

Ministry of Lectors



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Secretariat for Worship and Liturgical Formation
Diocese of Gaylord

Prayer for Lectors

***Everlasting God,
When he read in the synagogue at Nazareth,
Your Son proclaimed the good news of salvation
for which he would give up his life.***

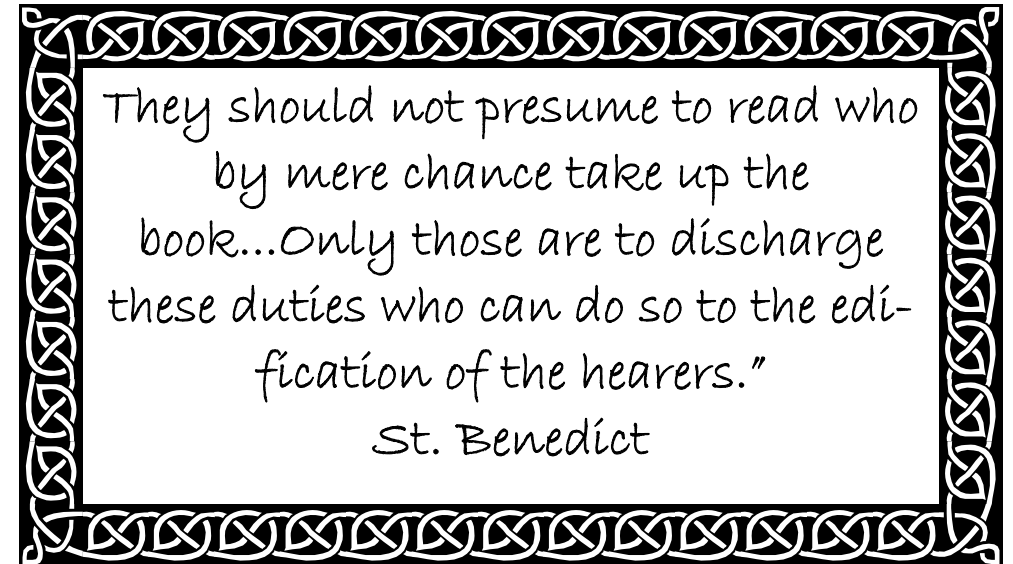
***Bless these readers.
As they proclaim you words of life.
Strengthen their faith
that they may read with conviction
and boldness,
and put into practice what they read.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.***

Amen

The above prayer for the Blessing of a Reader confirms the importance of your ministry as a lector. Even as you proclaim the readings for the assembly with the conviction and boldness that come from study and preparation, the Church also expects you to apply the message of those same readings to your own spiritual life.

As a lector you allow God to use your voice to communicate with the assembly. Your ministry keeps alive the memory of how God has acted in nature and history from age to age, especially in the story of the Jewish people and above all in the gift of Jesus Christ and the Church.

To proclaim the Word well, you will need to study it and pray over it, allowing it to take hold of your own heart and mind. As a lector you are a servant of the Word of God. Like St. John the Baptist, always stand under that Word.





What are the rewards of becoming a Lector?

As a Lector you will...

- engage in active participation of your faith,
- strengthen and reinforce your faith by learning more about the Word of God,
- experience fellowship among your brothers and sisters of our Ministry and the greater faith community,
- establish a closer relationship and understanding of God, yourself, and the community, and obtain personal growth within our faith

“Through Baptism we put on Christ and become members of his Body. We are initiated into the Christian community and called to a holiness of life in the world befitting disciples of Jesus. But through all three Sacraments of Initiation we are called to something more: to embrace Christ’s mission of salvation.

Baptism initiates all into the one priesthood of Christ, giving each of the baptized, in different ways, a share in his priestly, prophetic, and kingly work. And so every one of the baptized, confirmed in faith through the gifts of God’s Spirit according to his or her calling, is incorporated into the fullness of Christ’s mission to celebrate, proclaim and serve the reign of God.”

(Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord, USCCB, 2005)

Dear Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord,

As Bishop of the Diocese of Gaylord, I take this opportunity to thank you for fulfilling a much needed liturgical role for your faith community. It is a blessing for me to be able to work side-by-side with liturgical ministers who so generously desire to serve the Lord and His people.

I encourage you to continue growing in your formation and your knowledge of the Eucharist. Participate in every opportunity presented to deepen your understanding of the ministry to which you have been called. Search out the avenues that will lead you even closer to the Lord through the Eucharist.

As you collaborate with the Church’s ordained ministers, may you be energized each and every time you gather in community and may you effectively reach out to those who thirst for the living God. Know that you will be in my prayers as you serve the Church and that you can count on my blessings always.

I whole-heartedly believe that the entire Diocese of Gaylord is enriched by your service as a liturgical minister. May Christ, the Bread of Life and the Cup of Eternal Salvation, reward you for your dedicated service.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Bernard A. Hebda
Bishop of Gaylord

Theology of Lay Liturgical Ministry

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his won, so that you may announce the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (1 Peter 2:9)

All liturgical ministers are, first and foremost, members of the Body of Christ. Through their baptism they are the “holy people and royal priesthood” whose right and privilege it is to participate in the ministry of Christ. How the lay faithful exercise this ministry in the world varies, but the fullest and more fundamental expression of it has always been “conscious, active and fruitful participation in the mystery of the Eucharist”. (General Instructions of the Roman Missal [GIRM], Introduction #5)

The celebration of the Eucharist is the “action of the whole Church” (GIRM, Introduction #5). The faithful, moreover should not refuse to serve the People of God gladly whenever they are asked to perform some particular ministry or function in the celebration” (GIRM #97). Some of the faithful are called to serve God’s people in a more particular way through one of the many liturgical ministries that have flourished in the Church since the Second Vatican Council. This diversity of roles, functions and ministries enriches our celebrations and assists us in our prayer. Serving in one of these ministries is both an honor and a responsibility, and those who commit to it need nurturing and support.

This handbook has been prepared to help you grow in a deeper understanding and love of the liturgy, your ministry and ultimately the Lord whom we all serve. It is to be used in tandem with your parish/cluster catechesis and formation.

Ministry of the Lector

“The Lord has given me a well-trained tongue that I may speak to the weary a word that will rouse them” (Is.50:4)

Proclaiming the Word of God has always been a fundamental part of Christian liturgy. The earliest Christians, firmly rooted in the traditions of the Jewish temple, incorporated the stories of God’s mighty deeds into their own worship rituals.

Glossary

Ambo	A sacred place from which the Word of God is proclaimed. It is reserved for Reading Scriptures, the Psalm, and the Easter Proclamation (Exsultet), but may also be used for the homily and general intercessions, and at times, during parts of other rites of the Church.
Assembly	The people of God, Catholic and otherwise, gathered for prayer and worship.
Credence Table	A small table placed in the sanctuary that holds items used during Mass.
Lectionary	The four-volume book containing the Scripture Readings used on Sundays and week days.
Liturgical Minister	Someone who meets certain requirements and has been trained and formed who serves in a special role during a liturgical celebration.
Missal	The book containing the prayers used by the priest during Mass (Formerly called the Sacramentary)
Parts of Mass	The Mass is divided into four main parts 1. Introductory Rites: Used to form one praying community. The parts of the Mass before the Scripture reading; entrance song through the opening prayer. 2. Liturgy of the Word: From the first reading through the prayer of the faithful. 3. Liturgy of the Eucharist: From preparation of the altar and presentation of the gifts through the prayer after communion. 4. Concluding Rite: Priest’s greeting/blessing/dismissal of the assembly.
Sanctuary	The sacred space around the altar usually set apart in some way from the rest of the church building.

