

# NEIGHBORS NORTH CATHOLIC COMMUNITY LECTOR MINISTRY MANUAL

(Last revised October 2019, David Dashiell)



## I. Mission

- In our ministry we proclaim the Word of God, not our own words.
- The Church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord's Body. She never ceases to present to the faithful the bread of life, taken from the one table of God's Word and Christ's Body. In Sacred Scripture the Church constantly finds her nourishment and her strength, for she welcomes it not as a human word, but as what it really is, the Word of God. (Catechism of the Catholic Church 103-104, 1 Thessalonians 2:13)
- We must, therefore, reverence the Word of God and allow it to transform our lives before proclaiming it to others. To do this, we must read Scripture regularly during our prayer time, meditating on the word that God is speaking to us that day. We must also proclaim the Word of God in our daily lives by our actions and deeds. Only then has it truly taken root.

## II. Liturgical Catechesis on the Liturgy of the Word

- A. **Sacred Scripture & Sacred Tradition:** God reveals Himself to us because He loves us and wants us to know and love Him. This revelation *in its fullness* is handed on through Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, which are entrusted to the Church as the —sacred deposit of faith. Through scripture and tradition, —God...uninterruptedly converses with the bride of His beloved Son. (*Dei Verbum* 8)
- B. **Inerrancy of Scripture:** Scripture, along with Tradition, is the —supreme rule of faith. (DV 21) It is truly the Word of God Himself. In Scripture, —the Father who is in Heaven meets His children with great love and speaks with them. (DV 21)
- C. **Scripture in the Liturgy:** Scripture is powerful, especially when proclaimed in the liturgy. When we, as lectors, proclaim the Scripture, our voices become the very echoes of God's own voice. As we speak, He once again speaks His own Word of life to His people. We must treat our role with special humility, reverence, and care.
- D. **Relation of Scripture to the Eucharist:** We know that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist. But He is also present in the Word. —The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since from the table of both **the Word of God** and of **the Body of Christ** she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life, especially in the sacred liturgy. (DV 21) Jesus is made present in the Mass in both **word** and **flesh**.
- E. **A Final Note:** —Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ (St. Jerome). If this is true for everyone, how much more so for us who proclaim Scripture!

## III. How to Prepare for Reading at Mass:

### A. Importance of Preparation

Preparation is **NOT** optional! It is essential that you prepare your readings well **BEFORE** you arrive at Mass. If we understand God's Word, we can proclaim it effectively.

### B. Prayerful Preparation for Reading

**Remember, we are proclaiming the Word of God.**

1. Always practice in prayer, asking God to open your heart to understand His Word.
2. Next, read through the Scripture passage (silently and aloud) looking at the technical quality of the passage. The readings can be found on [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org).
  - a. Note the genre (narrative story, poetry, exhortation, law, etc.).
  - b. What is the literal meaning of the passage?
  - c. Look up the correct pronunciation for any difficult words, especially names. The USCCB has audio recordings at [www.usccb.org/bible/readings-audio.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings-audio.cfm) Look for pronunciation books in the sacristy, such as the little red book: *Lector's Guide to Biblical Pronunciations*. If you don't know how to pronounce a word, just ask the priest!
  - d. Meditating and re-reading the passage, try to gain a deeper understanding of the passage. **Put it in context** by reading it with its surrounding text in your own Bible and with the other readings of the day. Some readings were chosen specifically to highlight a point in the Gospel for that day.
3. Continue to read the passage aloud, concentrating on making the meaning clear. Work on correct pausing, tone, emphasis, etc. **Remember, you want it to sound natural**, not artificial.
4. Just like good reading skills, it takes practice to prepare well, so don't give up if you have trouble at first; just keep praying. God will honor your persistence and bless your efforts.

## IV. Reading Techniques

### 1. Create “thought-phrases”

Break up long, grammatically complex sentences into *thought phrases* and understand the relationship between each of these phrases:

**Col. 1:15-16** – He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. / For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, / whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; / all things were created through him and for him.

