

Ministry of the Reader



Our Lady of the Lake 2019

About the cover: This illustration of the Solemnity of the Annunciation is from a Missale Romanum published by the Society of St. John the Evangelist, 1932 in Belgium. The Latin text in the ribbon above the figure of Mary reads: "Let it be done to me according to your Word."

Introduction

1. To reflect on the ministry of reader, it would be good to remind ourselves of the Introduction to the Lectionary for Mass. The complete text can be found in Volume I of the four volume Lectionary for Mass, marked Lectionary for Sunday Mass. Readers should familiarize themselves with the text, as it gives a wonderful introduction to the role of the Sacred Scriptures in the Mass, and an excellent presentation of how the particular readings appear throughout the liturgical year. The following excerpt may serve as an introduction to our booklet for readers.
2. The many riches contained in the one word of God are admirably brought out in the different kinds of liturgical celebration and in the different gatherings of the faithful who take part in those celebrations. This takes place as the unfolding mystery of Christ is recalled during the course of the liturgical year, as the Church's sacraments and sacramentals are celebrated, or as the faithful respond individually to the Holy Spirit working within them. For then the liturgical celebration, founded primarily on the word of God and sustained by it, becomes a new event and enriches the word itself with new meaning and power. Thus in the Liturgy the Church faithfully adheres to the way Christ himself read and explained the Sacred Scriptures, beginning with the "today" of his coming forward in the synagogue and urging all to search the Scriptures.
3. In the celebration of the Liturgy the word of God is not announced in only one way nor does it always stir the hearts of the hearers with the same efficacy. Always, however, Christ is present in his word, as he carries out the mystery of salvation, sanctifies humanity and offers the Father perfect worship. Moreover, the word of God unceasingly calls to mind and extends the economy of salvation, which achieves its fullest expression in the Liturgy. The liturgical celebration becomes therefore the continuing, complete and effective presentation of God's word. The word of God constantly proclaimed in the Liturgy is always, then, a living and effective word through the power of the Holy Spirit. It expresses the Father's love that never fails in its effectiveness toward us.
4. "It is necessary that those who exercise the ministry of reader, even if they have not received institution, 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." (General Instructions) Their preparation must above all be spiritual, but what may be called a technical preparation is also needed. The spiritual preparation

presupposes at least a biblical and liturgical formation. The purpose of the 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 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.

5. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (the Sacramentary) is the foundational text for all we do in celebrating the mass. It can be found online at the United States Bishops web site **www.usccb.org** in the section on Prayer and Worship. There is also abundant information about the Ministry of the Word at Mass and with other prayer.

Sequence of Actions for Readers

As Readers play an important part in the Liturgy, they should make every effort to actively participate in the Eucharistic Liturgies by participating in all the songs and prayers with the assembly. The following “Sequence of Actions” has been written specifically for our parish. Familiarity with them will assist you in your ministry.

6. Preparation
 - a. Before even practicing for the readings themselves, read them prayerfully and take time to meditate on what the readings are expressing about our faith.
 - b. Please practice the readings the week before you are to read to provide the most effective delivery. There are many on line resources to help you understand the particular readings. Begin at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/>. Most helpful are the audio recordings of the readings to assist in pronunciation and emphasis.
 - c. Readers will all receive a study edition of the readings for the Liturgical Year to assist in their preparation.
 - d. A reader should have basic understanding of the cycle of the readings throughout the liturgical year and be familiar with the structure of the Lectionary. The USCCB web site is a good resource for this.
 - e. If a liturgy uses two or more readers (such as a funeral or special celebration or masses with the youth), the readers should contact each other during preparation time as they prepare the readings so they know how to divide the readings for the Sunday liturgy.
 - f. New readers should normally be commissioned before they exercise their ministry.
 - g. At a convenient time when the church is empty, practice with someone in the congregation to listen and give feedback using the sound system. Get comfortable with how it picks up your voice.
 - h. A reader should strive to live a life of service, prayer and holiness. Regular prayer and frequent confession will aid the reader in developing a life based on the gospels. If the occasion arises that a reader is conscious of grave sin, he or she should refrain from ministry until reconciled with God and the community.
 - i. Because readers exercise their ministry in the public context of the Church, they should refrain from ministry if the situation arises in their private life that would cause public scandal in faith and morals.
7. Arrive fifteen (15) minutes prior to Mass
 - a. Sign the minister sign-in sheet in the fellowship hall and go to the sacristy and let the mass coordinator know you have arrived. Coming at

least this early allows time to find a replacement and have them prepare at least a little if someone does not show up.

