



TRAINING GUIDELINES FOR LECTORS

2026

THE DIOCESE *of* RALEIGH
OFFICE OF DIVINE WORSHIP

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INTRODUCTION:

These guidelines follow the Liturgical Ministry Series: Guide for Lectors and Readers (LTP), 2nd edition. We recommend reading this book to gain a greater spiritual, theological, and practical preparation to fulfill your role with the knowledge and reverence.

WHAT IS A READER?

A lay person called by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Word of God.

WHO IS A READER?

A lay person who reads the First Reading, Psalm (if there is no cantor), Second Reading, and "Prayers of the Faithful."

- When we pick up the Word of God, we hold a powerful tool
- Through Sacred Scripture, God speaks to His people
- At Mass, God speaks to everyone gathered, and His Word can touch each person in a unique and personal way
- The Readers proclaim God's Word with the community so that all may encounter Christ through Scriptures

WHAT IS LITURGY?

The word liturgy comes from the Greek word meaning "public work" or "work of the people." The liturgy is a celebration of divine worship of the whole people of God – doing what is ours to do: proclaim the Gospel and charity-in-action.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LITURGY?

- Recognizes that it is God who gathers us together in God's presence
- Helps us build community
- It is both ordinary and cosmic
- The Paschal Mystery is central (Jesus Christ's Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension)
- We encounter Christ and one another in the liturgy
- It is different from devotion(s)
- It reflects and shapes our faith
- It edifies us as believers in the world sent forth in mission
- Provides an opportunity to serve

A LECTOR SHOULD KEEP IN MIND THE FOLLOWING:

- Shows charity, compassion, and listens with empathy
- Reflects on his/her faith and seeks to grow in his/her faith
- Distinguished by his/her faith, Christian life, good morals, good reputation in the ecclesial community, and is instructed in the performance of this service
- Recognizes that God has been good and gives back to God what He has given him/her

MINISTRY ELIGIBILITY

The liturgical assembly really requires two lectors... Therefore, appropriate measurements must be taken to ensure that the laity have the proper training to carry out this ministry with dignity (*Lectio* Introduction #52)

- Be a Catholic with good moral character and strives to live the message of the Gospel
- Participate faithfully every weekend in the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist and Holy Days of Obligation.
- Participate faithfully in the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist and Holy Days of Obligation, and strive to live and practice the Catholic faith in daily life.

MINISTRY REQUIREMENTS

- Dress simply and modestly
- Know and abide by the standards of the diocese and your parish

Note: In the Diocese of Raleigh, a Lector/Proclaimer should:

- Be registered as a member of the parish to which you have been delegated
- Strive to lead a life rooted in the teachings of the Catholic Church by participating faithfully in the sacramental life of the Church. If married, your marriage should be recognized by the Catholic Church.
- Participates in a single liturgical ministry, e.g., extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, lector, or cantor (this is to encourage participation from members of the parish community)

GOD'S WORD IN THE CHURCH AND OUR LIVES

- When God speaks, we respond on the spot by listening and adoring. Then later we carry out the purpose of the Scriptures in our way of life
- The reader has a daunting responsibility because his/her voice needs to carry God's voice. The reader communicates a divine message

LITURGY OF THE WORD WITHIN MASS

- The Mass has two main parts, often called "tables": the ambo (Liturgy of the Word) and the altar (Liturgy of the Eucharist)
- The Book of the Gospels is the collection of Gospel readings, and it represents Christ
- The Word of God must be respected; readers should not change the introduction, conclusion, or the scripture reading
- The Word of God does not dwell in communal reading, but in communal hearing

THE READER'S ROLE DURING MASS AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

- Lectors need to be prepared biblically, liturgically, and technically
- **Biblically:** the reader needs to understand the readings in their context and through faith, grasp the central message.
- **Liturgically:** the reader must have some grasp of the meaning and structure of the Liturgy of the Word and the significance of its connection with the Liturgy of the Eucharist
- **Technically:** make the readers more skilled in the art of reading publicly
- Readers have the following duties:
 - Join in the entrance procession of Mass and may carry the Book of the Gospels, if there is no deacon present.
 - Observe silences after each Reading.
 - Lead Psalm or Prayers of the Faithful if needed
- The Readers' role concludes with the Liturgy of the Word and the reader continues to participate fully at Mass through the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
- The Reader does not walk out at the end of Mass in the procession

THE LECTIONARY

The Sunday readings follow a three-year cycle, known as Years A, B and C.

