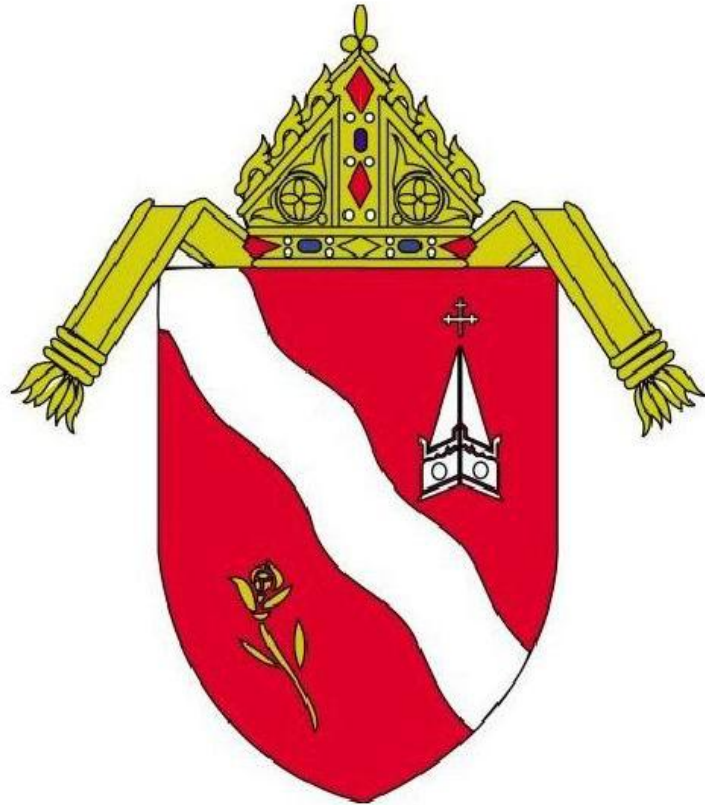
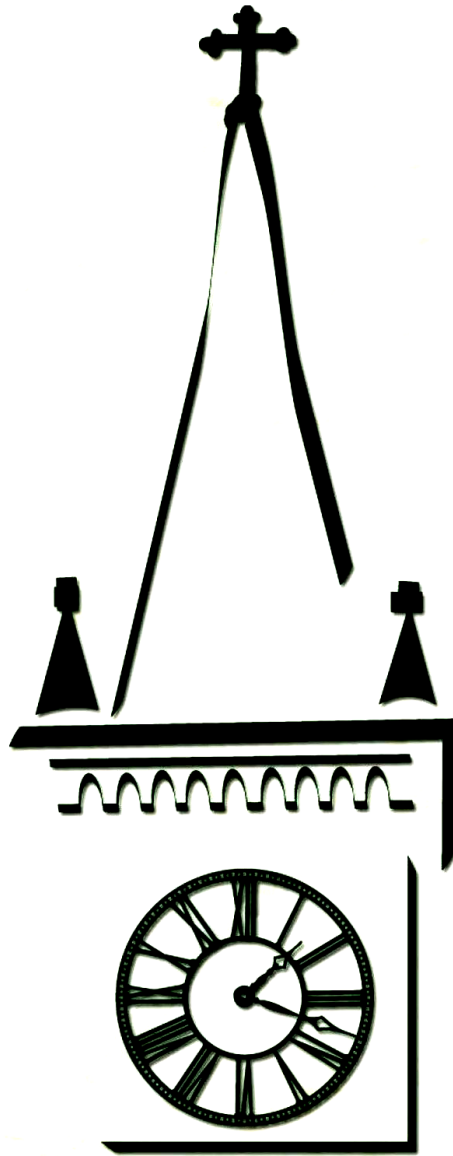


Diocesan Manual For Parish Trainers of Lectors



Office of Divine Worship
Under His Excellency, Most Reverend
James Anthony Tamayo, D.D., First Bishop of Laredo
Diocese of Laredo
Fall 2012



*The Lord GOD has given me a well-trained tongue,
That I might know how to speak to the weary
a word that will rouse them.
Isaiah 50:4*

This document is not an original work but a compilation of excerpts from various sources such as books, training manuals, Web page content and other resources. An attempt to give proper credit to all authors and sources has been made. However, if any have been overlooked, it is not an attempt to make claims of personal work. A bibliography page is found at the end of this booklet and numerous citations are found throughout the document giving credit to the original authors and their work.

Contents

I.	Statement of Purpose	4
II.	Opening Prayer	5
III.	The Ministry of Lector	7
	a. Theology and Sacredness of the Ministry of Lector	
	1. Of What Value is the Ministry of Lector?	8
	2. The Importance of the Word of God	9
	b. Preparation for Serving as a Lector	11
	1. Remote Preparation – Spiritual	12
	2. Proximate Preparation – Text	13
	c. Lector’s Dress	14
	d. Meditation – “What My Brothers Need”	15
IV.	Public Speaking Skills	18
	a. Verbal Communication Skills	
	1. Proper Breathing and Breath Control	19
	2. Monotone and Vocal Variety	22
	3. Emphasis and Stress	24
	4. Appropriate Pacing and Rate of the Reading	26
	5. Pausing	29
	6. Clear Articulation and Pronunciation	31
	b. Nonverbal Communication Skills	33
	1. Posture	34
	2. Eye Contact	35
	3. Bowing	36
	4. Hand Positioning	36
	5. Moving/Walking	36
	6. Making Mistakes	37
	c. Public Speaking Anxiety	38
V.	Brief Introduction to the Lectionary	39
VI.	Feedback and Support as a Learning and Growing Tool	45
VII.	Practice Exercises	49
VIII.	Reference Information and Material	69
IX.	Resources	75
X.	Bibliography	81
XI.	Certificate of Completion	83

Statement of Purpose

"Something has happened in our parish! I look forward to listening to the readings which are proclaimed with such conviction by people who live what they are saying. The lectors make me long to hear the Word which I find myself keeping in my heart and reflecting on it all week."

Our hope in presenting this Lector Manual for the Diocese of Laredo is that similar things will be said by the people of your parish after the Lector Trainers have used the contents of this manual to refresh in each lector the wonder of the Word and the best means to proclaim It.

As the Catechism of the Catholic Church says in paragraph 1154, "When the Holy Spirit awakens faith, he not only gives an understanding of the Word of God, but through the sacraments also makes present the "wonders" of God which it proclaims."

We are grateful to our Bishop, Most Rev. James Tamayo, D.D., for the request that we provide these workshops and resources so that the lectors of the Diocese of Laredo have a standard and guide for their ministry.

May the Word take flesh in the minds and hearts of all who hear that Word proclaimed throughout the Diocese of Laredo.

Given at the beginning of the Year of Faith October/November 2012



*For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."
But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed?
And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard?
And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?
And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent?
As it is written,
"How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"
Romans 10:13-15*

Opening Prayer

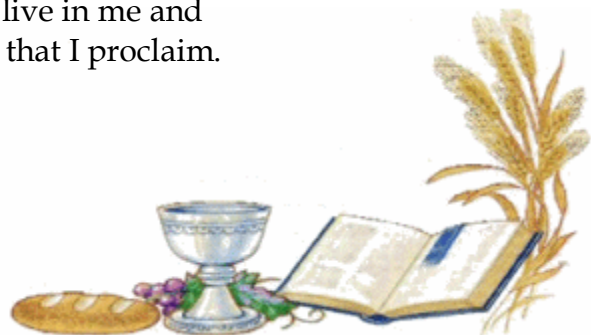
A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God.
All things came to be through him,
and without him nothing came to be.
What came to be through him was life,
and this life was the light of the human race;
the light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it.

The Gospel of the Lord

Prayer Of A Minister Of The Word

Lord, invest me with your power
as I prepare to proclaim the marvel of your message.
I have prepared my reading,
I have tried to take within me
the meaning of what I am about to proclaim.
Help me to proclaim, not just with my lips,
but with my whole heart and soul.
Lord, make me a hollow reed
so that your voice will be heard by all who hear me.
Free me of excessive concern over my performance.
Convert my feeling of nervousness and
turn all my apprehension into an energy
for proclaiming your word with power and authority.
May your Spirit live in me and
fill the holy word that I proclaim.



The Word of God

The Ministry of Lector

Section Contents

- I. Theology and Sacredness of the Ministry of Lector
 - a. Of What Value is the Ministry of Lector
 - b. The Importance of the Word of God
- II. Preparation for Serving as a Lector
 - a. Remote Preparation – Spiritual
 - b. Proximate Preparation – Text
- III. Lector’s Dress
- IV. Meditation – “What My Brothers Need”



*In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
John 1:1*

Of what value is the Ministry of Lector?

- It has amazing value!

Listen to this: “*Christ is present in his word since it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church*” (n. 7). (Repeat and dwell on this)

This comes from an authority as trustworthy as the Second Vatican Council’s document *Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy*. This means that, *as a lector*, when you proclaim the Scriptures during the Liturgy of the Word, *Christ speaks through you*. This is a great privilege indeed!

- Think about this for a moment.

You, the lector, are not merely someone who stands before the Eucharistic assembly and reads aloud some sacred words from a printed page. *When you proclaim* the scriptural readings *something happens –a great mystery–* that would not happen if everyone in the congregation silently read the readings from the missalette themselves.

- What makes Christ present?

It is the action of *hearing* the Scriptures as they are read aloud, or proclaimed, in church.

Therefore, *how* you proclaim the Scriptures is vitally important to the quality of the experience for the entire congregation. We will say more about skills for lectors later in the workshop.

- The ministry of lector is so important because the *Word of God* is, first of all, a *spoken* word, a *dynamic* word, a “word” spoken to us *by God*.

You recall how when Mary visited Elizabeth, right after finding out she was to be the Mother of God, and Elizabeth was expecting a son, Elizabeth says she **heard** Mary’s greeting and the baby in her womb leapt for joy! Elizabeth was in a back room perhaps. She didn’t first **see** Mary; she and the baby, John the Baptist, **heard** her greeting. Isn’t it awesome how God teaches us that the spoken word is a dynamic work full of power and grace?

- **Allow God to speak** his word **through you** to the assembly.

When you *proclaim the word of God it comes alive*, and it is your role to let the word of God come alive in you so that it may come alive for the entire congregation.

- As a lector, you become the means by which God’s word touches the hearts of those gathered together for precisely this purpose.

(Some ideas were from: The Joy of Being a Lector by Mitch Finley)

The Importance of the Word of God

- OK, we have said that **God's word** is **primarily spoken and proclaimed**, not a written text.

What does that mean for those in the congregation who read from the missalette? Would they have to if you read well? *Our goal is to proclaim so clearly that no one has to read, just listen.*

- You are really encouraged, when you are at the ambo, to read from the Lectionary and not from the missalette or some printed out page.

Using the beautiful book of the Lectionary elevates the dignity of the Word. Beauty touches hearts because that is how God made us. It is said that holiness is the fullness of beauty.

We use sacred vessels for the Body and Blood of Christ made of precious metals, like silver and gold. What if the priest would use a Dixie cup and a paper plate? Well, if we really believe that, as lectors, we deliver the Word of God, then, we should surround the experience with as much beauty as possible, like an attractive Lectionary, lighted candles near the ambo during the reading, etc.

- Think of the people who cannot go to Holy Communion.

Perhaps some of those people are not married in the Church or never made their First Communion. However, they can still receive Jesus in his WORD which you proclaim to them. You are the minister who brings Jesus to them through the Word. Jesus wants to feed and nourish them.

- Think of those who cannot read because they never learned how or perhaps their eyesight is no longer good.

You announce or proclaim the Word to them!

- God brought forth the world and all creation by his Word.

He says, for example, let there be trees and the trees appeared! And whenever God's word is spoken, anew it re-creates!

How does it make you feel to know that your proclamation has that power and importance?

Have you ever witnessed that power of the Word?

The
WORD
 by name
 is
 Jesus Christ

- God's Word has power beyond all other words.

He speaks this Word to reveal Himself, but also to reveal to us our own deepest nature. It is this Word, which tells us that we are His people, that our destiny is interwoven with His life. And, more than this, it is by this Word that He makes Himself present to us.

For this reason, the Church has never known a sacramental celebration apart from the proclamation of God's Word. By that word -which you proclaim- he calls your parish community into being to receive God's gift and to respond in faith.

- God's Word to us is **Jesus Christ**.

So **your purpose** as reader **is not to read biblical texts**, but to **reveal Jesus** in a way that calls people to an encounter with him and then to respond to him.

- When the Word is truly proclaimed and listened to, things happen.

We experience the power and presence of the living God in this community, here and now. It is the discovery that the great works of God are not simply history but are enacted anew in our own community of _____ as we gather to worship.

(Some ideas based on Archdiocese of Vancouver, Office of Religious Education)

For small group sharing:

Turn to the person next to you and answer the following questions.

- What struck you from the presentation?
- What more could you add?

If time allows:

Get feedback in the large group from several small groups.

