

LECTIONARY FOR MASS

INTRODUCTION

PROLOGUE

Chapter I

General Principles for the Liturgical Celebration of the Word of God

1. Preliminaries

a. Importance of the Word of God in a liturgical celebration

1. Vatican Council II,¹ the teaching of the Popes,² and various postconciliar documents of the Roman Congregations³ have already made many excellent statements about the importance of the Word of God and about re-establishing the use of Scripture in every celebration of the Liturgy. The Introduction of the 1969 edition of the Order of Readings for Mass has clearly stated and briefly explained some of the more important principles.⁴

On the occasion of this new edition of the Order of Readings for Mass, requests have come from many quarters for a more detailed exposition of the same principles. In response, this expanded and more helpful arrangement of the Introduction first gives a general statement on the close relationship between the Word of God and the liturgical celebration,⁵ then deals in greater detail with the Word of God in the celebration of Mass, and, finally, explains the precise structure of the Order of Readings for Mass.

1 See especially Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 7, 24, 33, 35, 48, 51, 52, 56; Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei verbum*, nos. 1, 21, 25, 26; Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, *Ad gentes*, no. 6; Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, no. 18.

2 Among the spoken or written papal statements, see especially: Paul VI, Motu Proprio *Ministeria quaedam*, 15 Aug. 1972, no. V: AAS 64 (1972) 532; Apostolic Exhortation *Mariialis cultus*, 2 Feb. 1974, no. 12: AAS 66 (1974) 125-126; Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 8 Dec. 1975, nos. 28, 43, 47: AAS 68 (1976) 24-25, 33-34, 36-37. John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Scripturarum thesaurus*, 25 April 1979: in *Nova Vulgata Bibliorum Sacrorum* (Vatican Polyglot Press, 1979) V-VIII; Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi tradendae*, 16 Oct. 1979, nos. 23, 27, and 48: AAS 71 (1979) 1296-1297, 1298-1299 and 1316; Letter *Dominicae Cena*, 24 Feb. 1980, no. 10: AAS 72 (1980) 134-137.

3 Cf., for example, Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, 25 May 1967, no. 10: AAS 59 (1967) 547-548. Congregation for Divine Worship, Instruction *Liturgicae instaurationes*, 5 Sept. 1970, no. 2: AAS 62 (1970) 695-696. Congregation for the Clergy, *Directorium catechisticum generale*, 11 April 1971, nos. 10-12 and 25: AAS 64 (1972) 106-107 and 114. Congregation for Divine Worship, General Instruction of the Roman Missal, nos. 29, 31, 46, 55, 93, 95, 355, 359. Congregation for Catholic Education, Instruction on liturgical formation in seminaries *In ecclesiasticam futurorum*, 3 June 1979, nos. 11, 52, and Appendix no. 15. Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, Instruction *Inaestimabile Donum*, 3 April 1980, nos. 1, 2, 3: AAS 72 (1980) 333-334.

4 Cf. *The Roman Missal* revised by decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, published by authority of Pope Paul VI [hereafter, *The Roman Missal*], *Lectionary for Mass* (1969; Eng. tr. 1969), Introduction, nos. 1-7; decree of promulgation: AAS 61 (1969) 548-549.

5 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 35, 56. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 8 Dec. 1975, nos. 28, 47: AAS 68 (1976) 24-25, 36-37. John Paul II, Letter *Dominicae Cena*, 24 Feb. 1980, nos. 10, 11, 12: AAS 72 (1980) 134-146.

b. **Terms used to refer to the Word of God**

2. For the sake of clear and precise language on this topic, a definition of terms might well be expected as a prerequisite. Nevertheless this Introduction will simply use the same terms employed in conciliar and postconciliar documents. Furthermore it will use 'Sacred Scripture' and 'Word of God' interchangeably throughout when referring to the books written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, thus avoiding any confusion of language or meaning.⁶

c. **Significance of the Word of God in the Liturgy**

3. The many riches contained in the one Word of God are admirably brought out in the different kinds of liturgical celebrations and liturgical assemblies. This takes place as the unfolding mystery of Christ is recalled during the course of the liturgical year, as the Church's Sacraments and sacramentals are celebrated, or as the faithful respond individually to the Holy Spirit working within them.⁷ For them the liturgical celebration, based primarily on the Word of God and sustained by it, becomes a new event and enriches the Word itself with new meaning and power. Thus in the Liturgy the Church faithfully adheres to the way Christ himself read and explained the Scriptures, beginning with the 'today' of his coming forward in the synagogue and urging all to search the Scriptures.⁸

2. **Liturgical Celebration of the Word of God**

a. **Proper character of the Word of God in the liturgical celebration**

4. In the celebration of the Liturgy the Word of God is not voiced in only one way,⁹ nor does it always stir the hearts of the hearers with the same power. Always, however, Christ is present in his Word;¹⁰ as he carries out the mystery of salvation, he sanctifies us and offers the Father perfect worship.¹¹

Moreover, the Word of God unceasingly calls to mind and extends the plan of salvation, which achieves its fullest expression in the Liturgy. The liturgical celebration becomes therefore the continuing, complete, and effective presentation of God's Word.

