

## READER GUIDELINES

**These guidelines are based on the following church documents and instructions:**

**1963 *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy / Sacrosanctum concilium (SC)*  
SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL**

**1998 *Lectionary for Mass (LM)*  
CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP  
AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENT (CDW)**

**2011 *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal:  
Including Adaptations for the Dioceses of the United States of America (GIRM)*  
CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP  
AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENT (CDW)**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The many riches contained in the one word of God are admirably brought out in the different kinds of liturgical celebrations and in the different gatherings of the faithful who take part in those celebrations. This takes place as the unfolding mystery of Christ is recalled during the course of the liturgical year, as the Church's sacraments and sacramentals are celebrated, or as the faithful respond individually to the Holy Spirit working within them. (Cf. LM, no. 3.) Because of the Holy Spirit's inspiration and support, the word of God becomes the foundation of the liturgical celebration and the rule and support of all our life. ... the Spirit brings home to each person individually everything that in the proclamation of the word of God is spoken for the good of the whole gathering of the faithful. (Cf. LM, no. 9.)
2. For in the readings, as explained by the Homily, God speaks to his people, opening up to them the mystery of redemption and salvation, and offering spiritual nourishment; and Christ himself is present through his word in the midst of the faithful. (Cf. GIRM, no. 55; SC, nos. 33, 7.) It can never be forgotten, ... that the divine word read and proclaimed by the Church in the Liturgy has as its one purpose the sacrifice of the New Covenant and the banquet of grace, that is the Eucharist. The celebration of Mass in which the word is heard and the Eucharist is offered and received forms but one single act of divine worship. (Cf. LM, no.10; GIRM no. 8)
3. Liturgical tradition assigns responsibility for the biblical readings in the celebration of Mass to ministers: to readers and the deacon. (Cf. LM, no. 49; GIRM, no. 59.) It pertains to the deacon in the liturgy of the word at Mass to proclaim the Gospel, sometimes to give the homily, as occasion suggests, and to propose to the people the intentions of the prayer of the faithful. (Cf. LM, no. 50; GIRM, nos. 59, 71.) The reader has his own proper function in the Eucharistic celebration and should exercise this even though ministers of a higher rank may be present. (Cf. LM, no. 51.)
4. Although the terms "reader" and "lector" are used in practice interchangeably, there is, with the implementation of the 2010 *General Instruction*, a distinction between these ministries. The "lector" is instituted to proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture, with the exception of the

Gospel. He may also announce the intentions for the Universal Prayer and, in the absence of a psalmist, recite the Psalm between the readings. (Cf. GIRM, no. 99.) In the absence of an instituted lector, other lay people may be deputed to proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture, people who are truly suited to carrying out this function and carefully prepared, so that by hearing the readings from the sacred texts the faithful may conceive in their hearts a sweet and living affection for Scripture. (Cf. GIRM, no. 101; SC, no. 24.) In these guidelines, considering that at this time only deacon candidates are instituted as lectors, ministers of the Word will be referred to as “readers.”

## II. PURPOSE

As stated above, these guidelines are to take the proper measure to ensure that there are trained laypeople, “truly suited to carrying out this function and carefully prepared,” to serve as readers that proclaim the word of God at Mass and at other liturgical celebrations throughout the diocese.