- b. Be sure to mark the Lectionary with the ribbon so the book is opened to the correct readings for the Sunday Liturgy. The readings always should be proclaimed from the Lectionary.
 - c. Go to the ambo and check the microphone position.
8. While the norm at our parish is to sing the response, please check with the music minister(s) to be sure that they will be leading the Responsorial Psalm.
- a. Be sure you know what petitions should be read. If a deacon is present, he will read the petitions.
 - b. Make sure the stand for The Book of Gospels is on the altar. The stand should be slightly toward the congregation past the midpoint of the altar to leave room for the priest to kiss the altar at the beginning of Mass.
 - c. Ensure that your place is reserved in the sanctuary in the row of chairs on the north side of the sanctuary.
9. Five Minutes before Mass begins
- a. Ensure that the Book of the Gospels is appropriately marked with a ribbon and proceed with it to the back entrance of the church to await the procession.
 - b. If a deacon is present, he will process in the with the Book of Gospels.
10. Process into Church
- a. If no deacon is present, the reader carries the Book of Gospels elevated above eye height. The use of the Book of Gospels is the norm of Sunday liturgies and solemnities. If there is something which impedes a reader from participating in the procession, the Book of Gospels may be placed on the altar before Mass.
 - b. Normally the Book of Gospels goes after the cross and the candles. When there is no incense, cross or candles to lead the procession, the Book of Gospels goes first, beginning when the congregation starts singing the opening song.
 - c. When the procession reaches the sanctuary, the reader who is carrying the Book of Gospels is to proceed immediately forward, without reverencing Christ in the tabernacle at that time, go **AROUND THE ALTAR**, and facing the people, place the Book of Gospels on the stand. **THEN**, step to the side in the sanctuary and bow from the waist (not just nod the head) with the other ministers in reverence to the altar. The reasons for this are several:
 - i. at that particular moment of the liturgy, we are celebrating the presence of Christ in the Word proclaimed at Mass and the

Sacrifice on the Altar. Since the tabernacle is not behind the altar, bowing in reverence to the altar is appropriate.

- ii. Secondly, walking around the altar and facing the people more dramatically draws the attention of the congregation to where it needs to be at that time when we begin the Liturgy of the Word. Third, there are often decorations in front of the altar that impede a graceful placing of the Book of Gospels on the altar.
- d. Proceed to your seat to the north of the ambo in the chair provided.

11. After the priest prays the Opening Prayer

- a. **Be seated.** It is important that a **significant pause for silence** mark the transition between the opening rites and the liturgy of the word. Hospitality ministers may be seating people after the opening prayer. The General Instructions have newly emphasized moments of silence throughout the liturgy.
- b. **Count to 15** then proceed to the Ambo reverently and slowly, do not race. Allowing silence to fall over the congregation will highlight the special liturgical action which is the proclamation of the Sacred Scriptures.
- c. Bow from the waist **to the altar** (the focus of the Eucharist after the beginning of Mass) at the foot of the steps, then take your place at the ambo. The readers are in the sanctuary and not passing in front of the altar, so a bow isn't technically required; however, in most churches readers will be entering the sanctuary at this time and it is a good habit to keep.
- d. Wait for the congregation to settle. If people are in the middle of finding a seat, wait for them.
- e. Adjust the microphone.
- f. Assume a comfortable position.
- g. Make eye contact with the congregation and be aware they are ready to hear the Word of God.
 - i. Begin the first reading with "A (rhymes with *duh not day*) reading from..." (**Do not say** "The first reading" or "The second reading is a reading..."). In other words, read what is in the lectionary.
 - ii. Pause briefly but distinctly before you begin the reading.
- h. Pay attention to your pacing. It is almost impossible to read too slowly, but it is very easy to read too quickly.
 - i. Make sure you speak clearly and loudly. There are parishioners with hearing problems and the reader must speak to them loudly so they can hear the Word. Do not count on the microphone to do all the work for you.
 - j. Please convey the emotion of the reading in your tone and volume. It is especially important to convey with your voice the different speakers that may be in the reading.

