



## Guidelines for Lectors/Readers in the Diocese of Boise

**Introduction:** What is a lector? In the context of the Catholic liturgy, “lector” has become the common term to refer to someone who has been trained and commissioned to proclaim the readings at parish Masses or other public liturgies or prayer services. However, a lector is *properly* a “stop” along the path to ordination, either to the diaconate or the priesthood. (Seminarians or those in formation to become deacons must be installed as lectors and acolytes, in official rites, before they are ordained.) In some parishes, members of the faithful who read at Mass are also sometimes referred to, simply, as “readers,” which helps maintain the distinction between the two categories. Both lector and reader are ministries for the laity. Since the word “lector” has commonly come to mean “someone who reads at Mass,” we’ll refer to that ministry as “lector” in these guidelines. These guidelines reflect both official church documents on the subject, as well as the diocesan bishop’s requirements for the ministry.



### Who May Serve as a Lector in the Diocese of Boise?

- Lectors must be practicing Catholics; “on exceptional occasions and for a just cause,” members from another religious tradition may read at Catholic liturgies (for example, at weddings or funerals). Technically, the Bishop of the diocese should be applied to for this permission.
- They must model a Catholic Christian way of life; and
- If they are married, they must be in a marriage that is valid according to the Catholic Church.

## How Do I Become Lector in the Diocese of Boise?

If you are interested in serving as a lector, you may approach the priest of your parish, or the minister in charge of the ministry of lectors, and volunteer to be part of this ministry. As well, you may *be* approached by your priest or another minister. Once you have prayerfully discerned that this is a role for you, you will undergo a training at your parish. Your training should cover the theology this ministry, as well as some basics regarding effective proclaiming; and it should give you a clear understanding of the practical process involved when serving in this role at Mass.



## What Does a Lector Do (and *Not* Do) at Mass?

The primary job of a lector is to proclaim the readings clearly, simply, and reverently. While there are many differences in how each parish may train their lectors, there are some basics that should be common to all:

- Before the lector even gets to Mass, he or she must prepare. Preparation should be spiritual and practical. That is, lectors should know ahead of Mass what they will be reading, and have a basic understanding of the text, as well as knowledge of how to pronounce all the words. (It's very difficult to say "*lema sabachthani*" under the best of circumstances, and distracting to the assembly to hear readers struggle with unfamiliar names and words.) Lectors should practice the text aloud, with a kind but critical listener, if possible. Lectors should arrive to Mass early enough to reassure the priest that they are there, and see that the Lectionary is properly marked.
- Lectors may be asked to process in with the rest of the ministers at the beginning of Mass. This is not a necessity; just something that some parishes do. If lectors do process in, they follow the cross bearer (and candle bearers, if there are any), and precede the deacon who is carrying the Gospel. Some parishes set aside particular seats for their lectors; others allow them to be seated anywhere in the assembly. Either way, lectors should be in a place that makes it easy for them to get to the ambo at the appropriate time.

- It's important for the lector to be a fully participating member of the liturgy during Mass. After all, lectors are first baptized members of the assembly. They should sing and respond with all the faithful at the appropriate parts of Mass; they should stand, sit, kneel and observe all postures and gestures along with all the faithful. It's important for lectors, and all liturgical ministers, to represent the postures and gestures as directed by the appropriate liturgical documents and by the bishop of this diocese. (For example, the posture to receive communion in the United States is standing; while a communicant may kneel to receive, a minister in the liturgy should stand; they should at all times model what the documents and the bishop determined will be the standard.)
- The lector who proclaims the first reading will approach the sanctuary after the collect (opening prayer).
- She or he should bow when they pass in front of the altar, then proceed to the ambo.
- When reading the scripture aloud for the assembly, lectors should keep the words from the Lectionary in mind: "The Word of God is not merely read during the liturgy. It is proclaimed, yet not with theatrical show. Effective proclamation involves the delivery of the message with clarity, conviction and appropriate pace. It demands the ability to evoke faith in others by demonstrating one's own faith."
- Posture, dress, voice—all should reflect an attentiveness and respect to both the word being proclaimed and to the gathered assembly. Lectors should strive for dignity and reverence as they read.
- If there is a second reading, the lector may proclaim that reading as well, after the responsorial psalm. In this case, the lector may step back from the ambo for the psalm, and then return to the ambo after the psalm is finished. If there is a different lector for the second reading, the first lector may either return to their seat or step back from the ambo and return after the second reading—whatever is the practice at their parish. Again, lectors bow when passing in front of the altar as they depart the sanctuary.



## Related Questions:

- **Should a Lector change the wording of the text to make it more inclusive?** Recently it's been acknowledged that non-inclusive wording may be a stumbling block to members of the assembly when listening to the Word. However, the lector is not at liberty to change the approved texts for the liturgy.
- **There's no deacon. May a Lector carry the Book of Gospels in the entrance procession?** In a Mass without a Deacon, the lector may take part in the entrance procession by carrying the Book of Gospels. He or she makes a bow upon reaching the altar and places the Book of Gospels upon the altar.
- **There's no deacon. May a Lector proclaim the Gospel reading?** No. If a deacon is not present during Mass, the priest himself proclaims the Gospel.
- **There's no deacon. May a Lector pronounce the petitions of the Universal Prayer?** Yes, a lector may read these prayers.
- **Can a Lector carry in the Lectionary?** The Lectionary is not carried in procession, but is resting on or near the ambo at the beginning of Mass.
- **Do Lectors say "first reading" or "second reading?"** No, Lectors should simply read out loud the words in the Lectionary; for example, "A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah." Lectors (and for that matter, priests and deacons) should never add words to the approved texts for Mass.

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