

Tips for the Parish Lector

I. Arrival at Mass

Lectors should arrive 20-25 minutes before Mass to sign in. Please show up if you have been scheduled for a Mass. If you cannot attend on a day that you have been scheduled, it is your responsibility to find a sub. Please be respectful of the Eucharist and the Ministry – do not wait until the Sunday that you have been scheduled to find a sub. All Liturgical Ministers need ample time to prepare to serve in the Eucharistic celebration.

Dress Code

Lectors should dress neatly, in a way consonant with the dignity of their role. Good taste and common sense are the best guides in this area; please avoid wearing shorts or tank tops. Appropriate dress is a sign of the reverence the minister has for the Eucharist and for the importance of the ministry.

III. Directions for First Lector

The first Lector is given the charge of reading the First Reading, and most weeks, the Responsorial Psalm.

II. Before Mass begins:

- a. After arriving, proceed to the lectern.
- b. Check that the Lectionary is flipped to the correct reading for that Sunday. Go over the readings again to ensure that you are comfortable with the readings and pronunciations. If you have any questions, please ask the Presider.
- c. Please check with the music director to see if the Psalm is to be sung during Mass. If not, please go over the reading for the Psalm.
- d. Find your seat in the assembly. Make sure to have chosen a seat in the assembly close to the aisle as to be able to proceed to the lectern with minimal disruption.

The Readings:

- e. Once the Presider sits down after the opening prayers, stand and process to the Altar. Bow slowly, and then proceed to the lectern.

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III. **Begin the first reading** – “A reading from the book of...” Read slowly, loudly, clearly, and with dignity. Make eye contact with the assembly. After the last line of the reading, look up and say: “The Word of the Lord.” If the Psalm is to be sung, please return to your seat in the assembly. If not, remain at the lectern and proceed to read the Psalm, inviting the assembly to repeat after you for the responsorial.

IV. **Begin the second reading** – “A reading from the book of...” Read slowly, loudly, clearly, and with dignity. Make eye contact with the assembly. After the last line of the reading, look up and say: “The Word of the Lord.”
After the second reading, return to your seat in the assembly.

V. **The Prayers of the Faithful:**

When applicable the second reader is responsible for the prayer of the faithful. Otherwise it would be the celebrant or on special occasions, someone other than a lector might read the Prayers of the Faithful. In any case the same guidelines would apply.

As the assembly approached the end of the Nicene Creed, please process to the Altar. Bow slowly, and then proceed to the lectern.

Read the Prayers of the Faithful, one by one, and invite the assembly to reply, “Lord, hear our prayer” after each.

After the last prayer, remain at the lectern as the Presider closes with a final prayer.

As the congregation takes their seats, return to the front of the altar and bow. You may now return to your seat in the assembly.

Lector’s “Ten Commandments”

1. I'll remember that it's about God and His WORD, never about me.
2. I'll practice names and proclaim them with confidence.
3. I'll know the readings, having prayed, and practiced them weeks before Mass.
4. I will honor my family in Heaven in my posture and my prayerfulness.
5. I will proclaim the living Word with an urgent passion that is alive, not dead.
6. I will dress in a way that brings honor to my Father's House and family.
7. I will not seek affirmations or compliments, realizing all glory belong to God.
8. I will respect the ministry, only proclaiming the Word if prepared to do so.
9. I will support, uplift, and pray for others who also seek and proclaim God's Word.
10. I will honor the opportunity to proclaim the Word and recognize the privilege.

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VI. Tips for Lectors

Here are ten tips to keep in mind before you go forward to proclaim the Word of God at Mass. Many of them might seem like no-brainers, but it never hurts to step back and remind ourselves of some of the basics. After all, this is a ministry, a very important one.

1. Realize what you're reading

Never forget that this is the Word of GOD, the Creator of all creation. Millions of lives were given to defend, uplift and uphold the truths contained within the Words. The Bible has transformed the lives of billions because it is more than just words on paper, it is the LIVING Word (John 1). It is Christ. Ask yourself; is Christ any less present in the Word than He is in the Eucharist? Absolutely not. While our Lord Jesus is present in a truly unique way in the Blessed Sacrament, He is every bit as present in His Sacred Word.

2. Recognize the Ministry

Remember that a lector is first and foremost a minister. You are a minister of the Word, every bit as important as a music minister, or a Eucharistic minister. Take humble pride in that fact. Treat this as a ministry...that is, with a servant heart. Remember the basic foundational premise of ministry is to serve others with the heart of God. Lectors are there to serve by proclaiming the Word. That proclamation is essential. Proclamation is more than reading, because you can read to yourself. Proclaiming necessitates someone listening. This goes all the way back to the early Church, with the first meetings of the apostles and disciples (Acts 13:44).