- k. At the end of the reading, pause briefly but distinctively, make eye contact with the assembly, then say, “The Word of the Lord.” Pause briefly after the reading and before saying “The Word of the Lord” so that it does not appear to be part of the reading.
 - l. Turn the page and ribbon to the next reading.
 - m. Take your seat in the sanctuary during the psalm (no bow).
12. If the Psalm is not sung:
- a. Pause for a few brief moments.
 - b. Begin with the Psalm response spoken loudly, distinctly and slowly. There is no need to introduce it with “the responsorial psalm is or similar words.
 - c. Repeat the response with the congregation.
 - d. Speak the verses of the Psalm and conclude the section with a clear vocal cue.
 - e. Repeat the refrain with the congregation each time.
 - f. On some occasions, the response may be sung but there is no one to sing the verses. In that case, you will be informed by the musicians to be prepared to read the verse texts in between the sung responses.
13. After the Responsorial Psalm
- a. Count to 10.
 - b. The reader proclaiming the second reading should approach the Ambo.
 - c. Follow the instructions listed for the first reading.
 - d. Remove the Lectionary from the ambo after the 2nd reading has been read and place it in the shelf below.
 - e. Return to your seat, turning to bow from the waist to the altar after leaving the stairs to the altar platform.
14. Immediately after the Creed, while the celebrant is inviting the people to attend to the General Intercessions
- a. The reader reading the petitions should go to the Ambo so as to be ready to begin soon after the invitation to prayer. Do not wait until the invitation is over. Before proceeding to the altar platform, one makes a profound bow of reverence.
 - b. Announce any special response to the petitions and repeat it along with the congregation to emphasize it.
 - c. Remain at the Ambo until AFTER the priest finishes the prayer after the petitions. (A good rule of thumb is that there should be no movement while prayers addressed to God by the celebrant are taking place.)
 - d. Take your seat, turning to bow to the altar after descending the stairs from the altar platform.
15. The General Instructions to the Roman Rite call for all ministers in the sanctuary to kneel during the Eucharistic prayer.

16. As the priest moves to kiss the altar during the closing song
 - a. The reader moves to meet the priest and the servers at the altar steps and walk in procession after the servers, before the celebrant. If the reader chooses, he or she does not have to join the recession.
 - b. Neither Book of the Gospels or Lectionary is to be carried during the recessional.

17. According to the Twelfth Synod of Bishops of the Catholic Church who met in Rome in the Fall of 2009, the book of Sacred Scripture, even outside of the liturgical action, should have a visible place of honor in the interior of the church. In order that we comply with this worthy exhortation, the reader returns the Book of Gospels to its place of honor in church after Mass is over, that is, when the recessional hymn is completed and the congregation leaves the church.

18. Scheduling
 - a. Each reader will receive a copy of the schedule showing the name of the reader and Mass time for each weekend Mass. If necessary, you can switch Mass times and weekends with another reader. If you decide you no longer wish to reader, please notify the reader coordinator and the pastor.
 - b. If you cannot attend the Mass at which you are scheduled to reader, **please find a substitute.**

19. Weekday Masses
 - a. New readers at weekday Masses are normally commissioned before exercising their ministry.
 - b. The reading proper to a solemnity, feast, or obligatory memorial takes precedence over the normal weekday reading. If there is an optional memorial or possible votive mass, the reader should consult with the celebrant ahead of time to find out which text is to be read. On a Solemnity, there is a second reading after the psalm so be prepared to read it too.
 - c. The responsorial psalm is normally recited at weekday masses. The reader should repeat the response with the congregation to assist them since they normally wouldn't have it to read.

20. Masses for Special Occasions
 - a. It is desirable that whenever possible, a commissioned reader read at special sacramental celebrations such as weddings, first communions, confirmations or funerals.
 - b. Photocopied texts of the readings may not be used during the liturgy.

- c. Student readers should be given ample instruction as to the use of the Lectionary as part of their basic religious instructions.

21. Dress

- a. The sacredness and public character of the liturgy requires a certain amount of attention to the appearance and clothing of the reader.
- b. Jeans, shorts, t-shirts, plunging necklines, and certain casual wear are discouraged for reading at mass.

