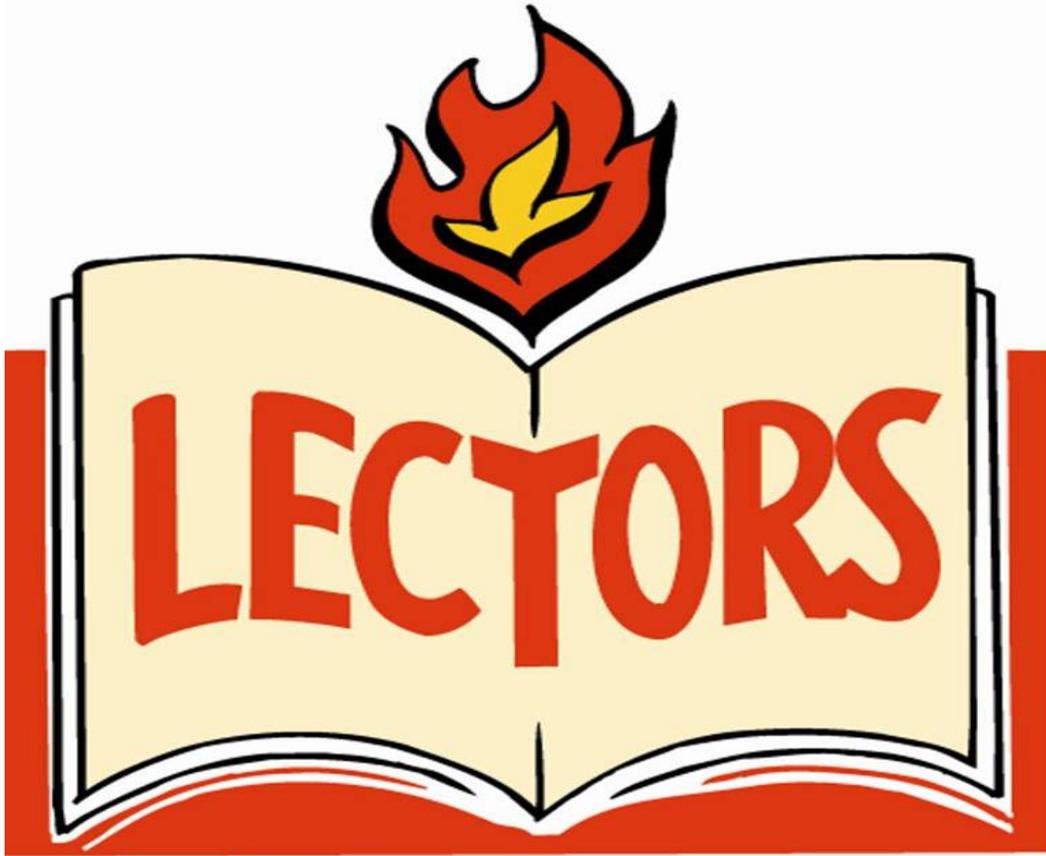


Lector Handbook



Immaculate Conception Church

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I.C.C. Website: www.iccgregory.org

I.C.C. Lectors webpage: www.iccgregory.org/ministries

Guidelines for Immaculate Conception Lectors

Introduction

Ministry of the Lector

Scripture itself tells us that God's word is "living and active." His word is not primarily a written text that is fixed and codified, but a Word spoken and proclaimed in the midst of a community of faith. His word brings forth creation whenever it is spoken anew, it recreates. It is by his Word that Israel was brought into being and continually challenged to renew its faithfulness to Him, and it is by His Word that the Church was called into being and constantly challenged to renew and reform itself.

