

## Deepening love for the Scriptures

Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass is a way of deepening our appreciation of Christ's gift of his Body and Blood offered to us in Holy Communion. This form of worship allows us to take part in the offering of the Sacrifice at Mass more conscious of the mystery we are invited to be part of.

In a similar way it is appropriate that the Scriptures should themselves sometimes form the centre of our acts of worship. 'Bible services' are encouraged especially on the Vigils of the more solemn feasts. Such services are also encouraged to foster the faith of catechumens and others who are unable to receive Holy Communion. (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 35.4, RCIA 81-84)

The spiritual writers, paraphrasing Matthew 7.7, summarize in this way the dispositions of the heart nourished by the word of God in prayer: 'Seek in reading and you will find in meditating; knock in mental prayer and it will be opened to you by contemplation.'

*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2654

There are a variety of other methods of praying with the Scriptures which are suitable for use by individuals and groups. These include *lectio divina* and 'Ignatian' meditation.

Our use of the Scriptures in liturgy and prayer can also be informed and enriched by the use of commentaries and published spiritual reflections on the Scriptures. Many readers find the monthly journal *Bible Alive* a useful resource. Others will look for useful support material available in Catholic bookshops - publishers of popular resources for use by readers include Liturgical Press ([www.litpress.org](http://www.litpress.org)) and the Catholic Bible School ([www.catholic-bible-school.org](http://www.catholic-bible-school.org))

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)



*Preparing to proclaim 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](http://www.rcdow.org.uk/liturgy)

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# Preparing to proclaim the Word

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

## Why prepare?

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.

If the minister is to fulfil this responsibility he or she will need to spend time in careful preparation.

## What am I reading and when?

In order for the minister to prepare it is important to know in advance when and what one is reading.

It is generally desirable that each reading is read by a different reader, and that the psalm and gospel acclamation sung by a psalmist and cantor. It is therefore important that a rota be prepared in good time advising which readings/chants have been entrusted to which ministers and allowing good time for preparation.

## Responsibilities

A minister's first responsibility is to the congregation he or she is called to serve. But that ministry is generally exercised collaboratively, and this makes its own demands.

### *Being on time*

Many parishes ask their ministers to 'sign in' at least ten minutes before the beginning of Mass. This allows individual ministers time to check all is as it should be, and for any last minute changes to be made should they be necessary.

### *Consistency of practice*

It is helpful for the congregation if the same rhythm is maintained in the Liturgy of the Word week after week. This is best achieved if readers approach the ambo in the same way, waiting for the congregation to be ready before they begin, ensure there is a time of silence for meditation and prayer after each reading, and leave the ambo/sanctuary in the same way.

## Preparing to Read

At Mass, as they prepare to listen to the proclamation of the Gospel, Christ's faithful people trace the sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips and heart.

This action denotes the desire to be responsive to the Lord in our thoughts, in our words and in our feelings.

In preparing a reading, during the week prior to ministering the word to the congregation, a reader should attend to these same three dimensions.

### *Understanding the reading*

- What is the writer trying to say?
- What does this mean to me and my community?
- How does it relate to the other readings and prayers at Mass?
- What does God say to the Church in this word today?

### *Speaking the reading*

- Try speaking the words out loud: to see what challenges the work of proclamation has in store.
- Consider how you can proclaim the passage so as to give fresh and authentic voice to God's living word?

### *Praying the Reading*

- Make time to respond in prayer to what you have discovered in the reading.
- Speak with the Lord about how you respond to his saving love.
- Try also to spend time bring before the Lord the community that you are called to serve. Pray that, through listening together to God's word, all might come to live in unity with God and with each other.

These three stages of preparing to proclaim a reading have been described according to the order of the prayer made by tracing the sign of the Cross on our forehead, lips and heart. However in practice many readers find it is most helpful to begin with focusing on prayer and understanding, and only then considering how in their proclamation they can best communicate the meaning of the passage as they have understood it.