

# PROCLAIMING THE WORD

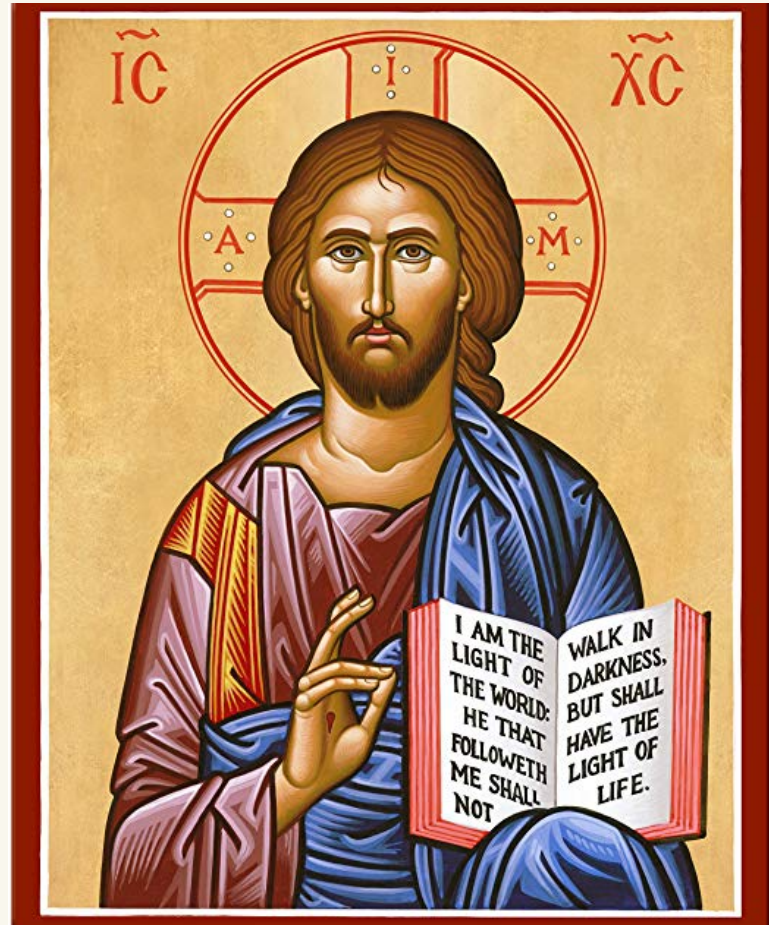


## A GUIDE FOR READING AT MASS

### DIOCESE OF LEEDS

#### THE YEAR OF THE WORD 2020-2021

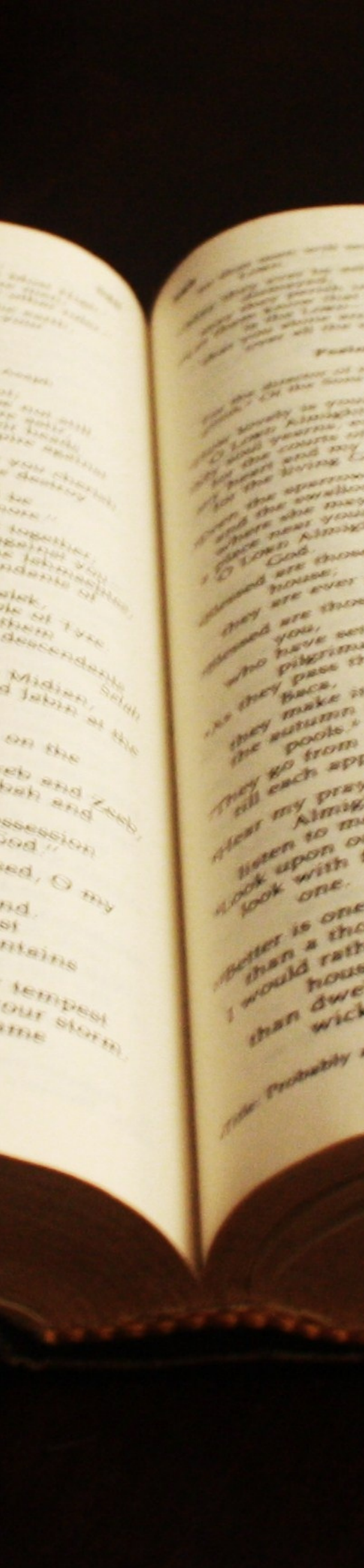
A Good practice guide to help Readers at Mass produced for "The God Who Speaks: The Year of the Word" by Rev Henry Longbottom of the Diocese of Leeds Education Vicariate



