

# OFFICE OF WORSHIP GUIDELINES FOR THE MINISTRY OF PROCLAIMER OF THE WORD OF GOD

*Issued September 15, 2009 by the Office of Worship and Spiritual Life, Diocese of Pueblo*

## INTRODUCTION

Christ is present in the scriptures – the living Word of God. These scriptures renew and reinvigorate the People of God. They are a source of nourishment, strength and life.

God speaks through Proclaimers of the Word [hereafter: *Proclaimers*] to those who are gathered for worship. Proclaimers rouse faith in those who hear them. They do not just *read* this living Word of God: they *proclaim* it to the Assembly. Proclamation delivers a message with clarity, dignity, conviction and appropriate pace. When the scriptures are proclaimed, God himself speaks to his people and Christ himself proclaims the Gospel.

For these reasons, the church has high expectations for all who proclaim the living Word of God to the Assembly. They must be qualified, trained and carefully prepared. They must also understand the Scripture being read.

## REQUIREMENTS

1. Proclaimers are validly baptized, have received the Eucharist, profess the Catholic faith and are active members of a Catholic parish in the Diocese of Pueblo.  
Exception: for pastoral reasons, family or friends may carry out the Proclaimer ministry at funerals or weddings, even if they are not Roman Catholic.
2. Readers are 16 years of age or older.  
Exception: at Masses for Children, children of any age may be Proclaimers provided they understand the reading and can proclaim it clearly.
3. The pastor has final approval for the assignment of Proclaimers in a parish.

## FORMATION

1. Proclaimers are trained prior to engaging in their ministry. Their training is comprised of these components:
  - a. Technical preparation –
    - i. public reading skills
      - voice, breathing, volume, pacing, emphasis, voice quality, facial expressions and the mood that the text and theme conveys;
      - warming up, clearing throat, drinking water and voice projection
      - Ambo space, sound equipment, acoustical challenges, type of microphone and proper positioning of the microphone
  - b. Scriptural preparation –
    - i. Learning the genres of scripture (narrative, history, law, prophecy, genealogy, blessing, discourse, poetry, sermon, hymn, prayer, proverbs and others) and the skills needed to proclaim each type of reading
    - ii. the themes of scripture
  - c. Liturgical preparation –
    - i. structure of the Liturgy of the Word
    - ii. the Liturgy of the Word's connection to the Liturgy of the Eucharist
    - iii. central messages of the liturgical seasons

- d. Spiritual preparation –
  - i. Proclaimers are to receive at least annual training and spiritual formation at the parish or deanery level. They need a program or retreat to renew their faith, prayer and commitment to their ministry, and to discuss the Theology of the Word, Office of Worship Guidelines for Proclaimers, and techniques in the practice of proclamation.
2. Each parish will formally install its newly-trained and renewed Proclaimers on an annual basis, following the rite of blessing found in the *Book of Blessings*, ch. 61, nos. 1827-1845, pp. 775-782.
3. Proclaimers are encouraged to attend adult education classes on liturgy, scripture and/or proclamation techniques.

## PREPARATION

1. Proclaimers with *Internet* access can access the readings at [www.usccb.org/nab](http://www.usccb.org/nab), or by using one of the Lectionary *Workbooks* (for example, Liturgy Training Publications *Workbook for Lectors*). Parishes are to provide Proclaimers who do not have *Internet* access or *Workbooks* with their scripture text at least a week ahead of time so they can practice. Where there are reading options, the Proclaimer checks with the Presider or the liturgy coordinator to confirm the chosen reading.
2. After gaining access to their assigned texts, Proclaimers
  - a. Pray over the text and reflect on its message
  - b. Study the text to understand it and to be able to interpret it
  - c. Read the selected reading aloud several times during the week
  - d. Check word pronunciations and practice delivery with a listener who can give them feedback about their articulation, pronunciation and enunciation.

Doing the above will make the Word come alive for the members of the Assembly. They can discern between someone who has prepared to exercise their ministry and someone who is seeing the reading for the first time.