## III. REQUIREMENTS OF MINISTERS

1. Catholic men and women who are 18 years of age or older and fully initiated - who have received the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation - are eligible for this ministry. They should demonstrate their readiness for the ministry by:
  - 1) regularly participating in the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist,
  - 2) living the Gospel message in their communal and individual lives,
  - 3) being faithful to the teachings of the church in regards to their present state in life, (Single or Married),
  - 4) attending the training/formation sessions provided by the parish, and
  - 5) accepting the responsibility to minister reverently as scheduled or needed.
2. Catholic children and youth are also eligible for this ministry, especially for service at children’s and youth Masses celebrated in their parishes and schools. They, too, should demonstrate their readiness for the ministry by:
  - 1) actively participating in the celebration of the Eucharist,
  - 2) learning about the Gospel message and applying it in their lives,
  - 3) exhibiting confidence when speaking in front of people,
  - 4) willingly attending training/formation/practice sessions, and
  - 5) accepting the responsibility to minister as scheduled or needed.
3. As with all other liturgical ministries, those who are formed and accepted as readers should have no expectation of extended or life-long service. They should understand that their ministry is a blessing and privilege and be willing to serve when and where needed.
4. No special clothing or insignia is necessary for readers in the Diocese of Las Cruces; however, age-appropriate, modest, dignified clothing is to be worn out of respect for both the Eucharist and the community gathered for worship.

## IV. RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARISHES

As all potential readers must be properly trained for the ministry, and, once trained, have continued formation, the parish has the following responsibilities:

1. **To provide training** that includes:
  - 1) an overview of Catholic beliefs about the Mass and the Word of God,
  - 2) an outline and practice of the skills and functions of this ministry in the parish, and
  - 3) information about diocesan Basic Ministry Formation, especially the Reader Specialization, with encouragement to receive further formation through the Specialization process and other diocesan or regional offerings, such as the Diocesan Eucharistic Congress (DEC) or Southwest Liturgical Conference (SWLC) Study Week.
2. **To bless newly trained readers prior to their serving at Mass**, whether during a weekend liturgy or a Liturgy of the Word at the end of their training. (See the “Order for the Blessing of Readers” in the *Book of Blessings*, Chapter 61.) NOTE: As with extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, it is suggested that readers be blessed for service for two years at a time.
3. **To provide** readers, once they are blessed, with the support needed to minister successfully in the parish, including **some sort of schedule, the contact information necessary to obtain a substitute** should the minister be unable to serve as scheduled, a mentor with whom to initially serve and ask questions, and **a reading resource** of some type, such as the annual Liturgy Training Publications (LTP) *Workbook for Lectors, Gospel Readers, and Proclaimers of the Word*.
4. **To arrange for a renewal of ministry, every two years** at a minimum, that includes prayer, liturgy and ministry formation, and time for discussions and questions about parish practice, including any inconsistencies or issues that have arisen. NOTE: The reader would be able to serve more than two years, given attendance at the renewal of ministry session and continued compliance with the above-mentioned requirements.
5. **To continually** (or at the very least annually) **recruit other members of the parish to serve as readers**. NOTE: Some ministers think that after a few years they are entitled to serve, and that they have the right to choose the terms of their service. It has also been found that the long-time ministry of some parishioners prevents other parishioners from stepping forward to serve. Given these factors, it is recommended that parishes consider implementing “term limits” on ministerial service in any capacity.

The parish also has the following material and physical responsibilities:

1. **To provide books of good quality and good condition from which the reader will proclaim.** *The General Instruction* states: Special care must be taken to ensure that the liturgical books, particularly the *Book of the Gospels* and the Lectionary, which are intended for the proclamation of the Word of God and hence receive special veneration, are to be in a liturgical action truly signs and symbols of higher realities and hence should be truly worthy, dignified, and beautiful. (Cf. GIRM, no. 349; SC, no. 122.) Because of the dignity of the word of God, the books of readings used in the celebration are not to be replaced by other pastoral aids, for example, by leaflets printed for the preparation of the readings by the faithful or for their personal meditation. (Cf. LM, no. 37.)

