Proclaimer of the Word
Ministry Guidelines

Go into all the world
and proclaim the Good News.

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INTRODUCTION
Welcome and thank you that you responded to the Call of God to proclaim the Good News in St. James Parish. Any confirmed Catholic adult of good moral standing (this includes a valid sacramental marriage in the Catholic Church) wishing to serve as a Proclaimer of the Word are welcome to sign up for this ministry. Your ministry makes God present in the community by His very word, and you welcome the congregation into God’s presence. You will lead the community to pray, and inform the same about important news.

The following outline, although overly detailed to those of you active in this ministry, should provide a solid guide to newcomers. Also, by striving for greater procedural consistency among the Proclaimers, we help the assembly feel more at ease, enabling them to truly absorb the Word of God.

If you are new to the parish or to this ministry, much on the following pages stems from accepted practices of the Church, traditions in other diocesan churches and simple common sense.

PRINCIPLES
During the liturgy, the Proclaimer is fulfilling a mission from God for sisters and brothers. It is a sacred duty that involves a sharing of one’s own faith. It is something special and requires meditation, prayer, belief, and a surety that one is sent.

It should not be a task that is being performed: a good Proclaimer allows the community to sense the presence of the living Jesus in that community through him or her without focusing too much attention on the Proclaimer.

"The liturgy of the word must be celebrated in a way that fosters meditation. 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. Proper times for silence during the liturgy of the word are, for example, before this liturgy begins, after the first and second reading, after the homily." (Lectionary for Mass, #28)

GENERAL GUIDELINES
The Proclaimer’s preparation begins at home well in advance of the liturgy. Become familiar with the scriptures you are to proclaim. Reflect, first of all, on their meaning. You must believe in what you are reading more than in the techniques that you use. Read naturally, that is, according to the nature of speech, yet with discipline and conviction. Do not over dramatize. If you believe what you are reading, your faith and sincerity will be your most effective tools.

Please be faithful to the schedule by fulfilling your assigned duty. Absenteeism is both disrespectful to the worshipping community and to you. If you cannot fulfill an assigned commitment, please secure a substitute. Do not wait until the last minute to do this. Your substitute will need time to prepare. If you are sick, please switch with someone.

Arrive about 15 minutes before Mass begins. Use the time to familiarize yourself with the layout of the text in the lectionary. Make sure the ribbon is properly set.
PROCLAIMER ORIENTATION/TRAINING
The Proclaimer’s Ministry for newcomers will start with an hour of orientation and after a suitable period of training (if required) the new proclaimer will be placed on rotation in the liturgy schedule.

All Proclaimers are required to renew their commitment to the Ministry each Fall.

PREPARATION BEFORE MASS

Schedule and Order of Duties
On the ministry schedule under Proclaimers you will generally find two names listed for each Mass. The first name is the Proclaimer of the first reading and the second name is the Proclaimer of the second reading. The Second Proclaimer gathers the ministers participating in the entrance procession, in the vestry, for a brief time of prayer, carries the lectionary during the entrance procession, proclaims the second reading and reads the prayers of the faithful. The First Proclaimer reads the Commentary before Mass begins, proclaims the first reading and reads the announcements after Mass. If a deacon partakes in the celebration of Mass, the lectionary will be processed in by him and he will read the prayers of the faithful.

Clothing
The way a minister dresses conveys a message to the congregation and speaks about the importance of his/her ministry. Proclaimers are asked to dress with modest clothing, no low cut, no mini skirt and no shorts.

Preparation
A few days ahead, read, study and reflect on the assigned readings. Develop an understanding of the message the author is trying to get across through the readings. When practicing the readings out loud, pay attention to your voice quality, volume, diction, pronunciation, pace, pausing, rhythm, and eye contact. The more you make the message your own and believe firmly in the Word of God, the more you will become a Proclaimer and not just a reader.

Please place a check mark on the ministry schedule located in the narthex indicating that you are present. If you are unable to minister at your scheduled time, it will be left up to you to get in touch with another Proclaimer to replace you. Phone numbers are sent to everyone either by email or regular mail. Please remind your replacement to change the name on the ministry schedule when he/she arrives at church.

Ministry Prayer
Five minutes before Mass begins, the Second Proclaimer gathers together all the ministers involved in the entrance procession in the Vestry (Altar Servers, Leader of Children Liturgy, Priest and Deacon) for a brief time of prayer.

Commentary
After the Ministry Prayer is read, all ministers for the Mass proceed to the aisle. The First Proclaimer, before he or she proceeds to the Podium, makes the sound system operator aware that he or she will be going to read the Commentary. Read clearly, slowly and loud enough so that you are easily heard and understood.
At the conclusion of the Commentary and only if there is a visiting priest
“Our presider today is Father_________. Concelebrating Mass with him is Father ______.”
“Please stand and join in our gathering hymn.”