That Word constantly proclaimed in the Liturgy is always, then, a living, active word¹² through the power of the Holy Spirit. It expresses the Father's love that never fails in its effectiveness toward us.

6 For example, the terms, *Word of God, Sacred Scripture, Old and New Testament, reading(s) of the Word of God, reading(s) from Sacred Scripture, celebration(s) of the Word of God*, etc.

7 Thus the same text may be read or used for diverse reasons on diverse occasions and celebrations of the liturgical year; this has to be remembered in the Homily, pastoral exegesis, and catechesis. The indexes of this volume will show, for example, that Romans 6 or 8 is used in various liturgical seasons and celebrations of the Sacraments and sacramentals.

8 Cf. Luke 4:16-21; 24:25-35 and 44-49.

9 In the celebration of Mass, for example, there is *proclamation, reading*, etc. (see General Instruction of the Roman Missal, nos. 43, 45, 134, 175, 191, 275, 276). There are also other celebrations of the Word of God in the Roman Pontifical, Ritual, and Liturgy of the Hours, as revised by decree of Vatican Council II.

10 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 7, 33. Mark 16:19-20; Matthew 28:20. St. Augustine, *Sermo* 85, 1: 'The Gospel is the mouth of Christ. He is seated at the right hand of the Father, yet continues to speak on earth.' (PL 38:520; see also *In Io. Ev. tract* 30, 1: PL 35, 1632; CCL 36, 289). *Pontificale Romano-Germanicum*: 'As the Gospel is read Christ speaks with his own mouth to the people...; the Gospel resounds in the church as though Christ himself were speaking to them.' (See C. Vogel and R. Elze, eds., *Le Pontifical Romano-germanique du dixième siècle. Texte I*, Vatican City, 1963/XCIV, 18, 334); *idem*: 'At the moment Christ approaches, that is at the gospel of the Mass, we put aside our staffs, because we have no need of human assistance.' (*ibid.*, XCIV, 23, 335).

11 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no 7.

12 Cf. Hebrews 4:12.

b. The Word of God in the plan of salvation

5. When in celebrating the Liturgy the Church proclaims both the Old and New Testament, it is proclaiming one and the same mystery of Christ.

The New Testament lies hidden in the Old; the Old Testament comes fully to light in the New.¹³ Christ himself is the centre and fullness of all of Scripture, as he is of the entire Liturgy.¹⁴ Thus the Scriptures are the living waters from which all who seek life and salvation must drink.

The more profound our understanding of the liturgical celebration, the higher our appreciation of the importance of God's Word. Whatever we say of the one, we can in turn say of the other, because each recalls the mystery of Christ and each in its own way causes that mystery to be ever present.

c. The Word of God in the liturgical participation of the faithful

6. In celebrating the Liturgy, the Church faithfully echoes the 'Amen' that Christ, the mediator between God and humanity, uttered once for all as he shed his blood to seal God's new covenant in the Holy Spirit.¹⁵

When God shares his Word with us, he awaits our response, that is, our listening and our adoring 'in Spirit and truth' (John 4:23). The Holy Spirit makes our response effective, so that what we hear in the celebration of the Liturgy we carry out in the way we live: 'Be doers of the word and not hearers only' (James 1:22).

The liturgical celebration and the faithful's participation receive outward expression in actions, gestures, and words. These derive their full meaning not simply from their origin in human experience but from the Word of God and the economy of salvation, their point of reference. Accordingly, the faithful's participation in the Liturgy increases to the degree that as they listen to the Word of God spoken in the Liturgy they strive harder to commit themselves to the Word of God made flesh in Christ. They endeavour to conform their way of life to what they celebrate in the Liturgy, and then in turn to bring to the celebration of the Liturgy all that they do in life.¹⁶

3. The Word of God in the Life of the 'People of the Covenant'

a. The Word of God in the Church's life

7. In the hearing of God's Word the Church is built up and grows, and in the signs of the liturgical celebration God's many wonderful, past works in the history of salvation are symbolically presented anew. God in turn makes use of the assembly of the faithful who celebrate the Liturgy in order that his Word may speed on in triumph and his name be exalted among all peoples.¹⁷

13 Cf. St. Augustine, *Quaestionum in Heptateuchum liber 2*, 73: PL 34, 623; CCL 33, 106. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei verbum*, no. 16.

14 Cf. St. Jerome: 'If, as St. Paul says (1 Corinthians 1:24), Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, anyone who does not know the Scriptures does not know the power of God or his wisdom. For not to know the Scriptures is not to know Christ' (*Commentarii in Isaiam prophetam. Prologus*: PL 24, 17A; CCL 73, 1). Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei verbum*, no. 25.

15 Cf. 2 Corinthians 1:20-22.

16 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 10.

