CHRISTIAN WORSHIP — like that of the Jews, before and after Christ — values both the reading and the hearing of Sacred Scripture. Science has shown different areas of the brain are engaged when language is processed visually or aurally; so entirely new perceptions can be unlocked when even well-known Scripture is heard rather than read. Opening these new doors is the special charism and responsibility of the Lector, one of the four Minor Orders of Clergy. Of great antiquity — being first mentioned by Justin Martyr, who died about 165 — its function, like that of all the Minor Orders, can be (and now almost always is) performed by laity. The Lector’s challenge is to give the Word of God a specific, assured, human voice — an Incarnation, of a sort — while at the same time ensuring the complete preëminence of the Word.

In Catholicism we worship with our whole bodies; if we perform a role in the liturgy, our personal actions become part of our fellow-worshipers’ experience of worship as well. “Noble simplicity” is a phrase much used by the Fathers of Vatican II to describe their ideal aesthetic for the Roman Rite. It would be hard to do better in describing a model of behavior for those who serve in our worship: neither punctilious, nor showy, nor careless, nor casual — but reflecting a close attention to what we do and how we do it, graceful because it is natural. This passage (composed of excerpts from Msgr. Peter J. Elliot’s excellent Ceremonies of the Modern Roman Rite) describes the state of mind and general demeanor very well:

Liturgical decorum begins with reverence and respect for sacred people, times, places, and objects. It is evident in the way [one] uses and values the “space” of the sanctuary... [one] always moves...without haste, with a sense of purpose and dignity...A natural sense of “what is fitting” also helps to eliminate distraction and disorder...Experience...can lead to a reverence which is natural and unaffected. The people see that [one] is “at home” with the procedures of Catholic worship. The ceremonial actions are not forced, nervous, or mechanical because, like the other skills we acquire in life, these actions gradually become part of us.

To sum up, everything done in the role of Lector must be — and must be perceptible as — a true offering to God, conscious and mindful; not only that, it must be an authentic personal act of worship, displaying the same deep unconscious individuality which makes our walk, our handwriting — and indeed our voices — such exquisite indications of our true nature. Stated in few words in black and white, this may seem daunting — but it is really quite simple, and mostly concerned with desire; mindfulness; and a proper orientation. Thank you — and may God bless you — for your desire and willingness to serve Him and His people as a Lector at Saint Gregory the Great.
THE MASS IS ONE LITURGY — although composed of many parts, it is a unity; and those of us who are participants must consider the timing of our actions such that the flow from one component to another makes this unity obvious (for a Lector, perhaps the most important issue is judging when to rise and come forward for the First Reading). What follows are guidelines for serving God and His people as a Lector in the context of Saint Gregory the Great’s Mass, together with some practical hints so you can do so with confidence, right from the start.

**MOVEMENT**

- **Arrive early for Mass; notify the Priest (or his representative in the Sacristy) that you are the Lector; and seat yourself well to the front of the Church.** If you have not been able to prepare your reading beforehand — by far the better course, and the only one by which the excellence to which we aspire can be achieved and maintained — or you wish to familiarize yourself with the passages’ appearance on the page, please arrive early enough to do so at the Lectern, as inconspicuously as possible. *The Lectionary should never be removed from the Lectern* — it contains the Word of God and should be maintained in a fitting and honored location.*

- **When the Priest has finished the Collect and all are singing “Amen,” rise from your seat and come forward: always come up — and return by — the center aisle.** As Father Bradford remains standing at the Epistle Side of the Altar during the Readings time your movements so you will reach the Lectern and are prepared to announce the First Reading so your movement does not draw undue attention and there is minimal, if any, interruption in the unified flow of the liturgy.

- **Before entering the Sanctuary reverence the Reserved Sacrament in the Tabernacle by genuflecting, if physically able (doing this at, or near, the Prie-Dieux will allow use of them for assistance in rising, if necessary): otherwise reverence the Sacrament with a bow or courtesy.** Then turn to your right and go to the Lectern.