Preparation for Serving as a Lector (Spiritual and Text Preparation)

Let's imagine that it is 10 minutes before Mass and the person in charge notices that there are no readers for the Sunday Mass. He goes to a man who is visiting their church and who in reality is only there because his relatives brought him along. He doesn't know the Bible very well, doesn't pray much nor receive the sacraments, but since he is a teacher, and something of a politician, he accepts to read the word that day.

- ❑ What do you think of that scenario?
- ❑ Does it ever happen?
- ❑ What is wrong with it?

(Let them respond)

Here's another story:

A bright and skilled young communications major began the first reading, speaking magnificently, articulating every syllable with perfect clarity, varying her pitch beautifully, accelerating and slowing at just the right spots, and with a perfect balance of dramatization. Then an elderly woman slowly hobbled up to the ambo for the second reading. As she began, her glasses slipped off her nose. She fumbled, adjusted them and continued. Her voice was frail, her pace erratic, her posture poor, her eye contact almost nil. But when she finished, there wasn't a dry eye in the place.

Said the puzzled first reader to the elder woman, "How were you able to touch those people like that? I sure didn't." And the elder woman humbly answered, "You knew the text. I knew the author." (pause)

Great lectors touch and impress us from the depths of their souls and their deepest love for our Lord. No matter how wonderful your platform skills are, when you don't know what you're reading about, the congregation is the first to pick it up.



Remote Preparation (Spiritual)

- *You must ground your lives in the Word of God.*

Read the Scriptures often. Prayer based on the Gospels and the psalms will help you to become more aware of your responsibility to live what you read and to prepare seriously to proclaim God's word to his people.

- Try to learn all you can about the Bible from good Catholic sources.

The Pastoral Institute of the Diocese of Laredo has such courses (Show plan of current courses).

There is a certificate for all lay ecclesial leaders (like lectors) that you should try to get. It is eight courses and they give you an excellent background in the Scriptures, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Sacraments, Commandments, Christian Prayers, etc.

I highly encourage you to attend those classes (Have Pastoral Institute flyers available).

- Daily find time to pray to get to know "the author" of the Scriptures.

Talk to God as you would to a friend. Also, use the wonderful Catholic devotions that are so valuable: the Rosary, the Divine Mercy Chaplet, prayer at 3:00 PM daily and all your other devotions. Fill your life with God, never letting 5 minutes go by that you do not think of him and raise your mind and heart to him.

- Do regular spiritual reading, go to confession at least once a month and fast regularly.

These are all practices that our church and Our Lady recommend to us to draw close to God and help souls.

- Your participation in a prayer group or movement is helpful to have you share your faith and be inspired by the efforts of others.

It also gives you an avenue for service to others.

- *You must be a model for others even when not in the ambo.*

- Lastly, *SILENCE.*

If you aspire to be a good lector in a noisy world, be good at silence. Make time each day to quiet your heart. Prepare yourself before you read. Use pauses while you read. *God is present also in the silence.*

Proximate Preparation (Text)

Before reading at mass, *the lector will want to ensure that he has a true familiarity with the scriptural texts* that he is to proclaim. This preparation will need to involve the advance study of the scriptural texts to be proclaimed, possibly in their context within the whole of scripture, and within the context of the liturgical year and the other readings for that day. This proximate preparation may also consist of practice in reading the texts you are assigned to, which should take care to avoid a sense of the dramatic, while presenting the readings in all of their depth and richness.

Study and practice throughout the week. Process what you are reading. It is advisable to begin some six days ahead to read the Sunday reading you will proclaim. Just read it a few times and quietly entrust it to your heart with a prayer to the Holy Spirit. That places it on the back burner, so-to-speak, and without your realizing it your subconscious is praying with it. You may begin to see things popping up that are related: a coincidence here, a word from someone there. This is the Spirit at work.

At the end of this booklet, in the “Reference Information and Material” section, you will find a sheet called: **A Suggested Method of Preparation for Proclaiming a Reading.** It gives an outline for a thorough way to prepare your readings.



Lector's Dress

When you walk up to the ambo, you bow. Now, imagine your clothes are too tight or too short; too revealing; or too casual; or that, your five inch heels make people wonder if you'll get to the ambo without twisting your ankle. Need I say more? People get distracted. Guys are not off the hook. They too need to dress with dignity. ***"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ."*** (Romans 13:14)

How we dress is important. It should reflect the **dignity** of the task we are performing in reading the Word of God. What would you wear to visit the President in the White House or to go to a job interview? At Church, whom do we visit? ***The Second Person of the blessed Trinity. Jesus, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity!***

The lector's task is to help the gathered assembly to encounter God in His Word. Thus, everything that the lector does during mass should ***aid the faithful to focus on the scripture,*** and not on himself. This means that ***the lector's clothing should not distract from the reading of the Word of God,*** but should rather express the dignity of the Word, and the importance that the lector assigns to his service.



Meditation

Purpose:

To ensure that trainees focus on the importance of their humility in the Ministry of the Word as well as the power Jesus has to use the skills and qualities of the lector to make His Word plain to the congregation members. It is important that every lector keep in mind that at least one person in the congregation needs to hear the particular Scripture passage proclaimed by a specific lector on the day it is proclaimed. God uses the lector's proclamation to reach out to that person at that moment (Hayes, 2007-2011, p. 36).

1. **Explain** that the author of the meditation wrote it in the first person and, although not the Trainer's actual, personal experience, all lectors will eventually experience something close to what is described in the meditation. In fact, they will have the experience more than once over their service years (Hayes, 2007-2011, p. 36).
2. **Ask** the group for a period of silence and **tell** the trainees to close their booklets, close their eyes, relax, listen to the meditation, be open to the sounds and words they will hear, and focus on their feelings as they experience the impact of the ideas presented (Hayes, 2007-2011, p. 36).
3. **Read the meditation aloud** in a strong voice. **Make sure** the pace of the reading is neither too fast nor very slow. Pause briefly at the end of each sentence (Hayes, 2007-2011, p. 36).
4. **Remain silent** for two minutes after presenting the meditation. Then... (Hayes, 2007-2011, p. 36)
5. **Ask:**
 - What did this meditation mean to you?
 - How does the meditation apply to Ministers of the Word?

(Hayes, 2007-2011, p. 36)

What My Brothers Need

I belong to a religious order, and [was asked to give a presentation with two other theologians in my own community].

[In the audience were] the men with whom I live and teach. I have given so many speeches in public I am rarely nervous. But this night I was definitely nervous... So, while the other two theologians... were giving their presentations before mine, I was silently praying. I asked Jesus to raise his becalming hand over me. Pour your peace into me. Help me to relax and do well.

Nothing happened. I mean nothing... So I examined my nervousness, in consultation with the divine physician, Jesus. I heard His diagnosis, and the words I heard inside me that night have had a profound effect upon... my life.

He said:

“You are nervous because you are getting ready to give a performance. You want to impress your brothers, to make sure they realize what a “gem” they have in you. I don’t want a performance. I want an act of love. Your brothers do not need you to impress them, but to love them.”

In this communication, Jesus reached very deeply into my life.

John Powell, S.J.

Quiet Moments

[Selected & Edited by Nancy Sabbag
(Servant Publications, 2000) Number 14,
from John Powell, **Touched by God**,
(Allen, TX, Thomas More, 1974)]

Public Speaking Skills

Section Contents

- I. Opening Statement About Effective Communication Skills to Learn and Practice
- II. Verbal Communication Skills
 - a. Proper Breathing and Breath Control
 - b. Monotone and Vocal Variety
 - c. Emphasis and Stress
 - d. Appropriate Pacing and Rate of the Reading
 - e. Pausing
 - f. Clear Articulation and Pronunciation
- III. Nonverbal Communication Skills
 - a. Posture
 - b. Eye Contact
 - c. Bowing
 - d. Hand Position
 - e. Moving/Walking
 - f. Making Mistakes
- IV. Public Speaking Anxiety



*O Christ, Brother;
So live within us
that we many go about our daily living
with the light of hope in our eyes,
the fire of inspiration on our lips,
your word on our tongue,
and your love in our hearts.*

*Amen.
Anonymous*

Public Speaking Skills to Learn and Practice

The skills that serve public speakers well are the same skills that serve lectors well. These skills are not easy to master and people's expectations continue to grow as the media show us so many highly polished presenters (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 43).

As lectors we are not expected to be professional actors, but we are expected to take the role seriously and strive to always improve our presentation skills. In this way also, *we learn to become more transparent and allow God to be visible in the word* (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 43).

We must also take into consideration the requirements of the listener. Understanding the text is the first challenge facing the reader. The second is to make sure that the listener understands the reader (Wallace, 2004, p. 46). If we mumble or speed through the reading, people will be distracted by us and miss how God is speaking to them (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 43).

There are several areas in particular to which we should pay close attention in our presentation style so that listeners truly hear the Word (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 43).

The public speaking skills we are most interested in developing for our particular ministry are as follow:

Verbal Communication Skills

- a. Proper Breathing and Breath Control
- b. Monotone and Vocal Variety
- c. Emphasis and Stress of Words and Phrases
- d. Appropriate Pacing and Rate of the Reading
- e. Pausing
- f. Clear Articulation and Pronunciation

Nonverbal Communication Skills

- a. Posture
- b. Eye Contact
- c. Bowing
- d. Hand Position
- e. Moving/Walking
- f. Making Mistakes

Verbal Communication Skills

a. *Breathing and Breath Control*

Many Liturgical readers practice certain aspects of their ministry, including eye contact, vocal tone, pacing and pausing. However, few pay attention to the most fundamental part of speaking: breathing.

One of the cornerstones of becoming a good lector is learning how to breathe correctly and how to control your breathing so that it is used to optimum effect when you read.

Everyone breathes. It's one of the most natural things we do. However, if you ask accomplished singers or public speakers to name the most important part of vocal technique, nine out of ten will say "breathing."

Lose Your Breath, Lose Your Voice

In order to speak, it is necessary to breathe. To see this for yourself, try this simple experiment. Try to inhale and speak at the same time. Can't do it? That's because the outward movement of air created by exhalation helps the vocal cords do their work. Here's another little experiment: exhale as far as you can. Let the air out of your nose and mouth, and push it out of your lungs. Now try to speak. You can produce some tone, but not very much, and not of a good quality. And it definitely doesn't feel good to speak this way. So, you can see now how important it is for a speaker to have a proper air supply, traveling in the proper direction.

So, is there some special way to breathe that helps you speak and read better? Yes!

Overview of Breathing

So how does one breathe for better speaking and reading? When we are born our breathing is naturally correct, babies can breathe, yell and scream with optimum effect because they use their lungs without conscious thought. If we were to observe babies breathe, we will notice that babies seems to breath from their stomach, but they are really using their abdominal muscles. As we grow older, some people become lazy in their habits only using the upper part of the lungs, taking a shallow breath instead of a normal one.

To understand how correct breathing and breath control works, first we need to understand the process that it uses to operate. We are not going to go into those details here, but if you are interested in reading a simple explanation of the process, you will find an explanation in the "*Reference*" section at the end of this booklet.

For our purposes, it is sufficient to say that, because *the language of sacred scripture is exalted language*, it often includes very lengthy sentences that can challenge the reader's breath control. So, as proclaimers of the Word, we are interested in increasing our lung capacity and strengthening our abdominal wall.

It's not hard to develop correct breathing techniques. In fact, it is so easy a baby can do it! Here's how it's done:

Breathing 101

The following is a simple exercise that will increase breath control by increasing lung capacity and strengthening the abdominal wall.

Trainer/Guide:

First, read the following instructions out loud carefully, and then ask the attendees to try them as you read them slowly for a second time. An additional related exercise can be found at the end of this booklet under the "*Practice Exercises*" section.

1. To allow the lungs to expand fully, a *proper posture* is essential. Sit forward in a chair, straighten your spine, lift your head up comfortably and let your stomach muscles relax.
2. *Slowly breathe in through your nose* as you imagine that you are a vessel filling up with air. The intake of breath should be completely silent. Fill up your abdomen first, then your lower ribs (you should feel them expand) and then all the way up to your chin.
3. Hold this breath for a count of five (increasing the count as time progresses).
4. Now *exhale slowly through your mouth*. As you exhale, keep your ribs expanded and tighten your abdomen as you would if you were doing a "crunch" – that is, the lower abdominal muscles should come in first as though you were rolling up a tube of toothpaste. (Since you are not a tube of toothpaste, keep your chest up as you exhale.)
5. Repeat. Once you have mastered the exercise sitting down, practice incorporating it into your speaking and reading. You may need to do it slowly at first until you can coordinate all the actions smoothly. You will improve dramatically by doing this exercise slowly and regularly.

The key thing to remember is that *breathing should be low and expansive*. If you do the exercise correctly, your stomach will go in while your chest stays out and expands. Practicing this technique will provide many benefits.