17 Cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:1.

Whenever, therefore, the Church, gathered by the Holy Spirit for liturgical celebration,¹⁸ announces and proclaims the Word of God, she has the experience of being a new people in whom the covenant made in the past is fulfilled. Baptism and Confirmation in the Spirit have made all the faithful messengers of God's Word because of the grace of hearing they have received. They must therefore be the bearers of the same Word in the Church and in the world, at least by the witness of their way of life.

The Word of God proclaimed in the celebration of his mysteries does not address present conditions alone, but looks back to past events and forward to what is yet to come. Thus God's Word shows us what we should hope for with such a longing that in this changing world our hearts will be set on the place of our true joy.¹⁹

b. How the Word of God is proposed in the Church

- 8 By Christ's own will there is an ordered diversity of members in the new People of God, and each has different duties and responsibilities towards the Word of God. Accordingly, the faithful listen to God's Word and dwell on its meaning, but only those expound the Word of God who have the office of teaching by virtue of Ordination or who have been entrusted with exercising that ministry.

This is how in teaching, life, and worship the Church keeps alive and passes on to every generation all that she is, all that she believes. Thus with the passage of the centuries, the Church is ever to advance toward the fullness of divine truth until God's Word is wholly accomplished in her.²⁰

c. Connection between the Word of God proclaimed and the working of the Holy Spirit

9. The working of the Holy Spirit is needed if the Word of God is to make what we hear outwardly have its effect inwardly. Because of the Holy Spirit's inspiration and support, the Word of God becomes the foundation of the liturgical celebration and the rule and support of all our life.

The working of the Holy Spirit precedes, accompanies, and brings to completion the whole celebration of the Liturgy. But the Spirit also brings home²¹ to each person individually everything that in the proclamation of the Word of God is spoken for the good of the whole assembly of the faithful. In strengthening the unity of all, the Holy Spirit at the same time fosters a diversity of gifts and furthers their multiform operation.

d. Close relationship between the Word of God and the mystery of the Eucharist

10. The Church has honoured the Word of God and the Eucharistic mystery with the same reverence, although not with the same worship, and has always and everywhere intended and endorsed such honour. Moved by the example of its Founder, the Church has never ceased to celebrate his Paschal Mystery by coming together to read 'in all the Scriptures the things written about him' (Luke 24:27) and to carry out the work of salvation through the celebration of the Memorial of the Lord and through the Sacraments. 'The preaching

18 Cf. *The Roman Missal*, Collects A, B, and C in the Mass for the Church. St. Cyprian, *De oratione dominica* 23: PL 4, 553; CSEL 3/2, 285; CCL 3 A, 105. St. Augustine, *Sermo* 71, 20, 33: PL 38, 463ff.

19 Cf. *The Roman Missal*, Collect for the Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time.

20 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei verbum*, no. 8.

21 Cf. John 14:15-17, 25-26; 15:26-16:15.

of the Word is necessary for the sacramental ministry. For the Sacraments are sacraments of faith and faith has its origin and sustenance in the Word.²²

The Church is nourished spiritually at the table of God's Word and at the table of the Eucharist:²³ from the one she grows in wisdom and from the other in holiness. In the Word of God the divine covenant is announced; in the Eucharist the new and everlasting covenant is renewed. The spoken Word of God brings to mind the history of salvation; the Eucharist embodies it in the sacramental signs of the Liturgy.

It can never be forgotten, therefore, that the divine Word read and proclaimed by the Church in the Liturgy has as its one goal the sacrifice of the New Covenant and the banquet of grace, that is, the Eucharist. The celebration of Mass in which the Word is heard and the Eucharist is offered and received forms but one single act of divine worship.²⁴ That act offers the sacrifice of praise to God and makes available to God's creatures the fullness of redemption.

22 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, no. 4.

23 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 51; Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, no. 18; also Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei verbum*, no. 21; Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, *Ad gentes*, no. 6. See General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 8.

24 Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 56.

PART ONE

The Word of God in the Celebration of Mass

Chapter II

Celebration of the Liturgy of the Word at Mass

1. Elements of the Liturgy of the Word and their Rites

11. 'Readings from Scripture and the chants between the Readings form the main part of the Liturgy of the Word. The Homily, Profession of Faith, and Universal Prayer or Prayer of the Faithful expand and complete this part of the Mass.'²⁵

a. Biblical readings

12. In the celebration of Mass the biblical readings with their accompanying scriptural chants may not be omitted, shortened, or worse still, replaced by nonbiblical readings.²⁶ For it is from the Word of God handed down in writing that even now 'God is speaking to his people'²⁷ and it is from the continued use of Scripture that the People of God, docile to the Holy Spirit under the light of faith, receive the power to be Christ's living witnesses before the world.
13. The reading of the Gospel is the high point of the Liturgy of the Word. For this the other readings, in their established sequence from the Old to the New Testament, prepare the assembly.
14. A speaking style on the part of the readers that is audible, clear, and intelligent is the first means of transmitting the Word of God properly to the assembly. The readings, taken from the approved editions,²⁸ may be sung in a way suited to different languages. This singing, however, must serve to stress the words, not obscure them. On occasions when the readings are in Latin, they are to be sung to the melody given in the *Ordo cantus Missae*.²⁹
15. There may be concise introductions before the readings, especially the first. The style proper to such comments must be respected, that is, they must be simple, faithful to the text, brief, well prepared, and properly varied to suit the text they introduce.³⁰
16. In a Mass with a congregation the readings are always to be proclaimed at the ambo.³¹
17. Of all the rites connected with the Liturgy of the Word, the reverence due to the Gospel reading must receive special attention.³² Where there is a Book of the Gospels that has

