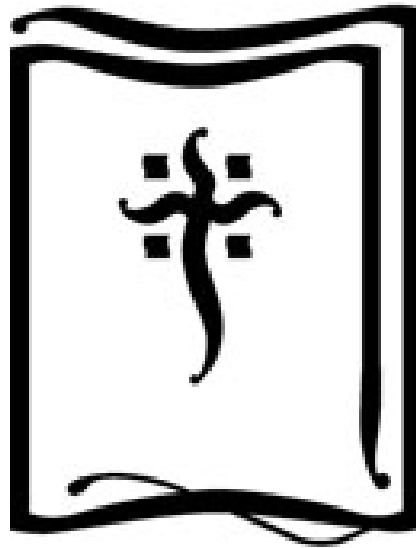


St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church

Lector Ministers Information booklet



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**In the beginning was the Word,
And the Word was with God,
And the Word was God.**

He was in the beginning with God.

**All things came to be through him,
and without him
nothing came to be.**

**What came to be through him was life,
and this life was the light of the human race;
the light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it.**

John1:1-5

The Liturgy of the Word within the Mass

The Mass takes place at two “tables” - the table of the Word and the table of the Eucharist. But it is one table. The two parts of the Mass form one profound experience.

“In the Mass the table both of God’s Word and of Christ’s Body is prepared, from which the faithful may be instructed and refreshed.”

The furniture is different. The Liturgy of the Word focuses on the ambo. The Liturgy of the Eucharist centers at the altar. These two furnishings draw the attention of the faithful throughout each part of the Mass.

There is one moment at the beginning, however, when the two parts of the Mass are drawn together. In the entrance procession, the Deacon carries the Book of Gospels to the altar. Arriving there, the Deacon sets it on the altar, reverences the altar and Book of Gospels, and withdraws. This action does not take place with the Lectionary.

The Books of the Gospels, true to its name, is the collection of Gospel passages that may occur on Sundays or other major occasions throughout the year. It may be used for proclamation at any Mass. Having the Gospels in a separate books sets them apart from the other scriptures.

The Gospels are special to us. When it is time to proclaim one at the Eucharist, the Liturgy explodes with a variety of symbols.

- The Priest and Deacon stands
- The people stands
- The cantor begins the Gospel acclamation
- The Deacon asks the Priest for a blessing
- A procession forms
- Candles, incense, and at times other signs of honor may be carried
- The Books of the Gospels is incensed
- The Deacon greets the people. They respond.
- All trace the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips and heart

And then after all of that, after doing everything we can to draw attention to this book, we hear the words of Jesus.

The Book of the Gospels represents Christ. The altar, where the Liturgy of the Eucharist will be celebrated, also represents Christ. So at the beginning of Mass, these two symbols of Christ are brought together in a simple, yet meaningful gesture.

The Book of the Gospels, carried up to the sanctuary in the entrance procession, is placed on the altar. The words of Jesus are set on the altar of Jesus. The Liturgy of Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist are joined as one.

The word of God deserves our respect. Lectors are not to change the text for the introduction and conclusion of the reading, nor of the reading itself. The reading has been prepared by translators who worked hard over hundreds of years on rendering the original language in a way it can be grasped when read aloud today. The translation has been approved by our bishops and confirmed by the Vatican for proclamation at the liturgy.

The opening and closing formula with another formula, such as “The first reading is a reading from...” is a distraction in prayer, just announce “A reading from the ...” The people more easily open their ears to the reading when they hear the appropriate cue. Indeed, the words take on a deep significance when they are repeated. The repetition of the words from church to church across the world, and from age to age throughout time, indicates their sanctity.

The reading closes when the lector says, “The word of the Lord.” Some years ago, the lector used to conclude the reading with “This is the word of the Lord.” But the conclusion was changed for various reasons. For example, the Latin text, on which the English translation of the parts of the Mass are based, has always had the lector say, “Verbum Domini, “ literally, “The word of the Lord.”

