

**Diocese of San Bernardino
OUR LADY of HOPE PARISH**



**STUDY GUIDE
for MINISTERS of the WORD**

*Based on the General Instruction of the Roman Missal
2011*

For Internal Use Only

1. THE CALLING OF THE MINISTRY

- 1.1. The proclamation of the Word of God is truly a ministry in the Church. Lectors bring the living Word of God to the liturgical assembly. In and through them God speaks to the gathered faithful. The ministry of the Word, therefore, is treated seriously and with great dignity.
- 1.2. The Word of God is not merely read during the liturgy. It is **proclaimed**. Effective proclamation involves the delivery of the message with clarity, conviction and appropriate pace. Proclamation is a special ministry which presupposes faith and also rouses faith in those who hear the Word proclaimed.
- 1.3. Lectors are fully initiated (Baptized, First Communion, and Confirmed), practicing Catholics whose lives witness to the Word which they proclaim. In addition, they possess the human maturity expected of those called to serve in the Christian community.
- 1.4. On special occasions and for pastoral reasons, a young person who is not yet fully initiated (i.e., not yet confirmed) may serve as lector during a liturgy. Proper training for this ministry is expected.
- 1.5. All liturgical ministers, especially the ministers of the Word, must be properly trained for their ministry. The ministry of the Word requires skill in public reading, knowledge of the principles of liturgy, and an understanding and love of the scriptures. A basic knowledge of the Bible, Lectionary for Mass, and the Liturgy of the Word, as well as the necessary oral proclamation skills are additional essential requirements.
- 1.6. Normally, lectors are commissioned by their pastor for their ministry in their particular parish, preferably during a Sunday Mass.

2. PRINCIPLES FROM THE GENERAL INSTRUCTION OF THE ROMAN MISSAL (GIRM)

- 2.1. When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, **God himself speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his word, proclaims the Gospel.** Therefore, the readings from the Word of God are to be listened to reverently by everyone, for they are an element of the greatest importance in the Liturgy. Although in the readings from Sacred Scripture the Word of God is addressed to all people of whatever era and is understandable to them, a fuller understanding and a greater efficaciousness of the word is nevertheless fostered by a living commentary on the word, that is, by the Homily, as part of the liturgical action. (GIRM #29).
- 2.2. In texts that are to be pronounced in a loud and clear voice, **the voice should correspond to the genre of the text itself**, that is, depending upon whether it is a reading, a prayer, an explanatory comment, an acclamation, or a sung text; it should also be **suited to the form of celebration and to the solemnity of the gathering** (GIRM #38).
- 2.3. The Liturgy of the Word is to be **celebrated in such a way as to favor meditation**, and so **any kind of haste such as hinders recollection is clearly to be avoided.** In the course of it, **brief periods of silence** are also appropriate, accommodated to the assembled congregation; by means of these, under the action of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God may be grasped by the heart and a response through prayer may be prepared. **It may be appropriate to observe such periods of silence, for example, before the Liturgy of the Word itself begins, after the First and Second Reading, and lastly at the conclusion of the Homily** (GIRM #56).

2.4. The Biblical Readings:

2.4.1. In the readings, the **table of God's Word** is spread before the faithful, and the treasures of the Bible are opened to them. Hence, it is preferable that **the arrangement of the biblical readings be maintained**, for by them the unity of both Testaments and of salvation history is brought out. **Nor is it lawful to replace the readings and Responsorial Psalm, which contain the Word of God, with other, non-biblical texts** (GIRM #57).

2.4.2. In the celebration of the **Mass with the people**, the readings are **always read from the ambo** (GIRM #58).

2.4.3. The function of proclaiming the readings is by tradition not presidential but ministerial. Therefore **the readings are to be read by a reader, but the Gospel by the Deacon or, in his absence, by another Priest**. If, however, a Deacon or another Priest is not present, the Priest Celebrant himself should read the Gospel, and moreover, **if no other suitable reader is present, the Priest Celebrant should also proclaim the other readings as well**.