Pertinent Excerpts from the General Instruction to the Roman Missal:

GIRM #29. When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his own word, proclaims the Gospel. Therefore, all must listen with reverence to the readings from God's word, for they make up an element of greatest importance in the Liturgy. Although in the readings from Sacred Scripture God's word is addressed to all people of every era and is understandable to them, nevertheless, a fuller understanding and a greater effectiveness of the word is fostered by a living commentary on the word, that is, the homily, as part of the liturgical action.

GIRM #38. In texts that are to be spoken in a loud and clear voice, whether by the priest or the deacon, or by the reader, or by all, the tone of voice should correspond to the genre of the text itself, that is, depending upon whether it is a reading, a prayer, a commentary, an acclamation, or a sung text; the tone should also be suited to the form of celebration and to the solemnity of the gathering. Consideration should also be given to the idiom of different languages and the culture of different peoples. In the rubrics and in the norms that follow, words such as "say" and "proclaim" are to be understood of both singing and reciting, according to the principles just stated above.

GIRM #45. **Sacred silence** also, as part of the celebration, is to be observed at the designated times. Its purpose, however, depends on the time it occurs in each part of the celebration. Thus within the Act of Penitence and again after the invitation to pray, all recollect themselves; but at the **conclusion of a reading** or the homily, all meditate briefly on what they have heard; then after Communion, they praise and pray to God in their hearts. Even before the celebration itself, it is commendable that silence to be observed in the church, in the sacristy, in the vesting room, and in adjacent areas, so that all may dispose themselves to carry out the sacred action in a devout and fitting manner.

GIRM #55. The main part of the Liturgy of the Word is made up of the readings from Sacred Scripture together with the chants occurring between them. The homily, Profession of Faith, and Prayer of the Faithful, however, develop and conclude this part of the Mass. For in the readings, as explained by the homily,

God speaks to his people, opening up to them the mystery of redemption and salvation and offering them spiritual nourishment; and Christ himself is present in the midst of the faithful through his word. By their silence and singing the people make God's word their own, and they also affirm their adherence to it by means of the Profession of Faith. Finally, having been nourished by it, they pour out their petitions in the Prayer of the Faithful for the needs of the entire Church and for the salvation of the whole world.

GIRM #56. The Liturgy of the Word is to be celebrated in such a way as to promote meditation, and so any sort of haste that hinders recollection must clearly be avoided. During the Liturgy of the Word, it is also appropriate to include brief periods of silence, accommodated to the gathered assembly, in which, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, the word of God may be grasped by the heart and a response through prayer may be prepared. It may be appropriate to observe such periods of silence, for example, before the Liturgy of the Word itself begins, after the first and second reading, and lastly at the conclusion of the homily.

GIRM #57. In the readings, the table of God's word is prepared for the faithful, and the riches of the Bible are opened to them. Hence, it is preferable to maintain the arrangement of the biblical readings, by which light is shed on the unity of both Testaments and of salvation history. Moreover, it is unlawful to substitute other, non-biblical texts for the readings and responsorial Psalm, which contain the word of God.

GIRM #58. In the celebration of the Mass with a congregation, the readings are always proclaimed from the ambo.

GIRM #59. By tradition, the function of proclaiming the readings is ministerial, not presidential. The readings, therefore, should be proclaimed by a reader, and the Gospel by a deacon or, in his absence, a priest other than the celebrant. If, however, a deacon or another priest is not present, the priest celebrant himself should read the Gospel. Further, if another suitable reader is also not present, then the priest celebrant should also proclaim the other readings. After each reading, whoever reads gives the acclamation, to which the gathered people reply, honoring the word of God that they have received in faith and with grateful hearts.

GIRM #60. The reading of the Gospel is the high point of the Liturgy of the Word. The Liturgy itself teaches that great reverence is to be shown to it by setting it off from the other readings with special marks of honor: whether the minister appointed to proclaim it prepares himself by a blessing or prayer; or the faithful, standing as they listen to it being read, through their acclamations acknowledge and confess Christ present and speaking to them; or the very marks of reverence are given to The Book of Gospels.