3. Familiarize yourself with names and places

Sometimes we think this just means learning how to pronounce a Biblical person's name, or a Biblical city or region, but it goes much deeper than that. We should be taking the extra fifteen or twenty minutes during the weeks prior to learn who these people were, where these places were located, and why they were important enough to mention. If the lector doesn't even do it, why would those folks sitting the pews? If we take the time to understand the seemingly "minor" facts and points in a reading, it will show in how we read it. When the story comes to life in your mind, whether you realize it or not, it will be reflected on your lips. So do anything you can to make it come alive.

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4. Approach it with professionalism

Professionals who read and do voice-overs for a living will spend, at times, hours working on a piece of material that is only a one or two minute "read". That might seem crazy to us, but it shouldn't. Read through your reading(s) a couple times just to start familiarizing yourself. Then, take the time to do a few different "reads"...that is, read it one way, emphasizing certain facets one time, then read it again, but emphasize different words, or place pauses in different places. You'll be amazed at how the same reading can come to life in different ways, if you really open your heart to the Holy Spirit (the inspiring author of the Sacred Scriptures) and pour your soul into it.

5. Dress for success

Don't ever underestimate the power of self-confidence. When we dress nicely, and feel we look good; we are more confident. You may not even realize it, but when you feel better about yourself, it shows in every part of your demeanor, both spoken and unspoken. That being said, modesty is essential. Don't dress in such a way that brings attention to yourself or that would make others focus more on you than on the Word of God.

6. Know it well enough for eye contact

How much have you practiced the reading(s) you are proclaiming? I don't just mean for pronunciation, but for proclamation and presentation. Begin practicing the readings several days ahead. Know the reading so well that you can almost do it from memory. When it comes time for Mass on Sunday, if you really know it you won't have your head buried in the Good Book (like so many people do, who unfortunately have not sufficiently prepared). Instead, you will be looking into the eyes of those believers who are assembled there before you. To your rehearsed and practiced eye, the readings sitting upon the ambo (pulpit) should be there to guide you, not for you to bury your head in.

7. Maximize your vocal potential

Literacy does not make someone a lector. Just because someone is 'able' to read a word, does not make them good at proclaiming the word. Just because someone 'has a nice speaking voice' does not make them a good speaker. There are people who spend all of their free time working on their voice. These professionals spend hours, weeks and years

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in development of their speaking and reading skills. Approach your lectoring with the same kind of pride and desire. When you practice the readings, practice your intonation (the rise and fall of pitch in your voice), your inflection (utilizing loudness and softness to enhance a point), and when to pause (drawing the attention of the listener to a specific point).

8. Put yourself in a position to be successful

We are told very clearly in the Scriptures that we are not to receive the Eucharist at Mass, if our souls are not in a state of grace (that is, if we have mortal sin and have not been to Reconciliation). Eucharistic Ministers, especially, often remind themselves that they should not administer the Eucharist on Sunday if not in a state of grace. Many EM's make it a point to get to Confession before they're scheduled for Mass. We must realize and remind people, though, that as lectors, we are every bit as much a minister of Christ, as a Eucharistic Minister is. Like it was said earlier...Is Christ any less present in the Scriptures than He is in the Eucharist? Absolutely not. While Christ is present in a unique and different way in the Eucharist, it is not a matter of "more present." Lectors are ministers of the WORD, which is Christ. We should be in a state of grace if we are to be entrusted with proclaiming His Word at Mass. Make it a habit to get to Reconciliation, often.

9. Practice reading Scripture

Don't allow yourself to get into the rut where the only time you're reading Scripture is when you're practicing the readings for Sunday. Don't just be reading the readings, be reading Scripture. The more time you spend in the word, on your own time and in your own study, throughout the course of the week, the more you will strive to learn about it, the more confidence you will have when proclaiming it, and the more passion you will develop for it. The more you read the word, the more you're giving God more to work with up there when it's time for you to proclaim on Sunday.

10. Lead by example

Read Colossians 3:16-17, Jeremiah 15:16 and Matthew 15:14. What are these verses telling us, and calling us to do and to be? Be sure that in everything that you do and in everything that you are, you are showing a passionate hunger, an abandoned humility, and a visible reverence for God in His Word. In the way you stand, you dress, you speak,

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you move, and you proclaim, do all in such a way that they do not see you, but Christ who is within you (Galatians 2:20). If you do so, it will only magnify the power of the Word, making Christ's true presence known and enlivening the hearts of all who hear it