25 General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 33.

26 Cf. Congregation for Divine Worship, Instruction *Liturgicae instaurationes*, 5 Sept. 1970, no. 2: AAS 62 (1970) 695–696. John Paul II, Letter *Dominicae Cenae*, 24 Feb. 1980, no. 10: AAS 72 (1980) 134–137. Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, Instruction *Inestimabile Donum*, 3 April 1980, no. 1: AAS 72 (1980) 333.

27 Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 33.

28 Cf. no. 111 of this Introduction.

29 Cf. *Missale Romanum* ex Decreta Sacrosancti Œcumenici Concilii Vaticani II instauratum, auctoritate Pauli Pp. VI promulgatum, *Ordo cantus Missæ* (ed typ., 1972), *Prænotanda*, nos. 4, 6, 10.

30 Cf. General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 31.

31 Cf. *ibid.*, no. 309 and nos. 32–34 of this Introduction.

32 Cf. General Instruction of the Roman Missal, nos. 60, 134.

been carried by the Deacon or reader during the entrance procession,³³ it is most fitting that the Deacon, or a Priest when there is no Deacon, take the book from the altar³⁴ and carry it to the ambo. He is preceded by servers with candles and incense or other symbols of reverence that may be customary. As the faithful stand and acclaim the Lord, they show honour to the Book of the Gospels. The Deacon who is to read the Gospel, bowing in front of the one presiding, asks and receives the blessing. When no Deacon is present, the Priest, bowing before the altar, prays quietly: *Cleanse my heart and my lips...*³⁵

At the ambo the one who proclaims the Gospel greets the people, who are standing, and announces the reading as he makes the Sign of the Cross on forehead, mouth, and breast. If incense is used, he next incenses the book, then reads the Gospel. When finished, he kisses the book, saying the appointed words quietly.

Even if the Gospel itself is not sung, it is appropriate for *The Lord be with you, A reading from the holy Gospel...*, and at the end *The Gospel of the Lord* to be sung, in order that the assembly may also sing its acclamations. This is both a way of bringing out the importance of the Gospel reading and of stirring up the faith of those who hear it.

18. At the conclusion of the other readings, *The word of the Lord* may be sung, even by someone other than the reader; all respond with the acclamation. In this way the gathered assembly pays reverence to the Word of God it has listened to in faith and gratitude.

b. Responsorial Psalm

19. The Responsorial Psalm, also called the Gradual, has great liturgical and pastoral significance because it is 'an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word.'³⁶ Accordingly, the people must be continually instructed on the way to perceive the Word of God speaking in the Psalms and to turn these Psalms into the prayer of the Church. This, of course, 'will be achieved more readily if a deeper understanding of the Psalms, in the meaning in which they are used in the Liturgy, is more diligently promoted among the clergy and communicated to all the faithful by means of appropriate catechesis.'³⁷

A brief remark may be helpful about the choice of the Psalm and response as well as their correspondence to the readings.

20. As a rule the Responsorial Psalm should be sung. There are two established ways of singing the Psalm after the First Reading: responsorially and directly. In responsorial singing, which, as far as possible, is to be given preference, the psalmist or cantor of the Psalm sings the Psalm verse and the whole congregation joins in by singing the response. In direct singing of the Psalm there is no intervening response by the community; either the psalmist or cantor of the Psalm sings the Psalm alone as the community listens, or else all sing it together.
21. The singing of the Psalm, or even of the response alone, is a great help towards understanding and meditating on the Psalm's spiritual meaning.

33 Cf. *ibid.*, nos. 120–122.

34 Cf. *ibid.*, nos. 133, 175.

35 Cf. *The Roman Missal*, Order of Mass, 'Liturgy of the Word: The Gospel'.

36 General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 61.

37 Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution *Laudis canticum* in *The Liturgy of the Hours [The Divine Office]* revised by decree of the Second Vatican Council and published by authority of Pope Paul VI (1971; Eng. tr. 1974). See also Constitution on the Liturgy, nos. 24, 90. Congregation of Rites, Instruction on music in the Liturgy, *Musicam sacram*, 5 March 1967, no. 39: AAS 59 (1967) 311. General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours, nos. 23 and 109. Congregation for Catholic Education, *Ratio fundamentalis* [Basic Plan for Priestly Formation], no. 53.

To foster the congregation's singing, every means available in the various cultures is to be employed. In particular use is to be made of all the relevant options provided in the Order of Readings for Mass³⁸ regarding responses corresponding to the different liturgical seasons.