GIRM #61. After the first reading comes the responsorial Psalm, which is an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word and holds great liturgical and pastoral

importance, because it fosters meditation on the word of God. The responsorial Psalm should correspond to each reading and should, as a rule, be taken from the Lectionary. It is preferable that the responsorial Psalm be sung, at least as far as the people's response is concerned. Hence, the psalmist, or the cantor of the Psalm, sings the verses of the Psalm from the ambo or another suitable place. The entire congregation remains seated and listens but, as a rule, takes part by singing the response, except when the Psalm is sung straight through without a response. In order, however, that the people may be able to sing the Psalm response more readily, texts of some responses and Psalms have been chosen for the various seasons of the year or for the various categories of Saints. These may be used in place of the text corresponding to the reading whenever the Psalm is sung. If the Psalm cannot be sung, then it should be recited in such a way that it is particularly suited to fostering meditation on the word of God. In the dioceses of the United States of America, the following may also be sung in place of the Psalm assigned in the *Lectionary for Mass*: either the proper or seasonal antiphon and Psalm from the *Lectionary*, as found either in the *Roman Gradual* or *Simple Gradual* or in another musical setting; or an antiphon and Psalm from another collection of the psalms and antiphons, including psalms arranged in metrical form, providing that they have been approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops or the Diocesan Bishop. Songs or hymns may not be used in place of the responsorial Psalm.

GIRM #62. After the reading that immediately precedes the Gospel, the *Alleluia* or another chant indicated by the rubrics is sung, as required by the liturgical season. An acclamation of this kind constitutes a rite or act in itself, by which the assembly of the faithful welcomes and greets the Lord who is about to speak to them in the Gospel and professes their faith by means of the chant. It is sung by all while standing and is led by the choir or a cantor, being repeated if this is appropriate. The verse, however, is sung either by the choir or by the cantor. a. The *Alleluia* is sung in every season other than Lent. The verses are taken from the Lectionary or the *Graduale*. b. During Lent, in place of the *Alleluia*, the verse before the Gospel is sung, as indicated in the Lectionary. It is also permissible to sing another psalm or tract, as found in the *Graduale*.

GIRM #64. The Sequence, which is optional except on Easter Sunday and on Pentecost Day, is sung before the *Alleluia*.

GIRM #70. As a rule, the series of intentions is to be a. For the needs of the Church; b. For public authorities and the salvation of the whole world; c. For those burdened by any kind of difficulty; d. For the local community. Nevertheless, in a particular celebration, such as Confirmation, Marriage, or a Funeral, the series of intentions may reflect more closely the particular occasion.

GIRM #71. It is for the priest celebrant to direct this prayer from the chair. He himself begins it with a brief introduction, by which he invites the faithful to pray, and likewise he concludes it with a prayer. The intentions announced should be sober, be composed freely but prudently, and be succinct, and they

should express the prayer of the entire community. The intentions are announced from the ambo or from another suitable place, by the deacon or by a cantor, a reader, or one of the lay faithful. The people, however, stand and give expression to their prayer either by an invocation said together after each intention or by praying in silence.

GIRM #99. The reader is instituted to proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture, with the exception of the Gospel. He may also announce the intentions for the Prayer of the Faithful and, in the absence of a psalmist, proclaim the Psalm between the readings. In the Eucharistic Celebration, the reader has his own proper office (cf. below, nos. 194-198), which he must exercise personally.

GIRM #94. After the priest, the deacon, in virtue of the sacred ordination he has received, holds first place among those who minister in the Eucharistic Celebration. For the sacred Order of the diaconate has been held in high honor in the Church even from the time of the Apostles. At Mass the deacon has his own part in proclaiming the Gospel, in preaching God's word from time to time, in announcing the intentions of the Prayer of the Faithful, in ministering to the priest, in preparing the altar and serving the celebration of the Sacrifice, in distributing the Eucharist to the faithful, especially under the species of wine, and sometimes in giving directions regarding the people's gestures and posture.

GIRM #101. In the absence of an instituted reader, other laypersons may be commissioned to proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture. They should be truly suited to perform this function and should receive careful preparation, so that the faithful by listening to the readings from the sacred texts may develop in their hearts a warm and living love for Sacred Scripture.

GIRM #102. The psalmist's role is to sing the Psalm or other biblical canticle that comes between the readings. To fulfill this function correctly, it is necessary that the psalmist have the ability for singing and a facility in correct pronunciation and diction.