2. **To provide a place in the church that is somewhat elevated, fixed, and of a suitable design and nobility.** It should reflect the dignity of God's word and be a clear reminder to the people that in the Mass the table of God's word and of Christ's body is placed before them. The place for the readings must also truly help the peoples' listening and attention during the liturgy of the word. (Cf. LM, no. 32.) Either permanently or at least on occasions of greater solemnity, the ambo should be decorated simply and in keeping with its design. ... it must of its nature be reserved for the readings, the responsorial psalm, and the Easter Proclamation (the *Exsultet*). The ambo may rightly be used for the homily and the prayer of the faithful <universal prayers> ... It is better for the commentator, cantor, or director of singing, for example, not to use the ambo. (Cf. LM, no. 33.)
3. **To provide adequate and appropriate lighting and sound at the ambo.** Provision must also be made for the readers to have enough light to read the text and, as required, to have modern sound equipment enabling the faithful to hear them without difficulty. (Cf. LM, no. 34.)

## V. PROCEDURES AS DIRECTED BY THE DOCUMENTS AND INSTRUCTIONS

1. In the procession to the altar, in the absence of a Deacon, the reader, wearing approved attire, may carry the *Book of the Gospels*, slightly elevated. In that case, the reader walks in front of the Priest but otherwise walks along with the other ministers. (Cf. GIRM, no. 194.) Upon reaching the altar, the reader makes a profound bow with the others. If he is carrying the *Book of the Gospels*, <he does not bow, but after the Priest bows,> ... he approaches the altar and places the *Book of the Gospels* upon it. Then the reader takes his own place in the sanctuary with the other ministers. (Cf. GIRM, no. 195.)
2. The reader reads from the ambo the readings that precede the Gospel. A speaking style on the part of the readers that is audible, clear, and intelligent is the first means of transmitting the word of God properly to the congregation. The readings, taken from the approved editions, may be sung in a way suited to different languages. This singing, however, must serve to bring out the sense of the words, not obscure them. (Cf. LM, no. 14.)
3. In texts that are to be pronounced in a loud and clear voice, whether by the Priest or the Deacon, or by a reader, or by everyone, the voice should correspond to the genre of the text itself, that is, depending upon whether it is a reading, a prayer, an explanatory comment, an acclamation, or an sung text; it should also be suited to the form of the celebration and to the solemnity of the gathering. Consideration should also be given to the characteristic of different languages and of the culture of different peoples. (Cf. GIRM, no. 38.)
4. After each reading, whoever reads it pronounces the acclamation, and by means of the reply the assembled people give honor to the Word of God that they have received in faith and with gratitude. (Cf. GIRM, no. 59.) Whenever there is more than one reading, it is better to assign the readings to different readers, if available. (Cf. LC, no. 52.)

5. The liturgy of the word must be celebrated in a way that fosters meditation; clearly, any sort of haste that hinders recollection must be avoided. The dialogue between God and his people taking place through the Holy Spirit demands short intervals of silence, suited to the assembled congregation, as an opportunity to take the word of God to heart and to prepare a response to it in prayer. Proper times for silence during the liturgy of the word are, for example, before this liturgy begins, after the first and second readings, after the homily. (Cf. LM, no. 28; GIRM, no. 23.)
6. As a rule the responsorial psalm should be sung. (Cf. LM, no. 20.) The psalmist, or cantor of the psalm, is responsible for singing, responsorially or directly, the chants between the readings – the psalm or other biblical canticle, the gradual and *Alleluia*, or other chant. (Cf. LM, no. 56.) In the absence of a psalmist, the reader may also proclaim the Responsorial Psalm after the First Reading. (Cf. GIRM, no. 196.) When not sung, the psalm after the reading is to be recited in a manner conducive to meditation on the word of God. (Cf. LM, no. 22.) NOTE: The Responsorial Psalm should correspond to each reading and should usually be taken from the Lectionary. It is preferable for the Responsorial Psalm to be sung, as least as far as the people's response is concerned. (Cf. GIRM, no. 61.)
7. After the reading that immediately precedes the Gospel, the *Alleluia*, or other chant laid down by the rubrics is sung, as the liturgical time requires. ... It is sung by everybody, standing, and is led by the choir or a cantor, being repeated as the case requires. The verse, on the other hand, is sung by the choir or by a cantor. (Cf. GIRM, no. 62.) <Bishop Cantú requests that the acclamation before the Gospel not be sung at the ambo. (Liturgical Practices Pastoral Letter, Bishop Cantú, January 2014)>
8. When there is only one reading before the Gospel: a) ... either an *Alleluia* Psalm or the Responsorial Psalm followed by the *Alleluia* with its verse may be used; b) ... either the Psalm and the Verse before the Gospel or the Psalm alone may be used; c) the *Alleluia* or the Verse before the Gospel, if not sung, may be omitted. (Cf. GIRM, no. 63.)
9. In the absence of a Deacon, the reader, after the introduction by the Priest, may announce the intentions of the Universal Prayer from the ambo. (Cf. GIRM, no. 197.) NOTE: They are announced from the ambo or from another suitable place, by the Deacon or by a cantor, a reader, or one of the lay faithful. (Cf. GIRM, no. 71.)
10. If there is no singing at the Entrance or at Communion and the antiphons given in the Missal are not recited by the faithful, the reader may read them at an appropriate time. (Cf. GIRM, no. 198; nos. 48, 87.)
11. NOTE: A liturgical function is also exercised by the commentator, who, if appropriate, provides the faithful briefly with explanations and exhortations so as to direct their attention to the celebration and ensure that they are better disposed for understanding it. The commentator's remarks should be thoroughly prepared and notable for their restraint. In performing this function the commentator stands in a suitable place within sight of the faithful, but not at the ambo. (Cf. GIRM, no. 58.)