Some of the benefits of proper breathing techniques include:

- ✓ **Awareness** of your breathing will enable you to **breathe more effectively** (deep breaths as opposed to shallow breaths).
- ✓ **Proper posture** for breathing creates a **confident, strong appearance**. Deeper breathing makes you feel more confident and strong as well.
- ✓ Deep breathing **decreases tension and helps you control your nerves better**. Andrew Weil, MD writes, “You cannot always center yourself emotionally by an act of will, but *you can use your voluntary nerves to make your breathing slow, deep, quiet, and regular, and the rest will follow.*”

Try to practice good breathing technique several times a day and soon you will naturally incorporate it into your everyday speaking. Here are a few tips for practicing breathing:

- ***Practice breathing while driving.*** Your hands are raised as you drive which makes it easier to keep your chest high. And, practicing breathing can also ease road rage significantly!
- ***Practice breathing while sitting at your desk or at home*** when you would normally be slumped over in your chair. Sit on the edge of your chair and take 10 practice breaths three times a day.
- ***Practice breathing when you are about to go to sleep or lying down on the floor*** at the end of a workout session. When you are lying down, it is easier to isolate the abdominal muscles and strengthen them for proper breathing. You can even put a book on your abdomen to exaggerate the way you use those muscles for even better awareness of how to do this correctly. Watch the book go up and down as you breathe “with your stomach.”

Well. *You thought you knew how to breathe, didn't you?* You weren't necessarily wrong. Since you're alive, you obviously have mastered breathing skills to some degree. But the breathing techniques required in public speaking do differ from those required to simply keep the body going.

When you proclaim the Word, ***the most important thing you can do for yourself is to breathe correctly.*** Always remember to breathe in through your nose as this will protect your vocal cords. If you breathe through your mouth, you will dry out your vocal cords and experience soar throat.

On the day you are scheduled to read, remember to consciously practice using the air you take in. When it is your turn to read, start with good posture and then take one more deep breath and breathe into your first words. Don't forget to breathe from time to time during the course of the reading. If you follow this advice, **you will automatically set a better pace for your reading** and your lungs and audience will both thank you for learning to breathe correctly.

b. Monotone and vocal Variety

Sometimes, the proclamation of Scripture during the liturgy of the Word sounds *bland and monotone*. And the reading of a familiar passage may even feel like it went in one ear and out the other, and nothing seems to speak to the heart until the priest brings light through explanations and illustrations during the homily. But in fact, the **Scriptures are alive and we ought to read them accordingly!** *We ought to read them with expression and avoid reading in a boring monotone* (Article Source: <http://www.wikihow.com/Do-an-Exciting-Scripture-Reading>).

A common sin against good public reading is monotony, often caused by speaking in a monotone: *staying on one note during most of the reading and dropping your voice only at the end of a sentence or phrase*. You can also be monotonous when you use the same pattern of notes over and over again, sometimes this falls into a “sing-song” pattern and listeners find themselves attending more to the melody than the meaning of what is being said (Wallace, 2004, p. 47-48).

So, why is a monotone voice boring? *The hypnotic, repetitious evenness of the voice is what puts us to sleep*. The sameness of the sound makes it bland and unemotional. The good news is this problem is fairly easy to fix. You just need to add vocal variety by combining differences in your pitch, rate, and volume. We’ll talk about each of these characteristics in more detail throughout this block.

Communication specialists tell us that the single most important quality demanded by an audience is vocal variety. What audiences find most difficult to listen to is a monotone voice that lacks color, variations in pitch, animation or warmth (Rosser, 1996, p. 13).

Vocal variety is an umbrella term that includes all the characteristics of speech that will be discussed here. It includes pitch, rate, volume, articulation –and this list is not exhaustive. Each term is elusive and imprecise. What is “too fast”? How loud is “too loud”? When does a pause become “dead space”? In our discussion of vocal variety, keep in mind that the complexities of human speech sounds do not categorize precisely. *Matters of taste, individual preferences and many other considerations make the aesthetics of speech a very imprecise science!* Nevertheless, we can speak of what is effective, pleasant and generally considered “listenable.” We also can identify undesirable characteristics: being monotonous, inaudible unclear, artificial, phony and stereotypical (Rosser, 1996, p. 13).

If you are, or have ever been, a parent or teacher to young children, you can apply this experience to your lecturing technique. When you read aloud to a young child you try to put some life into what you read; you need to put some lively expression in your voice. Perhaps, you use a different tone for each character. *You vary your style depending on the kind of book you read*. Your voice sounds different when you read *Peter Rabbit* than it does when you read *Little House on the Prairie* (Finley, 2000, p. 58).

Apply these insights to your ministry as a lector. *Let the literary style of the reading have an impact on how you read it.* A narrative, such as the story of David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:1-27), requires a different voice than a hymn, such as St. Paul's ode to Christ (Philippians 2:5-10) (Finley, 2000, p. 58).

Let your voice reflect your understanding of what you read. Whatever you do, avoid reading with a dull monotone voice. *Read as if what you are reading has meaning for you personally.* At the same time, there are always two extremes. Do not try to dramatize the reading or exaggerate so your reading comes across as weird or quirky (Finley, 2000, p. 58).

The best advice anyone can give you is to read from your heart, not from your head. *Proclaim the Scriptures from your deepest center where God dwells in silence and unconditional love.* When you do that, those upon whose ears the sacred words fall will perceive what they are supposed to perceive: God speaking to them in the silence of their own hearts with a message of unconditional love (Finley, 2000, p. 58).

Trainer/Guide:

Related exercises can be found at the end of this booklet under the "*Practice Exercises*" section.



*Indeed, the word of God is living and active,
sharper than any two-edged sword,
piercing until it divides soul from spirit,
joints from marrow;
it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

Hebrews 4:12

c. *Emphasis and Stress*

Have you ever heard the saying, "It's not what you say, but how you say it?" Let's focus on what this statement means and why it is important in oral communication. When we speak, we use many ways to express ourselves and to get our message across to our listeners. The words we choose, our body language, our gestures, and our facial expressions are all important aspects of communication.

The emphasis we place on the words we read also influences the meaning of what is said. **Word stress** can alter the meaning of a printed text when someone listens to the text instead of reading it. Important words in a sentence are said more slowly, usually at a higher pitch, and sometimes a little more loudly than unimportant words. The stress we place on these words tell our listeners to pay attention to them because they are important. So how we say or read something matters. (Article Source: <http://EzineArticles.com/1888244>)

Let's take a look at the following sentence:

I don't think he should get that job.

This simple sentence can have many levels of meaning based on the word you stress. Consider the meaning of the following sentences with the stressed word in bold. Read each sentence aloud and give a strong stress to the word in bold but with no noticeable emotion:

I don't think he should get that job.

Meaning: Somebody else thinks he should get that job.

I **don't** think he should get that job.

Meaning: It's not true that I think he should get that job.

I don't **think** he should get that job.

Meaning: That's not really what I mean. OR I'm not sure he'll get that job.

I don't think **he** should get that job.

Meaning: Somebody else should get that job.

I don't think he **should** get that job.

Meaning: In my opinion it's wrong that he's going to get that job.

I don't think he should **get** that job.

Meaning: He should have to earn (be worthy of, work hard for) that job.

I don't think he should get **that** job.

Meaning: He should get another job.

I don't think he should get that **job**.

Meaning: Maybe he should get something else instead.

Read each sentence again but this time with a **strong emotion of anger or rage** in the voice.

Ask: What was different this time around?

Some observations will be:

1. A common observation is that the "*pace*" of the reading changed! It usually is somewhat slower.
Observation: listeners need time to picture the scene – the emotional overtone of the words on the scene.
2. A second observation is that the focus of the listener is now on the one saying the words –the *words are personal!*
Observation: as lectors, we bring our personal witness of what the Scripture means to us, personally, by the way we proclaim a reading. Our willingness to let our emotions enter our proclamation makes a great deal of difference in how individuals in the Assembly "hear" the proclamation.
3. In many Scripture passages, God is angry! How does he sound?
Observation: we have a responsibility to the Assembly to help them "see" God as He is.
4. Some will object to the use of emotion as being "too dramatic!"
Observation: as Catholics we are seldom known for being "dramatic" in church! An honest expression of emotion, however, is never perceived as being dramatic. It is always those who are "acting" that are labeled as being dramatic.
(Hayes, 2006-2011, p. 10)

Repeat the exercise if there is time but *use some other emotion (happiness, surprise or regret)*.

As you can see, there are many different ways this sentence can be understood. The important point to remember is that *the true meaning of the sentence is expressed through the stressed word or words*. In other words, *the stress or emphasis on the read words conveys the underlying message*. Equally important, the "*tone of voice*" or "*attitude*" of the lector *conveys emotions*. (Article Source: http://esl.about.com/cs/pronunciation/a/a_wordstress.htm)

Your preparation of the reading will help you understand the mood and tone of the reading and what needs to be emphasized. What you emphasize in a phrase can potentially change the meaning of that phrase for people hearing it, so the decision should be made carefully. Once you are extremely familiar with the reading and have a good sense of what God is conveying in it, you will be much more comfortable deciding exactly what tone to use and where to place emphasis (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 46).

Trainer/Guide:

Related exercises can be found at the end of this booklet under the "*Practice Exercises*" section.

d. *Appropriate Pacing and Rate of Reading*

The most frequent complaint: **everyone reads too fast**. Well, perhaps not everyone, but this is surely *the most common complaint against readers*. Audience sensitivity is the answer. You have the printed words before you (words you presumably have studied closely) and the assembly does not. They are relying on hearing stimulation alone. If they do have the text before them in a missalette, your challenge is to make “hearing” more profitable and enjoyable than “reading along” (Rosser, 1996, p. 18).

If you want to be understood, you cannot read as quickly as you talk in everyday conversation. *Reading at a conversational pace is too fast!*

Trainer/Guide:

A related tongue-twister exercise can be found at the end of this booklet under the “*Practice Exercises*” section. The exercise is used to demonstrate to trainees, through their own experience, that their public reading effectiveness is enhanced when they slow down the speed/pace of their reading (Hayes, 2007-2011, p. 44).

The first principle concerning the pacing of the reading is to slow down. It is rare that a lector reads too slowly for people to understand the meaning of the text. While you may feel that you are reading painfully slowly, this will most likely not be the case. Beyond slowing down, *the pace of the reading depends on the text, the space, and the sound system* (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 46).

The content of the reading will call for variation in your speed. For instance, when Jesus says, “Amen, Amen, I say to you...,” you know he is about to say something very important. A slower pace will give the statement greater weight (Wallace, 2004, p. 54).

Some text requires a slower proclamation simply because they are *dense in meaning or in syntax*. Others are particularly *solemn or particularly brief*. A very brief reading must be proclaimed slowly, lest it be over before the hearers have had a chance to focus on it. Sometimes a reading can be so short that if you don’t slow down, it will not make any impression (Rosser, 1996, p. 22).

Consider this optional reading from the book of Revelation for a funeral liturgy:

I, John, heard a voice from heaven say, “Write this:
 Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.”
 “Yes,” said the Spirit,
 “let them find rest from their labors,
 for their works accompany them.”

That is it –two sentences! It is over before you know it. But notice there are three voices or speakers in these two sentences: the speaker (John), the voice from heaven, and the Spirit. So you can give this reading the power it deserves by careful pacing, allowing each voice to have its moment (Wallace, 2004, p. 55).

In contrast, other readings can profit from a degree of briskness. For example, there are those moments of dialogue when the pace can pick up, as in this exchange between Jesus and Peter at the Last Supper that is read on Holy Thursday:

Peter said to him, “You will never wash my feet.”
 Jesus answered him, “Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me.”
 Simon Peter said to him, “Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well.”

Familiarity can lead to reading too quickly. Some readers approach texts with the attitude that “we have all heard this so many times before” and they speed through the overly familiar text. But while we may have heard a text many times, this time *it might speak to someone there for the first time*. Remember, too, although you have spent time reading, studying, praying over and practicing the text, the listeners have not. For many, the last time they may have heard this reading could be three years ago, and if it was read poorly then or if a person was not paying attention, then six years might have gone by since this text got a hearing. So, ***approach every reading as if this were being read for the first time***; give yourself the time needed to absorb the thoughts and feelings, to see in your imagination the events happening in a story, to allow any questions asked in a text to hang in the air for a moment, to respond to the images the text sets out. ***Rushing through a reading is a very frustrating experience for a listener.*** And if the pace is at a breakneck speed, ***people will turn off*** (Wallace, 2004, p. 55 & 56).

On the other hand, it is possible to read too slowly. Then a reading becomes ***tedious, boring, and lifeless***. But this is a relatively rare disease. Again, if you have any doubts one way or the other, ask if you are either a rapid-fire reader or a languid lector (Wallace, 2004, p. 56).

In conclusion, ***read at a steady pace, not too fast, not too slow***. What is too fast? What is too slow? New lectors sometimes read too fast, due perhaps to being a bit nervous. More experienced lectors sometimes read too fast because they slip into a “slap-dash” approach to lectoring: get up there, get through it, and get back to the pew. ***It’s better to read a little too slowly than to read too fast.*** The ideal is a natural, unrushed reading pace. If you read too slow, that will distract people as much as reading too fast, but it’s the rare lector for whom this is a problem. ***For most of us, it would improve the quality of our lecturing if we could slow down a little.*** Rely on the judgment of those who listen to you. If they think you read too fast, slow down. If they think you read too slow, pick up the pace a bit (Finley, 2000, p. 56).

