

## LECTOR – Ministry

### I. General Information

#### A. Scheduling:

1. The schedules are sent out quarterly and emailed 3 weeks before the beginning of the next quarter.
2. Please make note of your assignments. If you are unable to make your scheduled assignment please find a substitute and notify Cindy Wuebker as soon as possible. Cindy sends out the intercessions the week prior to your lector assignment and can email it directly to you. If you did not notify Cindy prior to the intercessions being sent out please forward them to your substitute so they can be prepared.
3. The lector schedule is available on [staugie.com](http://staugie.com) under St Augustine Ministry schedule which is on the right side of the home page.

#### B. Lector Dress:

1. The Church is God's house. When visiting God especially the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we should dress as if it is a very important occasion. One's attire should be more "dressy" and not include jeans, t-shirts, strapless or low-cut tops. If possible it would be appropriate for men to wear dress pants, shirt and tie, and women to wear a dress or slacks. One should use their best judgment since the focus should be on the "Word" proclaimed not what one is wearing (flashy or sloppy).

#### C. Arrival Time:

1. We would like to have lectors arrive approximately 10-15 minutes before church as a courtesy to Father, deacon or the sacristan at that particular Mass. Lectors who arrive late may be replaced by Father, the deacon or sacristan. Generally a replacement will be made approximately 6 minutes before Mass since a short prayer for all ministers is said at 5 minutes before Mass.

#### D. Seating at Mass:

1. Generally the lector should sit in one of the first 3 pews on either side of the middle aisle. By sitting close to the sanctuary the lector is able to go back and forth to the pulpit easily especially if the creed is not recited. The church encourages you to sit with your family if at all possible.

### II. Lector Responsibilities:

**A. You are reading the Word of God!**

**1. Remember the Mass consists of two major parts; The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. When the Sacred Scriptures are read in Church, God himself is speaking to his People and Christ, present in his word, proclaims the gospel. (Bishops 2011)<sup>1</sup> As lector you are representing God in proclaiming these Sacred Scriptures.**

**B. Prior to Mass**

1. Be prepared: Have you ever come to Mass and left complaining you could not hear or understand the lector. **DO NOT LET THAT BE YOU!** Be prepared and practice!

2. Read the readings, intercessions etc out loud several times during the week prior to your scheduled Mass. If there are various versions of the readings for that week please see email sent out by the church with the intercessions. It should list short or long version or what options if any may be used. If you do not know e-mail or call Cindy, she can let you know which one is applicable.

3. Make sure you warm up and lubricate your voice prior to arriving at Mass so that it limits your coughing or clearing your throat while you are reading.

4. Upon arrival at Church make sure lectionary is open to the first reading; make sure intercessions that were sent to you earlier in the week are at the lectionary (ambo). Adjust height of microphone so it is just below your mouth to project one's voice properly.

**C. The Mass: Individual Parts (outline of duties and proper position at Mass for all ministers – bolded items pertain to lector)**

1. Procession facing the Sanctuary from the back of Church: As soon as the first word is heard in the processional song the cross bearer will start a slow walk toward the sanctuary.

a) Servers are first

(1) Cross Bearer should be at the 3<sup>rd</sup> pew from the back

(2) Candle Bearers are just behind the 1<sup>st</sup> pew. As procession starts Candle bearers should be approximately 2-3 pews behind cross bearer.

b) **Followed by lector**, then deacon if present, and finally Father

c) Congregate at altar – Candle bearers are on either end, father and deacon are in the middle, **with lector just inside server on Mary's side (ambo side)**, and cross bearer on Mary's side outside of the candle bearer. All bow (servers only slightly) and then move to their stations.

(1) Candle bearers place candles in the sacristy, then move to seats at the side of the sanctuary. Each one will stay in their end of the sanctuary, the Virgin Mary side or St. Joseph side (book bearer).

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<sup>1</sup> The Roman Missal – Study edition

(2) Cross bearer places cross in the cross cradle on the Virgin Mary side and then is seated on Virgin Mary side of the sanctuary next to the candle bearer.

**(3) Lector moves behind the ambo and is stationed there until the greeting**

2. Introductory Rites

a) Introductory prayer/blessing (sign of the cross)

**b) Lector reads initial greeting to congregation (look to Father to pause)**

c) Penitential rite / Kyrie

**(1) Lector usually remains behind ambo**

(2) During Lent and sometimes throughout the year the priest, deacon and all ministers kneel in front of altar, check with deacon or Father before Mass to be certain how the Kyrie/penitential rite will be handled.

d) Gloria may be sung or recited

e) Opening prayer recited by Father: book bearer gets the Sacramentary when Father says "Let us pray". He/she then brings the Sacramentary to Father. Father takes the Sacramentary and places it on the book bearers open hands. Father reads the opening prayer.

f) Everyone is then seated to listen to the biblical readings.

