: Again the dictionary. Look for commentaries on the reading on the internet.

Form: This refers to the literary form of a passage. Is it a story, a letter or a fragment of poetry? Understand that each is read differently.

PRACTICE THE SELECTION: Practice makes perfect. Once you have read it once and then come to a better understanding of its meaning, then you can concentrate on the following areas:

Nervousness: Concentrate on the reading, not yourself and channel any nervous energy into what you are saying, the reading itself. Take a few slow, relaxed deep breathes.

Voice Quality: Be clear and distinct.

Volume: Understand the projection of your voice. Are you loud? Too Loud? Do you speak softly? Do you need to speak up? Don't force your voice. Understand the microphone system and adjust it to your level. Understand your breathing patterns.

Diction: Notice the vowel and consonant sounds of your selection. Final consonants are important and should be pronounced. **Listen for muffled sounds, slurred words and dropped endings.**

Range of Voice: Range of voice refers to the scale of notes you use when speaking. A single scale of notes is referred to as monotone. You will put people to sleep if you read this way. Use a wide range of notes in your voice when reading.

Pace: How fast or slow are you reading? Set a good pace for the reading. Let the listener have time to absorb what you are saying. Slow down at the end of the reading.

Pause: Avoid too long and too short pauses. Pace yourself. Pauses also help those listening to follow what you are saying. Remember to pause at the end of your reading before you say.....Thanks be to God.

Rhythm: Know what should be stressed and what should not be stressed. Thought bearing words should be stressed. Some of those words are highlighted in your workbook. Small words that fill in the thought should not be stressed.

Intonation: Watch the tone of your reading. Highs and lows.

Eye Contact: Make eye contact with congregation at some point. Easy at the beginning when telling them which reading you are reading. Sweep the congregation or look up to the back of the church. At the end of the reading, make contact again after your pause when you say Thanks be to God.

Remember:

- If you make a mistake, don't panic, it's not the end of the world. You are human. Read through it like nothing happened.
- Keep external movement to a minimum during your reading.
- Be aware of your visual cues. How you approach/leave the ambo. How you look.
- What is your body language saying? Are you Reverent?

EXPECTATONS OF YOUR JOB:

- 1 Keep track of when you are scheduled to read. Monthly schedules can be found in the Gathering Foyer of the church and online at www.stjohn-catholic.org.
- 2 If you cannot serve, consult the minister list and find a substitute. It is your responsibility to find a substitute.
- 3 Prepare. Prepare, Prepare. Prepare both of the readings before you come to Mass. Sometimes one minister does not show up and you will be required to do both readings. Be prepared to proclaim both.
- 4 Be prepared to serve as a lector or commentator even if you are not scheduled to do so. When you arrive for Mass, check in with the Ministry Coordinator to see if a substitute is needed.
- 5 Arrive **at least** 15 minutes early to check in with the Ministry Coordinator of your Mass and to check the ambo to make sure the Lectionary is there and open to the correct readings.
- 6 Position the microphone at a level directly at your mouth. It is important that you speak into the microphone at a very close distance.
- 7 Find your reading partner and confirm which readings you are doing.
- 8 If you are going to be out of town for an **extended period of time** and would like to be taken off the ministry list, here is what you do:
 - a. Email the following people will assure that you are taken off the list: the Parish Secretary and the Lector/Commentator Coordinator. This is an attempt at a two-fold communication. It works most of the time.
 - b. In any circumstance, you can contact the Lector/Commentator Coordinator and she will contact the Parish Secretary.
 - c. You must notify one complete month prior to the month you want to be taken off. Example: You are out of town in December. We must be contacted by November 1st to take you off the December list.

An informational internet site for liturgical background
for the weekly readings is www.lectorprep.org

*“May the Lord be in your heart and on your lips that
you may worthily proclaim His Holy Word.”*

*Information taken from The Ministry of Lectors by James A. Wallace
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