

Prayer for Lectors

*Praise to you, Lord God, King of the universe and all glory
to you name.*

*I thank and praise you for calling me to use my gift of speech
to proclaim Your Word to your people. Open the hearts off
all who gather here so they may hear your voice when I read.*

*Aid me in my preparing for this ministry, cleanse my mind
and heart from all worry and anxiety, help me overcome dif-
ficult pronunciations, and allow me to proclaim Your Word
to the best of my ability so that the power of Your Word can
shine through me.*

*All praise to You, heavenly Father, who created everything
through the Word, in the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Amen



Ministry of Lector

Reading in Church

Parish of Shrule

Shrule & Glencorrib Churches

Introduction

This booklet is to help the regular reading at parish weekend Masses. Its purpose is to encourage, support and offer some practical tips that can help the reader grow in confidence and enrich their own faith and the faith of the congregation.

There are various ministries within the celebration of the Mass: altar servers, Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, Readers, Choir, along with those who prepare the church for the Liturgy by arranging flowers, cleaning and maintain the church, collecting the offertory baskets, and, of course, the sacristans. Each has a unique role, and each contribute in their own way to enhancing the celebration of the Liturgy; and each is interdependent on the other. Combined, they ensure the celebration of the Liturgy provides an opportunity for people to encounter God in their lives through prayer.

Many people are reluctant to read in church as they do not like the attention or focus. Even when they agree to read, they try to keep it low key and casual. Ironically, this approach attracts more attention, as such efforts draw more attention to the person! It is hoped that the following will give practical advice and suggestions to the reader, along with creating a standard approach to reading so that an individual reader attracts little or no attention to him/herself, while at the same time allowing the Scripture reading itself to take center stage and be proclaimed.



Acclamation together. Allow time for people to stand, and slowly start reading the Gospel Acclamation.

6. **When the Gospel Acclamation is sung:** The reader waits for the acclamation to be sung, then reads the verse, and as the second acclamation is sung he/she moves from the ambo and return to their seat.

What is the purpose & benefit of all this?

So far there has been very little said about the primary purpose of Scripture which is to deepen our relationship with God. Up to now, the primary focus is on the background to Scripture, hints on how to read better and 'Do's & Don'ts' of Scripture. But to what purpose? The purpose of any ministry is to serve and help people encounter and experience God in their lives, and this is especially true in Mass. The Word of God is alive and active, and a simple word, phrase or verse of Scripture can change a persons' life. Less distractions mean an increased chance of a person being more attentive to Scripture and at work in their hearts.



This principle does not just apply to 'listeners' but also to the readers themselves— ministry is not about doing or serving, it is about growing in our relationship to God, others and ourselves.

***NB:** If the rota is based on a month; lectors/readers minister from the first day of the month to the last day **inclusive**. Therefore the end of the month is a Saturday, lectors/readers finish their ministry on the Saturday and the next months lectors/readers begin their month on Sunday.*

Thank You for Volunteering for this Ministry

Do's & Don'ts – Recognized Standard Practices for Reading

- 1. First & Second Readings:** Though most people do it, try not to read out, 'First Reading' or 'Responsorial Psalm' or 'Second Reading and avoid saying, 'The First Reading is a Reading from...'. The introduction such as 'A reading from Jeremiah' is the recognized standard practice.
- 2. Responsorial Psalm 1:** The Responsorial Psalm is meant to be sung, and when it is, the reader can move away from the ambo until the Psalm is sung.
- 3. Responsorial Psalm 2:** Many readers say, 'Responsorial Psalm' and then say 'the response is...'. The proper way is not to say, 'Responsorial Psalm' but only to say 'Our response is, '...' and repeat slowly with the congregation.
- 4. Responsorial Psalm 3:** Another common mistake by readers at the end of each verse of the Responsorial Psalm is to say: 'Response' – this is not the correct way. The Responsorial Psalm is a community prayer with a community dialogue or conversation between the reader and congregation. In a conversation between the reader and the congregation. It is considered not polite to remind the other that it is their turn to speak by saying, 'your turn'. There is a natural flow to conversation when one pauses and the other speaks. Similarly, with the Responsorial Psalm; the congregation responds when the reader stops. The simple way to do this is to simply look up and pause and quietly say the response with them.
- 5. When the Gospel Acclamation is not Sung:** The Gospel Acclamation is meant to be sung by everyone as they stand to greet and welcome the reading of the Gospel. When it is not, invite people to 'stand and greet the Gospel' by reading the Gospel

Starting at the Beginning

The liturgy of the Mass is divided into two parts:

1. The Liturgy of the Word
2. The Liturgy of the Eucharist

Both parts are understood to have the same relevance and importance as God is found both in the Word as God is found the Eucharist. The Liturgy of the Word takes place at the 'ambo' and the Liturgy of the Eucharist takes place at the 'altar'.



