

Lector Formation - Coming and Going Guidelines

- **Arrive at Church 20-30 minutes before the Mass time.**
 - Let the presider and other ministers know that you are there.
 - Make sure that the Lectionary is set up for the correct reading.
 - Sit in the body of the church and quietly prepare yourself to proclaim.
 - Participate fully in the responses and singing.

- **Approaching the ambo (lectern)**
 - Walk down the center aisle if at all possible.
 - To bow or not to bow?
 - Bow to the altar, the symbol of Jesus Christ, this way:
 - Come to a complete stop, slowly bow at the waist, a profound bow, straighten up, then proceed to the ambo.
 - Genuflect to the tabernacle only on entering and leaving the Church.
 - If not using the center aisle, be sure to bow to the altar, then move to the ambo.
 - Avoid taking a short-cut to the ambo that avoids the bow by approaching from the ambo from the side.

- **When you arrive at the ambo to read**
 - Check your page for the proper reading
 - Check the proclamation “A reading from...”
 - Look at the people and make eye contact.
 - Take a deep breath and, while maintaining eye contact, proclaim “A reading from...”
 - Pause before proceeding with the reading.

- **When you conclude the Scripture passage**
 - Pause
 - Make eye contact with the people
 - Proclaim clearly and slowly “the Word of the Lord”
 - When the people have concluded their response turn and return to your place.

This is a basic start for lector formation. The following pages offer additional help. Ongoing practice and feedback are essential. Both technical and spiritual formation are needed for lectors to fulfill their role in the liturgy properly. Contact the Office of Worship to schedule a workshop. 814-824-1270.

Lector Formation – Proclaiming the Scriptures

To proclaim Scripture means more than just “reading it” aloud. The energy that you feel about the content must be communicated in the proclamation. The tone of your voice should reflect the style and content of the text. A quick way to approach this is to put yourself in the mindset of telling a story or sharing some great news to a group, such as, the Good News of Jesus Christ!

A more detailed approach is to examine each of the following categories one at a time and work on improving each one:

- **Vocal Projection or Volume** – A Scripture proclamation must be loud enough for all to hear the words easily. The voice of the lector must fill the space and should not seem subdued or distant. The microphone is not meant to make up for a lack of volume.

To work on volume, try this: stand tall with feet shoulder width apart. Breathe from the beltline before beginning to read. To build awareness of your breath and how to manage it, light a candle at home; take a breath from the beltline and blow on the flame to keep it consistently bent over. When you read, keep that same sense of measured exhalation.

- **Articulation** – Day to day conversation is often relaxed and can even be lax. In front of a group a more precise articulation of words is needed. Consonants, both initial and final are very important so that the words of the reading are clear, distinct and easy to understand.

To work on articulation, try this: read the Lord’s Prayer out loud and emphasize the initial and last consonants of each word. Read it out loud again and emphasize the consonants in the middle of words. Note that some consonants are formed by the lips and teeth: f, t, k, ch, p. Others need your voice: m, n, v, l. Some final consonants, e.g., b, d, g, are followed by a light “ih” or “uh,” as in “God-ih” “Lord-uh.” Being lax with consonants may mis-communicate the word and the meaning, as in “The law is kinda merciful” instead of “The Lord (-ih) is kind (ih) and merciful.” Practice this sentence with the “shadow vowel” following the consonant as marked: “Job_ longed_ to appear before God_.”

- **Rate** – Reading rate, or speed, sometimes called pace, matters when lecturing. Note how children and teens often *read very fast*—too fast for good comprehension. Adults may do the same. The rate should not be too fast or too slow but should match the sense of the reading. It should not always be the same-- but vary with the context.

To work on rate or speed of reading: imagine you are speaking in slow motion with every syllable *s t r e t c h e d* like taffy. “Moses came down from the mountain” becomes “Mm ohhh seh ss c aaa mme doouwnn...” You get the idea. Now that you are aware of stretching, use it when it helps to convey the meaning of the reading. Rate is not about the space between the words (see pauses) but the speed of saying the word itself.

- **Eye Contact** – People listen and respond best when we make eye contact with them. See “Lector Formation – Coming and Going Guidelines” on making eye contact at the beginning and end of the reading. Avoid a rapid up and down movement.

To work on eye contact: find a phrase or word that has importance to the overall meaning. The example that comes to mind for me is St. Paul’s letter about faith, hope and love: “And the greatest of these is love.” Memorize the whole phrase or the end of the phrase. As you proclaim it, look up and make eye contact. Hold that contact for a moment as people absorb what you’ve read. Then go on. It may be helpful to leave a finger pointing to your place when you look up.

- **Melody** – is the variation in pitch in your voice as you read. A voice with no pitch variation is called monotone—and no one wants to be labelled with that description.

