



ST. CHARLES GARNIER PARISH

# PROCLAIMERS OF THE WORD

*A manual for readers  
and commentators*



**May the Lord be in our heart,  
on our mind, and on our lips,  
that we may worthily  
proclaim his Word.**



# PROCLAIMERS OF THE WORD

## a manual for readers and commentators

*Adapted for St. Charles Garnier from the  
Guidelines for Proclaimers of the Word,  
Diocese of Nelson Liturgical Committee.*

"He is present in His Word, since it is He Himself who speaks when the Holy Scriptures are read in the Church." (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, n. 7)"

"...in the sacred books the Father who is in heaven meets His children with great love and speaks with them; and the force and power in the word of God is so great that it remains the support and energy of the Church, the strength of faith for her sons and daughters, the food of the soul, the pure and perennial source of spiritual life." (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, n.21)

With these words of Vatican II the need for conscientious preparation for our ministry is obvious. Moreover, for many (perhaps most) of our parishioners the readings of the liturgy are their **only** exposure to the sacred scriptures making this moment of ministry even more precious. As conduits of the Word, we bear a serious obligation to deliver this "divine revelation", placed in our trust, to the best of our abilities. Preparation will be key to the fruitfulness of our ministry.

### PREPARATION AT HOME

1. Check your schedule so you know well ahead of time when it is your turn to proclaim. **If you can't keep the schedule, ensure that another person will take your place.** Allow your replacements as much notice as possible so that they may adequately prepare the readings.
2. Pray for guidance. Prayerful preparation will let the Spirit guide the readers' understanding of God's Word. Locate the Sunday's liturgy in your missal. *Each member of this ministry is provided with a complimentary copy. If you have not received one they are available through the Parish office.*
3. Use the Opening Prayer of the liturgy to center your thoughts and focus your attention on the task at hand.
4. Review the readings silently for comprehension. Begin with the Gospel to determine the theme.
5. Now read the first reading, usually taken from the Old Testament. Unlike the second reading, the first tends to be thematically linked with the gospel. Can you discern a connection between these two readings?

6. Read the psalm (also taken from the Old Testament). Remember, the Psalter is an ancient hymnal, a collection of religious poetry of various kinds: praise and worship of God; prayers of help; pleas for forgiveness; songs of joy and thanksgiving; as well as petitions for the punishment of one's enemies. The psalm must be read accordingly.
7. Locate each of the readings in a bible and read several of the verses immediately preceding and following the liturgy passages to place each reading in its scriptural context. *The use of a bible commentary will be helpful in obtaining a better understanding of the content of the scripture passage.* Use a dictionary to check the meaning or pronunciation of words with which you are unfamiliar.
8. Read the text(s) you will be proclaiming aloud, several times, until you feel absolutely comfortable with the reading. **Remember to use the punctuation of the passage to determine pauses, stops, and inflections.** According to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal the readings "are to be delivered in a loud and clear voice, whether by the priest or deacon or by the lector, or by all, the tone of voice should correspond to the genre of the text, that is, accordingly as it is a reading, a prayer, an instruction, an acclamation, or a liturgical song; the tone should also be suited to the form of celebration and to the solemnity of the gathering" (GIRM 38). To be able to read technically well is important. However, the scriptures "communicate not only ideas and content, but also attitudes, emotional reactions and so forth" and this too must be communicated (JBC, n 67, p 511) .

*NOTE: Commentators should also prepare the readings. In the event that an absent reader has not arranged for a substitute the commentator will assume the reader's role and the readings will have been appropriately prepared.*

#### **PREPARATION AT THE CHURCH**

1. **Be at the Church well ahead of time.** This is of particular importance for the commentator as it will be your first glimpse at the introduction for the liturgy and the prayers of the faithful.
2. Check for any last minute changes in the liturgy and touch base with your counterpart.
3. Spend a few moments in quiet reflection and pray that all members of the liturgical team may carry out their ministry in a manner worthy of the celebration.

### **VESTURE (What to wear)**

All ministers taking part in the Liturgy wear appropriate clothing, keeping in mind that the manner of dress should show the dignity of the ministry but not attract attention. The focus must be on the Word proclaimed, not on the person proclaiming. Our public ministry is not the appropriate forum for personal statements whether of fashion or piety.

- *Strive for personal transparency.*

### **ENTRANCE RITES**

The Commentator introduces the theme of the liturgy and invites the community to rise and greet the ministers of the celebration. This initiates a procession which begins at the sacristy and terminates at the foot of the altar. In the procession, the reader carries the lectionary in a slightly elevated position visible to the assembly. Upon arriving at the foot of the altar the reader takes up a position in front of the ambo, facing the sanctuary, and waits for the presider to arrive.