22. When not sung, the Psalm after the reading is to be recited in a manner conducive to meditation on the Word of God.³⁹

The Responsorial Psalm is sung or recited by the psalmist or cantor at the ambo.⁴⁰

c. Acclamation before the reading of the Gospel

23. The Alleluia or, as the liturgical season requires, the Verse before the Gospel, is also a 'rite or act standing by itself.'⁴¹ It serves as the assembled faithful's greeting of welcome to the Lord who is about to speak to them and as an expression of their faith through song.

The Alleluia or the Verse before the Gospel must be sung and during it all stand. It is not to be sung only by the cantor who intones it or by the choir, but by the whole congregation together.⁴²

d. Homily

24. Through the course of the liturgical year the Homily sets forth the mysteries of faith and the standards of the Christian life on the basis of the sacred text. Beginning with the Constitution on the Liturgy, the Homily as part of the Liturgy of the Word⁴³ has been repeatedly and strongly recommended and in some cases it is obligatory. As a rule it is to be given by the one presiding.⁴⁴ The purpose of the Homily at Mass is that the spoken Word of God and the Liturgy of the Eucharist may together become 'a proclamation of God's wonderful works in the history of salvation, the mystery of Christ.'⁴⁵ Through the readings and Homily Christ's Paschal Mystery is proclaimed; and it becomes present through the sacrifice of the Mass.⁴⁶ Moreover Christ himself is also always present and active in the preaching of his Church.⁴⁷

Whether the Homily explains the biblical Word of God proclaimed in the readings or some other text of the Liturgy,⁴⁸ it must always lead the community of the faithful to celebrate the Eucharist wholeheartedly, 'so that they may hold fast in their lives to what they have grasped by their faith.'⁴⁹ From this living explanation, the Word of God proclaimed in the readings and the Church's celebration of the day's Liturgy will have greater impact. But

38 Cf. nos. 89–90 of this Introduction.

39 Cf. General Instruction of the Roman Missal, nos. 38 and 63c.

40 Cf. *ibid.*, no. 309 and nos. 32ff, of this Introduction.

41 Cf. General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 63c.

42 Cf. also *ibid.*, nos. 37–39. *Missale Romanum* ex Decreto Sacrosancti Concilii Œcumenici Vaticani II instauratum, auctoritate Pauli Pp. VI promulgatum, *Ordo cantus Missæ*, *Prænotanda*, nos. 7–9; *Graduale Romanum* (1974), *Prænotanda*, no. 7; *Graduale simplex* (2nd ed. typ., 1975), *Prænotanda*, no. 16.

43 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 52. Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Inter Œcumenici*, 26 Sept. 1964, no. 54: AAS 56 (1964) 890.

44 Cf. General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 66.

45 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 35, 2.

46 Cf. *ibid.*, nos. 6 and 47.

47 Cf. Paul VI, Encyclical *Mysterium Fidei*, 3 Sept. 1965: AAS 57 (1965) 753. Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, *Ad gentes*, no. 9. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 8 Dec. 1975, no. 43: AAS 69 (1976) 33–34.

48 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 35, 2. General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 65.

49 VSecond Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 10.

this demands that the Homily be truly the fruit of meditation, carefully prepared, neither too long nor too short, and suited to all those present, even children and the uneducated.⁵⁰

At a concelebration, the celebrant or one of the concelebrants as a rule gives the Homily.⁵¹

25. On the prescribed days, that is, Sundays and Holydays of Obligation, there must be a Homily in all Masses celebrated with a congregation, even Masses on the preceding evening; the Homily may not be omitted without a serious reason.⁵² There is also to be a Homily in Masses with children and with special groups.⁵³

A Homily is strongly recommended on the weekdays of Advent, Lent, and Easter Time for the sake of the faithful who regularly take part in the celebration of Mass; also on other feasts and occasions when a large congregation is present.⁵⁴

26. The Priest Celebrant gives the Homily either at the chair, standing or sitting, or at the ambo.⁵⁵
27. Any necessary announcements are to be kept completely separate from the Homily; they must take place following the Prayer after Communion.⁵⁶

e. Silence

28. The Liturgy of the Word must be celebrated in a way that fosters meditation; clearly, any sort of haste that hinders reflectiveness must be avoided. The dialogue between God and his people taking place through the Holy Spirit demands short intervals of silence, suited to the assembly, as an opportunity to take the Word of God to heart and to prepare a response to it in prayer.

Proper times for silence during the Liturgy of the Word are, for example, before this Liturgy begins, after the First and the Second Reading, or after the Homily.⁵⁷

f. Profession of Faith

29. The Symbol or Profession of Faith, said when the rubrics require, has as its purpose in the celebration of Mass that the gathered faithful may respond and give assent to the Word of God heard in the readings and through the Homily, and that before they begin to celebrate in the Eucharist the mystery of faith they may call to mind the rule of faith in a formulary approved by the Church.⁵⁸

g. Universal Prayer or Prayer of the Faithful

30. Enlightened by God's Word and in a sense responding to it, the assembly of the faithful prays in the Universal Prayer as a rule for the needs of the universal Church and the local community, for the salvation of the world and those oppressed by any burden, and for special categories of people.