The initial English translation made sense: “This is the word of the Lord.” It made a simple declarative statement about the word that had been read. But in time, the meaning became obscured. Some lectors picked up the book before they announced, “This is the word of the Lord,” as if the word were the book. It is not. The book is special, and it deserves to be handled with reverence because of its sacred contents and purpose. But the word is not the book. The word is the spoken word.

To many people, this seemed like a small point, but it aims to say something large: God still speaks to us. God’s word is not past history. It is alive. The liturgy accentuates this reality in many ways.

The practice of distributing copies of the readings so that everyone can read along may seem helpful, but actually it confuses the meaning behind the communal *reading*, But in the communal *hearing*. The book is less important than the voice, then the lector’s words at the conclusion of the reading have an earthshaking meaning: “The word of the Lord.” We have just heard God speak to us.

The reading of sacred scripture has always been an important part of Christian worship. As we know from Jesus own behavior, it was customary for readings to be proclaimed at the Jewish synagogue. Those early Christians who came from Judaism logically based their worship on ceremonial forms with which they were familiar. That included a reading.

Saint Paul asked those who received his letters to read them to other believers. At the end of the first letter to the Thessalonians, he commands the recipients to read the letter to the entire community. The letter to the Colossians' says, "And when this letter is read before you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and you yourselves read the one from Laodicea." To the Corinthians, he writes, "For we write you nothing but what you can read and understand, and I hope that you will understand completely."

What are the "good qualities of a Christian Life"?

Individual ministers bring their own unique good qualities with them to this ministry. Some of these good qualities are a pure gift, a matter of personality and temperament. Others have been developed through discipline, experience and struggle. When these good qualities are brought to the ministry, both the qualities and the ministry are enhanced.

As the ministry of Lectors matures and deepens, it should lead individuals to focus on certain qualities that they wish to develop or refine within themselves. For each person this will be different. Ministers may find it helpful to keep a journal, to develop a relationship with a spiritual director or a wise friend, or join with other Lectors to reflect on the effect their ministry is having. While each member will bring or develop different qualities, four particular good qualities are:

- Humility
- Hospitality
- Gratitude
- Reverence

Reverence

As ministers, we are teachers of reverence. It is especially important to note personal reverence in the following situations:

- How we act as we approach the ambo
- How we prepare ourselves for our ministry and Mass
- How we gather and pray as a community
- How we dress to perform our ministry
- How we respect others

These not only express our own attitudes, but also form the attitudes of others.

What is a Lector?

- A lector is the person who proclaims the first or second reading at Mass.
- A lector must have the qualifications listed above and have a desire to minister in this capacity at the Eucharistic liturgy.
- A lector is a person who is of excellent character, and serious about the practice of their faith.
- A lector believes that Sacred Scripture is the Word of God and have deep respect for Gods presence in that Word.

How does a person become a lector?

Pastors and Deacon propose candidates for delegation as lectors on the basis of objective pastoral need. Lectors are carefully chosen based on their skills in proclamation, their willingness to complete formation in this ministry, and their evidence of a deep spirituality.

Who can be a lector?

- Man, Woman, or young person.
- A person in full communion with the Catholic Church
- A person serious about the practice of their faith.

What is required for formation?

All new candidates for lector must receive training, from their pastor or deacon, No person may be excused from formation for the ministry of lector.

What happens upon completion of training?

- New lectors may be commissioned for publicly proclaiming the Word by their pastors. The Order for the Blessing of Readers (Book of Blessings #1831ff).
- Lectors are required to attend Liturgy of the Hours before the 5:30 pm or 9:00 am Mass. (If attending one of these Masses)
- Lectors are required to attend the Prayer Service before each Mass.

Schedules

Every minister is responsible for serving when scheduled. Courtesy and common sense dictates that a scheduled minister should notify the appropriate person or *find a substitute when he or she is unable to serve at a scheduled time*. Ministers should also notify Cheryl Jacobson via e-mail if they will be out of town for a period of time or if they will be unable to serve at a particular liturgy each week.

