



LECTORS IN THE DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide regular and licit practice of the ministry of Lector. It defines the intention of liturgical law relative to the proclamation of the Word, the demands of proper liturgical practice and the expectations of the universal and local Church.

The following regulations for lectors serving in the Diocese of Springfield reflect universal law of the Latin Church, particular law for Dioceses of the United States of America as well as particular law for this Diocese of Springfield.

Proclamation of the Word

The role of lector is truly one of service to the Church. Lectors bring the living Word of God to the liturgical assembly. The ministry of the Lector is, therefore, to be treated seriously and with great dignity. (See *GIRM* [*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*], art. 55.)

The Word of God is not merely read during liturgies; it is proclaimed, yet without theatrical show. Effective proclamation involves the delivery of the message with clarity, conviction and appropriate pace. It demands the ability to rouse faith in those who hear the Word proclaimed, which is why undertaking this special ministry presupposes faith in the one who exercises it. (See, *LFM*, [*General Introduction to the Lectionary (for Mass)*], art. 47.)

Formation of Lectors

If they have not already done so, Lectors must receive sufficient spiritual, theological and practical preparation to be able to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence. It is the responsibility of the pastor to ensure that this formation is provided. In order to assist pastors wishing to train lectors in their own parishes, the Office of Divine Worship can provide a syllabus and bibliography upon request. Additionally, the Diocesan Office of Divine Worship will assist parishes by offering formation programs and by assisting parishes in locating qualified individuals to conduct formative training on the parish level.

Parishes are strongly encouraged to offer opportunities for ongoing spiritual development for lectors. The Office of Divine Worship is available to assist with programs of this type, which are to include prayer, reflection on the Holy Eucharist and Sacred Scripture, as well as other means of further enrichment.

Selection and Requirements of Lectors

Lectors are fully initiated, practicing Catholics whose lives witness to the Word which they proclaim. This ministry of the Word requires skill in public reading, knowledge of the principles of liturgy and an understanding of the Sacred Scriptures. Therefore, only properly trained and commissioned lectors are to be scheduled for liturgy. (See *GIRM*, art. 101, and *LFM*, art. 55).

All lectors are to be commissioned for their ministry, preferably during a Sunday Mass. The blessing used for this commissioning is found in the *Book of Blessings*, Chapter 61.

Those commissioned as lectors will participate periodically in enrichment programs. By their own initiative emanating from love for their ministry, lectors are to seek ongoing education and formation.

Preparation

To make the service of the Word effective, all lectors are to be prepared when they exercise their ministry. Preparation is to be spiritual, scriptural and practical. Spiritual preparation involves prayer and reflection upon the sacred texts they are scheduled to proclaim. Scriptural preparation involves understanding the text. Practical preparation involves mastering difficult words, learning correct pronunciations and practicing the delivery of the text aloud, ideally in the presence one who is able to critique the delivery.

Immediate preparation is also expected of all lectors. This requires, among other things, arriving in ample time prior to the liturgy, locating the readings in the Lectionary, arranging the microphone and assuring that the sound system is functioning properly.

Inclusive Language

Sensitivity for inclusive language in the liturgy has been recognized and incorporated into the translations of Sacred Scripture at a level approved by the Episcopal Conference for use in the dioceses of the United States of America. Therefore, the lector is not at liberty to change the approved Scripture and prayer texts for the liturgy to accommodate a desire for inclusive language. In the preparation of other texts, such as the General Intercessions or commentary of any type, language that is inclusive could be used if it maintains the dignity due to Divine Worship and language.

Ministers of the Word

According to the ancient tradition and the teaching of the Church, the readings other than the Gospel are proclaimed by lay ministers. (See *GIRM*, art. 59.)

The use of two lectors, one for each reading, is encouraged. The parish community should strive for enough lectors to fulfill this ideal. (See *GIRM*, art. 109, and *LFM*, art. 52.)