### 2. Sentence Continuity

When the subject and verb are separated, sustain the thought by sustaining your voice. **Resist the temptation to speed up** and reach the end of the sentence, sticking instead to a steady, collected rhythm. It is possible to maintain a slow, steady pace, and still sustain the meaning of the sentence. You can imply by the tone of your voice the movement toward the end of the thought.

### 3. Transitional Words

Be aware of transitional words (but, now, then, however, so, for, therefore, because, since). They often help in understanding relationships between sentences and phrases.

**1 Cor 13:12-13** For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part: then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

**\*Note:** the same transitional word may have different meanings in different passages

### 4. Use Verbal Punctuation

Transfer written punctuation into verbal punctuation: at commas, pause slightly; within quotations, raise voice slightly; at periods, drop voice slightly (but don't get softer: **drop your tone, not volume**).

- (1) *No punctuation:* I Jesus have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches I am the root and the off-spring of David the bright morning star the Spirit and the Bride say come and let him who is thirsty come let him who desires take the water of life without price
- (2) **Rev 22:16-17** —I, Jesus, have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star. The Spirit and the Bride say, — come. And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price.

### 5. Stressing Words

Emphasis can determine meaning, so be sure to emphasize the right words.

- (1) Consider the example of changing the emphasis in this sentence.
  - (1) **What** did you say to him?
  - (2) What **did** you say to him?
  - (3) What did **you** say to him?
  - (4) What did you **say** to him?
  - (5) What did you say **to** him?
  - (6) What did you say to **him**?

### 6. The Mood/Attitude of the Reading

Consider this sentence: — Thanks, you're really being a friend to me. First say it with sarcasm, then say it with warmth and gratitude. The attitude makes all the difference.

- a) Find and understand the emotional context of the writer and/or characters. If there is pleading, then *plead*. The same goes with exhortation, praise, wonder, sadness, repentance, joy, etc. **The object is not to be theatrical**, but to deliver the full meaning of the text. You are not acting out the Scriptures; you are *proclaiming* them.

## 7. Do Not Over-dramatize

This is critical. If you over-dramatize the reading, it sounds unnatural and the attention of the congregation is drawn to your voice, not the words themselves. We should be able to go beyond the voice to the Word of God being proclaimed. The message of what God has to say is what should grip us. **His word is exciting enough, without our adding to it. Being a good lector is not the same thing as being a good actor/actress on stage.**

## 8. Do Not Swallow your Words

Avoid the temptation to breeze through transition words or to glaze over common words and phrases. Also, be careful not to slur words together: It is a — slow watch, not a slowatch. There is a difference between “forever and ever” and “forever never”. **If you find yourself stumbling over words, you are reading too quickly!**

## 9. Enunciation

**Do not over-enunciate!** Speak clearly, but *normally!* Don’t pronounce T’s and K’s as different syllables. On the other hand, make sure you **carefully give each word its due**. There is a balance between over-enunciation and mumbling. We want to avoid both, speaking the Word of God with effectiveness and letting it reach the people **clearly**. Enunciate well, but do it without overemphasis.

## 10. Pauses

Pauses give people time to think and understand what you’re reading. **Speak slowly** and don’t be afraid to take pauses where appropriate. We often speak more quickly than we think we are. Rarely, if ever, does a lector pause too much. However, try to avoid long pauses in the middle of sentences where breaking up a thought would be detrimental.

## 11. Memorization and Eye-Contact

Be sure you are proclaiming the Word. You should have it practically memorized from preparing ahead of time. But you are still *reading* the Word, not reciting it from memory. This means you should read from the Lectionary, but occasionally look up and make eye contact with the congregation. If you are afraid of losing your place, use your finger.

## 12. Volume and Microphones

Stand straight at the microphone and **do not lean into it. Do not move the microphones** – they will project your voice well, and the volumes are pre-set. **You still need to project and speak clearly, though.** People frequently complain that lectors are too quiet (not too loud), even while amplified. Sneeze, cough, or clear your throat away from the mic. Make sure ‘P’s are spoken more softly than usual, since they create a ‘popping’ effect in the mic.