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. A single reading may not be divided between two or more Proclaimers, except for the reading of the Passion and at Children's Masses.
2. When there is more than one reading, it is preferable to assign the readings to different Proclaimers.
3. In the absence of a Cantor, a Proclaimer may read the responsorial psalm. It is preferred that the responsorial psalm be led by someone other than the Proclaimer for the first reading.
4. In the absence of a Deacon, a Proclaimer or Cantor or someone else may be assigned to pray the Prayers of the Faithful.
5. Announcements should be assigned to and read by someone other than the Proclaimers of the scripture readings that day.
6. Proclaimers exercise their ministry only. They do not function as Cantors or assume the role of other liturgical ministers during the same liturgy.

## LITURGICAL RULES FOR PROCLAIMERS

### BEFORE MASS

1. For their ministerial role, Proclaimers wear appropriate and dignified clothing that does not distract the Assembly's attention from the proclamation. At the Presider's discretion, Proclaimers may wear an alb.

2. Lay ministers, not ordained ministers, proclaim non-Gospel readings because these are a ministerial, not presidential, function.
3. The *Lectionary* should be marked and in place before Mass to minimize distractions during Mass. Missalettes or worship aids are not to be used for proclamation because they weaken the effect of the Liturgy of the Word.
4. Proclaimers are to arrive at their parish a reasonable time before Mass begins so they can double-check their readings in the *Lectionary* or in other sources and check out the microphone.

#### DURING MASS

1. The Ambo is the symbol for the presence of the living Word of God. The Ambo is only used for scripture readings, the responsorial psalm, the Gospel, the homily and the Prayer of the Faithful. Announcements and cantoring are never done from the Ambo – they are done from a lectern or cantor's stand. The Ambo should have adequate lighting.
2. Proclaimer(s) take part in the entrance procession. They walk behind the altar servers and in front of the Deacon or, in his absence, the Presider. In the absence of a Deacon, the Proclaimer carries the *Book of Gospels*, in a slightly elevated position, with both hands. The Proclaimer places the *Book of Gospels* on the altar reverently, either flat or in an upright position. The *Lectionary* is never carried in the entrance procession because it is the distinctiveness of the Gospels, containing the words of Christ, that is especially significant. If there is no *Book of Gospels*, the Proclaimer(s) just march in procession.
3. When carrying the *Book of Gospels*, the Deacon or Proclaimer does not bow or genuflect when arriving at the altar; if not carrying it, a bow is made with the other ministers when arriving at the altar, and the Proclaimers then go to their place without waiting for the Presider to arrive at the edge of the sanctuary.
4. If the tabernacle is located in the sanctuary, the members of the entrance procession (except the person carrying the *Book of Gospels* and the Processional Cross) genuflect as they approach the altar.
5. Proclaimers may be seated either in the sanctuary or in the Assembly. If seated in the Assembly, Proclaimers sit where they have easy access to the Ambo.
6. If there aren't any music ministers in church, the Proclaimer may read the entrance antiphon.
7. Proclaimers never carry a piece of paper to read from to the Ambo. Any special readings are to be put in the *Lectionary* prior to Mass, not carried up.
8. When it is time to proclaim the first reading, the Proclaimer approaches the Ambo slowly and reverently. On the way to the Ambo, the Proclaimer bows to the altar at the edge of the sanctuary. However, if the Proclaimer is already in the sanctuary, the Proclaimer goes straight to the Ambo without reverencing the altar.
9. At the Ambo, the Proclaimer adjusts the microphone and waits until everyone has settled before starting to proclaim.
10. The Proclaimer reads the text "as is" and does not improvise or substitute language.
11. The Proclaimer pauses before beginning the reading. When the Proclaimer announces the reading ("A reading from ..."), he or she maintains eye contact with the Assembly. The opening formula is said verbatim and never altered by the Proclaimer. This is followed by another pause of two or three seconds to distinguish the announcement of the reading from the reading itself.
12. During the reading, occasional eye contact with the Assembly is encouraged, to keep the members of the Assembly engaged.
13. At the end of the reading, another pause of two or three seconds follows before the ending announcement is made ("The Word of the Lord"). The concluding formula is said verbatim and never altered by the Proclaimer. Eye contact with the Assembly is maintained during the ending announcement.
14. Neither the *Lectionary* nor the *Book of Gospels* is raised up when the concluding acclamation is proclaimed.

