

LIVING LITURGY™

for Lectors

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and

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for your ministry*

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USING THIS RESOURCE

Proclaimed well, the word of God can and does change the lives of the hearers. Since “proclaimed well” is sometimes the challenge, *Living Liturgy for Lectors*TM offers not only background material to aid your reflection on the scriptural texts, but also helpful insights and technique to enrich your delivery of the word of God.

The points offered in this resource will help you as a lector approach your ministry each week with confidence. Moreover, our hope in this resource is to help you, and the assemblies you serve, encounter the word of God afresh, every time it is proclaimed. Even though many may have heard numerous times what will be proclaimed, when proclaimed well new insights can and do occur, both for the hearer and the reader. The Scriptures are the living word of God. If proclaimed well we never hear them the same way twice.

In addition to the insights offered throughout this book, here are a few general, practical, and technical points to be considered when proclaiming the word of God:

1. Do you have an adequate sound system? Can everyone hear and understand all the words that are being read?
 - Sound systems can be intimidating. Might there be someone in the parish who can assist in delivering the best sound your system is capable of?
 - Get as comfortable as possible with your system and microphone. If you can't hear yourself over the sound system (or even a large room without a system) then there is a very good chance few others can hear you.
2. Is your diction as good as it might be? The following are some tips.
 - When you are speaking publicly are you pronouncing the end consonants? For example, try reading the following, pronouncing the underlined letter:

Indeed, religion with contentment is a great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, just as we shall not be able to take anything out of it. If we have food and clothing, we shall be content with that. (1 Timothy 6:6-8)

- Often when speaking publicly we think we are sounding the end consonants but in fact we are not. Don't be afraid to exaggerate. Finally, taking care to pronounce the end consonants will almost always make you slow down.
3. Something that nearly all of us need to do is *slow down*. It is rare that a lector will be guilty of reading too slowly. The opposite is usually the case: most people read too fast. When in doubt, slow down.
 4. Do you understand what you are reading? Can you verbalize the sense of the reading in your own words?
 - When addressing the above questions, Saint Paul always comes to mind. A biblical commentary is indispensable in helping to understand what Paul—or any other Scripture author—is saying. Frankly stated, if you the reader, do not understand what you are reading then how can the listener be expected to understand what you are reading?
 5. Rehearsing aloud will always help improve your reading. It will also lower your nervousness and help you keep from stumbling!
 6. Is the reader's tone of voice fresh and accessible for the hearer? Use your own voice. Don't try to sound "holy." Simply be *sincere* with your reading, taking great care that the listener hears and understands the written word of the Lord. This, after all, is the bottom line.



Preparing to Proclaim

Key words and phrases: “Stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come.”

To the point: This new liturgical season begins with a dramatic flair. The tone of this Sunday’s readings ranges from celebratory—*the Lord’s day is coming! Let us go to the house of the Lord!*—to strikingly hortatory—*put on the armor of light! Be*

ready! The Scripture texts this week are drenched with vivid imagery, from beating swords to the snatching of men and women from their labors. In proclaiming these readings, we ought to consider both the grand content of these words and the even greater reality to which these words are directing us. The immanent coming of Christ at Christmas ushers in a new age of the Messiah, as the dawn from on high breaks upon a world sorely in need of Christ’s peace. Our manner of speaking must boldly guide the congregation into this impending reality, proclaiming that the kingdom of God is truly at hand, and that we must act accordingly.

Making Connections

Between the readings: The readings together speak of the impending reality of God’s kingdom—a kingdom that arrives on God’s terms, not ours. It will be a kingdom of healing and restoration for all humankind, offering joy and peace to people that we might not have chosen. It asks us to live in the light of Christ, rather than in the “night” that we perhaps prefer. And, as Jesus tells us, it will come at a time that we will not expect.

To experience: Sometimes, we might feel like we can push off the demands of following Jesus: “I’ll be a ‘good Christian’ later, I’ve got plenty of time.” Jesus invites us to break out of our usual patterns so that we can be more intentional about our relationships with God and others. What brings you joy? What brings you peace? What holds you back? What gets in the way of accepting God’s love? What do you need to change, or do differently? If we renew our attention to the words of Jesus this season, even with some initial apprehension, God might just have something new and life-giving to offer us.

Prayer

God of time and eternity, bless our beginning of this new liturgical year. Make this Advent season for us a time of conversion, joy, and hope. Help us to prepare for your coming by throwing off the works of darkness and putting on Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

First Reading (Isa 2:1-5)

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

This is what Isaiah, son of Amoz,
saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

In days to come,
the mountain of the LORD's house
shall be established as the highest
mountain
and raised above the hills.

All nations shall stream toward it;
many peoples shall come and say:
"Come, let us climb the LORD's mountain,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may instruct us in his ways,
and we may walk in his paths."

For from Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the LORD from
Jerusalem.

He shall judge between the nations,
and impose terms on many peoples.