## 13. Be Aware of the Genre

Remember, **Scripture is written in human language: it has genres.** Avoid sound robotic because you missed the genre. Use common sense: read description as narrative and dialogue as real people speaking. If you are reading one of St. Paul’s epistles, read it as if you were St. Paul speaking to the congregation. If you are reading Genesis, read it as a narrative. If you are reciting a Psalm, recite it as a spiritual poem.

## 14. Mistakes

If you make a mistake, do not apologize or explain. Simply use the correct word and continue reading. Many people don’t notice, and apologizing distracts from the Word.

## 15. Posture

Keep your feet together or shoulder-length apart and flat on the floor. Stand up straight to assist your breathing and enunciation. The congregation will notice slouching or fidgeting.

## 16. Do Not Change Scripture

Scripture, as the Word of God, comes to us complete and without error. It is extremely rare to find a misprint. If you think there is one, check with a priest before Mass. Chances are the Lectionary is correct and it is simply a Hebrew, Greek, or Latin grammatical structure you are not used to. In addition, never add, remove, or change a word from the reading for any reason, even for the sake of inclusive language (changing “men” to “men and women”).

## 16. Do Not Change the Mass Parts

The General Intercessions and Lector Introduction are prepared beforehand for each Sunday or Vigil Mass. Follow what is printed on the page specifically, without modifying or adding words. Say the full name of each parish – “Saint Athanasius” instead of “Saint A’s.”

## V. The Spirit of the Lector

- A. **Being a good lector is not the same as being a good news broadcaster.** Even after all of our concern and care to study the text and practice our delivery, we must remember that what we are reading is not of this world. It is holy wisdom uttered directly from the mind of God Himself.
  1. **We are there only to give glory to God and to His holy Word.** All prayer, study, and practice should be with this goal in mind. We need to be very careful not to let our desire for recognition and approval distract us from our task.
  2. Look upon opportunities to read as chances to serve God in ministry, not performances.
- B. **Grow in your personal love for Scripture.** — Sacred Scripture is the Word of God, and we should never lose sight of that. If you are not praying with Scripture and reading it on your own, reconsider what attracts you to this ministry. Is it proclaiming the Word, serving God, or being in the spotlight?
- C. **Trust in the Lord.** Sometimes our desire to be effective lectors can end up making us worry too much about talent and prayerfulness. Remember, the Scriptures have a beauty and power all their own. We don’t need to worry about *making* Scripture powerful. **We should simply be transparent,** and let God do the work, without letting ourselves become obstacles to the saving power of God’s Word.

## VI. A Quick Review

- As ministers, we are leaders performing our work in view of the entire congregation. As leaders, we ought to model the Church’s teaching. The Church has guidelines for our posture during Mass:
  - **Bow from the waist** whenever you pass by the altar. This is called a **profound bow**. The altar is the place of sacrifice, where Christ is truly made present under the species of bread and wine, and it is the focal point of the liturgy.
  - **Genuflect on you right knee** whenever approaching the tabernacle or passing by it. It holds the Lord.
  - **During Mass**, the altar takes precedence over the tabernacle, because the sacrifice of Christ is happening in real time. Therefore, if the tabernacle and altar are in the same area, you should bow towards the altar when you pass by **instead of** genuflecting towards the tabernacle.
  - **Outside of Mass**, Christ present in the tabernacle takes precedence over the altar, since the sacrifice is not going on at the moment. Therefore, if both are in the same area, you should genuflect towards the tabernacle when you pass by **instead of** bowing towards the altar.
  - **During Mass or not**, genuflect when approaching the tabernacle to retrieve the Lord.
- Please **keep your hands folded** if you are not carrying anything. This is a standard posture of reverence for all liturgical ministers. It was specifically requested by our pastor.
- If you believe another minister needs correction, please bring it to the attention of the clergy or staff and **let them correct the minister. Do not approach them yourself.**