Christian Sacred Scripture – The Bible

The readings from Scripture are found in the Bible, the sacred text for Christians. The Bible is broken into the Old Testament (or Hebrew Bible, as it is now more often called) and New Testament. The Old Testament deals with the time before Christ, and the New Testament deals with the time of Christ's presence on earth and the early Church following the Ascension of Christ. There is a total of 72 books in the Catholic Bible – 46 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament, including the 4 Gospels.



Readings on weekends cover all 72 books over a 3-year period. The 3-year cycle are based on the Gospels of Matthew, Mark & Luke, while the First and Second Readings come from the Old & New Testament respectively. The Gospel of John is read each year during the Seasons of Lent & Easter.

How is Scripture structured for Mass?

- 1. First Reading:** This reading comes from the Old Testament, recalling various times where God has intervened in humanity, renewing God's relationship with us, but failing to succeed due to our inability to keep our promises.

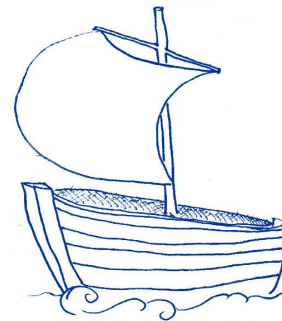
2. **Responsorial Psalm:** The psalm comes from the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament. A psalm is understood to be a song or poem written in response to mark and celebrate God's intervention and is directly linked to the first reading.
3. **Second Reading:** This reading comes from the New Testament, and often refers to a similar theme or setting as found in the Old Testament Reading, but this time, refers to the fulfilment and the keeping of our relationship with God due to the actions of Christ focusing on Christian living.
4. **Gospel Acclamation:** The acclamation is the introduction to the theme of the Gospel
5. **Gospel:** The readings from the Gospel come from the 4 Gospels which relate directly to the words and actions of Jesus while on earth and serve as the bridge between the Old and New Testament readings.

Why is Scripture read in church liturgies?

Reading of Scripture has the power to stir lives to the point where it directly influences and impacts how we live, act and behave. An old description for Mass goes as follows, 'Gather the folk, tell the story & break the bread'. The purpose of reading of Scripture is to 'tell the story' of God's involvement and presence in the world and in the human story. Scripture is the account of faith and belief where events of history are understood in the context of faith. Scripture is understood to be the living 'Word of God' in that it is more than historical facts, but in fact continues to have impact on people's lives to this day. Since Scripture has a 'living' influence on people's lives and how they live as followers of Christ; it is an essential part to any Christian prayer and liturgy. Scripture has power beyond ordinary words—it influences and directs people on how to live as a Christian, bringing them closer to God – Scripture is read in faith to a people of faith.

match the pace of your speech. An additional advantage is that as you read the Scripture, you gain an appreciation of the message which itself improves how it is read.

6. **'Dealing with difficult words'**- There is no getting away from those difficult words! This highlights the importance of looking at the readings before Mass, and, if possible, at home in the days before you are to read. Some people are very good at breaking down words into parts and syllables, but remember it is possible to find out how to pronounce words using google where apps will even pronounce the word for you. Initially, when people start reading, they need to spend some time on difficult words but they improve quickly as they become more confident.



These steps take time to learn and most people are reading for a brief time each year so be patient with yourself. Focus on one step and when that becomes familiar and comfortable, move to the next step. It is important to appreciate that for many people, including those who read, busy schedules with family, work and children are part of life — so be patient with yourself and others.

Remember— Reading is using the gift of speech God has given you to bring people close to God, so the effort & practice is worth it!

and 'comas'. They help you pace how you read, give you the opportunity to breath, and allow you to feel more in control.

4. **'Read as if you are having a conversation'** –

Scripture is a dialogue between God and us, so it is a conversation. Taking this approach allows you to frame what you are doing as if you were *'speaking'* to someone, not *'reading'* to them. If we spoke the same as we read, people would soon tell us to 'slow down, you are going too fast and I didn't catch everything' or 'I didn't understand what you just said'. Slowing down also allows us to 'enter' more into what we are reading. This simple change in thought has a surprising impact not just on how we read, but also on how what we read is heard. Use Punctuation!



