Guidelines for



READER
MINISTRY

St. John
Henry Newman
Parish

Who can undertake reading at Mass?

A reader is appointed by the Parish priest and responsible to the Parish priest, though in each church there are members of the congregation who coordinate the rotas etc. Like any ministry it is not a 'right' but a privilege to undertake it, and as with any ministry it requires prayerful preparation and an open heart.

Readers are asked to sign the appropriate registration form, which also asks you to complete Level 1 safeguarding training and give permission for your image to be livestreamed via YouTube at Masses. The form can be found here: Volunteer Form (Non-DBS Role and No References Required)

Readers under the age of 18 - Anyone under the age of 18 who wishes to read at Mass must have a permission form completed by their parent or guardian. This form gives permission for the young person both to read at Mass and to appear in the parish's livestream on YouTube etc. it can be accessed here: Permission Form for under 18's to Read at Mass.

General Information about reading at Mass

The number of those who volunteer will affect the time gap between you undertaking the Ministry. If it is a long time - rejoice that the church has so many people who wish to undertake the ministry!

If there is a time when you no longer feel able to undertake the ministry, then it is the Parish Priest who you should talk to in the first instance as the overseer of all ministries in the Parish.

Readers bring the living word of God to the assembled faith community. When the Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself is speaking to his people.

The ministry of the word, therefore, should be treated with great dignity. The word of God is not merely read, but proclaimed, within the liturgy.

The Church desires where possible that people only undertake one ministry in any particular Mass. E.G. If you are a Welcomer, Serving, singing in the Choir or a Eucharistic Minster at a Mass then where possible you should not exercise the reading ministry as well.

Reading in church is about proclaiming God's holy word. In this, more is required than simply reading a text aloud. The reader is a channel for communication of the inspired word of God in the scriptures to the whole assembly. Effective proclamation involves the delivery of the message with clarity, conviction and appropriate pace.

Readers can be of any age so long as they are able to communicate God's word clearly and effectively, and give some evidence of living in accordance with the values inherent in what they are proclaiming. They should be baptised/received members of the Catholic Church, though dispensation for this can be given for pastoral reasons.

Readers should prepare themselves as far in advance as possible, reading the text, studying it and reflecting on it and praying on it, as well as reading it aloud several times. Some readers will begin their preparation on Monday for the following weekend.

To ensure the pastoral effectiveness of the liturgy of the word, it is important to pay attention to the symbols of the liturgy. Symbols that are integral to any celebration of the word are: the reader(s), the book(s), the ambo (Lectern), and processions. The reader ministers as one of the worshipping assembly and is expected to fully participate in the entire liturgy. It is inappropriate for a reader to participate actively only in the liturgy of the word.

Ministers should take their place among the general body of the people, somewhere convenient for reaching the sanctuary easily.

Ministers of the Word should *dress in a manner appropriate* to their holy ministry and one which is acceptable in the locality. Please do think about logos etc on t-shirts and tops.

The word is contained in permanent, dignified and well-bound books: the Lectionary for Mass and the Book of the Gospels. The readings are usually proclaimed from official liturgical books.

The place for the proclamation of the word of God is the ambo, unless because of height of reader it is not appropriate. The ambo is reserved for the readings, the responsorial psalm. It may rightly be used for the homily and the prayer of the faithful.

Processions are important liturgical actions. The deacon may solemnly carry the Book of the Gospels which is always placed on the altar. The Lectionary for Mass is never carried in procession and should have been placed beforehand on the ambo. The gospel procession can be an important ritual action in the liturgy of the word even though it may not be expressed fully at every liturgy.

After the second reading, the deacon, or priest when there is no deacon, may carry the Book of the Gospels from the altar to the ambo in procession. He may be preceded by the thurifer, and, when appropriate, by servers with candles.

When incense is used, the Book of the Gospels is incensed after the introductory dialogue and before the gospel is proclaimed.

