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TRAINING READERS
If readers are to carry out their important role in the liturgy, they need guidance and training. This issue of the Bulletin provides some help in this important area for parishes and communities:

- Aid in choosing and training readers
- An understanding of the liturgy of the word
- Suggestions for better preparation and celebration of the liturgy of the word
- Ideas for helping present readers
- Helping readers to retire when the time has come.

The goal of this issue is to provide better reading for the people, and in this way to help them offer better worship to God.
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EDITORIAL

FAITH AND PROCLAMATION

Since the beginning, the Lord's day assembly has been the primary mode of catechesis of the Christian people. The faithful are called together so that God's word and the experience of community in prayer and action may form them, mold them, lead them along the ways of the Spirit.

The liturgy is the Church's basic way of teaching the faith, and the Sunday celebration is the first and fundamental form of catechesis for the people of God. This teaching is not only by word — the faith comes by hearing, Paul reminds us — but by experiencing the Christian community in the fullest meaning of this term. It is in the liturgy that we recognize the Lord Jesus in the breaking of bread.

The liturgy of the word is the main bearer of this educational function. This is the way that the Church carries on the basic Christian education of God's children, and forms them in his ways. Sunday after Sunday, the people of God are assembled by their Father and are formed in his truth, according to his Spirit. Then they are enabled to celebrate the liturgy of the eucharist with uplifted hearts and prayers of thanks.

There are several factors which affect the impact of the scripture readings in the life of a parish or community. Two of these are the immediate concern of this issue:

Manner of proclamation: The way in which a reader proclaims the reading has a strong influence on the people who listen to it. If the reader is unprepared, or does not understand the passage, or does not know how to read clearly and distinctly, the power of the reading is weakened on this occasion. If on the other hand the reader reads slowly and clearly, and with obvious interest and understanding, then the people of God are open to the nourishment and guidance of the Spirit.

Personal faith of the reader: The ability to read well is only one aspect of a reader's role. Unless the person who proclaims the scriptures believes what he reads, and is striving to live the word of God, his ministry will not be the fruitful link between God's word and the assembled community. The reader's proclamation of the word must be based on his personal proclamation in his daily living.

It is important in our Church today to help readers to develop both their spiritual life and their reading skills. In this way, their reading of the scriptures in the Sunday liturgy can have a deep influence on the life of the Christian people.
SCRIPTURE IN THE CHURCH TODAY

This article provides a brief summary of the Constitution on revelation of the Second Vatican Council.

In the Constitution on revelation, the Council set out to describe how God's saving message is revealed and passed on to us, thus leading all to faith and love (no. 1).

Revelation: God our Father chose to reveal himself and his plan of salvation through Christ. Speaking to us as friends, God invites us to share his life. The Father reveals his plan by his deeds (in the story of our salvation) and by his words. God's words and actions reveal and strengthen each other (no. 2).

God reveals himself in creation of the world and of the human race, in his loving care for us, and in the promise of a redeemer. Through patriarchs and prophets he taught Israel and prepared the way for the coming of the promised savior and his gospel (no. 3).

The greatest revelation of God is in his Son, made flesh for us, sent to enlighten and save all people. The Lord Jesus revealed God by his presence, his teaching, by his actions and wonderful signs. The most important revelation was his death, resurrection, and sending of the Spirit. This is the final revelation, and the Christian covenant is definitive. No new public revelation is expected before the second coming or manifestation of Christ (no. 4).

We are to give the obedience of faith to God. He makes this possible by first giving us his grace, the guidance of his Spirit, moving us to God and helping us to believe. The Spirit continues to bring our faith to completion by giving us his gifts (no. 5).

God has revealed himself and his will for our salvation, to share with us his treasures which can be known only by faith. Through creation our human mind can know God, but through revelation we can know religious truths with ease, certitude, and freedom from error (no. 6).

Revelation is passed on: To make sure that his revelation for the salvation of all would be handed on without loss to every generation, Jesus sent his apostles to teach his gospel to all. His gospel is the source of the truths of salvation and of moral teaching. By their preaching, example, and the rules they made, the apostles handed on what they had learned from Jesus' words and actions, and from the

1 Dogmatic constitution on divine revelation, Dei verbum, November 18, 1965. The text may be found in:

In this article, the numbers in parentheses refer to the paragraphs in the Constitution on Revelation. Full references to scripture, the Fathers of the Church, and other Church documents are given in the Council text.
teaching of the Holy Spirit. Christ’s command was also carried out when the Spirit inspired some apostles and other writers to write down the teaching about salvation. The apostles also established bishops to make sure that the gospel would remain entire and living in the Church (no. 7).

A succession of preachers continues the preaching of the apostles until the second coming. The apostles handed on everything needed for the people of God to be holy and growing in faith. The Church hands this on to all generations in its teaching, its life, and in its liturgy.

The Spirit develops the apostolic tradition in the Church as generations of believers deepen their understanding of this teaching by meditation, study, and prayer, and by the preaching of their bishops. The Fathers of the Church are witnesses of this living tradition, which is seen in the Church’s life and prayer, faith and action. This tradition helps the Church to know the full canon of scripture, and to understand it. Thus God continues to speak through the gospel in the Church. Through the Church, the gospel is heard in the world, leading others to faith in Christ (no. 8).

This living tradition and scripture are closely linked, coming from God and leading us to him. Scripture is God’s word in written form, written down under the Spirit’s inspiration. Tradition is God’s word, handed on by Christ and his Spirit to the apostles. The Holy Spirit helps their successors to preserve, explain, and spread this word by their preaching. Scripture and tradition are equally sacred, and the Church knows God’s revelation through them (no. 9).

God entrusted his word to the Church in one deposit of faith, consisting of scripture and tradition. The entire people of God, united with their bishops, remain faithful in the apostolic preaching, in the life of the community, in the breaking of bread, and in praying. The whole Church — leaders and people — keeps, practises, and professes the faith it has inherited.

The teaching office of the Church (all who proclaim God’s word with authority) has the exclusive task of interpreting his word as found in scripture and tradition. The Church has this authority from Jesus himself. It serves God’s word, and teaches only what has been passed on to us. The Church listens to his word, keeps it with care, and with the help of the Spirit, explains it as Jesus has commanded. Everything we must believe as God’s revelation comes from this deposit of faith.

Tradition, scripture, and the Church’s teaching authority are united by God: they cannot be separated or stand alone. By the guidance of the Spirit of truth, they work together to help bring salvation to all (no. 10).

**Inspired scripture and its interpretation:** The Spirit inspired the writing of the truths revealed by God in scripture. Following the faith of the apostles, the Church accepts that all the books (with all their parts) of both OT and NT belong to the canon of scripture because they were written under the Spirit’s inspiration. Thus God is their author, and the Church has received them in this way. God chose the writers, and was acting in them and through them in such a way that they were true authors, using their own talents, and yet writing down all the things — and only those — that God desired.
What the authors said is said by the Spirit. The books of the bible teach the
truth which God intended to be included in the scriptures for the purpose of saving
us. They contain no error. Scripture, inspired by God, helps us to teach and equips
us for doing good works (no. 11).

In the scriptures God is speaking to us through other people and in a human
way. To understand his message to us, we have to see what the writers really meant,
and what God wanted to reveal through their words.

To understand the writers of scripture, we need to consider the literary forms
they used (such as history, prophecy, poetry), and how these were expressed and
understood in their authors' time and cultural setting.

Texts are to be interpreted in the light of the unity of the bible, for it is
inspired by one Spirit. Thus the Church's living tradition and the harmony among
the truths of our faith help in their interpretation. By their study and groundwork,
scripture scholars help the Church to grow in its understanding of God's word.
The Church is the final judge of interpretations of scripture, since it is carrying
out the Lord's command to guard and interpret God's word (no. 12).

Scripture shows God's wisdom: he adapts his words to our human under-
standing, and expresses them as human speech, just as his eternal Word took our
flesh and became one of us (no. 13).

Old covenant: In his plan for saving all humans, God chose a particular
people and made his promises to them. He made a covenant with Abraham, and
then with Israel through Moses. By God's word and action, the people of Israel
grew in their understanding of his will, and proclaimed this to other people. God's
plan to save us is truly his word, and is contained in the Old Testament books,
which are inspired by him. The Old Testament was written to teach us, and
continues to have permanent value (no. 14).

The Old Testament was mainly intended to make ready for the coming of
Christ, savior of all, and of his kingdom. The Old Testament announced it through
the prophets, and described its meaning in different types. The OT books, written
before Christ and his new covenant, help us to know God and how he deals with
us, for they contain his teaching. They help us to know God better, and reveal
something of our salvation; they provide us with excellent prayers, and pass on
to us wise truths about life. Followers of Christ should respect the books of the
Old Testament (no. 15).

God inspired and wrote both the Old Testament and the New. He hid the
New Testament in the Old, and explained the Old Testament in the New. Christ
founded the new covenant in his precious blood. The Old Testament books are
involved in the gospel teaching. They receive their complete meaning in the New
Testament, and help to explain its meaning (no. 16).

New covenant: God's word brings his salvation to believers; especially in
the New Testament, his word shows his power. The Word became flesh in the
fullness of time, and lived among us. Jesus set up God's kingdom in this world,
revealed both the Father and himself by word and action, and brought his work
to completion by his paschal mystery (dying, rising, ascending, sending his Spirit).
Now Jesus attracts all to himself. God has revealed this to the apostles and New
Testament prophets. They preached his saving Good News, led people to believe
in Jesus, and assembled his Church. God has prepared the New Testament writings as a permanent witness of these truths (no. 17).

The gospels hold a special place in the New Testament, giving us the main witness of Jesus' life and teaching. The Church maintains that the apostles are the origin of the four gospels: their preaching carried out Christ's command, and was passed on to us in written form — under the Spirit's inspiration — by the apostles and other inspired persons of their era. Our faith is based on the one gospel as written down, according to the four evangelists (no. 18).

The Church still holds that the gospels are historical, handing on the teaching and actions of Jesus for our salvation. After the Lord's ascension, the apostles understood his teaching in word and deed more clearly because of what the risen Christ did and because of the Spirit's guidance. In writing the gospels, the authors selected some things from oral or written teaching, summarizing and arranging them, explaining some because of local situations, and continuing to proclaim the truth about our Lord. The authors intended to write what they and other eyewitnesses remembered in order to help us to know the truth (no. 19).

The New Testament also contains the epistles of Paul and works of other apostolic writers. These works are inspired by the Spirit, and confirm the truth about Christ, state his teaching more fully, and preach his saving power. They also tell about the early years and growth of the Church, and foretell how the Church will be fulfilled in glory. Jesus remains with his Church and gives us his Spirit to guide us into the fullness of truth (no. 20).

Scripture in the Church's life: The Church venerates both the scriptures and the body of the Lord. The table of God's word and of Christ's body provides the bread of life for the Church, particularly in the liturgy.

Scripture and tradition remain the highest rule of faith. The scriptures are inspired by God and have been written down for all time, and give us God's word through the prophets and apostles. Scripture must nourish and guide the Church's religion and preaching. In scripture God our Father meets us and speaks to us with love, and thus gives the Church its strength, vigor, faith, and spiritual life. God's word is alive and builds up his Church (no. 21).

All believers should be able to approach the scriptures with ease. In the past, the Church accepted the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament into Greek and respected other translations, especially the Vulgate.

To make sure that God's word is always available, the Church works to have good translations from the original languages. Now these translations are being prepared together with members of other Churches so that they may be used by all Christians (no. 22).

In order to teach God's word to its people, the Church daily seeks to understand the scriptures more fully. Thus it encourages us to study the Fathers and the liturgies of both Eastern and Western Churches. Exegetes and theologians should co-operate to explore and explain the scriptures. In this way ministers of the word will be helped to bring the riches of scripture to God's people, to teach them and help them burn with love for him. Biblical scholars are encouraged to continue their studies and remain loyal to the mind of the Church (no. 23).
The main and continuing foundation of theology is God's written word and tradition. By the light of faith, theology studies all the truth contained in the mystery of Christ. The inspired scriptures strengthen and renew theology, for they contain and are the word of God, and their study is the heart of theology.

The ministry of the word consists of preaching, catechesis, and all other types of teaching; the homily given during the liturgy has an eminent position in this ministry. Scripture nourishes this ministry, and enables it to lead us to holiness (no. 24).

All members of the clergy must read and study the scriptures with great diligence, especially priests, deacons, and catechists, who are active ministers of the word. They need to cultivate scripture and listen to it in their hearts so that they will not become empty preachers of God's word. It is their responsibility to share his word — especially in the liturgy — with those entrusted to their pastoral care.

Because ignorance of the bible is ignorance of Jesus, the Council urges all believers, particularly members of religious communities, to read the scriptures frequently, and thus gain the unsurpassed knowledge of our Lord.

To do this, they should listen to the word in the liturgy, and read it directly in a devout manner; they may also learn about it through courses and other biblical aids available today.

Prayer and scripture reading go together, as God and his people converse in this way.

