



Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church

LECTOR HANDBOOK

Congratulations, you have accepted the ministry that proclaims the word of God to the congregation of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. Lectors are well prepared in advance by knowing all the readings for the celebration of that day's mass and have a special place in their hearts for the readings they will proclaim.

Preparation:

1st check your assignments. Schedules are generated every couple of months or so. Copies of the schedule are placed in the vestibule of the church or if you supply your email address, in your email mailbox.

All Lectors are responsible for fulfilling their assignments or finding someone to substitute. A new roster of Lectors is distributed at least once a year. Also please give serious consideration to others when called on to substitute or receiving a request for a change. Remember, you will probably require someone to substitute for you one day. Help others as you wish others to help you.

Your next responsibility is preparation of your readings for Mass before coming to church. Take advantage of the following when preparing your readings:

- ❖ Read through the selected reading in the Lector Workbook. The notes in the workbook often provide helpful insights and explanations of the readings. The pronunciation guide can assist with difficult words, names and places.
- ❖ Take advantage of the Lector Preparation web site <http://www.lectorprep.org/>. It is another resource which contains notes, historical and theological information on the readings.
- ❖ Spend some time reflecting on or praying about the reading.
- ❖ Use your bible. Read the passages that proceeds and follows the parts that were extracted for the Mass.
- ❖ Practice reading the scripture passage out loud several times until you are very comfortable with it.

Arrival for Mass:

Please arrive for Mass at least 15 minutes ahead of time, dressed appropriately to reflect the dignity of the service you are about to perform.

Sign in on the schedule at the back of church.

If you are not assigned, check the schedule as well and make sure the assigned Lector is present. If the assigned Lector is not present, please do not hesitate to meet the celebrant and volunteer.

After signing in, head to the vestry and check the Lectionary to ensure that you have prepared for the correct readings. Sometimes other readings may be substituted, especially when a feast day moved to Sunday, i.e. feast for Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, or one makes a mistake and prepares for the wrong week. Read over the

Prayer of the Faithful. If unsure of the pronunciation of any names for mass dedications or decesses, please check with the celebrant. Everyone deserves to have their names pronounced correctly.

In the time you have left, check the pulpit. There should be an open copy of the Lectionary, a binder that contains the Prayer of the Faithful and the announcements as well as music and notes for the Cantor. Also check the microphone and make sure it is adjusted properly for your height and that it is turned on.

5 minutes before the Mass begins, proceed to the vestibule with the Book of the Gospels. If a deacon is assigned, the deacon will carry the Book of the Gospels.

Procession:

The line-up for the procession is as follows:

- ❖ Altar Server with the cross
- ❖ 2 Altar Servers (if present)
- ❖ Lector (if carrying the Book of the Gospels, then raise the Book over head with the face of the Book facing forward during the procession. If the Lector feels more comfortable, he/she may hold the Book in front of them.)
- ❖ Deacon
- ❖ Priest

The procession proceeds up the aisle as the opening hymn begins. (Please hold the Book of the Gospels with both hands and walk slowly and reverently.) Sing the processional hymn if you know it. When the procession reaches the altar, the Lector/Deacon places the Book of the Gospels on the altar at the center. The Lector then takes a position towards the left center of the altar leaving an open space for the Priest. When the Priest joins the group at the center of the altar, bow to the altar with the others and proceed to a seat behind the pulpit.

Readings:

After the Priest concludes the opening prayer and is seated, slowly make your way to the pulpit. Take a moment and allow everyone in the congregation to be seated and allow late-comers to be seated. (Take note here that at a children's mass, the Priest may call the children to the center of the nave and send them off to study the Word of God. This is normally at the 10:00 Mass during the school year. Please wait until the children have left the upper church before proclaiming the Word of God.)

You are now ready to proclaim the 1st reading. Begin with "A reading from the ...". Read slowly; but, not too slow. At the conclusion of the reading, pause for about 5 seconds, look out to the congregation and proclaim "The Word of the Lord." Say this clearly and slowly. Wait until the congregation responds "Thanks be to God." At this point you will do one of the following:

1. At all Masses except the 7:30, step down from the pulpit, allow the cantor to take their place for the Responsorial Psalm and take your seat.
2. At 7:30 Mass, read the Responsorial Psalm. 1st read the response, then hold up your hand towards the congregation as a signal for them to repeat the response, then alternate between reading a verse of the psalm and allowing the congregation to respond.