The Prayer of the Faithful is part of the Liturgy of the Word. When no deacon is present, the lector or cantor announces the intentions from the ambo. If the intentions are sung, a cantor is to be assigned the function of announcing the intentions. (See *GIRM*, art. 138, and *LFM*, art. 53.)

Symbols in the Liturgy of the Word

God speaks to the faith community at worship through persons, actions and objects. To ensure the effectiveness of the Liturgy of the Word, it is important to pay full attention to the symbols of liturgy. Symbols that are integral to any celebration of the Word are: the lector(s), the sacred book(s), the ambo, and the processions.

The lector ministers as a member of the worshipping assembly and is expected to participate in the entire liturgy. It is inappropriate for a lector to participate only in the Liturgy of the Word.

The Word is contained in the Lectionary and the Book of Gospels, which are to be permanent, dignified and well-bound tomes. The readings are always proclaimed from these liturgical books. The Word of God is not to be proclaimed from a missalette or participation aid without grave necessity. (See *LFM*, art. 37.) Non-biblical readings are never to be substituted for the readings or Responsorial Psalm. (See *GIRM*, arts. 57, 349, and *LFM*, arts. 12, 35, 36.)

The ambo is the symbol of the presence of the Word of God in the Church just as the altar is the symbol of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. The Liturgy of the Word takes place at the ambo. The ambo should be permanent, solemn, dignified and prominent. Candles and other decorative elements may be placed around it. The ambo is to be used for the proclaimed Word, namely, the readings from Sacred Scripture, the Gospel, the homily and the intentions of the Prayers of the Faithful. All readings take place at the one ambo; it is improper to have two ambos. (See *GIRM*, arts. 58, 309, *LFM*, art. 16.) A lectern or cantor's stand is used for song leading, announcements, funeral eulogies and all other matters that are not the proclamation of Sacred Scripture or elements of the Liturgy of the Word.

Responsorial Psalm and Alleluia

An integral part of the celebration of the Word of God is the Responsorial Psalm and the Gospel Acclamation, that is, the Alleluia or seasonal verse that replaces it. Psalmody is designed to be sung; it loses much of its power when it is recited. Ideally, since the Responsorial Psalm at Mass is taken from Sacred Scripture and is part of the Liturgy of the Word, it is sung or read from the ambo.

Because the Psalm can be sung in a variety of ways, such as responsorially or antiphonally, lectors should check with the musicians beforehand as to whether anything is expected of them. (See *GIRM*, art. 61, and *LFM*, art. 20.)

The leadership of music ministry properly belongs to the musicians. It is preferable for a cantor to sing the Responsorial Psalm or at least the people's response. If the Responsorial Psalm cannot be sung, then it is to be recited by the lector in such a way as to foster meditation. (See *GIRM*, art. 61.) The Lector always repeats the response with the congregation.

"The *Alleluia* or [as the liturgical season requires], the verse before the Gospel, must be sung and during it all stand. It is not to be sung only by the cantor who intones it or by the choir, but by the whole of the people together" (*LFM*, art. 23).

Ritual Action

Among the actions in the Liturgy of the Word, processions are important. In a Mass celebrated without a deacon, the lector takes part in the entrance procession. Solemnly carrying the Book of Gospels slightly elevated, he or she makes a bow upon reaching the altar and places the Book of Gospels upon it. The Lectionary is not carried in procession, but is resting on the ambo prior to the beginning of Mass. (See *GIRM*, arts. 44, 120d, 195.)

After the second reading and the accompanying pause, all stand for the singing of the Alleluia or Gospel Acclamation. During that time, the deacon or priest carries the Book of Gospels from the altar to the ambo in procession. He may be accompanied by acolytes and thurifer. The Gospel procession is an important ritual action in the Liturgy of the Word even if it not expressed fully at every Mass.