As apostolic teachers, bishops have the responsibility of instructing their people on the right way to use translations of the bible, particularly of the New Testament and the gospels. Adequate notes should help Catholics become familiar with God's word and be filled with its spirit.

Suitably annotated editions of the bible should be developed for people who are not Christians. People and pastors should work to have these distributed (no. 25).

As we read and study the scriptures, God's treasure of revelation will fill our hearts. We hope for an increase in spirituality from increased devotion to God's word, similar to the growth in the Church's life through participating constantly in the eucharist (no. 26).

PREPARATION

I ask one favor of you: each of you should take the section of the gospels which is to be read among you on the first day of the week, . . . and before that day arrives, sit down at home and read it through.

St. John Chrysostom
LITURGY OF THE WORD

Recognizing that the word of God is at the heart of the liturgy (see Liturgy constitution, no. 24), the Vatican Council set out to provide more scripture and a greater variety of readings in liturgical celebrations (nos. 35, 51).

**Purpose:** The liturgy of the word leads us into the liturgy of the eucharist or other sacrament. Nourished by the word, renewed in faith and love, we are now ready to go further in praising and thanking God in the liturgy, and in receiving the graces he offers us. Then, strengthened and renewed, we return home to do a better job of living our daily life for God and his people.

The liturgy of the word in the Mass consists primarily of the readings and the chants between them: responsorial psalm and *alleluia*. God is speaking to his beloved people in the readings, and we respond by singing the chants. The other parts of the service of the word — homily, creed, prayer of the faithful — complete the work of the readings (GI, no. 33).

By listening to the readings in the liturgy, the Church is letting Christ speak to us, proclaiming God’s loving desire to save us as he has saved his people in the past. Our Lord, who died and rose to save us, wants to make the fruits of his paschal mystery available to us now, he proclaims his love for us, and invites us to respond in song and prayer and love — in the liturgy of the word, particularly in the liturgy of the sacrament, and always in the liturgy of our daily living.

Great emphasis has been placed by the Church on the place and importance of the scriptures in its liturgy. Much of the benefit of the celebration comes from their effective proclamation and reception.

**Structure:** To understand the role of the liturgy of the word in the liturgy, it is important to see the basic structure of the rites. In celebrating the eucharist and the other sacraments today, the liturgy of the word leads to the liturgy of the sacrament. Brief introductory and concluding rites fill out this structure.

- **Mass:**
  - Introductory rites
  - Liturgy of the word
  - Liturgy of the eucharist
  - Concluding rites

A more detailed outline of the contents of this structure is given in *Sunday Mass Book*, pages 23-24, and in Bulletin 55, pages 252-253.

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1 GI: Throughout this issue, the abbreviation GI is used for the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, which is at the beginning of the sacramentary (Canadian edition, pages 11-54). An earlier version of it was printed in Bulletin 28.

This instruction provides the official viewpoint on the meaning and value of the various rites in the Mass, and shows what the Church is thinking of them today. It is necessary to be familiar with the General Instruction if we are going to understand, prepare, and celebrate the eucharist properly. A summary of the contents of the Instruction is given in the pastoral notes in *Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy*—Canada’s annual liturgical calendar. Readers and liturgy committee members need to become quite familiar with these norms.
Sacraments:

- Introductory rites
- Liturgy of the word
- Liturgy of the sacrament
- Concluding rites

When the sacrament is celebrated within Mass, the combined rite takes this shape:

- Introductory rites
- Liturgy of the word
- Liturgy of the sacrament
- Liturgy of the eucharist
- Concluding rites

Outlines for the various sacramental celebrations, along with many of their prayers and rites, are found in *Sunday Mass Book*, pages 1066-1159.

Blessings usually follow a similar structure:

- Introductory rites
- Liturgy of the word
- Liturgy of the sacrament
- Concluding rites

Many suggestions for developing and celebrating blessings are given in Bulletin 49, *Blessed Be God and His Creation*. The elements which enter the celebration of a blessing are discussed on pages 159-163 of that issue.

Liturgy of the hours: Special structures are used in the various hours of praise. These will be studied in Bulletin 58, *Day by Day We Give Him Praise*, in March-April 1977.

Further help in understanding the liturgy of the word is provided in Bulletin 50, *Reading God's Word: the Lectionary*. It explains the place of scripture in the liturgy, and gives the history of the lectionary. It also offers many insights into our present lectionary and its contents. These and other aids in preparing and celebrating the liturgy of the word are contained in Bulletin 50, which is still available from Publications Service.

Sabotage: Several things can frustrate much of the effect of the scripture readings, and thus be detrimental to the fruitfulness of the entire celebration:

- Poor proclamation: Faults which can make the readings lose their effect include: failure to understand the importance of scripture or the place of the readings in the rite; lack of preparation, prayer, and study; not understanding the meaning of the text; reading without sufficient volume, or going too fast to be understood; failure to break the text into intelligible word groupings; inability to maintain contact with the members of the assembly; not waiting until the people and priest are seated and settled; not pausing for a moment of silent prayer and reflecting after the reading; having one reader do everything — make announcements, read all the readings, lead the psalm, lead the other hymns; a reader who fails to come, or who shows up or prepares at the last moment, or who does not believe what he proclaims, contributes greatly to the destruction of good worship.
Failure to listen: Not all the faults lie with the readers, however. The members of the assembled community can also contribute to failure by not listening carefully, by allowing themselves to be distracted easily, by coming late, by sitting as far as possible from the reader, by not responding to the readings. A question for members of the community to ask themselves is this: Do we prepare for the celebration by prayer, by reading over the texts of the Mass or other rite? The parish liturgy committee might ask itself if it helps the people to know what these texts will be, and if it offers the people some aids for preparation and prayer.

Other factors can contribute to this sabotage by lessening the respect we have for God's word. Some of these would include: slovenly or over-casual dress by the readers; careless or disrespectful handing of the book of the word; toleration of a poor sound system; constant failure to give signs of honor to the word by carrying the book properly, by incensing and kissing it at the gospel, by enthroning it during the day; having an inadequate lectern and using it for everything else; treating the reader as a jack-of-all-trades; or choosing a reader at the last moment. One could also mention ushers who let latecomers stroll in during the proclamation of the readings.

Good proclamation: On a more positive note, when readings are proclaimed well, the liturgy of the word can be an effective celebration of faith. Some contributing factors:

Preparation: Choosing and assigning a sufficient number of good readers in advance; giving them good initial training and formation; providing them with aids for understanding the scriptures and the liturgy of the word; encouraging readers to make a retreat; providing days of recollection for them; helping them to grow in their personal prayer life and in reading the scriptures prayerfully; working with them to understand the theme of the celebration as found in the day's readings, and to appreciate the meaning and value of the various seasons and feasts of the liturgical year; promoting an annual updating, and re dedication to this ministry; allowing readers to retire with honor.

Good reading: A good sound system, proper lighting, and adequate space contribute to good reading. The readers (see GI, no. 71) need to be well prepared, able to proclaim carefully and respectfully, and at a good speed for listening. They approach the lectern with dignity, and dress properly. They are able to maintain contact with the listeners, and to speak out of their own faith. In this way they let God speak through them — through their words, their actions, their lives. They wait for silence before beginning, they announce the reading carefully, and then announce that this is God's word, inviting the people's acclamation. After this, they return to their place, and reflect in silence with the rest of the people on the word they have heard.

Attentive listening: Parishioners are helped to listen well by being encouraged to grow in their own use of the scriptures. During the year, the parish offers guidance in praying the psalms, in reading and meditating on the gospels and other sacred books. Each week they are encouraged to prepare for the following Sunday's celebration by prayer and reading the Mass texts. The practice of coming early and of spending some time in personal prayer is promoted, and members of the liturgy committee give example in doing this. The parish bulletin
offers help each week for prayer and meditation on the eucharist and the other treasures from the Church's tradition, so that they, like Mary, can ponder these things in their hearts (see Lk. 2: 19, 51). Most of all, they are helped to realize that they are God's chosen people, washed, forgiven, nourished by God through Christ's death and resurrection, and that his Spirit is with them to guide them in loving God by loving others. They realize that they are a community of faith and love, and try to live as God's witnesses in the world.

○ An atmosphere of faith: Everything about the liturgy of the word — the respect shown for the book, the proper use of the lectern for God's word only, the dress and manner of the readers, the effort to sing the psalm and gospel acclamation well, the careful preparation of the homily and the prayer of the faithful — all these contribute to the deepening faith of the community in God's word. Gradually, it is becoming a servant of the word, a community obedient in faith. By listening eagerly to Jesus as he speaks, by seeking to know and do God's will, this community is proclaiming its faith to the world, and at the same time, letting it grow deeper.

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A daydream? No matter at what level the liturgy of the word is in your parish, you can begin moving it toward the situation desired by the Church and by Christ. It will take prayer and humility and effort, and it will take time. But only by such means can the liturgy of the word become truly effective in your community of faith.

RULES FOR READERS

PREPARE your text by reading it over carefully several times, along with the other readings of the Mass. What is God saying to his people in this celebration? Practise your text. Consult a commentary, and discuss your reading with others during the week before you are to read.

PRAY that God will open the hearts of his people to listen to his word in a spirit of faith. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you proclaim God's word as well as you can.

CARRY the lectionary in the procession at the beginning and end of Mass. Hold it up so that all may see the book. By your bearing and appearance, be a sign of the respect God's people should have for his holy word.

PROCLAIM the word of the Lord to his people with dignity. Read slowly, with adequate volume. The lectionary text is divided into senselines to help you proclaim well. Remember that the Lord is speaking to his people through you.

LIVE what you proclaim. Strive to put into practice what you read to the community. Pray for deeper faith and stronger love. The Lord is heard more clearly when your reading is verified by the way you follow him in your daily life.
READERS IN ACTION

ROLE OF THE READER

St. Luke tells us that Jesus read the lesson from Isaiah (Is. 61: 1-2) in the synagogue one Sabbath, and then preached on it to the people (see Lk. 4: 16-30). Today in the liturgy of the word of our Sunday Mass, readers read the Old and New Testament lessons — and God continues to speak to his people.

In history: Reading and preaching to the people is mentioned in 1 Tim. 4: 13. The first letter to the people of Thessalonika is to be read to all the believers (1 Thess. 5: 27). The reading of other letters is requested in Col. 4: 16. These references, however, are not necessarily to liturgical services.

The first mention of reading at a Sunday Mass is found in St. Justin, a layman describing the eucharist at Rome around the year 150. He says that the memorials of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read by a reader “as long as time permits.” Then the president preaches, and urges the community to imitate what they have heard.

Hippolytus (Rome, 215) mentions that readers are instituted when the bishop hands them the book of the scriptures. They do not receive the laying on of hands because they are not being ordained, he says.

The role of reader was a stable function in the Church. Pope Cornelius mentions them among various ministries in 251, and from the fifth century they have been prayed for in the solemn prayers on Good Friday.

From the sixth to the eighth centuries, the Roman practice was for a family to offer an adolescent son for the office of reader. He was allowed to read at the night office. If considered acceptable, the pope ordained him reader with a blessing. By the ninth century, the lectorate was a minor order for clerics on the way to the presbyterate.

In the 1200s, William Durand, Bishop of Mende, included in his personal pontifical the text of an instruction before the ordination of readers, which picked up an older text on the role of readers: “The reader is to read to the one who preaches, to sing the lessons, and to bless bread and all new fruits.” This was carried over into the Roman pontifical, and lasted until the present decade.

The Vatican Council pointed out that each minister is to carry out only his own ministry (Liturgy constitution, no. 28). Readers carry out an exalted ministry in the liturgy, and are to do so with piety and dignity. They are to be filled with the spirit of the liturgy, and need training in order to carry out their ministry well (no. 29).

A new ministry: On August 15, 1972, Paul VI continued the reforms of Vatican II by making important and far-reaching changes in the ministries of the Latin Church. The points which involve readers are noted here:

- The minor order is abolished.

1 The text of his apostolic letter is given in Flannery, Vatican Council II, pages 427-432.
A new ministry of reader is established, open to lay persons. At this time, however, this ministry is restricted to men.

Bishops and major religious superiors may institute people in this ministry.

Those entering this ministry require the firm intention of serving God and his people.

Those wishing to become deacons or presbyters are to be instituted as readers along the way.

**Role:** The reader is to proclaim God's word in the midst of his people when they assemble for liturgy (eucharist, sacraments, liturgy of the hours, other rites). At Sunday Mass, the reader reads the first two lessons, from the Old and New Testaments. When two readers are present, it is better that each read one lesson (GI, no. 71). Where others of higher rank are present, they are not to usurp the reader's role of proclaiming the word (GI, no. 66).

**Other duties** of the reader (see also GI, nos. 148-152):

- When there is no cantor to lead in the singing of the psalm, the reader sings or says it, and the people answer with the refrain.
- When there is no deacon or cantor to do it, the reader states the community intentions in the prayer of the faithful.
- Directing the community in singing and other forms of participation.
- Preparing the people by instruction to receive the sacraments well.
- When necessary, preparing other members of the community who are temporarily appointed to read the scripture lessons at Mass and in other liturgical functions.