When the Responsorial Psalm is completed, allow the Cantor to return to his/her station (if there is a Cantor). Approach the pulpit again and proceed with the 2nd reading. Again begin with “A reading from ...”. Just as with the completion of the 1st reading, when the 2nd reading is completed, pause for about 5 seconds and proclaim “The Word of the Lord” Wait for the congregation to respond “Thanks be to God.” At this point, step down from the pulpit and stand at your seat, ready for the reading of the Gospel. DO NOT READ THE ALLELUIA! This is a prayer that is intended to be sung and not read. This applies to the 7:30 Mass or any Mass where music is not available.

Prayer of the Faithful:

The Prayer of the Faithful is read by the Deacon, if present, or the Lector if there is no Deacon assigned.

The Prayer of the Faithful is read after the completion of the creed and after the Priest reads the opening prayer & response to each petition. If there is a deacon assigned, allow the deacon to read the petitions. If no deacon assigned, proceed to the pulpit, remove the binder that contains the petitions and begin reading the petitions after the priest completes the beginning prayer. (Take note that there will be times when the creed is not recited, i.e. when renewing baptismal vows.) Read the petitions slowly and clearly. At the conclusion of each petition (usually “We pray to the Lord”), the congregation responds “Lord Hear Our Prayer” or whatever has been written for the response.

At the conclusion of the petitions, the Priest will say a closing prayer. Stay at the pulpit and wait for everyone to take their seat. You may now read the announcements. When you have completed with the announcements, leave the pulpit and take your seat.

Liturgy of the Eucharist:

Keep an eye on the Altar Servers. If they are short-handed, please assist the Altar Servers at the presentation of the gifts. Accept the basket with the collection and place it at the foot of the Altar.

Take your seat again. Stand for the Preface and remain standing through the Consecration and the Lord’s Prayer. If you can kneel, you may kneel during the Consecration. If a Deacon is present, take his lead. Do not feel uncomfortable to remain standing if you wish.

At the “Sign of Peace”, exchange a sign with the Priest, Deacon, Altar Servers and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion as they come up. Join them at the end of the line at the foot of the altar. Do not fill in for an EMHC unless asked. When you receive Communion, you may take your seat.

Recessional:

Stand with the Priest as he says the closing prayer and administers the final blessing. Most Priests will then proceed back up the altar to kiss the altar. Some do not. Watch this. When the Priest either comes down from the altar or moves to the foot of the altar, take up a position to his left, bow when he bows and process out with the priest in the same order that you processed in. Leave the Book of the Gospels at the altar.

Once you are back in the vestibule, allow the congregation to exit the church. You may then go back to the sanctuary and setup for the next Mass. Place the Lectionary back on the stand and open it to the beginning of the day’s readings, bring the Book of the Gospels back to the vestry.

You are now finished for the day.

7:30 Mass

At 7:30 Mass there are a few exceptions.

1. You do not process up from the back of church. There is no cantor; therefore, you get to greet the congregation as Mass opens.
2. Report to the sacristy, check the binder and review the opening greeting.
3. Take your normal seat and wait for the lights at the side of the sanctuary to turn on.
4. When the lights are lit, proceed up the pulpit, read the welcome of the congregation and announce the priest. Read the opening prayer.
5. Leave the pulpit and take a position at your seat.
6. You read the Responsorial Psalm.
7. **Do not read the Alleluia.**

Holy Week

During Holy Week, there is the reading of the Passion. Normally 2 Lectors will be assigned for the reading of the Passion. This starts with Passion Sunday (a.k.a. Palm Sunday).

When there are 2 Lectors assigned, 1 reads the 1st reading and the Prayer of the Faithful and announcements. The 1st Lector normally reads the passion, taking the parts identified as people and congregation.

The 2nd Lector, reads the 2nd reading and takes the part of the narrator when reading the Passion. Who is Lector 1 and Lector 2 is normally worked out before the Mass.

When reading the Passion, the Priest takes the Christ part.

Holy Saturday (Easter Vigil Service)

The Vigil Service there can be as many as 7 readings. For this reason, there may be 2 or 3 Lectors assigned.

Normally there is a rehearsal during the day where reading assignments are worked out. Prepare for all 7 and find out during rehearsal which ones are needed.

There is also 1 reading for the Mass and the Prayer of the Faithful and the announcements. Again this is worked out during rehearsal.

Multiple Ministries

There are some individuals who have been commissioned in multiple ministries. If you are one, please do everything possible to only serve one ministry during your Mass assignment. If EMHC's are short handed, allow another EMHC from the congregation to come up and fulfill the ministry for Mass. Fill in as an EMHC only if asked or no one comes up.