Revisiting Breath Control Techniques for Proper Reading Pace

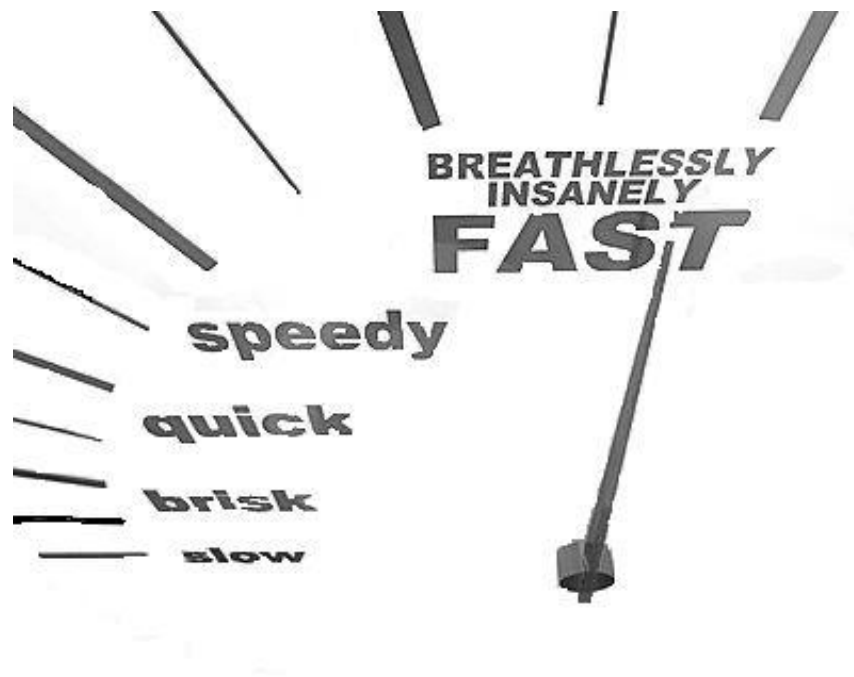
In general, for vocal variety, you are encouraged to vary your pace by speeding up and slowing down appropriately for the message contained in the Scripture passage. However, some people have trouble with pacing due to poor *breathing*. If you read too fast, or if your reading is labored or too slow, consider the following:

1. Reading *too fast* is often the result of not stopping to breathe often enough.

Solution: To slow down your reading with the breath, consciously take a breath before you begin. Remember to stop and breathe between ideas and sentences. The next time you practice a reading, take time to inhale and exhale deeply five times before you start to read. Then, take one more deep breath and exhale vigorously into your first words.

2. Reading *too slow* can be the result of not taking in and using enough air.

Solution: Not using enough air can cause a person to sound dull and lifeless. This may also be caused by poor posture. Practice the breathing technique previously presented, paying special attention to posture. Be sure you move that air with the abdominal muscles as you speak. Overdo the latter when you practice so you really feel the breath in the sound. By breathing deeper and then using all the air in your sound, you create a more energetic sound and you feel more energized, too.



e. *Pausing*

Some people read like they drive, with as few stops along the way as possible. Others pause too often, causing listeners to lose the flow of thought (Wallace, 2004, p. 56).

The challenge in effective pausing is learning not to fear silence. Many readers, especially those who are new to the ministry, are afraid of the “*sound of silence*” when they are at the lectern. A steady stream of sound gives them the impression that they are moving along nicely and not stumbling over starts and stops. Unfortunately, the “*steady stream of sound*” is ***not pleasant for the hearers and does violence to the text.*** Remember that your *audience must process the text, relying on your vocal presentation to endow it with meaning, to signal changes in topic, to prepare them for a particular significant part of the reading, and so forth.* ***Effective pausing gives them time to do their processing.*** It also gives you time to refresh your understanding and your voice. Finally, a well-executed pause is one way to emphasize part of a text, either what has just been proclaimed or what is to come next; this is the “*pause for effect*” (Rosser, 1996, p. 23).

Lively *human speech*, of whatever degree of formality, is *punctuated with pauses*, very much like the “*rests*” in music. Some are very brief, almost unnoticeable; others are quite long and dramatic. ***Like music, natural human speech derives a great part of its meaning from the silences that punctuate the sound*** (Rosser, 1996, p. 23).

Revisiting Breath Control Techniques for Pausing Effectively

When speaking, pauses are the golden silences that allow your listeners to take in what you are saying. They are the “*beats*” an actor uses between phrases; they are that special something that leads to “*comedic timing.*” Importantly, ***pauses also give us time to breathe.***

Here’s how to apply breathing to your pauses:

1. ***Breathe before speaking*** your first words.

Taking that first breath allows you to align everything physically, mentally, and emotionally. It also allows your larynx to be stimulated but relaxed. And finally, it gets the oxygen flowing so that you can think and read more clearly.

2. ***Be aware*** of your breathing.

It is amazing to see how many people simply forget to breathe when they are in front of an audience. As you may have experienced, nerves can play a big part in forgetting to breathe and feeling out of breath. So, the short-term solution to this is to ***pause and breathe!*** The long-term solution, however, is to practice being aware of your breathing all day long. ***Awareness of breathing makes for natural pauses.*** The more you practice, the more likely it is you’ll remember to breathe when you’re proclaiming the Word.

Trainer/Guide:

Related exercises can be found at the end of this booklet under the “*Practice Exercises*” section.

Pause & Play

to see the effect



f. *Clear Articulation and pronunciation*

Articulation is the *physical production of particular speech sounds: to utter clearly and distinctly; to pronounce syllables with clarity*. Articulation involves the “shape,” or formation, of sounds with the lips, tongue, teeth, soft palate and muscles of the face. The way sounds are formed results in either clarity or mushiness, affectation or naturalness (Rosser, 1996, p. 31).

Articulating words clearly is extremely important for the lector. Make sure that all syllables are pronounced, that the ending of words are not dropped, and that multiple words are not strung together to form one unintelligible word (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 45).

This helps the assembly to hear and understand the Word of God. Particularly when so many of our communities have a variety of nationalities among both their lectors and assembly members, it is critical for everyone’s understanding that there be no mumbling or slurring of words (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 45).

What we recognize as a foreign or regional accent is the result of sounds being shaped in a way different from our own. There is no absolute rule of “right” and “wrong” in such matters. In some parts of the country, the reader who pronounces “walking” as “walkin’,” and “others” as othuhs,” would be judged to have poor (or regional) articulation. “Where is she from?” the hearers would wonder. In other places, “walkin” and “othuhs” would be expected and pass unnoticed. “Walking” and “others” would sound affected. **More important than notions of correctness, from the audience’s point of view, are clarity and the fulfillment of expectations** (Rosser, 1996, p. 31).

Far more distracting than any unfamiliar accent or even error is **exaggerated or overdone articulation**. This is always **perceived as phony or artificial**, and it *signals that the reader is more concerned with “getting it right” than with “getting it across”* (Rosser, 1996, p. 31).

With all of the above in mind, it may indeed be necessary for some readers to improve their articulation. Lazy articulation can muffle sounds and make words difficult to understand. *Further evidence that all the elements of vocal variety are interdependent is that articulation almost always improves when the energy level is elevated through sufficient volume, pitch and projection* (Rosser, 1996, p. 31).

Now, pronunciation is the accepted standard of the sound, rhythm and stress patterns of a syllable, word or phrase in a given language.

Before you get much further in your preparation, it is important to identify what words are unfamiliar to you. The names of people and places can be particularly difficult to pronounce, and yet are critical for the assembly to hear correctly in order to understand the reading. There are several good pronunciation guides in printed and online formats, and it is helpful to have access to one at home, so that you aren’t trying to learn the pronunciation a few minutes before Mass begins (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 41).

Incorrect pronunciations can undermine an otherwise fine proclamation. No matter how much authority you give to it, the line is not “A reading from the letter of Saint Paul to the *Philippines*,” but rather “A reading from the letter of Saint Paul to the *Philippians*” (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 41).

It is very important to pronounce words properly. *Correct pronunciation allows the assembly to follow the reading and not wonder what it is you really meant to say.* Pay particular attention to words that are easily misread or mispronounced, completely distorting their meaning for the assembly. For example, on the Third Sunday of Advent in Year A, we should not hear from Isaiah: “Here is your God, he comes with *vindiction*”; rather we should hear “Here is your God, he comes with *vindication*.” By mispronouncing “*vindication*” the assembly is left wondering what that word was and what it means, and they have missed the next sentences about God coming to save us and opening the eyes of the blind. Once you begin the proclamation during Mass, however, *read everything with confidence and pronounce words that are repeated in the text consistently so the assembly can follow you* (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 41).

Even experienced lectors might want to check on the state of their articulation, pronunciation and diction. The most immediate way is to ask a few people at Mass if they had any trouble understanding you (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 54).

Trainer/Guide:

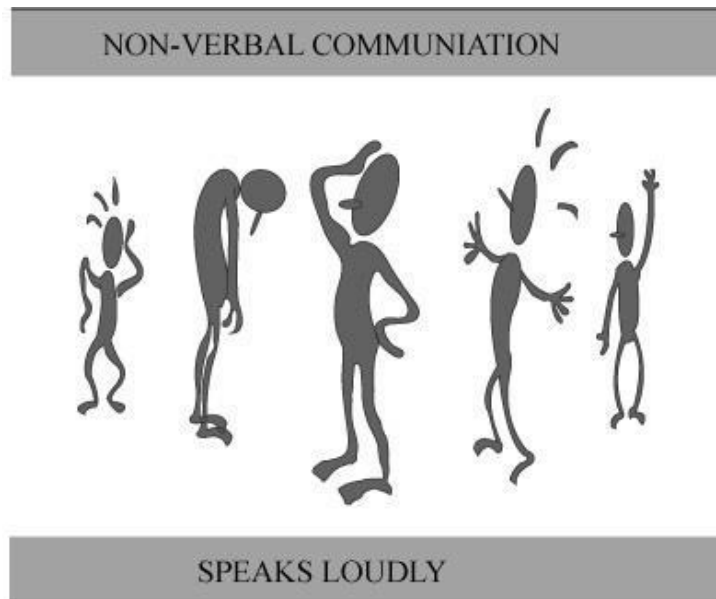
Related exercises can be found at the end of this booklet under the “*Practice Exercises*” section.



Nonverbal Communication Skills

While we have looked at the verbal aspects of proclaiming scripture at Mass, your nonverbal communication is also extremely important (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 48).

Experts in the field remind us over and over that “**nonverbal language speaks loudest**”. Nonverbal language is everything but the words coming from our mouth (including “ahs”, “uhs”, body language, dress, posture, attitude and so on). If the way we present ourselves to an audience is disagreeable or distracting, it will drown out anything we have to say. Readers who shift rhythmically from one foot to the other, lean into the microphone or wear enormous dangling earrings allow unfair competition to accompany them to the lectern. Their non-verbal language will drown out their proclamation (Rosser, 1996, p. 88).



a. *Posture*

First, it is important to have good posture, whether you are processing or standing at the ambo (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 48).

Slouching will detract from your reading, as will leaning back and putting your hands in your pockets (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 48).

Also, when standing at the ambo, be still and avoid fidgeting. Shifting your weight back and forth from one foot to the other, or slightly bouncing up and down will distract greatly from your reading. Often these are nervous gestures we are not aware of, so feedback from others is particularly helpful in determining if we have a problem that needs correction (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 49).

Good, relaxed posture, neither stiff nor careless, is a must, not only because of the signal it gives but because it is required for effective use of the body in public communications (Rosser, 1996, p. 88).

Hold your shoulders back, place your legs directly beneath your shoulders (don't lock your knees!), and keep your back straight. This *alert, dignified posture will convey the significance of the proclamation*. However, take care not to throw your shoulders too far back and your chest too far out so that you project an air of arrogance instead of humility and dignity. Practicing in front of a mirror will help you find the posture that looks and feels appropriate (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 48).

b. Eye Contact

While reading from the ambo, *it is important to make eye contact with the assembly* (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 48).

A frequent word of advice for public speakers is to have eye contact with their audience. This also holds for lectors... You want to make listeners feel you are reading to them, which involves now and then a moment of genuine connection with listeners, not a darting glance from a head bobbing up and down, nor a sweeping eye/windshield wiper movement across the church that really looks at no one, nor a look over the heads of listeners. Watch for falling into a mechanical pattern: up and to the right, up and to the left, right, left. Take the time to look, but not glare, at various people sitting in the different sections of the church (Wallace, 2004, p. 58).

There are times when making eye contact is appropriate, for instance, the opening line and closing dialogue of the reading can certainly be done while looking at the people. It is also important to *look at people during the reading.* This really does help to keep people engaged and help to convey meaning (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 48).

