

CATHOLIC PARISH OF FORSTER TUNCURRY



HANDBOOK FOR READERS

FROM THE PARISH PRIEST

Thank you for accepting the responsibility of proclaiming the Word of God during our community's celebration of the Lord's Day.

The ministry of reader is a privileged and responsible one. To those who exercise this ministry belongs the privilege of proclaiming the Word of God in and to the community assembled to worship God.

The reader is

to proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture, with the exception of the Gospel. He may also announce the intentions for the Universal Prayer and, in the absence of a psalmist, recite the Psalm between the readings.

In the celebration of the Eucharist, the lector has his own proper function, which he himself must carry out.

(General Instruction to the Roman Missal, 99)

This is therefore not a ministry to be undertaken lightly. It requires preparation, dedication, and a commitment to deepen your understanding of the Scriptures so that when you proclaim them in the assembly, you are aware that in this action "God himself speaks to his people" (*GIRM*, 29).

The purpose of this Handbook is to facilitate reflection on your ministry and its place in the celebration of our Sunday liturgies. I commend it to your reading and study.

Again, on behalf of the worshipping community, thank you for accepting responsibility of the Ministry of Reader.

Fr Andrew Doohan

February 2014.

E. Rostering Arrangements

New rosters will be prepared every two months. They will generally be available two weeks before the current roster finishes.

If you know you are going to be away at a particular time of the year, please let the Parish Office know as early as possible so that this can be recorded on our rostering system.

If sufficient notice prior to the production of each new roster is given our rostering system can take this into account and omit your name for the period of your absence.

Once a roster has been issued, if you need to be away during the period of that roster, we would ask you to make arrangements for a 'swap' with another reader. Each new roster will contain the contact details for your fellow readers to facilitate this.

ministry within and on behalf of the assembly, and your ministry commences as soon as you move from your seat.

After leaving your seat, move forward towards the sanctuary, and make a reverence **to the altar** (since the altar is the focus of our liturgy; qv *GIRM*, 296) before moving to the ambo to fulfil your task.

Please note: There is no need to move to a place in front of the altar in order to do this; simply move from your seat by the most direct route, and reverence the altar before moving into the sanctuary.

It is not necessary to acknowledge the presider nor the tabernacle. The only exception to this is when the local Bishop is presiding, when it is customary after reverencing the altar to acknowledge the Bishop in his role as the chief teacher of the faith within the diocese.

The ordinary form of reverencing the altar is to bow. This is **not** a simple nod of the head, but rather a distinct bow of the head and shoulders.

There is no need to remain in the sanctuary of the church after you have completed your ministerial task. After you have finished proclaiming your reading you can immediately move back to your seat, again moving deliberately (see above). If you leave the sanctuary of the church as you return to your seat, it is customary to again reverence the altar as you return to your seat (see above).

C. Immediate Preparations Before Mass

It is advisable for **Reader A** to arrive at Mass early enough to check with the musicians as to what parts of the Responsorial Psalm is being sung. This will enable **Reader A** to determine their role (if any) in the proclamation of the Responsorial Psalm.

It is advisable for **Reader B** to arrive at Mass early enough to read over the intentions of the Universal Prayer so they are comfortable with them when it comes time for them to be announced during the liturgy. A copy of these intentions will be available from the sacristy of the church.

D. Moving the Lectionary

If the Book of the Gospels is being used, **Reader B** is asked to remove the Lectionary from the ambo at the end of the Second Reading. The book can be placed either on the shelf under the ambo or elsewhere in the sanctuary so that the Book of the Gospels can be placed easily on the ambo.

PROCLAIMING THE WORD OF GOD

Proclaiming the Word of God in the liturgical assembly is **NOT** the same as reading the Scriptures privately or as reading anything else in any other setting.

This is for two reasons.

Firstly, the Scriptures are not any ordinary text. They are the Word of God, part of God's revelation to his people. Secondly, 'proclamation' is significantly different from reading, and requires a different set of skills.

In general, proclamation requires

- a slower pace than private reading;
- the insertion of very brief pauses into the text to highlight significant parts;
- the use of a different tone of voice – generally higher – than in other circumstances;
- the use of variations in tone and speed; and
- clear diction and pronunciation.

Effective proclamation of the Scriptures also requires both an understanding of what is being proclaimed, and the meaning behind what is being proclaimed. It is not something that can be done without preparation and study, both of which is more than simply looking at the words on a page.

It should be obvious therefore that proclaiming the Word of God requires significant preparation, and is not something to be undertaken lightly.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

The Liturgy of the Word is an integral part of every liturgical celebration. It consists of the proclamation of a number of readings from Scripture together with responses to those proclamations. If appropriate, sacramental actions (such as baptisms or confirmations) can take place immediately following the Liturgy of the Word as part of the assembly's response to the Word of God.