LECTOR QUALIFICATIONS

- 1. Must have received the sacrament of Confirmation.** At Immaculate Conception, there is no definitive age, since maturity and talent is based on the individual, but lectors must have received the sacrament of Confirmation.
- 2. Have Basic Public Speaking Abilities.** The mere wish or willingness to serve as Lector does not qualify one for the ministry. Basic abilities are required but it is not necessary that the Lector be highly gifted in communication techniques. What is important is that the Lector has the charisma for the building up of the community. It also requires an adequate vocal instrument, self confidence, maturity, poise and sensitivity to the diversity of one's audience, and a love of Scripture as part of the requirement.
- 3. Be an active parishioner.** This would involve many things. The minimum would be that you Church: you must attend Mass frequently and not only be seen when you are scheduled to read.
- 4. Be In Good Faith Standing.** Men and women who take on the ministry of Lector are presumed to be of good faith, eager to serve their fellow Christians and willing to engage in ongoing formation into effective service There should be no ecclesial impediments to your ability to serve (i.e.: being in an irregular marriage, living together without benefit of marriage, not having been baptized and confirmed in the Catholic faith and so on).
- 5. Have a willingness to rotate mass assignments and Cover Your assignments.** As with any ministry, it involves personal sacrifice. Immaculate Conception scheduling of lectors accommodates such needs as work, vacations or medical personnel on-call schedules, and other commitments when the lector advises the lector coordinator in advance of each quarterly schedule. Individual desires such as to not be assigned to a particular mass (such as "please don't assign me to the Sunday 5:00pm Mass", or similar) may not always be able to be accommodated; Fairness to all lectors is important. However, lectors can always trade their assignments with other lectors. It is understood that unforeseen last minute needs do arise and therefore every lector is asked to be open to receiving requests for schedule changes from fellow lectors. When a schedule is disseminated, if a lector is assigned to a mass that they seek to revise, the lector must contact (telephone, e-mail) all other lectors to find a lector to switch assignments with. The assigned lector remains responsible for being sure their assignment is covered

YOUR PART: The ministry of Lector is an important role and an awesome task. Your external attitudes” and “appearances” are noted by the worshipping community. As a Lector you bring the printed Word to life; making it flesh. You give voice to God’s healing and strengthening Word as it goes out to the people. It is important, therefore that you be at one with the parish priests as an active builder of unity within the parish.

1. **Commitment / Assignment Schedules.** Assignments are scheduled in advance. There are four quarterly assignments plus two special holiday assignments which are published (one for the Christmas/New Years, and one for Palm Sunday/Holy Week/ Easter Sunday). The publication schedule is established at the start of each new calendar year. This allows lectors to submit any special work/ school/ sports or vacation needs esp. during these holiday periods by each cut-off date. The Lector Coordinator will attempt to accommodate such special needs and Lectors can always switch/trade assignments with other lectors. Each lector remains responsible for covering their assignment.

Exception: The **ONLY** situation for not fulfilling your obligation would be an unexpected last minute illness or true emergency. In such cases, you are asked to contact the second lector assigned to your mass, so they are prepared to do all readings at that mass.

Schedules:

December – February

March – May

June – August

September – November

We rely on you making the effort to get coverage whenever possible, and routine follow-ups are needed on missed assignments. Don't worry-You'll always be forgiven (practice what we preach)! Kindly just let the Lector Coordinator know after-the-fact (so the coordinator doesn't need to track down who missed the assignment).

2. **Dress Code: Dress Appropriately-** People do talk.. *The key is to become “transparent” so that the Word itself, not the reader, is placed in the foreground.*” Granted no one will see what you are wearing during mass as you will be wearing an alb but please dress in your Sunday best and be respectful of the fact that you are serving the Lord. Women please do not wear excessive amounts of make-up or jewelry: the make-up can stain the alb and is often times difficult to remove , jewelry should be modest and not distracting.

The ONLY Exception is if you are at a Mass and there is no lector, and you volunteer at the last minute to fill in. You can be less concerned about how you are dressed; your offer to help will normally be welcomed. However, if you're wearing a Led Zeppelin T-Shirt or it looks like you're on the way to/from the beach, you will be better off not volunteering. The General Rule of Thumb - If you are dressed neatly, better for you to offer to volunteer.

3. LECTOR PREPARATION: Even the most well experienced lectors need to prepare!

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION: Lectors should be encouraged to ground their lives in the Word of God. They are encouraged to read the scriptures often. Prayer based on the Gospels and psalms will help lectors to become more aware of their spiritual responsibility to live what they proclaim and to prepare seriously for reading God's word to his people.