3. Liturgy of the Word

**a) First reading (Old Testament) – read by lector**

b) Responsorial psalm – usually sung by organist, choir and congregation – **if not sung then recited by lector** with responses from congregation

**c) Second Reading (New Testament) – read by lector**

**(1) After reading the lector should return to one of the first 3 pews on either side of the main aisle. The lector should turn and bow towards the altar once he/she reaches the midpoint of the altar, before leaving the sanctuary.**

d) Gospel acclamation is generally sung by organist, choir and congregation. All stand.

e) Gospel (one of four) – (sign of the cross – head, lips, hear) is generally read/presented by Father or the Deacon

f) Homily – generally presented by Father or the Deacon (all sit)

g) The Creed – generally recited by congregation (all stand)

**(1) When recited or sung the lector should move to ambo before congregation begins to recite about the “Holy Spirit” or the “Church”**

**(2) When not recited or sung the lector should move to ambo immediately after homily. Always pay attention to Father when the Creed is to begin. Generally Father will introduce an intercession to allow the lector to proceed to the ambo and read your intercessions.**

**h) Prayer of the Faithful (general intercessions - petitions) - read by lector**

4. Liturgy of the Eucharist

a) Presentation and Presentment of the Gifts - offertory hymn is sung at this time.

(1) As congregation sits, altar servers go to work

(2) Book bearer brings Sacramentary to the altar and places it on the stand. Once this is completed be prepared to receive gifts from gift bearers.

(3) Alter servers (Mary’s side) bring the 4 cups, chalice, and water to the Altar and places them on a straight line at the edge of the Corporal. Once this is completed be prepared to receive gifts from gift bearers.

(4) As gift bearers approach the altar all servers follow Father or the Deacon to the front of the Sanctuary and are ready to receive the gifts either from Father or the Deacon.

(5) Bread and Water is presented by the gift bearers at the foot of the sanctuary and given to Father or the Deacon.

(6) Deacon or Priest accepts the gifts and gives Ciborium (with bread hosts) and wine vessel to servers on Virgin Mary side and the collection basket to the book bearer.

(a) The server receiving the Ciborium immediately proceeds to the Altar and places the Ciborium on the Corporal next to the Chalice.

**(b) There will be more detail after this part of the outline. Need Hal’s help as to how I should detail this.**

b) Prayer over the gifts – priest can sing or recite

c) Eucharistic Prayer and acclamations

(1) The prayer is surrounded by the Holy-Holy acclamation and Great Amen

(2) Congregation kneels at this time

d) Lord’s Prayer - will be sung or recited by congregation

e) The sign of peace – generally shake hands of those immediately around you

(1) All Eucharistic ministers and servers gather behind the altar.

f) Breaking of the Bread and the Lamb of God

g) Distribution of Holy Communion

(1) All Eucharistic ministers of the body and blood move to their assigned stations for congregation to receive Holy Communion

h) Prayer after Communion

5. Concluding Rite

a) Solemn final blessing (sign of the cross)

b) Announcements

c) Dismissal

d) Recessional – Servers collect the candles and cross and move to the front and side of altar, **lector enters the sanctuary and stands to the left of the altar**; priest and deacon are in the middles. All bow before leaving the altar. Part of closing song will be sung before generally leaving the sanctuary to process to the front of Church;

D. After Conclusion of Mass

1. Gather any belongings you left in the Sanctuary before Mass.

### III. Lector Training<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> A Well Trained Tongue – Alfred R Rosser -

A. The Minister and the Word (chapter 1)

1. Your ministry as reader gives voice to God's healing and strengthening word. You become another "John the Baptist" preparing the way of the Lord. (page1)
2. Over time your relationship with Christ should continue to deepen. You should see yourself more and more as a disciple of the Lord, one who is not merely taught but being formed by the Master. (page 1)
3. The reader's ability to proclaim the word transparently so that the word itself, not the lector is placed in the foreground. (page 2)
4. Men and women who take on the ministry of reader are presumed to be of good faith, eager to serve their fellow Christians and willing to engage in ongoing formation into effective service. (page 2)
5. Finally the mere wish or willingness to serve as reader does not qualify one for the ministry. This is not something to add to your ministry resume. If you are not willing to properly prepare then this ministry is not for you. This statement sounds harsh; no one wants to discourage a volunteer. But the fact remains that the ministry of reader is a charism for the building up of the community. (page 2)
6. The word of God is a living and dynamic presence, achieving the very salvation about which it speaks even as the reader proclaims it. Christ is present in his word since it is he himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the church. In the reader's proclamation, the word of God is alive with power, achieving the sanctification of the people to whom it is proclaimed and rendering glory to God whose creative word brought all things into being. (page 3)

