

Diocesan Norms for the MINISTRY OF READER

Diocese of Orlando
Office of Liturgy

I. INTRODUCTION

In the absence of an instituted reader, other lay people may be designated to proclaim the readings from the Sacred Scriptures. Such designated readers must be truly qualified and carefully prepared for this office, so that the faithful will develop a warm and lively love for Sacred Scripture from listening to the reading from the sacred texts (*GIRM 101*).

When the Scriptures are read in Church, God himself is speaking to his people, and Christ, present in his own word, is proclaiming the gospel (*GIRM 29*). In proclaiming the word of God, reader exercise their responsibility in mediating the presence of Christ. God speaks to the assemble through them, and the impact of God's message will depend significantly on their conviction, their preparation and their deliver.

The reading of God's word must therefore be listened to by all with reverence; they make up a principal element of the Liturgy (*GIRM 29*).

The richness in the quantity and in the variety of readings in the *Lectionary* challenges those who are called upon to proclaim the Scriptures at Mass. They employed various literary forms to convey the message of salvation, ranging, for example, from narratives and the poetry of the psalms to prophetic oracles and parables, from theological expositions to apocalyptic visions. An awareness of the literary form of the particular reading and a knowledge of the sacred author's style will enable the reader or psalmist to proclaim more fully and with greater understanding of the tone and content of the text.

The psalmist or cantor of the psalm is to sing the psalm or other biblical song that comes between the readings. To fulfill their function correctly, these psalmists should possess the ability to sing and an aptitude for correct pronunciation and diction (*GIRM 102*). At times, however, it may be necessary for the responsorial psalm be lead by the reader or another minister.

II. REQUIREMENTS

Those who normally fulfill the ministry of reader should be fully initiated members of the community and of sufficient maturity and competency to undertake this ministry.

III. SEATING AND ATTIRE

The proper place for the seating of readers is within the assembly distinguished clearly from those of the clergy (*GIRM 310*). They should be seen coming forth from the assembly and returning to it when their ministry has been completed.

In the Diocese of the United States of America, acolytes, altar server, readers, and other lay ministers may wear the alb or other suitable vesture or other appropriate and dignified clothing (*GIRM 339*). Readers should be encouraged to dress appropriately.

IV. TRAINING

The liturgical assembly truly requires readers, even those not instituted. Proper measures must be taken to ensure that there are certain suitable lay people who have been trained to carry out this ministry. Whenever there is more than one reading, it is better to assign the readings to different readers, if available (*Introduction 52*).

It is necessary that those who exercise the ministry of reader 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, but what may be called a technical preparation is also necessary. The spiritual preparation presupposes at least a biblical and liturgical formation. The purpose of their biblical formation is to give readers the ability to understand the readings in context and to perceive by the light of faith the central point of the revealed message. The liturgical formation ought to equip the readers to have some grasp of the meaning and structure of the Liturgy of the Word and of the significance of its connection with the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The technical preparation should make the readers more skilled in the art of reading publicly, either with the power of their own voice or with the help of sound equipment (*Introduction 55*).

Further, readers should be instructed in the basic elements of the liturgy. They should be made aware of the distinctions between the liturgical seasons, rites and books, and be present in sufficient time preceding the liturgy to receive instruction regarding any particular circumstance which may effect them in their ministry. Readers should always be prepared to read even when they are not assigned.

Each parish should have in place an extensive training program for those who proclaim the scriptures, for both the Lord's Day and during the week. Training workshops and models for training programs are available through the Diocesan Office of Liturgy.

V. OPERATING PROCEDURE

A. Introductory Rites

In the absence of a deacon, the reader, carrying the *Book of Gospels* elevated slightly, follows the altar servers in the entrance procession. The *Lectionary* is never carried in procession (*GIRM 120 d*).

The *Book of Gospels* is placed upon the altar. The reader steps back and makes a profound bow (*GIRM 122*). The reader then goes to his/her seat.

B. Liturgy of the Word

Following the Opening Prayer, the reader goes to the ambo (*GIRM 58*) and proclaims the first reading from the *Lectionary* **already placed there before Mass**: all sit and listen. At the end, the reader makes the acclamation, *The Word of the Lord*, with all responding, *Thanks be to God* (*GIRM 128*).

When the first reading has been concluded, the reader should remain still and silent until the ministers of music begin the psalm response (*GIRM 128*). If there is only one reading before the Gospel reading, or if another reader is to proclaim the second reading, the (first) reader then returns to his/her seat.

At the conclusion of the psalm, if there is a second reading before the Gospel reading, the reader proclaims it from the ambo with all listening and making the acclamation at the end. Then, as the occasion allows, a brief period of silence may be observed (*GIRM 130*). The reader returns to his/her seat as the Gospel Acclamation begins.

The Profession of Faith (Creed) is either sung or recited by the priest together with the people standing. At the words, *By the power of the Holy Spirit ... became man*, all make a profound bow; on the solemnities of the Annunciation and Christmas, all kneel (*GIRM 137*).

When the Creed has been recited, the priest, standing at the chair, with hands joined, briefly introduces the faithful to the general intercessions. Then the deacon, or the cantor, the reader, or another person may announce the intentions from the ambo (or another suitable place) facing the people who for their part make a reverent response. At the completion of the intercessions, the priest concludes the petitions with a prayer (*GIRM 138, 177*).

C. Concluding Rites

When the priest begins to move, the reader may come forward and bow with the other ministers. All the ministers then turn and leave in procession in the same order and manner as at the beginning of the Mass (*GIRM 186*). Neither the *Book of Gospels* nor the *Lectionary* is carried out in the concluding procession.

VI. INSTALLATION OF READERS

The *Book of Blessings*, Chapter 61, provides an “Order for the Blessing of Readers” which should be used in the blessing of new readers. Readers should be commissioned for a specified period of time, perhaps two years. This will allow both the reader and the parish community to benefit from this ministry. Recertification and blessing would be dependent upon parish policy and programs.

Reference Abbreviations

GIRM
Introduction

General Instruction of the Roman Missal
Introduction to the Lectionary for Sunday Mass