**ENTRANCE PROCESSION**

As the opening hymn begins the First Proclaimer is seated and the Second Proclaimer picks up the lectionary and holds it out front, slightly elevated, processes into the church in the following order:

**A. Altar Server carrying Processional Cross**

**B. Altar servers carrying processional candles**

**C. Leader of Children’s Liturgy**

**D. Proclaimer or Deacon carrying Lectionary, slightly elevated**

**E. Presider(s)**

When arriving in front of the stairs and altar, all stand along the dark line on the floor and make an inclination towards the altar. The Deacon or the Second Proclaimer will bring the Lectionary to the Ambo. When placing the Lectionary on the Ambo, open it to the day’s first scripture reading, and then proceed to your seat while Father and Deacon kiss the Altar and proceed to their seats.

**Prayers of the Faithful and Announcements**

You will receive, by email, an advance copy of the commentary, prayers of the faithful and announcements in order that you can practice. For those who are not on email, we ask you to come early to church to familiarize yourself with the text. You will find the copy of the commentary, prayers of the faithful, and announcements in the vestry. If another announcement is added to the list, make sure to inform Father about it. If there are any names for which you are uncertain of the pronunciation, please ask Father. This would include unfamiliar names or words in the scripture readings.

**Readings**

The readings should be marked by a ribbon in the lectionary. Check to make sure they are the correct readings. Your pocket Sunday Missal contains all the readings. Take note of the page number on which your readings begin. This is a precaution if the ribbon marking the page is accidentally removed from its original place.

**Approaching the Ambo**

Following the Opening Prayer and as Father takes his seat, both Proclaimers proceed to the Sanctuary. They do not bow toward the altar. While the First Proclaimer goes to the Ambo, the Second will be seated.

**THE READINGS**

**First Reading**

The appropriate introduction is “A reading from …” **only proclaim what is written in black.** At the end of the reading, step back from the Ambo and bow your head for a few moments of reflection. Then return to your seat.

**Responsorial Psalm**

When the psalm is **not sung**, the First Proclaimer goes to the Ambo saying, “please repeat the refrain after me”. Read the first verse while the people respond after each verse with the refrain. After reading the psalm, return to your seat.
Second Reading
After the psalm, the Second Proclaimer promptly goes to the Ambo. Again, the appropriate introduction is “A reading from ...” Incorporate a meditative pause following the second reading. After the reading, announce, “Please stand for the Gospel”. Return to your seat.

THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL
The Second Proclaimer proceeds to the podium for the Prayers of the Faithful as the Creed nears the end so that there are no unnecessary delays. Following an introduction by the Presider, read the prayers of intercession slowly and with ample pause to allow the listeners to pray with you. (If a Deacon is present, he will read the Prayers of the Faithful.)

Read as follows: “For the Church [PAUSE] that we ...”

The final petition provides members of the congregation a time of prayer for their own intention. Make sure to allow them a sufficient pause before resuming with “we pray to the Lord”. When the intercessions are concluded, step back from the podium but remain until Father has said a prayer, than return to your seat.

Announcements
As Father has concluded clearing the Altar and proceeds to his seat, there is a time for silent prayer. Father will then say the Closing Prayer (Prayer after Communion) and then the First Proclaimer will proceed to the podium. Read the announcements clearly, slowly and loud enough so that you are easily heard and understood. At the conclusion, say: “Please stand for the final blessing and dismissal”.

CONCLUSION
Although the preceding pages in this handbook deal primarily with your procedural duties at Mass, the most important aspect of the Proclaimer’s Ministry is in “bringing forth” clearly, audibly and sincerely, the Word of God.

At least yearly, a workshop will be organized for the Proclaimers of our church. It is important that we attend, if at all possible, and that we review with regularity the handbook. With consistency and good communication we can best serve our parish in this ministry.
**SUMMARY**
The following summarizes your duties.

- **FIRST PROCLAIMER** reads the Commentary.
- **SECOND PROCLAIMER** reads the Ministry Prayer before mass in vestry.
- **SECOND PROCLAIMER** carries the Lectionary in the entrance procession if there is no Deacon.
- **FIRST PROCLAIMER** reads the first reading immediately after the opening prayer.
- **FIRST PROCLAIMER** reads the Psalm if there is no choir.
- **SECOND PROCLAIMER** reads the second reading immediately after the Psalm.
- **SECOND PROCLAIMER** proceeds to the podium at the beginning of the Creed and reads the Prayers of the Faithful immediately after Father’s introduction if there is no Deacon.
- **FIRST PROCLAIMER** proceeds to the podium after Father has said the Closing Prayer (Prayer after Communion) to read the announcements.