They shall beat their swords into
plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks;
one nation shall not raise the sword against
another,
nor shall they train for war again.
O house of Jacob, come,
let us walk in the light of the LORD!

Pronunciation

Amoz AY-muhz

Judah JOU-duh

Zion ZAI-uhn

Good times are coming!
All nations are going to
enjoy the prosperity! All
war will end with imple-
ments of war being
beaten into tools to culti-
vate the land to support
life rather than destroy
life.

Try a pause after "nor
shall they train for war
again." Then really pro-
claim: "O house of Jacob,
come . . .!"

Responsorial Psalm (Ps 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9)

R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

I rejoiced because they said to me,
“We will go up to the house of the LORD.”

And now we have set foot
within your gates, O Jerusalem.

R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

Jerusalem, built as a city
with compact unity.

To it the tribes go up,
the tribes of the LORD.

R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

According to the decree for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of the LORD.

In it are set up judgment seats,
seats for the house of David.

R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!
May those who love you prosper!

May peace be within your walls,
prosperity in your buildings.

R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

Because of my brothers and friends
I will say, “Peace be within you!”

Because of the house of the LORD, our God,
I will pray for your good.

R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

Second Reading (Rom 13:11-14)

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

Brothers and sisters:

You know the time;

it is the hour now for you to awake from sleep.

Try being very measured in your delivery of the first two lines emphasizing the word *know*. Then after “You *know* the time”—you tell them what it is time to do!

For our salvation is nearer now than when we
 first believed;
 the night is advanced, the day is at hand.
 Let us then throw off the works of darkness
 and put on the armor of light;
 let us conduct ourselves properly as in the
 day,
 not in orgies and drunkenness,
 not in promiscuity and lust,
 not in rivalry and jealousy.
 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ,
 and make no provision for the desires of
 the flesh.

Gospel (Matt 24:37-44; LIA)

A reading from the holy Gospel according
 to Matthew

Jesus said to his disciples:

“As it was in the days of Noah,
 so it will be at the coming of the Son of
 Man.

In those days before the flood,
 they were eating and drinking,
 marrying and giving in marriage,
 up to the day that Noah entered the ark.
 They did not know until the flood came and
 carried them all away.

So will it be also at the coming of the Son of
 Man.

Two men will be out in the field;
 one will be taken, and one will be left.

Two women will be grinding at the mill;
 one will be taken, and one will be left.

Therefore, stay awake!

For you do not know on which day your Lord
 will come.

Be sure of this: if the master of the house
 had known the hour of night when the
 thief was coming,

After the orgies, etc.,
 which can be a bit embar-
 rassing to read and hear,
 enjoy a nice pause and
 then say with great
 thoughtfulness, “But put
 on . . .”

Try taking a longer than
 usual three-to-four-second
 pause after “A reading
 from the holy Gospel . . .”
 This is a technique used
 by great speakers to
 really arrest the listeners’
 attention.

Matthew is obviously
 drawing a parallel here
 between those caught un-
 aware in the flood and
 those who will be caught
 unprepared for the com-
 ing of the Son of Man.
 Terrifying, isn’t it? Allow
 a pause for listeners to
 ask, what shall we do?
 The answer follows:
 “Therefore, stay awake!”
 Be ready always!

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

he would have stayed awake
and not let his house be broken into.
So too, you also must be prepared,
for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of
Man will come.”

Preparing to Proclaim

Key words and phrases: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”

To the point: This week’s gospel introduces John the Baptist, often called the last of the Old Testament prophets. John is a brilliant example of the gospel proclamation, particularly because of his way of living. He is depicted as a wilderness man, living in the desert, eating locusts and wild honey—this cannot help but provoke our curiosity. In his time, John’s unique ascetic way of life gives credibility to his preaching, not the other way around. In ours, hypocrisy in the church is one of the great counterwitnesses to the love of Christ. The church is holy primarily because Christ is holy, not because we are, but we are nonetheless called to follow after that holiness as best we can. John calls us to repentance and to seek the kingdom of God, especially as we serve in ministerial roles within the church. Our lives can, like John, bring people toward Jesus. If we are not careful, however, we can also push them away.



Making Connections

Between the readings: Both Isaiah and John the Baptist speak directly of God’s kingdom to come, though in very different language. This juxtaposition invites us into the frequent “both/and” nature of Catholic faith. In his letter to the Romans, Saint Paul invites the community to hold on to hope in the fullness of the kingdom, and to live in its “harmony” in the present.

To experience: Given the broken and war-torn state of our world today, it might be difficult to trust that the peace and justice of God will ever come to fruition. Violence and conflict seem to prevail in our families, our neighborhoods, our countries, and throughout the world. This can overwhelm us and make us feel small and useless in the face of evil. Today’s readings invite us to trust above all in the kingship of Christ, who will bring peace and will bring justice. The Christian faith is one of hope rather than despair, life rather than death, and light rather than darkness.