### **ORDER OF PROCESSION:**

1. Cross bearer
2. Altar servers
3. Book bearer
4. Eucharistic Ministers
5. Presider

### **VENERATION AT THE ALTAR (Genuflecting or bowing)**

The manner of veneration is less important than the unity displayed by the ministers at this time. Not everyone can genuflect so it is recommended that the ministers bow in veneration.

- *Rule of Thumb: if you are carrying a sacramental (lectionary, cross, chalice, etc.) bow rather than genuflect. Bowing is an equally reverent gesture.*

### **ENTHRONING THE LECTIONARY**

**After bowing, move to the ambo and enthrone the book. Don't wait for Father to precede you.**

**Whenever approaching the ambo, do not cut between the altar and the ambo. Approach it from the right (rail) side.**

The reader then returns to his /her seat in the assembly. It is a truer sign of lay participation in the liturgy if the reader sits with his/her family and friends coming up to the ambo at the necessary time.

## **PROCLAIMING THE WORD**

After the opening prayer and when the assembly is seated, the reader goes to the ambo in a dignified and unhurried manner. **Readers and commentators do not bow when approaching the sanctuary to read.** Once at the ambo the reader pauses, makes eye contact with the assembly and introduces the reading (e.g., "A reading from the letter of Paul to the Galatians",) pauses again, then proclaims the reading. **Do not** read the rubrics or chapter and verse citations, nor introduce the readings as the first or second.

1. ***Apart from the veneration we give the altar during the procession we do not bow (to the altar, ambo, book, celebrant, etc.) again until the recession.***
2. *Technically, the only time a minister would bow would be upon crossing in front of the altar on the way to the ambo. For the sake of simplicity we ask that the reader/commentator sit on the ambo side of the church, at least for the duration of the readings, and near the front to reduce travel time and the distraction it can cause.*
3. *Use the pause before the introduction to adjust the microphone and collect your thoughts. Use the pause after the introduction to reorient your eyes to the page and review the first line of the reading.*
4. *Microphones do not mean that we should speak softer or softly. **We should read more loudly than normal** and let the microphones amplify even that. Some Lectors currently read too softly and are not easily heard in parts of the church. Do not stand too close to the microphone or else you'll "pop your p's"; leave about 6 inches. Adjust the angle of the microphone so that you are speaking directly into it. There is no point in being Lectors if we are not reading clearly, slowly and loudly enough so that people can understand the reading. **Read to the folks in the back pew.***

Between the readings there should be a moment of "sacred silence." If the same person is proclaiming two consecutive readings he/she should, after completing the first, (step back from the ambo,) bow his/her head and lead the assembly in a meditative silence. The next reader should not approach the ambo until the previous reader is seated. These moments of "sacred silence" are the only opportunities during the Mass that the assembly will have to quietly reflect upon the Word of God proclaimed.

- *Remember: the liturgy must flow but not be rushed.*
- *After saying "The Word of the Lord", lectors should pause before leaving the ambo.*

## **RESPONSORIAL PSALM**

The psalm response introduces the psalm and needs no introduction itself. Before speaking, the proclaimer of the psalm gains the attention of the assembly by moving to the ambo and making eye contact with the assembly.

Proclaim the response loudly, clearly and slowly while maintaining eye contact with the assembly.

At the end of each stanza the proclaimer should look up from the text to the assembly (as a cue for their response.)

If the psalm is to be sung, the reader should return to his/her place in the assembly and join the congregation in the recitation of the antiphon.

- *There is a non verbal dimension to proclamation; the assembly is not only attentive to the words read but also the tones, gestures, and silences. Remember, the assembly may contain children who cannot appreciate the significance of the words spoken. However the sacredness of the moment can still be conveyed.*
- ***Under no circumstances should the ribbon be moved from its position marking the first reading. A misplaced ribbon may confuse the lector of the following mass. When the book is returned to the sacristy replace it on the counter and open it to the first reading. If the ribbon has been moved unconsciously, it can be corrected.***

### **PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL**

It is vital that the commentator, prior to the Liturgy, review the petitions carefully making special notation of any names mentioned. If you are uncertain of a particular pronunciation ASK. If a petition doesn't make sense to you read it to someone else for their opinion; "typos" happen and there maybe a mistake in the wording of the petition. At any rate, it will be hard to communicate to the assembly something that you yourself do not understand!