To work on melody: Focus on speaking with energy. When we do that, our natural sense of interest and excitement comes through. Melody is one of the side effects. You could also practice counting from 1 to 5 and 5 to 1, raising and lowering the pitch of your voice for each number as you go up and down.

After you have practiced your reading, ask a fellow reader to use the “Feedback Form” to offer you helpful input.

Lector Formation – Feedback Form

The following form is an instructional tool from Aelred Rosser's book "A Well-trained Tongue" from Liturgy Training Publications. It is useful at any stage of a reader formation program. It is a tool, that presents the wide range of characteristics present in good reading. It can serve as an objective view for indicating areas where a reader needs to improve his or her skills.

Begin by evaluating the five categories below marked with an asterisk. Then gradually add in the other categories.

Source (Reader): _____

Receiver (Feedback): _____

Verbal Considerations

***Eye Contact** (Openness)

5 _____ 4 _____ 3 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____
Sensitive to and open to assembly *Seems unaware of the assembly*

***Vocal Projection** (Volume)

5 _____ 4 _____ 3 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____
Voice fills the space clearly, distinctly *Voice seems subdued inadequate*

***Melody** (Expression)

5 _____ 4 _____ 3 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____
Wide use of vocal range, appropriate to text *Monotone lacks variety*

***Rate**

5 _____ 4 _____ 3 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____
Varied and appropriate, energetic *Too fast (or too slow, dull)*

***Articulation**

5 _____ 4 _____ 3 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____
Distinct, clear, easy to understand *Indistinct, imprecise (or overdone)*

Pauses

5 _____ 4 _____ 3 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____
Effective, enhancing the meaning *Awkward, conflicting with meaning*

Spiritual Considerations

Scripture Message

5 _____ 4 _____ 3 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____
Clearly understands the meaning *Seems uncertain of the meaning*

Mood and Feeling

5 _____ 4 _____ 3 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____
Clearly communicates the mood and feeling *Seems unaware of the mood and feeling*

Nonverbal Considerations

Posture

5 _____ 4 _____ 3 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____
Alert, confident yet relaxed *Stiff, rigid, or too casual*

Demeanor

5 _____ 4 _____ 3 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____
Poised and confident *Uncomfortable, nervous, tentative*

Dress

5 _____ 4 _____ 3 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____
Modest, subdued, appropriate *Too flashy, too casual, or distracting*

Environmental Considerations

Use of Ambo and Microphone

5 _____ 4 _____ 3 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____
Clearly in command of space and equipment *Seems unfamiliar with space and equipment*

Liturgical Movement (procession/recessional)

5 _____ 4 _____ 3 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____
Poised, comfortable, natural *Rigid, too casual, or awkward*

Additional comments: _____

Lector Formation - Resources

A Well-Trained Tongue: Formation in the Ministry of Reader, Aelred Rosser. A comprehensive guide for lector training, establishes liturgical and ministerial principles for lectors and gives guidance on preparing lector training sessions. Reviews biblical literary genres, methods of preparing, and much more. Published by Liturgy Training Publications, www.ltp.org \$15.95.

Guide for Lectors, Paul Turner and Virginia Meagher. Background and tools needed to study, pray, serve in the liturgy and grow in the ministry. For individuals or groups; Pastoral, inviting format and style. Includes: theological foundation of the ministry; Catechesis on the minister's role; encouragement for deepening the spirituality. Published by Liturgy Training Publications, www.ltp.org \$5.95.

Lector and Gospel Reader's Workshop, Audrey Sommers. An interactive video workshop published by Liturgy Training Publications, 2006. Includes CD ROM on planning and setting up workshop, exercises and handouts. Available through diocesan media library.

The Ministry of Lectors, James A. Wallace. A thorough guide for lectors that emphasizes spiritual as well as technical preparation. Published by Liturgical Press, www.litpress.org \$7.95.

Read the Way You Talk: A Guide for Lectors, Jack Hartjes. A small book about speaking naturally and sounding like you know what you are saying. Gives very detailed explanations of pronunciation, diction, and inflection for lectors. Not for the beginner. Published by Liturgical Press, www.litpress.org \$9.95.

Essential Tools for Lectors:

Workbook for Lectors and Gospel Readers, A yearly workbook containing all the lectionary readings for the Sundays and Feasts of the year. Includes brief background on the readings, gives optional emphasis marks, some pronunciation information. Published by Liturgy Training Publications, www.ltp.org \$14.00. Also available through Hofmann's Church and Religious Goods, 814-455-8094.

Pronunciation Guide for the Lectionary, A small, handy guide to many of the most troubling pronunciations in the lectionary. Published by Liturgy Training Publications www.ltp.org \$5.00