In order to carry out his work well, the reader is to pray and reflect carefully on God's word. In the words of the Liturgy constitution (no. 24), he is to do his best to develop a warm and living love for the scriptures.

**Assessment of the reader's role:** Several criticisms may be made of this ministry as it is presently described:

- The role seems to be a grab bag for leftovers, especially for communities that have not organized their liturgies very well.
- This ministry certainly confuses the role of the lay readers who serve in almost every parish in the land; to state that instituted readers prepare "temporary readers" does not clear up the issue — firm action is needed in each country if we are to spell out these matters more clearly.
- A further criticism is the restriction of the ministry to men alone. Some hierarchies are continuing to press Rome to remove this restriction, and are simply using an interim rite until this is changed (see Bulletin 53, pages 86-93).

The rest of this issue will deal with ordinary lay men and lay women who serve as readers in their parish or community liturgy.
God speaks through the reader: It is important to remember that the reader's main responsibility is to let God speak through him. The fact that it is God's message that is being heard is emphasized by the Council (Liturgy constitution, nos. 7, 33), and by the General Instruction (GI, no. 33).

The reader should seek to be a perfect channel of God's word by the holiness of his life, by his prayerful preparation of the text, by his way of proclaiming, and by his manner and dress. Nothing about him should divert the attention of the people from the message to the messenger.

Prayer should be an important part of the reader's life. Each day, especially at morning and evening—the Church's traditional hours of prayer—he should praise and thank God, ask his forgiveness, and pray for himself and his family, for the Church and the world. Frequent or daily scripture reading is also necessary if he is to become steeped in the word of God and formed in the mind of Christ.

A prayer for readers: A reader may wish to use or adapt this prayer several times during the week, and on Sunday before the Mass in which he or she proclaims the word of God.²

Praise to you, Lord God,  
king of the universe,  
and all glory to your name.  
I praise you and thank you for calling me  
to proclaim your word to your beloved people.  
Open the hearts of all who worship with us,  
so that they may hear your voice when I read.  
Let nothing in my life or manner disturb your people  
or close their hearts to the action of your Spirit.  
Cleanse my heart and mind,  
and open my lips so that I may proclaim your glory.  
All praise to you, heavenly Father,  
through the Lord Jesus  
in the Holy Spirit,  
now and for ever. Amen!

Role of the community: As noted in the previous article, members of the assembly have to do something if they are to be active participants in the liturgy of the word each Sunday:


- Prayer: It would not be out of order to pray for the celebrating priest, the readers, singers, and other ministers, for themselves and all the members of the congregation, asking Jesus to praise the Father through their liturgy.

- In tune with the liturgy: By understanding the spirit of the current liturgical season and Sunday, they will be more able to hear and appreciate the message of the readings and homily as they are proclaimed.

Listen: The message is proclaimed to the community which is seated and listening to God's word in faith. The eternal God speaks to us today: we are to open our hearts and listen.

Celebrate: After the liturgy of the word, we continue on to celebrate the liturgy of the eucharist, praising and thanking God for the truth he has revealed, and especially for having saved us in Christ.

Live: Nourished by God's word and the bread and cup of everlasting life, we go back to our normal occupations and circumstances — but now more able to live as witnesses of God's love in Christ for the world.

The primary role of the reader is not to lead the congregation in song, to make announcements, or to keep things running smoothly — these are the responsibility of other ministers.

It is not to preach to the congregation — that is the responsibility of the presiding priest.

It is not to convert the congregation — this is the Spirit's task.

The primary role of the reader is to be a servant of the word: through his ministry he or she lets the Father speak to his beloved people.

Heavenly Father,
send the Spirit of your Son
into the hearts of your people.

Bless those who read your word in public,
and bless those who hear it.
Lead us to eternal light
by the paths of the Lord Jesus.

All glory and praise are yours, Father,
now and always and for ever. Amen!

IN GOOD COMPANY

Notitiae is the international review published by the worship section of the Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship. In its August-September issue (nos. 121-122), pages 334-354, we are pleased to note that it published 21 pages of material from Bulletin 52, Reconciliation and Forgiveness.

The articles reprinted by the Vatican are

- Basic truths (pages 14-20)
- Reconciliation (pages 20-21)
- Sacrament of penance (pages 22-25)
- New attitudes (pages 26-29).
PREPARING FOR THE CELEBRATION

A reader needs to prepare more than the text he is to proclaim. Good readers will prepare for the whole celebration in which their reading is a small but important part. This article proposes some ideals toward which each parish and community should seek to guide its readers.

Life and Prayer

Liturgy and life cannot be separated for any sincere Christian. Honest community worship flows from people who are trying to serve God in their daily life. Public prayer needs to be supported, enlivened, and made real by personal prayer and by personal living of the commandments.

Between Sundays, prayer and Christian life are essential for sincere worship. Day by day we are called by God to be his people of praise and prayer — his praising and pleading Church. We are to give him glory by our lives and by our prayer. Our way of life is to reflect and support our prayer, and our prayer is to help us to live each day in love and service of God and all his people.

Daily life: If we do not love God and serve him each day in our family life, in our work and our recreation, in our ordinary routine, then we cannot pray well. We are called to know and obey God’s will: if we deliberately resist it or reject it, we cannot give ourselves to prayer. The Lord Jesus teaches us to love and serve God by loving and serving him in our neighbor. If we ignore or sidestep his way, we cannot expect to be able to pray sincerely. We cannot praise God when we refuse to obey him, nor can we plead with him for others when we keep our own hearts away from him.

Daily prayer: We are God’s beloved people. He expects us to praise him daily, and to stand before him to plead for the needs of all his people, of all creation. Our praise and our intercession, offered with and through Christ, are to be universal in their scope.

Individuals who do not pray daily cannot expect to turn on a spirit of prayer in public worship each Sunday. Their lack of personal prayer each day will help to make Sunday’s liturgy sterile. Individual prayer every day is a necessary preparation for each week’s community worship.

Liturgy needs to be followed up by prayer. Our prayer life needs to be nourished by reflection on the readings and other liturgical texts. We need to pray over the Sunday and seasonal texts, to meditate on them, to chew them over, to grow in our understanding of what God is saying to us through them.

Complementary roles: The early Church recognised quite early the intimate relationship between service and prayer. This was expressed, for example, in having the deacon — who helped the bishop care for the sick, poor, and needy throughout the week — express the needs of the community and the universal Church in the prayer of the faithful. The one who worked all week with those in need could best lead the community in prayer for their brothers and sisters.

Day of the Lord

Primary feast: Sunday is the original and primary feast day in the Church.1 Every seven days, on the first day of the week, we praise God our Father in union with his Son and his people throughout the world. As God’s people, we come together to celebrate the paschal mystery of our Lord Jesus Christ, who saved us by his death and resurrection. The Second

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1 See Constitution on the liturgy, no. 106. Bulletin 43, Sunday Belongs to the Lord, looks at the place of Sunday in the life and worship of the Church. Subsequent articles on Sunday are in Bulletins 45, 47, and 50.
Vatican Council wanted to restore Sunday to its primary place in our Christian worship and life (see Liturgy constitution, nos, 106, 102).

**Modified by the liturgical season:** Throughout the year, we praise God's saving work in Christ, primarily on Sundays but also on weekdays. Different liturgical seasons are marked, and during them we concentrate on one or other aspect of the paschal mystery. On certain days we praise God for his saving grace as he has shown it in the lives of his various saints. Yet at the same time — both in the Mass and in the liturgy of the hours — we continue to praise God for the whole of his saving mercy, including this aspect of it.

**In the life of the Christian,** Sunday is the day of community and personal worship. When we gather around the altar with our bishop, we give a most effective sign of the Church; when a parish community is celebrating the eucharist, especially on Sunday, the universal Church is truly present (see Liturgy constitution, nos. 41-42; Gt, nos. 74-75).

As readers grow in the spirit of their ministry, they will see Sunday as a special day, the Lord's day, and will do their best to make it a day of worship and joy in his service.

**Preparation for the Lord's Day**

Every reader, as every Christian, should prepare for Sunday by prayer and faithful living — in imitation of Jesus Christ, the obedient servant and Son of God.

**General preparation for Sunday Mass:** Whether appointed to read next Sunday or not, a reader is wise to make a general preparation for each Sunday's Mass, and to begin this early in the week. *Sunday Mass Book* provides many useful aids for this preparation, which could include:

- **Liturgical season:** The introduction to the liturgical season should be read when a new season begins. During ordinary time, it would be good to reread the introduction about once a month. On other occasions, one could read parts of the general introduction in SMB, pages 17-28.

- **Introduction to this Sunday's readings:** Before the readings of each Sunday's Mass in SMB, there is a brief introduction intended to provoke some serious thoughts about God's word.

- **Gospel:** The reader could read through the gospel text slowly and carefully, and pray to our Lord about some of the things he is saying to his Church in this week's passage. It may be useful to read the introduction once more.

- **Other texts** may be read and prayed over. The best order is gospel, first reading, psalm, second reading. This time could conclude with prayer, including perhaps the opening prayer of the Mass, offered to the Father through his Son Jesus.

**Preparation for reading:** Some practical suggestions for readers and liturgy committees to consider:

- **Early preparation:** Adequate time is needed for proper preparation. The Monday before the scheduled Sunday is not too soon to begin. A suggested outline of a week of preparation is given below. It is hard to see how it can be done well in any shorter period. Some may prefer to extend this over a period of ten days or two weeks.

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2 The origin and development of the liturgical year in the Western Church is described in a special issue of the Bulletin, no. 47, *Year of Praise* (80 pages, $2.00 in Canada, $2.50 outside Canada; available from Publications Service: see inside front cover).

Early appointment: The suggestions made in this article are based, of course, on the assumption that the parish liturgy committee or other responsible person is making appointments of readers in good time, and is communicating the reading dates to them some weeks in advance. (To do otherwise is to impede the possibility of good reading.)

Preparation with others: Several readers may get together to share their prayers and insights, and to practise together. Where two readers are appointed for each Mass — this is more desirable than only one (see GI, no. 71) — they may prepare together and help each other.

Ecumenical preparation: In the past few years, the Anglican Church and various Protestant Churches in North America have adopted the Roman Sunday lectionary as an option for their liturgical celebrations. Although they have made changes in some texts (just as we persist in “bumping” Sundays for other less important occasions, contrary to the spirit of the Liturgy constitution, no. 106), in general we share most of the texts most of the time. Readers, liturgy committees, and clergy could consider some joint preparation for at least the major Sundays and seasons in the liturgical year.

Prayer: A prayer that may be used by a reader is given in the previous article. It is reprinted from Bulletin 50, page 259. Members of the community, especially those on the liturgy committee, may wish to pray for the readers and other ministers (see Bulletin 54, page 192).

A Week of Preparation

One way of spacing the preparatory steps is suggested here. Readers in each community will have to adapt it according to local needs and the amount of effort they are ready to make in carrying out their ministry for God and his people. (A petition for ever-growing generosity on the part of all the Church’s ministers is something each Christian could include in his daily prayer.)

Monday: Readers carry out the general preparation for Sunday as described above, and conclude it with prayer for themselves and their ministry.

Tuesday: After prayer to the Holy Spirit for light, the readers read over the gospel text slowly. Where several readers are together, they can discuss what Jesus is saying to his people in this text; a reader who is preparing alone must ask himself the same questions.

Then they read over the first reading, the responsorial psalm with its antiphon, and the second reading. After reading the texts and discussing them briefly, they look at a commentary on the texts. A suggested list of these is given later in this issue, under Resources for readers.

- They read a commentary on the gospel, then of the first reading, psalm, and finally of the second reading (see Bulletin 50, pages 246-247).
- They discuss and pray over the insights they have gained from the readings and the commentary. How will these influence the way they proclaim these readings next week?
- They pray for help to be able to proclaim God’s word so that he may speak to his people clearly and directly.
- They ask how members of the congregation may be helped in advance and afterward to derive fuller benefit from God’s word in next Sunday’s Mass.

Some of these ways could include:
- Putting the scripture references to next Sunday’s readings in the parish bulletin, along with a page reference to Sunday Mass Book (as given in the 1977 Liturgical calendar). A paragraph of explanations could also be included.
- A brief introduction to the liturgy of the word may be given by the celebrating priest (GI, no. 11; Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy, note 7c).
Wednesday is similar to Tuesday. It is a day for reading the scripture texts and the commentaries on them.

- If there was insufficient time for the responsorial psalm on Tuesday, it should be studied more fully today: it is a response, in God's inspired words, to the first reading, which in turn reflects on or contrasts with the gospel reading.
- Today is a good time to begin sharing some of the riches of next Sunday's texts with family, fellow readers (if not already done on Tuesday), or friends.
- The psalm may be prayed or sung as a personal response to what God is doing in his people.
- A reader's prayer may be said.