TEXT PREPARATION: All lectors should “**study**” the texts during the week before they are assigned to read. Studying does not refer to intellectual examination and analysis only. Rather it means reading over the texts and praying with them to understand their meaning in the context of faith. Lectors can obtain a Lector Workbook from the Love Note Inc. in Corpus Christi in English or Spanish (starts with the 1st Sunday of Advent, and ends with the Feast of Christ the King). The Lector Workbook is an excellent tool for preparation. Lectors should make good use of the workbook as part of their preparation. If you are unable to purchase one of these books you can visit Lectors proclaim website online to find the readings in text and audio.

• Reading background is available on-line at <http://lectorsproclaim.org/>

Lectors can take home a copy of the Missalette; extra copies are usually available in the sacristy. Some masses will have multiple options for readings. The Celebrant chooses which readings are to be read. A lector will not know which reading(s) will be read, so needs to be prepared for all of the optional readings. Arrive early to the sacristy on such days and ask the Celebrant in the sacristy before mass which reading is desired. The Missalette often helps in determining the ‘most likely’ reading(s) that a Celebrant will choose. Where an option for Long or Short versions are available, always prepare for the long version. Some Celebrants might ask which reading YOU prefer, and allow you to read the one you desire. However, you need to be prepared for, and open to, whatever determination the Celebrant makes.

PRINCIPLES OF PROCLAMATION: The art of proclaiming Scriptures differs from speech-making and theatrics. Even though the vocal techniques may be fundamentally the same, their use and expression differ greatly. For in proclamation the text must be primary. The lector is only a messenger of the word of God. He or she does not simply read stories, but rather proclaims the mystery of salvation. Contact with the assembly—contact is achieved not simply by words, but especially through one's manner of speaking. This in turn is realized through physical attitude, inflection and a sense of dialogue with one's listeners. Make your proclamation a prayer. As you gain more confidence with experience, **make eye contact with the congregation.** Keeping one thumb on the lectionary margin as you read helps prevent you losing your place when raising your eyes. Having the microphone adjusted to your mouth level is important; it's OK to adjust the mic as you speak if you realize your projection is weak. Expression—All communication expresses subjectivity (emotion, sentiments, etc). In the liturgy we must distinguish between individual expression and symbolic representation of a situation. While the lector should become invisible to the Word, some individual expression is necessary to make the proclamation come alive. **This expression should never take precedence over the Word;** it's not a theatrical performance. Proclaiming the Scriptures at the liturgy is a symbolic act and we must remember that it is Christ who is present in His word.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED TECHNIQUES; Preparing for the Text Itself:

1. Make sure you know the meaning of what you read:

- Look up unfamiliar words in the dictionary.
- if you have a word that is difficult to pronounce you can always look it up via google and find pronunciation
- The lector workbook frequently gives specific difficult word pronunciation, and .

- You'll occasionally find words with more than one acceptable pronunciation.
- 2. Key words—each phrase is dominated by a key word whose emphasis carries the primary meaning of the phrase. The workbook prints these key words in italics. These words should be emphasized vocally through pitch, pause, duration or the sound of the word.
- 3. Examine the phrasing. The readings are written in sense lines which are an aide to good proclamation and stay in a comfortable rhythm.
- 4. Rhythm—Each selection and each part of the selection has its own rate and rhythm. Be careful to note these differences in the selection and be ready to speak them accordingly—Avoid being “sing-songy.”
- 5. Painting verbal “pictures” - be conscious that words put together can provide us with ideas and images. When you prepare a reading, form physical details of the situation in your mind and in your heart. This will make the event you are reading more believable to you. And the more believable it is to you, the more you know it through feeling and love—the more believable and loveable it will be to the assembly.

Preparing Yourself:

1. Learn to **breathe from your diaphragm for greater control and volume.**
2. Use **punctuation marks as natural points to pause and/or take a breath.**
3. Learn to articulate all the sounds in each word you speak, so that you can **project your voice.**
4. Learn to **control the rate of your speech (pace).** Beginners often read much too fast. Speak slowly enough for clarity without being too slow (becomes boring if too slow).
5. **Body language** communicates many things without us saying a word. Practice reading in a mirror. a. Good posture is necessary. Don't Slouch; Stand straight. Stand with reverence and concentration, not leaning over the Ambo or the Lectionary.
 - b. Muscles need to be relaxed, without any tense-up in your upper body.
 - c. Feet should be firmly “planted” and slightly apart. Put all tension in your feet if you are nervous, but avoid nervous shaking of your foot (many congregants can see your feet; It's distracting).

www.lectorprep.org has a good summary of reading background, pronunciation and proclamation tips that you can use instead of, or addition to, your Lector Workbook. It increases your confidence and in turn help you proclaim better – with confidence and more effectively.