50 Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi tradendae*, 16 Oct. 1979, no. 48: AAS 71 (1979) 1316.

51 Cf. General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 213.

52 Cf. *ibid.*, no. 42. Also Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, 25 May 1967, no. 28: AAS 59 (1967) 556-557.

53 Cf. Congregation for Divine Worship, Instruction *Actio pastoralis*, 15 May 1969, no. 6g: AAS 61 (1969) 809; *Directory for Masses with Children* (1973; Eng tr. 1973), no. 48.

54 Cf. General Instruction of the Roman Missal, nos. 66, 382. *The Roman Ritual* as revised by decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and published by authority of Pope Paul VI, *Rite of Marriage* (1969; Eng tr. 1969), nos. 22, 42, 57; *Rite of Funerals* (1969; Eng tr. 1970), nos. 41, 64.

55 Cf. General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 136.

56 Cf. *ibid.*, no. 184.

57 Cf. *ibid.*, no. 45.

58 Cf. *ibid.*, no. 67.

The celebrant introduces the prayer; the Deacon, another minister, or some of the faithful may propose intentions that are short and phrased with a measure of flexibility. In these petitions ‘the people, exercising their priestly function, make intercession for all,’⁵⁹ with the result that, as the Liturgy of the Word has its full effects in them, they are better prepared to proceed to the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

31. For the Universal Prayer the celebrant presides at the chair and the intentions are announced at the ambo.⁶⁰

The congregation takes part in the Universal Prayer while standing and by saying or singing a common response after each intention or by silent prayer.⁶¹

2. Aids to the Proper Celebration of the Liturgy of the Word

a. Place for proclaiming the Word of God

32. There must be a place in the church that is somewhat elevated, fixed, and of a suitable design and nobility. It should reflect the dignity of God’s Word and be a clear reminder to the people that in the Mass the table of God’s Word and of Christ’s body is placed before them.⁶² The place for the readings must also truly help the people’s listening and attention during the Liturgy of the Word. Great pains must therefore be taken, in keeping with the design of each church, over the harmonious and close relationship of the ambo with the altar.

33. Either permanently or at least on occasions of greater solemnity, the ambo should be decorated simply and in keeping with its design.

Since the ambo is the place from which the ministers proclaim the Word of God, it must of its nature be reserved for the readings, the Responsorial Psalm, and the Easter Proclamation (*Exsultet*). The ambo may rightly be used for the Homily and the Universal Prayer, however, because of their close connection with the entire Liturgy of the Word. It is better for the commentator, cantor, or director of singing, for example, not to use the ambo.⁶³

34. In order that the ambo may properly serve its liturgical purpose, it is to be rather large, since on occasion several ministers must use it at the same time. Provision must also be made for the readers to have enough light to read the text and, as required, to have sound equipment enabling the congregation to hear them without difficulty.

b. Books for proclamation of the Word of God

35. Along with the ministers, the actions, the ambo, and other elements, the books containing the readings of the Word of God remind the hearers of the presence of God speaking to his people. Since, in liturgical celebrations the books too serve as signs and symbols of the sacred, care must be taken to ensure that they truly are worthy and beautiful.⁶⁴
36. The proclamation of the Gospel always stands as the high point of the Liturgy of the Word. Thus the liturgical traditions of both the East and the West have consistently continued to preserve some distinction between the books for the readings. The Book of

⁵⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, no. 69.

⁶⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, no. 138.

⁶¹ Cf. *ibid.*, no. 71.

⁶² Cf. note 23 of this Introduction.

⁶³ Cf. General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 309.

⁶⁴ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 122.

the Gospels was always designed with the utmost care and was more ornate and shown greater respect than any of the other books of readings. In our times also, then, it is very desirable that cathedrals and at least the larger, more populous parishes and the churches with a larger attendance possess a beautifully designed Book of the Gospels, separate from the other book of readings. For good reason it is the Book of the Gospels that is presented to the Deacon at his Ordination and that is laid upon the head of the Bishop-elect and held there at his Ordination.⁶⁵

37. 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 faithful's preparation of the readings or for their personal meditation.

Chapter III

Offices and Ministries in the Celebration of the Liturgy of the Word within Mass

1. Function of the One Presiding at the Liturgy of the Word

38. The one presiding at the Liturgy of the Word brings the spiritual nourishment it contains to those present, especially in the Homily. Even if he too is a listener to the Word of God proclaimed by others, the duty of proclaiming it has been entrusted above all to him. Personally or through others he sees to it that the Word of God is properly proclaimed. He then as a rule reserves to himself the task of composing comments to help the people to listen more attentively and to preach a Homily that fosters in them a richer understanding of the Word of God.
39. The first requirement for one who is to preside over the celebration is a thorough knowledge of the structure of the Order of Readings so that he will know how to inspire good effects in the hearts of the faithful. Through study and prayer he must also develop a full understanding of the coordination and connection of the various texts in the Liturgy of the Word, so that the Order of Readings will become the source of a sound understanding of the mystery of Christ and his saving work.
40. The one presiding is to make ready use of the various options provided in the Lectionary regarding readings, responses, Responsorial Psalms, and Gospel Acclamations;⁶⁶ but he is to do so with the agreement⁶⁷ of all concerned and after listening to the faithful in regard to what belongs to them.⁶⁸
41. The one presiding exercises his proper office and the ministry of the Word of God also as he preaches the Homily.⁶⁹ In this way he leads his brothers and sisters to an affective knowledge of Sacred Scripture. He opens their souls to gratitude for the wonderful works of God. He strengthens their faith in the Word that in the celebration becomes a