B. Effective Communication Skills (chapter 2)

1. Have you ever come to Mass and left complaining you could not hear or understand the lector. **DO NOT LET THAT BE YOU!** Be prepared and practice!
2. All the communication skills relevant to public speaking are relevant to liturgical proclamation. In "NO WAY" does this emphatic statement imply that the purposes of public speaking and liturgical proclamation are identical; they are not. The purpose of liturgical proclamation (and all liturgy) is ritual celebration of faith. It is not to inform, to persuade or to entertain (though it may do all three). (page 5)
3. Our proclamation of the word is never without effect. The poorest proclamation, the mediocre proclamation and the most compelling proclamation each affect their hearers. What is true of liturgical worship is true of proclamation, of which it is a part: Poor liturgy diminishes faith; good liturgy augments it. The Latin axiom *Lex orandi, Lex credendi* – as we pray, so shall we believe; the manner of our worship determines the quality of our belief. (page 7)

4. There is sacramentality to lectoring (a sacrament is an outward sign of an inward reality. It is Christ himself who speaks. The “outward sign” is the proclamation while the inward reality is the fulfillment of the word as it is proclaimed. Proclamation of the word is not a sacrament but it does have a sacramental character. Human speech is powerful. When it is employed in the proclamation of the word of God, it is sacramental. Readers who see the power and responsibility with which they are entrusted will not take their charism lightly. (page 7)

5. Finally there should be an ongoing dynamic between the lector and his audience. The lector’s reading affects his listener’s hearing, upon seeing their reaction or lack thereof; the lector should slightly alter his approach. This ongoing dynamic must be ongoing for the lector to be ultimately effective.

### C. Breathing exercises

1. Human speech is a controlled function. The speaker can use the mechanism to adjust many aspects of speech. Some cannot be adjusted like the timbre of the voice (what makes your voice distinct from others); the highness or depth of the tone is another.

2. What you must do to control is your breathing. Learning to support speech with the abdominal wall is not difficult; learning to relax the rest of the body can be challenging. The exercise:

a) Stand comfortably erect, with good but relaxed posture

b) Breathe slowly through your mouth on the count of four (one Mississippi, two...). The idea is to draw a full deep breath. The intake of the breath should be completely silent; if you can hear it, you are breathing too quickly. Be careful not to raise your shoulders or to exert any effort trying to expand your chest. Let the abdominal muscles relax completely. The incoming volume of air is all that accounts for the movement. You should see some outward movement of both chest and belly.

c) Now exhale slowly on the count of eight. Exhale through your teeth, making a hissing sound. The sound should be very soft on the count of one and as loud as possible on the count of eight as you try to empty your lungs completely. During exhalation, conserve your air as you consciously but gently pull the abdomen in to support a steady out flow. The contraction will increase as your volume increases. Be careful not to involve the chest, shoulder, head, neck, or throat muscle. Do not collapse the shoulders as you run out of air. (page 9) See rest of exercise on page 10.

d) See pages 11 – 12 as samples for reading exercises.

D. Vocal Variety (page 13)

1. This is an umbrella term to include all the characteristics of speech. It includes melody (or modulation), rate, pause, volume, articulation. The questions are: How fast is too fast? How loud is too loud? When is a pause too long or short? Each person reading and each person listening will have a different interpretation. The main purpose of practicing these parts of speech is to effectively communicate God's word. Take time to ask the Holy Spirit to direct your practice and pray for guidance. Then take the time to practice the readings out loud in advance and maybe even have family members listen to get feedback.

2. Practice exercise page 14-15

E. Melody

1. Melody in music refers to the movement of the pitch from one level to another. This is the kind of movement that must also typify the voice of the reader. The melody of your voice should complement the biblical text similar to the melody in music to the lyrics. A good text to test on is 1Corinthians 13:3-13 the "way of love". This text is more poetic while the passage from Acts is a narrative. Melody is determined by such factors as: the topic, the mood, the purpose, and the literary genre such as poetry, prose, narrative and argument. The lector's purpose is to proclaim the text as it was written, not to recreate it or dramatize it.

2. Practice exercises on pages 16-18

F. Rate

1. Generally almost all first time lectors will read too fast. Most parishioners cannot properly hear the "Word" if the syllables, words and sentences all slide together due to the speed of the reader. The reader must be sensitive to one's audience. The lector has the printed word in front of you while the audience may or may not. Generally the church would like to have the people in the pew listening, not reading along. This makes this even more important. Another aspect of rate has to do with the rhythm of the reading. Generally the rhythm varies to catch the listener's ear. Different types of rhythm:

a) Text with a consistent beat or hypnotic rhythm (Matthew 1:1-17)

b) Text illustrating parallelism Joel 2:2-10

c) Practicing rate – short texts should be read more slowly or else it will be completed before the listener is focused on it – maybe a slower introduction.

