

# **Minister of the Word Saint Joseph Parish Guidelines**



“The Sacred Scriptures, above all in their liturgical proclamation, are the source of life and strength”

*Lectionary #47*

Revised June 2013

## What is a Minister of the Word?

*Also called “Lector”, “Reader”, or “Proclaimer of the Word”*

**A Minister of the Word proclaims the first or second reading from Sacred Scripture at Mass. This person may also lead the Prayer of the Faithful at mass.**

The Minister of the Word at Mass has an important function in relation to the gathered faithful. According to the *General Instruction to the Roman Missal*:

“Lay people may be deputed to proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture, people who are truly suited to carrying out this function and carefully prepared, so that by their hearing the readings from the sacred texts the faithful may conceive in their hearts *a sweet and living affection* for Sacred Scripture” (*GIRM* #85, emphasis mine).

As Catholics we believe that the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God. The Word teaches, inspires, reprimands and warns. It is a gift that leads us to sacramental encounter with the living Lord, a gift that shapes our lives as Christians.

The mystery and reverence demanded by the sacramental encounter with God at Mass makes lecturing a ministry rather than simply an opportunity for public speaking. The faithful gathered at prayer should know that the word contained in the Sacred Scriptures has meaning to the minister and that s/he believes the message is important. The lector’s proclamation should communicate to each person in the assembly that the message is important to them for their conversion and faith journey.

## Who can be a lector?

According to the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, a lector may be a man, woman, or child in full communion with the Catholic Church. S/he must be serious about living as a Christian disciple, and must be willing to attend a parish formation event.

“When [the faithful] hear the word of God and reflect deeply on it, Christ’s faithful are enabled to respond to it actively with full faith, hope, and charity through prayer and self-giving, and not only during Mass but in their entire Christian life.”

*~Introduction to the Lectionary  
for Mass, chapter 3, 48*

## Preparation

The *GIRM* acknowledges the “careful preparation” needed for you as a Minister of the Word to effectively carry out your proclamation of the Sacred Scripture or lead the assembly in the Prayer of the Faithful. Outlined below are some practical suggestions for preparation before you carry out your ministry:

### Spiritual preparation:

- A. Use the Sacred Scripture as a source for your private prayer or meditation. Let the Old Testament, psalms, Gospels and epistles inform and nourish your faith life.
- B. Identify the reading that you are to proclaim. Read and pray over the text. Identify the reading’s context, the speaker’s tone and mood. Use the lector workbook as a resource to help you put your reading in context and to help with any tricky pronunciation.
- C. Practice proclaiming the text with feeling, understanding, and clarity. Practice several times to help the text settle into your mind.

### On your assigned day:

- A. Dress mindfully. The way you are dressed should not detract from your ministry or the liturgy.
- B. Arrive fifteen minutes before Mass begins and inform the sacristan that you are present.
- C. Go to the Sacristy to check your reading. Make certain the reading is the one you practiced and is marked correctly in the Lectionary. If you are proclaiming the Prayer of the Faithful, read it through.
- D. The Minister of the Word who is scheduled for the first reading should take the Lectionary to the ambo. Adjust the microphone as needed, and check to see that the bookstand is on the altar. The Minister of the Word who is scheduled for the second reading should take the Prayer of the Faithful sheet to the ambo.
- E. You are invited to gather with the other liturgical ministers in the back of the church for prayer immediately prior to the start of Mass.

## Your role in the Entrance Procession

- A. Both Ministers of the Word should participate in the entrance procession. Each follows the cross and candle bearers in the entrance procession. Leave sufficient space (four “squares”) when following the servers. Walk slowly.
- B. The first reader carries the *Book of the Gospels*. The *Gospels* should be held straight up and down, with two hands, and with the front of the book facing forward. The second reader walks beside the first reader.
- C. The minister carrying the *Gospels* proceeds directly onto the altar platform (do not bow at this time) and places the book in the stand on the altar. The book should be facing the congregation as if ready to read. Meanwhile the second reader remains on the floor with the other ministers at the foot of the altar. After placing the book, the first reader joins the other ministers and all bow toward the altar and proceed to their seats.
- D. Ministers of the Word are encouraged to sit within the community with their family or friends throughout the liturgy. Ministers are not required to sit next to the altar platform. However, it is advised that the reader of the Prayer of the Faithful should be seated close to the ambo or in the front row on the north side of the church after the second reading is completed.

