

Guidelines for Lay Readers

Principles of Oral Reading

Oral reading is an act of interpretation and a form of communication that make passages vivid and meaningful. It requires practice.

Home Preparation

- Pray with the text.
- Set aside time at home over several days to prepare the readings.
- Become familiar with the scriptural text.
- Identify the type of passage: narrative, poetry, dialogue, letter etc...
- Identify the characters.
- Study the meaning of the passage.
- What words need emphasis?
- What ideas need to be given at a slower or faster rate?
- Where are pauses needed?
- Where are changes in volume or voice needed?
- Where does the phrase move to its climax?
- Consider the tone of the passage: comforting, scolding, warning, intimate...
- Become familiar with unusual names.
- Read ideas not words.
- Possibly use available technology to practice and listen to oneself.
- Be conscious of lengthy sentences, particularly in the Pauline letters.
- Ask for feedback.

Presence and Proclamation

Voice

- Having reflected on the tone of the passage use a voice quality that dynamically illustrates the reading.
- Avoid speaking too low, too loud, in a monotonous tone or a sing-song pattern.
- Avoid dropping the voice at the end of phrases and sentences.
- Respect punctuation marks.
- Indicate, by changes in the vocal tone, the various speakers in a passage, including the narrator.
- Be conscious of consonants and use them. Diction helps propel the text forward.
- Articulate the consonants properly particularly at the end of words.
- Be aware that the acoustics of the space will affect tempo, pauses, and diction.

Posture

- Walk upright and with confidence to and from the ambo.
- Do not carry anything in your hands.
- Stand straight and comfortably.
- Hands may rest lightly on the ambo; do not grab the sides tightly.
- Do not lean on the ambo or sway back and forth.
- Facial expressions help convey the message.
- There is no need for gestures.
- Do not fidget with tie, hair etc, as it can be distracting

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Eye Contact

- Look at the assembly for a moment before beginning.
- Maintain eye contact as much as possible, particularly at the ends of paragraphs and sections.

Breathing

- Breathe regularly and from the diaphragm, not the chest.

Microphone Use

- Make sure the microphone is turned on before the liturgy.
- Inquire if your microphone is unidirectional, bi-directional or non-directional.
- Position the microphone appropriately. A voice, may become distorted if the microphone is too close or a reading may be inaudible if the microphone is too far from the speaker.
- Be aware of the acoustics of the space.

In general...

- Use only a Lectionary or Bible for proclaiming the Word. Do not use missalettes or loose pieces of paper.
- When introducing a passage do not use such phrases as, “The first reading is a reading from...”
- Proper English diction pronounces the “A” in the phrase “A reading from...” as a short “a” (uh) versus the long “a” (aey).
- Pause a few seconds at the end of a passage before declaring “The Word of the Lord.”
- The Alleluia/Gospel Acclamation and its verse are omitted if it is not sung.
- Silence is critical in order for the Word of God to take root. A period of silence follows each reading and the psalm.
- For the General Intercessions or Universal Prayer, approach the ambo after the Creed, before the priest’s introduction/invitation and do not leave until after the completion of the closing prayer and the assembly has responded “Amen.”
- If a mistake occurs, do not apologize, repeat the phrase and continue reading.
- Remain standing in place until the assembly has responded, “Thanks be to God.”

Continuing Education

- Attend training sessions geared toward improving public speaking skills.
- Participate in Scripture study to develop a better understanding of the Scriptures.
- Workbooks for lectors are available through: Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN and Liturgical Training Publications, Chicago, IL.

Before Liturgy

- Arrive at the church with plenty of time to check the Lectionary, General Intercessions, and announcements.