

**Guidelines for  
Lectors (“Ministers of the Word”)  
at Mass for  
St. Athanasius Parish-Harrison and Sacred Heart-Gladwin**

Updated 1/17/2016

**TWO PRAYERS FOR LECTORs BEFORE MASS**

*Heavenly Father,  
I thank You for allowing me to serve You at this Holy Mass.  
Help me to be mindful and attentive of my duties,  
Never seeking to draw attention to myself,  
And only desiring to bring greater glory to You.  
Help me to serve You well,  
As if this was my first Mass,  
My last Mass,  
My only Mass.  
Amen.*



*Soul of Christ, sanctify me  
Body of Christ, save me  
Blood of Christ, inebriate me  
Water from Christ's side, wash me  
Passion of Christ, strengthen me  
O good Jesus, hear me  
Within Thy wounds hide me  
Suffer me not to be separated from Thee  
From the malicious enemy defend me  
In the hour of my death call me  
And bid me come unto Thee  
That I may praise Thee with Thy saints  
and with Thy angels  
Forever and ever  
Amen.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Anima Christi*

## **NOMENCLATURE**

Commonly, “Ministers of the Word” are called “Lectors” and the two titles could be used interchangeably. The “Ministry of Reader” is an officially instituted ministry of a candidate for Holy Orders and therefore, the title of Reader must not be used.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Lectors are members of the faithful called forth to publicly proclaim the Word of God. They are entrusted with the responsibility of proclaiming the Sacred Scriptures to the Christian assembly.

## **ELIGIBILITY**

Candidates who desire to pursue the Ministry of the Word need to be persons of mature faith, good Christian witness and sacramentally active in the life of their Church. They should exhibit the willingness to enter initial and on-going formation periods, to study, be critiqued, and to develop their special skills continually during their years in ministry.

On-going discernment in this ministry is the responsibility of the person seeking to pursue it, those involved in the formation and training of the person, and the pastoral leader. A willingness to serve is not the final admission to this ministry. One should be willing to enter into formation periods to understand and discern what is essential and necessary for this service.

## **FORMATION and TRAINING**

It is the responsibility of the designated pastoral leader to train suitable candidates to become lectors and to provide them with a timely ministry schedule.

Lector candidates must be willing to enter initial and ongoing formation and be responsible for their scheduled duties. They may need to provide a substitute in their absence, but they may not ask someone who is already scheduled for another liturgical ministry the same day.

Training and formation of lectors should occur before they are commissioned. Lectors should be adequately prepared in the following topics:

1. Some biblical knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures is essential for the lector who is making a serious commitment to proclaim the Word in the assembly. The lector needs to be familiar with the format of both the Old and New Testaments and the various literary forms found therein; e.g., poetry, story and letter. An understanding of the liturgical year (the cycles, seasons and feasts) is basic and essential to this ministry.

2. A lector should have the oral and technical skills necessary to proclaim the Word. This competency extends far beyond the ability to read words correctly and includes posture, use of the microphone, projection, tone, pitch, volume, accent, gesture, pace, eye contact, phrasing, pronunciation and articulation. This requires continual practice, review and critique.

## **ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES<sup>2</sup>**

Lectors normally walk in the entrance procession carrying the *evangelary* (i.e., the Book of the Gospels).

Lectors proclaim the First and Second Readings from the *lectionary*, not to be confused with the evangelary. (The priest or deacon proclaims the Gospel from the *evangelary*.)

Lectors also lead the assembly in the Universal Prayer (i.e., the intercessions or petitions) except during funerals and baptisms.

## **ATTIRE**

“Bodily demeanor (gestures, clothing) ought to convey the respect, solemnity and joy of the moment when Christ becomes our guest.”<sup>3</sup> A neat and reverential appearance is in keeping with the dignity of the lector’s role. The lector’s attire should be “Sunday Best.” Without getting overly specific, appropriate attire includes being properly groomed, wearing a suit and tie, or clean, nicely creased trousers with a shirt and tie or a nice shirt/sweater; pants-suit or skirt or slacks with blouse/sweater.

- 1) Examples of inappropriate attire (that will certainly distract people) include:
  - a) Low-cut tops and/or tops with bare shoulders
  - b) Shorts
  - c) Short skirts
  - d) Jeans
  - e) Clothing with slogans or logos, etc.
  - f) Political buttons, distracting jewelry, etc.
  - g) Athletic shoes, flip-flops, “Crocs,” etc.
  - h) Anything that could shift the communicants’ attention from the readings to *you*.
- 2) Lectors do not wear special liturgical garb.