GENERAL LITURGICAL GUIDELINES

1. **General Reading Duties.** The lector is a liturgical minister of the Mass and other sacraments whose functions are:

-to proclaim the scripture readings (except the Gospel)

-to announce the intentions of the Universal Prayer (when a Deacon is not present)

-to read the Responsorial Psalm at Masses without Music (When a Cantor is present, it is sung by the Cantor).

2. **Arrive Early.** Arrive 10-15 minutes before mass. The Lector book and an exact copy of the Lectionary are on the sacristy table. Check the readings in the Lectionary on the Ambo to be sure they are opened to the assigned reading of that Sunday. Place a ribbon bookmark on the page(s).

3. **Cell Phones/ Beepers.** Turn them OFF before the start of the mass. Never answer a cell phone call or text while you are serving. If you carry a beeper, put it in vibrate mode and if it should activate during mass, wait until the end of the mass to return the call. Better yet, leave them on the sacristy table until Mass is over.

4. **Adjusting the Microphone.** When you approach the microphone, make sure it is adjusted to be at the level of your mouth while reading. You should not have to bend forward, bend down, or stretch upwards to the microphone during your readings. Adjust the microphone before you start reading and do so from the STEM (the bendable rod below the head of the microphone); NOT from the head of the microphone itself. Never touch or tap the head of the microphone. Touching the head itself can too easily damage the unit as it is extremely sensitive and expensive equipment. The lighted microphone switch is on the wall next to the sacristy door; when its lighted, the mic's are ON..

5. **Lector Binder: Universal Prayers** (aka Prayer of the Faithful, or General Intercessions) are found in the lector book on the sacristy table when you arrive. Review the Intercessions before the Mass. Check with the Celebrant if any name appears difficult to pronounce. We try to include phonetic pronunciations, but sometimes it simply is not available and you need to do your best guess. The last intercession 'for whom this Mass is offered' is important. Each Mass has a different name(s). Parishioners sign up way in advance for specific Masses in remembrance of loved ones, and family members often travel from out of town for that specific Mass. If a lector reads the wrong names, as you might image, those family members will be upset.

Exception for Deacons: When a Deacon serving at your Mass, the Deacon will read the Universal Prayer. The deacon typically has a separate book for this purpose

6. **Lector 1 vs. Lector 2 Assignments.** In cases such as Christmas, Easter Vigil, Palm Sunday, Pentecost or Special Masses 2 readers may be assigned usually because the length of readings or the addition of a Sequence (Easter, Pentecost & Feast of Corpus Christi)

Lector #1 reads the First Reading and the Prayer of the Faithful/ Gen Intercessions (Deacon, if serving, reads the Intercessions); Lector #2 reads the Psalm (if choir isn't singing it) Second Reading and sequence. Confirm with the other lector assigned to make sure you both know which readings you are doing. If a lector does not show (for any unforeseen circumstance), be prepared to do both readings. It's also acceptable for the two lectors decide amongst each other before the start of the mass to change roles, such as when lector#2 may prefer to do the Universal Prayers because someone close to them is being prayed for.

7. **Processional:** In the entrance procession (with a 2 -3 pew spacing in between so as to not run into anyone.)

- a. Altar servers lead.
- b. Extra Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion follow after the Altar Servers, walking side by side.
- c. Lectors (carrying the Book of Gospels, if no Deacon present)
- d. A Deacon (if any) and then the Celebrant(s).