## VI. THE CHOICE OF TEXTS FOR THE MASS: The Readings

1. Sundays and Solemnities have assigned to them three readings, that is from a Prophet, an Apostle, and a Gospel, ... These readings should be followed strictly. In Easter Time, according to the tradition of the Church, instead of being from the Old Testament, the reading is taken from the Acts of the Apostles. For Feasts, two readings are assigned. ... For Memorials of Saints, unless proper readings are given, the readings assigned for the weekday are normally used. ... (Cf. GIRM, no. 357.) In the Lectionary for weekdays, readings are provided for each day of every week through the entire course of the year; ... In Masses for special groups, the Priest shall be allowed to choose texts more particularly suited..., provided they are taken from the texts of an approved Lectionary. (Cf. GIRM, no. 358.) ... a special selection of texts from Sacred Scripture is given for Ritual Masses into which certain Sacraments or Sacramentals are incorporated, or for Masses that are celebrated for certain needs. (Cf. GIRM, no. 359.)
2. At times, a longer and shorter form of the same text is given. In choosing between these two forms, a pastoral criterion should be kept in mind. ... (Cf. GIRM, no. 360.) If you, as the reader, have not been told which form to proclaim, check with the presider before the liturgy begins.
3. When a possibility is given of choosing between one or other text laid down, or suggested as optional, attention shall be paid to the good of the participants, ... (Cf. GIRM, no. 361.) Again, if you, as the reader, have not been told which text to proclaim, check with the presider before the liturgy begins.
4. The adaptations to the *Ordo Lectionum Missae* as contained in the Lectionary for Mass for use in the Diocese of the United States of America should be carefully observed. (Cf. GIRM, no. 362.)

## VII. CONCLUSION

By Christ's own will there is a marvelous diversity of members in the new people of God and each has different duties and responsibilities with respect to the word of God. (Cf. LM, no. 8.) It is necessary that those who exercise the ministry of reader, even if they have not received institution, be truly suited and carefully prepared, so that the faithful may develop a warm and living love for Sacred Scripture from listening to the sacred readings. Their preparation must above all be spiritual, which presupposes at least a biblical and liturgical formation, but what may be called a technical preparation is also needed. (Cf. LM, no. 55.) Readers that have received sufficient spiritual and technical preparation should fulfill their role with a knowledge and reverence that both contributes to the ordered celebration of Mass, and enables the faithful to develop a warm and living love for Sacred Scripture.