

Outline of Liturgical Reader Training

Introduction: Sue

Reading from Scripture: Isaiah 40:4-9:Ceci

Prayer: Sue (or the person she selects)

History and Practice

When you become a liturgical Reader in the Roman Catholic Church, you join the ancient Order of Readers. During the first three centuries of Christian history, there were sporadic periods of persecution. During these periods, the Roman civil government attempted to destroy the Church. When a period of persecution broke out, some of the first members of the Christian community to be attacked were the Readers. They not only proclaimed the Word during the Sunday celebrations, but they also were responsible for the books. Capturing the Readers meant also gaining control of the scripture texts which could then be destroyed. After 313AD, when it became legal to be a Christian in the Roman Empire, the position of Reader continued to be a position of respect. During the Middle Ages, the Order of Readers/Lectors was absorbed into the training pattern and ordination process for priests and ceased to be a responsibility of lay persons.

When the liturgy was revised at the direction of the Second Vatican Council (1963-1965), the position of lay reader was re-introduced into the Mass. The proclamation of the first and second readings, along with the responsorial psalm, is the privilege of lay people. The proclamation of the Gospel is the privilege of the ordained Deacons and Priests.

Intro to Lectionary

- a) Council of Trent 1545 to 1563
 - Established a common lectionary for the Catholic Church that was built around a complete reading of the Gospel of Matthew and a limited selection from the Epistles of Paul. A limited number of readings taken from the other Gospels for a particular liturgical season, i.e. the Nativity story of Luke for Christmas.
 - The readings were proclaimed in Latin
 - The Sunday readings were repeated at the daily masses of the following week.
- b) The Church assigned to itself the task of developing a new Lectionary at Vatican II in 1965. It was completed in 1969, **issued in English in 1971**
(Second Vatican Council 1963 to 1965)

The goal set for the revised lectionary was that it would be a text which would open up the entire Word of God for the people of God. The task reflects revived interest in scripture as a whole and of St. Jerome's statement that "Ignorance of scripture is ignorance of Christ."

The present Sunday lectionary provides three scripture readings and a psalm for each Sunday Mass organized in a three-year cycle. Essentially, two Old Testament readings and two New Testament readings:

- First reading: Old Testament selected with reference to the Gospel of the day.
- Second "reading": Old Testament Psalm
- Epistle: a New Testament letter read semi-continuously and selected without reference to the Gospel of the day, except for three Sundays in Lent during Cycle A and the specific holy days, i.e., Christmas, Easter Vigil, etc.
- The Gospel

(Some liturgical scholars count the alleluia exclamation preceding the Gospel as a fifth "reading.")

Three-year Sunday cycle is based on a semi-continuous reading of one of the Synoptic Gospels:

Cycle A: Gospel according to Matthew
Cycle B: Gospel according to Mark
Cycle C: Gospel according to Luke

The Gospel of John is included over the period of three years as Sunday readings specific to the seasons of celebration, Easter and Christmas, and during Lent.

During Cycle B, the Gospel of John is read in a semi-continuous way for a portion of Ordinary Time because of the brevity of the Gospel according to Mark.

c) The lectionary of the Catholic Church is used by a large number of Protestant churches world wide, all of the Anglican communion, the United Methodist Church, and by other mainline and independent denominations. There have been some adaptations made to the texts for the use of the Protestant communities.

Revised Lectionary issued July 1999

The three elements of the revision:

- Added an indicator of either who was being addressed in a given reading or who was the speaker, i.e. if Paul is addressing the whole church: brothers and sisters, or if his letter is addressed to a specific individual: beloved.
- Re-edited a limited number of readings which had proven to be very confusing.

- Introduced some changes in translation which used the principle of gender neutrality or gender inclusiveness where appropriate. These changes were strictly limited to human references, i.e. brothers and sisters as a translation of *adelphoi*, “*dearly beloved*,” for those addressed in Paul’s letters, instead of the exclusive term “brothers.”

The Physics, Physiology and Psychology of Proclamation

- a) Theme: read slowly
 - Sound reproduction (echoes and speakers and mics): Physics
 - Your hearers may hear slowly: physiology of the assembly
- b) The nature of the English language: dependent on clearly articulated consonants, ex: differentiating between the words ‘an’ or ‘and’ depends on the clearly articulated final consonant, “d’.

Physiology of the Reader:

- c) tongue shapes and controls articulated word formation in English. (ex. the various tongue positions needed to form the word “world”)

The Psychology of the Reader:

- d) The natural inclination to escape from the attention of a crowd
- e) The reassuring sympathy of the assembly

The Practical Details

- a) Proclamation of the Word
 - 1) Silence is a tool.
 - 2) statements of fact: announcement of the source of the reading and the “Word of the Lord”
 - 3) gift of your faith in final statement, proclaim it with power
- b) Reading
 - 1) with love
 - 2) with prayer
 - 3) With practice, the Workbook and how to use it.
 - 4) with understanding