Pronunciation

Gentiles JEHN-tailz

Have you ever had a plant that you thought was dead and then one day you spot a beautiful green shoot making an appearance? Wow! This is the kind of excitement with which you can deliver the first line.

With the arrival of this new being, the order of the world will change for the better.

Prayer

God of endurance and encouragement, as we prepare to celebrate the coming of your Son into the world, draw us to sincere repentance for our sins, especially those that disrupt the harmony we are called to have with you and with one another. **Amen.**

First Reading (Isa 11:1-10)

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

On that day, a shoot shall sprout from the
stump of Jesse,

and from his roots a bud shall blossom.

The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him:

a spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
a spirit of counsel and of strength,

a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the

LORD,

and his delight shall be the fear of the

LORD.

Not by appearance shall he judge,

nor by hearsay shall he decide,

but he shall judge the poor with justice,

and decide aright for the land's afflicted.

He shall strike the ruthless with the rod of his
mouth,

and with the breath of his lips he shall slay
the wicked.

Justice shall be the band around his waist,

and faithfulness a belt upon his hips.

Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb,

and the leopard shall lie down with the kid;

the calf and the young lion shall browse
together,

with a little child to guide them.

The cow and the bear shall be neighbors,

together their young shall rest;

the lion shall eat hay like the ox.

The baby shall play by the cobra's den,
and the child lay his hand on the adder's
lair.

There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy
mountain;
for the earth shall be filled with knowledge
of the LORD,
as water covers the sea.

On that day, the root of Jesse,
set up as a signal for the nations,
the Gentiles shall seek out,
for his dwelling shall be glorious.

Responsorial Psalm (Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17)

R. (cf. 7) Justice shall flourish in his time, and
fullness of peace for ever.

O God, with your judgment endow the king,
and with your justice, the king's son;
he shall govern your people with justice
and your afflicted ones with judgment.

R. Justice shall flourish in his time, and
fullness of peace for ever.

Justice shall flower in his days,
and profound peace, till the moon be no
more.

May he rule from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

R. Justice shall flourish in his time, and
fullness of peace for ever.

For he shall rescue the poor when he cries out,
and the afflicted when he has no one to
help him.

He shall have pity for the lowly and the poor;
the lives of the poor he shall save.

R. Justice shall flourish in his time, and
fullness of peace for ever.

May his name be blessed forever;
 as long as the sun his name shall remain.
 In him shall all the tribes of the earth be
 blessed;
 all the nations shall proclaim his happiness.
 R. Justice shall flourish in his time, and
 fullness of peace for ever.

Pronunciation

Gentiles JEHN-tailz

This reading is a pretty straightforward one for St. Paul. Nevertheless, read through it a number of times and out loud, if at all possible. Readings should never be done “fast.”

Paul often writes in a declarative voice, as in this case. Try delivering this in a very determined manner.

Second Reading (Rom 15:4-9)

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

Brothers and sisters:
 Whatever was written previously was written
 for our instruction,
 that by endurance and by the
 encouragement of the Scriptures
 we might have hope.
 May the God of endurance and
 encouragement
 grant you to think in harmony with one
 another,
 in keeping with Christ Jesus,
 that with one accord you may with one
 voice
 glorify the God and Father of our Lord
 Jesus Christ.

Welcome one another, then, as Christ
 welcomed you,
 for the glory of God.
 For I say that Christ became a minister of the
 circumcised
 to show God's truthfulness,
 to confirm the promises to the patriarchs,
 but so that the Gentiles might glorify God
 for his mercy.

As it is written:

*Therefore, I will praise you among the
 Gentiles
 and sing praises to your name.*

Gospel (Matt 3:1-12; L4A)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea

and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said:

*A voice of one crying out in the desert,
Prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight his paths.*

John wore clothing made of camel's hair and had a leather belt around his waist.

His food was locusts and wild honey.

At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins.

When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers!

Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?

Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance.

And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.'

For I tell you,

God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones.

Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees.

Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit

will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

Pronunciation

Judea jou-DEE-uh

Pharisees FEHR-ih-seez

Sadducees SAD-joo-seez

What a wonderfully theatrical writing (in the best sense) we have been given here! At the beginning you are describing one of the Bible's most colorful prophets—one who I don't think I would like to meet in a dark alley by myself! Yet the people are flocking to him; it's amazing.

Notice that there is arguably a crescendo in this reading. It begins gently, albeit not without substance, and builds straight through to the last line. Don't be afraid to give this reading the same energy that John the Baptist would.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

I am baptizing you with water, for repentance,
but the one who is coming after me is
mightier than I.

I am not worthy to carry his sandals.
He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and
fire.

His winnowing fan is in his hand.
He will clear his threshing floor
and gather his wheat into his barn,
but the chaff he will burn with
unquenchable fire.”