The general structure of the Liturgy of the Word is as follows:

- First Reading, followed by silence.
- Responsorial Psalm.
- Second Reading, followed by silence.
- Gospel Acclamation
- Gospel

- Homily, followed by silence.
- Profession of Faith (or other sacramental action)
- Universal Prayer (or Prayer of the Faithful)

Some of these different components of the Liturgy of the Word will be discussed in more detail shortly.

THE PLACE OF SILENCE IN THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

You will notice in the above general structure (which is the basic structure used for Sunday Mass) that provision is made for periods of silence. “The Liturgy of the Word is to be celebrated in such a way as to favour meditation, and so any kind of haste that hinders recollection is clearly to be avoided” (*GIRM*, 56). The inclusion of these periods of silence allows the members of the assembly to reflect on what they have heard and allow it to ‘seep into their bones’.

The use of periods of silence also stops the Liturgy of the Word from becoming a barrage of words directed at the assembly, which may result in the loss of the power of this important part of our Sunday liturgy. “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).

PARISH PRACTICE: When pausing for silence, a good pause of about thirty (30) seconds will be observed.

DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ROSTERED READERS

With the advent of the new roster format from the beginning of February 2014, two readers will be rostered for each of our Sunday Masses. They will be rostered either as **Reader A** or **Reader B**.

The responsibilities of **Reader A** will be to:

- Process the Book of the Gospels
- Proclaim the First Reading
- Lead the Responsorial Psalm in the absence of a musician/psalmist

The responsibilities of **Reader B** will be to:

- Participate in the Opening Procession
- Proclaim the Second Reading
- Announce the intentions of the Universal Prayer

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A. Participation in the Opening Procession

It is appropriate that **Reader A** carry the Book of the Gospels in the procession at the beginning of the liturgy, joining the procession immediately after the processional cross (if one is used). Once they have reached the sanctuary, and the presider has revered the altar, they should place the Book of the Gospels in the centre of the altar. They can then return to their seat until it is time for the Liturgy of the Word.

*Please note: It is customary to **not** bow to the altar if you are carrying an item such as the Book of the Gospels.*

Reader B should join the procession behind **Reader A**. After they have revered the altar, they can then return to their seat until it is time for the Liturgy of the Word.

B. Moving From Your Seat

Readers should sit within the assembly and move from their seats when it is time for them to perform their specific ministry. Each reader should move separate from their seat immediately before it is time for them to proclaim their reading.

In other words:

- **Reader A** will move from their seat *after the Collect has been prayed AND after the presider and assembly have sat down.*
- The psalmist/cantor who will be singing and/or reciting the verses of the Psalm should move to their place *at the end of the appropriate period of silence.*
- If **Reader A** will be leading the Psalm in the absence of a psalmist/cantor, they should remain at the ambo, *but wait until the appropriate period of silence has concluded before commencing.*
- **Reader B** will move from their seat *immediately after the Responsorial Psalm has concluded.*
- **Reader B** will move from their seat for the Universal Prayer *after the Profession of Faith has concluded.*

As with any movement during the liturgy, a reader should move from their seat *deliberately*. This does not mean you have to rush nor to adopt a slow pace, but rather to walk with purpose. Remember that you are exercising a very specific

for a 'normal' Sunday celebration. On other special occasions, it might be necessary to include more intentions (or indeed replace them with a different and more specific set) than would normally be the case, but this should be the exception rather than the rule.

Thirdly, there is a specific sequence to the Universal Prayer (*GIRM*, 70). Generally speaking, we should pray for:

- For the needs of the Church;
- For public authorities and the salvation of the whole world;
- For those burdened by any kind of difficulty;
- For the local community; and
- For the dead.

On the basis of the above list, it is easy to see how five to seven distinct intentions can easily be reached.

The most important thing to remember is that after announcing each intention, the reader should pause to allow the members of the assembly to pray, before inviting them to join together with "Lord, hear us" etc.

Because of their nature as a response to the Scripture readings, it is preferred that the intentions of the Universal Prayer to be announced from the ambo—the place where the Word of God is proclaimed. It is also possible for them to be announced from some other suitable place within the church building.

PARISH PRACTICE: It is the practice of the Parish for the intentions of the Universal Prayer to be announced from the ambo by **Reader B**.

THE FIRST AND SECOND READINGS

The nature of both the First and Second Readings is that of a ritual 'unit', i.e. they share a common structure that is important to recognise and respect.

Like most actions that take place during the celebration of any liturgy, we are dealing with a 'language' that is composed of words, actions, and symbols, and we are called to use that language carefully.