# WHAT A READER DOES

Practice varies from parish to parish, but in general, a Reader's responsibility includes the following:

- Reading the **First Reading**, the **Responsorial Psalm** (if it is not sung) and the **Second Reading**. If possible, a different person reads the Second Reading.
- Intoning the "Alleluia" or Lenten "Praise to You O Christ", etc (which is ordinarily sung) and leading the Congregation in reciting the "**Gospel Verse**" (the line between the two acclamations of the "Alleluia" or its Lenten equivalent) which may also be sung.
- In the absence of a Deacon, leading the "**Prayer of the Faithful**" (Bidding Prayers). These are introduced by the Priest after the Creed. Remember to pause between the end of each prayer and saying "Lord in your Mercy" (or equivalent).
- At the Feasts of Easter, Pentecost & Corpus Christi, leading the Congregation in reciting the "**Sequence**" (an ancient hymn) which is inserted between the Second Reading and the Gospel Acclamation. Introduce the Sequence by saying "We say together the Sequence ..." or words to that effect. Sometimes the Sequence is sung.
- Assist with **extra readings during Holy Week** (e.g. Passion narrative etc.)
- In some parishes, the Reader recites, or invites the congregation to recite, the **Entrance Antiphon** (before the Priest arrives at the Altar) & **Communion Antiphon** (immediately after the Priest consumes the Precious Blood). Similarly, in some parishes the Reader leads the congregation in reciting an opening prayer e.g. the prayer for the Year of the Word.



# WHY BEING A READER IS IMPORTANT

## *Imitating Christ*

Readers are taking up an example set by Christ Himself. As the **Introduction to the Lectionary** points out:

"The liturgy of the Church faithfully adheres to the way Christ himself read and explained the Scriptures, beginning with the 'today' of his coming forward in the synagogue and urging all to search the Scriptures."

"When He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up, He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was His custom. He stood up to read ..."

LUKE 4:16

## *Emphasising the unity of God's Word*

The New Testament lies hidden in the Old Testament. Through the readings at Mass, we appreciate that the Word of God forms a unity in proclaiming the one and same mystery of Christ. As **St Jerome** remarked: *Not to know the Scriptures is not to know Christ.*

## *Serving at the table of God's Word*

Readers assist in announcing the divine covenant. As the **Introduction to the Lectionary** puts it:

"The Church is nourished at the table of God's Word and Eucharist; from the one it grows in wisdom and from the other in holiness. In the Word of God, the divine covenant is announced; in the Eucharist, the new covenant is renewed."



# FINDING YOUR WAY AROUND THE LITURGICAL BOOKS

## ***The Lectionary***

As a Reader, the main book you will need to be familiar with is the **Lectionary** which contains the Biblical readings for Mass. The Lectionary is split into three volumes:

- I Proper of Seasons, Sundays in Ordinary Time
- II Weekdays in Ordinary Time, Proper of Saints, Commons
- III Rituals, Masses for Various Occasions, Votive Masses

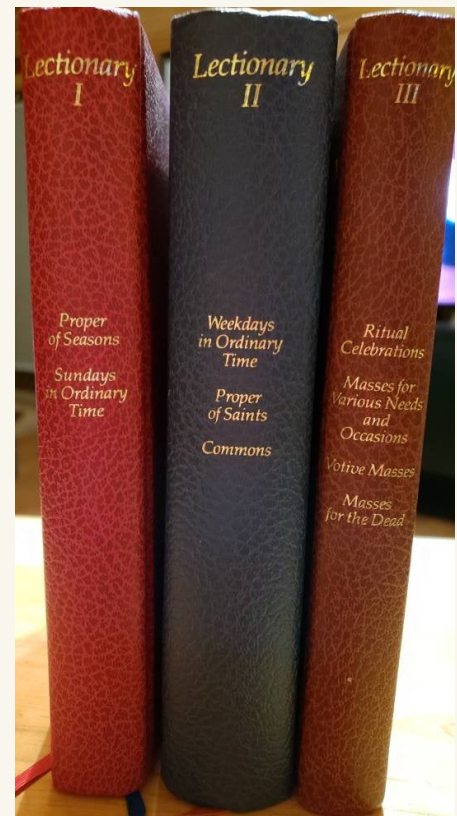
The following pages of this Guide describe how the Lectionary is structured.

## ***Other Books***

When you are in the Sacristy and Sanctuary, you may come across other liturgical books which are used primarily by the Clergy, although it is good for a Reader to know of their existence and what they look like.

