Guide for Lectors **Sacred Heart Parish** **Nekoosa, WI**

October 2026

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for responding to the call to serve as a Lector! The Lector performs a great service to the Church by proclaiming the readings from Sacred Scripture and, in the absence of a psalmist, reciting the Psalm between the readings.[1] In addition, when no Deacon is present, the lector announces the intentions for the Universal Prayer. It is an honor and a privilege to serve in this capacity and, of course, careful preparation on the part of the Lector is required.

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance, Church teaching, and helpful tips that will make you better suited to carrying out this function, "so that by their hearing of the readings from the sacred texts the faithful may conceive in their hearts a sweet and living affection for Sacred Scripture."[2]

This document is not all-inclusive. If, after reading it, you have any questions, contact Father John or Deacon Rick for guidance.

PREPARATION

Practice, practice, practice! Standing at the ambo during Mass is *not* the place for you to read the readings for the first time! Plan to review and practice the readings *before* you come to Mass. That way you'll have time to learn a little bit about the subject of the readings, look up the pronunciation of difficult words, etc. The *Workbook for Lectors, Gospel Readers, and Proclaimers of the Word*, given to all lectors at the beginning of each liturgical year, is an extremely valuable preparation resource. Please use it! Taking the time to prepare and practice will make you more knowledgeable, confident, and capable. You'll be more effective in proclaiming God's Word. You'll notice – and so will the folks in the pews.

DRESS

As a Lector, you proclaim the Word of God and represent His Church. As such, you should dress in a way that is dignified and shows respect for the ministry you are carrying out.

- Clothes should be neat, clean, modest, tasteful, not casual (no jeans, t-shirts, flip-flops, tank tops, etc.) and should reflect proper reverence.
- Clothing that intentionally draws attention to yourself or is distracting to other parishioners should not be worn.

PUNCTUALITY

[1] General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) paragraphs 99, 196, and 197
[2] GIRM, paragraph 101

Arrive at least 15 minutes early. This gives you time to review the readings one last time before you proclaim the Word of God. It also gives time for the Priest or Deacon to talk to you about any special situations that will occur during the Mass. For example, if the Deacon is going to be giving the homily, he may ask you to place the lectionary on a shelf of the ambo after you finish the second reading. Or you may be asked you to lead the Responsorial Psalm if the choir won't be singing it. There are a number of small changes that could occur. If you arrive early, you'll have time to prepare and won't be caught off guard. People DO notice when you aren't fully prepared, and it detracts from the reverence of the Mass. In addition, you'll want to take time to:

- Make sure the lectionary is set to the correct page (arriving early will give you time to ask the Priest or Deacon if you aren't sure). NOTE: Do not remove the lectionary from the ambo. *Lectors DO NOT process out of the sacristy with the lectionary*. This action is only proper to the *Book of the Gospels* as part of the entrance procession.[3]
- Adjust the height of the microphone to suit your reading position.
- Make sure the microphone is on. If you don't see a green light at the bottom, it's not on. Just press the little button at the bottom of the microphone stalk and it'll power up.
- Make sure that the "Pastoral Patterns" booklet is set to the proper date. It is usually paper-clipped to the correct page, but it's a good idea to double check. Both the calendar date and the liturgical calendar date (2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, First Sunday of Lent, etc.) are listed at the top of the page. Silently read the introduction so that you are familiar with it.
- Take note of the number of the hymn that will be used for the entrance procession.
- Pray! As you are quietly waiting in the server sacristy for Mass to begin, take a moment to thank God for calling you to proclaim His Word. Offer your service as Lector as a gift of love to God. Ask that the Holy Spirit be with you to guide your thoughts, words, and actions. Then trust Him to be there for you as you proclaim His Word.

GESTURES

In addition to proclaiming God's word, a Lector can also help lead the assembly by his or her actions. There are a few times during the Mass when it is appropriate to make a bow of the head or to make a *profound bow* (a bow of the body). A bow signifies reverence and honor shown to the persons themselves or to the signs that represent them.[4]

- The bow of the *head* is made when the three Divine Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) are named together and at the names of Jesus, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the Saint in whose honor the Mass is being celebrated.

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[3] General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) paragraphs 120 d. and 172

[4] General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) paragraph 275

- A *profound bow* is made to the tabernacle (before the start of Mass) or to the altar (during Mass), and in the Profession of Faith at the words, "And by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man."

ACTIONS DURING THE MASS

The Beginning of Mass

- Before Mass begins, take a moment to discard any thoughts or emotions that could distract you. Give yourself completely to God.
- When you leave the server sacristy, proceed to the ambo in a dignified manner, pausing to make a *profound bow to the tabernacle* on your way.
- When you reach the ambo, greet the people with:
    - "Good Morning (or evening). Welcome to Sacred Heart Parish as we celebrate the (whatever the Liturgical Date, Holy Day, or Feast Day is)."
    - Then read the short paragraph found in the "Pastoral Patterns" booklet.
    - "Our celebrant is Father (name)." If a Deacon is present, add "assisted by Deacon (name)."
    - "Our opening hymn is number (number), (name of hymn)."

      An example of a full greeting: "Good morning. Welcome to Sacred Heart Parish as we celebrate the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time. (Paragraph from the Pastoral Patterns booklet). Our celebrant is Father John, assisted by Deacon Mike. Our opening hymn is number 795, (name of the song)." NOTE: You do not have to use this *exact* format, but for consistency you should say something similar.
- Then proceed to your chair, stand in front of it, and join in the singing of the hymn.

The Readings

- After the Priest has finished the Collect prayer, proceed to the ambo for the first reading. At 10:30 Mass there is often a children's homily; if this is the case, you may choose to stay at your chair until after the Priest gives a blessing to the children before proceeding to the ambo.
- Announce the first reading by saying, "A reading from (whatever the reading is)." Do not say, "Our first reading is…" If the people have been paying attention, they should know which reading they're about to hear. The same applies to the second reading. Just say, "A reading from…"

- After you've finished the reading, pause briefly and then say, "The Word of the Lord." After the people have responded with "Thanks be to God," you may proceed back to your chair and sit down, unless you will be leading the Responsorial Psalm.
- If you are leading the Responsorial Psalm, it is not necessary to raise your hand to prompt the peoples' response unless there appears to be some confusion.
- At the 5pm Mass *you* will be leading the Responsorial Psalm; at 10:30am mass the *choir* will normally lead the Responsorial Psalm.
- After you have completed the second reading, turn toward the altar, make a profound bow, and return to your pew.

NOTE: The following apply <u>only</u> when there is no Deacon present:

- Return to your chair after the second reading.
- After the Profession of Faith, the Priest will introduce the Universal Prayer (sometimes also referred to as the *Prayers of the Faithful* or the *Petitions*). As he is doing so, proceed to the ambo and prepare to read each of the petitions from the "Pastoral Patterns" booklet.
- After each petition say, "Let us pray to the Lord." Wait for the response, "Lord, hear our prayer" before proceeding to the next petition.
- Do not insert your own petitions (such as "You may now add your own personal intentions"); *only* read the ones that are in the Pastoral Patterns booklet.
- After reading the last petition ("For all the prayers that we hold in the silence of our hearts…") be sure to pause for a moment before saying "We pray to the Lord" so that people may make their silent prayer to God.
- After the last petition is read, the Priest will offer a prayer. Following that, he may do the announcements or may announce the offertory hymn.
- After the hymn for the offertory has been announced, make a profound bow to the altar and return to your pew.

Communion

If you will also be serving as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (EMHC), please make sure you are familiar with the information contained in the *Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.*