

ST. MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS CATHOLIC CHURCH
LECTORS INSTRUCTIONS
(revised 1/1/2003)

- I. **ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR READING:** Reading the Sacred Scriptures in the context of the Divine Liturgy of the Mass is part of the privilege and the responsibility of the baptized member 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 to the Assembly of Christians. They minister the Word of God. Accordingly, Lectors must prepare to speak that Word effectively. That means reading and living with the assigned readings during the days preceding the Lector's assigned Mass.
- II. **LECTIONARY:** For Sunday readings, we have a three year cycle, years A, B and C. In the Liturgical Year 2002-03, starting with Advent, we are presently in Year B, which follows the Gospel of Mark. 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 & 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., 2002-03, then we are in weekday cycle I. If the calendar year is "even," e.g., 2003-04, then we are in weekday cycle II. Again, you will have to know what week of the year it is, e.g., Thursday of the Third Week of Advent.
- III. **SCHEDULING:** A schedule is published periodically showing Lector assignments and listing all Lectors and their phone numbers. If you are scheduled to serve and cannot be present at that Mass, it is your responsibility to find a replacement for yourself from the published list of Lectors. When a replacement is necessary and has been found, please inform the Mass Coordinator by telephone.
- IV. **DRESS:** Men should always be in a suit, or at least a blazer and dress slacks with a tie; women should be in a dress or skirt and dress blouse, or at least in a dress suit.
- V. **CHECK-IN:** Ten minutes before mass is to begin, check in with the Mass Coordinator in the sacristy. This check-in is to insure that we have Lectors for every Mass, and to give you the quiet time necessary to prepare yourself, and the Lectionary (and the Intercessions, if no Deacon is serving), to proclaim the Word of God effectively, and also to allow for any special instructions.

VI. **ENTRANCE:** The Lectors come into Mass in the procession carrying neither the Lectionary nor the book of the Intercessions. Genuflect and take your place in the front pew, prepared to come forward at the indicated time. Sit at the right end of the front, left pew so that you will approach the sanctuary from the central aisle. Do not come up from the side aisle. If no Deacon is serving, one of the Lectors processes in, single file, holding the Book of the Gospels, somewhat elevated, and places the Book of the Gospels on the altar, and returning to the floor level reverences the altar with a bow and takes a place in the pew.

VII. **READING METHODS:**

- A. It is most important to read slowly and distinctly (sloooooowly and distinctly), 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!
- B. 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 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 a neutral, flat rendition of the mere words. Most Lectors err on the side of too little drama in their reading. Take some risks!
- C. 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.
- D. While at the ambo, please avoid all unneeded touching of it, leaning on it, fingering, drumming, 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.
- E. 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.

VIII. PROCEDURE:

- A. After the priest completes the opening prayer, please be seated with the congregation and silently pray for a few moments. Only then should you stand and leave the pew. Do not carry anything with you to the ambo. When you reach the first step into the sanctuary, but while still standing on the floor level, pause and bow to reverence the altar (not the celebrant nor the tabernacle). Then go directly to the ambo without rushing.
- B. After reaching the ambo, pause one moment and find the first reading. Then look up and announce the first reading in a loud, clear voice, saying only exactly what is printed on the page. For example, you might say, "A reading from the book of the Prophet Jeremiah." Please note, you do not say, "The first reading is . . ." or anything other than what is printed on the page.
- C. After announcing the reading, then look back at the page and begin the reading. You might prefer to keep your eyes on the text during the entire reading, rather than looking up from time to time, as you find most conducive to a good, clear reading of the text. Speak slowly, clearly, and loudly. When you have finished, pause one moment, look up at the congregation, and announce the end of the reading, saying only, "The Word of the Lord." Do not hold the book up as you say this.
- D. At all Sunday Masses (including Saturday evening), we have cantors to sing the Responsorial Psalm from their lectern and not from the ambo. Accordingly, after you conclude the first reading, leave the Lectionary open, in place, on the ambo, and be seated in one of the chairs behind the ambo, if you are the only Lector, or bowing to the altar return to your pew if there is another Lector.
- E. After the psalm has been sung, the Lector prays for a few moments, then stands and comes to the ambo, bowing to the altar. As before, look at the page to find the text, look up and announce the reading (again, say only, "A reading from the Letter of Paul to the Romans," etc., never begin with, "The second read is . . ."). Then look back to the page and begin the reading. When you have finished, announce the ending, "The Word of the Lord."
- F. After the congregation responds, before you leave the ambo, close the Lectionary, being sure to leave the ribbon in place to mark the page, and place the book on the left side of the shelf of the ambo. Then step to the left of the ambo and go down the steps into the central aisle directly in front of and to bow to the altar, and then return to your pew.

- G. From time to time, it may not be possible for the cantor to sing the psalm. If the psalm is not to be sung, then after you complete the first reading, pause and step back from the ambo one step, bowing your head. Silently pray for a few moments, then step back to the ambo. Look down at the page to locate the text of the psalm, and then look up and read the words of the psalm response, e.g., "The Lord is kind and merciful." Please do not announce it in any way, e.g. "The Responsorial Psalm is.., etc." Rather, you begin simply by reading the words of the psalm response, then leading the people in repeating that response, then yourself reading the verses of the psalm, in alternation with the peoples' responses, on down to its conclusion. Then step back from the ambo again, and repeat the silent prayer before you announce the second reading.
- H. When a deacon is assisting at Mass, he reads the General Intercessions. When there is no deacon, the Lector reads them. When the people come to the words in the Creed, "one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church," leave your pew and approach the ambo just as you did for the first reading. The text of the prayers will be on the shelf of the ambo. Read the prayers slowly, loudly, and clearly. When the priest finishes the concluding prayer, return to your pew as you did after the second reading.
- IX. **RECESSIONAL:** As the priest comes off the altar at the end of Mass, the Lectors line up behind him, holding nothing in their hands, and reverence the altar and tabernacle in the same way that the priest does, either a bow or a genuflection, as the case may be, and then recess out following the altar servers.
- X. **QUESTIONS:** If you have any questions about these procedures, please telephone at the parish office at your convenience. I am grateful for your invaluable assistance in the sacred liturgy, and on behalf of the entire parish family, I thank you for your service.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS AND
FAITHFUL SERVICE AT THE ALTAR.**

SELF-CRITICISM: Excellent Very Good Good Needs Improvement Comments

Preparation _____

Volume audio _____

Pacing _____

Diction _____

Pronunciation _____

Expressiveness _____

Pauses _____

Eye Contact _____

Movements _____

Nerves _____

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