

SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH



This brochure was made especially for
Saint Joseph Roman Catholic Church
as part of our parish ministries.

*Ministry of Reader
at Mass*

17. Do not bow to the ambo or Lectionary before, during or after the Reading.
18. Genuflect before coming up to the ambo.
19. Bow to the tabernacle or cross (the altar should be revered by a simple bow during the Mass).
20. Forget to put the Lectionary under the ambo after the Second Reading.
21. Say “Good morning” “Good evening” or any other additional words.

DON'TS:

1. Do not hesitate to ask questions of the Celebrant about the Scripture you are to proclaim, especially about pronunciation.
2. Read from a Missalette or loose-leaf papers.
3. Begin a long "A" "Ay Reading...." Speak normally, without affectation in voice and manner.
4. Announce "The First" "The Second" or "The Third" Reading.
5. Let yourself be distracted by crying babies or latecomers.
6. Ad lib. It is the Word of God that you are proclaiming, not your own.
7. Hold up the Lectionary at the end of the Reading as you say "The Word of the Lord."
8. Be surprised if God inspires you.
9. Hesitate to allow your own emotions show. A smile is appropriate when the words are joyful or when the words of hope stir your faith.
10. Think of the faithful as an audience. They are believers like yourself. It is not a performance before spectators.
11. Draw attention to yourself by your dress, posture, gestures or speech. Let the message come through you.
12. Lean on the ambo.
13. Speak too slowly or too quickly. Either way the message is hard to understand or could be completely lost.
14. Get upset if you make a mistake. Just pause a second and regain your composure. It is never appropriate to say "I'm sorry" during the Reading.
15. Forget to call another Reader if you are not able to make your assignment.
16. Think you must be a perfect example of God's Word.

1. Certain Preliminaries

a) The Importance of the Word of God in Liturgical Celebration

1. The Second Vatican Council,¹ the magisterium of the Popes, ² and various documents promulgated after the Council by the organisms of the Holy See³ have already had many excellent things to say about the importance of the word of God and about reestablishing the use of Sacred Scripture in every celebration of the Liturgy. The Introduction to the 1969 edition of the **Order of Readings for Mass** has clearly stated and briefly explained some of the more important principles.⁴ On the occasion of this new edition of the Order of Readings for Mass, requests have come from many quarters for a more detailed exposition of the same principles. Hence, this expanded and more suitable arrangement of the Introduction first gives a general statement on the essential bond between the word of God and the liturgical celebration,⁵ then deals in greater detail with the word of God in the celebration of Mass, and finally explains the precise structure of the Order of Readings for Mass.

b) Terms Used to Refer to the Word of God

2. For the sake of clear and precise language on this topic, a definition of terms might well be expected as a prerequisite. Nevertheless this Introduction will simply use the same terms employed in conciliar and postconciliar documents. Furthermore it will use "Sacred Scripture" and "Word of God" interchangeably throughout when referring to the books written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, thus avoiding any confusion of language or meaning.⁶

c) The Significance of the Word of God in the Liturgy

3. 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.⁷ 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.⁸

2. Liturgical Celebration of the Word of God

a) The Proper Character of the Word of God in the Liturgical Celebration

4. In the celebration of the Liturgy the Word of God is not announced in only one way⁹ nor does it always stir the hearts of the hearers with the same efficacy. Always, however, Christ is present in his word,¹⁰ as he carries out the mystery of salvation, sanctifies humanity and offers the Father perfect worship.¹¹ 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 word¹² through the power of the Holy Spirit. It expresses the Father’s love that never fails in its effectiveness toward us.

b) The Word of God in the Economy of Salvation

5. When in celebrating the Liturgy the Church proclaims both the Old and New Testament, it is proclaiming one and the same mystery of Christ. The New Testament lies hidden in the Old; the Old Testament comes fully to light in the New.¹³ Christ Himself is the center and fullness of the whole of Scripture, just as He is of all liturgical celebration.¹⁴ Thus the Scriptures are the living waters from which all who seek life and salvation must drink. The more profound our understanding of the celebration of the liturgy, the higher our appreciation of the importance of God’s Word. Whatever we say of the one, we can in turn say of the other, because each recalls the mystery of Christ and each in its

13. Rehearse the passages a few times, especially when Saint Paul likes to use run-on sentences.

14. Consider yourself a “proclaimer of God’s Word” and not just the reader.

15. Allow the Scriptures to influence your own personal lives.

16. Pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you in your proclaiming of God’s Word.

17. Take a look at the Lectionary **before** Mass to make sure it is opened to the proper week and Reading.

18. As you approach the ambo, you may bow to the altar (a genuflection is not necessary).

19. When Reading is complete, you should turn the page to be prepared for the next Reading.

20. When you return to your pew, you may once again give a simple bow to the altar and NOT the tabernacle.

21. When Reading, you should pick up your head several times. This is a perfect way to make sure people are paying attention to you.

22. Modulate your voice, both its pitch and volume. Using variations of your voice make is easier for the faithful to understand.

23. Use your judgment about phrasing. Extended pauses are not necessary and can be very distracting.

24. You may pause for a brief moment after the Reading.

25. Make sure there is a extended pause between the last words of the Reading and “The Word of the Lord.”

26. Remain at the ambo until the faithful respond “Thanks be to God.”

Now having the legal and theological background for this great ministry it is time to address some practical applications of this theology. Below are a set of “Do’s” and “Don’ts” when proclaiming God’s word in Church.

