

## **Lectors of Sacred Scripture Resurrection Parish**

Lectors are members of the community who feel called to be more involved in the celebration of Mass by sharing the Word of the Lord. The lector is only a messenger of the Word of God. He or she does not read stories, but rather proclaims the mystery of salvation. The proclamation of the Scripture at Mass is most important because many people only hear the word of God in the formal setting of Mass. Their only regular exposure to Scripture is from the lector and the priest.

*“When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his word, proclaims the Gospel. Therefore, the readings from the Word of God are to be listened to reverently by everyone, for they are an element of the greatest importance in the Liturgy. Although in the readings from Sacred Scripture the Word of God is addressed to all people of whatever era and is understandable to them, a fuller understanding and a greater efficaciousness of the word is nevertheless fostered by a living commentary on the word, that is, by the Homily, as part of the liturgical action.” (GIRM no. 29)*

**Qualifications of Lectors:** We ask that candidates be

- at least 18 years of age or if younger completed the Sacrament of Confirmation
- a registered member of the Parish
- an individual who regularly attends Mass
- completed the Sacrament of Confirmation
- have a desire to be more involved in the celebration of the Holy Mass
- complete a brief training with the pastor or his designee
- be able to serve at least one Mass each month
- be installed for service by the pastor

### **Procedures for Lectors of Sacred Scripture at Resurrection Parish**

#### **Before Mass:**

Since lector assignments are scheduled on a monthly basis, please take time prior to your scheduled service to familiarize yourself with the scripture readings. Read them aloud in practice because you will be communicating through your voice the Word of God. You may use a Lectors workbook, a missal or a website to find the readings.

Please remember to dress in a manner which portrays the deep respect of the Word of the Lord. A Lectors attire should never attract attention nor be a distraction.

Please arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the Mass for some prayerful preparation time before Mass. Lectors are encouraged to check the Lectionary and the Prayers of the Faithful at the ambo to make sure they are correct for the scheduled Mass.

#### **During Mass:**

The lector will be part of the procession. The processional members meet in the sacristy before Mass then walk to the entrance of the church. They process behind the servers (if available), but in front of

the priest. The priest may ask the lector to carry the Book of Gospels in the procession if no deacon is present.

The procession moves up the center aisle to the altar. Each individual moves to their area in the sanctuary, makes a profound bow and remains standing.

Following the opening prayer, the lector gives a bow toward the altar then moves to the ambo to begin the Liturgy of the Word.

**First Reading:** It is not necessary to say, "Our first reading is" or to read any other introduction unless instructed to do so by the priest. Rather announce reading itself such as "A reading from the book of Genesis".

The lector proclaims the first reading ending with "The Word of the Lord. There is a brief pause between the last word of scripture and the ending "the Word of the Lord."

The lector should pause for a moment to allow the faithful to reflect on God's word that was just proclaimed. There is no need to announce, "We pause to reflect..."

**The Responsorial Psalm:** If the choir/cantor is singing the responsorial, the lector may be seated.

If the choir is not singing the responsorial, the lector takes on this duty. At the conclusion of the responsorial psalm, the lector should pause briefly to allow the faithful to reflect on the message.

**Second Reading:** The lector next begins the second reading. It is not necessary to say, "Our second reading is", rather announce the reading itself: "A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Romans"

The lector proclaims the second reading. There is a brief pause between the last word of scripture and the ending "The Word of the Lord."

**Gospel Acclamation:** The lector returns to stand by their chair to listen to the Gospel proclamation if sung by the choir/cantor. Make sure to tuck the Lectionary on the shelf so that the priest may place the Book of Gospels on the Ambo.

If not sung by choir, but the priest leads the people in signing, then the lector must stay at the Ambo to read the verse. The lector may serve as the cantor and can sing/chant the alleluia and accompanying verse if they have the skill. This should be determined before Mass begins when conferring with the priest. After the verse is given, place the lectionary on the shelf and return to stand by your chair.

The "Alleluia" should never be read by the lector it is omitted if it is not sung or chanted.

**General Intercessions/Prayers of the Faithful:** If a deacon is present he will perform this prayer, if not it moves to the lector. At the ending of the Creed, the lector moves to the ambo to read the General Intercessions.

The lector should be facing the priest as the priest gives the introduction. After the priest completes the introduction the lector turns to the congregation to read the Intercessions.

After the last intercession the lector then turns to face the priest as the priest reads the concluding prayer of petition.

The lector may return to sit in the sanctuary for the remainder of the Mass or may return to the pew to sit with family.

**Communion:** The lector and EMHC approach the right of the altar to receive communion as the priest finishes Communion from the chalice. (If the lector is in the pew, they come up for communion as part of the congregation.)