GIRM #109. If there are several persons present who are able to exercise the same ministry, nothing forbids their distributing among themselves and performing different parts of the same ministry or duty. For example, one deacon may be assigned to take the sung parts, another to serve at the altar; if there are several readings, it is well to distribute them among a number of readers. The same applies for the other ministries. But it is not at all appropriate that several persons divide a single element of the celebration among themselves, e.g., that the same reading be proclaimed by two readers, one after the other, except as far as the Passion of the Lord is concerned.

GIRM #128. After the Collect, all sit. The priest may, very briefly, introduce the faithful to the Liturgy of the Word. Then the reader goes to the ambo and, from the Lectionary already placed there before Mass, proclaims the first reading, to which all listen. At the end, the reader says the acclamation *Verbum Domini*

(*The word of the Lord*), and all respond, *Deo gratias (Thanks be to God)*. Then, as appropriate, a few moments of silence may be observed so that all may meditate on what they have heard.

GIRM #260. The readings should whenever possible be proclaimed from the ambo or a lectern.

GIRM #261. After the collect, the minister reads the first reading and Psalm, the second reading, when it is to be said, and the verse for the *Alleluia* or other chant.

GIRM #130. If there is to be a second reading before the Gospel, the reader proclaims it from the ambo. All listen and at the end respond to the acclamation, as noted above (cf. no. 128). Then, as appropriate, a few moments of silence may be observed.

GIRM #133. If The Book of Gospels is on the altar, the priest then takes it and goes to the ambo, carrying The Book of Gospels slightly elevated and preceded by the lay ministers, who may carry the thurible and the candles. Those present turn towards the ambo as a sign of special reverence to the Gospel of Christ.

GIRM #135. If no reader is present, the priest himself proclaims all the readings and the Psalm, standing at the ambo. If incense is used, remaining at the ambo he puts some into the thurible, blesses it, and, bowing profoundly, says, *Munda cor meum (Almighty God, cleanse my heart)*.

GIRM #171. When he is present at the Eucharistic Celebration, a deacon should exercise his ministry, wearing sacred vestments. For the deacon a. Assists the priest and remains at his side; b. Ministers at the altar, with the chalice as well as the book; c. Proclaims the Gospel and, at the direction of the priest celebrant, may preach the homily (cf. above, no. 66); d. Guides the faithful by appropriate introductions and explanations, and announces the intentions of the Prayer of the Faithful; e. Assists the priest celebrant in distributing Communion, and purifies and arranges the sacred vessels; f. As needed, fulfills the duties of other ministers himself if none of them is present.

GIRM #176. If, in addition, there is no other suitable reader present, the deacon should proclaim the other readings as well.

GIRM #177. After the introduction by the priest it is the deacon himself who normally announces the intentions of the Prayer of the Faithful, from the ambo.

GIRM #196. The reader reads from the ambo the readings that precede the Gospel. If there is no psalmist, the reader may also proclaim the responsorial Psalm after the first reading.

GIRM #197. When no deacon is present, the reader, after the introduction by the priest, may announce from the ambo the intentions of the Prayer of the Faithful.

GIRM #295. The sanctuary is the place where the altar stands, where the word of God is proclaimed, and where the priest, the deacon, and the other ministers exercise their offices. It should suitably be marked off from the body of the church either by its being somewhat elevated or by a particular structure and ornamentation. It should, however, be large enough to allow the Eucharist to be celebrated properly and easily seen.

GIRM #309. The dignity of the word of God requires that the church have a place that is suitable for the proclamation of the word and toward which the attention of the whole congregation of the faithful naturally turns during the Liturgy of the Word. It is appropriate that this place be ordinarily a stationary ambo and not simply a movable lectern. The ambo must be located in keeping with the design of each church in such a way that the ordained ministers and readers may be clearly seen and heard by the faithful. From the ambo only the readings, the responsorial Psalm, and the Easter Proclamation (*Exsultet*) are to be proclaimed; it may be used also for giving the homily and for announcing the intentions of the Prayer of the Faithful. The dignity of the ambo requires that only a minister of the word should go up to it. It is appropriate that a new ambo be blessed according to the rite described in the Roman Ritual before it is put into liturgical use.

GIRM #117. ...On the altar itself may be placed The Book of Gospels, distinct from the book of other readings, unless it is carried in the Entrance Procession.