5. **'Learn to hear your own Voice'**: Surprisingly, many people



are not used to listening to themselves or hearing their own voice. It is important to be aware of how your voice sounds. If it is too strong or weak, it can impact on reverberation and influences how what you are reading is actually heard. It is important to hear your own voice and know what you sound like so you can have an idea of how others hear you. The best trick to solve this is to find a quiet place by yourself and speak out loud. You could also practise while using a Scripture reading. This increases your awareness of what you sound like to others, and helps highlight strengths and weakness. You will gradually notice if you are pausing correctly or reading too fast; if you are speaking clearly or speaking inaudibly etc. People can find it embarrassing and even awkward to do this, but it is something worthwhile doing! It also allows you to train your eyes to

Simple Tips for Reading

You might ask yourself, what have you let yourself in for by agreeing to doing readings at Mass. That is a very natural question. You might say that you are too nervous, which is a very natural response. So, rather than focus on Scripture and reading at Mass, start by focusing on learning a skill, which is namely speaking in public. Use the **'Tips for Reading'** to help you learn the skill of speaking in public.



It is natural to be nervous when speaking in public, even if the text is already prepared – the heart rate goes up, people can begin to perspire more, the tone of our voice lowers and we avoid eye contact. These are some of the signs that we are nervous. It is better to acknowledge how we are rather than trying to ignore the signs. There are a few simple 'tricks' to gain confidence in public speaking:

1. **'Dress comfortably and avoid doing anything awkward'** – **Visuals speak** - if we are already nervous, then doing something awkward will only add to our nervousness. For example, it is better to bow when approaching the sanctuary rather than genuflect because with bowing, we keep both our feet on the group and are steadier than if we genuflect and become unsteady! This is not a good way to start even before we being to read!!!
2. When we reach the **'ambo'** – remember it is we who are now in control and set the pace. Place both feet on the ground, and both hands on the ambo top. This helps makes a person feel secure. Many feel the pressure to get the readings done fast and not to waste time, but in fact, if the readings are done



quickly, people cannot hear them properly. This is when readings become a waste of time, so go **SLOW**.

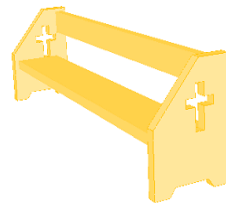
3. Make sure the 'mic' is working properly – aside from reading quickly, not been heard is another big pitfall when reading. However, with improved systems, even when people are nervous now and speak softly, the sound system can pick up the voice. However, it is still important to ensure that the mic is within range; so when you reach the ambo, adjust the mic before you start reading.



4. The readings for the Mass are found in a book that is called the 'Lectionary', usually printed in a type-face that is easy to read. Remember, the pupil of the eye dilates when we are nervous, and it becomes more difficult to read smaller print! It is not advisable to read from the Mass leaflet. A simple way to avoid this is to check the lectionary before Mass to ensure that it is open at the correct page, and that you know where the readings are. You will be the first person to use the lectionary during Mass, not the priest. This simple step means you avoid flicking pages when you go up to read as well as avoiding unnecessary anxiety.



5. 'When to go up to read' – Regardless of where you sit, move slowly. The basic rule is if you are seated near the sanctuary, then you can go up as the people are sitting down. If you are seated away from the sanctuary, then standard normal practice is move as the 'Collect' (Opening Prayer) is been read by



the celebrant. The reasoning behind this is that there should be no noticeable gaps in the liturgy.

These steps have nothing directly to do with Scripture, but by following these steps it makes a huge difference on how a reading is done, how the reading is heard, and increases the possibility of people hearing and encountering God in a profound way due to 'how' the reading was done. This reason alone makes it worth while to learn these skills.

Pushing the Boat out a Bit Further!

1. **Reverberation Time:** This is the time it takes for sound to travel within a defined space such as a room or church. The reverberation time is influenced by size of church, number of people present, structure and materials. A change in any of these impacts on how sound travels and how a person is heard. So read 'Slowly'.
2. **Read Slowly:** The sense of hearing is a sense that is 'slow' to register what is heard. The cardinal rule in regard to reverberation time therefore is to 'Read Slowly'. There is a difference between hearing something and reading something. The purpose of reading Scripture at Mass is so that people can 'hear' it. When we read too fast, people cannot hear us properly and, therefore, they cannot take in what they are hearing. Pace Yourself!
3. **Punctuation - 'Full Stops & Comas'** - As you become more comfortable and confident, it's time to move onto the next level. The first thing to start with is making use of 'full stops'

