

# The Reader at Mass

## General Principles

### Arrive to Mass Early

Arrive at least ten or fifteen minutes before the start of Mass. Advise the priest that you will be the Reader so that he knows you have arrived and can give you any special instructions. If there is a visiting priest, introduce yourself and make him feel welcome in our community.

### Reading and Explaining the Word of God

When the Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself is speaking to his people, and Christ, present in his own word, is proclaiming the gospel. The readings of God's word must therefore be listened to with reverence; they make up a principal element of the liturgy. In the Scriptures, God's word addresses all people of every era and is understandable to them, and a fuller understanding is fostered by a living commentary on it, that is to say, by the homily, understood as an integral part of the liturgical action.

### Vocal Expression of the Different Texts

In texts that are to be delivered in a loud and clear voice, whether by the priest or deacon or by the Reader, or by all, the tone of voice should correspond to the genre of the text, that is, accordingly as it is a reading, a prayer, an instruction, an acclamation, or a liturgical song; the tone should also be suited to the form of celebration and to the solemnity of the gathering. Other criteria are the idiom of different languages and the genius of peoples.

### Silence

The liturgy of the word must be celebrated in such a way as to promote meditation. For this reason, any kind of haste must be avoided. Brief moments of silence are appropriate during the liturgy. Such moments should be suitable for the gathered assembly, in which the Word of God is taken into the heart by the fostering of the Holy Spirit, and its response is prepared through prayer. Such moments of silence are observed after the first and second reading, and then, at the completion of the homily.

### Scripture Readings

In the readings, the table of God's word is laid for the faithful and the riches of the Bible are opened to them. Hence, the arrangement of the biblical readings must be observed, whereby the unity of each Testament and of the history of salvation is demonstrated; nor is it permitted that the readings and responsorial psalm, which contain the word of God, are substituted by other, non-biblical texts.

In the celebration of the Mass with a congregation, the readings are always given from the ambo.

By tradition, the office of reading the Scriptures is a ministerial, not a presidential function. The readings should be delivered by a Reader, the Gospel being proclaimed by the deacon or by a priest other than the celebrant. If, however, a deacon or other priest is not present, the priest celebrant proclaims the Gospel. Further, if a suitable Reader is not present, then the priest celebrant also delivers the other readings. After each reading, whoever does the reading proclaims the acclamation. Responding to it, the gathered people honor the word of God which they have received with faith and grateful hearts.

The Reader proclaims the readings from Sacred Scripture, with the exception of the gospel reading. In the absence of a Deacon, he or she also announces the intentions for the *Universal Prayer* and, in the absence of a Cantor, reads the psalm between the readings. In the celebration of the Eucharist, the Reader has specific duties which he or she alone ought to perform, even though ordained ministers may be present. Readers must be carefully prepared for this ministry, so that the faithful will develop a warm and lively love for Sacred Scripture from listening to the reading from the sacred texts.

### **Liturgy of the Word**

After the opening prayer, all sit. Then the Reader enters the Sanctuary, bows to the Altar, then goes to the ambo and proclaims the first reading from the *Lectionary* already placed there before Mass; all sit and listen. At the end, the Reader pauses, and then makes the acclamation, *The Word of the Lord*, with all responding, *Thanks be to God*.

Then a brief period of silence may be observed as appropriate, so that all may meditate on what they have heard. The Reader then goes to a seat prepared in the back of the Sanctuary.

The Cantor then sings the psalm verse and, as a rule, the congregation makes the response.

After the Responsorial Psalm, the Reader returns to the ambo and proclaims the second reading while all listening and make the acclamation at the end, as above. Then, again allows, a brief period of silence may be observed, after which the Reader returns to his/her place in the congregation.