⁶⁵ Cf. *The Roman Pontifical* revised by decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and published by authority of Pope Paul VI, *Ordination of Deacons, Priests, and Bishops* (1968; Eng. tr. 1976); *Ordination of Deacons*, no. 24; *Ordination of Deacons and Priests*, no. 21; *Ordination of a Deacon*, no. 24; *Ordination of a Bishop*, no. 25; *Ordination of Bishops*, no. 25.

⁶⁶ Cf. nos. 78–91 of this Introduction.

⁶⁷ Cf. General Instruction of the Roman Missal, nos. 357–360, 362, 367.

⁶⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, no. 352.

⁶⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, no. 66. Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, Instruction *Inæstimabile Donum*, 3 April 1980, no. 3: AAS 72 (1980) 334.

sacrament through the Holy Spirit. Finally, he prepares them for a fruitful reception of Communion and invites them to embrace the demands of the Christian life.

42. The one presiding is responsible for preparing the faithful for the Liturgy of the Word on occasion by means of introductions before the readings.⁷⁰ These comments can help the gathered assembly toward a better hearing of the Word of God, because they enliven the people's faith and their desire for good. He may also carry out this responsibility through other persons, the Deacon, for example, or a commentator.⁷¹
43. The one presiding leads the faithful towards the Liturgy of the Eucharist as he directs the Universal Prayer and through its introduction and conclusion connects them, if possible, with the day's readings and the Homily.⁷²

2. Role of the Faithful in the Liturgy of the Word

44. Christ's Word gathers the People of God as one and increases and sustains them. 'This applies above all to the Liturgy of the Word in the celebration of Mass: there is an inseparable union between the proclamation of the death of the Lord, the response of the people listening, and the offering through which Christ has confirmed the New Covenant in his Blood. The people share in this offering by their inner intentions and the reception of the Sacrament.'⁷³ For 'not only when things are read "that were written for our instruction" (Romans 15:4), but also when the Church prays or sings or acts, the faith of those taking part is nourished and their minds are raised to God, so that they may offer him their worship as intelligent beings and receive his grace more abundantly.'⁷⁴
45. In the Liturgy of the Word, the congregation of the faithful still today receives from God the Word of his covenant through the faith that comes by hearing. The faithful must respond to that Word in the same faith so that more and more they may become the people of the New Covenant.

The People of God have a spiritual right to receive abundantly from the treasury of God's Word. Its riches are presented to them through use of the Order of Readings, the Homily, and pastoral efforts.

For their part, the faithful at the celebration of Mass are to listen to the Word of God with an inward and outward reverence that will bring them continuous growth in the spiritual life and draw them more deeply into the mystery they celebrate.⁷⁵

46. As a help towards celebrating the memorial of the Lord with devotion, the faithful should be keenly aware of the one presence of Christ in both the Word of God — 'it is he who speaks when the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church' — and 'especially under the Eucharistic elements.'⁷⁶
47. To be received and integrated into the life of Christ's faithful, the Word of God demands a living faith.⁷⁷ Hearing the Word of God unceasingly proclaimed arouses that faith.

70 Cf. General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 31.

71 Cf. *ibid.*, no. 105.

72 Cf. *ibid.*, nos. 55, 71.

73 Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, no. 4.

74 Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 33.

75 See General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 29.

76 Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 7.

77 Cf. *ibid.*, no. 9.

The Scriptures, and above all in their liturgical proclamation, are the source of life and power. As Paul attests, the Gospel is the saving power of God for everyone who believes.⁷⁸ Love of the Scriptures is therefore the force that renews the entire People of God.⁷⁹ All the faithful without exception must therefore always be ready to listen gladly to God's Word.⁸⁰ When this Word is proclaimed in the Church and put into living practice, it enlightens the faithful through the working of the Holy Spirit and draws them into the entire mystery of the Lord as a reality to be lived.⁸¹ The Word of God reverently received moves the heart and its desires towards conversion and towards a life filled with both individual and community faith,⁸² since God's Word is the sustenance of the Christian life and the source of the prayer of the entire Church.⁸³

48. The close connection between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist in the Mass should prompt the faithful to be present right from the beginning of the celebration,⁸⁴ to take part attentively, and to dispose themselves to hear the Word, especially by learning beforehand more about Scripture. That same connection should also awaken in them a desire for a liturgical understanding of the texts read, and for the willingness to respond through singing.⁸⁵

When they hear the Word of God and reflect deeply on it, the faithful receive the power to respond to it actively with full faith, hope, and charity through prayer and self-giving, and not only during Mass, but in their entire Christian life.