However, during the reading, you might want to make eye contact at certain points but not at others. The former occasions are fairly obvious: when the words of the text are as much for our salvation as for anyone else's. Such an instance would be Paul's words to the Thessalonians: "Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing," or when a narrator is imparting information, especially at the beginning or end of a story. But when a character is speaking to another in a story, you might want to place the character spoken to above the heads of your listeners so they do not think these words are aimed at them. This can be true even when Jesus is speaking, especially if he is chastising the Pharisees or annoyed with the apostles. You probably do not want to be looking at anyone when John the Baptist is calling the Pharisees a brood of vipers or Paul is calling the Galatians stupid (Wallace, 2004, p. 58 & 59).

You will feel most comfortable making eye contact throughout the reading if you are familiar enough with it to be able to look up at the people and back down at the Lectionary and not lose your place (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 48 & 49).

c. *Bowing*

Any gesture that you make should be done with care and deliberation. The gesture you are most likely to make is bowing, if you pass in front of the altar on your way to or from the ambo (there is no reason to bow if you do not pass in front of the altar).

A deep bow is made to the altar by all who enter the sanctuary, leave it, or pass before the altar. –*Ceremonial of Bishops, #72*

Good liturgical gesture is done with grace and meaning (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 49).

d. *Hand Positioning*

In general, **hand gestures are not necessary when serving as a lector.** So that your hands have a natural place to be, it is a good idea to let them rest on the ambo, holding the Lectionary, or subtly marking your place with a finger (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 49).

e. *Moving/Walking*

All our movements should be done with purpose and reverence, whether walking to or from the ambo, or bowing before the altar. Movements **should be neither too fast nor too slow** (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 49).

If you are carrying the Book of the Gospels in the opening procession, or removing the Lectionary after the second reading, it is important that you handle these books **reverently.** Apart from the readings within them, **the books themselves,** especially the Book of the Gospels, **are symbols of our faith and of the salvation of Christ throughout the history of God's people.** *They should be carried with two hands and picked up and put down carefully* (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 49).

f. *Making Mistakes*

We do make mistakes on occasion, even after preparing. Is it better to keep moving on or go back and read it correctly? Announcing Paul's Letter to the Phillippines or even reading "Then Jesus went out and hung himself" during the Passion might be better off left behind as quickly as possible, leaving listeners to make the obvious correction. However, *if there is a serious change in the meaning of a statement that either contradicts the text's meaning or could baffle or confuse the community*, it is best to go back and re-read what has been misread. The lector who read, "... that which is mortal must clothe it self *with immorality*" rather than "... *with immortality*" was correct to go back and re-read the sentence. Don't get flustered; a slight pause followed by an "Excuse me," then a re-reading, is sufficient. Watch, though, that you do not re-read too quickly, as there is a tendency to do, assuming people already heard most of the phrase or sentence except for the mistake. Give the thought its full value; read it as if for the first time, which, in deed, it is (Wallace, 2004, p. 59).

Public Speaking Anxiety (stage fright)

Whether you are experienced or new at this ministry, you need to deal with the number one phobia in nearly every human being: public communication anxiety, or, in more popular terms, "*stage fright*". If you do not experience this anxiety at all, chances are that you are not taking your ministry seriously enough or have settled for "safe" methods that render your reading too "casual", too low-key, lifeless and ineffective (Rosser, 1996, p. 39).

That rather stern remark brings us to the first step in dealing with stage fright: remembering that it has a positive side. Remind yourself that *such anxiety is the fear of not doing a good job or the fear of looking ridiculous*. The positive side is that your fear is really the energetic desire to do well (Rosser, 1996, p. 39).

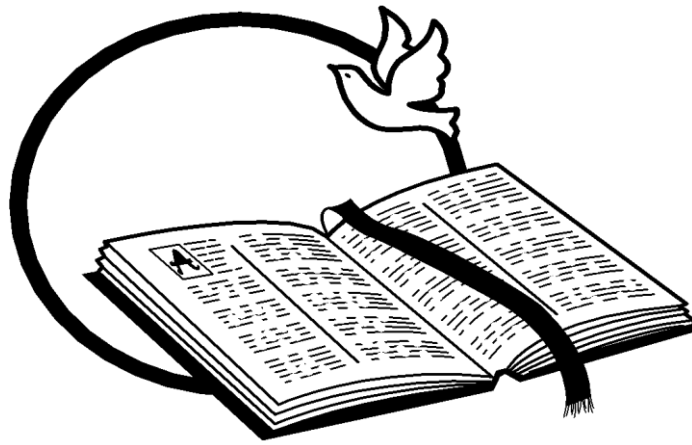
There is no cure for public speaking anxiety, and there is no wish to "cure" it. Rather, the constructive approach is to "use" it –to use the energy underlying it. The best way to use that energy is to prepare well and then proclaim the word with a high energy level. All the experts in the field of communication agree that *thorough preparation is the best way to handle stage fright* (Rosser, 1996, p. 39).

...Public performance is a skill and an art. *Practice not only makes perfect (or nearly so). It also creates confidence*. Therefore, seek every opportunity for public speaking experience so that your success rate is elevated. Finally, remind yourself that you share the challenge of stage fright with every dedicated performer, preacher and reader (Rosser, 1996, p. 40).

Brief Introduction to the Lectionary

Section Contents

- I. Our Lectionary
- II. Cultivating Spirituality Through the Lectionary
 - a. Sundays
 - b. Weekdays
 - c. Special Occasions
 - d. Navigating Through the Lectionary



*The grass withers,
the flower fades;
but the word of our God
will stand forever.
Isaiah 40:8*

Our Lectionary

The second Vatican Council also made changes to the Lectionary. The Sunday Lectionary expanded into a *three-year cycle of readings denoting Years A, B, and C*. During *Ordinary Time*, each year features one Gospel: Matthew, Mark, and Luke, respectively. The Gospel of John appears during the Easter season all three years, as well as on other occasions, such as the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time each year, many of the Sundays of Lent, and some of the summer Sundays of the Year B.

On the Sundays of Ordinary Time, the first reading comes from somewhere in the Old Testament. It always bears a thematic relationship to the Gospel. During other times of the Year, the first reading explores a theme relating to the season. For example, the first readings of Lent tell a sequence of stories from salvation history, leading up to the promise of our redemption. Over the course of three years, nearly all of the books of the Old Testament are represented in the Sunday Lectionary.

An exception to this plan occurs during the season of Easter. At that time, the first reading is drawn from the New Testament – from the Acts of the Apostles. There we hear the story of the apostolic Church, as it faced struggles and rejoiced in the promise of the Resurrection. For the seven weeks of Easter, all the readings come from the New Testament.

The responsorial psalm is chosen because it relates to a theme from the first reading. There are a few exceptions when the psalm pertains more to the season of the year or even to the Gospel. It is permissible to substitute another psalm that fits the occasion, especially if the parish has a musical setting of it in its repertoire.

The second readings during Ordinary Time are semi-continuous excerpts of different New Testaments books. For example, each year Ordinary Time begins with a series of readings from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Large parts of the letter are never read, but the passages we hear follow the thought of the letter from beginning to end over the entire three-year cycle. During the other times of the year, the second reading is chosen because it relates to the feast or season being celebrated. For example, the second readings of Advent show how the early Christians expected Christ would come again very soon, and how they challenged one another to live accordingly.

(Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 10 - 11)

Cultivating Spirituality through the Lectionary

The Bible makes a good companion for every Christian's prayer. The Lectionary is an especially good prayer resource for the lector.

Years ago, Catholics were actually discouraged from reading the Bible. Authorities were afraid that people would misinterpret what it says. Catholics used their Bibles as record books—places where the names of children, the choice of spouses, and the dates of death were recorded. They rested on coffee tables or nearby shelves. But rarely did Catholics use Bibles for prayer.

It is fitting to commend the names of the family to pages of the Bible. But it is more fitting to read the word of God.

Today, the Catholic Church includes a wider variety of scripture readings in a typical Sunday Mass than in the past. Readings from scripture form an integral part of our worship outside of Mass as well. *As a Church we have recommitted ourselves to the word of God, and many individuals have discovered its beauty as well.*

For lectors, a Lectionary offers an ideal way to use the Bible for prayer and study. (Paperback study editions can be purchased). The Lectionary is the collection of readings used for Mass and other principal celebrations of the Church. *It does not include every line of the Bible.* It does include those parts of the Bible deemed most useful for Christians to know, arranged in a helpful way. It doesn't look like an abridged Bible, but in a way, it is.

Lectors can find out which readings are appointed for any given Sunday by consulting any number of different tools, but it would be good for lectors to learn how the Lectionary is organized.

If you do not own your own, take a look at the one in church sometime. *The Lectionary requires four volumes. The first is the one you use the most. It contains the readings for Sunday. The second and third volumes are used for weekdays, and the fourth has collected the readings for other special occasions.*

(Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 19)

Sundays

The *first volume*, though, is the one you should know the best. Notice that the book is arranged by seasons: Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Ordinary Time. There is a section for solemnities of the Lord during Ordinary Time, where you find the readings for days like the Most Holy Trinity and the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. Many lectors find these readings difficult to locate.

Each Sunday offers readings for Years A, B, and C. *If the number of the calendar year is divisible exactly by three, then we are in Year C.* You can figure out Year A and B from there. The liturgical year begins, of course, with the Advent that precedes the new calendar year.

Weekdays

On weekdays during Ordinary Time the first reading is on a two-year cycle, but the Gospel remains the same each year. At the beginning of Ordinary Time the Lectionary presents a semi-continuous reading of Mark, considered to be the oldest of the four Gospels. It then moves to Matthew and concludes with Luke. During the seasons of the year (Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter), we hear the same first reading each year and the same Gospel reading. Excerpts from the Gospel of John are proclaimed during these seasons especially during the second half of Lent and throughout the Easter season. To simplify things for the Lector, the readings of each year are kept in separate ritual books. We use *Year I readings in odd-numbered years and Year II readings in even-numbered years*. Year I and II begin with the Advent that precedes the odd- and even- numbered calendar years, respectively.

Special Occasions

Volume four contains the readings for special occasions: Marriages, funerals, Baptisms, and a host of other events. If you are ever looking for a particular passage from the Bible to fit a certain circumstance, it is worth looking at volume four. You may not find the exact theme you need but once you become familiar with the contents of the book, it will be easier to locate useful passages.

The four volumes are divided in the following way:

- ❖ **Volume I:** Sundays (Cycles A, B, C), Solemnities, Feasts of the Lord and the Saints
- ❖ **Volume II:** Proper of Seasons for Weekdays: Year I, Proper of the Saints, Common of the Saints;
- ❖ **Volume III:** Proper of Seasons for Weekdays: Year II, Proper of the Saints, Common of the Saints;
- ❖ **Volume IV:** Common of Saints, Ritual Masses, Masses for Various Needs and Occasions, Votive Masses, and Masses for the Dead.

(Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 20 - 21)

Navigating throughout the Lectionary

In the front of the Lectionary you will find several tables. One of them shows you which Lectionary cycle falls during which year. It also gives the date for some moveable feasts such as Ash Wednesday, Easter, and Pentecost. It will tell you how many weeks of Ordinary Time will fall between the Christmas season and Lent. It will also say which week of Ordinary Time will resume on what day when the Easter season is over.

Another table gives the order of the second readings in Ordinary Time. If you're interested, you can see at a glance which books of the Bible you will be reading during Ordinary Time this year.

In the second appendix of the Lectionary is a complete chart of scripture readings found in the Lectionary. It is arranged according to the books of the Bible, starting with Genesis and ending with Revelation. If you know a citation and you wonder where to find it in the four-volume Lectionary, you can look it up in the second appendix.

One of the more important skills a lector can develop is how to figure out why a particular reading is chosen for any given day. You can find some help for this in the Lectionary, but you often have to use your imagination. You will find a most helpful introduction to the Lectionary in the front of the first volume. Chapter four is called "The General Arrangement of Readings for Mass," and chapter five is the "Description of the Order of Readings." Paragraphs 64 through 68 explain the principles behind the choice of texts four Sundays. Paragraphs 92 through 110 explain the rationale behind the choice of readings season by season.

Lectors familiar with these principles will understand another layer beneath the scripture they read. They certainly want to come to know the meaning of the passage as it appears in the Bible – what book it is from, what part of the narrative it tells, what problems it is answering, or what part of an extended argument it makes. But they will also want to know the meaning of this passage as it appears in the Lectionary. Why was it chosen for this particular day? Does it have a theme that relates to the Gospel? Is there a word or phrase that sounds the theme of the season of the year we are in? It is simply a continuation of a passage we heard last Sunday? Answers to these questions are critical if the lector is to nuance the reading in a way that lends coherence to the entire Liturgy of the Word.

For this reason, it will help you to have some familiarity with all the scriptures of any given Sunday, even those you do not proclaim including the psalm. The psalm is often chosen as a direct response to the first reading. If you will be reading the first reading, consider why the psalm for that day fits. What will the Gospel be, and how does it fulfill the ideas germinating in your text? If you see how all the readings of a given day interrelate, you will read with greater understanding.