# Logistics

## Weekday Liturgies (Monday-Saturday)

- a. Dress neatly and appropriately. See the **Dress Code** that follows.
- b. Please arrive at least **10 minutes** before the Mass begins. This is important because there may be a change in the reading. If there are options for the reading, ask the celebrant what he wants. He may have based his Homily on using the long version, for example.
- c. Be on time to review the reading one last time and pray before Mass.
- d. Sit in the second row on the left side of the church. You should be on the end closest to the center.
- e. On weekdays, the Priest or deacon reads the Universal Prayer.
- f. Approach the ambo immediately following the Opening Prayer. When the congregation begins to sit, you approach the altar. When going to the ambo, bow from the waist before stepping up into the sanctuary. Bow at the bottom of the steps, at the center of the altar.
- g. Wait for the noise of the congregation to subside; then begin reading. **TAKE YOUR TIME; DON'T RUSH!**
- h. For the **First Reading**, follow these guidelines:
  - i. **Read only the words printed in the Lectionary.** Do not use your own words, phrases, or introductions, such as: "Our first reading is..." or "Responsorial Psalm: ..."
  - ii. After the reading, bow your head and **be silent for seven to ten seconds** before leading the Responsorial Psalm, to give the congregation time to reflect.
- i. For the **Responsorial Psalm**, follow these guidelines:
  - i. **DO NOT** introduce the Psalm by saying, — The Responsorial Psalm is...
  - ii. Say the responsorial strophe (refrain) of the Psalm and the congregation will repeat it after you. **Do not recite the response with the congregation.**
  - iii. Look up at the congregation each time they are expected to repeat the strophe. Do not use hand gestures: only cantors should use them.
  - iv. Leave the Lectionary on the ambo for the Gospel reading and return to your seat. Bow (from the waist) **after** you come down the steps at the center of the altar. **Do not bow at the ambo; only bow at the bottom of the steps in the center, and bow to the altar instead of the Priest.** The altar has a relic of a saint in it. We are reverencing both the altar of sacrifice and that saint when we bow.

## Sundays/Holy Days and Feast Days

- a. Arrive **15 minutes** early.
- b. If there are options for the reading, ask the celebrant what he wants you to read.
- c. Make sure the Lectionary is set and look over the introduction or the Universal Prayer.
- d. Bring the Lectionary out to the ambo and leave it open to the First Reading.
- e. The **SECOND LECTOR** is in charge of the introduction before Mass begins.
  - i. If the church is packed, the head usher may ask you to make an announcement for people to move in towards the center aisle. If this happens, make the announcement that appears in italics on the introduction sheet. **Do not make it unless the usher asks.**
- f. If you are the **SECOND LECTOR**, you do not process in. Simply return to your seat after the introduction. Sit in the third row on the left side of the church. You should be on the end of the row closest to the center.
- g. If you are the **FIRST LECTOR**, you carry the Book of the Gospels in the liturgical procession. **If there is a deacon, he will carry the Book of the Gospels and you will not process in.**
  - i. Hold the spine with your *left hand*. The Book of the Gospels should be elevated, so that all can see it. Before entering the sanctuary, pause for a moment as a sign of reverence to the altar – you do not bow because you are carrying the Book of the Gospels.
  - ii. Walk around the right side of the altar.
  - iii. When behind the altar, facing the congregation, lay the book upright on the center of the altar, with the front of the book facing the congregation.
  - iv. Step back, bow slightly, and continue down the front steps (to your right) to your seat. **Do not wait for the cantor to reach the altar; bow immediately when you reach the bottom of the steps and go straight to your seat.**
  - v. Sit in the second row on the left side of the church. You should be on the end closest to the center.
- h. The Second Lector must **close the Lectionary and put it on the shelf inside the ambo** after the second reading.
  - i. **If there is no deacon**, the **FIRST LECTOR** reads the Universal Prayer, or Intercessions.
- j. For the **Universal Prayer**, follow these guidelines:
  - i. Approach the sanctuary, bowing at the center of the altar before you come up, when the congregation reaches “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life.” The object is not to rush, but to avoid making the congregation wait for you to arrive at the ambo.
  - ii. Let the priest introduce the Intercessions, then read only what is printed. **DO NOT add an intercession such as “for those prayers we hold in the silence of our hearts...”**
  - iii. Do not use hand gestures for the responses.
  - iv. Look at the chart for the intention of the day’s Mass.
  - v. Announce names very carefully; often, relatives are present for the Mass.
  - vi. Face the Priest while he prays the concluding prayer.
  - vii. Immediately announce the second collection after the Priest concludes the prayer. Do not wait for the congregation to sit down.
  - viii. Return to your seat, bowing (from the waist) at the bottom of the steps, at the center of the altar.

