

## Questions for reflection

- What ways of learning about the faith have you found most helpful in the past? What further support would you most value?
- What particular gifts do you feel you are already able to bring to your ministry? What particular skills and talents may you need help to develop?
- What resources does your parish already provide that you can draw on? What further help do you think might be provided, either in the parish or elsewhere?

## Resources

Over recent years the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales has issued a range of documents which provide an introduction to the Church's teaching on the Mass and the Scriptures, and on ministry in the Church.

- *One Bread One Body*. This teaching document on the Eucharist in the life of the Church seeks to help Catholics to a greater understanding of the Mass and the Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.
- *The Gift of Scripture*. This teaching document introduces how we might read the Old and New Testaments, learning to more deeply hear and live by the word of God.
- *Celebrating the Mass*. This pastoral introduction offers a resource to help the Church consider how it prepares, celebrates and lives from the Mass.
- *The Sign We Give*. This report has been approved by the Bishops' Conference and issued to encourage the Church in England and Wales to think more deeply and imaginatively about the theology and practice of collaborative ministry.

*One Bread, One Body*; *The Gift of Scripture*; and *Celebrating the Mass* are all published by the Catholic Truth Society, [www.cts-online.org.uk](http://www.cts-online.org.uk). *The Sign We Give* is published by Matthew James Publishing Ltd. Further resources are given in *Ministers of the Word: Recommended Reading*, [www.rcdow.org.uk/liturgy](http://www.rcdow.org.uk/liturgy)



*Lay Ministers of the Word* is one of a series of resources prepared by the Liturgy Commission to support the continuing formation of liturgical ministers in Westminster diocese. Other resources can be downloaded from [www.rcdow.org.uk/liturgy](http://www.rcdow.org.uk/liturgy)

Extract from *Celebrating the Mass* © 2005, Bishops Conference of England and Wales. Other texts © 2007, Westminster Liturgy Commission

# Lay Ministers of the Word

An introduction for lay ministers  
in Westminster Diocese

## The Liturgy of the Word

The Mass is made up of the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, which are so closely connected as to form one act of worship. In the word of God the divine covenant is announced; in the Eucharist the new and everlasting covenant is embodied and renewed.

The chosen people entered into a special covenant with God at Sinai, a covenant that was renewed and fulfilled on Calvary. By hearing the word proclaimed in worship, the faithful again enter into the unending dialogue between God and the covenant people, a dialogue sealed in the sharing of the Eucharistic food and drink. The meaning of Communion is proclaimed in the word; the message of Scripture is made actual once again in the Communion banquet. The proclamation of the word is thus integral to the Mass and at its very heart.

The readings from Sacred Scripture and the chants between the readings form the main part of the Liturgy of the Word. The Homily, Profession of Faith, and Prayer of the Faithful expand and complete this part of the Mass. For in the readings God speaks with his people, opening up to them the mystery of redemption and salvation, and nourishing their spirit; Christ himself is present in the midst of the faithful through his word. The Homily is an integral part of the liturgy to assist the assembly to hear the voice of the Lord in his word. By their silent listening and pondering, and by their singing and acclamation, the people make God's word their own, and they also affirm their acceptance of it by the Profession of Faith. Finally, having been nourished by this word, the assembly makes petition in the Prayer of the Faithful, praying for the needs of the entire Church and for the salvation of the whole world.

*Celebrating the Mass* 151-153

## Reader

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.

The richness in the quantity and in the variety of readings in the Lectionary challenges those who are called upon to proclaim the Scriptures at Mass.

Each of the individual sacred authors reflected on the meaning of God's action in history from their own perspective. They employed various literary forms to convey the message of salvation, ranging, for example, from narratives and the poetry of the psalms to prophetic oracles and parables, from theological expositions to apocalyptic visions. A reader will proclaim the word of the Lord more fully and more effectively if he or she has an awareness of the literary form of a particular reading or psalm.

- Both to assist the assembly to appreciate the genre and context of the different passages of Scripture and benefit from a different voice, it is better to have a different reader for each reading.
- The responsorial psalm should be sung by a psalmist or cantor, but, if necessary, may be led by a reader.
- When there is no deacon, a reader may carry the Book of the Gospels before the presiding priest in the entrance procession and lay it on the altar.
- When there is no deacon, the reader may, from the ambo, announce the intentions in the General Intercessions.

*Celebrating the Mass* 41-42

## Other Ministers

*Celebrating the Mass* identifies a range of ministers who, together with the readers, have a role to play in the celebration of the Liturgy of the Word. These include the Cantor for the psalm and the Gospel Acclamation; the priest or deacon who proclaims the Gospel; the minister who leads the Prayer of the Faithful and servers.

Further ministers are often involved in preparing the Liturgy of the Word, for example the parish Liturgy Preparation group and the writer of the biddings for the Prayer of the Faithful. Still others will be involved in assisting people draw nourishment from the liturgy of the Word, for example catechists and ministers who take the word and Holy Communion to the sick and housebound.

A good celebration of the Liturgy of the Word, that helps the congregation hear and pray with the scriptures, requires careful collaboration between all these ministers.