After each reading, whoever reads it pronounces the acclamation, and by means of the reply the assembled people give honor to the Word of God that they have received in faith and with gratitude (GIRM #59).

2.4.4. The reading of **the Gospel constitutes the high point of the Liturgy of the Word**. The Liturgy itself teaches the great reverence that is to be shown to this reading by setting it off from the other readings with special marks of honor, by the fact of which minister is appointed to proclaim it and by the blessing or prayer with which he prepares himself; and also by the fact

that through their acclamations the faithful acknowledge and confess that Christ is present and is speaking to them and stand as they listen to the reading; and by the mere fact of the marks of reverence that are given to the Book of the Gospels (GIRM #60).

2.5. The Responsorial Psalm (GIRM #61)

- 2.5.1. After the First Reading follows the Responsorial Psalm, which is **an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word** and which has great liturgical and pastoral importance, since it fosters meditation on the Word of God.
- 2.5.2. **The Responsorial Psalm should correspond to each reading and should usually be taken from the Lectionary.**
- 2.5.3. **It is preferable for the Responsorial Psalm to be sung**, at least as far as the people's response is concerned. Hence the psalmist, or cantor of the Psalm, sings the Psalm verses **at the ambo or another suitable place**, while the whole congregation sits and listens, normally taking part by means of the response, except when the Psalm is sung straight through, that is, without a response.
- 2.5.4. However, in order that the people may be able to sing the Psalm response more easily, texts of some responses and Psalms have been chosen for the different times of the year or for the different categories of Saints. These may be used instead of the text corresponding to the reading whenever the Psalm is sung. **If the Psalm cannot be sung, then it should be recited in a way that is particularly suited to fostering meditation on the Word of God.**

2.6. The Acclamation before the Gospel

2.6.1. After the reading that immediately precedes the Gospel, **the *Alleluia*** or another chant laid down by the rubrics **is sung**, as the liturgical time requires. An acclamation of this kind constitutes a rite or act in itself, by which the gathering of the faithful **welcomes and greets the Lord** who is about to speak to them in the Gospel and profess their faith by means of the chant. **It is sung by everybody, standing, and is led by the choir or a cantor, being repeated as the case requires. The verse, on the other hand, is sung either by the choir or by a cantor.**

2.6.1.1. **The *Alleluia* is sung in every time of year other than Lent.**

2.6.1.2. **During Lent, instead of the Alleluia, the *Verse before the Gospel* as given in the Lectionary is sung.** (GIRM #62).

2.6.2. When there is only one reading before the Gospel:

2.6.2.1. During a time of year when the *Alleluia* is prescribed, either an Alleluia Psalm or the Responsorial Psalm followed by the Alleluia with its verse may be used.

2.6.2.2. During a time of year when the *Alleluia* is not foreseen, either the Psalm and the Verse before the Gospel or the Psalm alone may be used;.

2.6.2.3. **The Alleluia or the Verse before the Gospel, if not sung, may be omitted** (GIRM #63).

2.6.3. **The Sequence** which, except on Easter Sunday and on Pentecost Day, is optional, **is sung before the Alleluia** (GIRM #64).

2.7. The Homily (GIRM #66)

- 2.7.1. The Homily should ordinarily be **given by the Priest Celebrant himself or be entrusted by him to a concelebrating Priest, or from time to time and, if appropriate, to the Deacon, but never to a lay person.** In particular cases and for a just cause, the Homily may even be given by a Bishop or a Priest who is present at the celebration but cannot concelebrate.
- 2.7.2. **On Sundays and Holydays of Obligation there is to be a Homily at every Mass that is celebrated with the people attending, and it may not be omitted without a grave reason. On other days it is recommended,** especially on the weekdays of Advent, Lent, and Easter Time, as well as on other festive days and occasions when the people come to church in greater numbers.
- 2.7.3. It is appropriate for **a brief period of silence to be observed after the Homily.**

2.8. The Universal Prayer

- 2.8.1. In the Universal Prayer or Prayer of the Faithful, the people **respond in some sense to the Word of God which they have received in faith and, exercising the office of their baptismal Priesthood, offer prayers to God for the salvation of all. It is desirable that there usually be such a form of prayer in Masses celebrated with the people,** so that petitions may be offered for holy Church, for those who govern with authority over us, for those weighed down by various needs, for all humanity, and for the salvation of the whole world (GIRM #69).

