



St. Mary of Magdala Church

An Ecumenical Catholic Community

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

This first major part of the Mass is comprised (on Sundays and all Solemn Feasts) of a series of three readings. The first two are separated by a sung Psalm or Canticle.

The **lectionary** (book which contains all the readings for the Liturgical Year) is very carefully crafted, and over the course of each year is intended to relay the story of our salvation. There are three cycles of readings, Cycle A, Cycle B, and Cycle C, so that we do not hear the same readings year to year.

- The First Reading
 - This is usually from the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament), though at times it may be taken from the Letters in the Christian Scriptures (New Testament). On Sundays in Ordinary Time it usually agrees in theme with the Gospel reading.
- The Psalm Response
 - This is usually taken from the Psalms, and should always be sung. It should be led by a cantor from the ambo. The song chosen should be based on whatever the Psalm is for that week's readings.
 - The piece used should have a clear and easy refrain that the assembly can repeat after the cantor. Again, the refrain should be the same as that from the Lectionary for that week. The assembly does not normally sing the verses – these are left to the cantor and/or choir.
 - The proper order is: the cantor sings the refrain – then gestures the assembly to repeat it.
 - In those rare times that a hymn is chosen it should be neither cumbersome nor long
 - **Music ministers and cantor should wait 15 - 30 seconds after the lector has been seated before moving into place and beginning the psalm**
- The Second Reading

- This reading is most often taken from the letters in the Christian Scriptures (New Testament) or from Acts or the Book of Revelation. The Lectionary usually selects one letter or book and reads through from week to week. Hence the second reading may or may not agree in theme with the other two; if it does so it is by coincidence.
- **Music ministers and cantor should wait at least 20 seconds after the lector has been seated before moving into place and beginning the Gospel Acclamation.**

Lectors have a critical role in the unfolding of the Liturgy of the Word. It can best be described in three stages:

Stage 1: Framing the reading

This is accomplished by the way in which the Lector approaches the reading. Proclaiming the reading is the highlight of what you will do. Your attitude and movements should build toward it, using silence and quiet to “frame” the proclamation. Here are some steps:

- Before you move to the ambo to do the reading allow for 15 -30 seconds of silence and no movement before you get up and go to the ambo. If you have the first reading let everyone be seated and be still before you even move to the ambo. If you have the second reading be sure to allow 15 –30 seconds of silence and no movement before getting up to move to the ambo.
- Do not add any personal words when you introduce a reading. (In previous training you may have been taught to say “Our first reading...” or “Our second reading...” to make it more personal.) But this takes attention away from the reading you are about to do. Simply say exactly what is written: “A reading from...”
- When you come to the end of the reading, pause for a few seconds (about 3 -5 seconds) and say simply, “The Word of the Lord.”
- Wait for the response from the assembly before you move away from the ambo.

Stage 2: Proclaiming the Reading

This is best accomplished by preparing for the reading. Use the Lector’s Guide and practice the reading at home. Read the background on the readings to better understand the context. When you proclaim the reading read slowly.

Do not over-emphasize or try to “add” to the power of the reading. Do not call attention to yourself – you are god’s instrument for focusing attention on the reading.

Read based on your understanding of the context and work the power of the reading itself. What you are proclaiming may be well over 2000 years old and has stood the test

of time. It has influenced the lives of countless millions. Let that power work through your proclamation.

To repeat:

- Prepare the reading at home by practicing it
- Review and understand the context
- Let the power of the reading speak for itself

VERY IMPORTANT: Read slowly and clearly (to help your timing, imagine that you are reading to children – if you feel you are reading too slowly you are probably reading at just the right speed)

Stage 3: How you comport yourself

Your movements should be slow and dignified. You are proclaiming God's Word. Everything you do should focus attention on the Word. Try each time to do the following:

- Allow for at least 15 - 30 seconds after the previous part of the liturgy before moving
- If you make a mistake do not interrupt the flow by apologizing. Simply stop, recollect yourself, and then continue on as if nothing happened. (Apologizing shifts the focus from the reading to you; keep the focus on the reading)