

HOW TO READ AT MASS

GUIDELINES FOR PROCLAIMING THE WORD OF GOD

PRACTICAL TIPS

1. If you are unable to read for any reason please try and find someone to swap with you on the Reader's Roster. Be prepared to read both readings in case someone does not turn up and you can't see another reader in the church to help.
2. Bow, together with the other reader (and cantor if there is one) before going up the steps to the altar together. Try and leave the altar together turning to bow before heading back to your place.
3. By arriving early, to avoid any embarrassment, you will be able to:-
 - a) check the Lectionary is open at the correct page;
 - b) check that the microphone is working properly and that it is centred;
 - c) have a quick run-through of the reading as it appears in the Lectionary.
 - d) ask the presiding priest for help if necessary.
4. You need to speak directly into the microphone so stand perfectly in line with it. To keep your voice at a constant level it helps to centre the page you are reading under the microphone so that the direction of your speech is aimed directly towards it. If the reading goes over the page it is easy enough to re-centre the next page by moving the Lectionary to the right or the left.
5. If there is to be music check with the musician(s) that the Psalm and the Alleluia are to be sung by a cantor. If not the first reader should also read the Psalm and the second reader the Alleluia.
6. Unless asked to do so always read from the Lectionary and not from a piece of paper.

Your role as reader is important – you are proclaiming the Word of God, which must be read with dignity and honour. Proclaiming a text is different from our normal way of reading in private.

KEY POINTS

- ❖ Introduce the reading with the words provided in the Lectionary. E.g. 'A reading from the prophet Isaiah' and finish with 'The word of the Lord'. Older Lectionaries have 'This is the word of the Lord'; in which case leave out 'This is'.
- ❖ Make sure you can be heard. If you have any concerns about the microphone, consult the Priest who will be presiding at the Mass.

- ❖ Read slowly and deliberately.
- ❖ Read louder than in a conversational tone and project your voice right into the microphone.
- ❖ Read with expression, understanding and conviction. Pay attention to the tone of your voice, which is important for communicating the message effectively.
- ❖ Use eye contact with the congregation.
- ❖ Be present to the congregation from beginning to end.

READING TIPS

- ❖ Read your reading over a few times in advance. Find out as much as you can about the reading so you can read it convincingly.
- ❖ Check any words you cannot pronounce or are unsure of, especially personal names.
- ❖ It is always better to be too slow than too fast since it is the Word of God and not some other writing. Read slower than usual so people can meditate on and pray in response to God's Word as well as hear it. If the church is large and has an echo, you must read slower still.
- ❖ Project your voice into the microphone more loudly than your usual tone, otherwise the microphone will not work for you. The larger the congregation, the louder and the slower you must speak so that the message reaches everyone. It is better to be too loud than too soft, too slow than too fast.
- ❖ Before you begin to read, take a moment to pause in silence and look out at all the people, making eye contact. This moment of silence immediately attracts everyone's attention.
- ❖ If you are able, make eye contact periodically with the congregation during the rest of the reading. If you feel self-conscious, look at the people's foreheads or just over their heads.
- ❖ If it helps, use your hand to move down the page line by line. Then, if you make eye contact, this will hold your place.
- ❖ Pause for a split second at commas, a full second at full stops, two seconds at the end of a paragraph. One helpful hint is to say to yourself, 'one' at each full stop or 'one, two' after each paragraph.
- ❖ Use expression when you read and make the words talk. Emphasize important words and phrases*. Give attention to the tone of your voice; it will communicate a strong message. Not only will the reading become more interesting, but it will also help the listeners to absorb it better.
- ❖ You should not sound singsong. Without care, your reading may develop a rhythm that is characteristic of you but not helpful for the best expression of the text.
- ❖ At the end of your reading, after you have said, 'The Word of the Lord', bow your head and pause in silence, slowly counting to 5. This gives the Word a chance to sink in, so people can reflect on it.

OTHER NOTES

1. Before coming to church read over and meditate on your reading. If you can, read a little commentary or background for fuller understanding. Also, check the pronunciation of difficult words ahead of time and practise out loud.
3. Do not be afraid. Pray for the God to guide you and speak through you. He will.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

Reading at Mass is a privilege. It is a ministry. You are marked as one of the leaders of the liturgy on that day. This requires that you dress out of respect for your role and for the people who recognize you as a leader.

*Which words should I emphasize?

Normally you should emphasize nouns (people and things) and verbs (actions). Some readers become over concerned about little words and give them too much emphasis. This is especially true of prepositions and personal pronouns. In the sentence '*Paul did not hand the sword to Peter; he took it from him*' the important words are 'Paul', 'not', 'hand', 'sword', Peter and 'took'; not 'to', 'he', 'from' or 'him'. Of course, there may sometimes be occasions when the little words do need emphasizing. 'I said put the book *by* the bin, not *in* the bin.' Giving insistent emphasis to personal pronouns in the hopes of making a reading more interesting can become a cause of discomfort to listeners. Ezekiel's words, 'The spirit came into me and made me stand up, and I heard the Lord speaking to me' are spoilt if the emphasis is placed on his personal pronouns rather than on the spirit and the Lord and the actions they perform for Ezekiel.