

The Reading Ministry in St Joseph's Parish, Malvern

Yes, as the rain and the snow come down from the heavens and do not return without watering the earth, making it yield and giving growth to provide seed for the sower and bread for the eating, so the word that goes from my mouth does not return to me empty, without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it was sent to do.

Isaiah 55:10–11

Indeed, the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart.

Letter to the Hebrews 4:12

The Proclamation of the Word to and for the parish community gathered in St Joseph's church and at the Cabrini chapel is a central part of the celebration of Mass in the parish. These notes are designed to assist you, as a Minister of the Word, to carry out this ministry in a way that allows the community to hear the Word of God, and to have the opportunity to reflect on what they have heard.

Preparing to Read

Remember that if you are unable to read on your rostered day, you should contact another rostered reader to swap dates. If you don't have a contact list or need any other assistance with this, contact the roster co-ordinator by email or phone.

Arrive about 10 minutes before Mass so that you can complete your preparations.

Preparing the text

No matter how experienced, all readers must be well prepared for each reading. Your preparation should be in prayerful reflection, and also by reading the words out loud a number of times. It follows that preparation will take time so please allow yourself that time, at home and/or by arriving well before the start of Mass.

There are a number of different authorised translations of the Bible. At St Joseph's the Lectionary uses the New Jerusalem Bible version (NJB or JB). As this translation is copyrighted, it is not readily available online.

However, the Sunday readings are available to all registered users of the St Joseph's website. The website also has additional notes on the readings and other resources to assist you.

TIPS:

Register for the parish website so that you can easily access the correct text for the readings used in St Joseph's parish. To register, simply go to <http://stjosephsmalvern.org.au> , click **Register** at the bottom left of the home page, then follow the steps to complete the process.

The pronunciation of biblical names and places can be difficult. To assist you, there are some useful websites, and there are apps you can buy and use on your iPad or tablet device. Or you can use printed phonetic pronunciations from the publication, *Break Open the Word* published by the Archdiocese of Brisbane. There is a copy available to registered users of the parish website.

Practical Matters

If there is a Mass co-ordinator, please let them know as soon as you arrive. If they are not aware you are present at least 5 minutes before Mass starts, they will try to organise a replacement reader. Be alert for that if you are running late for some unavoidable reason.

If there is no Mass co-ordinator, let the Celebrant know that you have arrived.

If you are reading the Welcome, you need to know which Sunday or Feast is being celebrated, as well as the name and number of the first hymn. This information is available on the parish bulletin, and from the choir. There is a printed text to guide you in what to say, and it is kept in the priest's sacristy or with the Book of the Gospels.

Go to the lectern and confirm that the Lectionary is in position. Read through the text as the page layout may be different from the one you used on the website. If required, confirm that the microphone is On but do not adjust the position of the microphone at St Joseph's.

Check with the choir if they are singing the Responsorial Psalm. If not, then if you are the first reader you will read it. Read the Response and Verses a number of times in preparation.

To maintain the flow of the liturgy, it is best if you are seated on the same side as the lectern.

Reading during Mass

The Welcome

It is the custom at St Joseph's for the second reader to read a short welcome, once the Celebrant signals you to do so. (See *Practical Matters*)

Procession

At the 10am Mass, you may process at the start of Mass, carrying the Book of the Gospels. At Cabrini Masses both readers may process, accompanying the Celebrant.

If you are carrying the Book of the Gospels, hold it up so that the community can see the Book. Walk directly in front of the Celebrant, and walk in a measured way at all times. Do not stop as you approach the altar; walk straight up the steps and place the Book midway along the front area of the altar. After you place the Book, turn to your right then walk back and stand on the Celebrant's left, and bow your head towards the altar when the Celebrant bows or genuflects.

NOTE: In the context of normal practice in the Catholic liturgy, a bow is 'simple', that is, it is a **bow of the head, towards the altar or crucifix**. In other words, do NOT perform a deeper bow from the shoulders or waist. In liturgical practice, deeper bows are reserved for the clergy, and used only in special situations.

Beginning the Proclamation

Walk to the lectern so that you are there in good time to maintain the flow of the liturgy. There is no need to bow as you approach. However, if you are coming from the far side of the church, you should stop opposite the centre of the altar, bow your head, then walk to the lectern.