Prayers of the Faithful are read from the ambo. **Father has asked that commentators be at the ambo by the end of his *introduction* to the prayers of the Faithful. Start moving at the end of the Apostles Creed; earlier if you are sitting near the back. Remember our movements should be unrushed and reverent, so give yourself time or sit nearer the ambo.** The Prayers of the Faithful are read in an unhurried and deliberate manner, with a short pause after the acclamation from the assembly. The acclamation response should not be introduced if it is the usual response to the prayers (i.e.: Lord hear our prayer).

If a petition contains a litany of names the commentator should pause momentarily after each name is announced.

At the conclusion of each petition the commentator should make eye contact with the assembly and say "We pray to the Lord."

On concluding the prayers of the faithful the commentator **remains at the ambo until the "prayer for vocations" is completed**, then returns to his/her seat in the assembly.

## **RECESSION**

The reader again carries the book out in procession. (Take your cues from the presider.)

The lectionary should be returned to the sanctuary along with the text of the prayers of the faithful.

## **IN SUMMARY:**

1. Prepare and rehearse the readings.
2. Read loudly and clearly.
3. Don't rush.
4. Your tone should mirror the tone of the text. Read with feeling.
5. Strive for personal transparency, a mere conduit for the Word.

6. Read with love,

*"for love covers a multitude of mistakes.*

*Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God,*

*serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.*

*Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God;*

*whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies,*

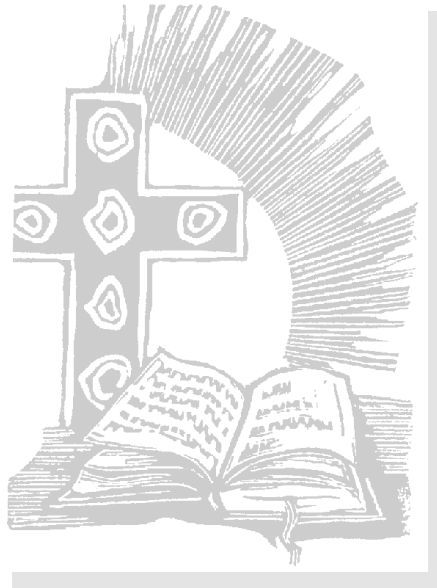
*so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ."*

*(1 Peter: 4:8b, 10-11)*



**PRAYER OF A MINISTER OF THE WORD**  
*From the lectors of Our Lady, Star of the Sea Parish, Singapore*

Lord, invest me with your power  
as I prepare to proclaim the marvel of your message  
I have prepared my reading,  
I have tried to take within me  
the meaning of what I am about to proclaim.  
Help me to proclaim, not just with my lips,  
but with my whole heart and soul.  
Lord, make me a hollow reed  
so that your voice will be heard by all who hear me.  
Free me of excessive concern over my performance.  
Convert my feeling of nervousness and  
turn all my apprehension into an energy  
for proclaiming your word with power and authority.  
May your Spirit live in me and  
fill the holy word that I proclaim.



**DEFINITIONS you may find helpful.**

**Ambo** is the liturgical name for the lectern, also known as the altar/table of the Word.

**Assembly** refers to the laity gathered for Mass.

**Bible Commentary** is a book written by scholars to let you know what the reading you are reading actually means. Sounds unnecessary but when you realize that what we read on Sunday is a copy of a translation which was a copy of a translation (no, that's not a typo) separated from us by hundreds of years and at least two cultures you see the need for clarification of even the most obvious statements. Throw in the mind and writing style of St. Paul and things can really become enigmatic. Believe me, using a commentary is time well spent.

**Commentator** is the person reading the non-biblical texts of the Liturgy of the Word (i.e.: the introduction of the liturgy and the prayers of the faithful.)

**Enthroned** think 'put'.

**Lector** is church speak for the reader.

**Lectionary** refers to the official book in which the readings of the Mass are contained. It is the ultimate of tackiness to read the readings at the ambo from your missalette or a loose-leaf sheet. Technically it is also bad form to carry the Lectionary in procession as that dignity is reserved for the 'Book of the Gospels' (which is actually a lectionary containing only the gospel readings.) However, as Canada does not yet have an authoritative Book of the Gospels, we carry the Lectionary in procession.

**Liturgy** for our purposes is the Mass.

**Personal Transparency** translates as 'hollow reed' or me without the 'statements'.

**Proclaim** means 'read with attitude'.

**Rubrics** are the instructions/directions often accompanying the reading but italicized or printed in red. They are for your eyes only, not for sharing with the assembly.

**Sanctuary** is the part of the church in which the altar, ambo and presider's chair are situated.

**NOTES:**



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