Cycle A: Gospel of Matthew

Cycle B: Gospel of Mark

Cycle C: Gospel of Luke

The **Gospel of John** appears during the Easter season all three years and on other occasions during Ordinary Time and Lent.

LITURGICAL SEASONS

Each liturgical season prepares us for the living presence of God, to celebrate with joy the Word of God that lives within us. It calls us to return to the Lord when we have been separated, and it guides us to reflect on the empty tomb, the glorious resurrection, and eternal life.

Advent: Celebrating Christ's two comings

Christmas Time: Celebrating the Incarnation

Ordinary Time in Winter: Christ's identity and ministry; our discipleship

Lent: Preparing to renew our baptism

Sacred Paschal Triduum: Commemorating the Passion, Death and Resurrection of God

Easter Time: Reflecting on the Living Paschal Mystery

Ordinary Time in Summer and Autumn: Christ's identity and ministry; our discipleship

DEVELOPING A PROCESS FOR PREPARING TO READ

- Start with prayer by asking for the wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit
- Read the passage aloud numerous times to let your mind and tongue begin to know it
- Identify genre, speaker, theme and voice

LEARN ABOUT THE BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE READING

- Read the passages before and after it in the Bible
- Use notes from a study Bible or commentary
- Think about how it fits in the Liturgical Year
- Discern the Teachings in the Reading, and determine:
 - Who is God and the Holy Spirit?
 - What is the nature of church, sacraments, and salvation?
 - How are disciples to act?
 - How are we to find hope?
- Look up the pronunciation of uncommon words and identify any words that are unfamiliar and are difficult to pronounce

USE PUBLIC SPEAKING TECHNIQUES AND SKILLS

- Practice reading the passage aloud several times
- "Warm up your voice: open and close your mouth, move your jaw, and take deep, controlled breaths
- Practice your volume, pacing, emphasis, and voice quality appropriate to the Scripture
- Have someone listen as you practice reading
- Presentation style:
 - **Control of breath and volume**
Breathe deeply from your chest to use a stronger, lower voice that projects well. Take full breaths so you can finish each phrase smoothly
 - **Clear articulation and pronunciation**
Make sure that:
 - All syllables are pronounced
 - Articulate words fully
 - **Appropriate pacing of the reading**
 - Read slowly, clearly, and with purpose
 - Use appropriate volume and pacing
 - Emphasize meaning without being theatrical

- **Practice at church**
 - Become comfortable with the physical setting of the church. Learn where to sit, where to stand, and how to move to and from the ambo
 - Being familiar with the sound system will make a difference in how the reading comes across and how to control your volume

PAY ATTENTION TO NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

- Stand upright with confidence
- Maintain natural hand placement, let them rest on the ambo, holding the lectionary, or subtly marking your place with a finger
- Make brief eye contact with the assembly and if applicable acknowledge those on the sides
- Your movements should be done with purpose and reverence
- If you are carrying the Books of the Gospel or moving the Lectionary after the second reading, handle these books reverently. They are symbols of our faith

READER'S ROLE DURING MASS

- Arrive early (i.e., 20 minutes before the start), or the time your parish directs.
- At many parishes, readers will be part of the opening procession. If this is not the case in your parish, you should be in your seat 10 minutes before Mass

THE RITUAL LANGUAGE THAT BEGINS THE READING IS VERY IMPORTANT:

- Begin clearly: "A reading from the..." exactly as written in the lectionary. Pause briefly, then proceed with the reading
- After the reading, pause, look up and say: "The word of the Lord"

- Wait for the assembly's response. Keep a moment of silence and then reverence the altar as you and proceed to your seat

RESPONDING TO NOISE AND UNUSUAL SITUATIONS

- If it's too noisy before reading, pause briefly to allow for silence
- If a loud noise occurs (e.g., sirens), pause for a few seconds, then continue
- Adjust your volume as needed
- Continue calmly if interruptions persist

RESPONSIBILITIES OUTSIDE MASS

- Be aware of your schedule, come prepared, and arrive early for Mass
- If you cannot read as scheduled, notify the Lector Coordinator following your parish guidelines
- Continue formation (Scripture study, public speaking, training)

REFLECTION AND SELF-ASSESSMENT

- After serving consider:
 - Was I prepared and prayerful?
 - Did I communicate the message clearly?
 - Were my pacing, tone, and pauses effective?
 - How can I improve next time?

WAYS TO CULTIVATE SPIRITUALITY AS A READER

Ways to deepen your ministry:

- Regular Mass attendance
- Engage with the parish community
- Personal Scripture and prayer
- Participating in study groups or retreats

- ### REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- NOTES:**