Thursday: Today the reader may give more attention to the mechanics of the proclamation, without forgetting that God is speaking to his people in this community, and through the person and presence of the assigned reader.

- Prayer for readers.
- Words: Care should be taken with the words of the texts. Pronunciation of proper names can be checked in the study edition of the Sunday Lectionary. Senseslines are provided to help the reader proclaim the text more clearly and easily. One should note the need for additional pauses.
- Reading aloud: The reader should proclaim the text aloud several times. If possible, another reader, spouse, or friend can listen without a text in hand to see how well the meaning of the passage is conveyed.
- A discussion of this text in the light of the other readings and the general thrust of the current liturgical season may follow.
- In a simple sentence, the reader may write down the main point of the lesson. The priest may wish to use this in his introduction to the liturgy of the word (see GL, no. 11). In this case, a member of the liturgy committee or another person may collect the sentences by phone from the readers, and pass them on to the priest.

Friday: The Lord Jesus has told us that his followers must carry their cross daily with him (Lk. 9: 23). A reader who is going to proclaim the word of God on Sunday may wish to make the previous Friday a special day of prayer and penance. Privileged forms of penance are recommended: these are based on the teaching of the gospels (fasting, almsgiving, prayer, works of mercy), or on the tradition of the people of God (abstinence). Further notes on the Church's penitential discipline are contained in Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy, pastoral note 20 (1976 edition, pages 43-44; 1977, pages 44-45).

- Prayer for readers.
- A review of the commentaries may help the reader to understand more fully the meaning of the text he or she is to proclaim.
- Once again the reading is proclaimed aloud, with attention to making it intelligible and clear to those who hear it for the first time.

Saturday: Today the reader may prepare for his Sunday ministry by:

- Prayer.
- Looking over the prayers and other readings of the Sunday Mass.
- Reading the reading carefully, aloud.
- Prayer for the people to whom he reads; for the priest who presides at the eucharist.

See Bulletin 42, pages 18-33, on Friday and on ten traditional forms of penance.
Sunday: Before Mass, the reader should pray for the grace to read well, and look over the text for a new quiet moments before leaving for church. Arriving in church in good time, he or she may spend a little while in prayer before the celebration begins.

BULLETINS FOR 1977

Volume ten of the National Bulletin on Liturgy, January to December 1977, will look at several topics in a practical and pastoral way. These subjects were chosen in consultation with the National Council for Liturgy.

- No. 57: Rites for the Sick and the Dying: A study of these rites in the light of current theological and sociological knowledge. Prepared under the direction of Rev. Charles Gusmer by students at St. John's University, Collegeville, Minn., this issue provides many helpful insights into the needs of the sick and the dying, and into the ways that the Church's rites and ministries can help them.

- No. 58: Day by Day We Give Him Praise: The liturgy of the hours is one of the Church's responses to Christ's command to pray always. After looking at the divine office in the past and present, this issue provides positive helps for community prayer in today's homes, parishes, and religious houses.

- No. 59: Celebrating Marriage: Practical articles on the liturgy of marriage, and suggestions for preparing and celebrating this sacrament.

- No. 60: Liturgical Preaching: The liturgy provides the setting and the sources for Christian preaching today.

- No. 61: Complete Index, 1965-1977: A complete topical index of everything contained in the Bulletin over a period of thirteen years. This issue provides a key to the valuable resources of the years of transition, and suggests practical ways of using these helps. A penance celebration for Advent 1977 is included.

Copies of a particular Bulletin may be ordered singly or in bulk, at $1.50 per copy (outside Canada, $1.75 because of higher postage rates). When 50 or more copies of a single issue are sent to one address, a discount of 33 1/3% is given.

Subscriptions for 1977, from January to December (nos. 57-61) are $6.00 ($7.00 outside Canada). Send your cheque or money order to Publications Service, 90 Parent Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B1, Canada.
CHOOSING READERS

The choosing of readers for a parish community is a serious responsibility. While this article speaks primarily of parish readers, what it says is also applicable to those to be instituted in the ministry of readers.

Qualities Desired

Persons chosen to serve as readers need these qualities:

Spiritual qualities: Those who are asked to take training to become readers should be men and women of faith whose lives conform to the meaning of the service they undertake for the people of God. They should distinguish themselves by their Christian life, faith, and morals, and should strive to be worthy of this great office.

- Devotion: Priests and others involved in their training and formation will work to help these readers to grow in their devotion to the scriptures and to the eucharist. The presence of Christ — in his word, in his sacrament, and in his brothers and sisters — will be a strong foundation for the readers’ devotional life. With Christ, they will seek to serve God and his beloved people.

- Love of scripture: Persons who become readers need to meditate often on the word of God. By study, prayer, and daily reading, they should seek to grow into a warm and living love for scripture, as encouraged by the Second Vatican Council (see Liturgy constitution, no. 24: Constitution on revelation, no. 25).

These spiritual qualities are to be based on each person’s present devotion, and gradually deepened over the years by constant familiarity with scripture and by annual retreats and days of recollection and renewal.

Technical qualities needed in persons being chosen for training as readers include the ability to understand what is being read, and to read this aloud so that others may understand it. The use of one’s voice, a deliberate rate of reading, volume, pauses, use of microphone, ability to move gracefully, and other similar qualities can be a matter of training.

Social qualities: Persons asked to become readers should be Christians who have the respect of the worshipping community. Persons whose selection might cause scandal among the faithful should never be chosen. In making such judgments, however, we need to use Christ’s criteria, and not those contrary to his gospel (see James 2: 1-9).

Who Chooses Candidates?

Being chosen as a candidate for any ministry is not a matter for popular election. The bishop of each diocese has the overall responsibility for seeing that the ministries of the Church continue to function and to carry out God’s work in an orderly fashion. To provide for adequate care of the faithful, parishes are established under a pastor, who is taking the bishop’s place in this community of faith (see Liturgy constitution, nos. 41-42). Each priest is a co-worker with the
bishop, and is responsible for “ordering” the ministries — that is, for seeing that they continue their work in a proper way.

In today’s parish, the priests work with the parish council in developing and arranging ministries. For the liturgical ministries such as readers, this would usually be done in co-operation with the parish liturgy committee.

**How to Choose Well**

Priests and liturgy committee may invite the members of the community to consider if they have some talents and the desire to serve as readers. Prompted by the Spirit, some people may volunteer for this service. At the same time, the priests and committee will usually find it practical to invite a number of individuals to consider accepting training for this ministry.

When choosing readers, the priest and liturgy committee must pray for God’s guidance. They need to discern charisms, gifts, or talents given by the Lord to individuals. These are intended, as Paul reminds us, for the building up of the body of Christ, his Church.

Those who are presently serving as readers, whether with or without training, should also be considered and their charisms discerned.

**How many readers?** The ideal to strive for is two readers for each Sunday Mass (see GI, no. 71). Another person trained as a reader could act as commentator, and lead in the responsorial psalm (when it is not being sung) and in announcing the intentions for the prayer of the faithful.

A parish should discuss how many readers it needs. Should readers be assigned to the same Mass week after week, or should they be rotated? How many extra readers are needed to fill in when readers are sick or absent? What about readers for funerals, weddings, and weekday Masses? What number will provide a good frequency for readers and adequate time for preparation? The temptation to choose quantity over quality should always be resisted; at the same time, however, a sufficient number of readers is needed for good reading in the parish liturgy.

**How often should readers be chosen?** The answer to this question depends on a number of circumstances which may vary from parish to parish. In some communities, the turnover rate is high because of employment opportunities. Civil statistics in Canada show that the average family moves once in just under four years, and that the people in rural areas are gradually moving toward larger urban centers.

Some parishes will train new readers each year; in other communities, every two or three years is enough.

**Limited Term**

**Time limit:** Service to God and the Church in the ministry of reader should be seen as a firm and stable commitment; it is not for life, however.

When invited to serve as readers and during their time of training, candidates should be advised that they will be called to act as readers for a limited period — one or two years. Toward the end of that time, they can evaluate their service.
with the priest and liturgy committee; if agreeable to all, they can take a brief period of retraining and dedication, and renew their period of ministry and commitment for another year or two.

The time limit should be clearly noted in the certificate presented at the ceremony: John Smith is called on to serve as reader in this community of St. John's parish for a period of two years, from this date until January 15, 1979.

Retirement: If a reader feels unable to fulfill the ministry adequately, he should be invited to retire gracefully with the prayers and public thanks of the parish. The important criterion will not be the length of their service but its quality — not how long but how well they serve. If desired, the retirement could be marked at a Sunday Mass or during the service of rededication of readers: see the notes under Installing readers in this issue.

Persons who later turn out to be unsuitable (in talents or in witness) are to be retired firmly but with thanks: it is not right to inflict a poor reader on a community for years, with the resultant damage to its faith life, just to avoid hurting his feelings. At the same time, one who cannot read well may consider what talents and gifts he or she has to devote to other actual or potential ministries in the community.

Religious Communities

Because of the nature of religious life, a different application needs to be made of the criteria suggested above.

Choosing readers: In many religious houses, community members take turns as reader. Perhaps those who do not read well might ask to be left off the roster, and serve the community in some other way, such as preparing the lists of readers or daily readings, or helping readers to find and use resource material.

Where possible, two readers should be appointed for Sundays and solemnities; consideration should be given to having a third person act as leader of the psalm (when not sung) and reader of the petitions in the prayer of the faithful.

Several readers would also take part in daily morning and evening prayer. One could proclaim the scripture reading: a longer form may be chosen. Another could prepare and lead in the prayer of intercessions (the forms given are models for further development).

An annual day of retraining and renewal for readers would be valuable for each religious community.

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The quality of the proclamation of the word of God on the Lord's day depends to a great extent on the way readers are chosen and prepared for this ministry.

What are you doing in your parish or religious community to ensure that only the best are chosen to serve in this way?

1 Bulletin 58, Day by Day, We Give Him Praise (March-April 1977), will look at the liturgy of the hours, and suggest positive helps for its community celebration.

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FORMATION OF READERS

Mr. and Mrs. Jerome DuCharme have been working as a team in giving reader training at various levels. Jerry and Gail share some of their experience gained from more than 50 parish workshops for readers.

In this article we wish to share the approach we use to train and form lay people who proclaim the word of God. Every program for readers has a particular emphasis and focus. In this program we challenge ourselves to carry out the recommendations made in 1972 when Pope Paul restructured the ministry of reader:

In order to carry out their work in a more perfect and suitable way, readers should meditate carefully on scripture. They should realize the importance of the office they have accepted. They are to make special efforts to develop and deepen a warm and living love and understanding of scripture, and thus become more perfect followers of the Lord Jesus.

Our reader program has three phases. The first phase is a workshop for the parish team of readers. All readers, new and old, men and women, are invited to this workshop. The second phase is a "train the trainer" workshop given to the co-ordinators of parish reader teams. The third phase is the very important follow-up sessions which provide continuing formation and training for readers.

It is important for the success of this program that the parish ministerial team and the liturgy committee be involved in its planning and implementation. These key people should also attend every session of the reader program in order to answer questions and solve problems raised by the readers. An effective program for readers involves not only the reader team but every person in the parish who is responsible for liturgical celebration.

I. Workshop for the Parish Team of Readers

The workshop for the parish team of readers has three goals for them:

- To reach a better understanding of their liturgical role;
- To gain a deeper appreciation of sacred scripture both in their lives and in their worship;
- To be challenged to improve their ability to proclaim God's word effectively.

This workshop is usually four hours in length.

Prayer: It is important to begin the workshop with prayer. We give immediate attention to the readers' need to be prayerful in order to be open to the action

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Footnotes:

1 Jerry and Gail DuCharme, who live in Country Club Hills, Illinois, conduct workshops for lay readers. Jerry is the author of three books, The Reader's Guide to Proclamation for cycles A, B, and C. He is also on the editorial board of Modern Liturgy magazine, and has done several translations from French. Gail has been involved in the field of religious education for the past 15 years, and is a graduate student at the Loyola University Institute of Pastoral Studies, Chicago.

of the Holy Spirit and to grow in their appreciation of God’s word. Only by prayer can readers make the amazing discovery that God speaks through them as they proclaim the readings.

Ministry: Our next emphasis is ministry. Most readers, unfortunately, do not yet see themselves as involved in a ministry. By proclaiming God’s word, readers serve the people in their parish. God’s people have the need and the right to hear an enthusiastic proclamation of the Good News of salvation in Jesus. Through the reader, our Father calls his people to respond in eucharistic celebration. Readers are ministers of proclamation.

Study: Time is then devoted in the workshop to giving the background of the readings as they are used in the Sunday lectionary. Each of the three readings has a specific message. The gospel, the first reading selected in preparing the lectionary, is the proclamation of the words and works of Jesus — past and present. The Old Testament reading, which serves as background for the gospel text, becomes more understandable when read in the light of the gospel message. The New Testament reading describes how the early Christian communities struggled to live out their belief in Jesus.

