

DESCRIPTION OF READERS' MINISTRY AT HOLY CROSS

May 2026

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.ⁱ

The liturgy of the word should be celebrated in a way that fosters meditation. A speaking style that is clear, audible and intelligent is the first means of transmitting the word of God properly to the congregation.ⁱⁱ

Rota

There is a rota for Sunday readers, which is prepared by Neville Simmons. You should arrange a substitute if you are unable to read on your designated day. Please see separate sheet for readers' contact details.

There is not a rota for Thursday. Any reader should be ready to read.

Preparation

You should prepare your reading in advance by reading it through with thought and prayer, so that when you read at Mass you do so with understanding of the text and having worked out any difficult syntax or pronunciation. You should read the readings aloud at home to help identify where stresses should lie, pace and pauses.ⁱⁱⁱ It can be helpful to record yourself – so easily done now with a smart phone. In general, you should read more slowly than you expect. Vary the pace depending on the text. The verb is always crucial in a sentence. Pay attention to punctuation, for example, pausing with commas and longer with full stops.

A new translation of the lectionary was introduced in Advent 2024, so any previous texts will be out of date. The new missal is available from the Catholic Truth Society or online at Universalis. The parish newsletter identifies the Liturgical Year (A, B or C) and the Sunday. There are copies of a Mass sheet with the readings in the church each Sunday.

The bidding prayers should be either on the reader's front bench or on the ambo in good time before Sunday Mass. You should aim to read through the bidding prayers before Mass starts. Usually, the authors of bidding prayers will email them to the designated reader ahead of time.

When you read at Mass you are proclaiming the Word of God. It is an important Ministry. Reading should be prayerful and reverent. Good reading is clear, easily audible throughout the Church, and helps the congregation to understand the text.

Process

At Holy Cross, we only have one reader each Sunday, who reads the first and second readings, the psalm, the Gospel acclamation and the bidding prayers. The front bench on the left is reserved for the reader. You should let the welcomers know when you arrive at the church.

First reading

The reader stands after the opening prayer. You should make a full bow towards the altar before ascending the steps to the ambo.

The lectionary will be on the ambo, open at the correct page. You should adjust the microphone so that it is the right height for you (quite close to level of your mouth and pointing towards it).

A brief prayerful silence should be observed at the ambo before you start to read, to give the congregation time to settle down and you to prepare yourself.

You announce the reading saying: 'A reading from the Book of/Prophet...' (**not** 'the first reading is...'). Having announced the reading, pause before starting to read.

You should read clearly, slowly, and audibly. The whole congregation should be able to hear you and to take in what you say.

Leave a prayerful pause at the end of the reading before concluding with 'The word of the Lord' (**not** 'This is the Word of the Lord').

Psalm

First read the response, which the congregation repeats. Do **not** say 'the responsorial psalm is' or anything similar. You and the congregation alternate verse and response. It helps to look up at the end of each verse so that the congregation knows when to say the response, particularly on Thursday when they probably do not have the text in front of them. You might want to give a hand signal. On Thursday, it helps for the reader to say the response with the congregation.

Pause between the psalm and announcing the second reading.

Second reading

You announce the reading saying: 'A reading from the Letter of ...' (**not** 'the second reading...')

Leave a prayerful pause at the end of the reading and conclude with 'The word of the Lord' (**not** 'This is the Word of the Lord').

Gospel Acclamation

On Sunday, the choir sings the Alleluia and you read the Gospel Acclamation. Wait until the Alleluia is finished before returning to your seat. On Thursday, you say the Alleluia, unless you are able to sing it yourself or someone in the congregation does so.

Prayers of the Faithful (bidding prayers)

You return to the ambo after the creed for the bidding prayers. You may need to check that the microphone is still switched on as the priest sometimes turns it off. The priest should read the Invitation (but sometimes does not, in which case the reader should). The priest also reads the concluding prayer. You should leave a definite pause between each prayer and the response ('Lord hear us' or an alternative). When 'In a moment of silence' is invoked, allow a longer silence so that the congregation has time to make their own petitions. Returning to your seat, you should switch off the microphone, if you are able, to conserve the battery. [This will change when we have a new sound system.]

Weekday Mass

On a weekday, there is only one reading, unless it is a feast day. Any one of the readers present should be ready to read. Decide amongst yourselves before Mass starts, if possible, who is going to read. The reader reads both the reading and the psalm (and second reading if there is one). You should also read (or sing) the Alleluia and Gospel acclamation. You should if possible read through the reading and psalm in the lectionary on the ambo before Mass starts, if you have not already done so at home.

Co-ordinator

The co-ordinator is responsible for keeping up to date the list of readers with their contact details and for informing the rota organizer (Neville Simmons) of any changes. You should let the co-ordinator know if your contact details change or if you wish to come off the list of readers.

Readers should feel free to contact the co-ordinator with any problems which may arise or suggestions for improving the way our ministry is carried out.

The co-ordinator should arrange induction for a new reader and organize training and formation for other readers if this is desired. Ideally, a new reader should be

commissioned by a priest or deacon. The current group of readers were commissioned at a 'renewal hour' led by Hugo Lomax in April 2026.

Frances Nieduszynska
3 May 2026

ⁱ *Celebrating the Mass: a pastoral introduction*. Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 2005, CTS (para. 41)

ⁱⁱ *General Introduction to the Lectionary* (second edition). Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, 1981 (paras. 14 and 28)

ⁱⁱⁱ Oliver Treanor (2018), *Speaking on God's Behalf: how to be a great reader in Church*, gives helpful advice on how to read well at Mass. Fr Petroc has a copy. It is available from www.paulineuk.org (£13.99)