2.8.2. The series of intentions is usually to be:

2.8.2.1. For the needs of the Church;

2.8.2.2. For public authorities and the salvation of the whole world;

2.8.2.3. For those burdened by any kind of difficulty;

2.8.2.4. For the local community.

Nevertheless, in any particular celebration, such as a Confirmation, a Marriage, or at a Funeral, the series of intentions may be concerned more closely with the particular occasion. (GIRM #70).

2.8.3. It is for **the Priest Celebrant to regulate this prayer from the chair**. He himself begins it with a brief introduction, by which he calls upon the faithful to pray, and likewise he concludes it with an oration. The intentions announced should be sober, be composed with **a wise liberty and in few words**, and they should be **expressive of the prayer of the entire community** (GIRM #71).

2.8.4. They are announced **from the ambo or from another suitable place**, by the Deacon or by a cantor, a reader, or one of the lay faithful (GIRM #71).

2.8.5. **The people, for their part, stand and give expression to their prayer** either by an invocation said in common after each intention or by praying in silence. (GIRM #71).

3. THE FUNCTIONS OF THE READER FROM THE GENERAL INSTRUCTION OF THE ROMAN MISSAL (GIRM)

3.1. Introductory Rites

3.1.1. In the procession, in the absence of a Deacon, **the reader, wearing approved attire, may carry the Book of the Gospels, slightly elevated.** In that case, **the reader walks in front of the Priest** but otherwise walks along with the other ministers (GIRM #194).

3.1.2. When the people are gathered, the Priest and ministers, wearing the sacred vestments, go in procession to the altar in this order:

3.1.2.1. The thurifer carrying a smoking thurible, if incense is being used;

3.1.2.2. Ministers who carry lighted candles, and between them an acolyte or other minister with the cross;

3.1.2.3. The acolytes and the other ministers;

3.1.2.4. A reader, who may carry a Book of the Gospels (**not a Lectionary**), slightly elevated;

3.1.2.5. The Priest who is to celebrate the Mass.

If incense is being used, before the procession begins, the Priest puts some into the thurible and blesses it with the Sign of the Cross in silence (GIRM #120).

3.1.3. Upon reaching the altar, **the reader makes a profound bow** with the others. If he/she is carrying the Book of the Gospels, he **approaches the altar and places the Book of the Gospels upon it.** Then the reader **takes his/her own place in the sanctuary with the other ministers** (GIRM #195).

3.2. The Liturgy of the Word

3.2.1. After the Collect, all sit. The Priest may, very briefly, introduce the faithful to the Liturgy of the Word. Then the reader **goes to the ambo** and, from **the Lectionary already placed there before Mass**, proclaims the First Reading, to which all listen. At the end, the reader pronounces the acclamation *The word of the Lord*, and all reply, *Thanks be to God*.

Then **a few moments of silence may be observed**, if appropriate, so that all may meditate on what they have heard. (GIRM #128).

3.2.2. Then the psalmist or the reader proclaims the verses of the Psalm and the people make the response as usual (GIRM #129).

3.2.3. If there is to be a Second Reading before the Gospel, the reader proclaims it from the ambo. All listen and at the end reply to the acclamation, as noted above (3.2.1). Then, if appropriate, a few moments of silence may be observed. (GIRM #130).

3.2.4. After this, all rise, and the *Alleluia* or other chant is sung as liturgical time requires (*cf.* 2.6) (GIRM #131).

3.2.5. During the singing of the *Alleluia* or other chant, if incense is being used, the Priest puts some into the thurible and blesses it (GIRM #132).