Specific Practical Points

- If you are unable to undertake your turn on the rota - then please swap with someone where possible and ensure that whoever coordinates the rota in your church is aware.
- Check beforehand that the Lectionary is marked at the correct place.
- Do not also carry hymn books, leaflets, bags, etc.
- Move from your place as soon as the people start to say 'amen' at the end of the Opening Prayer. When at the sanctuary step bow to the altar and proceed to the Ambo.
- Announce the reading clearly and allow a brief pause before beginning the reading.
- Never say 'The first reading is …' or ' The Second reading' just 'A reading from….'
- At the end of the reading leave a longer pause (1….2….3….) before saying 'The Word of the Lord'.
- Silence should be considered 'a part of the celebration.'
  There should be moments of recollection whereby, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the word of God can find a welcome in our hearts.
- If the psalm is not being sung, leave another brief pause before introducing it.
- Do not say "The response to the psalm is….." Simply read the response clearly and look up to make it clear to the people that they have to repeat it.
- At the end of each verse simply look up to encourage the people to make the response. Never say 'Response!' in between verses. Please do join in the Psalm response as when they are long they can be hard to remember!
- Leave pauses as mentioned above for the first reading
- Do not tell people to stand, simply pause and begin the Acclamation.
- Once you have helped lead the saying of the verse in the gospel acclamation please leave the ambo. So that servers and the Deacon/Priest can be in place when it ends.
- When the Book of the Gospels is being used, remember to move the Lectionary to the shelf on the Ambo to make room for it at SMW, HTB and SJD.
- ***BEFORE*** the end of the recitation of the Creed return to the ambo so that you are ready to lead the people of God in prayer. As before bow at the sanctuary step to the Altar.
  Before Mass always have read through the prayers and if there is something that you wish to add then please do so

The Bidding Prayers, also known as the Prayer of the Faithful or the Universal Prayer, are an important part of the Liturgy of the Word at Mass. They normally follow the readings, Gospel, homily and Profession of Faith, and give the whole congregation an opportunity to bring before God the needs of the Church, the world, those who are suffering, and our own local community.

Prayer for the needs of others has been part of Christian worship from the earliest centuries of the Church. Over the course of history, this form of congregational intercession ceased to be a regular feature of the Roman Mass. The Second Vatican Council restored it, asking that the "common prayer" or "Prayer of the Faithful" should once again have its proper place, especially at Sunday Mass. In doing so, the Church recovered something very ancient: the Christian community gathering and praying not simply for itself, but for the needs of all.

The name "Bidding Prayers" helps us to understand how they are intended to work. The person reading the intentions is not simply reading a series of prayers while everyone else listens. Rather, each intention bids, or invites the congregation to pray for something.

For example, we might hear: "We pray for all those in our community who are lonely, sick or anxious, that they may know the comfort of Christ and the support of those around them." The congregation has now been bid to pray for those people. It is therefore important to give everyone a little time in which to do so. This is why, when we provide Bidding Prayers, we suggest a pause of around five seconds after each intention. To the reader at the ambo, five seconds can initially feel quite long, but to the congregation it provides a valuable moment of silence in which they can make the intention their own and offer their personal prayer to God. Without it, the Prayer of the Faithful can easily become a rapid list of announcements followed by repeated responses. With it, we recover the real purpose of this part of the Mass. We hear a need, we hold it before God in our hearts, and then together we respond.

The reader then invites the common response, "Lord, in your mercy," and the congregation replies, "Hear our prayer." The response gathers the individual prayers of the people and gives them a common voice.

The priest begins the Prayer of the Faithful with an invitation to prayer and, after the individual intentions have been offered, brings them to a conclusion with a final prayer. In our celebrations, we will also often include an intention entrusting our prayers to the intercession of Our Lady and praying the Hail Mary together, before a time for private intentions, before the priest says the concluding prayer.

The intentions themselves usually follow a broad pattern. We pray for the Church, globally and locally, and its mission; for the needs of the world and those entrusted with responsibility; for people experiencing suffering, hardship or particular difficulties. We also remember those who have died and those who mourn them.

The Bidding Prayers which are prepared for each Sunday provide these intentions, but they need not be regarded as a fixed or exhaustive list. An additional intention can certainly be added when there is something happening in the parish, the local community or the wider world which ought to be brought before God in prayer.

What matters is that an additional intention remains genuinely a prayer. The Bidding Prayers should not become political statements, commentary on current affairs, personal opinions or an opportunity to tell the congregation what they ought to think about an issue. We can, of course, pray about matters which are political or controversial. We can pray for peace, justice, wise leadership, reconciliation and for all those affected by war, poverty or injustice. But the intention should invite people to pray rather than impose a particular political viewpoint upon them.

After leading the Prayer of the Faithful, remain at your place at the Ambo until after the celebrant has finished the concluding prayer. Then go to the centre of the sanctuary, bow to the Altar and then return to your seat.