



Rocky Mountain House



Evergreen



Caroline

## ST. MATTHEW PARISH IN ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE AND MISSIONS IN EVERGREEN AND CAROLINE

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## The Ministry of Proclaimer (Reader - Lector)

“The Ministry of Proclaimer calls us to be servants of the Living Word of God”



**Thank you very much for accepting the call to this ministry.**

**"If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." - John 8:31-32**

**The function of the Proclaimer is to effectively proclaim the Word of God during liturgical celebrations.** A Reader strives to present the Word of God with clarity and distinction so that it is not just merely "read", but fully understood by the listening Parish Community.

The lector or minister of the word is one who proclaims the readings during mass. This ministry is rooted in love for the word of God. The one who provides the ministry of reader is called to not only be familiar with the readings of the mass but **to be familiar with scripture in general.** To love the word and bring it to others at mass is the joy and call of one who enters into the ministry of lector.

Genuine ministry is about humble service. **A model of ministry for readers is John the Baptist** who had to decrease so that the Messiah could increase (cf. John 3:30). It also was said of him that, *"He was not the light, but came to testify to the light"* (John 1:8). In order to serve the community and give faithful testimony to the Word, the reader must put aside personal agendas and needs.

- **Arrive 10 minutes early** and check the readings in the Lectionary to note any differences to the one you have been practicing.
- If you are not able to attend the Mass you are scheduled for, **please arrange for a substitute!**

## **Reading in the church.**

Reading in church is about **proclaiming** God's holy Word. In this, more is required than simply reading a text aloud. The reader is a channel for communication of the inspired word of God in the scriptures to the whole assembly.

## **Qualifications.**

Readers can be of any age as long as they are able to communicate God's word clearly and effectively, and give some evidence of living in accordance with the values inherent in what they are proclaiming.

## **Preparation.**

**Readers should prepare themselves** as far in advance as possible, reading the text, studying it and reflecting on it and praying on it, as well as reading it **aloud** a number of times. Some readers will begin their preparation on Monday for the following weekend.

The ideal is for the reader to have read the text aloud a sufficient number of times to know sections of it virtually by heart and to have internalized it to some extent. This enables readers to raise their heads from the printed page to make **eye-contact** with members of the assembly from time to time, a practice which is highly recommended.

- Discover where the sense of the whole passage and individual sentences lie.
- Do not read over-dramatically. Not even a good actor does that.
- Read intelligently, animatedly, and – where indicated, conversationally.
- **Read slowly and clearly**, and maintain the flow of the passage.
- Different materials require different treatment. The outbursts of the prophets need to be read with feeling, the rebukes of St. Paul with regret, and the poetry of the Song of Songs with passion.
- Verbs are more important than adverbs, nouns more important than adjectives. Let the stress fall on verbs and nouns, not their helpers.
- **Well used pauses can create visual and audible spaces:** for reflection, to change the established pace, to show respect and to heighten interest.
- **The secret of a successful Reader is practice**, much practice. Reading aloud is a very different skill from reading silently and this will require practice.

## **Dress.**

Ministers of the Word should dress in a manner appropriate to their holy ministry and one which is acceptable in the locality. Dress the way you proclaim - with dignity and respect!

## **Place in the church.**

The proper place for the seating of readers is within the assembly. They should be seen coming forth from the assembly and returning to it when their ministry has been completed.

## **How many readers?**

Whenever there is more than one reading, it is better to assign the readings to different readers (*GIRM* 52). This not only helps avoid any possible monotony with the use of the same voice, but, more importantly, reflects the fact that the two readings will be different in literary form and will accordingly need a different style of proclamation.

## **The place for the Word.**

The readings are proclaimed from the ambo (lectern) (cf. *GIRM* 58, 196), the special place for the Word. The Responsorial Psalm may also be sung from the ambo or another suitable place (cf. *GIRM* 61). **The intentions for General Intercessions are also announced from the ambo (lectern)** (cf. *GIRM* 197).

## **Entrance procession.**

Two readers go in the procession, immediately before the priest or deacon (after Eucharistic Ministers or if they do not take part in the procession after the Adult Server and Candle Bearers). Only the *BOOK OF*

*THE GOSPELS* is to be carried in the procession. The *LECTIONARY FOR MASS* should already be placed on the ambo (pulpit) opened to the appropriate Sunday readings before the beginning of the mass.

### **When to approach sanctuary.**

The best time for first reader to move to the sanctuary is while everyone is seating themselves and getting comfortable. The first reader should only start to move **after the 'Amen'** response to the Opening Prayer of the Mass has been said by all. The second reader only approaches **when the singing of the Responsorial Psalm is completed.**

The readers should move as unobtrusively as possible. This has implications for manner of dress and for footwear. The readers should bow to the altar, a symbol of the presence of Christ, as they pass (cf. *CB* 72), while remembering that Christ is also present in the very proclamation of the word. They do not need to genuflect towards a tabernacle (cf. *CB* 71), nor bow to the presiding priest.