3.2.6. If the Book of the Gospels is on the altar, the Priest then takes it and approaches the ambo, carrying the Book of the Gospels slightly elevated. He is **preceded by the lay ministers, who may carry the thurible and the candles. Those present turn towards the ambo** as a sign of special reverence for the Gospel of Christ (GIRM #133).

3.2.7. If no reader is present, the Priest himself proclaims all the readings and the Psalm, standing at the ambo (GIRM #135).

3.2.8. **The Priest, standing at the chair or at the ambo itself or, if appropriate, in another worthy place, gives the Homily.** When the Homily is over, **a period of silence may be observed** (GIRM #136).

3.2.9. The Creed is sung or recited by the Priest together with the people with everyone **standing**.

After the recitation of the Creed, the Priest, standing at the chair **with his hands joined**, by means of a brief address **calls upon the faithful to participate** in the Universal Prayer. Then the cantor, the reader, or another person announces the intentions from the ambo or from some other suitable place while facing the people. The latter take their part by replying in supplication. At the very end, the Priest, **with hands extended, concludes the petitions with a prayer** (GIRM #137).

3.2.10. In the absence of a Deacon, the reader, after the introduction by the Priest, may announce the intentions of the Universal Prayer from the ambo (GIRM #197).

3.3. **Kết Lễ**

3.3.1. After the celebration of Mass, the acolyte and other ministers return together with the Priest in procession to the sacristy, in the same manner and order in which they entered (GIRM #193).

At the conclusion of the Mass, the lector does not process with the Book of the Gospels, and the Lectionary is never carried in procession.

4. OTHER ADAPTATIONS

- 4.1.1. **Immediate preparation is also expected of all lectors.** This requires arriving at least 15 minutes before the liturgy, locating the readings in the Lectionary, arranging the microphone, making sure that the sound system is properly functioning, and attending to any other duties as required by the parish.
- 4.1.2. The lector should not ordinarily exercise another liturgical ministry during the same Mass. **Announcements and/or any commentaries during the celebration are ideally read by someone other than the lector, and not from the ambo.**
- 4.1.3. Properly there are no booklets for the assembly to follow the readings, although there may be Sunday Missals for the hearing impaired and for those whose language is different from the one used at Mass.
- 4.1.4. Ideally, **members of the assembly listen to the proclamation of the Scriptures and do not read along.** In the act of communal listening, the worshippers experience not only unity among themselves but also the presence of Christ through the Word.
- 4.1.5. In recent years sensitivity for inclusive language in the liturgy has been encouraged. It is important to note, however, that the **lector is not at liberty to change the approved scriptural and prayer texts for the liturgy.**
- 4.1.6. The Scriptures for Mass are contained in the Lectionary and the Book of Gospels. Both of these are available in permanent, dignified and beautifully bound books, with large print for ease of proclamation. They are to be treated with care and reverence.

- 4.1.7. **The readings are always proclaimed from these liturgical books, and never from a missalette or participation aid, both of which are transitory and made from throw-away materials.** This applies to the celebrations of Matrimony and funerals as well.
- 4.1.8. The ambo is a symbol of the presence of the Word of God just as the altar is a symbol of the sacrament of the Eucharist. The Liturgy of the Word takes place at the ambo, always a permanent, solemn, dignified and prominent place. Candles and other decorations may be placed around it but without obscuring the ambo.
- 4.1.9. When the Book of the Gospels is carried in procession by a lector, the lector goes immediately to the altar, without a bow, and places the Book of the Gospels flat on the altar, leaving room for the priest to venerate the altar. After the Book of the Gospels has been placed on the altar, the lector bows profoundly to the altar and then takes a place in the sanctuary.
- 4.1.10. Ministers of the Word are not to add their own words to the texts. The words of announcement **A reading from...** and conclusion **The Word of the Lord** are intended to be read exactly as in the lectionary.
- 4.1.11. The announcement of the reading and the ending need to be distinguished from the reading itself. Lectors make this distinction by observing a pause of two or three seconds after the former and before the latter phrase. Both are stated in a matter of fact tone without special emphasis.
- 4.1.12. If the Responsorial Psalm is recited, the lector begins the recitation with the antiphon in the Lectionary. No instruction is necessary. Do not announce the **Responsorial Psalm.**