- The altar servers walk up the aisle to the bottom of the Altar steps then turn right or left and walk around the sanctuary to their respective chairs.
- Eucharistic ministers bow together at the last pew and turn left into their pew
- Lector(s) bow together at bottom of Altar step, then walk up the altar steps and place the Book of Gospels on the Altar and then back down to their seat (right side of the pew closest to the center aisle)

a. **1st Reading:** The lector begins with “**A Reading from the Book...**” After the celebrant says the Opening Prayer, and the congregation begins to sit, Lector #1 walks from the ministers pew to the center of the Altar, bows to the Altar table, then walks to the Ambo. Wait until the assembly is seated/ settled down, ready to hear God’s Word. No additional introduction is permissible. **Do not** read the brief one line summary that is printed in red ink on the lectionary book for that passage. Begin with the standard “*A Reading from the...*”. At the end, **PAUSE (count to 5)** before saying “*The Word of the Lord*” After your reading.

Exception: Sun Family Mass (9am), On most Sundays (as often as possible), a Childrens’ Liturgy is given in the chapel. The celebrant will call the children to assemble. While the children are walking to the Chapel, the lector proceeds to the Ambo, but **wait at the Ambo until all children have exited to the Chapel** before starting the 1st reading.

b. **Responsorial Psalm:** Most Sunday Masses, this is sung by the Choir. If the psalm is not sung (the choir should let whoever is reading know ahead of time) the lector should pause (count to 5) before starting the Psalm. The lector **begins the psalm by simply reciting the antiphon**. **DO NOT** say “The Responsorial Psalm is...” or any other words.

c. **2nd Reading: Do NOT say** “The second reading is from...” all that is needed is for you to say **A Reading from.....**”
At the end, **PAUSE (count to 5)** before saying “*The Word of the Lord*” After your reading, proceed directly from the Ambo to the lector chair (bowing to the altar).

The pauses are necessary in order for the congregation to be able to absorb what has just been read, before beginning the next scripture. At Masses with music the changing of lectors and cantors provide a ‘natural pause’ for the congregation to absorb and reflect. When there is no music, these intentional additional pauses are needed.

11. **The Universal Prayer (sometimes called “Prayer of the Faithful” or “General Intercessions”:** While the congregation recites the Profession of Faith (the Nicene or Apostle’s Creed), lector #1 should proceed directly to the Ambo when the words “*I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.*” Are recited. After the Celebrant reads the opening prayer, Read the Intercessions from the Lector Book. **Remain in the Ambo until the Celebrant finishes the Concluding Prayer.** Return directly to your seat bowing,

Exception: If a Deacon is serving, then the deacon will read the Universal Prayer following the above protocol. Lector remain seated.

CATECHETICAL BACKGROUND

Scripture itself tells us that God’s word is “living and active.” His Word is not primarily a written text but a Word spoken and proclaimed in the midst of a community of faith. His Word brings forth creation and whenever it is spoken anew it recreates. It is by His Word that Israel was brought into being and continually called to renew its faithfulness to Him; it is by His Word that the Church was called into being and constantly challenged to renew and reform itself.

God’s Word, therefore, is a Word with a power beyond all other words. He speaks this Word to reveal Himself to us but also to reveal to us our own deepest nature. It is this Word which tells us that we are His people, that our destiny is intrinsically interwoven with His life. And, more than this, it is by this Word that He makes Himself present to us. For this reason, the Church has never known a sacramental celebration apart from the proclamation of God’s Word. Indeed such a celebration could not be a sacrament. God establishes his presence by his Word and the power of that presence once again calls a community into being to receive God’s work and to graciously respond.

The real presence of another speaking to us demands a response. And so too, the Word of God. He calls us by this Word so that we can live by this Word. As we understand the Word more and more deeply, we come to recognize that we must change—thus, the fruit of God’s Word truly heard and attended to always produced renewal, a renewal that has at its heart a recognition of our origins as his people.

God has spoken his definitive Word to us in Jesus Christ. It is He who is the living and effective Word of God in the worshipping community. The ultimate purpose, therefore, of celebrating God’s Word is not to read biblical texts but to **encounter Jesus** in a manner that elicits from us a unified response of living fidelity. Our celebration of the Word in the Eucharistic celebration is above all else a celebration of the presence of Jesus.