Preparation: We then proceed to teach a method by which readers can prepare the readings for each Sunday. It is important for the long-range results of this workshop that a specific method be presented and that the readers be given the opportunity to try the method during the workshop. There are four basic steps in the method we teach: PRAY, PREPARE, PRACTISE, PROCLAIM.

- Prayer: We begin with prayer. This may be a spontaneous prayer led by one of the leaders of the workshop.

- Prepare: The Sunday readings are then read in this order: gospel, first reading, responsorial psalm, and second reading.

Next there is a slow, prayerful reading of a commentary for that particular set of readings. The commentary which we use is The Reader’s Guide to Proclamation, written expressly for lay readers. Each commentary explains how the readings are used in a liturgical context and describes how proclamation of God’s word leads us to encounter the risen Jesus, present and active in our eucharistic celebration.

After the commentary is read, the readings are read again, but in this order: first reading, responsorial psalm, second reading, and gospel.

Having read through the readings twice, the reader should now concentrate on the meaning and how best to interpret the readings. We give three suggestions on how to get at the meaning in the readings: (1) Be sensitive to the balanced lines of biblical poetry. (2) Catch the flow of thought by paying particular attention to the verb action (movement) contained in the sentences of the passage. (3) Capture the feeling in the emotion-packed words found in the readings.

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3 See “The Lector Workshop” in Modern Liturgy (7291 Coronado Drive, San Jose, California 95129), vol. 3, no. 4, page 21.
4 This method is also given in “The Lector Workshop” in Modern Liturgy, vol. 3, no. 7.
We recommend that readers use this method to prepare the readings for each Sunday's eucharist, whether or not they are scheduled to read on that particular day. Within the three-year cycle of Sunday readings, the most important passages of the bible will be read in a prayerful manner.

- **Practise:** The next step in preparing the readings is to practise aloud. Before going into the practice session of the workshop, certain proclamation techniques are presented and discussed at length. We emphasize four techniques of public reading: volume, pace, enunciation, and eye contact. We also give some attention to posture and to the way in which the lectionary should be carried in procession.

The reader must have a good grasp of the techniques of public reading in order to proclaim God's word with enthusiasm. Expressing enthusiasm in public is not easy for most readers.

“In our attempts to lead the people to the eucharist through a stirring proclamation of the word, we must acknowledge a 'hang-up' which many of us have. As children we were discouraged when we tried to express negative emotions: 'Don't be angry . . . You shouldn't be jealous . . . Don't be afraid!' Men especially were told to conceal sadness and disappointment: 'Boys don't cry.' Since we have made a lifelong effort to suppress negative emotions, many of us consequently have difficulty expressing the positive emotions which are necessary in the enthusiastic proclamation of scripture. We guard against showing real enthusiasm in public. We hold ourselves back.

"Why not allow ourselves to be surprised by the love which God shows for us in Jesus? Why not react openly before our brothers and sisters in a genuine spirit of proclamation? When we proclaim God's word freely, we will discover how the word prepares us and leads us to a joy-filled celebration of the eucharist. In our eucharistic prayer we will become more aware of the continuing, dynamic presence of Jesus among us . . . Each eucharist is a precious opportunity for us to respond to our Father with hearts filled with awe and amazement at what he does for us through Jesus!"  

It is important to point out the difference between public reading and proclamation. In public reading, there is stress on being technically correct and on holding the interest of the listeners. Proclamation demands all this and more. In the liturgy of the word, the depth of the reader's prayer life and faith ought to be evident.

A workshop for a parish team of readers should give each participant the opportunity to practise aloud in church with the microphone and receive suggestions on how to improve. The readings used in the practice session are the two readings which were prepared in learning the method of how to prepare the Sunday readings, as described above.

The first person to critique the reader is the reader himself. Then the group may offer other suggestions. It is always helpful for the workshop leaders to begin each critique on a positive note with a word or two of encouragement. When the proclamation has overall excellence, we should not hold back in our praise. The reader who does well should be motivated to continue his efforts at excellent proclamation.

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Whenever possible, videotape equipment or a good tape recorder should be used during the practice session. This will give each reader the chance to hear himself as the others did.

The first phase workshop concludes with a service of rededication, as outlined below.

**A Service of Rededication**

The workshop for parish readers concludes by inviting the readers to re-dedicate themselves to the ministry of proclamation. The service should be held in the church with one of the parish priests as president. The Easter candle is lighted to remind everyone of the continuing presence of the risen Jesus among us. The priest and a reader begin the service with a procession. The reader carries the lectionary in a dignified manner.

**Entrance rite**

1. An appropriate song
2. Enthroning of the word of God
3. President's greeting: The celebrant also reminds the readers of the presence of the risen Lord among them as they come together for this service of rededication.
4. Opening prayer: The celebrant may compose his own prayer, or use the following:

   Heavenly Father, we praise you for being ever mindful of the needs of your people. Thank you for calling these readers to be of service to your people. Help them respond to your call with greater generosity and dedication. We ask this, Father, through Christ our Lord.

   All respond: Amen!

**Liturgy of the word**

5. First reading: Jer. 1:1, 4-9 (see lectionary, no. 397). A few moments of silence should follow the reading.
8. Homily: This short homily brings together the three main points of the readings: God's call to the prophet Jeremiah ("Behold, I put my words in your mouth!"); St. Paul’s prayerful reminder that God’s power is at work in us; and the gospel account of Jesus giving the apostles a striking example of loving service. The homily should also make reference to the opportunity which the readers will have in a few moments to rededicate themselves as ministers of the word.
9. General intercessions: These petitions may serve as a model. Other intentions may be added by workshop participants.
That the people of our parish may open their hearts to Jesus, who is the living Word of God, we pray: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

For the courage to respond generously to God’s call to be of loving service to his people, we pray: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

For the interest and energy to prepare diligently for the proclamation of God’s word, we pray: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

For an ever deeper love for God’s word, and for our continued growth in the skills required for the effective communication of God and his message, we pray: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

The president then leads all in the Lord’s prayer.

**Ritual action**

10. The priest invites the workshop participants to come forward. He gives the lectionary to each person, and says: “N., the Lord be in your heart and on your lips that you may enthusiastically proclaim God’s word to his people.”

While holding the lectionary, the reader replies: “I recommit myself to the proclamation of God’s word.” (A reader may wish to make a spontaneous response.)

The readers return to their places.

**Conclusion of the rite**

11. The presiding priest give a blessing.

12. A final hymn of praise is sung.

**II. Training the Trainers**

A “train the trainer” workshop: The purpose of this second workshop is to lay the groundwork for developing an effective, on-going parish program for readers. The people who attend the “train the trainer” workshop are the co-ordinators of parish reader teams. In all probability, these will be the people who will eventually be instituted in the ministry of reader in their parish. Since the trainer workshop is designed as a follow-up on the workshop for the parish reader team, all participants should have attended the first workshop in order to receive full benefit from the trainer workshop.

In most parishes, the co-ordinator of the reader team does only the scheduling of readers. In the trainer workshop, we work at building up the self-confidence of the co-ordinators so they can become effective trainers and leaders in their parish reader program.

In the first part of the workshop, the co-ordinators become better acquainted with materials and aids which may be used by parish reader: the lectionary and its use; using a practice lectionary (in Canada, the paperback study edition,
The co-ordinators take a much more active role in the trainer workshop. They are given the opportunity to teach the method of preparing the Sunday readings which was presented in the first workshop. This is a method by which they can teach other readers how to prepare for proclamation. The trainers also learn how to explain the three steps for bringing out the meaning of the readings.

In much the same way, the trainers are shown how to present proclamation techniques and also how to conduct a practice session. Some trainers prefer to work with one reader at each practice session. Many trainers will be able to work effectively with a group of readers.

As in the first workshop, there is a stress in the trainer workshop concerning the importance of prayerful preparation of the readings so that God's word is proclaimed in a fitting way. Because ministry is a call to serve God's people willingly, we encourage trainers to give their readers the opportunity to make a yearly commitment to proclamation. Only people who are making a serious effort to proclaim the word with dignity and enthusiasm should be invited to continue as readers. Sometimes veteran readers are evasive when challenged to develop their skills in proclamation and when asked to deepen their sense of ministry. Trainers are therefore interested in sharing their experiences in dealing with readers who apparently are no longer interested, but do not resign.

Sufficient attention should be given in the trainer workshop with regard to good methods for selecting and training new readers. It should be strongly recommended that everyone who is being considered as a reader be first given a try out. If the person shows promise of becoming a good reader, the co-ordinator then gives that person full training. When the new reader is ready to proclaim the word, he could be scheduled to read at weekday Masses. This will give him practice in the liturgical setting as well as the chance to become familiar with the place of proclamation.

At the completion of the "train the trainer" workshop, the parish program is only in the beginning stages. The groundwork has been laid for a solid parish program for readers. A successful program, however, requires the creativity and persistence of the parish trainer, and the co-operation and support of the priests.

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8 *Sunday Lectionary — Study Edition: Jerusalem Bible texts, 460 pages, introduction, calendars, pronunciation guide, two colors, 5 by 7¾ inches. $4.00 each ($3.50 for five or more), from Publications Service at the address on the inside front cover of this Bulletin.

9 *Read the Word of the Lord* is a cassette program produced by J. S. Paluch, Chicago. Ten cassettes contain the first two readings for Sundays and major feasts in the entire three-year cycle. The translation used is New American Bible. Fifteen sets of instructions on using the program and some guidelines for good reading are included. Side two of cassette X has two sections: the first presents the theory of good reading; the second section gives examples and exercises in volume, pace, inflection, interpretation, etc.
III. A Continuing Program of Training and Formation

Follow-up session: Here are some suggestions for topics for on-going formation and training sessions for the parish team. The parish priest should be involved in every session. When needed, an outside speaker may be invited to present a particular topic.

- The reader's role in the eucharistic liturgy; the roles of the commentator and cantor.
- The liturgy of the word and eucharistic celebration: God's invitation and our response.
- How the liturgical theme flows from the scripture readings.
- Review the method presented in the workshops on how to prepare the Sunday readings.
- How to read the bible prayerfully.
- The reader's role in the celebration of other sacraments.
- Listening to and then discussing tape X, side two of the Paluch program, Read the Word of the Lord (see note 9, above).
- The liturgical seasons; the meaning of ordinary time.
- An explanation of the three cycles of Sunday readings.
- The weekday lectionary.
- Key events in the Old Testament, especially the Exodus and the Sinai covenant.
- The prophets.
- The psalms.
- The four gospels (several sessions).
- Paul's letters (several sessions).
- Understanding what is meant by a biblical theme; some examples of important themes (several sessions).

DESIGNING TRAINING FOR READERS

An article by this title in Bulletin 46, pages 313-318, offers helpful ideas on preparing, conducting, and evaluating training courses for readers.

Copies of Bulletin 46 are still available: see the inside front cover of this issue for the address of Publications Service.
CEREMONIAL

Our human nature is incarnate. We cannot express our thoughts unless we do so in words or actions. And at the same time as such expressions clothe our thoughts in perceptible form, they are making these thoughts more a part of us and of others who perceive them.

Well done ritual actions express faith and reverence in liturgical celebrations. A good celebration expresses and deepens the faith of those who take part in it; a poor celebration tends to weaken one's faith and desire to participate.

Readers need to know how to do certain ritual actions well. In this way, they will not distract others, and they will contribute to the celebration by being able to concentrate more on the meaning of the ritual act than on its execution. The General Instruction describes some of these in nos. 20-23, 233, 234.

Common Ritual Actions

Some actions that a reader should know how to perform well are described below. Each has a meaning, and when done well can help people to worship better; when done poorly, these actions can be a distraction or detriment to good worship.

Walking during a liturgical celebration is not the same as a stroll or saunter in the park; neither is it a march. In the liturgy, one moves from one place to another gracefully and for a purpose.

- In procession: A group of people or ministers moves from one point to another in a purposeful manner. A procession should be orderly (arranged in a specific way, with everyone in line), and should start at a definite moment. It moves along a determined route, at a deliberate speed. In our liturgy, the procession is normally accompanied by song, or at least by music. In a procession, the participants do not look around, or gawk at the people in the community.

- An individual moves deliberately to any position. When one reader carries the book in the opening procession, he may be accompanied by the second reader. After bowing to the altar, they move to the lectern, lay the book upon it, and go directly to their seats.

Carrying the book: The lectionary itself is intended to signify our respect for the scriptures. The rich red binding and the cross in gold on the cover add a note of dignity. Christian tradition has decorated the gospel book with gold and jewels, proclaiming for all that this is the word of the Lord.

Like the processional cross, the lectionary is a symbol of Christ's presence among his people: when his word is read in church, it is indeed the Lord Jesus who is speaking to us.

It should go without saying that the reader does not carry a hymnal or anything else but the book: like the crossbearer and acolytes, he bears only one symbol at a time.