GIRM #120. Once the people have gathered, the priest and ministers, clad in the sacred vestments, go in procession to the altar in this order: a. The thurifer carrying a thurible with burning incense, if incense is used; b. The ministers who carry lighted candles, and between them an acolyte or other minister with the cross; c. The acolytes and the other ministers; d. A reader, who may carry The Book of Gospels (though not the Lectionary), which should be slightly elevated; e. The priest who is to celebrate the Mass. If incense is used, before the procession begins, the priest puts some in the thurible and blesses it with the Sign of the Cross without saying anything.

GIRM #122. On reaching the altar, the priest and ministers make a profound bow. The cross adorned with a figure of Christ crucified and perhaps carried in procession may be placed next to the altar to serve as the altar cross, in which case it ought to be the only cross used; otherwise it is put away in a dignified place. In addition, the candlesticks are placed on the altar or near it. It is a praiseworthy practice that The Book of Gospels be placed upon the altar.

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GIRM #138. After the recitation of the Creed, the priest, standing at the chair with hands joined, by means of a brief introduction invites the faithful to participate in the Prayer of the Faithful. Then the cantor, the reader, or another person announces the intentions from the ambo or from some other suitable place while facing the people, who take their part by responding in supplication. After the intentions, the priest, with hands extended, concludes the petitions with a prayer.

GIRM #173. When he reaches the altar, if he is carrying The Book of Gospels, he omits the sign of reverence and goes up to the altar.

GIRM #339. In the dioceses of the United States of America, acolytes, altar servers, readers, and other lay ministers may wear the alb or other suitable vesture or other appropriate and dignified clothing.

GIRM #357. For Sundays and solemnities, three readings are assigned: that is, from a Prophet, an Apostle, and a Gospel. By these the Christian people are brought to know the continuity of the work of salvation according to the God's wonderful plan. These readings should be followed strictly. During the Easter Season, according to the tradition of the Church, instead of the reading from the Old Testament, the reading is taken from the Acts of the Apostles. For Feasts, on the other hand, two readings are assigned. If, however, according to the norms a feast is raised to the rank of a solemnity, a third reading is added, taken from the Common. For memorials of Saints, unless strictly proper readings are given, the readings assigned for the weekday are customarily used. In certain cases, readings are provided that highlight some particular aspect of the spiritual life or activity of the Saint. The use of such readings is not to be insisted upon, unless a pastoral reason suggests it.

GIRM #358. In the Lectionary for weekdays, readings are provided for each day of every week throughout the entire year; as a result, these readings are for the most part to be used on the days to which they are assigned, unless there occurs a solemnity, feast, or memorial that has its own proper New Testament readings, that is to say, readings in which mention is made of the Saint being celebrated. If, however, the continuous reading during the week is interrupted by the occurrence of some solemnity or feast, or some particular celebration, then the priest, taking into consideration the entire week's scheme of readings, is allowed either to combine parts omitted with other readings or to decide which readings are to be preferred over others. In Masses with special groups, the priest is allowed to choose texts more suited to the particular celebration, provided they are taken from the texts of an approved lectionary.

GIRM #359. In addition, the Lectionary has a special selection of texts from Sacred Scripture for Ritual Masses into which certain Sacraments or Sacramentals are incorporated, or for Masses that are celebrated for certain needs. Selections of readings of this kind have been established in this way, so that through a more apt hearing of the word of God the faithful may be led to a

fuller understanding of the mystery in which they are participating and may be brought to a more ardent love of the word of God. As a result, texts spoken in the celebration are to be chosen keeping in mind both a suitable pastoral reason and the options allowed in this matter.

GIRM #360. At times, a longer and shorter form of the same text is given. In choosing between these two forms, a pastoral criterion must be kept in mind. At such times, attention should be paid to the capacity of the faithful to listen with understanding to a reading of greater or lesser length, and to their capacity to hear a more complete text, which is then explained in the homily.

GIRM #361. When a choice is allowed between alternative texts, whether they are fixed or optional, attention must be paid to what is in the best interests of those taking part, whether it is a matter of using the easier text or one more appropriate in a given group or of repeating or setting aside a text that is assigned as proper to some particular celebration while being optional for another, as pastoral advantage may suggest. Such a situation may arise when the same text would have to be read again within a few days, as, for example, on a Sunday and on a following weekday, or when it is feared that a certain text might create some difficulties for a particular group of the Christian faithful. Care should, however, be taken that, when choosing scriptural passages, parts of Sacred Scripture are not permanently excluded.