**Conclusion of Mass:** Announcements are made by the priest just before final dismissal; however at times a lector may be given the task of making special announcements. The priest will inform the lector before Mass if they are to help with announcements.

After the priest announces that the Mass has ended, the lector will follow the priest to the foot of the altar. The lector bows at the same time as the priest and servers and then process out in the same order as they entered. (If the lector is in the pew, there is no need to come back up to process out.)

After Mass the lector should either prepare the lectionary and the prayers of the faith book at the ambo for the next Mass and should return the Book of Gospels to the sacristy. If there is not another Mass, all books then should be brought to the sacristy and put away in the cupboards.

### **Miscellaneous Information.**

- Lectors are asked to serve at a weekend Mass (Saturday Vigil or Sunday) at least once each month. The sign-up period for a Mass is generally from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the Month.
- If unable to serve at a scheduled Mass, the Lector must arrange for a substitute.
- Lectors who would like some experience before serving at a weekend Mass are invited to lector at weekday Mass. Contact the priest to arrange this opportunity.
- It is preferred that a Lector only serve as a Lector at the Mass to allow others the opportunity to serve the Lord. However, when other lay helpers are not available a Lector who feels comfortable serving in additional roles at Mass may perform those duties with approval of the priest. Those additional duties could be as
  - Altar Server
  - Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion
  - Usher
- Most people hear the word of God only in the formal setting of Mass. Their only regular exposure to Scripture is from the lips of the lector and the priest. That lays a heavy responsibility on the lector. If the lector sounds prepared, earnest, competent and reverent they help the congregation to take the Scripture's lessons more seriously. A lector brings the printed Word to life. You give voice to God's healing and strengthening Word. The ministry of Lector is such an important office or better still such an awesome task, your external "attitudes" and "appearances" are noted by the community.
- Connection with the assembly is achieved not simply by words, but especially through one's manner of speaking. This in turn is realized through physical attitude, inflection and a sense of dialogue. Make eye contact when possible. Make your proclamation prayer-like.

## Suggestions to help bring out the meaning of the readings:

- Lectors are encouraged to ground their lives in the Word of God. They are encouraged to read the scriptures often (not just when they are scheduled). Prayer based on the Gospels and psalms will help lectors to become more aware of their spiritual responsibility to live what they proclaim and to prepare seriously for reading God's word to his people.
- To put it simply, the readings from scripture have been chosen because there is a spiritual message readily apparent in almost every passage. The lectors goal is to allow the congregation to hear that message.
- The website <http://www.lectorprep.org> has summaries and background on the readings and pronunciation guide that you can use for unfamiliar words.
- Make sure you know the meaning of what you read. Become familiar with the readings to understand the central points made Know points or words of emphasis within the reading. Look up unfamiliar words.
- Examine the phrasing. The readings are written in sense lines which are an aid to good proclamation
- Be conscious that words provide us with ideas and images. When you prepare a reading, form physical details of the situation in your mind and in your heart. This will make the event you are reading more understandable. The more understandable it is to you, the more you know it through feeling and love and the more understandable and loveable it will be to the assembly.
- Learn to control the rate of your speech. Beginners often read too fast. Speak pleasantly slow enough for clarity and to help focus yourself and the congregation but avoid being too boringly slow.
- Vary your rate, tone and pitch and use appropriate pauses.
- Do not drop the last line of the reading. Keep energy up through the very last word.
- Learn to articulate all the sounds in each word you speak, so that you can project your voice.
- Learn to use your diaphragm rather than throat when speaking for greater control and volume.
- Proclaim the readings with strength, confidence and clarity. A good lector allows the community to sense the powerful presence of the living Jesus in Word without focusing too much attention on the lector.
- To read with emphasis does not mean accentuating every word or phrase. A suggestion: give more attention to verbs and then meaningful phrases while being careful not to overemphasize adverbs and adjectives. This expression should never take precedence over the Word. Proclaiming the Scriptures at the Mass is a symbolic of Christ who is present in His Word at Mass.

- Be loud enough to heard in the back rows, but don't overload the microphone
- Remember to pause before you begin to read and then pause after you finish a reading before moving to the next reading or leaving the ambo.
- Good posture is important. Don't Slouch. Stand straight but muscles need to be relaxed. Body language communicates many things without us saying a word. Stand comfortably on both feet that should be firmly planted and slightly apart to achieve a comfortable balance. Avoid shaking your foot or any other fidgeting. Practice reading in a front of a mirror if needed.
- The best participants of the Mass are "transparent". In other words, the Mass is the focus so your actions should only enhance the Mass, not distract from it.
- Dress appropriately so that the Word itself not the reader is placed in the foreground.