2. Practice exercises page 19-22

G. Pausing

1. The audience must be able to process the text; they are relying on your vocal presentation to help them with the meaning. Pausing is important for several reasons:

a) Effective pausing gives the audience time to process the text



b) Give the lector time to refresh your understanding and voice which helps your proclamation.

c) Helps to emphasize a particular text

2. Practice exercises pages 24-27

#### H. Volume/Pitch

1. As a lector you must be able to read your audience to determine if they are listening or hearing your word. The audience is always sending non-verbal cues to the lector especially in one's volume and pitch. One can generally detect if they are attentive or distracted; are they straining to hear or appear to easily hear each word. People will be distracted by what may be louder or more interesting (someone close to you whispering) or even annoying (baby crying).

2. One's pitch and volume should adjust based on the text being read, for instance if it is based on a joyous occasion, a warning being shouted, a calming influence for those who are worried, etc. Regardless of the text, the most important attribute of a good lector is that they can be heard throughout the church in a voice that is not annoying or disagreeable, but one that engages the listener in the text being read.

3. Practice exercises pages 29-31

#### I. Articulation

1. Articulation involves the shape or formation of sounds with the lips, tongue, teeth, soft palate, and muscles of the face. The way sounds are formed result in either clarity or mushiness; pretentiousness or naturalness. One should normally speak in the language that the listeners are expecting. Certain words may be pronounced in one part of the country different than other parts of the country and therefore are acceptable in that area.

2. The most important point is that the words spoken are understandable clearly heard by your audience. The lector should not sound phony or exaggerate the pronunciation. It is important that the lector is not lazy in their articulation of the text less it sounds muffled and and make the words difficult to understand.

3. Do not confuse pronunciation with articulation. Pronunciation is the correct way to sound a given word as found in the dictionary. We should pronounce words as we would find them listed in the dictionary, the only exceptions to this is if your entire local parish pronounce certain words differently than what is found in the dictionary. It is especially important to review and look up words that you do not know or understand so that you have the proper pronunciation and state it in the proper context.

4. Practice exercises pages 33-35

#### J. Emphasis/Stress

1. Emphasis and stress are important in properly communicating the text to your audience but it also may be the most subjective or elusive to communicate. In the “Workbook for Lectors, Gospel Readers and Proclaimers of the Word” certain words are bolded for the reader to know what words should receive more emphasis. The amount of emphasis for each of these bolded letters may receive a different degree of emphasis which again is difficult to communicate properly. Fortunately and unfortunately there is no right or wrong.

2. The best way to get the proper stress and emphasis is to be well informed about the text and pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you proclaim God’s word so it has the most effect on your audience, which means each person sitting in the pew. The lector workbook is very helpful in explaining the texts meaning, it also has tips on how to proclaim the text. These are very helpful in your preparation for proclaiming God’s Word on Sunday or any other time you are lectoring.

3. Practice exercises pages 37-39

#### K. Stage fright

1. Whether you are experienced or new at this ministry you need to deal with the number one phobia of nearly every human being – public speaking. If you do not experience this anxiety at all, chances are you do not take this ministry seriously enough or have settled for “safe” methods that render your reading too “casual,” too low-key, lifeless and ineffective.

2. Remember anxiety is the fear of not doing a good job or the fear of looking ridiculous, but the fear does provide an energetic desire to do well. Use that energy to prepare well and proclaim God’s Word with energy, not just like you are going through the motions.

3. One can control the physical evidence of stage fright by breathing deeply and slowly, becoming familiar with the liturgical environment. Practicing at the ambo with others listening helps in this process. Practice moves you to perfection and it also provides you confidence

#### L. Conclusion

1. Pray to know and understand the text

2. Prepare by reviewing the text, reading the lector workbook for that Sunday. possibly read the bible text preceding and following the text to be proclaimed

3. Practice reading the text, where you want to put emphasis, the rhythm, the pauses, the melody

4. Proclaim the readings out loud to hear yourself so you sense the emphasis, rhythm, pauses, melody, rate, loudness, etc. Maybe have a family member listen. Note it will help them prepare for the Sunday liturgy

5. Pray to be an effective lector so God’s word will be carried out by his people.

6. By following the above 5P’s when Proclaiming God’s Word, God will Provide you Peace to do an excellent job. God will say “Well done good and faithful servant.”