15. Proclaimers remain in place for a period of silence after concluding acclamation (at least 15 seconds), to give people time to absorb the message, respond to it and pray. Proclaimers do not turn the page or remove the book until these 15 seconds are over. Then they return to their seats, bowing to the altar after leaving the sanctuary.
16. During the responsorial psalm, the Proclaimer is seated. However, if the psalm is not sung by a cantor from the Ambo, a Proclaimer may read the responsorial psalm. It is preferable that it be led by someone other than the Proclaimer for the first reading because it is a distinct ministry. If a Proclaimer reads the responsorial psalm, s/he does not announce "Responsorial Psalm" before beginning the antiphon. The psalm is read or sung from the Ambo.
17. Silence is observed after the singing of the responsorial psalm, for recollection and dialogue with God.
18. If there is a second reading, that Proclaimer observes the instructions for the Proclaimer for the first reading as stated above.
19. When the *Book of Gospels* is used, the second Proclaimer reverently removes the *Lectionary* from the Ambo to the credence table (or elsewhere) when the Gospel Acclamation begins.
20. The Gospel is always proclaimed by a Deacon or Priest.
21. The General Intercessions or Prayer of the Faithful is led by a Deacon or, in his absence, a prayer leader. These are announced either from the Ambo, a lectern or a cantor stand. The prayer leader arrives at the Ambo before the Presider invites the people to pray, bowing to the altar before entering the sanctuary. The prayer leader remains at the Ambo until the Presider concludes the prayer. While returning to his or her seat, upon leaving the sanctuary, s/he bows to the altar.
22. If there aren't any music ministers in church, the Proclaimer may read the communion antiphon.
23. Announcements may take place following the prayer after communion. They are never given from the Ambo. A priest or deacon may make them from their chair; Proclaimers or other announcers make them from another microphone stand. People remain standing if the announcements are brief; otherwise, invite them to sit down.
24. Only Proclaimer(s) seated in the sanctuary join in the closing procession. They reverence the altar with a bow when the other ministers bow (or genuflect if the tabernacle is located in the sanctuary). No liturgical books (*Lectionary*, *Book of Gospels* or *Sacramentary*) are carried in the closing procession. The ministers walk out in the order in which they entered.

## PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

1. It is helpful to avoid sugar, dairy and caffeine prior to proclaiming. It is also helpful to warm up the voice prior to proclaiming.
2. If the Proclaimer make a mistake while reading, don't say "excuse me" or "I'm sorry". Either correct the mispronounced word or let it go.
3. Proclaimers avoid any behavior that either draws attention to themselves or that distracts from the proclaimed Word of God or from their ministry (e.g., bad posture, placing their hands in their pockets, wearing inappropriate clothing, wearing anything that draws attention to the reader, unnecessary movement, fidgeting, leaning on the Ambo, etc.). Hands should be on the Ambo, holding the book, or used inconspicuously to keep one's place while reading. Dress appropriately—attire should not distract from ministry. Simplicity, modesty and dignity are the goals.
4. If the Proclaimer makes a mistake, back up and read it again correctly, or just continue proclaiming. Don't say "excuse me," or a similar phrase, because you are in liturgical mode, not ordinary mode.

## LOCAL RULES

These Guidelines provide general observations and principles on this important ministry. For a smooth functioning of this ministry, the needs of the local faith community must be taken into consideration.

Factors affecting this include, but are not limited to: the physical layout of the church, the traditions of the local faith community and the style of the Presider.

Examples of some local practices that need to be determined include:

- Scheduling
- Finding substitutes
- Dress code
- Grounds for removal
- Arrival times
- Use of sign-in sheets
- Use of distinctive signs of ministry (medallions, badges)
- Seating
- Responsibilities before Mass
- Responsibilities after Mass

## RESOURCES USED

*A Commentary on the General Instruction of the Roman Missal.* Edward Foley, Nathan D. Mitchell and Joanne M. Pierce, ed. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2007.

Archdiocese of Los Angeles. *Guidelines for Proclaimers.* November, 2003.

Archdiocese of Milwaukee. *The Ministry of Reader Guidelines.*

Archdiocese of Santa Fe. *Archdiocesan Guidelines for the Ministry of Reader.* March, 2005.

*General Instruction of the Roman Missal.* Washington: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. 2003.

Meagher, Virginia and Turner, Paul. *Guide for Proclaimers.* Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications. 2007.

Rosser, Aelred, O.S.B. *Guide for Proclaimers.* Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications. 1998.

Wallace, James A. *The Ministry of Proclaimers.* Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2004.

Turner, Paul. *Let Us Pray.* Collegeville: Liturgical Press. 2006.