## Your role in the Liturgy of the Word

- A. Ministers of the Word follow the order of the Mass. If Children’s Liturgy of the Word is offered (10:00 a.m. Mass), wait until the children are called forward and dismissed before approaching the ambo. Please be in your place at the ambo by the time the last parent and child leave the congregation.
- B. The first reader should approach the ambo slowly when the presider and congregation are seated. If you pass in front of the altar, bow in reverence. It is not necessary to bow when approaching the ambo from the side.
- C. Be sure to make eye contact with the congregation while proclaiming the text. **In accordance with the rubrics, identify the reading as follows:**
  - a. “A reading from the...,” pause and then begin proclaiming the reading.
  - b. When concluding the reading, pause and proclaim, “The Word of the Lord.” Wait for the congregation to respond with “Thanks be to God” before leaving the ambo.  
*Do not change this formula in any way. Do not begin with, “Our first reading today is...” or conclude with “This is the word of the Lord.”*
- D. Pause after concluding your reading, step away from the ambo and slowly walk to your seat. The second reader should follow the same instructions above as for the first reader.

- E. Once the second reading has been proclaimed, place the Lectionary in the shelf under the ambo (insert the book vertically so it is not sticking out). The second reader should try to remain close to the ambo to be prepared to read the Prayer of the Faithful. If a deacon is present and the second reader is not reading the Prayer of the Faithful, s/he may return to his/her seat in the congregation.
- F. After the congregation recites the Creed, the presider will introduce the Prayer of the Faithful. It is advised to approach the ambo during the part of the Creed that says, “We believe in one, holy, catholic, apostolic...” so that you are in place before the presider introduces the petitions.
  - a. If there is a baptism celebrated during Mass, the Creed is omitted and the Prayer of the Faithful follows the conclusion of the baptism.
  - b. If there is a deacon present, he will read the Prayer of the Faithful.
- G. Turn and face the presider as he introduces the prayer. After the introduction, start the Prayer of the Faithful. Read each intercession slowly, making clear for whom the intercession is addressed. This is the prayer of the Church, and the faithful assembled for liturgy are invited to join in the prayer. Pause briefly before saying, “*We pray to the Lord*” or a similar statement. After reading the final intercession, turn and face the presider and remain at the ambo until he has completed the closing prayer. Once the presider is finished, you may return to your seat (there is no need to bow when leaving the ambo).
- H. Note that during some liturgical seasons, such as Advent or Lent, the invitation to prayer and the response to the Prayer of the Faithful may be sung by the choir and congregation. Lectors will be informed of this ahead of time.
- I. Lectors do not participate in the recessional procession.



## Scheduling and Formation

- i. Schedules are prepared in advance by the Director of Music and Liturgy using a ministry scheduling program called Ministry Scheduler Pro (MSP). Once you have been trained, you will receive an e-mail with a username and password that will enable you to access the MSP site. When you log in, you will be able to: update your Mass preferences and availability, view your schedule, request subs or swaps for any of your ministry dates.
- ii. You will receive an e-mail with your schedule at the beginning of each schedule cycle. You may view your schedule at any time by logging into the MSP website with your log-in information.
- iii. If you are scheduled as a minister and are unable to be present on that date, **it is your responsibility to find a substitute prior to Mass**. You can do this by accessing the scheduling program and requesting someone to volunteer for your assignment (either as a sub or a swap). If you volunteer for someone else, please be sure that the minister schedules in both the Hospitality Room and the Sacristy reflect that change.
- iv. The person listed first on the schedule proclaims the first reading and carries the *Book of the Gospels* in the opening procession. The person listed second on the schedule proclaims the second reading and the Prayer of the Faithful. If a deacon is present, he will read the Prayer of the Faithful.
- v. Lector Workbooks are available from the Director of Music and Liturgy. These have the same translations as the readings that you will read. There are also helpful hints about pronunciation and about the meaning of the readings.
- vi. The *General Instruction to the Roman Missal* (#57) states that the lector may **never change the words of a reading** or proclaim a non-scriptural text at Mass.
- vii. Formation and training is required for all new ministers before the minister is scheduled.
- viii. Attendance at the annual Evening of Reflection, parish retreats, or other formation events is strongly encouraged for renewing Ministers of the Word.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this ministry, please contact the Director of Music and Liturgy ([musicandliturgy@stjoeparish.com](mailto:musicandliturgy@stjoeparish.com)).

**Thank you for your ministry to Saint Joseph Parish!**