



ST. MARK *the* EVANGELIST
CATHOLIC CHURCH

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GUIDELINES FOR THE MINISTRY OF READER

**For just as from the heavens
the rain and snow come down
And do not return there
till they have watered the earth,
making it fertile and fruitful,
Giving seed to him who sows
and bread to him who eats,**

**So shall my word be
that goes forth from my mouth;
It shall not return to me void,
but shall do my will,
achieving the end for which I sent it.**

(Isaiah 55:10-11)

The Word of God

After the resurrection, Jesus commanded his apostles: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation." (Mark 16:15)

These words from the Gospel according to Mark the Evangelist, our parish patron, are a challenge for all Christians to bring the good news of Jesus Christ into the world in which we live. We do this by our words but even more so by our actions. "How beautiful are the feet of those who announce good news." (Romans 10:15b)

To proclaim the word of God in the world in which we live we must first hear the word of God and believe. "And how can they believe unless they have heard of him?" (Romans 10:14b)

We come to know the word of God by reading and studying the scriptures. But most especially we come to know the word of God in the liturgy. Christ "is present in his word, since it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church." (Sacrosanctum Concilium, #7).

"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." (GIRM, #29)

The Ministry of Reader

The Mass consists of two main parts - the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, which “are so closely interconnected that they form but one single act of worship. For in the Mass the table both of God’s word and of Christ’s Body is prepared, from which the faithful may be instructed and refreshed.” (GIRM, #28).

“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, #55)

“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 be clearly 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.” (GIRM, #56)

According to the tradition of the Church, the “function of proclaiming the readings is ministerial, not presidential.” (GIRM, #59). For this reason, the readings other than the Gospel are proclaimed by a reader and not by the priest or deacon.

Members of the assembly are called forth for the privilege and responsibility of proclaiming the word of God at Mass as Readers. Pope Benedict XVI urges “that the liturgy of the word always be carefully prepared and celebrated” and “that every effort be made to ensure that the liturgical proclamation of the word of God is entrusted to well-prepared readers.” (Sacramentum Caritatis, #45).

Following the guidelines of the Church, and in particular of the Diocese of St. Petersburg, the parish community of St. Mark the Evangelist calls forth from its members those who are qualified to proclaim the Word of God and willing to take upon themselves the responsibilities and functions of this ministry.

Above all, the Reader should be a person of prayer who reflects frequently on the words of Scripture, engages in ongoing formation in the study of spirituality, scripture, liturgy, and technical skills, and seeks to live and proclaim the word of God in everyday life.

To proclaim the Word of God effectively it must not come from the head and the mouth but truly come from the heart with the voice humbly serving as the instrument of God’s presence among us so that God’s word may touch the hearts and lives of the assembly and challenge us to bring the good news of Jesus Christ into the world in which we live.

Qualifications for the Ministry of Reader

The qualifications to become a Reader at St. Mark the Evangelist Church are:

- Registered member of the parish who has received First Communion
- Possession of the skills needed for effective oral proclamation of the Word of God
- Completion of a two evening orientation process in liturgy, the liturgical year, the structure of the Mass, an understanding of the lectionary, praying with the Scriptures, and the practical aspects of being a Reader.

Responsibilities of the Ministry of Reader

The responsibilities of a Reader at St. Mark the Evangelist Church are:

- Follow the guidelines for Readers from the Diocese of St. Petersburg and the parish of St. Mark the Evangelist
- Access the quarterly schedule on the parish web site and serve as a Reader at the assigned Masses or arrange for a substitute if you are unable to serve
- Prepare the assigned reading prior to Mass through reflection, prayer, and practice (each Reader is provided with a workbook containing all the Sunday readings for the year)
- Dress appropriately
- Arrive 20 minutes prior to the Mass to receive any special instructions and coordinate with the other reader
- Reflect and pray on the scripture readings for each Sunday even when not assigned to read and be prepared to read if needed
- Read all communications sent to the Readers through email
- Participate in ongoing formation provided by the parish for spiritual, scriptural, liturgical, and technical formation
- Notify the Reader Ministry Leader with any address, phone number, and email address changes
- Notify the Reader Ministry Leader if there are periods of time when you will not be available to serve or if you desire to change the Mass at which you serve as a Reader

Functions of the Ministry of Reader

The primary function of the Reader is to proclaim the Word of God in the first and second readings.