Held with dignity: The reader may carry the book of the word in several proper ways:

- Against his chest: Carried with the gold design on the front cover facing out, the book is supported by his hands at the bottom of the book. If his fingers touch the front cover, they will not mark the gold cross, which was moved higher on the cover to avoid this problem.

- Held out in front with arms extended: The book is held with the cross facing forward. The right hand is on the bottom corner (where the “CCC” and gold maple leaf are on the spine), and the left hand rests on the top outside corner. Again, the hands do not touch the gold cross. The elbows may rest against the body for better balance.

- Before the face: The reader holds the book as described above, but carries the lectionary, cross facing forward, about 18 to 24 inches in front of his face. This method is a little more solemn, and could become the normal practice on Sundays.

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Held on high: On particularly solemn occasions (Easter, Christmas, or when a deacon reads the gospel), the book may be held at arms' length above the head, with the cross facing the back, and visible to all as the procession moves through the congregation. The reader holds the lower corners of the book.

When the procession reaches the sanctuary, the reader places the book on the lectern, and goes to his place.

If a separate gospel book (evangeliary) is carried by the deacon, it takes the place of the lectionary in the procession: the greater replaces the lesser. (In this case, the lectionary is placed on the lectern before Mass, and the reader takes part in the procession without his book.) The deacon lays the gospel book on the altar when the procession comes to the sanctuary.

Standing, sitting, kneeling: In the sanctuary, the reader should stand straight, without slouching. When seated, he should remember that he is not in an easy chair at home: he sits up, and does not cross his legs. Kneeling is hardly a dignified position of prayer when one crouches or leans back on the pew.

Genuflecting: It is surprising how many do this sloppily. A little practice at home can refine it into a dignified sign of respect. The right knee is placed close to the left foot while keeping the body straight. The sign of the cross is not made during the genuflection in our culture.

Bowing: Readers need to learn how to bow with dignity. Many readers and servers bow awkwardly, moving both head and rump at the same time. A correct bow is made by moving the head and shoulders slightly, while keeping the back straight. A little practice before a mirror or with other readers will help.

Sign of the cross: The full sign is made at the beginning of Mass and during the final blessing. Made well, it can be a sign of faith. Many people tend to make it in a careless fashion. Readers should make sure they do it well and reverently. A smaller sign is made with the thumb on the forehead, lips, and heart at the beginning of the gospel. If done deliberately, this can be an expression of our belief in Jesus who is about to speak to us.

Striking the breast: This gesture is made only once in the Mass, when the first penitential rite is used. Each person touches his hand lightly to his chest: we do not need to punch ourselves or listen for the echo. The gesture is no longer made when bells ring or during the Lamb of God.

Kiss of peace: A simple handclasp is customary and adequate, while expressing the wish that the other may share the peace of Christ. It is not a time for conversation. (The meaning of this rite is explained more fully in Kiss of peace: see Bulletin 48, pages 122-124.)

Communion: When receiving in the hand, the reader holds out his hand — about chest-height — before the minister of communion. The palm is flat and facing upward. The other hand is best placed beneath the open hand. It is undesirable to have fingers poised to snatch at the bread of life.

It is fitting for readers to receive communion from the chalice in a Mass in which they read (see GI, no. 242g).

Other Notes

Hands are a problem for many ministers. Their position when holding the book is described above. When reading, the reader may place his hands along the edge of the book or lectern. He should keep them still, and not fidget with the ribbons or pages.

In procession, a reader who is not carrying the lectionary may carry an open hymn book, or simply join his hands: dangling or swinging arms are best left for parades. When in the sanctuary, the reader should not keep his hands in his pocket.
Normal lay clothing is used by the reader when carrying out his ministry. A suit is fitting for a man, rather than a windbreaker. In summer time, a more relaxed form of dress may be appropriate: each community should decide upon this.

One ministry at a time: Each minister is to carry out all the duties of his ministry, and is not to take over those of another (see Liturgy constitution, no. 28). In practice, this means that the reader should not also be an acolyte or minister of communion.

PRAYING WITH THE SCRIPTURES

Readers are encouraged to meditate on the scriptures and to pray with the word of God. Some practical suggestions for readers provide some help for those who want to pray with the scriptures.

Be open to God's Spirit: We do not know how to pray as we should. For this reason, God has poured his Spirit into our hearts in order to help us in our weakness. The Holy Spirit is interceding for us, expressing what we cannot even put into words (see Rom. 8: 26-27). We have to learn to be open to the Spirit's action, and let him pray in us.

Use God's own words in our prayer: The Holy Spirit inspired the authors of the psalms and canticles to write down what God wanted. He who designed the human person helps us to express what is in our heart of hearts. These prayers are not always easy to use, but if we allow the Spirit to express both praise and pleading through our voices, we can grow in our prayer life.

Meditate on God's word: In the liturgy, we stand to listen to the gospel reading, for we believe that Jesus is speaking to us (see Gl, no. 35). When an individual Christian reads the gospels reverently, the Lord continues to speak to him. It is particularly helpful to read each Sunday's gospel in preparation and in a meditative spirit during the week.

As we learn to let the Lord speak to us in the gospel, we become more open to his word, and are better able to pray with the scriptures.

Lord Jesus,
we give you praise.
Speak to us as we read your word,
and send your Spirit into our hearts.
Guide us today and each day in your service,
for you are our way, our truth, our life.

Lord Jesus, we love you:
keep us in your love for ever and ever. Amen!
READING IN OTHER CELEBRATIONS

While the eucharist celebrated on Sunday by the community is the chief liturgy of the week, readers and liturgy committees need to remember that scripture readings are part of almost every liturgical rite today. Some of these are described here briefly.

Other Masses

The lectionary and sacramentary contain readings and prayers for many types of Masses. Looking at the lectionary, for example, we find these celebrations:

**Sunday Masses**: Most of the articles in this issue refer to reading on the Lord’s day. A valuable help for the reader is *Sunday Lectionary — Study edition*. (All the books mentioned in this article are described more fully in *Resources for readers*, in this issue.) See also Bulletin 50, pages 224-230.

**Weekday or ferial Masses**: The present lectionary provides readings for every day of the year; in ordinary time, these are based on a two-year cycle. Readers will find the day's readings (or choice of texts) given in *Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy*, the annual liturgical calendar. *Weekday Lectionary — Study Edition* contains the rest of the texts from the lectionary; together with the Sunday edition, it has all the texts given in the larger *Lectionary for Mass*.

Further notes on the weekday lectionary are given in Bulletin 50, pages 231-235.

The readings in the Sunday and weekday Masses are semi-continuous during ordinary time; all the other Masses in the lectionary follow a thematic approach.

**Sanctoral Masses**: Masses in honor of the saints are proper when assigned to a specific date; other texts are chosen from the appropriate common. References for these celebrations are given in the liturgical calendar. On memorials, it is preferred to use the daily ferial readings. See Bulletin 50, pages 236-238.

**Ritual Masses**: Since the Second Vatican Council, the Church has returned to its tradition of celebrating the sacraments within Mass. The ritual Masses are intended for these celebrations. See Bulletin 50, pages 239-240.

- **Wedding Masses**: Families often request that a relative or friend of the family should read. As long as these persons are suitable and capable, this may be permitted. Only scripture readings are read; secular readings are not to be tolerated. (Bulletin 59, May-June 1977, will be entitled *Celebrating Marriage.*)

- **Funeral Masses**: The family may wish to have one or two of their relatives or close friends act as readers.

**Other Masses** in the lectionary include:

- **Masses for various needs** of the Church and the civil community, or special occasions in the life of the local assembly. Such Masses would be used, for example, for Christian unity, for peace and justice, for the election of the pope or bishop, in thanksgiving. See Bulletin 50, pages 240-241.

- **Votive Masses** are celebrated in honor of the mysteries of the Lord, of Mary, or of the saints. These are now to be used with moderation: see Bulletin 50, pages 241-242.

The entire issue of Bulletin 50, *Reading God's Word: the Lectionary*, provides a more complete study of the lectionary, its contents and its proper use.
Other Celebrations

The scriptures are normally read in all celebrations of the liturgy outside Mass:

Sacraments: When celebrated during the eucharist, the appropriate ritual Mass is used; outside Mass, a liturgy or service of the word, based on the same texts, is celebrated.

Liturgy of the hours: The daily celebration of the liturgy of the hours is filled with scriptures. Psalms and brief scripture readings are in every hour, and readings from the Church Fathers or traditional writers are also in the office of readings. The liturgy of the hours will be studied at greater length is Bulletin 58, *Day by Day We Give Him Praise* (March-April 1977).

Bible celebrations: Encouraged by the Vatican Council, these have become part of our normal worship life. Readers take part in them as in the liturgy of the word at Mass. Three particular types of bible services are well known:

- **Wakes:** The service for a dead person, usually celebrated the evening before the funeral Mass, is a bible service. Models are provided in *Catholic Funeral Rite* and *Rite for a Catholic Wake*.
- **Blessings:** A blessing is best celebrated within the context of a service of the word. Many details on celebrating blessings are given in Bulletin 49, *Blessed Be God and His Creation*.
- **Penance celebrations:** A specific form of bible service. A model service for Lent 1977 is included in this issue, and an Advent service in Bulletin 55, pages 219-228. Other penance celebrations from past issues are listed on page 224.

In all these rites, the reader has the same role and responsibility as at Mass.

UNDERSTANDING THE LITURGICAL YEAR

The Church's liturgical year, our year of grace and praise, developed gradually. In apostolic times, Sunday was the only feast. Before long, the celebrations of Easter and Theophany (Epiphany) developed. Christmas was first celebrated in Rome around the year 336.

A complete outline of the liturgical year is contained in Bulletin 47, *Year of Praise*.

Sunday and its place in the liturgical year is the topic of Bulletin 43, *Sunday Belongs to the Lord*; see also Bulletins 45, 47, and 50.

Advent-Christmas seasons are important: see Bulletins 36, 41 and 55.

Lent-Easter: See Bulletins 37, 42, and 47.

Saints' days: See Bulletins 36, 41, 45, and 47.

Further Ideas on understanding the liturgical year are given in *Sunday Mass Book*, pages 19-22, and in the introduction to each liturgical season.

A key to the day-by-day celebration of the liturgical year, and to the interrelationship of the temporal and sanctoral cycles is given each year in *Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy — Liturgical Calendar*. This is described more fully in *Resources for readers* in this issue.
THE CHURCH’S CATECHISM

Rev. John H. Fitzsimmons teaches scriptures at St. Peter’s College, Cardross, Dunbarton, in Scotland. A member of the ICEL subcommittee on presentation of texts, Father Fitzsimmons has lectured in several countries on the lectionary.

In an age when many people lament the passing of the catechisms from our schools, it is strange that they do not realize that the Church still has its own program of catechetical instruction set into the framework of the liturgy. On the other hand, for all the experts in religious instruction who will tell us what was wrong with the older style, there are still very few who have turned to the Church’s presentation of the word of God for inspiration in devising new styles. (See Editor’s note, below.)

Yet, the preface to the Roman Missal of 1969 is quite clear on the point: Pope Paul says that the lectionary was composed so that the desires of the bishops at Vatican II could be fulfilled and that “sacred scripture will then be a perpetual source of spiritual life, the chief instrument for handing down Christian doctrine, and the center of all theological study.”

If we take this seriously, there are almost unlimited possibilities for relating theology and catechetics to the liturgy of the Church’s year.

It is clear that the gospels form the backbone of the lectionary; the “more representative portion of the holy scriptures read to the people over a set cycle of years” that Vatican II was looking for is based on the principle of the centrality of the gospels. This is logical, for the gospels remain “our principal source for the life and teaching of the incarnate Word, our savior.” Hence, the composers of the lectionary opted for a three-year cycle; each year is characterized by one of the synoptic gospels: so the first year of the cycle (Year A) is in reality the Year of Matthew; the second (Year B) concentrates on the gospel of Mark; the third (Year C) revolves around the gospel of Luke.

Each of these gospels in turn is read in semi-continuous fashion throughout the liturgical year on the Sundays in ordinary time. It is this principle that gives coherence to each of the three years in the cycle. When we take into account the importance attached to the infancy gospels of Matthew and Luke during Advent and Christmas and to the gospel of John during Lent and Easter, then it is clear that if there is a program in the Church’s unfolding of the word of God, it is to the gospels that we have to turn to discover it.

The beauty of this principle is that it gives each of the evangelists a chance to speak for himself. A close analysis of the choice of gospel passages for the liturgy will be enough to make the point that what we have in the first year is “the essential Matthew,” while the second and third do the same for Mark and Luke. Likewise, the major seasons of Lent and Easter present us with the “essential John.” This way of presenting the gospels is in accord with the Church’s intention.

Editor’s note: Since Vatican II, scriptural and liturgical catechesis has been an integral part of the Canadian catechetical program. At each grade level this program continues to provide instruction and formation into the scriptural and liturgical life of the Church.