What You Can Expect From Your Parish

- The Lectionary and Book of the Gospels are easily accessible, attractive, up-to-date and well kept.
- The Word of God is proclaimed from the Lectionary and Book of the Gospels. Never should pieces of paper be used unless in a binder or formal book form.
- The ambo is in a place that can be seen by all.
- The sound system is adequate so that all in the assembly can hear the Word of God, all prayers, etc.
- Provision is made for persons with hearing impairment. (i.e. signing if necessary)
- Provisions to the space to enable people with disabilities to proclaim the Scriptures from the ambo.
- The first and second readings are proclaimed by two different lectors. The responsorial psalm is sung with the assembly taking part. The deacon, or priest in the absence of a deacon, proclaims the gospel.
- The parish supports the lectors and provides them with opportunities for ongoing formation
- When the Word of God is proclaimed outside of Mass (prayer service, vespers, devotions) reverence for the Word of God is conveyed in the same manner as it is at Mass. This is also true for funerals and weddings.

They knew that God's word is powerful and active, "achieving the end for which God sent it" (Is 55:11). God's word continues to reach the ears of the weary through the voice of the lector. "When the Scriptures are read in Church, God himself is speaking to his people." (GIRM #9)

Since by tradition the reading of Scripture is a ministerial, not a presidential function" (GIRM #34), it properly belong to ministers other than the presiding priest. This includes deacons and lay people who are "truly qualified and carefully prepared" (GIRM #101). Effective leaders require a degree of competence in public speaking, as well as training, practice, and on-going formation. Most of all they must be "doers of the word, not hearers only" (James 1:22), with a mature and lively faith that is evident from the way they live.

This ministry is not for everyone and careful **ongoing** discernment is called for in order to determine who would make an effective lector. This discernment is accomplished by both the minister and the leadership of the Church throughout the years of service to the Word. Blessed are all who accept the challenges of this ministry, whose well-trained tongues still speak to the weary on God's behalf.

The lector is to be Spiritually prepared:

- Make the readings your prayer for at least the week prior to proclaiming them.
- Be familiar with both readings and the Gospel as well as the Psalm response
- Pray with and research the readings so you understand the words you are proclaiming, both when originally penned by the author and how they are understood in our day and age
- Embrace the message
- Become aware of the connection between the O.T. and the Gospel
- Study the New Testament reading in relationship to what was read last week as well as what will be read next Sunday

Diocesan Requirements for the Ministry of Lector

1. A candidate for Lector must be fully initiated into the Church, in current good standing in the Church and a registered parishioner of a parish.
2. The minimum age for the commissioning as a Lector is usually high school age (around 16).
3. Each candidate must participate in a preparation process offered by the parish, cluster of parishes, vicariate or the Worship Office.
4. The preparation process and on-going formation process should include but is not limited to the following areas:

What is the Church?

What is Liturgy?

Understanding the role of Sacred Scripture in the Mass

The Liturgy of the Word

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

The role of the Lector

5. No one should exercise more than one ministry at the same Eucharistic liturgy.
6. If the pastor/parish life coordinator so chooses, a certificate from the Diocese may be issued to the individual.
7. The lector should be commissioned at Mass using the Book of Blessings.
8. Since Lectors are ministers of the Church, the requirements apply to **all** lectors, including weekday Masses, School Masses, Weddings, Funerals and other liturgies of the Church.

- When finished proclaiming the second reading, close the Lectionary and move it away from the top of the ambo according to your worship space so that the one doing the intercessions does not place his or her script on top of the Lectionary.
- At the end of Mass, the Lectors do not join the recessional procession out of church. They have proclaimed the Word and now all the people carry the Word out to others.
- The Deacon is the ordinary for the Prayer of the Faithful. However, others, including the lector or cantor may lead them as well, but only one person is to proclaim all the intercessions.

