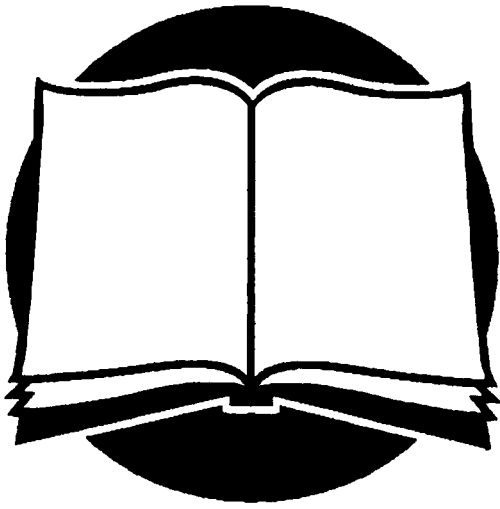




GUIDELINES  
*for*  
MINISTERS  
*of the*  
WORD

*Diocese of Lansing*

## INTRODUCTION:

The proclamation of the sacred scriptures is an essential part of each Sunday's worship. The Second Vatican Council documents clearly speak of the ways in which Christ is present in each liturgical celebration. "He (Christ) is present in his word since it is he himself who speaks when the scriptures are read in the Church." (Article 7, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy [CSL]) God's plan for salvation is revealed to all who listen when the sacred scriptures are proclaimed. In the hearing of God's Word, the Church is built up and grows.

The men and women who are entrusted with the awesome and challenging responsibility of proclaiming the scriptures to the Christian assembly assume a necessary and vital role with the Church. They become the conduit through which God speaks and are in fact the communicators of God's very self. In a world where people hunger to hear an encouraging, helpful and consoling word from each other, how fitting it is that God's living and active Word can find the fullness of love, revelation and healing. It is important, therefore, to provide some helpful guidelines for lectors to aid them in their ministry.

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*It is  
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## FORMATION AND TRAINING:

The formation and training of the lector are crucial for the celebration of quality liturgy and proclamation. It is the responsibility of the pastor/pastoral coordinator and the parish community to see that each person who proclaims the readings is adequately prepared in an understanding of 1) liturgy, 2) basic knowledge of scripture, 3) ministry and 4) the Lectionary cycle and liturgical year.

Time is a necessary aspect to consider. The adequate preparation of the lector cannot be accomplished in one session and will require a commitment of time, prayer, study, reflection and practice.

To prepare lectors responsibly, the following four topics are recommended as essential parts in their formation. We recommend that these topics be treated in two or more evenings and blended as seen fit.

### Topic One: The Lector and the Liturgy

Basic to a deeper understanding of the Vatican directive of "full, active and conscious participation" (#14, CSL) is an understanding of LITURGY. This understanding is basic to those who prepare to assume responsibility in liturgical celebrations. Two essential components of Topic One are a theological development of worship and the human person's need to express this worship through sacrament. In addition, a discussion on public prayer and the use of symbol, as well as a delineation of the qualities which make up good liturgy are important. This topic would also include a basic outline of THE MASS and its parts.

### Topic Two: The Lector and the Word

Some biblical knowledge of the scriptures is essential for the lector who is making a serious commitment to proclaim the Word in the assembly. The bible and lectionary are basic tools to develop this understanding. The lector needs to be familiar with the format of both books and the various literary forms found therein; e.g., poetry, story, letter. A development of the principal themes of the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament, e.g. revelation, covenant, pascal mystery, will also be helpful.

Participation in Bible study groups and attendance at a Scripture session is encouraged. An understanding of the shape of the liturgical year, its cycles, seasons and feasts, is basic and essential to this ministry.

### **Topic Three: The Lector and Ministry**

By reason of our baptism each person enjoys both the privilege and the responsibility of ministry in the church. As one who proclaims the Word in the Christian assembly, the lector assumes the demanding task which will entail a personal time commitment for study and prayerful preparation. It will be essential for those in formation to be familiar with the rituals of the Mass as well as other liturgical services, and to develop a reverence and skill for liturgical presence within themselves and towards the sacred books they will be handling.

### **Topic Four: The Lector and Proclamation**

Every lector must have the oral and technical skills necessary to proclaim the Word. This competency extends far beyond the ability to read words correctly and includes posture, use of microphone, projection, tone, pitch, volume, accent, gesture, pace, eye contact, phrasing, pronunciation and articulation. A careful balance must be maintained among all of these so the assembly does not feel they are spectators at a dramatization but active hearers in a living proclamation. This requires continual practice, review and critique. Practice sessions with video taping and honest feedback are extremely helpful.

### **SPECIFIC NORMS FOR LECTORS:**

1. Scheduling is a necessary part in preparation for each Sunday. Whoever has this responsibility must see that lectors received their assignments well in advance of the time.
2. Preparation of the readings is done well in advance of the performance of the ministry. Unprepared lectors do a great disservice to the Christian community which has the right to hear the Word of God proclaimed well at every liturgy.
3. The normal attire is "lay clothing."

4. Seating for the lector varies from parish to parish. There is much merit to having the lector come forth from the assembly to proclaim. However, pastoral custom may be such that lectors sit in an appointed place close to the sanctuary. What must be kept in mind is that the lector must clearly be seen as a member of the assembled community.

### **REQUIREMENTS:**

Candidates who desire to pursue the ministry of lector need to be persons of mature faith, good Christian witness and sacramentally active in the life of their church. They must exhibit the willingness to enter initial and on-going formation periods, to study, be critiqued, and to develop their special skills continually during their years in the ministry.

The determination of who can serve as a lector is both the responsibility of the person seeking to pursue this ministry, those involved in the formation and training of the person, and pastors/pastoral coordinators. Those who willingly enter the formation period must understand that discernment is an essential and necessary part for final admission to this ministry.

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Once the formation and training is completed and the discernment process has been mutually confirmed, the person is appointed as a parish lector. He/she is commissioned for two years. This term is renewable with the provision that on-going formation and discernment is provided.

Usually the lector is commissioned at a public liturgical celebration for his/her own parish community. However, when the need arises and with the consent of the pastor this designation may be transferred to another parish and/or location.

## **RESOURCES:**

The following resources can be helpful in formation training. They are available at the Diocesan Office of Worship — (517) 323-9011.

### **Videos:**

*Making Sunday Worship Work*, Franciscan Communications  
*Training the Parish Lector*, The Liturgical Press

### **Books:**

*A Well-Trained Tongue*, LTP  
*Guidelines for Lectors*, LTP  
*Manual for Lectors*, Pflaum Publishing - Judith Tate  
*Messengers of God's Word, A Handbook for Lectors*, Paulist Press - Joseph M. Champlin  
*The Ministry of Lectors*, Liturgical Press - James A. Wallace, C.Ss.R.  
*This is the Word of the Lord*, Franciscan Communications  
*Workbook for Lectors and Gospel Readers*, LTP

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