1 See Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution Missale Romanum, prefaced to the sacramentary (Canadian edition, pages 7-11); the quotation should be read in context and in conjunction with the introduction to the lectionary and with the General Instruction of the Missal, nos. 33-35, 41-42.
2 See Constitution on the liturgy, no. 51.
3 See Constitution on divine revelation, no. 18.
4 Perhaps it is worth remarking that much of the point of what has been said is lost by perpetuating the designations Year A, Year B, Year C. It might be better if we were to adopt Year of Matthew, Year of Mark, Year of Luke. For instance, “the 17th Sunday of Luke” sounds better, looks better, and actually expresses something better than “the 17th Ordinary Sunday of Year C.”
with contemporary scholarship where the emphasis is placed on the individual theologies and personal insights of each evangelist. In other words, the theology of Matthew is the directing factor during the first year of the cycle, Mark's theology in the second, and the theology of Luke in the third year. Further, Matthew's insight into the mystery of the incarnation coupled with Luke's represents the starting-point for the Church's understanding during Advent-Christmas; John's all-embracing theology, based as it is on an insight into the paschal mystery, lends itself to further development during Lent-Easter.

Matthew: What distinguishes Matthew's account of the gospel story from the others is the interest he shows in the words of Jesus; his portrait of Christ is basically that of the master, the teacher of the new law. What he has done is to gather the traditions of the words of Christ into five great collections or discourses: the sermon on the mount, the mission sermon, the parable sermon, the community sermon, the final sermon. It is here that we will find, above all, his theology, and, of course, they are well represented in the lectionary for Year A. The narrative parts of the gospel are intertwined with these discourses to give a carefully worked catechetical construction to the whole gospel. Underlying everything is the evangelist's conviction that Jesus (whom he has defined at the outset as “Emmanuel,” “God-with-us”) is “with” his Church “always to the end of time.” Hence, his basic principle is the abiding presence and activity of the risen Lord.

It is not surprising, then, that much of what he has to say concerns the Church itself; at a very early stage, his was recognized as “the ecclesiastical gospel.” If we pursue this through the gospel, then it becomes apparent where Matthew leads us — into the areas of the theology of the Church and of the sacraments. He starts with a principle that has become familiar in modern theology, “Christ the sacrament of the encounter with God,” and he develops it in line with the present experience of the Lord's abiding presence and activity in the Church, namely through the sacraments. It seems, then, that if we were to follow Matthew in the course of the year which is named after him, our preaching, teaching, and instruction would embrace these areas of theology and doctrine: the mystery of the Church and the sacramental life.

Mark: When we turn to the gospel of Mark, then we are confronted with quite a different book — its very brevity sets it apart. But the brevity hides a theology that is profound; any impression of simplicity is deceptive. As time goes by, Mark is gradually being recognized as a theologian of not inconsiderable talent. He sets out to lead his readers directly to the person of Jesus Christ, and in doing so he is not afraid to present in all its starkness the full picture of the humanity of the Lord.

After the “confession of Peter” which is the crisis or turning-point of his gospel, everything changes; he moves from the theme of the “kingdom of God” to that of personal attachment to Jesus, and the gospel becomes a catechism of the Christian life, even to the point of suffering and death. All that Mark has to say is geared to the question which each reader must pose to himself or herself: “Who is this?” The two titles “Son of God” and “Son of Man” represent the two axes on which the whole of Mark's gospel turns.

It is equally clear, then, where his theology leads us — into that area known as Christology. We are faced with the mystery of Christ and we are asked for a response. Hence, there are the secondary theological themes of faith, discipleship, mission. It has proved to be one of the most fruitful areas in contemporary theology, and the Church directs us to Mark for a starting-point.

Luke: The gospel of Luke presents itself as at once a more attractive proposition, because his concern is to set forth what all of this means in practice. His is the social gospel, the gospel of the poor, the underprivileged, the outcast; the message of forgiveness and reconciliation, this is Luke's theme. Therefore, it is clear where his theology leads us — it leads us into all of those areas where theology and life come together: poverty, liberation, the life.

of prayer and dedication demanded of the disciple of Christ, the place of the Holy Spirit. Even this abbreviated list is enough to show the immediacy of Luke's message. The good Samaritan, the prodigal son, the good thief... all these and a host of others we will find in Luke's gospel and nowhere else. It would be true to say, also, that the lectionary has gone out of its way to include as much as possible of Luke's personal insight into the cycle for Year C. Here, then, is a golden opportunity to grasp the nettle firmly and work out for ourselves what the gospel means in 1977.

**John:** Each year we are confronted with the gospel of John. His theology is always thought to be deeper than that of the others; it may well be, but it also has a capacity to speak in the simplest way about the most profound truth. John's purpose is to interpret Christ for us in such a way that we can enter into the very life of God himself. What we know from theology as "grace" forms the central point of his theology. He speaks constantly of "life" and becomes clear that "life" is in Christ and that Christ gives "life" to those who come to him; "life" gradually takes on a clear definition until it emerges that the "life" we are offered in Christ is the life of the Trinity itself. Through the many encounters between the Word made flesh and men and women, we are let into the mystery of the dealings of God with the human soul, in such a way that the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection becomes the start of a new kind of "life" for us.

**Summary**

Putting all this together, we might represent in this way what the Church is offering us:

**Year A — the year of Matthew:**
- The incarnation (Advent-Christmas)
- The Church and the sacraments (Matthew)
- The life of grace (John)

**Year B — the year of Mark:**
- The incarnation (Advent-Christmas)
- The mystery of Christ and faith (Mark)
- The life of grace (John)

**Year C — the year of Luke:**
- The incarnation (Advent-Christmas)
- The Christian life; the social gospel (Luke)
- The life of grace (John)

Expressed this way, it is clear that what we have in the liturgy over the three-year cycle is a comprehensive presentation of Christian doctrine. This is a consolation and a challenge: a consolation because it destroys any fears that we might be missing out on something (for there is not an element in theology or doctrine which is not reducible to these areas); it is a challenge, because the educative process means that these basic, evangelical, ideas have to be expanded and applied to the lives of our communities in the light of 2,000 years experience and development.

This is no mean task; at the same time, it represents what Pope Paul hoped it would be — "the chief instrument for handing down Christian doctrine," and at the same time provides us with "the center of all theological study." In the long run, it demands that each priest, deacon, or teacher will have to give an account of the faith that is his in the light of the gospel, and that is a challenge indeed. But, until that is done, there is no real hope of the word of God's being opened up "more lavishly, so that richer fare may be provided for the faithful."  

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6 See Constitution on the liturgy, no. 51.
RESOURCES FOR READERS

Some helps should be available in every parish for readers who want to prepare themselves for proper proclamation of God's word. A person who takes the ministry quite seriously would want to have a personal copy of those which he or she finds particularly useful. The resources listed below are highly recommended as practical helps for readers and others preparing for the Sunday celebration.

Scripture texts: The texts to be proclaimed are found in the lectionary itself. The annual liturgical calendar, Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy, gives the reference to the lectionary for Masses on each day of the year.

- **Sunday Lectionary — Study Edition:** This book is a smaller copy of the Sunday section of the large lectionary. In two colors, it provides the identical text, pagination, senselines, and page turns. A pronunciation guide for proper names is given on pages 420-425. Sewn, perfect binding, 460 pages, calendars, 5 by 7 1/4 inches; $4.00 each, or $3.50 each for five or more: available from Publications Service: see inside front cover.

- **Jerusalem Bible:** The notes in this bible — this version is used in the Canadian lectionary — provide many insights into the meaning of the text. It is available in many editions. For study by readers, it is better to get a fully annotated edition of the full bible.

- **Sunday Mass Book:** The text of the Sunday readings and prayers is given, preceded by a brief paragraph which looks at the meaning of this week's liturgy of the word. 1344 pages, two colors, ribbons. $10.95 (Publications Service, 90 Parent Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B1).

Commentaries: Today there are various commentaries which provide background to the Sunday texts:

- **The Jerome Biblical Commentary** studies each section of the scriptures, and offers detailed notes and background information on the books and texts of the bible.

- **Preaching the New Lectionary,** by Reginald Fuller: The readings for each Sunday are carefully analyzed, and their meaning brought out more clearly. The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn. 56321. (Reviewed in Bulletin 47, page 78.)

- **Commentary on the New Lectionary,** by Gerard S. Sloyan: In two or three pages each Sunday, the author provides exegetical comments on the meaning of the texts, as seen in modern biblical thought. Paulist Press, New York, Toronto. (Reviewed in Bulletin 53, page 123.)

- **The Reader's Guide to Proclamation,** by Jerome J. DuCharme: Three volumes are now available, one for each year of the lectionary cycles. Each week's notes provide an outline of the contents of the Sunday readings, and helps readers as they prepare their texts by study and prayer. Mr. and Mrs. DuCharme have written *Formation of Readers* in this issue. (Year A was reviewed in Bulletin 48, page 143; year B, in Bulletin 53, page 123; year C, in this issue.) Franciscan Herald Press, 1434 West 51st Street, Chicago, Ill. 60609 ($2.95 a copy, or $7.50 for the set of three).

- **Discover the Bible:** A weekly 6-page leaflet for the period from September to June, this publication is now in its thirteenth year of service to the Christian community. It is mentioned each year in the Bulletin as a useful aid to readers and others, wanting to share more fully in the richness of the Sunday readings. Further information from The Bible Center, 2000 Sherbrooke Street West, Montréal, Québec H3H 1G4.

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**Reading God's Word: the Lectionary:** This is no. 50 of the National Bulletin on Liturgy. It takes a thorough look at the lectionary, and helps readers to understand more fully how the texts go together, and how the liturgy of the word is formed and celebrated. $1.50 per copy ($1.75 outside Canada), Publications Service, 90 Parent Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B1.

**General Instruction of the Roman Missal:** This is described in more detail in *Place of the word* in this issue of the Bulletin.

**Other helps:** Finding the daily readings, especially when there are several choices, is simplified by the use of *Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy — Liturgical Calendar*. This annual guide provides many helps to readers and liturgy committee: see especially the extensive pastoral note 7, on the liturgy of the word. Other pastoral notes apply general principles on the liturgy of the word to many other celebrations and situations. Daily starters provide suggestions for prayer and preaching based on the daily readings. The 1977 edition is now available: perfect binding, illustrations, 4½ by 6½ inches, glossy paper, 220 pages. $2.50 per copy.

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As further resources become available, the Bulletin will make them known through book reviews and other references.

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**DIGNIFIED BOOKS**

The traditional practice of the Roman rite, coming to us from many centuries of constant use, is to have the celebrating priest or bishop and his ministers use dignified books in liturgical celebrations.

Liturgical books can be signs of our faith. Churches where liturgical books are dignified, where they are treated with respect, are teaching their people about respect for God’s word.

The Eastern Churches have long had the custom of decorating the book of the word — especially the gospel book or evangelium — with gold and jewels. They do this to proclaim in a most concrete way that this is God’s word to us, his beloved people. Prayers and rites reinforce this belief.

Today, however, in the Western Church, there is a temptation to slackness and sloppiness:

- Some communities are content to have readers proclaim God’s word out of ten-cent leaflets instead of proclaiming it from the bible or lectionary.
- Some presbyters have been foolish enough to abandon the sacramentary, and attempt to use some other book or booklet, or none at all.

* * *

Our liturgy goes far beyond the texts of its prayers and readings. Our actions — vesture, gesture, posture, types of books used, amount of time, the use of music, sufficient ministers, time and effort spent in preparation — often express our faith (or lack of it) much more fully than our words.

*What did the liturgy of the word express in your parish last Sunday?*
INSTALLING READERS

Some suggestions for developing a parish rite for publicly naming or reappointing adults to act as readers in community worship:

Preparation: A period of preparation, involving training and spiritual formation is necessary. An understanding of the Church and its mission, of worship and liturgy, needs to be developed, and candidates have to deepen their prayer life over a period of time. Several lectures or brief courses cannot impart this; it needs personal guidance and gradual growth, which take time. Practice in practical Christian service is also as desirable for future ministers as it is for catechumens.1

Celebration: Normally, the rite would be celebrated during the eucharist, in order to emphasize the close relationship of this ministry and all Christian service with the eucharist.2

* Day: Our Church in North America has a tendency to overload Sunday, as though it were the only possible time to do anything ecclesiastical. It might be better to celebrate these interim rites during the week, perhaps at an evening Mass; in this way, it may be possible to use appropriate readings. On the Lord’s day, the assigned Sunday texts are better used, in accord with the general principles of liturgy.3

* Homily: At Mass, the rite follows the liturgy of the word. At the end of the homily, the presiding bishop or prebyster speaks for a moment or two to the congregation about the role of readers in the community’s life and worship. Then he speaks briefly to the candidates about the responsibilities they are taking on.

* Prayer: The president invites the members of the community to pray with him in silence for the candidates; this prayer replaces the general intercession at this Mass. After some moments of silent prayer, he says a suitable prayer in these or similar words:

Blessed are you, Lord God, creator of the universe and Father of all: you have called us to serve you and praise you in the family of your Church.

