Proclaimer of the Word
Ministry Guidelines

Go into all the world
and proclaim the Good News.

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INTRODUCTION
Congratulations that you responded to the Call of God to proclaim the Good News in St. James Parish. 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.

Parish Priests

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. This does not mean that one should read stiff or formal, but rather putting oneself into Jesus’ position and sharing the Word of the Father with people. It is something special and requires meditation, prayer, belief, and a surety that one is sent.

Because it is Scripture that is being read does not mean that the skills of public speaking (adequate loudness, good phrasing, proper emphasis, etc.) are not required or are to be downplayed. Rather, it means that these skills which are picked up through training and experience are used in a context in which God’s Word can speak to God’s people: a Word that has power and that challenges, comforts, and builds up a community. 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 yourself. 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. It is important that the readings from scripture is proclaimed clearly and audibly.

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 carried by him.
Clothing
The way a minister dresses conveys a message to the congregation and speaks about the importance of his/her office. In fact, the manner of dress of all ministers often sets the standard for the congregation. Rather than dictating what to wear, Proclaimers are asked to dress with the best clothing in their closet. (Modest clothing, no low cut and no mini skirt.)

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 development of these qualities will enhance your proclamation of the Word. 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.

When you arrive at our place of worship, do a voice check on the microphone. The volume of your voice can be increased or decreased by changing your distance from the microphone. It is essential that your voice be heard by all those present in church.

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 were 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 (Altar Servers, Proclaimers, 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 Music Stand, 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. Introduction: e.g. Good Morning/evening and welcome to the celebration for the 25th Sunday in Ordinary time.
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.”

When the “Entrance Hymn” has started, the whole procession walks towards the Altar  
lining up in front of the altar, make a bow and than go to the positions allotted to  
each.

**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 raised, 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, then proceed to your seats or other  
destinations while Father and Deacon kiss the Altar and then proceed to their seats.  
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.

**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.

The First Proclaimer may need to discuss the following with the music director for that Mass:
• Will the responsorial psalm be sung? If not, it is read by the First Proclaimer from the music stand in front of the choir.

You may ask Father if there are any additional announcements or additions to the Prayers of the Faithful.

Approaching the Ambo
If you walk across the church directly in front of the altar, do not bow toward the altar but continue to walk towards the ambo or chair. The two Proclaimers will go together to the sanctuary. While the First Proclaimer goes to the Ambo, the Second will go to a chair beside the credence table. When the First Proclaimer is finished with the reading, he or she will go to a chair beside the credence table as well, while the Psalm is being sung. After the Psalm, the Second Proclaimer will go to the Ambo and proclaim the Word. When both readings are done, the two Proclaimers will go back to their pews.

THE READINGS
First Reading
Following the Opening Prayer and as Father takes his seat, both Proclaimers proceed to the Sanctuary. No sign of reverence, e.g. bow or genuflection, is necessary. Do not read what is written in red. 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. This allows some time of silence for the listeners to let the Word of God sink in. Then return to your seat beside the Credence Table.

Responsorial Psalm
When the psalm is not sung, the First Proclaimer brings the Lectionary and goes to the music stand in front of the choir, saying, please repeat the refrain after me. Than you will read the first verse while the people respond after each verse with the refrain. After the psalm return the Lectionary to the Ambo and return to your chair beside the Credence Table.
Second Reading
After the psalm, the Second Proclaimer promptly comes up to the Ambo. Again, the appropriate introduction is: “A reading from ... Incorporate a meditative pause following the second reading. After the reading please announce “Please stand for the Gospel”, and than the 2nd Proclaimer carries the book to the Altar and places it in the middle. The Proclaimers than return to their pews.

When there is a baptism and the parents and godparents walk with their child, behind the altar, after the ceremony of baptism is finished, the First Proclaimer introduces the newly baptized children to the faith community and asks the people to welcome them.

There will be no Creed recited when there is a baptism ceremony.

THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL
The second Proclaimer proceeds to the music stand for the Prayers of the Faithful as the Creed begins so that there are no unnecessary delays. Following an introduction by the Presider, read the prayers of intercession. Read these prayers 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”. The intercessions are concluded with the communal prayer found on the video screen. After announcing the selection, wait until all appear ready and then lead off by reading the first line aloud and back away from the microphone. At the end of the prayer, return to your pew.

Announcements
As Father has concluded clearing the Altar and proceeds to his seat, the first Proclaimer will proceed to the Music Stand in front of the choir.

Read the announcements clearly, slowly and loud enough so that you are easily heard and understood.

At the conclusion, return to your pew.
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.
• **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 it is not sung.
• **SECOND PROCLAIMER** reads the second reading immediately after the Psalm.
• **SECOND PROCLAIMER** proceeds to the Music Stand in front of the choir, at the beginning of the Creed, and prepares to read the Prayers of the Faithful immediately after Father’s introduction if there is no Deacon.
• **FIRST PROCLAIMER** proceeds to the Music Stand in front of the choir after Father has finished clearing the Altar and prepares to read the announcements.