

2015 Lector Workshop

The Word of God

1. What we read are not simply words on a page – they are God’s living word. *“In Sacred Scripture, the Church constantly finds her nourishment and her strength, for she welcomes it not as a human word, but as what it really is, the Word of God.”* – Dei Verbum, 24
2. The Lector must make the Word of God come alive. *“When Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people, and Christ present in his word, proclaims the Gospel.”* – GIRM, 29
3. Lectors are not to become the focus of attention. By virtue of our baptisms we are prophets or mouthpieces for God.
4. This may be the only Scripture a majority of the faithful are exposed to on a weekly basis. St. Jerome said, *“Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.”*

Our Preparation

1. We are most effective when we have prepared in advance– read the readings multiple times (silent and out loud).
2. Preparation also involves understanding the text, hence there is a commentary at the bottom of the page in the lector workbooks.
3. Preparation is not memorization, but a familiarity with the text.

Before Mass Starts

1. Be here 15 minutes prior to Mass
2. Double check the readings are set to the correct Sunday (listed on the bulletin cover) or Holy Day
3. Check in with the priest if there are multiple options for readings (such as a vigil set of readings, sequence, second option, or Christmas) or if there is a word you cannot pronounce (the workbook has pronunciation hints and there is a separate book in the sacristy)
4. Place the Lectionary & Universal Prayer (Prayers of the Faithful) on the ambo/lectern
5. Adjust the microphone to your correct height before Mass. Check that the sound system is turned on.
6. Bring the Book of the Gospels to the vestibule and be ready for the procession

Tools of the Trade

1. Stress Words – words that are more important or expressive are printed in bold in your workbooks. Typically we stress nouns and verbs rather than articles and prepositions.
2. Feeling Words – Yes, you are bringing God’s Word alive, but it doesn’t require dramatic interpretations or hand gestures. Trust the Holy Spirit to deliver these words to people’s hearts.
3. Pauses - Identify good locations for pauses when you prepare. Rule of thumb: A pause cannot be “too long,” unless it breaks the flow. Example: *For if a man with gold rings and fine clothes comes into your assembly, and a poor person in shabby clothes also comes in, and you pay attention to the one wearing fine clothes and say, “Sit here, please,” while you say to the poor one, “Stand here,” or “Sit at my feet,” have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil designs?*
4. Words that Sound like what they Mean – Example: *Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in **haste**.* “Haste” would be stressed and slightly rushed when we say it (because that’s what it means).
5. Introduction / Conclusion – When introducing the readings, memorize where it is from so you can proclaim it while making complete eye contact. Example: Make eye contact and say, “*A Reading from the Prophet Isaiah,*” then look back down to the text. Do the same at the conclusion, which is always, “**The Word of the Lord.**” Also pause after the introduction and before the conclusion.
6. Ritardando – As in music, become slower as the reach the end of the final sentence. People tend to remember it better.
7. Eye contact – This connects you with the assembly and makes them less distracted. We can look up at the middle and/or end of a sentence. Do this to the best of your ability without paraphrasing the text. Sometimes it is helpful to use our finger to keep our place when we look up. When making eye contact, either look out straight or change locations (left, center, right). Never sweep your head or stare a particular person down, especially when reading something sinful or damning. It tends to make others self-conscious.
8. Pace – Don’t over speak the microphone, there are lags in time and reverbs in the churches that make it difficult to understand. Slow and steady. If there is sign language happening at Mass, a slower pace yet must be taken, but not enough to draw awkward attention.
9. Popping – To avoid popping the microphone, don’t stand too close or turn your head slightly when saying words with a ‘p’ or ‘b’ sound.
10. Volume – The microphone cannot amplify what is not there. Public speaking involves air coming up from the diaphragm not just the throat as in casual conversation.
11. Wardrobe – Wear something that is not distracting, but is reverent. Try not to wear jeans, sweats, shorts, t-shirts, overly large logos/writing on shirt, no yoga pants/tights/leggings that reveal too much, avoid low cut and/or tight blouses.
12. Don’t Innovate – Don’t change the text. Don’t add “*The second reading is ... or the Responsorial psalm is ...*” If you change a response people may hesitate to respond. The Mass responses and postures are routine so we get lost in the moment and not worry about what we are to say and do next, but rather be still and attentive in God’s presence. Most people know the Order of the Mass and already anticipate what is coming next.