To begin the reading of the Word, simply start with: 'A reading from the Book of ...' or 'A Reading from the Second Letter of ...'. These are ritual statements and should be used consistently by all readers at each Mass. They do not require modification.

As you read, please take your time. Don't be afraid to pause between phrases within sentences, though the text must also flow. Avoid the temptation to dramatise the text with your voice, as this is often intrusive for those listening to the proclamation of the Word.

It helps to break longer sentences into meaningful phrases. This is especially important for any complex sentences you noted during your preparation time. By giving emphasis to a small number of key words and pausing so that you break up the information for the community, you will help to bring out the meaning. This is especially important for the ‘contrast’ or counter-balanced ideas and phrases that are commonly used in Scripture, especially in Paul’s letters, eg. Adam and Christ, light and darkness, law and Spirit.

TIPS:

Do NOT say ‘The first reading is ...’ or ‘The second reading is ...’. It is self-evident to the congregation that it is the first or second reading.

Do NOT read out any other text eg. text printed in red in the Lectionary which might be a brief summary of the reading. Nor should you read out the chapter and verse numbers of the particular text.

Finishing the Proclamation

To conclude the reading of the Word, pause for 3–5 seconds then say ‘**The Word of the Lord**’. This is an invitation to the community to affirm what they have heard proclaimed, so it should be said after a suitable pause.

Walk back to your place, unless you are leading the Responsorial Psalm.

If the Book of the Gospels is being used and you are the second reader, move the Lectionary to the side table as you leave the lectern.

TIPS:

Do NOT say ‘**This is** the Word of the Lord’ even if that is written in the Lectionary.

Do NOT stop, turn or bow as you leave. That is not necessary.

Responsorial Psalm

You will know from your preparation if the choir is singing the Responsorial Psalm or if you are reading it.

NOTE: Remember that the whole psalm is the response to the first reading, both the antiphon and the verses. The congregation know how to respond, so you don’t need to ‘coach’ them. It is most important that you to leave them the ‘space’ to make their response.

Start by simply reading out the Response (ie. the people's antiphon; usually printed after a **red R**), and then wait for the congregation to repeat it.

TIPS:

Do NOT say 'Our response to the Psalm is ...' or announce 'The Responsorial Psalm: The response is ...'. As with the readings, this is self-evident to the community.

AVOID 'coaching' or 'leading' unless absolutely necessary. If it is a long or unfamiliar antiphon, take your time to say it, and break it into manageable phrases. Resist the temptation to join in the community response, except in a quiet voice. The volume of your voice from the microphone will 'talk over' the congregation and make it harder for them to make their initial response and remember all the words correctly.

Alleluia Verse

The Alleluia verse is only used when the Alleluia is sung as part of the Gospel procession.

Leave the lectern after completing the second reading, move the Lectionary to the side table if required, and return to your seat. It is not necessary to stop, turn or bow after you leave.

General Intercessions (Prayer of the Faithful)

Walk to the lectern so that you are there in good time to maintain the flow of the liturgy, ie. approach the lectern while the community is still reciting the Creed. You should always be in position BEFORE the Celebrant commences the opening prayer.

Please **remain at the lectern** until the Celebrant has finished the closing prayer, then return to your seat. The intercessions you read out are one part of the community's prayer, so always wait until the Celebrant finishes the closing prayer.

In the words of the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, “sacred Scripture is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy. From it are taken the readings, which are explained in the homily and the psalms that are sung. From Scripture the petitions, prayers and liturgical hymns receive their inspiration and substance. From Scripture the liturgical actions and signs draw their meaning”. Even more, it must be said that Christ himself “is present in his word, since it is he who speaks when Scripture is read in Church”. Indeed, “the liturgical celebration becomes the continuing, complete and effective presentation of God’s word. The word of God, constantly proclaimed in the liturgy, is always a living and effective word through the power of the Holy Spirit. It expresses the Father’s love that never fails in its effectiveness towards us”.

Pope Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, 52 (2010)

*On behalf of St Joseph’s parish, thank you for
volunteering and for continuing to act as
a Minister of the Word.*