Responsibilities of the Lector

During the Liturgy

- If the Church has a Book of the Gospels, it is carried by the deacon in the Entrance Procession. If there is no deacon, then the lector carries the book of the Gospels. The Book of the Gospels is placed on the altar, laying flat, **after** the altar has been revered at the foot of the sanctuary. (GIRM #122)
- When it is time for the first reading, pause long enough for people to settle into their places and prepare to listen to the Word. When the assembly has had the time to prepare, stand and move to the ambo. **Never move during a prayer at any time during the Mass.**
- As you approach the ambo, make a profound bow to the altar as the altar is a symbol of Christ during Mass. (If the Bishop is present, after bowing to the altar, nod toward the bishop to recognize his authority.)
- If...the tabernacle...is present in the sanctuary, the priest, the deacon, and the other ministers genuflect when they approach the altar and depart from it (at the beginning and end of Mass) **but not** during the celebration of the Mass itself. (GIRM #274)
- Establish eye contact with the assembly.
- Two lectors should participate in every Sunday Mass and Solemnity; one for the first reading and another for the second.
- When you have completed the reading, pause momentarily— then, look up to the people and end with “The Word of the Lord.”
- Remain at the ambo for a very brief moment of silence. The Lectionary should be removed from the ambo or put underneath on a shelf so the cantor, if you have one, does not place his/her music on the Lectionary.
- Once again on the main floor of the worship space, the lector makes a profound bow to the altar before turning away and going to his or her place.
- Once the Cantor has finished with the Psalm, and is back in his/her place, the second reader proceeds to the ambo making a bow to the altar.

Reverence

From the beginning of the Church, Christians have always had a reverent devotion for the Lord's presence in the Eucharistic species of bread and wine. The Lord's presence in His Word deserves the same respect. In the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* the Council Fathers of Vatican II described the multiple ways Christ is present to us:

Christ is always present in his Church, especially in its liturgical celebrations. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass not only in the person of his minister, “the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross,” but especially under the Eucharistic elements. By his power he is present in the sacraments, so that when a man baptizes it is really Christ himself who baptizes. He is present in the word, since it is he himself who speaks when the Holy Scriptures are read in the Church. He is present, lastly, when the Church prays and sings, for he promised.- “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them”
(Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, # 7)

As a lector, you are being commissioned to help your community grow in reverence for God's Word. You will demonstrate that reverence by the way you carry and/or handle the Lectionary and the Book of the Gospels for they are symbols of God's presence as well as how seriously you take your responsibility to be prepared to read the Scriptures.

Responsibilities of the Lector

Preparation before the Liturgy

1. Pray the Scriptures at least throughout the week prior to proclaiming them.
2. Read the Scripture background of the text so you will understand the context of the passage you will be proclaiming.
3. Be sure you have the correct pronunciation of the words in the passage you will proclaim. Practice audibly until you can speak them naturally.
4. Practice reading aloud. When possible, have someone listen to you.
5. Attend training sessions offered by the parish and/or the Diocese.
6. Come prepared to read even if it is not your assigned day.
7. Follow your parishes guidelines for appropriate attire for Liturgical ministers.
8. Develop a sense of dignified, reverent ritual movement since you will be taking part in the processions.
9. Be familiar with Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest in case of an emergency and SCAP must be used.

Responsibilities of the Lector

Immediately Before the Liturgy Begins

1. Arrive ahead of time as a courtesy to other liturgical ministers and a sign of respect for the ministry you are about to perform for the community.
2. Familiarize yourself with and find the pages in the Lectionary you will be using.
3. If you are ministering on a day when there is a choice of readings be sure to check with the **celebrant-presider as to his choice**.
4. Take time for mental and spiritual preparation.
5. Check with the presider and other liturgical ministers, including musicians, for any changes or special instructions for this liturgy.
6. **The Lectionary is placed on the ambo before the celebration begins. It is never carried in the Entrance Procession.**
7. Check to see that the microphone is operating properly.