The **Book of the Gospels or "Evangelary"** is a ceremonial book carried in at entrance procession and placed on the Altar until the Gospel Acclamation. The **Roman Missal**, which comes in three sizes (Altar, Chapel & Study editions), contains the texts for the Mass. At the front of the Missal is a text called the "General Instruction" containing the rubrics for the actions and rituals at the Mass. There is also the recently published **Excerpts from the Roman Missal** (also know as the "Book of the Chair") which contains just those prayers which the priest says when he not at the altar.

For funerals, weddings and other occasions, there are specific **Ordos** containing the order of service (instructions, prayers, biblical readings) for these sacraments. At ceremonies performed by a bishop e.g. a confirmation, a special liturgical book called the **Pontifical** is used.





# LECTIONARY FOR SUNDAYS & MAJOR FEAST DAYS

This runs in a **three-year cycle** (Year A, Year B, Year C) comprising:

- First Reading - From OT; except during Easter when it is from the Book of Acts.
- Responsorial Psalm - Mostly from Psalms but sometimes other biblical "Canticles".
- Second Reading - Mostly from St Paul but sometimes other NT Epistles and Revelation.
- Gospel Verse - Usually a direct Biblical quotation, but sometimes adapted from a biblical text.
- Gospel - Year A: St Matthew; Year B: St Mark mostly; Year C: St Luke (St John is used mostly in Lent & Easter).

Note also the use of "**Sequences**" (which are ancient hymns) for Easter (*Victimae Paschali*), Pentecost (*Veni Sancte Spiritus*) & Corpus Christi (*Lauda Sion*).

# LECTIONARY FOR WEEKDAYS, LESSER FEASTS, AND SPECIAL OCCASIONS

This runs in **two one-year cycles** (Year I and Year II) comprising:

- First Reading - Semi-continuous texts alternating between OT & NT .
- Responsorial Psalm - Mostly Psalms but sometimes other OT Canticles.
- Gospel Verse - Usually a direct Biblical quotation, but sometimes adapted from a biblical text.
- Gospel - Same each year; semi-continuous readings from St Mark, St Matthew, & St Luke, in that order.

## *An Interesting Fact ...*

The combined Lectionary (Sunday and Weekdays) uses 90% of the Gospels, 55% of the rest of the NT, and about 13% of the OT (see Felix Just SJ [catholic-resources.org](http://catholic-resources.org))



# GOOD PRACTICE TIPS

## ***Get to know the Reader protocol where you will read***

- Where does the Reader sit (preferably a place near the Ambo/lectern)?
- Is the Responsorial Psalm (& Sequence if applicable) & Gospel Verse ever sung or does the Reader always read it?
- When the Alleluia or Lenten equivalent is sung, who intones the first note; the Priest, Cantor/Choir or Reader?
- Are the Entrance and Communion Antiphons used? And if they are, who proclaims them (the Priest or Reader?)

## ***Preparation***

- If it's your first time, practise reading with the microphone.
- Always double-check the Rota, organising a replacement well in advance if you can't make your slot.
- Ensure you have the correct readings. Some Parishes give Readers the Sunday "Missalette" a week in advance. You may have your own copy of the Weekday and Sunday Missals or a Monthly Magnificat subscription. Free access to the readings (except Responsorial Psalm texts) is available at [www.universalis.com](http://www.universalis.com). Short reflections on each of the Sunday readings are available via Wednesday Word ([www.wednesdayword.org](http://www.wednesdayword.org))
- Practise a few days in advance. Read aloud a few times, checking pronunciation of tricky words (you can consult online aids e.g. [www.biblespeak.org](http://www.biblespeak.org)) if necessary. Practise with another person or in front of mirror to improve confidence.

# GOOD PRACTICE TIPS

## ***On the day***

- Before Mass, check the Lectionary is at the correct page & that there's a copy of *Prayer of the Faithful*. During Mass, move in a dignified fashion, bowing to the altar before & after the reading.
- Read slowly. You are usually faster than you think!
- Be expressive; reflect the tone of the text. Recall that psalms are poetry.
- If you make a minor mistake don't stop and say "*sorry*" or "*excuse me*". Instead continue with confidence.
- Pause, for about 5 seconds, at the end of the reading before saying "The Word of the Lord".
- Join in the psalm response after each verse to help the congregation.
- Start the "Alleluia" or Lenten equivalent (normally sung) and recite the Alleluia verse.
- Stay at the lectern until the Gospel Verse has been recited, moving away at the start of the second chanting of the Alleluia or Lenten equivalent.

## ***Things to avoid***

- Never say: "*The response to the psalm is ...*" or "*The first/second reading is ...*", or "*Please stand for the Gospel.*"
- Remember that since 2010 the correct conclusion is "**The Word of the Lord**" (not "*This is the Word of the Lord...*" as printed in the Lectionary which was published before 2010).