## The Ordo

The Ordo (meaning order) is a calendar of saints and special celebrations during the liturgical year. It is used to determine which prayers and readings will be used at a particular liturgy.

We celebrate four types of days (in order from highest to lowest rank):

- Solemnities (Sundays, Marian feasts, Easter, Christmas, etc.)
- Feasts (saints, apostles, some other Marian feast days, special events in the life of Christ, etc.)
- Memorials (obligatory or optional)
- Ferial (daily; no specific feast)

Certain days of solemnity are peculiar to a particular diocese, religious order, or an individual church. Also note that if more than one celebration falls on the same day, the one of higher rank is celebrated.

## The Lectionary

The Lectionary contains all the scripture readings used at Mass. There are three sets of readings for Sundays— Years A, B, and C (Starting December 1, 2019, we will be in Year A, Cycle II).

There are three readings for Sundays:

- Old Testament (or Acts of the Apostles during the Easter season).
- New Testament (Acts of the Apostles, an Epistle, or Revelation).
- The Gospel reading.

For weekdays, there are two reading cycles: I or II (I=odd years, II=even years). For particular feasts, the readings are by date in the back of the Lectionary. (The Ordo will tell you the number of the reading you should use. These numbers are in the left hand corner of the book in red for easy reference.)

The Lectionary is currently in four volumes, and the Book of the Gospels is used for the Sunday Gospel:

- Vol. 1 is the Sunday Lectionary.
- Vol. 2 is the Lectionary for Weekday Masses in Year I.
- Vol. 3 is the Lectionary for Weekday Masses in Year II.
- Vol. 4 is the Lectionary for Ritual and Votive Masses, Masses for Various Needs and Occasions, and Masses for the Dead.
- The Book of Gospels is for Sundays, Solemnities, and some Feasts and contains only the Gospel.

# Dress Code

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## Sundays and Feast Days

Sunday best (formal), clean and tidy

## Weekdays

Business Casual (nice shirt/blouse/dress/pants/skirt), clean and tidy

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† Notes about this dress code:

- † It is the **clergy's** responsibility to enforce the dress code. They have expressed the desire not to allow a minister to serve if he/she is poorly dressed. Please understand that if a member of the clergy asks you not to serve because of improper dress, it has to do with reverence for the Lord.
  - † The **purpose of a dress code** is twofold: reverence for God and consideration for our neighbor.
  - † We perform our ministries in the presence of Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. At Mass, He comes down from heaven with His angels and offers Himself for us once again on the altar of sacrifice. We should dress for this most special occasion, out of respect for God.
  - † Though we cannot control the actions or thoughts of others, we can control how we present ourselves. Part of this is done through our dress, in which we express our consideration for our neighbor through clothing that most easily directs the congregation to the liturgy. People come to Mass to worship God without distraction, so we should do everything we can to allow them to focus on Him and not us.
  - † This dress code is very general. We trust you to know what is too long, short, or inappropriate for Mass. A word of reminder that the sanctuary is raised higher than the rest of the church – people can see more.
  - † A good rule is that if you have any question about a certain article of clothing, there is a good chance you should not wear it while ministering. When in doubt, ask the priest.
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