If no Altar Servers show for Mass, do your best to assist the Priest. If there is only 1 Altar Server present, then assist at the Offertory procession.

Final Notes

It cannot be emphasized enough that preparation before Mass is a must. It is true that everyone gets nervous reading before people. The best way to gain confidence is to be prepared. Take the week before Mass to review the readings. Study them and the notes in the workbook. Read the readings out loud. Have someone listen to you as you read, especially during the early months of your ministry.

Also do not forget a prayer for inspiration. Take the time to meditate on the readings and pray that God will bless you with a good voice to properly proclaim his word. 2 examples are below to help get you started.

Prayer 1:

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Page 4 of 9

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“Come Holy Spirit, into my mind and my heart as I read these Sacred Scriptures. Inspire me with your grace to proclaim this Living Word with sincerity and reverence. Help me to focus on the Word and discern its meaning so that I can communicate it clearly and enthusiastically. Each time I approach the Pulpit, remind me that I am on holy ground and that the Ministry of proclaiming the Scriptures is a sacred trust. I place all my trust in you, that through your power, the people of God will hear and accept the Word into their hearts.”

Prayer 2:

*“The Lord has given me a well-trained tongue,
that I may know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them.”*

Thank you for your service.

Proclaiming Tips ⁽¹⁾

Mindset

In order to put yourself in the perfect frame of mind, you should arrive at the church early and leave the entire outside world behind you. Your cares, your problems, aspirations, anxieties, plans, hobbies, hopes, and what's for dinner - all must stay outside. Find a quiet spot and sit or kneel and pray to the Lord whatever is in your heart. You might ask that He make you a worthy vessel for proclaiming His message and that His people hear His voice and not yours. Ask the Holy Spirit to be with you, that His flame be bright in your heart as you joyfully proclaim His Word.

Body Language

The moment you step forward you are sending signals to your listeners. Are you reverent, dignified and sincere or hurried and anxious or cavalier? These signals come from how you carry yourself and what you wear.

You should adopt a good posture, if physically able to do so, and walk with hands folded or kept naturally at your side. Walk at a reverent pace, slower than usual. Do not bounce, swagger or sashay and above all, do not run or appear hurried. One can usually tell how a reading will go based on the lector's approach to the ambo (lectern). Those who race to the ambo will generally race through their reading. On the other hand, those who approach in a focused, deliberate manner will also proclaim that way.

Posture

Upon reaching the pulpit stand squarely behind it. Stand on two feet, not one. Place your hands lightly on the lectionary or ambo or you may hold the book if you feel comfortable doing so. Most lectors prefer to keep the lectionary on the ambo when proclaiming but it makes a lovely presentation when held. It is as if you are caressing and embracing God's Word just as He caresses and embraces us continually throughout scripture.

Again, always strive to appear dignified, not nervous or casual. Do not put your hands anywhere other than on the lectionary or ambo or comfortably at your sides. Do not put your hands in your pockets, on your hips, behind your back or in folded arms. These gestures are cavalier, uninviting and distracting. Above all, do not use your hands at any point during the reading. It is theatrical, inappropriate and will annoy your listeners.

Announcement Line

The lead-in or announcement line tells the listeners from whom or from where the reading comes, i.e. the prophet Isaiah or the Book of Psalms. Proclaim the announcement line loudly and clearly. You will get the assembly's attention if you start out in a positive, determined manner. Also, make sure your mind is one step ahead of your mouth. Flub the announcement line and you're likely to mentally kick yourself throughout the rest of the reading. Why? Because quite often as goes the beginning, so goes the rest of the reading.

And always pause for a few healthy seconds after the line is read. This will give the assembly a chance to place the prophet, era or Biblical location in their minds and ready them to actively listen to the passage.

Eye Contact

You may be doing everything else right - proper pace, effective pausing, speaking in a clear, engaging manner and so on, but if you do not look at your listeners, you will not connect with them. Anyone can stick his nose in a book and read, knees knocking together or not, but only those with the ability to look their assembly right in the eye will exude confidence and win credibility for the message they so urgently wish to embed.

Now let's consider some of the best times to look directly at your assembly:

- when you first get to the ambo
- when you proclaim the announcement line
- at the end of a sentence
- during key words or phrases
- when changing gears (e.g. changes in mood, time, place, character, relationship, etc.)
- just before the closing line (i.e. "The Word of the Lord" or "The Gospel of the Lord")
- during and after the closing line.