By spending time studying the Lectionary, you are deepening your appreciation of the spiritual task you do. Your love for the word of God will grow as you become more familiar with the way our church proclaims it and hears it. (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 21 - 22)

Feedback and Support as a Learning and Growing Tool

Section Contents

- I. From Skill to Art
- II. Finding Feedback and Support in Your Ministry
- III. Group Feedback Session

**TRUTH
IN LOVE**



*So faith comes from what is heard,
and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.
Romans 10:17*

From Skill to Art

We all tend to reach *plateaus in any human endeavor in which we engage*. This is especially true for any performance skill: dancing, singing, acting, playing and instrument –and being lector. A skill progresses into an art over time (Wallace, 2004, p. 67).

Finding Feedback and Support in Your Ministry

Practice does not necessarily make perfect; sometimes it only makes permanent. Ask for feedback. Family and friends can often make good suggestions, if you let them know you are open to hearing from them. But a helpful suggestion here: ***Don't ask and then argue with the response***. Just say “***thank you***” and think about what the other person has said (Wallace, 2004, p. 67-68).

Even ***more helpful*** is the practice of group feedback with other lectors that should be a part of all of our ministries. These sessions should occur regularly, perhaps monthly or bimonthly, so that the work of the lector and the appropriate feedback is not forgotten over a span of several months' time (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 52).

It can seem quite daunting to present yourself to a group for their reactions to work you care about. But ***honest feedback is one of the best means we have of learning and growing in our ministry***. Group feedback sessions with other lectors allow people to say to one another, “This is how you helped me to understand what you were proclaiming, and this is what got in the way” (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 52).

Group feedback also helps us gauge the line between the expressive proclamation we are called to give, and dramatization of the reading that is not appropriate. ***Without input from others, it is hard to know how well God's word is truly being received by the assembly***. And ***when we take the time to critically listen to others and participate in their reflection processes, we can pick up on the good characteristics of their proclamation styles and learn from their mistakes as well as our own*** (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 52).

When engaging in a group feedback process, ***it is most helpful for participants to speak as members of the assembly about what helped or hindered their experience of the reading, rather than trying to take the role of a teacher***. It is also helpful to ***distinguish between the clarity and effectiveness of proclamation and one's personal taste***. For example, telling a fellow lector that his or her level of drama made you uncomfortable is appropriate for the group process, but critiquing the theme that the lector chose to emphasize, simply because you would have chosen another theme, is less helpful. Telling a fellow lector that his or her attire distracted you from hearing the scripture is appropriate, but complaining about colors you don't care for is not (Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 52).

Group Feedback Session

Today, we will experience the *impact of feedback* as a means of *improving our lector skills and abilities*. To help us focus the exercise, we will guide our feedback by some questions:

Questions for a Group Feedback Session

(Meagher & Turner, 2007, p. 53 - 54)

1. Was the lector's *voice loud* enough?
2. Did the *phrasing* of the reading *make sense*?
3. Did the lector *articulate* the words *well* or some of them *slurred or mumbled*?
4. Were words *pronounced correctly*?
5. Did the pace allow people to *listen and follow*?
6. Did the *quality of voice* match the mood of the reading?
7. Was the *nonverbal communication* helpful or distracting?
8. Was the *posture* good?
9. Did the lector *look* at the assembly (eye contact)?
10. Was the *movement* of the lector graceful?
11. Did the lector's *attire* distract from the reading?

Trainer/Guide:

The related Scripture Readings to be used for this exercise can be found under the "Practice Exercises" section. Also, a related form with questions can be found at the end of this booklet under the "Reference Information and Material" section.

*The Lord be in my mind,
on my lips and in my heart
that I may worthily
proclaim the words of salvation.*

Practice Exercises

Additional Exercises for Breath Control

Exercise I

(From Aelred R. Rosser "A Well Trained Tongue" pages 9-10)

1. Stand comfortably erect, with *good but relaxed* posture:

Stand firmly, body directly centered over the feet. Straighten the spine by imagining that a string, connected to the top of your head, is pulling you upward, forcing you to straighten. Straighten your shoulders by pulling back on the shoulder blades. Next, lift the ribcage. Finally, turn your attention to the muscles of the neck and throat. Your head should be in a comfortable position, neither held stiffly nor tilted up or down. A tilted head will restrict the movement of air as you breathe, and a stiff neck will just not feel good. This complete posture may feel unnatural at first but with practice you will discover that it's just about the most comfortable way possible to hold the body.

2. Breathe slowly and quietly through your nose on the count of four (one Mississippi, two Mississippi, etc...). The idea is to draw a full deep breath. The intake of breath should be completely silent; if you can hear it, you are breathing in too quickly.
3. Exhale slowly on the count of eight (one Mississippi, etc...). Exhale through the teeth, making a hissing sound (sssssssss). The sound should be very soft on the count of one and loud on the count of eight as you try to empty your lungs completely.

During exhalation, conserve your air as you consciously but gently pull the abdomen in to support a steady outflow. The contraction of these muscles will increase as your volume increases. Be very careful not to involve the chest, shoulder, head, neck or throat muscles. Do not collapse the shoulders, for example, as you run out of air. Isolate the abdominal muscles to do that work.

4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 adding four counts to each subsequent exhalation.

Breathe in quietly through the mouth: four counts
 Breath out hissing, soft to loud: twelve counts
 Breathe in quietly through the mouth: four counts
 Breath out hissing, soft to loud: sixteen counts
 Breathe in quietly through the mouth: four counts
 Breath out hissing, soft to loud: twenty counts
 Breathe in quietly through the mouth: four counts
 Breath out hissing, soft to loud: twenty-four counts
 Breathe in quietly through the mouth: four counts
 Breath out hissing, soft to loud: twenty-eight counts

And so on...

Your ability to tolerate higher counts will increase with practice. But remember that the exercise is a breath control builder, not an endurance contest!

Exercise II

(From Aelred R. Rosser "A Well Trained Tongue" pages 10-11)

Here are a few sentences that will challenge and develop effective breath control. Remember to use your full proclamation voice when reading them and to employ the fullest range of vocal variety. Otherwise, the point of the exercise will be lost. Do not continue reading after all but a fraction of your breath is gone and your voice begins to sound shaky or pinched. The point is to sustain the natural, full sound as long as you can. You will soon notice that your reservoir is growing!

Exodus 19:16

On the morning of the third day
there was thunder and lightning,
as well as a thick cloud on the mountain,
and a blast of a trumpet so loud
that all the people who were in the camp trembled.

Genesis 11:6

And the Lord said, "Look, they are one people,
and they have all one language;
and this is only the beginning of what they will do;
nothing that they propose to do
will now be impossible for them.

For the following passage, note that you are not expected to proclaim in it just one breath. But it's a good exercise. Passages like it often suffer from a choppy delivery. See how fluid you can make it by using good breath control.

Proverbs 8:27-31

When he established the heavens, I was there,
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
when he made firm the skies above,
when he established the fountains of the deep,
when he assigned to the sea its limit,
so that the waters might not transgress his command,
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
then I was beside him, like a master worker;
and I was daily his delight,
rejoicing before him always,
rejoicing in his inhabited world
and delighting in the human race.

Exercises for Vocal Variety

The following passages require a lot of vocal modulation to communicate the various levels of syntax or the appropriate range of feelings. Don't be afraid to exaggerate vocal range in these exercises, realizing of course, that in actual proclamation such exaggeration would be out of the question (Rosser, 1996, p. 14).

Notice that this first passage contains a rhetorical question and that contrasts are involved ("not with the water only but with the water and the blood") (Rosser, 1996, p. 14).

1 John 5:5-6

Who is it that conquers the world
 but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?
 This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ,
 not with the water only but with the water and the blood.
 And the Spirit is the one that testifies,
 for the Spirit is the truth.

In the next passage, note that the word *faith* is italicized to indicate that it is the recurring theme; a well-modulated and varied delivery will make the word fresh each time, not as though it were a new idea each time but the same idea with another aspect. By the time you say the word the last couple of times, it should feel and sound like "an old friend" (Rosser, 1996, p. 14).

Hebrews 11:1-9

Now *faith* is the assurance of things hoped for,
 the conviction of things not seen.
 Indeed, by *faith* our ancestors received approval.

By *faith* we understand
 that the worlds were prepared by the word of God,
 so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

By *faith* Abel offered to God
 a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain's.
 Through this he received approval as righteous,
 God himself giving approval to his gifts;
 he died, but through his *faith* he still speaks.

By *faith* Enoch was taken so that he did not experience death;
 and "he was not found, because God had taken him."
 For it was attested before he was taken away
 that "he had pleased God."

And without *faith* it is impossible to please God,
 for whoever would approach him must believe
 that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

By *faith* Noah, warned by God about events as yet unseen,
 respected the warning and built an ark to save his household;
 by this he condemned the world
 and became an heir to the righteousness
 that is in accordance with *faith*.

By *faith* Abraham obeyed
 when he was called to set out for a place
 that he was to receive as an inheritance;
 and he set out, not knowing where he was going.

By *faith* he stayed for a time
 in the land he had been promised,
 as in a foreign land, living in tents,
 as did Isaac and Jacob,
 who were heirs with him of the same promise.

St. Paul's ode to Christ:

Philippians 2:5-10

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
 who, though he was in the form of God,
 did not regard equality with God
 as something to be exploited,
 but emptied himself,
 taking the form of a slave,
 being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,
 he humbled himself
 and became obedient to the point of death
 -even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him
 and gave him the name that is above every name,
 so that at the name of Jesus every
 knee should bend,
 in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
 and every tongue should confess
 that Jesus Christ is Lord,
 to the glory of God the Father.

Exercises for Emphasis and Stress

Individual words that are significant to the meaning of the sentence need special emphasis or stress. Determining which words are significant is very often based on the lector's personal life and faith experience and what he or she understands as the author's purpose of the passage being proclaimed. Read the following passage emphasizing the significant words and phrases you think will convey the author's purpose and meaning. Annotate your emphasis markings on the passage.

Romans 8:8-17

Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

But you are not in the flesh;
you are in the Spirit,
since the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ
does not belong to him.

But if Christ is in you,
though the body is dead because of sin,
the Spirit is life because of righteousness.
If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead
dwells in you,
he who raised Christ from the dead
will give life to your mortal bodies also
through his Spirit that dwells in you.

So then, brothers and sisters,
we are debtors, not to the flesh,
to live according to the flesh –
for if you live according to the flesh, you will die;
but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body,
you will live.

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

For you did not receive a spirit of slavery
to fall back into fear,
but you have received a spirit of adoption.

When we cry, "Abba! Father!"
it is that very Spirit bearing witness
with our spirit that we are children of God,
and if children, then heirs,
heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ –
if, in fact, we suffer with him
so that we may also be glorified with him.

In almost all cases, failure to use word stress results in a bland, monotone proclamation. The *Workbook for Lectors and Gospel Readers* is an excellent aide, here, although not all lectors always agree with the Workbook's editors. The following is the same passage as before but includes emphasis markings to suggest to the reader which words might be stressed most effectively.

Romans 8:8-17

Those who are in the flesh *cannot* please God.

But *you* are not in the flesh;

you are in the Spirit,

since the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Anyone who *does not have* the Spirit of Christ

does not belong to him.

But if Christ is in you,

though the body is dead because of sin,

the **Spirit is life** because of righteousness.

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead

dwells in you,

he who raised Christ from the dead

will give life to your mortal bodies also

through *his Spirit* that dwells *in you*.

So then, brothers and sisters,

we are debtors, *not* to the *flesh*,

to live according to the flesh—

for if you live according to the flesh, you will die;

but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body,

you will *live*.

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are *children* of God.

For you did not receive a spirit of slavery

to fall back into fear,

but you have received a spirit of *adoption*.

When we cry, "Abba! Father!"

it is that *very Spirit* bearing witness

with our spirit that *we are children* of God,

and if children, then heirs,

heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—

if, in fact, we suffer with him

so that *we may also be glorified with him*.

Exercises for Appropriate Pacing and Rate of Reading

Tongue-Twisters

Purpose:

To demonstrate to trainees, through their own experience, that their public speaking effectiveness is enhanced when they slow down their speaking speed and pace.

Note:

The trainer is looking to encourage the trainees to state that they are forced to slow down. This point is then reinforced with respect to proclaiming Scripture.

1. People slow down because the syllables are difficult to get their tongue to work smoothly with if spoken at a fast pace.
2. People slow down if the words are unfamiliar (audience “hearing” also slows down if the words are unfamiliar).
3. Lectors must strive for outstanding enunciation and pronunciation in order to ensure that they are understood by the congregation.

Exercise:

1. Describe the exercise. Each Twister, by itself, is recited by all trainees before reciting the next Twister. The order of the tongue-twisters (one twister at a time) is:
 - a. Peter Piper
 - b. Sea Shells
 - c. World’s Worst
2. Discuss with the trainees which of the Twisters was the worst for them personally and why.