A sacramental celebration of the Word of God is never mere reading of texts. It is the public proclamation in the midst of the assembled faithful of who God is, where God can be found and how God works through us. It is a sacramental event. When the Word is truly proclaimed and heard—things happen. It becomes the experience of the power and presence of the living God in this community, here and now. It is the discovery that the great works of God are not simply history but are enacted anew in our own community as we gather to worship.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD: STRUCTURE AND NATURE

The Mass has two parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Readings from scripture and the chants between the readings form the main part of the Liturgy of the Word. The homily, profession of faith, and general intercessions or Prayer of the Faithful develop and complete it. In the readings, explained by the homily, God speaks to his people of redemption and salvation and nourishes their spirit; Christ is present among the faithful through His Word. Through the chants the people make God’s word their own and express their adherence to it through the profession of faith. Finally, moved by this onward, they pray in the general intercessions for the needs of the Church and for the world’s salvation (*General Introduction to the Roman Missal*, 33). *Outline:*

First Reading - A proclamation from the Hebrew scriptures (or Acts during the Easter season), that ends with “The Word of the Lord.”

Congregation responds—“Thanks be to God.”

Responsorial Hymn— taken from the Psalms -sung or recited

Congregation responds—singing or reciting the refrain—the refrain picks out an important aspect of the liturgy of the day or season.

Second reading—a proclamation from the New Testament (Acts of the Apostles, Paul or other Epistles), ending with “The Word of the Lord.”

Congregation responds—“Thanks be to God.”

Gospel Acclamation: According to the season of the year, the Gospel is preceded by the Alleluia or other chant (during Lent). Its purpose is to solemnize the proclamation of the Gospel and prepare for it. It should always be sung and is usually omitted when not sung.

Gospel Reading—A proclamation taken from one of the four gospels—central part of the Liturgy of the Word—by standing for the acclamation and gospel text, all show their reverence, the people recognize and acknowledge that Christ is present and speaking to them.

Homily— integral part of the liturgy—given on Sundays and on all Holydays of Obligation; recommended on weekdays whenever possible because it is a necessary source of nourishment of the Christian life because it is the living interpretation of God’s Word for today and encourages members of the community to praise God and ask his help in this Eucharist, living during the week what they celebrate on Sunday.

Profession of Faith—Nicene or Apostle’s Creed—the community responds and assents to the Word of God which it has heard proclaimed and interpreted; it also calls to mind the essential teaching of the Church before the celebration of the Eucharist

Universal Prayer (aka General Intercessions—Prayers of the Faithful): in this prayer the people exercise their priestly function by interceding for all people. The Celebrant opens/leads the invitation to prayer. The lector reads the petitions, and then the Celebrant concludes with a prayer to the Father. The Liturgy of the Eucharist then begins with the procession of gifts at the Offertory.

TERMS USED

LECTIONARY— The liturgical book containing the biblical texts used in the Eucharist and Sacraments. The Lectionary is published in four volumes.

VOLUME I—Contains the Sunday readings arranged according to the liturgical year from Advent to the Solemnity of Christ the King, in three cycles, A,B,C. Cycle A focuses on the Gospel of Matthew; Cycle B on Mark and Cycle C on Luke. The Gospel of John is read on the last three Sundays' of Lent, the Sundays of Easter, and from the 17th to the 21st Sundays of Ordinary time in Cycle B and on other important solemnities of the Church year.

VOLUME II— Year I—Weekday readings arranged according to the liturgical year - Includes readings for COMMONS or readings for celebrations of Mary and the saints.

VOLUME III—Year II—Weekday readings arranged according to the liturgical year - Includes COMMONS for celebrations of Mary and the saints.

VOLUME IV— RITUAL MASSES— readings for various rituals (weddings, baptisms, confirmation, funerals, etc) or for various occasions: for the Church, for civil needs, for various public needs, for particular needs.

AMBO: or pulpit is the place from which the Word of God is proclaimed and explained. Lector and priest should use it for all scripture readings, including the psalm whether recited or sung, and the Prayer of the Faithful.

LECTOR BOOK: A special binder that is used to hold the Prayer of the Faithful and Announcements.

PRESIDER BOOK: A special binder that is used by the Celebrant and contains the Penitential Rite and other prayers, the Prayers of the Faithful and Announcements.