- **We will follow the established custom of Saint Athanasius: announce the reading in a distinct voice, "A Reading from ______;" pause briefly; then commence the passage appointed.** Use this form, neither adding to it nor changing it. The introductions printed in the Lectionary are usually — but not always — correct; attached to this document you will find a list of

At the end of the First Reading pause briefly; then conclude in a distinct voice: “The Word of the Lord.” Sit in the chair set near the Lectern during the Psalm (if you wish to sing the Psalm set a copy of the Proper Insert on this chair before Mass). Remember when in the Sanctuary everything you do becomes part of the People’s experience of worship — Catholicism is a very physical religion; we express ourselves by our postures and demeanor as clearly as in our words. Do not cross your legs or arms or assume any other posture which might appear casual: we are in the physical Presence of our Lord and in His service.

At the beginning of “Amen” at the conclusion of the Psalm, rise from your seat and return to the Lectern.

Introduce, read, and conclude the Second Reading as you did the First; then leave the Lectern using the method by which you reached it (but omitting the genuflection) and return to your seat by way of the center aisle. Turn and reverence the Sacrament by genuflecting before entering your pew.

The Church desires the Word of God to be proclaimed from sources worthy of Holy Scripture.† If you need to read from a larger-print copy of the text place it on the Lectern inconspicuously, before Mass and remove it after Mass. *Never carry it to or from the Lectern.*

**READING**

Because your individuality must be present in your reading of the Word for you to be a good Lector it is much more difficult to give rules for “how to read” than it is for how to get back and forth to the Lectern; it is far easier to give advice on what not to do! The extremes (too often encountered) should both be avoided: Scripture should neither be read without inflection, (as though it had no meaning) nor should its inflection be overdone (lest the effect overshadow the meaning). Beyond this, perhaps one thought will do before moving on to a few practical helps: The great danger — and the great joy, and wonderful possibility for the movement of the Spirit — is that this particular bit of God’s Word will be proclaimed, on this particular day, to this particular portion of His people, by — you. The Holy Spirit has informed the Scripture; that same Holy Spirit will take
care of bringing its message home to the people — your job is to be the earthly, physical means of getting it to them. You are, if you will, one section of a very large and intricate stained glass window: the Light shining through it never changes; but — as It shines through you — It casts a different colored light into the church — a very beautiful one. All you must do is be yourself.

Make the Holy Spirit an active partner in your ministry — pray before engaging the Scripture you are appointed to read; pray before the Mass at which you will serve; pray at all times for guidance and support in this important apostolate.

Always engage your appointed Scriptures before you read them at Mass: this is crucial. There are few people — even professional actors — who are comfortable reading “cold,” and — except under the most extreme circumstances — a fitting respect for our Lord and His Church demands it.

If unsure, look up the pronunciation — especially the accentuation — of unusual names and practice them out loud.

Consider the original purpose of the Scripture(s) you will be reading: was it a letter? a harangue? a history? a folk tale? poetry? Then consider its structure: look particularly for parallelisms, and mark these (mentally or physically): they may be as simple as a balance between two words, or much more complex — with whole phrases (or even paragraphs) mirroring or contradicting each other: the structure of the Pauline epistles can be very complex.

Do not fall into the quite common error of observing the above rule...but accentuating the wrong idea. In particular, possessives are rarely the important item; rather the word to which they refer. To wit: in the psalm verse your rod and your staff, they comfort me the important pair is not “your” (and “me”) but “rod” and “staff.”

Always practice both readings out loud before your service at Mass. It is important this be done at full volume, not sotto voce. The result — if you have not done so — will convince you never to omit to do so in future.

It is very easy to speak too quickly in public; it is very difficult to speak too slowly. Let the sense of the words be your guide; but consciously moderate your diction. Public speaking is formal, not casual, speech, and requires a more measured pace than we are used to.
ONLINE RESOURCES

The Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition Bible is available online if you wish to read surrounding text or look at some future week’s readings: although our Ordinariate Calendar calls many Sundays by different names the Lections are the same as those used by the Church Universal. But beware! The Lectionary version of the texts is almost always significantly different from what you will see online! Much of this is predictable: because the lections are plucked out of context their beginnings are often changed to reintroduce who is speaking; to whom; and where; but there can be more subtle and unpredictable changes as well. If you use this online resource never copy texts to use when reading at Mass! They will not match those printed in the Lectionary!