The 'structure' of both the First and Second Readings is as follows:

- **Ritual Opening**
This has the form "A reading from...", and represents a ritual opening which immediately notifies the assembly that this is something important that needs to be listened to.

Please note: There is no need to change this ritual opening in any way, such as "The second reading is a reading from...". I would ask you to refrain from doing so.

- **Proclamation of the Text**
This is self-explanatory: the designated text of Scripture is proclaimed in a suitable manner as outlined on page three.

- **Slight Pause**
At the end of the designated text, it is appropriate to observe a slight pause. A count of five would be sufficient. This slight pause lets the assembly know that the text from Scripture has come to an end.

Please note: This slight pause is not the silence called for at the conclusion of the reading, which is significantly longer.

- **Closing Acclamation**
*Since the introduction of the current translation of the Roman Missal, the ending of each of the readings is "**The Word of the Lord**".*

*Since the Lectionary has not yet been printed to reflect this (and may not be for some time yet), the printed book will still have the older, longer ending contained in it. Readers are asked to always use the newer ending, i.e. "**The Word of the Lord**", regardless of what they see printed in the Lectionary.*

Please note: It is important to not drop the definite article at the beginning of this phrase. The ending is "**The Word of the Lord**" not "Word of the Lord" (as similarly with "**The Body of Christ**" not "Body of Christ").

- Silence
After the assembly's response, "Thanks be to God", there follows a period of silence. See page four.

THE RESPONSORIAL PSALM

The Responsorial Psalm is a response of praise and thanksgiving to the proclamation of the First Reading.

The Psalms are, by their nature, poetic and musical. They were written to be sung, and this is *always* the preferred situation. While this can be best achieved by the singing of the whole psalm this is not always possible, so it is equally acceptable for just the antiphon of the psalm to be sung with the verses being spoken by the psalmist or reader.

A response of praise and thanksgiving cannot follow immediately upon such a powerful ritual action such as the proclamation of the Word of God. It is appropriate that a period of silence (of 30 seconds—see page four) be observed between the First Reading and the Responsorial Psalm.

PARISH PRACTICE: It shall be the practice of the Parish for the Responsorial Psalm to be proclaimed in the following manner:

- During the Seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter, and on other Solemnities during the year: the Psalm will be sung in its entirety wherever possible, with a psalmist/cantor singing the verses and the assembly joining in the response.
- At all other times: whenever possible the response will be sung by the assembly, and a psalmist/cantor will read the verses of the Psalm.
- When no musicians are available: the Responsorial Psalm will be spoken in its entirety, with **Reader A** reading the verses, and the assembly joining in the response.

THE GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

The Gospel Acclamation is both a response to the Second Reading *and* a song of welcome for the Gospel which immediately follows it.

The usual response of "Alleluia" is again written so as to be sung, and this understanding of the Gospel Acclamation as song is so important that "the Alleluia or the Verse before the Gospel, if not sung, may be omitted" (*GIRM*, 63).

As with the Responsorial Psalm, the ability to respond first requires reflection, and so it is again appropriate that a period of silence be observed (of 30 seconds—see page four) between the Second Reading and the Gospel Acclamation.

PARISH PRACTICE: It shall be the practice of the Parish for the Gospel Acclamation to be proclaimed in the following manner:

- Wherever possible: the Gospel Acclamation will be sung in its entirety, with a psalmist/cantor singing the verse and the assembly joining in the response, i.e. the "Alleluia" or Lenten equivalent.
- When no psalmist/cantor is available: the response of the Gospel Acclamation, i.e. the "Alleluia" or Lenten equivalent, will be sung, with the verse being spoken by the assembly.
- When the above options are not available: the entire Gospel Acclamation will be omitted.

THE UNIVERSAL PRAYER

Readers have a role to play in "The Universal Prayer" (known colloquially as "The Prayer of the Faithful"), by announcing each of the intentions.

Several things need to be noted here.

Firstly, the intention should preferably be no longer than one sentence. Intentions are not designed to be long-winded statements; they are intended to direct the prayer of the assembly. Accordingly, each intention should be in the form of "We pray for the Church" or "We pray for our drought-stricken land", followed by a pause (a count of five is about the right length), then the invitation to pray "Lord, hear us" or "We pray to the Lord" etc.

On occasion, the intention might be supplemented by another clause, e.g. "We pray for the Church, that she might always bear true witness to Christ", but not to be structured so as to be too specific. The intentions of the Universal Prayer are not designed to tell God what we want—God already knows!—but are constructed to allow the assembly to direct their prayers towards the needs and concerns of the Church, thereby uniting our prayers with those for whom we pray.

The second thing to say about the Universal Prayer is that there should not be too many of them. Five to seven distinct intentions would normally be enough.