Ministry of the Word: Points of Emphasis

Those who serve our congregation as ministers of the word perform a sacred function in bringing Christ to the people through Sacramental Word. To assist our readers in their work and to ensure that there is consistency at all the liturgies, the following points are provided.

1. Review the fundamental nature of the liturgical action you participate in: the proclamation of the Word of God is truly a **real presence of Christ** in the midst of the congregation. The role of the reader is essential as it makes possible the encounter with Christ in a very personal way, face to face in the Eucharist or whenever we gather as two or three in His name and proclaim the Word. The immediacy of having the scriptures proclaimed in the midst of the congregation. Not mere reading silently or listening to some recording is a radical and unique way the liturgy of the Church brings Christ into our hearts and minds. By your prayerful preparation and diligent attention to your ministry, you are personally answering Christ's question to the disciples for all to see: "And who do you say that I am?"
2. Review carefully the sequence of actions at the entrance procession. Readers who are carrying the Book of Gospels are to proceed immediately forward, without reverencing the tabernacle at that time, go **AROUND THE ALTAR, and facing the people**, place the Book of Gospels on the stand. THEN, step to the side in the sanctuary and bow with the other ministers in reverence to Christ as represented by the altar. The reasons for this are several: at that particular moment of the liturgy, we are celebrating the presence of Christ in the Word proclaimed at Mass and the Sacrifice on the Altar. Secondly, walking around the altar and facing the people more dramatically draws the attention of the congregation to where it needs to be at that time when we begin the Liturgy of the Word. Third, there are often decorations in front of the altar that impede a graceful placing of the Book of Gospels on the altar.
3. Be seated. It is important that a significant pause for silence mark the transition between the opening rites and the liturgy of the word. Hospitality ministers may be seating people after the opening prayer. Wait until the invitation of Children's Liturgy of the Word is over. It takes a bit of time for the rustle of being seated dies down and people start paying attention. **Allowing silence to fall** over the congregation will highlight the special liturgical action which is the proclamation of the Sacred Scriptures. Proceed to the Ambo reverently without haste. Pause after the Responsorial Psalm before beginning the Second Reading.

4. Begin moving to the ambo **as soon as the creed is finished**, while the priest introduces the Universal Prayers.
5. Before the revision of the Missal, the general instructions did not specify a procession with a Book of Gospels. Many different customs developed in various churches, including even processing in with a Lectionary. Since the promulgation of the new General Instructions in 2005 in the US, clear instructions as to the Book of Gospels are present. There is **NO provision for carrying the Book of Gospels out** in procession at the end of mass. Therefore we will now follow the rubrics that have been established.
6. According to the Twelfth Synod of Bishops of the Catholic Church who met in Rome in the Fall of 2009, the book of Sacred Scripture, even outside of the liturgical action, should have a visible place of honor in the interior of the church. In order that we comply with this worthy exhortation, Lectors, please return the **Book of Gospels to its place of honor** in the church after Mass is over, that is, when the recessional hymn is completed and the congregation leaves the church.
7. When there is no incense, cross or candles to lead the procession, the Book of Gospels goes first, beginning when the congregations starts singing the opening song.
8. The sacredness and public character of the liturgy requires a certain amount of attention to the **appearance and clothing of the reader**. Jeans, t-shirts, shorts, plunging necklines, and certain casual wear are discouraged for reading at mass. It is so important that if you are unable to attend your scheduled mass, you find a replacement so they can be fully prepared.
9. Finally, please consider the manner in which you proclaim the scriptures: know that it is the Living Word of God. Speak the words as if they are being proclaimed for the first time to an unknowing audience. Immediacy of proclamation is a good way of picturing it. Do this by looking up as much as possible, especially at the ritual's opening words and closing addresses. Remember, you should appear to be **proclaiming the Word of God** rather than merely reading from a book.
10. If you are in doubt about the **pronunciation of a word**, especial a place name or the name of a biblical person, ask the priest. It is a good idea to listen to the audio recordings for the readings that can be found on the U.S. Bishops' web site: www.usccb.org.

