

A teacher's guide to Ministering the Word of God

What is it?

Through the readings God speaks to his people, opening up to us the mystery of redemption and salvation, offering spiritual nourishment. Christ himself is present to us and for us.

The task of the ministers of the Word is to help God's work be fruitful for us: to help us hear and understand, and help us to respond to the stirring of our heart and spirit in the way we live our life with God and in the world.

The Liturgy of the Word

First Reading: Taken from the Old Testament (except during Easter time when it will come from Acts of the Apostles)

Responsorial Psalm: Taken from the Old Testament Book of Psalms or from a poetic section of Old or New Testament

Second Reading: Taken from the Epistles of the New Testament or, especially during Easter time, the Book of Revelation

Gospel Acclamation: Throughout the year the Church greets the Gospel by singing Alleluia, except during Lent when another Acclamation is used.

Gospel: The Gospel reading is taken from one of the four gospels. It is read by an ordained minister, the deacon, if one is present, or the priest or bishop.

Homily: The homily is a 'breaking open' of God's word so those present can better digest the living word of God, and benefit from it for their lives.

Creed: The Creed is recited on Sundays and other Solemnities. It rehearses the principal mysteries of God and salvation.

Prayer of the Faithful: The Liturgy of the Word concludes with the baptised faithful uniting in prayer for those in need.

Where can you choose the readings from?

The Church is formed by the living word of God. Our fundamental task is to listen to the word of God and to respond to what we God says. So very rarely does the Church choose which readings to listen to on a particular day - for that could be seen as putting words into God's mouth!

So, generally the Church listens to the whole of the Scriptures in sequence, with a different cycle on Sundays and Weekdays. And it is therefore usual at any Mass to listen to the readings of the day, rather than to choose readings according to what we like or what seems suitable to us.

These readings, and their arrangement, are found in the Lectionary. The Lectionary for use in England and Wales is in 3 volumes.

- Volume 1 is for Sundays and the great Seasons of Advent/Christmas and Lent/ Easter
- Volume 2 for Weekdays
- Volume 3 for celebrations of particular sacraments, and in particular circumstances.

So is there NO choice?

No, usually a choice can be made - unless you are celebrating on a Solemnity or major feast, in which case you would probably be celebrating the feast anyway and want to use its readings.

But always spend time with the readings of the day first. You will be surprised how often the readings turn out to be appropriate. Or maybe, if you remember the word of God is a living word, not surprised but grateful, even humbled.

Otherwise you may find particularly appropriate readings in *Masses for Various Needs and Occasions* section of Volume 3 of the Lectionary.

You need a Lectionary!

1. The Word of God should always be proclaimed from a worthy volume, to symbolise its importance.
2. The Lectionary shows the readings of the day.
3. There are two current editions. The full size Ambo edition and the Study Edition which will generally meet school needs. Contact St Pauls Bookshop for details: 020 7828 5582

A teacher's worksheet for **Ministering the Word of God**

Ministers for the Liturgy of the Word

Mass for

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Coordinator for Mass is.....

Priest is

What does the reader do?

Well, obviously, they read. But more than that, they need to be able to help people to hear, and to understand what they hear.

We have doubtless all had experience of talking and finding that no-one is listening. It's bad enough when it is us, but worse still when it is God's word they are not listening to or hearing!

So in selecting readers the main priority needs to be choosing readers who can read so that the congregation can hear, understand and be nourished by God's word.

This is perhaps quite challenging. Rather than choosing children who might, just, be able to read the passage stumblingly, but who will not hold the audience (sorry, congregation!), it might mean we choose an adult who will be able to read well and who will be able to minister the word to the congregation. And do this for the benefit of the children so they can listen to the word.

On the other hand. it might mean that we put more than the common effort into helping a child reader. We need to help them

- understand the meaning of the reading in its biblical context
- think about what the reading has to say to us today
- be confident, clear, audible and engaging in their proclamation of the reading

The better our service of the word of God in preparation and proclamation, the more fruitful its reception by the congregation is going to be.

Listening and responding to the word of God

God speaks so that we might move into deeper relationship with him by responding to what he says. This is quite some ask!

As is so often the case, if the Mass is to be meaningful and fruitful for us, we need to work - whether we are ministers or congregation. Teachers can have a big impact on how the congregation manages to find nourishment in the word of God.

- Readings are often not easy to understand at first hearing. Perhaps in the days before Mass they could be introduced in class, and talked about.
- Allow time during the Mass for silence after the reading for the congregation to take it to heart and ponder its meaning for them.
- Give time in the days after the Mass to come back to the reading, and talk about how we might live out what it says to us.

All this takes effort but it helps us form the children to be people who listen to God's word and who put it into practice in their lives. If we take this seriously we help them develop a practice of preparing, listening and reflecting that will be theirs always.

Ministers for the Liturgy of the Word

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| | Lectionary |
| • Reader 1..... | /page no. |
| 1st Reading | |
| • Psalmist | |
| Psalm | |
| • (Reader 2) | |
| (2nd Reading) | |
| • Gospel Acclamation | |
| • Prayer of the Faithful | |

Readers' names should be passed to.....
for approval before.....