

Questions for reflection

1. What ways of learning about the faith have you found most helpful in the past? What further support would you most value?
2. What particular gifts do you feel you are already able to bring to your ministry? What particular skills and talents do you feel you need help to develop?
3. What resources does your parish already provide that you can draw on? What further help do you think might be provided, either in the parish or elsewhere

Resources

Over recent years the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales has issued a range of documents which provide an introduction to the Church's teaching on the Mass and the Scriptures, and on ministry in the Church.

- *One Bread One Body*. This teaching document on the Eucharist in the life of the Church seeks to help Catholics to a greater understanding of the Mass and the Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.
- *The Gift of Scripture*. This teaching document introduces how we might read the Old and New Testaments, learning to more deeply hear and live by the word of God.
- *Celebrating the Mass*. This pastoral introduction offers a resource to help the Church consider how it prepares, celebrates and lives from the Mass.
- *The Sign We Give*. This report has been approved by the Bishops' Conference and issued to encourage the Church in England and Wales to think more deeply and imaginatively about the theology and practice of collaborative ministry.

One Bread, One Body; *The Gift of Scripture*; and *Celebrating the Mass* are all published by the Catholic Truth Society, www.cts-online.org.uk. *The Sign We Give* is published by Matthew James Publishing Ltd.

Westminster
LITURGY
Commission

Proclaiming the Word 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

Acknowledgements: *Celebrating the Mass* © 2005, the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. *Introduction to the Lectionary* © ICEL, 1981

Proclaiming the Word

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

Ministering the Word

When God shares his word with us, he awaits our response, that is, our listening and our adoring ‘in Spirit and in truth’ (John 4:23). The Holy Spirit makes our response effective, so that what we hear in the celebration of the liturgy we carry out in the way we live: ‘Be doers of the word and not hearers only’ (James 1:22)

Introduction to the Lectionary, 6

The Church recognises that there is a family relationship between a range of ministries which she groups as ‘ministries of the word’.

These are all ministries which are exercised so that others might more clearly understand and be fed by the living word of God.

There are, for example, the ministries of preacher and teacher, and of reader and psalmist. Each of these ministries can be distinguished from the other, but each also relies on the other. The one who seeks to teach from the scriptures relies on the word being well proclaimed so that the faithful can hear it and take it to heart. The one who proclaims the word in the liturgical assembly relies on the assembly having been taught how to receive the word fruitfully and how to ponder on it in their hearts.

For this reason is helpful if those various people ministering the word in a parish have the opportunity to come together to reflect on what they do and how they can help each other in the ministry entrusted to each.

Ministering the Word of God at Mass

A reader is asked to do more than simply read the readings at Mass. The readings are intended to be proclaimed in such a way that they might be heard, and that they might bring those who hear them to a deeper knowledge and love of the Lord. The minister has the responsibility of leading the assembly into a time of listening.

The liturgy of the word must be celebrated in a way that fosters meditation; clearly, any sort of haste that hinders reflectiveness must be avoided. The dialogue between God and his people taking place through the Holy Spirit demands short intervals of silence, suited to the assembly, as an opportunity to take the word of God to heart and to prepare a response to it in prayer.

cf. Introduction to the Lectionary, 28

Reader

In proclaiming the word of God from Sacred Scripture, readers exercise their responsibility in mediating the presence of Christ. God speaks to the assembly through them, and the impact of God’s message will depend significantly on their conviction, their preparation, and their delivery.

The richness in the quantity and in the variety of readings in the Lectionary challenges those who are called upon to proclaim the Scriptures at Mass. Each of the individual sacred authors reflected on the meaning of God’s action in history from their own perspective. They employed various literary forms to convey the message of salvation, ranging, for example, from narratives and the poetry of the psalms to prophetic oracles and parables, from theological expositions to apocalyptic visions. A reader will proclaim the word of the Lord more fully and more effectively if he or she has an awareness of the literary form of a particular reading or psalm.

- Both to assist the assembly to appreciate the genre and context of the different passages of Scripture and benefit from a different voice, it is better to have a different reader for each reading.
- The responsorial psalm should be sung by a psalmist or cantor, but, if necessary, may be led by a reader.
- When there is no deacon, a reader may carry the Book of the Gospels before the presiding priest in the entrance procession and lay it on the altar.
- When there is no deacon, the reader may, from the ambo, announce the intentions in the General Intercessions.

Celebrating the Mass, 41,42