### **Catechetical Background (From the USCCB)**

Scripture itself tells us that God's word is "living and active." His Word is not primarily a written text but a Word spoken and proclaimed in the midst of a community of faith. His Word brings forth creation and whenever it is spoken anew it recreates.

It is by His Word that Israel was brought into being and continually called to renew its faithfulness to Him; it is by His Word that the Church was called into being and constantly challenged to renew and reform itself. God's Word, therefore, is a Word with a power beyond all other words. He speaks this Word to reveal Himself to us but also to reveal to us our own deepest nature. It is this Word which tells us that we are His people, that our destiny is intrinsically interwoven with His life. And, more than this, it is by this Word that He makes Himself present to us. For this reason, the Church has never known a sacramental celebration apart from the proclamation of God's Word. Indeed such a celebration could not be a sacrament. God establishes his presence by his Word and the power of that presence once again calls a community into being to receive God's work and to graciously respond. The real presence of another speaking to us demands a response. And so too, the Word of God. He calls us by this Word so that we can live by this Word. As we understand the Word more and more deeply, we come to recognize that we must change, thus, the fruit of God's Word truly heard and attended to always produced renewal, a renewal that has at its heart a recognition of our origins as his people.

God has spoken his definitive Word to us in Jesus Christ. It is He who is the living and effective Word of God in the worshipping community. The ultimate purpose, therefore, of celebrating God's Word is not to read biblical texts but to encounter Jesus in a manner that elicits from us a unified response of living fidelity. Our celebration of the Word in the Eucharistic celebration is above all else a celebration of the presence of Jesus.

A sacramental celebration of the Word of God is never mere reading of texts. It is the public proclamation in the midst of the assembled faithful of who God is, where God can be found and how God works through us. It is a sacramental event. When the Word is truly proclaimed and heard, things happen. It becomes the experience of the power and presence of the living God in this community,

here and new. It is the discovery that the great works of God are not simply history but are enacted anew in our own community as we gather to worship.

**No lector may change the wording of scripture.** The translation in the Lectionary is the only approved translation for use at Mass. You can not take it upon yourself to use more inclusive language for example or to leave out any words. However, it is understandable that mistakes can occur and if you lose your place during a reading, you may inadvertently leave out or add unintentional words. While you are to make every effort to avoid such mistakes by studying the readings in advance, you need not be worried if such an error occurs. Often you will be the only person who notices such minor errors.

### **LECTOR PRAYERS**

Everlasting Father  
in the beginning your Word brought forth life  
and called us into being.  
In the fullness of time,  
Jesus, your Son, the Word became flesh.  
In the synagogue at Nazareth and on the hills of  
Galilee,  
he taught the good news of salvation,  
the Gospel of life and of truth.  
In an act of everlasting love  
he opened his arms on the cross  
and by his death destroyed all death,  
leading us to everlasting life.  
Lord, open my lips,  
that my mouth may declare your praise.  
Open my heart,  
that I may proclaim the Word made flesh.  
Strengthen my mind,  
that I may live the holy words I speak.  
For your Word is all holy and all true  
and lives in glory with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Lord, as I accept Your calling to be a Lector,  
Bless me with passion that I may keep doing it  
with fervor,  
Bless me with inspiration that I may keep doing  
it with excellence,  
Bless me with wisdom that I may keep doing it  
with prudence,

Bless me with humility that I may keep doing it  
with servitude,  
And bless me with love, that I may keep doing it  
for You. Amen.

Come Holy Spirit,  
fill the hearts of Your faithful  
and kindle in them the fire of your love.  
Send forth Your Spirit,  
that I may worthily proclaim your Word Amen.

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. Amen.

**From the GIRM (General Instruction of the Roman Missal):** The readings are always given from the ambo in Masses with a congregation. (58) While the new *Institutio* recommends the singing of the Responsorial psalm (61), it notes that "if the psalm cannot be sung, then it should be recited in a way more suited to fostering meditation on the word of God." (61)

In the absence of a deacon, the reader, "wearing the appropriate vesture, may carry the *Book of the Gospels* slightly elevated" in the entrance procession. (194) Upon entering the sanctuary, he places the *Book of the Gospels* on the altar. Then, he takes up his position in the sanctuary with the other ministers. (195) *The Lectionary*, however, is never carried in procession. (120)

In the absence of an instituted acolyte, lay ministers (readers) may serve at the altar, assisting the priest or deacon. "They may carry the cross, candles, ashes, censer, bread, wine and water" or serve as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. (100)

Admonishing that the Liturgy of the Word "must be celebrated in such a way as to promote meditation," (56) the *Institutio* cautions against "any kind of haste which impedes recollection" and recommends brief moments of silence throughout the liturgy, especially after the readings and the homily so that the word of God may be "taken into the heart by the fostering of the Holy Spirit." (56)