In leading the discussion, after everyone has had an opportunity to present a tongue-twister, the trainer helps the trainees reach the conclusion that slowing the pace of speaking enhances the ability of any speaker to ensure that words are pronounced clearly and distinctly.

The Tongue-Twisters

Peter Piper

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.
Peter's mother pickled the peppers that Peter picked.
The Pipers boasted about Peter's pepper picking propensities!

Sea Shells

She sells sea shells on the seashore
The shells she sells are sea shells. I'm sure.
And if she sells sea shells on the seashore,
Then I'm sure she sells seashore shells.

The World's Worst Tongue Twister (Guinness Book of Records)

The sixth sheik's sixth sheep's sick.

Pacing and Rate – Additional Exercise

A very brief reading must be proclaimed slowly, lest it be over before the hearers have had a chance to focus on it. Consider the following passage, the second reading on the Feast of the Holy Trinity (Year A). It is one of the briefest readings in the entire lectionary. It should take about 45 seconds to proclaim effectively, including the opening announcement and concluding dialogue. Time yourself (Rosser, 1996, p. 22).

2 Corinthians 13:11-14

A reading from the Second Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians.

Brothers and sisters,
put things in order, listen to my appeal,
agree with one another,
live in peace;
and the God of love and peace will be with you.
Greet one another with a holy kiss.
All the saints greet you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with all of you.

The word of the Lord

Exercises for Appropriate Pausing

The best guarantee that you will employ pauses and all the elements of vocal variety is your thorough understanding of the text and your courageous desire to share it fully with your audience.

In Isaiah's poignant exhortation to accept God's benevolence and love, the text is almost disjointed. In its fervor it rephrases itself, introduces new images, asks rhetorical questions, and so forth. Without careful pausing, the text could sound like a jumble of thoughts and be difficult to follow. But a careful delivery will reveal an earnest and heartfelt plea that becomes stronger as it proceeds. Practice the reading making use of pauses (Rosser, 1996, p. 25).

Isaiah 55:1-3

Everyone who thirsts,
 come to the waters;
 and you that have no money,
 come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
 without money and without price.

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
 and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to me,
 and eat what is good,
 and delight yourselves in rich food.

Incline your ear,
 and come to me;
 listen, so that you may live.
I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
 my steadfast, sure love for David.

The following is the same text as before; markings suggest one possible approach to the reading (Rosser, 1996, p. 25).

/ = brief pause
// = medium pause
/// = long pause

Isaiah 55:1-3

Everyone who thirsts,
 come to the waters;//
 and you that have no money,
 come,/ buy and eat!///
Come,/ buy wine and milk
 without money and without price.///

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,/
 and your labor for that which does not satisfy?//
Listen carefully to me,
 and eat what is good,/
 and delight yourselves in rich food.///

Incline your ear,
 and come to me;/
 listen, so that you may live.//
I will make with you an everlasting covenant,//
 my steadfast, sure love for David.

Exercises for Articulation

What do we call "good articulation"?

Good articulation is a clear pronunciation of words so that others can hear and distinguish well everything we say.

Out of habit or laziness, some people talk with their mouth practically closed and their lips barely moving. Others, out of shyness, adopt a tone so low that others can barely understand what they say.

Lift your face, clear your throat, mouth wide open! *Like the musician, the proclaimer must tune his instrument before playing it so that the audience does not miss a single note of his symphony.*

Exercise I

Bite a pencil, as if you have a horse bit mouthpiece. In that position, read a newspaper aloud for five minutes. Notice how you loosen all the muscles of the face.

Exercise II

Take a book and start reading aloud, slowly and in syllables:

Cle-ar-pro-nun-ci-a-tion-of-words-so-that-o-thers-can-hear...

Read a few paragraphs exaggerating your reading and grimacing as you speak. Then, read faster but still in syllables and making sure that you pronounce each of the letters in each word.

Why should you do diction exercises?

Because the scripture you are reading might have dense and great content, you may pour your heart all in to it but unless your audience can UNDERSTAND what you're saying, the message is lost.

Diction exercises will help you learn how to speak clearly. The athlete does warm-ups and stretches before an event: a lector must do likewise. These exercises are the lector's warm-up equivalent. They prepare and train you to speak with ease.

The specific benefits of diction/articulation exercises are:

- ✓ strengthening and stretching the muscles involved in speech
- ✓ bringing to your attention habitual speech patterns which may be less than perfect!

Good diction is NOT about changing your accent or making you 'talk posh'. It is about clarity - making sure what you say is heard.

The most commonly known and used Diction Exercises are **Tongue Twisters**.

There are literally squillions of them, each focusing on either a single letter, or a letter combination. Often they're complete nonsense - phrases and word combinations chosen purely for the way they make you work to say them clearly. Tongue twisters have long been an integral part of a public speaker's tool kit. As well as being fun, they are extremely effective.

Beginners' tips

- ❖ Always start slowly and carefully.
- ❖ Make sure the start and end of each word is crisp and avoid running the words together.
- ❖ Repeat the phrase, getting faster and faster while maintaining clarity. If you trip over words, stop and start again.

Here is a few of them:

Diction Exercises for 'S' words:

- Six thick thistle sticks
- Theophilus Thistler, the thistle sifter, in sifting a sieve of unsifted thistles, thrust three thousand thistles through the thick of his thumb.
- The shrewd shrew sold Sarah seven sliver fish slices.
- Sister Susie sat on the sea shore sewing shirts for sailors.

For 'D' words try:

- Did Doug dig Dick's garden or did Dick dig Doug's garden?
- Do drop in at the Dewdrop Inn

Additional Exercises for Good Articulation and Diction

The following passage is the first reading on the Feast of Pentecost. Although some readers dread it because of the proper names, it provides a *good exercise in confident and clear articulation* for other reasons, too. It contains *energetic words* that require energetic articulation: rush, filled, bewildered, amazed, astonished, power and so forth. The *proper names must roll off the tongue with total confidence*; otherwise, the hearers will be distracted as they root for you to get through the list! Master the names; then imbue the text with the kind of conviction that confident articulation makes possible (Rosser, 1996, p. 33).

Acts 2:1-11

When the day of Pentecost had come,
 they were all together in one place.
 And suddenly from heaven there came a sound
 like the rush of a violent wind,
 and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.
 Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them,
 and a tongue rested on each of them.
 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit
 and began to speak in other languages,
 as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven
 living in Jerusalem.
 And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered,
 because all heard them speaking in their own languages.
 Amazed and astonished, they asked,
 "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?
 And how is it that we hear, each of us,
 in our own language?
 Parthians, Medes, Elamites,
 and residents of Mesopotamia,
 Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,
 Phrygia and Pamphylia,
 Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene,
 and visitors from Rome, both Jews and converts,
 Cretans and Arabs—
 in our own languages we hear them
 speaking about God's deeds of power."

Articulation – Additional Exercise

1 Corinthians 15:45-50

Thus it is written:

"The first man Adam became a living being";
the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.
But it is not the spiritual that is first,
but the physical, and then the spiritual.

The first was from the earth, a man of dust;
the second is from heaven.

As was the one of dust, so are those who are of the dust;
and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven.
Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust,
we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

What I'm saying, brothers and sisters, is this:
flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,
nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Scripture Readings for Feedback and Support Exercises

Thirtieth Sunday In Ordinary Time

A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah

Thus says the LORD:
Shout with joy for Jacob,
 exult at the head of the nations;
 proclaim your praise and say:
The LORD has delivered his people,
 the remnant of Israel.
Behold, I will bring them back
 from the land of the north;
I will gather them from the ends of the world,
 with the blind and the lame in their midst,
the mothers and those with child;
 they shall return as an immense throng.
They departed in tears,
 but I will console them and guide them;
I will lead them to brooks of water,
 on a level road, so that none shall stumble.
For I am a father to Israel,
 Ephraim is my first-born.

The Word of the Lord

Thirtieth Sunday In Ordinary Time

A Reading from the Letter to the Hebrews

Brothers and sisters:

Every high priest is taken from among men
and made their representative before God,
to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

He is able to deal patiently with the ignorant and erring,
for he himself is beset by weakness
and so, for this reason, must make sin offerings for himself
as well as for the people.

No one takes this honor upon himself
but only when called by God,
just as Aaron was.

In the same way,
it was not Christ who glorified himself in becoming high
priest,

but rather the one who said to him:

You are my son:

this day I have begotten you;

Just as he says in another place:

You are a priest forever

according to the order of Melchizedek.

The Word of the Lord.

Thirty-Second Sunday In Ordinary Time

A Reading from the First Book of Kings

In those days, Elijah the prophet went to Zarephath.
As he arrived at the entrance of the city,
 a widow was gathering sticks there; he called out to her,
 "Please bring me a small cupful of water to drink."
She left to get it, and he called out after her,
 "Please bring along a bit of bread."
She answered, "As the LORD, your God, lives,
 I have nothing baked; there is only a handful of flour in my jar
 and a little oil in my jug.
Just now I was collecting a couple of sticks,
 to go in and prepare something for myself and my son;
 when we have eaten it, we shall die."
Elijah said to her, "Do not be afraid.
Go and do as you propose.
But first make me a little cake and bring it to me.
Then you can prepare something for yourself and your son.
For the LORD, the God of Israel, says,
 'The jar of flour shall not go empty,
 nor the jug of oil run dry,
 until the day when the LORD sends rain upon the earth.' "
She left and did as Elijah had said.
She was able to eat for a year, and he and her son as well;
 the jar of flour did not go empty,
 nor the jug of oil run dry,
 as the LORD had foretold through Elijah.

The Word of the Lord.

Thirty-Second Sunday In Ordinary Time

A Reading from the Letter to the Hebrews

Christ did not enter into a sanctuary made by hands,
a copy of the true one, but heaven itself,
that he might now appear before God on our behalf.
Not that he might offer himself repeatedly,
as the high priest enters each year into the sanctuary
with blood that is not his own;
if that were so, he would have had to suffer repeatedly
from the foundation of the world.
But now once for all he has appeared at the end of the ages
to take away sin by his sacrifice.
Just as it is appointed that human beings die once,
and after this the judgment,
so also Christ, offered once to take away the sins of many,
will appear a second time, not to take away sin
but to bring salvation to those who eagerly await him.

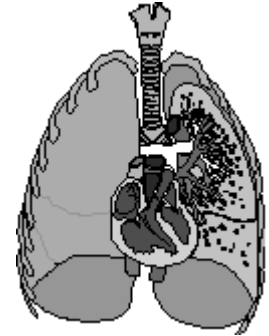
The Word of the Lord.

Reference Information And Material

Breathing and Breath Control

To understand how correct breathing and breath control works, first you need to understand the process that it uses to operate.

Surrounding your lungs is a muscle system called the diaphragm which is attached to the lower ribs on the sides, bottom and to the back acting as an inhalation device. When you breathe in the muscle lowers displacing the stomach and intestines. When you breathe out the diaphragm helps to manage the muscles around the lungs (abdominal muscles) control how quickly the breath is exhaled.



If you breathe out quickly, the diaphragm does nothing but when you breathe out very slowly the diaphragm resists the action of the abdominal muscles. A singer learns to use this muscle system to control the breath as it is being exhaled.

Hold a finger close to your lips and breathe out slowly, the breath should be warm and moist and you should notice the action of the diaphragm as you exhale. This is the correct amount of breath used when singing normally. A singer does not need to 'force' or 'push' air through the vocal chords to produce a good strong sound, doing so creates too much pressure against the chords, preventing them from operating correctly which can cause damage to the voice.

The stomach area should move naturally inward toward the end of the breath, the stomach should not be 'sucked in' as it prevents the diaphragm from working effectively. Instead the abdominal area should remain expanded to the level it was when you inhaled and allowed to gradually decrease naturally at the end of the breath.

This is where the 'control' comes into play - the singer expands the lungs by inhaling and 'controls' the amount of air expelled when singing a note by allowing the muscle support system to remain expanded - this doesn't mean the stomach is pushed out, rather that it is blown up like a balloon when the air goes in and the singer slows down the natural rate at which it goes down. In most people the breathing is shallow and only the top half of the lungs are used - breathing correctly uses the whole of the lungs so that more air is available, the singer then uses the natural action of the muscles (diaphragm and abdominals) surrounding the lungs to control the amount of air that is exhaled when singing a note.

Good breath support during singing and speech requires, good posture, abdominal breathing and breathing during natural pauses. Breathing and correct support does not require great physical strength - although having toned abdominal muscles helps, even a child can learn how to breath and support their voice correctly. Remember....the diaphragm doesn't exhale for you - just helps to control the amount of air exhaled.

A Suggested Method of Preparation for Proclaiming a Reading

It is recommended that you follow this suggested methodology each day over 3-5 days (or more) before your scheduled reading.