- 4.1.13. Anything that might distract from the proclaimed Word or from the dignity of this ministry is to be avoided. Such distractions include: leaning on the ambo, placing hands in pockets, shuffling from one foot to the other, any excessive movement, wearing inappropriate or immodest clothing or wearing anything that draws attention to the lector.
- 4.1.14. The Lector **does not lift the Lectionary** while saying **The Word of the Lord**.
- 4.1.15. In the Dioceses of the United States of America, acolytes, altar servers, readers, and other lay ministers may wear the alb or other appropriate and dignified clothing (GIRM #339). The lector dresses in a manner that expresses the dignity associated with the role of proclaiming the Word of God. Recreational and athletic clothing are considered inappropriate. The lector should never dress or do anything to draw attention to her/himself at any time.

5. THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE LECTIONARY

5.1. The Lectionary is arranged in two cycles, one for Sundays and one for weekdays.

- 5.1.1. **The Sunday cycle is divided into three years, labeled A, B, and C.** 2021 was Year B, 2022 is Year C, Year A will begin on November 27, 2022 and continue through December 2, 2023.

In Year A, we read mostly from the Gospel of Matthew. In Year B, we read the Gospel of Mark and chapter 6 of the Gospel of John. In Year C, we read the Gospel of Luke. The Gospel of John is read during the Easter season in all three years.

The first reading, usually from the Old Testament, reflects important themes from the Gospel reading. The second reading is usually from one of the epistles, a letter written to an early church community. These letters are read semi-continuously. Each Sunday, we pick up close to where we left off the Sunday before, though some passages are never read.

5.1.2. **The weekday cycle is divided into two years, Year I and Year II.**

Year I is read in odd-numbered years (2023, 2025, etc.) and Year II is used in even-numbered years (2022, 2024, etc.). The Gospels for both years are the same.

During the year, the Gospels are read semi-continuously, beginning with Mark, then moving on to Matthew and Luke. The Gospel of John is read during the Easter season. For Advent, Christmas, and Lent, readings are chosen that are appropriate to the season.

The first reading on weekdays may be taken from the Old or the New Testament. Typically, a single book is read semi-continuously (i.e., some passages are not read) until it is finished and then a new book is started.

5.1.3. **The year of the Lectionary cycle does not change on January 1, but on the First Sunday of Advent (usually late November) which is the beginning of the liturgical year.**

5.1.4. In addition to the Sunday and weekday cycles, the Lectionary provides readings for feasts of the saints, for common celebrations such as Marian feasts, for ritual Masses (weddings, funerals, etc.), for votive Masses, and for various needs. These readings have been selected to reflect the themes of these celebrations.

5.2. Some Notes from the USCCB

- 5.2.1. **A Lectionary** is composed of the readings and the responsorial psalm assigned for each Mass of the year (Sundays, weekdays, and special occasions). The readings are divided by the day or the theme (baptism, marriage, vocations, etc.) rather than according to the books of the Bible. Introductions and conclusions have been added to each reading. **Not all of the Bible is included in the Lectionary.**

Individual readings in the Lectionary are called pericopes, from a Greek word meaning a “section” or “cutting.” Because the Mass readings are only portions of a book or chapter, introductory phrases, called incipits, are often added to begin the Lectionary reading, for example, **In those days, Jesus said to his disciples**, etc.

- 5.2.2. Since May 19, 2002, the revised Lectionary, based on **the New American Bible is the only English-language Lectionary that may be used at Mass in the dioceses of the United States**, except for the current Lectionary for Masses with Children.

No one owns the copyright on the Bible itself. Rather, the copyright is held on particular translations or editions of the Bible. The Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) owns the copyright on the New American Bible translation. Some versions of the Bible are in the public domain. The copyright allows the owner to protect the integrity of the text so that individuals may not introduce changes without permission. Royalty fees earned by licensing the text to companies who publish and sell Bibles help to provide funds for Scripture scholarship and other educational needs.