3. Ministries in the Liturgy of the Word

49. Liturgical tradition assigns responsibility for the biblical readings in the celebration of Mass to ministers: to readers and the Deacon. But when there is no Deacon or another Priest present, the Priest Celebrant is to read the Gospel⁸⁶ and when there is no reader present, all the readings.⁸⁷
50. The Deacon's part in the Liturgy of the Word at Mass is to proclaim the Gospel, sometimes to give the Homily, as occasion suggests, and to propose the intentions of the Universal Prayer to the people.⁸⁸
51. 'The reader has his own proper function in the Eucharistic celebration and should exercise this even though ministers of a higher rank may be present.'⁸⁹ The reader's ministry, which is conferred through a liturgical rite, must be held in respect. When there are instituted lectors available, they are to carry out their office at least on Sundays and major feasts, especially at the principal Mass of the day. These readers may also be given responsibility for assisting in the planning of the Liturgy of the Word and, to the extent necessary,

78 Cf. Romans 1:16.

79 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei verbum*, no. 21.

80 Cf. *ibid.*

81 Cf. John 14:15-26; 16:4, 5-15.

82 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, *Ad gentes*, nos. 6 and 15; also Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei verbum*, no. 26.

83 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 24. Also Congregation for the Clergy, *Directorium catechisticum generale*, 11 April 1971, no. 25: AAS 64 (1972) 114.

84 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 56. See also Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, Instruction *Inæstimabile Donum*, 3 April 1980, no. 1: AAS 72 (1980) 333-334.

85 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 24 and 35.

86 Cf. General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 59.

87 Cf. *ibid.*, no. 135.

88 Cf. *ibid.*, nos. 71, 94, 177; Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, Instruction *Inæstimabile Donum*, 3 April 1980, no. 3: AAS 72 (1980) 334.

89 General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 99.

of seeing to the preparation of others of the faithful who may be appointed on a given occasion to serve as readers at Mass.⁹⁰

52. The liturgical assembly truly requires readers, even those not instituted. Proper measures must therefore be taken to ensure that there are qualified laypersons who have been trained to carry out this ministry.⁹¹ Whenever there is more than one reading, it is better to assign the readings to different readers, if available.
53. In Masses without a Deacon, the function of announcing the intentions for the Universal Prayer is to be assigned to the cantor, particularly when they are to be sung, to a reader, or to another person.⁹²
54. During the celebration of Mass with a congregation another Priest, a Deacon, and an instituted lector must wear the distinctive vestment of their office when they go to the ambo to read the Word of God. Those who carry out the ministry of reader just for the occasion or even regularly but without institution may go to the ambo in ordinary attire that is in keeping with local custom.
55. 'It is necessary that those who exercise the ministry of reader, even if they have not received institution, be truly qualified and carefully prepared so that the faithful may develop a warm and living love for Scripture from listening to the sacred texts read.'⁹³

Their preparation must above all be spiritual, but what may be called a technical preparation is also needed. The spiritual preparation presupposes at least a biblical and liturgical formation. The purpose of their biblical formation is to give readers the ability to understand the readings in context and to perceive by the light of faith the central point of the revealed message. The liturgical formation ought to equip the readers to have some grasp of the meaning and structure of the Liturgy of the Word and of the significance of its connection with the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The technical preparation should make the readers more skilled in the art of reading publicly, either with the power of their own voice or with the help of sound equipment.

56. The psalmist, that is the cantor of the Psalm, is responsible for singing, responsorially or directly, the chants between the readings—the Psalm or other biblical canticle, the Gradual and Alleluia, or other chant. The psalmist may, as occasion requires, intone the Alleluia and Verse.⁹⁴

For carrying out the function of psalmist it is advantageous to have in each ecclesial community laypersons with a talent for singing and correct diction. The points made about the formation of readers apply to cantors as well.

57. The commentator also fulfils a genuine liturgical ministry, which consists in presenting to the assembly of the faithful, from a suitable place, relevant explanations and comments that are clear, of marked simplicity, meticulously prepared, as a rule written out, and approved beforehand by the celebrant.⁹⁵

90 Cf. Paul VI, *Motu Proprio Ministeria quaedam* 15 Aug. 1972, no. V: AAS 64 (1972) 532.

91 Cf. Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, Instruction *Inestimabile Donum*, 3 April 1980, nos. 2 and 18: AAS 72 (1980) 334 and 338. See also Congregation for Divine Worship, *Directory for Masses with Children* (1973; Eng. tr. 1973), nos. 22, 24, 27.

92 Cf. General Instruction of the Roman Missal, nos. 71, 99, 197. See also *Consilium ad exsequendam Constitutionem de sacra Liturgia, De oratione communi seu fidelium* (Vatican City, 1966), no. 8.

93 General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 101.

94 Cf. General Instruction of the Roman Missal, nos. 62 and 102.

95 Cf. *ibid.*, no 105b.