It is the function of the deacon to carry the Book of the Gospels in the entrance procession and to lead the assembly in praying the petitions of the Prayer of the Faithful. In the absence of a deacon the Reader will assume these functions.

For Sunday Mass two readers are assigned for each Mass. There should always be two readers and, if one is missing an effort should be made to find a second reader, but in the event a second reader cannot be found, all duties are assumed by the one reader.

Reader #1

Initial next to your name on the schedule in the narthex; if substituting for someone else, indicate your name in place of the assigned name

Confirm that the lectionary is on the ambo and opened to the first reading. Review the Prayer of the Faithful and be sure the binder containing the prayer is placed on the shelf of the ambo. Adjust the microphone at this time since you will be the first to use it.

Take your seat in the assembly near the ambo or near the entrance to the ramp (if you prefer to use the ramp instead of the steps).

After the conclusion of the Opening Prayer, remain standing at your seat while the rest of the assembly sits down. Once the assembly is seated, slowly approach the ambo. Go directly to the ambo **without bowing or genuflecting**. Proclaim the first reading from the lectionary (only the lectionary should be used for the proclamation of the reading). Make eye contact with the assembly and announce the reading (A reading from....), pause for a few seconds. Proclaim the reading speaking directly into the microphone so the assembly can hear it. Use eye contact as much as possible without turning away from the microphone to indicate that this word is being proclaimed and not just read to the assembly. At the end of the reading pause for a few seconds, make eye contact with the assembly and conclude with "The Word of the Lord." Then return directly to your seat in the assembly **without bowing or genuflecting**.

If a deacon is not present, Reader #1 will lead the assembly in praying the petitions of the Prayer of the Faithful. Toward the end of the Profession of Faith, approach the ambo (**no bowing or genuflecting**) allowing enough time to be ready once the Profession of Faith is completed. Remove the binder with the Prayer of the Faithful from the shelf, and place it on the ambo. After the priest has introduced the prayer, announce the response and then read each petition prayerfully. This is not the same as proclaiming the Word of God. This is leading the assembly in prayer. To convey a sense of prayer there should be no eye contact with the assembly during the reading of the petition. However, eye contact should be made with the assembly at the conclusion of the petition as the words "let us pray to the Lord" or "we pray" are spoken. Remain at the ambo until the priest prays the concluding prayer. Then return to your seat in the assembly **without bowing or genuflecting**.

Reader #2

Initial next to your name on the schedule in the narthex; if substituting for someone else, indicate your name in place of the assigned name

If there is no deacon, process with the ministers immediately preceding the priest celebrant(s) carrying the Book of the Gospels (not the lectionary) slightly elevated with the spine of the book on the right side (the front of the Book of the Gospels is facing the people not the Reader). Upon arriving at the sanctuary continue directly to the altar (do not stop and bow) and place the Book of the Gospels in the stand so the front of the book is facing the people. Go directly to your place in the assembly without bowing or genuflecting.

NOTE: If you are not comfortable carrying the Book of the Gospels, Reader #1 may carry the book for you. If neither Reader is comfortable carrying the Book of the Gospels, notify the Director of Liturgy or the Liturgy Coordinator who will arrange for someone to carry the book.

If there is a deacon, take your seat in the assembly near the ambo or near the entrance to the ramp (if you prefer to use the ramp instead of the steps).

After the Responsorial Psalm is concluded allow a few moments of silence. Then slowly approach the ambo. Go directly to the ambo **without bowing or genuflecting**. Adjust the microphone and proclaim the second reading from the lectionary (only the lectionary should be used for the proclamation of the reading). Make eye contact with the assembly and announce the reading (A reading from....), pause for a few seconds, proclaim the reading speaking directly into the microphone so the assembly can hear it. Use eye contact as much as possible without turning away from the microphone to indicate that this word is being proclaimed and not just read to the assembly. At the end of the reading pause for a few seconds, make eye contact with the assembly and conclude with "The Word of the Lord." Close the lectionary and place it on the shelf under the ambo. Then return to your seat in the assembly **without bowing or genuflecting**.