

### *Discourse and Letters*

- Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24 (13th Sunday, Year B)
- John 15:1-8 (5th Sunday of Easter, Year B)
- I Thessalonians 1:1-5 (29th Sunday, Year A)
- II Corinthians 8:7. 9. 13-15 (13th Sunday, Year B)

### *Legal texts*

- Exodus 20:1-17 (3rd Sunday of Lent, Year B)
- Leviticus 13:1-2. 44-46 (6th Sunday, Year B)
- Leviticus 19:1-2. 11-18 (1st Week of Lent, Monday)
- Deuteronomy 4:1. 5-9 (3rd Week of Lent, Wednesday)

### Resources

Additional guidance in how to help ministers of the Word develop the necessary practical skills can be found in

- *Ministering the Word of God: Parish Resource Study Book*. Fr Allen Morris. London, Catholic Truth Society, 2015
- *A Word that will rouse them*. Aelred R. Rosser. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1995
- *A Well-trained tongue. Formation in the ministry of reader*. Aelred R. Rosser. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1995
- *Stop Reading and Start Proclaiming*. Douglas Leal. San Jose, CA: Resource Publications, 2006.

Further resources are listed on the sheet *Ministers of the Word: Recommended Reading* which can be downloaded from the Diocesan website: [www.rcdow.org.uk/liturgy](http://www.rcdow.org.uk/liturgy)

# A word alive and active...

**Westminster**  
**LITURGY**  
*Commission*

*A word alive and active* is one of a series of resources prepared by the Liturgy Commission to support the continuing formation of liturgical ministers in Westminster diocese. Other resources can be downloaded from [www.rcdow.org.uk/liturgy](http://www.rcdow.org.uk/liturgy)

An introduction for Readers  
and other ministers of the Word  
in Westminster Diocese

## Introduction

This leaflet has been prepared to assist ministers of the word consider the variety of readings that are entrusted to them that they might minister them to the congregation.

## Why readings are read

When we hear the scriptures proclaimed at Mass, we very rarely hear passages that we have not heard before. The Sunday readings are proclaimed from a three year cycle and the Weekday readings from a two year cycle. Readings at weddings and funerals and other rituals are drawn from a still more restricted lectionary. We do not need to be informed – for these are readings already familiar to us; we do need for this word to be newly ‘performed’, to become a reality in our midst, to be truly the Lord speaking to us, calling us to communion with him.

Ritual language is not concerned with hearing something new. It is concerned with expressing the familiar and hearing it anew each time the ritual is celebrated.

Aelred R. Rosser. *A Well-Trained Tongue*. Page 42

The minister responsible for the effective proclamation of the scriptures needs to learn to draw on the skills of the public speaker – clear pronunciation; speaking sometimes more loudly sometimes more softly, sometimes speaking more slowly and sometimes more quickly – but always speaking audibly; emphasising particular words or phrases to better communicate the meaning of the passage, and making use of pauses to give shape and rhythm and texture to the reading.

Other people may use these same sorts of techniques to good effect in play-acting, to ‘make pretend’. The minister of God’s word uses them to bring about the communication of saving truth, to serve God’s speaking to the minds and hearts of the faithful.

## The language of the scriptures

The Bible is not a collection of uniform books, but of a very diverse collection of writings. These include

- Poetry – e.g. the Book of Psalms and the Song of Songs
- Narrative – e.g. the Books of Genesis and Exodus
- Parables – examples can be found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.
- Letters – e.g. the Letters of Paul and Peter
- Discourse – e.g. the ‘Farewell Discourse’ of Jesus in the Gospel of John

(John 13:31-17:26) or the Book of Isaiah

- Legal texts – e.g. the Book of Leviticus

Each of these literary forms invites a different way of performance. Poetry makes different demands on the hearer to those of narrative; parables makes different demands to legal texts. Therefore the reader needs to proclaim these different forms of texts in such a way as will best help those who listen to receive them in such a way as best helps them to respond to the different demands they make.

Because the Bible is a library of books of different kinds of writing, we must revise our frame of mind, our expectations, as we move from one literary form to another. If we fail to do this, we fail to understand what we are reading.

Margaret Nutting Ralph. *Scripture: Nourished by the Word*. Page 21

## Developing Skills

Practice with these different readings. It will be more helpful to do this with a group of others, but is a useful exercise even by oneself.

### Poetry

- Isaiah 11:1-10 (2nd Sunday of Advent, Year A)
- Isaiah 35:4-7 (23rd Sunday, Year B)
- Isaiah 54:5-14 (Easter Vigil, 4th Reading)
- Ephesians 1:3-14 (15th Sunday, Year B)

### Narrative

- Matthew 22:15-21 (29th Sunday, Year A)
- Mark 5:21-43 (13th Sunday, Year B)
- Luke 24:13-35 (3rd Sunday of Easter, Year A)
- Acts 9:26-31 (5th Sunday of Easter, Year B)

### Parables

- Jeremiah 17:5-8 (6th Sunday, Year C)
- Matthew 20:1-16 (25th Sunday, Year A)
- Matthew 25:1-13 (32nd Sunday, Year A)
- Luke 15:1-32 or Luke 15:1-10 (24th Sunday, Year C)