1. *Silently* read the passage to yourself at least 2 times (more if desired).
2. Read the *entire chapter* in the Bible from which the reading is taken. *Think* about what the whole chapter is about:
 - a. What is going on in the chapter – events, personalities, etc?
 - b. How does the selection of the verses in the reading “fit” with what you see as the purpose(s) and/or overall “story” of the chapter?
 - Do the verses leave out anything important? If so, can you imply the important missing parts through emotion, expression, etc. in your voice?
 - What do the selected verses “highlight” in the chapter?
3. Re-read the passage to yourself 1-2 times but this time with some “**meaning**” – what you think the author intended and how he/she intended it.
4. “*Say*” the reading to yourself, silently, in your head. “*Hear*” yourself proclaiming it.
 - c. Did it sound right?
 - d. What needs to change? Why?
 - e. Do you sound sincere, convinced, etc. that you know what you’re talking about?
5. *Read* the “**notes**” at the bottom of the page for this particular proclamation in the workbook...
6. *Say* the reading *out loud* at least 3 times with as much *expression* as you can. After each of these “**proclamations**” ask yourself:
 - f. Did it sound right to me? What do I want to change?
 - g. Am I comfortable with myself proclaiming that way? If not, why?
 - h. Will the Assembly understand what I’m proclaiming?

Then, hold a *quiet* conversation with Jesus. Tell him what you’re trying to accomplish and ask for His help – Wisdom, Courage, Understanding, and Love of my fellow disciples. And then be *still* for a few minutes while Jesus talks back to you.

7. Check the marginal notations in the Workbook... for suggested pronunciations, word stress, etc.
8. *“Say”* the reading out loud again, at least 3 times, as you now intend to proclaim it. Are you satisfied?

Repeat the above (but without re-reading the entire chapter in the bible or referencing the Workbook... [unless you feel you need to]) on successive days before your scheduled reading. On the morning of your scheduled reading, go through the above exercise once or twice but stop at least a half hour before you leave for church! Let your mind do its work! Perhaps on the way to church, or just before you rise to proclaim, *ask Jesus to help you* be more aware of His presence throughout the liturgy. *“Not my will but yours be done!”*

*Source: Archdiocesan Manual for Parish Trainers of Lectors
Archdiocese of Atlanta
Used with permission*



**“Do I stand with Jesus
and joyfully proclaim
the Word of God
to all of God’s people?”**

Questions for a Group Feedback Session

1. Was the lector's *voice loud* enough?

2. Did the *phrasing* of the reading *make sense*?

3. Did the lector *articulate* the words *well* or some of them *slurred or mumbled*?

4. Were words *pronounced correctly*?

5. Did the pace allow people to *listen and follow*?

6. Did the *quality of voice* match the mood of the reading?

7. Was the *nonverbal communication* helpful or distracting?

8. Was the *posture* good?

9. Did the lector *look* at the assembly (eye contact)?

10. Was the *movement* of the lector graceful?

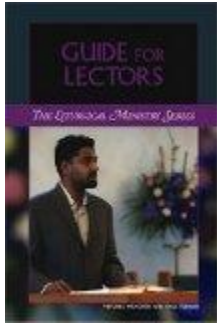
11. Did the lector's *attire* distract from the reading?

Resources

Lector Resources

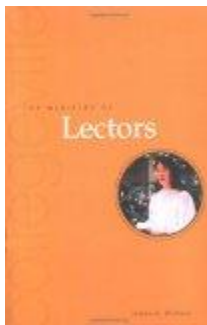
Training, Enrichment and Preparation Aids

Books:



Guide for Lectors
Paul Turner and Virginia Meagher

Effectively train those new to the ministry of lector and rejuvenate the work of veterans, with this new resource from LTP. Like all of the guides in this series, *Guide for Lectors* gives them the background and tools they need to study, pray, and serve in the liturgy. For use by individuals or with groups, this guide will help lectors grow in their ability to proclaim the word of God.



The Ministry of Lectors (Collegeville Ministry Series)
James A. Wallace, CSsR

Emphasizing both spiritual and speaking preparation, this book will help experienced and beginning lectors in the ministry of proclaiming the word of God. Wallace offers insight to various understandings of the lector's work (job, ministry, vocation), and reflects on the mystery of God who speaks to—and through—us in the Word. Includes ideas for ongoing technique development, as well as a guide to meeting the needs of the text, listeners, and liturgical setting.



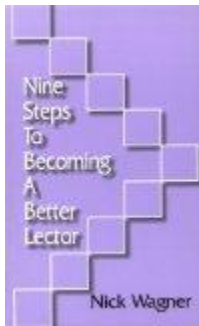
Read the Way You Talk A Guide for Lectors
Jack Hartjes

Read the Way You Talk offers instruction for lectors. It presents guidelines for making oral reading meaningful and believable. Three lessons give detailed instructions in eighteen different areas including parallelism, repetition, and pronunciation. Special guidance is provided for using inflection and stressing words. With practice, readers who share the Word of God with others can read as naturally as they speak while they become comfortable with their audience, sure of what they are saying, and confident their message is important.



Guide for Lectors (Basics of Ministry Series)
Aelred R. Rosser

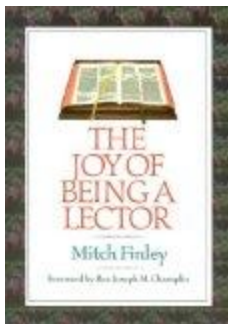
Guide for Lectors begins by looking at the role of proclaimers of the word throughout history, from Jewish-Christian tradition and the early church until after Vatican II. This historical background is followed by key insights into enhancing the proclamation skills of lectors and gospel readers. Practical tips on preparation (pronunciation, vocal variety, rhythm, pace and volume) are combined with actual lectionary texts, with commentary, for the reader to try.



Nine Steps to Becoming a Better Lector

Nick Wagner

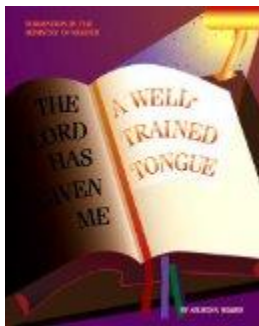
As a lector, you have a major impact in how the assembly responds to the readings. Whether you are a novice or veteran lector, *Nine Steps to Becoming a Better Lector* will help you play your role more forcefully. Written by a former editor of *Ministry & Liturgy*, this handy book walks you through a nine-step training process that you can apply on your own or in a group of fellow lectors.



Joy of Being a Lector

Mitch Finley

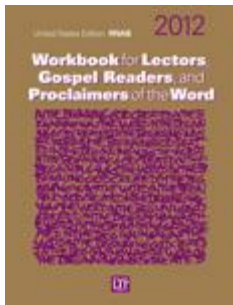
"Welcome to the ministry of lector. As you increase your understanding of this ministry, and how to carry it out well, you will discover that you become stronger in your faith in other ways, too. You will discover that a lector is far more than someone who simply stands up and reads aloud from the Lectionary. Much, much more than that."



A Well-Trained Tongue: Formation in the Ministry of Reader

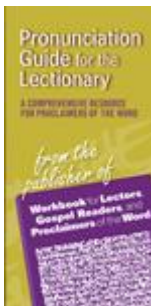
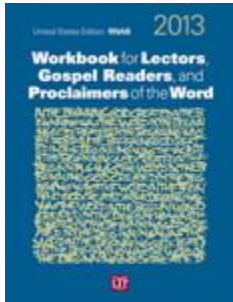
Aelred Rosser, OSB

This is an essential rallying guide for both beginning and veteran lectors. For group formation, one-on-one or individual study. Filled with practical exercises to help the reader develop the skills needed for the more challenging passages in the Lectionary. Inviting discussions include: the literary genres of the Bible, the liturgical year, the three-year structure of the Lectionary, what the reader might wear for this ministry, their place in the procession and how a formation team might be formed in the parish.



Workbook for Lectors, Gospel Readers, and Proclaimers of the Word

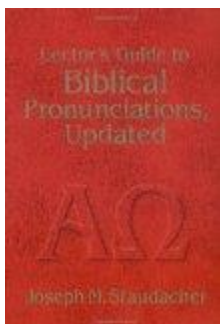
Workbook for Lectors, Gospel Readers, and Proclaimers of the Word™ prepares readers to proclaim the scripture for this year's Sundays and holy days of obligation, providing scripture commentaries, readings in large print for practice, advice for proclamation, and pronunciation aids.



Pronunciation Guide for the Lectionary

Compiled by Michael R. Prendergast, Susan E. Myers, and Timothy M. Milinovich

This portable little guide provides easy-to-understand pronunciations for a multitude of words in the Lectionary for Mass for Sundays, weekdays, and ritual and votive Masses. From the most puzzling Old Testament names to tricky English words that don't follow the usual pronunciation patterns, this booklet will meet the needs of all psalmists and proclaimers of the word--



Lector's Guide to Biblical Pronunciations

Few things are more publicly embarrassing than stumbling over a word during the readings at Mass. Avoid a fiasco by learning the correct pronunciation of hundreds of biblical names with Lector's Guide to Biblical Pronunciations, Updated. This very popular bestseller has been completely updated and expanded to correspond with the new Lectionary. With nearly double the entries of the original edition, it is still the same small size that will fit neatly into your pocket, purse, or out of sight on the Ambo. So reasonably priced, every lector should have his or her own copy.

Video:

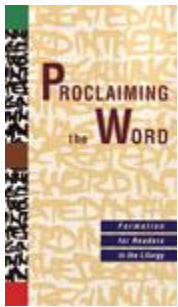


Lector and Gospel Reader's Workshop: A Resource for Bringing God's Word to Life

Audrey Sommers



Lector and Gospel Reader Workshop is an interactive video workshop that combines the liturgical and spiritual aspects of being an effective lector with public speaking techniques. The workshop addresses the role of the lector according to Vatican II and provides the latest information on the General Instruction of the Roman Missal. Participants will learn breathing techniques and will recite Scriptural tongue twisters and word emphasis exercises before proclaiming a reading on camera for group critiques.



Proclaiming the Word: Formation for Readers in the Liturgy DVD

Aelred Rosser

It is Christ who speaks when the Bible is read at the liturgy. In this video, experienced readers and the host, Aelred Rosser, explore the spiritual foundation and the skills needed in this ministry. Part One examines the faith of the reader, and Part Two examines the work of the reader. Segments can easily be used in training sessions to form new readers and to improve the skills and motivation of experienced readers, including priests and deacons.

Online Resources:

✓ <http://lectorsproclaim.org/>

LectorsProclaim.org is dedicated to helping men and women become more effective proclaimers of the Scriptures in liturgical ceremonies.

✓ <http://www.lectorprep.org/#moreresources>

Lector Preparation / Lector's Notes Home Page try to serve the Church by helping lectors prepare to proclaim the Scriptures in our Sunday assemblies. For each day's first and second readings (and occasionally for the gospel), the Notes give the historical and theological background, plus suggestions on oral interpretation.

✓ <http://www.lectorworks.org/index.html>

At Lector Works you will find: A series of thoughts about the lectionary readings of the day, as an oral proclamation within the church's public prayer, and how the writer would want to have them declared and received effectively.

✓ <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings-audio.cfm>

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Besides the day to day readings you can bring up in handy printout form, this well-known site also has recordings from which you can listen to and practice.

✓ <http://liturgy.slu.edu/6OrdB021212/main.html>

St. Louis University Center for Liturgy. This site is one of the most enriching ways to enliven and deepen a person's experience of the Sunday Mass. It includes introductory prayers, reflections, commentary, in-depth study and analysis of the readings, discussion questions and much more.

✓ <http://thecatholiclector.blogspot.com/>

The Catholic Lector. Weekly reflections and commentary on the Sunday readings including questions that offer insights into our roles as proclaimers of God's word.

✓ <http://netministries.org/Bbasics/bwords.htm>

Pronunciation Guide. Quick access to biblical pronunciations and definitions.

Bibliography

Bibliography

Finley, M. (2000). *Joy of Being a Lector*. Totowa, NJ: Catholic Book Publishing Corp.

Hayes, G. (2007-2011). *Proclaim the Word!: Training for New Lectors, Trainer's Manual*. Alpharetta, GA: Lectorsproclaim.org.

Hayes, G. (2006-2011). *Proclaim the Word!: Training for Seasoned Lectors, Trainer's Manual*. Alpharetta, GA: Lectorsproclaim.org.

Meagher, V, & P. Turner. (2007). *The Liturgical Ministry Series: Guide for Lectors*. Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications.

Rosser, A. R. (1996). *A Well-Trained Tongue: Formation in the Ministry of Reader*. (Martin. E. Connell, Ed.). Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications.

Wallace, J. A. (2004). *Collegeville Ministry Series: The Ministry of Lectors*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press.

Course Completion Certificate

DIOCESE OF LAREDO COMMITTEE ON LITURGY & DIVINE WORSHIP

COURSE COMPLETION CERTIFICATE GRANTED TO:

Name of Lector Completing the Course

Lector Workshop

Hours of Instruction: 3



Trainer

Pastor's Signature

Course Completion Date

Parish