### **Proclamation techniques.**

Before starting, **adjust the microphone if necessary** (make sure it is directly in front of you).

It is good practice for a reader to wait until the congregation have settled before beginning the reading. Communication requires the full attention of the people as well as the preparation of the reader. Waiting gives readers a "space" to prepare themselves to proclaim the word and make **eye-contact** with the people. Doing this may require practice to become natural to the reader.

**The manner of delivery should not be rushed** (cf. *GILM* 28). A significant proportion of all readers read too quickly, and begin before the people are ready to listen. This can be due to nervousness.

### **A pause at the end of the reading.**

A pause of at least 10 and preferably 15 seconds is strongly recommended **between the proclamation of the actual scripture text and the reader saying "The word of the Lord"**. This not only gives the text that has just been proclaimed a chance to be absorbed by the listeners before the conventional concluding formula moves people's minds on to what comes next, but it also provides the reader her/himself with an opportunity to take the word on board and make it her/his own.

Such silent pauses are recommended in *GILM* 28 and *GIRM* 56. A silence of 10 or 15 seconds will at first seem very long to the person reading, but not nearly so long to those who are given this time to pray and reflect. Once again, it may take some time for this to become natural to both reader and congregation.

### **The General Intercessions.**

After the brief introduction from the priest, the intentions for prayer are announced from the ambo (lectern) by one of the readers (in our parish – always a second reader). The reader comes forward from his/her pew during the Profession of Faith and approaches the ambo during the introduction by the priest. ♦ In the General Intercessions a 10-15 second pause is highly recommended only after the announcement of the intention that the people are being asked to pray about, and before the invitation to respond (e.g. "Let us pray to the Lord"). **In all "regular" intentions we do not observe any pauses.**

### **When to leave the sanctuary.**

In liturgy, every movement draws attention to itself. A useful rule of thumb is for ministers only to move when there is some other movement going on, to minimize distraction.

Therefore, for example, the 1<sup>st</sup> reader should leave the sanctuary as the cantor moves to the music desk, the 2<sup>nd</sup> reader should go to the ambo as the cantor moves away from the music desk, and so on.

In our parishes, after the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading the practice is that no one stands until the presiding priest stands. In such a case, the 2<sup>nd</sup> reader places the Lectionary on the shelf and should remain standing quietly at the ambo until the Gospel reader and people all stand and the Gospel Acclamation begins, and move away at that time. ♦ At the end of the General Intercessions, the person announcing the intentions should not move away until **after** the presiding priest has finished the concluding prayer. The movement will be "covered" by everyone else sitting down, preparing for the collection, etc.

## Spiritual reflections on the Ministry of Proclaimer (Reader)

- Yours is a share in the work of the Lord's Spirit who opens our hearts to God's holy word.
- Yours is the task of telling our family story, the story of salvation.
- Yours is to proclaim the true and saving word of God.
- You are the messenger of God's love for us.
- Your task is to proclaim that word, which challenges, confronts, and captures our hearts.
- You proclaim a word that heals and comforts and consoles.
- Yours is the ministry of the table of God's word, which feeds the hungers and the longing of our hearts for the truth.
- Yours is to offer the story of the "great things the Lord has done for us," that we might turn to the table of Eucharist with good cause to give thanks and praise.
- Yours is nothing less than the ministry of the Lord's voice calling out in the midst of God's people.
- Come to your work from your personal prayer, praying that the Spirit will open your heart to what you proclaim.
- Prepare the word which is yours to speak: study the scriptures, understand the passage, let it dwell deep within you.
- Come to your work in awesome reverence of the word you proclaim: it is the Lord's word.
- Come to your ministry as one judged and saved by the word you speak.
- Anyone can read the scriptures in public; only the believer can proclaim them.
- Approach the ambo, the table of the Lord as you would the Lord himself, with reverence and awe.
- Handle the book of the Lord's word with great care; it is a tabernacle of the Lord's presence.
- Let your eyes fall often on the faces of the assembly; they are the body of the Lord whose word you proclaim.
- Let the Lord's peace settle in your heart, that your voice may be clear and steady.
- Let your voice echo the sound of the word, with conviction, with gentleness, with strength, and with wonder.
- Remember that the story you tell is filled with a drama you need not supply, but must always convey.
- Like the prophet, you will sometimes proclaim what no one wants to hear; remember always your own need to hear the hard saying, and never imagine that your ministry places you above what you proclaim.
- If you are the best of the parish lectors, be gentle in helping others to improve.
- If you are the least of the parish lectors, seek out that help which others can give.
- If you do not know how well you read, ask: be grateful to constructive criticism and humbled by any praise you receive.
- Let no minister of the word think that there is nothing left to learn; another commentary and another workshop cannot but help the open mind and heart.
- When your brothers and sisters praise and thank you for your work, take delight in the word that you have heard and rejoice in the work the Lord has accomplished through you.
- Be faithful in the work you do, for through it the Lord saves his people.