The schedule is posted on the parish web site and printed in the parish bulletin monthly.

<http://www.stmarkscatholic.org>

A list of active Lectors and their telephone numbers is available through the parish office.

Illness

If a Lector has the flu, a cold or other illness that can be spread easily, it is far more thoughtful to the community to find a substitute than to risk spreading illness.

It is the responsibility of the scheduled minister to find a substitute. Please do not rely upon someone else to find you a replacement for your ministry.

Just before Mass

Many parishes have a procedure for signing in before Mass. The practice at St. Mark is to have the Lectors arrive 15 minutes before Mass and gather in the Chapel. During this time you can visit with the other Lector and pray with the other ministers that are serving at Mass, also you can find out if there has been a change that affects your ministry during this Mass. It also serves to let the priest, deacon know that you are present and ready to serve at the Mass.

As the Liturgy Begins

In some parishes, ministers of communion sit in the assembly together in a special area. At St Mark, we have no set arrangement for our ministers. However, it is suggested that you try to sit near the front and near the end of the row so you do not disturb people to get out performing your ministry.

Preparation

- Ahead of time, use Sacred Scripture often as a source of your private prayer and meditation outside of your assigned times.
- When you have been assigned to PROCLAIM the Word to the assembly, prepare, read aloud, and PRAY the readings during the preceding weeks.
- Consider how your assigned reading relates to the Gospel and the homily. The Lector Workbooks which are available will be helpful for this preparation.
- On your assigned day, arrive ahead of time on the day you are scheduled so that you can enter into a spirit of prayer before the liturgy begins.
- Come prepare to give PROCLAIM **both Readings**
- Make certain well ahead of time that the Lectionary is correctly marked and that the microphone is adjusted properly.

The Liturgy of the Word at Mass

After the opening prayer has been completed,

The lector moves toward the front and waits for the second Lector, reverences the altar together, then goes to the ambo for the first reading. According to rubrics, the lector does not genuflect during Mass, even if passing in front of the tabernacle.

Note: The Lectionary is not to be elevated at any time. The Lector proclaims the word from the Lectionary *resting on the ambo only* and not from their hands.

- **The Lector says at the beginning:** A reading from the...
- **And at the End:** The Word of the Lord.
 - **All respond:** Thanks be to God.

Do not change this formula in any way. For example, **DO NOT** begin with, Our first reading today is. or any similar beginning.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

After the assembly has responded "Thanks be to God" a period of silence is to be observed. According to our parish custom, the First lector returns to the seat behind the ambo, and the length of silence is determined by the cantor. The cantor moves to the ambo and proclaims the responsorial psalm after the silence.

If there is a second reading, it is proclaimed at the ambo as described for the first reading. There will always be a second reading on Sundays and Holy days. During the week, there will be only one reading and a Gospel except on certain feasts and solemnities.

A period of silence is observed before the singing of the Alleluia (Gospel Acclamation during Lent). The Alleluia or Gospel Acclamation is not sung from the ambo.

The priest or deacon processes the Book of Gospels to the ambo, and proclaims the Gospel.

The reading of the Gospel is the high point of the Liturgy of the Word. The Liturgy itself teaches that great reverence is to be shown to it by setting it off from the other readings with special marks of honor.

The homily is given. After the homily, there is a period of silence.

After the liturgy

Do a mini self-evaluation by asking:

- Did I arrive 15 minutes early to pray and prepare myself for my ministry?
 - By arriving on time you also show respect to the other Lector, Lay ministers, Priest and Deacon.
- Did I dress to serve as a Lay minister?
- Did I proclaim the meaning of the Scriptures, or merely read the words?
- Did I effectively communicate to the assembly God's word of salvation using all the skills available to me?
- What can I do to improve next time?
- Did I make good use of my time preparing the week before Mass?
- Did I change any words in the Reading?
 - You may never change the words of a reading, or proclaim a non-scriptural text during Mass. (*#57 General Instruction of the Roman Missal*)
- Was I ready to Proclaim both readings if needed?
- Did I pray during the week?