You can get the whole set of readings for any given Sunday of the year by referencing the Date of the Sunday on this excellent site (remember: the names of the Sundays in our Ordinariate Calendar are different from those used by the rest of the Church, but the Readings on any given Sunday are the same):

<http://wordtoworship.com/lectionary/catholic>

If you then click the left-hand button at the bottom of any Reading you will be taken to the site mentioned above (Bible Gateway). In the drop-down menu of Bible translations at top left, make sure you select Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition, not “New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition” which you will see first. Click this link to see how this will/should look:


If you want to be completely self-contained and always prepared, you can be: Although the Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition Lectionary is out of print and has been for some years, all remaining copies were purchased by an Anglican-Use parish in Texas, Our Lady of the Atonement, who sells them, first come, first serve — for as long as they last. This is the book you read from at the Lectern — or, rather the “smaller half” of it, as the Lectionary is in two volumes, the larger containing the weekday
readings for the year. All wrapped, uncirculated, and — as of this writing — $100/set, with $25 shipping in the US for a total of $125.00.

<http://atonementparish.blogspot.com/>

The following is a large omnibus site aimed at Lectors in the body of the North American Catholic Church — as such, the Lectionary-specific items are of no use to us, as the translation is not that used by the Ordinariate. Many other items may be of interest, however. It is listed mostly because of its size — I do not vouch for the contents. Caveat lector / Suum cuique:

<http://www.lectorprep.org/>

* From General Introduction to the Lectionary (1981) First Part, Chapter II §2b:35, The Books for Proclamation of the Word of God in the Liturgy: The books containing the readings of the word of God, along with the ministers, the actions, the use of special locations, and other elements, evoke for the hearers the memory of the presence of God speaking to his people...in liturgical celebrations they are signs and symbols of supernatural realities.

† From General Introduction to the Lectionary (1981) First Part, Chapter II §2b:35–37, The Books for Proclamation of the Word of God in the Liturgy: Since in liturgical celebrations the books too serve as signs and symbols of the higher realities, care must be taken to ensure that they truly are worthy, dignified and beautiful...Because of the dignity of the word of God, the books of readings used in the celebration are not to be replaced by other pastoral aids, for example, by leaflets printed for the preparation of the readings by the faithful or for their personal meditation.
Old Testament

The pentateuch or Five Books of Moses
A Reading from the Book of Genesis
A Reading from the Book of Exodus
A Reading from the Book of Leviticus
A Reading from the Book of Numbers
A Reading from the Book of Deuteronomy

The Historical Books
A Reading from the Book of Joshua
A Reading from the Book of Judges
A Reading from the Book of Ruth
A Reading from the First Book of Samuel
A Reading from the Second Book of Samuel
A Reading from the First Book of Kings
A Reading from the Second Book of Kings
A Reading from the First Book of Chronicles
A Reading from the Second Book of Chronicles
A Reading from the Book of Ezra
A Reading from the Book of Nehemiah
A Reading from the Book of Tobit
A Reading from the Book of Judith
A Reading from the Book of Esther
A Reading from the First Book of Maccabees
A Reading from the Second Book of Maccabees

The Wisdom Books
A Reading from the Book of Job
A Reading from the Book of Proverbs
A Reading from the Book of Ecclesiastes (or Qoheleth)
A Reading from the Song of Songs
A Reading from the Book of Wisdom
A Reading from the Book of Ecclesiasticus or Sirach

The Major Prophets
A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah
A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah
A Reading from the Book of Lamentations
A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Baruch
A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel
A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Daniel

*The Twelve Minor Prophets*
A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Hosea
A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Joel
A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Amos
A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Obadiah
A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Jonah
A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Micah
A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Nahum
A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Habakkuk
A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Zephaniah
A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Haggai
A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Zechariah
A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Malachi

**New Testament**

*[The Canonic Gospels]*

*Apostolic History*
A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles

*The Pauline Epistles*
A Reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans
A Reading from the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians
A Reading from the Second Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians
A Reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Galatians
A Reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians
A Reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Philippians
A Reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Colossians
A Reading from the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Thessalonians
A Reading from the Second Letter of Saint Paul to the Thessalonians
A Reading from the First Letter of Saint Paul to Timothy
A Reading from the Second Letter of Saint Paul to Timothy
A Reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to Titus
A Reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to Philemon
A Reading from the Letter to the Hebrews
Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.