

**T**he Eucharist is the vital centre of all that the Church is and does. At its heart is the real presence of the crucified, risen and glorified Lord, who continues his saving work among us. The Second Vatican Council reminded us: ‘the most holy Eucharist holds within itself the whole spiritual treasure of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Passover and our living bread’. (cf. *One Bread One Body* 3)

All who exercise a liturgical ministry need a proper preparation for their responsibilities. They are to have the competence to perform the particular ministry with which they have been entrusted. (cf. *Celebrating the Mass* 29)



This leaflet is one of a series of leaflets prepared for liturgical ministers to help them refresh their understanding of their role at Mass. The series draws on the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and *Celebrating the Mass*, a document of the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales.

It is one of the collection of resources produced by the Liturgy Office to assist the work of liturgical renewal in England and Wales.

## What the Church says about...

### *The Liturgy of the Word*

In the readings... God speaks to his people, opening up to them the mystery of redemption and salvation, and offering them spiritual nourishment; and Christ himself is present in the midst of the faithful through his word. By their silence and singing the people make God’s word their own... Finally, having been nourished by it, they pour out their petitions in the Prayer of the Faithful for the needs of the entire Church and for the salvation of the whole world.

### *Silence*

The Liturgy of the Word is to be celebrated in such a way as to promote meditation, and so any sort of haste that hinders recollection must clearly be avoided. During the Liturgy of the Word, it is also appropriate to include brief periods of silence, accommodated to the gathered assembly, in which, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, the word of God may be grasped by the heart and a response through prayer may be prepared. It may be appropriate to observe such periods of silence, for example, before the Liturgy of the Word itself begins, after the First and Second Reading, and lastly at the conclusion of the Homily.

*General Instruction of the Roman Missal* GIRM 55–56

### *The ministry of proclaiming the word*

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.

*Celebrating the Mass* 41

Laypersons may be commissioned to proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture. They should be truly suited to perform this function and should receive careful preparation, so that the faithful by listening to the readings from the sacred texts may develop in their hearts a warm and living love for Sacred Scripture.

The Reader proclaims the readings from Sacred Scripture, with the exception of the Gospel. He may also announce the intentions for the Prayer of the Faithful and, in the absence of a psalmist, proclaim the Psalm between the readings.

The psalmist’s role is to sing the Psalm or other biblical canticle that comes between the readings. To fulfil this role correctly, it is necessary that the psalmist have the ability for singing and a facility in correct pronunciation and diction.

GIRM 99, 101, 102

## Preparing to Read

In preparing to hear the Gospel proclaimed, the highpoint of the Liturgy of the Word, Christ's faithful people trace the sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips and heart.

The three-fold focus of that preparation is also a useful summary of the preparation a reader should make during the week before proclaiming the word.

- **Understand the reading.**

Considering what the writer is trying to say; what it means to me and my community; how it relates to the other readings and prayers at Mass; considering what God is saying in this word today.

- **Practising the proclamation of the reading.**

Speaking the words out loud, to see what challenges the work of proclaiming has in store; considering how to speak it so as to give fresh and authentic voice to God's living word.

- **Spending time in prayer.**

Expressing one's love for God, and learning to trust in God's love for us. Praying for the community one is called to serve, that together, and through God's word, all might come to live in unity with God and with each other?

*For as the rain and the snow  
come down from heaven,  
and do not return there  
until they have watered the earth,  
making it bring forth and sprout,  
giving seed to the sower  
and bread to the eater,  
so shall my word be  
that goes out from my mouth;  
it shall not return to me empty,  
but it shall accomplish  
that which I purpose,  
and succeed in the thing  
for which I sent it.*

ISAIAH 55:10-11



**L**ord,  
be on my lips and in my heart,  
that I may worthily proclaim  
your holy word.

**Liturgy  
Office**

ENGLAND  
& WALES

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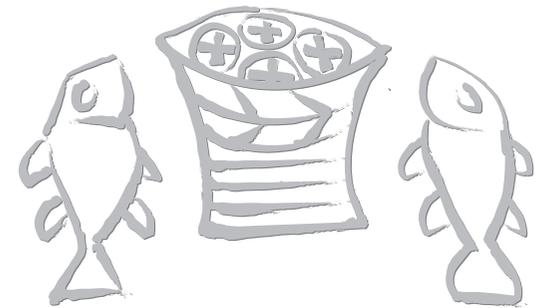
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This leaflet is one of series for liturgical ministers on the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* produced by the Liturgy Office, 39 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1PL.

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## Readers and their ministry at Mass



*The Lord has given me  
a disciple's tongue.  
He provides me with speech  
so that I may know  
how to reply to the wearied.  
Each morning  
he wakes me to hear,  
to listen like a disciple.*

ISAIAH 50:4-5