## **BEFORE MASS**

- 1) You are responsible to read when scheduled or to find an appropriate substitute.
- 2) Preparation of the readings must be done in advance. Unprepared lectors do a great disservice to the assembly.
  - a) Annual lector workbooks for practicing at home are available from the parish office.
  - b) Be familiar with the three-year “A”, “B”, and “C” cycle structure of the readings and how to find them in the lectionary.
  - c) If there are multiple options for a reading, always default to the first option unless the priest directs otherwise.
  - d) A handy biblical pronunciation guide may be found at <http://tinyurl.com/gq8wgqp>
- 3) Arrive 15 minutes before Mass, “check in,” and then familiarize yourself with the placement of the readings in the lectionary. Although the sacristans will normally prepare the lectionary with the ribbon, it is ultimately your responsibility to ensure

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<sup>2</sup> If a deacon is present he will fulfill all of the roles of the lector.

<sup>3</sup> CCC 1387b

that the lectionary is properly prepared. Also, ensure that the lectionary is properly placed on the bookstand on the ambo.

- 4) Ensure that the folder containing the Universal Prayer is prepared for the correct day and review it for any difficult names or words. Note that Saturday evening's petitions will often be slightly different than those for Sunday.
- 5) Ensure that the microphone is turned on at the amplifier and also at the base of the microphone itself. Properly position it for your height and to avoid swiping it when turning pages.
- 6) Just prior to the start of Mass, bring the evangeliary (not the lectionary) and gather with the priest and the altar servers in the narthex for a pre-Mass prayer.
- 7) Carry the evangeliary in procession, front cover forward and inclined, elevated slightly above eye level. The lector walks after the altar servers and before the priest.
- 8) Bow your head upon reaching the sanctuary step, then place the evangeliary flat on altar, cover side down.
- 9) Go to your pew, sitting within the first five pews so as to minimize delays walking to/from the ambo.

### **DURING MASS**

- 10) When the people sit after the Penitential Rite, walk (preferably with your hands palm to palm) to a spot in front of the altar, bow to it at your waist, then proceed to the ambo. Walk at a dignified pace without rushing, but without dawdling.
- 11) At the introduction to the reading, proclaim only what is written. For example, say, "A reading from the Book of Genesis," not, "This is' a reading from the Book of Genesis." Conclude with, "The Word of the Lord," not, "This is' the Word of the Lord." Do not add or omit words.
- 12) Speak clearly and more slowly than a normal conversation pace. (Speed-reading is the most common complaint about lectors.)
- 13) Do not proclaim in a wooden monotone, but do not overly dramatize. Remember, this is about the Word of God, not about you. Observe punctuation marks.
- 14) After the First Reading, pause for several seconds, then:
  - a) Sacred Heart Parish: be seated in the lector's chair by the credence table.
  - b) St. Athanasius Parish: return to your pew, again turning and bowing to the altar.
- 15) At the conclusion of the Responsorial Psalm return to the ambo and proclaim the Second Reading.
- 16) When finished with the Second Reading, place the lectionary on the lower shelf of the ambo, being careful not to push anything to the floor. Pause silently for several seconds (don't wait for the priest to stand up) then return to your pew, again turning and bowing to the altar.
- 17) Approach the ambo again (bowing to the altar) as the Nicene Creed is ending, not after it has concluded. Begin the Universal Prayer after the priest has given it's opening prayer.

- 18) After the priest gives the closing prayer of the Universal Prayer, place the binder on the lower shelf of the ambo and return to your pew (turning and bowing to the altar).
- 19) In general, handle the liturgical books with reverence and care.
- 20) Try to avoid adjusting the microphone (this should have been done before Mass).  
Also, try to avoid swiping the microphone with the lectionary pages as you turn them.
- 21) Lectors do not perform another ministry during the same Mass (e.g., Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion) unless an emergency situation arises.
- 22) Lectors walk in the processional, but not the recessional.
- 23) Because lectors are meant to be models for the ritual behavior of the assembly, you should participate in all of the ritual gestures and postures with devotion, and make all oral and sung ritual responses with pious enthusiasm.

### **LIVING THE SACRAMENTAL LIFE**

Practice your Catholic faith through a prayerful relationship with God. Avail yourself of the sacraments regularly, especially Eucharist and the sacrament of Reconciliation.

Serving as a lector is a public role in the Church, so it's especially important to live in a manner consistent with Catholic teaching to the best of your ability. Remember, serving as a lector is a privilege as well as a profound responsibility, not a right.

### **SCHEDULING**

- 1) The Lector Coordinator will prepare and distribute the lector schedule by email or postal mail. You can always pick it up from the office.
- 2) Please inform the Lector Coordinator if you need to be away for any period.
- 3) You are responsible for finding a substitute if you have to miss your assigned schedule.
- 4) Lectors who are habitually absent will be removed from the schedule.
- 5) Please be ready to serve as a lector "in a pinch" at a Mass at which you are attending but not scheduled, especially at funerals and Holy Days. Try to be flexible.

The Lector Coordinator will inform all lectors of any updates to this document.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Lector Coordinator or Fr. Marcel Portelli if there are any questions or if you have suggestions for improvement.

And THANK YOU!