At the time of the proclamation of the Holy Gospel, the posture of standing highlights the fact that the Gospel enjoys a pre-eminent place among the Scripture readings. (Cf. *GIRM*, arts. 134, 276d, and *LFM*, art. 17.) When incense is used, the Book of Gospels is incensed before the Gospel is proclaimed. This is accomplished with three swings of the thurible. (Cf. *GIRM*, art. 277.)

The Book of Gospels is not carried in the recession.

Silence

“The dialogue between God and his people taking place through the Holy Spirit demands short intervals of silence, suited to the assembly, as an opportunity to take the word of God to heart and to prepare a response to it in prayer” (*LFM*, art. 28). Proper times for silence during the liturgy of the word are, for example, “before the Liturgy of the Word itself begins, after the first and second reading, and lastly at the conclusion of the homily.” (See *GIRM*, art. 56.) The congregation is seated during the times of silence.

Seating and Action of Lectors

Lectors are to be seated in a place that allows them easy access to the ambo, preferably among the assembly. (See *GIRM*, art. 310) At the appropriate time, the lector approaches the ambo slowly and with reverence. If the lector must pass in front of the altar, he or she bows to the altar before proceeding to the ambo. If the lector must pass before the Most Blessed Sacrament, he or she genuflects before proceeding to the ambo. (See *GIRM*, art. 274.) All movements in the liturgy are performed with dignity and grace; they are never hurried. After the reading, the lector returns to his or her seat in like manner.

When there are two lectors, the first returns to his or her seat after the reading and before the Responsorial Psalm is intoned. The second lector then approaches the ambo after the Psalm and returns to his or her seat before the Gospel Acclamation.

When only one lector proclaims both readings but not the Responsorial Psalm, he or she is seated during the Psalm.

Lectors begin to read by saying, “A reading from the Book of Exodus” as written in the Lectionary. Words such as “The first reading is...” or the like are never added.

If the Responsorial Psalm is recited, the lector begins the recitation with the antiphon. Words such as “Responsorial Psalm” or the like are never added.

Ministers of the Word must not add or change any words of the texts.

The announcement of the reading such as “A reading from the Book of Exodus” and the conclusion, “The Word of the Lord,” are distinguished from the reading itself. Lectors do this by observing a pause of about three seconds after the former and before the latter phrase. The same tone of proclamation is maintained for “The Word of the Lord.”

While proclaiming the Word, a lector may hold the Lectionary or place in on the ambo with hands resting upon it. Anything that might distract from the proclaimed Word, such as leaning on the ambo, putting one’s hands in one’s pockets, or shuffling from one foot to the other are to be avoided.

The Lectionary is not lifted off the ambo while saying “The Word of the Lord.”

The lector must never do anything to draw attention to him- or herself at any time. Clothing is to be appropriate for the occasion, modest and in keeping with the dignity of the ministry.

Non-Catholic Lectors

There is sometimes a desire to have a non-Catholic serve as a lector at a wedding with parties of mixed religion, a funeral, or an ecumenical gathering. The *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* indicates that baptized non-Catholics may proclaim the Scripture readings, but only with the permission of the local bishop, contingent upon the approval of the local pastor. In the Diocese of Springfield, this permission may be obtained through the Vicar General’s office. The parish should assist such occasional readers in such a way that God’s Word is proclaimed properly and with dignity.


Additional questions may arise regarding the best way to approach particular circumstances that can arise in the life of a parish. These may be referred to the Office of Divine Worship.

These regulations, approved in whole by the Bishop of Springfield, become in force for this Diocese of Springfield on Sunday, 28 November 2021, the First of Advent, for the period *ad experimentum* until Sunday, 05 June 2022, the Solemnity of Pentecost.

From the Chancellor,

prepared in cooperation with the Office of Divine Worship.

Approved in whole by the Most Rev. William D. Byrne, Bishop of Springfield,
28 October 2021, the feast of the Holy Apostles Simon and Jude.


Very Rev. John G. Lessard
Chancellor



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