Pronunciation

There are basic pronunciation guides available that phonetically spell out the pronunciations of the Biblical names of people and places. For instance, Barrabus may be listed as buh-RAB-us or Capernaum as kuh-PER-num. If your parish does not have a pronunciation guide, contact Liturgy Training Publications in Chicago, IL.

Also, the lector workbook provides guidelines for pronunciation for many, though not all, historical names and places in the readings. Please consult at least one of these sources as you prepare your reading and practice so you feel comfortable with the pronunciation. The congregation will appreciate your smooth handling of difficult words. On the other hand, lack of preparation is never as obvious as the lector who comes to a difficult word, stops and then stumbles through it. This can be easily avoided with careful attention to detail in advance and practice!

Enunciation

Enunciation is different from pronunciation. The latter involves using the tongue, lips and teeth to phonetically make the correct sounds of a word. Enunciation means that the speaker clearly articulates all the sounds that make up the word. For instance, a common mistake in enunciation is to drop the "d" or "t" sound from the end of a word. This is a dangerous practice in proclaiming because very often, it is precisely the inclusion of the "d" or "t" that separates one word from another. For instance, "mend" has a totally different meaning than "men". Likewise "sent" without a clearly enunciated "t" might be interpreted by listeners as "sin".

Rate

What do you think are the two biggest complaints about lectors' performance? You probably guessed at least one of them if not both. One is rate and the other is volume, i.e. "They read too fast" and "I can't hear them."

Rate refers to how quickly or slowly one speaks. (It does not mean how much time one takes between thoughts or phrases; that's pausing.)

The best rate for a particular passage depends on the content of the reading but as a general rule, lectors should proclaim at one-half their normal speaking voice. That's right, one-half.

Slowing down accomplishes several things. First of all, people do not listen as fast as you may speak. People need time to digest what you are saying to them. Unless you slow down, they may not be able to keep up and will simply tune out. At that point, you've lost them and all that practice and preparation would have been for naught.

Secondly, slowing down helps achieve clearer pronunciation and enunciation.

Very importantly, slowing down brings an added dimension of power to the reading. Try it and see the difference for yourself.

Volume

The other of the two most common criticisms that listeners have of lectors is they cannot be heard. (The other one is reading too fast.) Sometimes, the problem is equipment-related but more often than not, it has to do with the lector's ability to project, voice quality and/or their use of the microphone.

Not all lectors or aspiring proclaimers have the ability to create effective volume. Some have small or naturally soft voices; others do not breathe correctly and still others may not realize that the volume they hear in their own voice at the ambo is not nearly as loud beyond the first few pews as they may think.

In addition, elements throughout the worship space will absorb sound from carpeting to winter coats.

The key to projecting effectively is

1. proper breathing
2. a natural gift of volume
3. correct microphone usage
4. confidence.

Microphone Usage

It is crucial to find just the right spot or zone that will enable you to maximize your volume without creating explosive or popping sounds. These distracting and unwelcome noises occur most often on "p" and "t" sounds and are created by speaking too closely to the head of the microphone. The rush of air that comes from your mouth on these consonants (and others as well) generates a strong force of air that is magnified unpleasantly through the sensitive head of the mike.

This can be easily avoided by positioning the microphone head a little above your mouth (nose level) or a little below (chin level) so the rush of air goes above or below the head. You can also stand just to the right or left of the head or stand a little back but not too far or your voice may fade out.

Chin level is preferred to nose level because the microphone may block the view of your face and facial expressions are an important component of proclaiming, but ultimately, you have to go with the mike position that best projects your voice.

Pausing

Silence is golden, at least in the right spots, and the proper use of pausing is essential to effective proclaiming. This is the one tool that eludes many a lector.

Let's consider some obvious places to use the pause:

- to provide a segue when the reading is changing direction
- to allow listeners to absorb an important point
- to provide space between multiple thoughts in the same sentence
- to take a breath
- before and after quotes to offset the quote from the character or narrator
- after the announcement line "A Reading from."
- before the closing line, "The Word of the Lord"

Please keep in mind that pauses used too frequently within a sentence or paragraph will create a choppy effect. Strive for smoothness and fluidity. Pauses that interrupt a phrase or grouping of words in the wrong places can change the meaning or intended feeling. Pauses that are too long or too frequent can kill the pace of the reading and create drag.

Coaching and practice will help you recognize and overcome these challenges.

(1) Proclaiming Tips: Proclaiming Tips may be found at web site:
<http://www.greatlectors.com/proclaimingt看.html>