

Guidelines for MINISTERS OF THE WORD

PROPER MINISTRY NAME: Minister of the Word

Commonly, the Ministers of the Word are called Readers and the two titles could be used interchangeably. The Ministry of Lector is an officially instituted ministry of a candidate for Holy Orders and therefore, the title of Lector must not be used when referring to a person who has not been instituted into the ministry of Lector.

INTRODUCTION

Ministers of the Word are members of the faithful called forth to publicly proclaim the Word of God. Men and women are entrusted with the responsibility of **proclaiming** the Sacred Scriptures to the Christian assembly.

ELIGIBILITY

Candidates who desire to pursue the Ministry of the Word need to be persons of mature faith, good Christian witness and sacramentally active in the life of their Church. They should exhibit the willingness to enter initial and on-going formation periods, to study, be critiqued, and to develop their special skills continually during their years in ministry.

On-going discernment in this ministry is the responsibility of the person seeking to pursue this ministry, those involved in the formation and training of the person and the pastoral leader. A willingness to serve is not the final admission to this ministry. One should be willing to enter into formation periods to understand and discern what is essential and necessary for this ministry.

ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES

The Minister of the Word proclaims the Word of God at liturgies. They **may** also be asked to lead the assembly in the Universal Prayer. There should be separate Ministers of the Word for each reading from Sacred Scripture. Ministers of the Word normally participate in the entrance procession carrying the Book of the Gospels, if a deacon is not present.

FORMATION and TRAINING

It is the responsibility of the designated pastoral leader to train suitable candidates to become Ministers of the Word and to provide those ministers with a timely ministry schedule. This training may be done in collaboration of staff and/or parish Worship Commission members.

Minister of the Word candidates must be willing to enter initial and ongoing formation and be responsible for their scheduled duties. They may need to provide a substitute in their absence, but they may not ask someone who is already scheduled for another liturgical ministry the same day.

Training and formation of Ministers of the Word should occur before they are commissioned. A Minister of the Word should be adequately prepared in the following topics:

1. Some biblical knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures is essential for the Minister of the Word who is making a serious commitment to proclaim the Word in the assembly. The Minister of the Word needs to be familiar with the format of both the Old and New Testaments and the various literary forms found therein; e.g., poetry, story and letter. An understanding of the liturgical year (the cycles, seasons and feasts) is basic and essential to this ministry.
2. A Minister of the Word should have the oral and technical skills necessary to proclaim the Word. This competency extends far beyond the ability to read words correctly and includes posture, use of the microphone, projection, tone, pitch, volume, accent, gesture, pace, eye contact, phrasing, pronunciation and articulation. This requires continual practice, review and critique.

COMMISSIONING

Upon the appropriate initial formation and discernment for this ministry, the person is appointed as a Minister of the Word, using the appropriate ritual. They are commissioned at a public ceremony (in the midst of the Sunday assembly) for a period of three years. They may be re-commissioned after a suitable period of discernment and opportunity for on-going formation.

SPECIFIC NORMS

1. Ministers of the Word have the responsibility to serve when scheduled or to find an appropriate substitute.
2. Preparation of the readings is done well in advance. Unprepared Ministers of the Word do a great disservice to the Christian community which has the right to hear the Word of God proclaimed well at each liturgy.
3. Ministers of the Word should arrive 10-15 minutes before Mass to become familiar with the placement of the readings in the Lectionary.
4. The Minister of the Word may be responsible for carrying the Book of the Gospels in procession. This book is to be elevated until it is placed on the altar.
5. After an appropriate time of silence, the Minister of the Word reverently comes forth from the assembly without causing unnecessary distractions.
6. A simple bow to the altar is appropriate, when approaching the ambo.

ATTIRE and DECORUM

Ministers of the Word should exhibit a love for the Word of God as evidenced by their demeanor and attire. This should be reflected in their dress. It should be appropriate for the occasion, not distracting from their role or calling attention to themselves and away from the focus of proclaiming the Word of God.

Ministers of the Word are to handle the sacred books with reverence and care during their use.

RESOURCES

1. Wallace, James A. *The Ministry of Lectors*. The Liturgical Press, 1981, 2004.
2. Meagher, Virginia and Paul Turner. *The Liturgical Ministry Series: Guide for Lectors*. Liturgy Training Publications, 2006.
3. Rosser, Aelred. *Guide for Lectors*. Liturgy Training Publications, 2002.
4. Rosser, Aelred. *A Well-Trained Tongue: Formation in the Ministry of Reader*. Liturgy Training Publications, 2002.
5. Tate, Judith. *Manual for Lectors*. Pflaum Publishing, 1975.
6. Champlin, Joseph M. *Messengers of God's Word: A Handbook for Lectors*. Paulist Press, 1982.
7. *Workbook for Lectors and Gospel Readers*. Liturgical Training Publications, [Annual Publication].
8. Ralph, Margaret Nutting. *Breaking Open the Lectionary – Three Volume Set*. Paulist Press, 2005.

GIRM REFERENCES

The following paragraphs of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal, Third Edition* provide further information with respect to this ministry ... GIRM #29, 38, 55-63, 71, 99, 101, 120, 122, 128-130, 138, 194-198 and 309.