DO’S:

1. Set aside some time at home before coming to church in order to prepare yourselves for the daily or Sunday reading.
2. One should attempt to study the text that is to be proclaimed so that the depth of understanding will be visible to the faithful.
3. One should read through all the Readings (including the Gospel) prior to Mass to see what themes and connections are present.
4. One should identify what **type** of Reading that is to be proclaimed. Is it a story, a conversation between characters? Is it a prophecy, a letter, a list of laws, a parable or song?
5. What does the passage mean to you? What do you think is the underlying message that should be proclaimed?
6. Pick out one important sentence or phrase and try to communicate this above all else.
7. Look up all the words that you cannot pronounce or understand. If you make a mistake while reading, just continue, it is not necessary to say “I am sorry” in the middle of the Reading.
8. Try to imagine what is actually going on during the Reading.
9. Take some time to pray with the text.
10. Refer to your guidebooks when preparing.
11. Make sure to articulate consonants at the end of words, like the d’s and t’s.
12. Pay close attention to where the stresses occur in the passage. Then make that clear to the faithful.

own way causes the mystery to be carried forward.

c) The Word of God in the Liturgical Participation of the Faithful

6. In celebrating the Liturgy the Church faithfully echoes the “Amen” that Christ, the mediator between God and men and women, uttered once for all as He shed His blood to seal God’s new covenant in the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ When God communicates His Word, He expects a response, one, that is, of listening and adoring “in Spirit and in truth” (John 4:23). The Holy Spirit makes that response effective, so that what is heard in the celebration of the Liturgy may be carried out in a way of life: “Be doers of the word and not hearers only” (James 1:22). The liturgical celebration and the participation of the faithful receive outward expression in actions, gestures, and words. These derive their full meaning not simply from their origin in human experience but from the word of God and the economy of salvation, to which they refer. Accordingly, the participation of the faithful in the Liturgy increases to the degree that, as they listen to the Word of God proclaimed in the Liturgy, they strive harder to commit themselves to the Word of God incarnate in Christ. Thus, they endeavor to conform their way of life to what they celebrate in the Liturgy, and then in turn to bring to the celebration of the Liturgy all that they do in life.¹⁶

3. The Word of God in the Life of the People of the Covenant

a) The Word of God in the Life of the Church

7. In the hearing of God’s Word the Church is built up and grows, and in the signs of the liturgical celebration God’s wonderful, past works in the history of salvation are presented anew as mysterious realities. God in turn makes use of the congregation of the faithful that celebrates the Liturgy in order that His Word may speed on and be glorified and that His Name be exalted among the nations.¹⁷ Whenever, therefore, the Church, gathered by the Holy Spirit for liturgical celebration,¹⁸ announces and proclaims the Word of God, She is aware of being a new people in whom the covenant made in the past is perfected and fulfilled. Baptism and Confirmation in the Spirit have made all Christ’s faithful into

messengers of God's word because of the grace of hearing they have received. They must therefore be the bearers of the same Word in the Church and in the world, at least by the witness of their lives. The word of God proclaimed in the celebration of God's mysteries does not only address present conditions but looks back to past events and forward to what is yet to come. Thus God's word shows us what we should hope for with such a longing that in this changing world our hearts will be set on the place where our true joys lie.¹⁹

b) The Church's Explanation of the Word of God

8. By Christ's own will there is a marvelous diversity of members in the new people of God and each has different duties and responsibilities with respect to the Word of God. Accordingly, the faithful listen to God's word and meditate on it, but only those who have the office of teaching by virtue of sacred ordination or who have been entrusted with exercising that ministry expound the word of God. This is how in doctrine, life, and worship the Church keeps alive and passes on to every generation all that she is, all that she believes. Thus with the passage of the centuries, the Church is ever to advance toward the fullness of divine truth until God's word is wholly accomplished in it.²⁰

c) The Connection between the Word of God Proclaimed and the Working of the Holy Spirit

9. The working of the Holy Spirit is needed if the Word of God is to make what we hear outwardly have its effect inwardly. Because of the Holy Spirit's inspiration and support, the word of God becomes the foundation of the liturgical celebration and the rule and support of all our life. The working of the Holy Spirit precedes, accompanies, and brings to completion the whole celebration of the Liturgy. But the Spirit also brings home²¹ to each person individually everything that in the proclamation of the Word of God is spoken for the good of the whole gathering of the faithful. In strengthening the unity of all, the Holy Spirit at the same time fosters a diversity of gifts and furthers their multiform operation.

d) The Essential Bond between the Word of God and the Mystery of the Eucharist

10. The Church has honored the Word of God and the Eucharistic mystery with the same reverence, although not with the same worship, and has always and everywhere insisted upon and sanctioned such honor. Moved by the example of its Founder, the Church has never ceased to celebrate his paschal mystery by coming together to read "what referred to him in all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:27) and to carry out the work of salvation through the celebration of the memorial of the Lord and through the Sacraments. "The preaching of the Word is necessary for the ministry of the Sacraments, for these are Sacraments of faith, which is born and nourished from the Word."²² The Church is nourished spiritually at the twofold table of God's Word and of the Eucharist:²³ from the one it grows in wisdom and from the other in holiness. In the word of God the divine covenant is announced; in the Eucharist the new and everlasting covenant is renewed. On the one hand the history of salvation is brought to mind by means of human sounds; on the other it is made manifest in the sacramental signs of the Liturgy. It can never be forgotten, therefore, that the divine word read and proclaimed by the Church in the Liturgy has as its one purpose the sacrifice of the New Covenant and the banquet of grace, that is, the Eucharist. The celebration of Mass in which the word is heard and the Eucharist is offered and received forms but one single act of divine worship.²⁴ That act offers the sacrifice of praise to God and makes available to God's creatures the fullness of redemption.

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