Look with mercy on these men and women who are prepared to proclaim your word and to lead your people closer to your teaching.

Bless them, and purify their hearts this day so that they may always live what they proclaim.

Through their words and example, deepen the faith and love of your Church, and bring us to share in your unending joy in heaven.

We praise you and thank you, Father, in the name of Jesus your Son and in the love of your Holy Spirit, God of glory for ever and ever.

All answer: Amen!

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1 See Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, no. 19(4). This study edition may be obtained from Publications Service for $2.00; see the address on the inside front cover.

2 See Liturgy constitution, no. 10; Ministry and life of priests, no. 5. These two sections should be read together.

3 See Liturgy constitution, no. 106; Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy — 1976 Liturgical Calendar, note 1b(2), page 5.
Conferring the office: The president gives each candidate an appropriate symbol of his new role in the worship of the community. The formula and symbol may be adapted as required. These symbols may be explained to the community at an appropriate moment, and to the candidates during their period of training. The pastor or bishop presents the lectionary used in Sunday worship to each of the candidates:

Joan Smith,
this is the word of God.
Be worthy of the message you proclaim
among the people that God has called his own,
and build up the body of Christ.

The reader may answer: Amen!

Then other members of the parish may present individual symbols in silence. For example, a representative of the parish council may present a scroll or certificate; one of the liturgy committee members may give a personal copy of a bible, New Testament, concordance, or commentary to the new reader.

- Mass continues with the preparation of the gifts. All members of the community are invited to receive communion under both forms. A suitable form of the solemn blessing may be developed.

- After Mass, it is fitting to invite the community to continue the spirit of the occasion by an informal gathering for coffee and donuts in the parish hall.

- Outside Mass: If the celebration has to take place outside the eucharist, it consists of an opening hymn and prayer; liturgy of the word, with sung responsorial psalm and gospel acclamation; the rite, as described above; the Lord's prayer, preferably sung; blessing of the new ministers and of the community; informal gathering in the parish hall after the service.

Retirement Ceremony

When a reader or a group of readers is ready to retire, this event may be marked by a brief ceremony in which the parish community may thank God for the service this person or group has given.

During a service of installation: If the retirement ceremony takes place during a service for installing new readers, it would follow the gospel and homily, in this order:

- A brief expression of thanks for the service these readers have given to this community.

- A prayer for the retiring ministers (and for them in their new ministry, if they are moving on to other forms of service):

All praise and glory are yours,
Father in heaven:
you have given us your Son
to be our brother and our savior.
He came as a servant,
ready to serve us all
and to give his life to ransom us from sin.

Bless these men and women, your servants:
they have served you by their lives,
and have served your people by proclaiming your word.
Let them continue to live in your love
(and to be faithful in their new ministry for you).
Beloved Father,
we give you glory
through Jesus Christ your Son
in the love of your Holy Spirit,
now and always and for ever.

All answer: Amen!

- The installation of readers continues with the prayer for the candidates.

- Presentation: The retiring ministers may take part in presenting some of the symbols of service when the new readers are being installed, and may receive communion under both forms.

In a separate service: A simple order may be followed:

- During Mass: After the gospel and homily, there is a brief expression of thanks, followed by the prayer for the retiring ministers. The prayer of the faithful contains a petition asking God to raise up many faithful ministers in his Church. The retiring ministers may receive communion under both forms.

- Outside Mass, the service may be arranged in this way:

  — Introductory rites: procession with hymn, opening prayer (see Mass for the ministers of the Church, no. 511, in the Canadian sacramentary).

  — Liturgy of the word: first reading (by one of the retiring ministers); sung responsorial psalm; if desired, second reading (by another retiring minister); sung gospel acclamation; homily by the presiding priest.

  — Rite of retirement: A brief expression of thanks for the service given by these ministers to God and this community; a prayer for the retiring ministers (and for them in any new ministries if they are moving to another form of service); a form of the general intercessions may follow, including prayer for all the ministers of the Church.

  — Concluding rite: All may sing the Lord's prayer (CBW, nos. 221-223), and share the kiss of peace. The president may give a solemn form of blessing. A hymn of thanksgiving may be sung during the recessional.

  — After the service, all may gather in the parish hall for coffee or for a meal.

Suitable readings for use during the time of preparation, for services of the word, for services of installation or rededication, and for ceremonies of retirement, are suggested in this list taken from the official rites. The numbers in parentheses refer to their location in Lectionary for Mass:

- Old Testament: Deut. 6:3-9 (see no. 748); Deut. 30:10-14 (no. 106); Is. 55:10-11; Neh. 8:1-4a, 5-6, 8-10 (see no. 458).

- Responsorial psalm: Ps. 19(18):8-11; Ps. 119(118):9-12; Ps. 147B(147):15-20.

- New Testament: 1 Cor. 2:1-5; 2 Tim. 3:14-17 (see no. 357); 2 Tim. 4:1-5 (see no. 358); Heb. 4:12-13 (no. 144); 1 Jn. 1:1-4 (no. 697).

- Gospel: Mt. 5:14-19 (see nos. 74, 240); Mk. 1:35-39 (see no. 75); Lk. 4:16-21 (no. 39); Lk. 24:44-48 (see no. 59); Jn. 7:14-18.
PLACE OF THE WORD

Do you know what the Church tells us about the place in the sanctuary where the word is to be proclaimed?

Current approaches are described in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal. This document is the best guide to proper celebration of the eucharist according to the mind of the Church today. The General Instruction is printed at the beginning of the sacramentary; in the Canadian edition, it is contained on pages 11-54.

The following are the most pertinent references to the liturgy of the word, its importance in the Mass, its ministers, and the place from which the word is proclaimed:

Liturgy of the word: see nos. 9, 11, 23, 33-47, 79-80, 84, 89-99, 131-132, 164-165, 232.

Role of readers: see nos. 66, 71, 82c; nos. 148-152.

Lectern for proclaiming the word of God: see no. 272.

Vesture: see nos. 81c, 301.

Choice of readings: see nos. 318-320.

- Further ideas on celebrating the liturgy of the word are contained in the 1973 letter of the Congregation for Divine Worship on eucharistic prayers (contained in Bulletin 40, pages 197-203): see especially nos. 1-2, 13-18.

Enthroning the bible: Many churches and chapels have the custom of enthroning the bible during the day. If you have been doing this for some time, perhaps your liturgy committee might consider some of these questions.

- What procedure do you follow when enthroning the bible? It should be done with dignity, both at the beginning and the end of the period of enthronement.

- When was the meaning of this practice last explained? Once a year at least, perhaps in the bulletin or during a bible service, the importance of the bible in our lives should be presented clearly.

- Are people encouraged to read God's word from the enthroned bible? The bible is intended to be read; it is not a decoration. Adequate light should be easily accessible to all, including children, who wish to be nourished by the word of God.

- Have you room to grow? Every year or so, it is good to review your community's practice of this devotion, and perhaps develop it more. For example, you might consider opening it at the day's gospel reading, or the responsorial psalm. In a convent, someone might wish to make a note of the references (and even the page numbers) of the readings and psalms for the day, or leave the book marked at these places.

The possibilities of this devotion are limited only by the imagination of your community.

Whether you do or do not enthrone the bible in your church, now is the time to give some serious thought to this practice, and move forward.

The Council urges us to have a warm and living love for God's word. This is one of the ways of helping your believing community toward this goal.

Readers and liturgy committees may grow in their understanding and celebration of the liturgy of the word through studying and discussing these paragraphs.
OTHER NOTES

CATHOLIC MINISTRIES PROGRAM

This article describes the program by which one Canadian diocese is helping people to prepare themselves for the official ministries of the Church.

In 1975, the priests' senate of the English sector of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, approved the beginning of a Catholic Ministries Program, in order to prepare candidates for the restored ministries of reader and acolyte, and for the order of deacon.

These notes are based on discussions with the program co-ordinator, Rev. Chester Warenda, of the University of Sudbury. The Catholic Ministries Program has been formulated according to the norms given by the Holy See for these ministries. It is a three-year program, with the first year leading to the ministry of reader, the second to that of acolyte, and the third to the ordination to the diaconate.

In its first year (1975-76) the program welcomed twenty-five candidates for the ministry of reader; of these twenty-two continued into the second year (acolyte). This year (1976-77) the program welcomed eighteen candidates for preparation for the ministry of reader. The diaconate program will begin in September, 1977.

Emphasis: The ministries program is more than an attempt to respond to the alleged shortage of priests; it is a response to the realization that all Christians are called to serve or minister to their brothers, and that some Christians will have this call formally signified by the Church through a rite of institution or ordination.

Preparing for the Ministry of Reader

This ministry takes its inspiration from Christ seen as prophet. Because the primary function of this ministry is to proclaim God's word, the program places emphasis on the scriptures, and on Jesus as the incarnate Word of God.

The program reflects the twofold nature of ministry:

- **Cultic**: The reader has a specific function in the liturgy, and is called in terms of this function.

- **Involved in daily life**: The reader serves the community living in this particular culture at this moment of history—the social sciences help readers to

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See also *Study Text III: Ministries in the Church*, from the Publications Office, United States Catholic Conference (1312 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005, U.S.A.). This was described in Bulletin 53, page 126.
understand how their ministry takes on a specific cultural form in character and in practice or exercise.

The structure of the program takes into account the dual character of each ministry, with two major aspects:

- **Foundational**: The "theoretical" basis or foundation of the ministry: scriptures, current theology, and social sciences help the candidates to understand this ministry, and give them a foundation on which to build the practical.

- **Functional**: Each session is centered on a particular theme of a practical nature.

**Ten weekends**: Each weekend session has three periods devoted to the theme being studied, including its scriptural foundation, current theology, and its incarnation (how this reality can be lived in our contemporary world).

**Organizing the Program**

**Entering the program**: Candidates for the ministry of reader may ask or be asked to enter the program. Each is interviewed at home by the committee responsible for the program.

**Schedule**: The program is held on ten weekends, around the middle of each month from September to June. The program for readers and the weekend timetable are outlined at the end of this article. Candidates come to Espanola, a town near the center of the diocese. Sessions are held in the local Catholic school.

As well as the monthly meeting, candidates meet weekly in their region to discuss the material for next month's theme.

**Families participate**: The families of the candidates participate in each weekend. Spouses take the sessions together, and a program is run for their children. Candidates and their families are billeted with local families, and eat together at the parish hall.

**Team effort**: Three teams work together to help the weekend sessions succeed: a kitchen team to prepare meals; a team to look after the children; and a team of resource people to take care of instruction and formation.

**Finances**: The program will cost about $25,000 this year (1976-77). Its costs are covered in several ways: by provincial government grants (community use of school buildings), and by one-quarter of the Easter collection in parishes. Parishes from which candidates come also make a contribution to the program.

**Institution**: In February or March, the candidates may, if they wish, petition to be instituted as readers by the bishop of the diocese. Toward the end of the year, in May or June, they receive institution, or they may leave the program. Those who are instituted as readers may, if they wish, continue in the second year of the program as candidates for the ministry of acolyte.

**Time and weather**: Experience in the program to this point has shown the dedication and enthusiasm of the candidates. Even the worst winter storms have not kept them away from the mid-monthly weekend sessions.
Program for Readers

An outline of the themes of each month's session is given here. Part A refers to the foundational (theoretical) section, and B to the functional (practical) section.

**September:** Contemporary Man — His World and Value System:
A. A reflection on contemporary culture
B. Aids to studying

**October:** Introduction to the Scriptures:
A. Why the bible?
B. Reading the bible

**November:** The Old Testament
A. The prophets
B. The liturgical texts: their structure, meaning, and dignity in celebration — lectionary, sacramentary, Catholic Book of Worship.

**December:** The New Testament:
A. Christ the prophet
B. Aids to proclamation

**January:** Prophetic Service in the Church Today:
A. Prophecy and proclamation in the Church today
B. Seminars on possible future forms of the ministry of reader

**February:** Prayer and Worship:
A. Prayer
B. The eucharistic prayers

**March:** Christian Living in the Twentieth Century:
A. Man's future in hope
B. The Canadian catechism

**April:** Religion and Morality:
A. Religion and ethics
B. Formation of Christian conscience

**May:** Death and Resurrection:
A. Death and resurrection
B. The institution of readers

**June:** Baptism:
A. Baptism as initiation
B. Celebrating the end of the program.
Timetable

Each weekend session has three periods devoted to the foundational and three to the functional. Sessions marked “in common” bring together people from all the courses.

Saturday:

8.00 Breakfast
9.00 Prayer (in common)
9.15 Presentation and discussion of theme
10.15 Break
10.30 Talk or homily, and discussion
11.00 Panel of resource people, and discussion
12.00 Audio-visual practicum
12.30 Lunch and recreation (in common)
2.00 Presentation and discussion of theme
3.00 Break
3.15 Talk or homily, and discussion
3.45 Panel of resource people, and discussion
4.45 Preparation of Sunday eucharist (in common)
5.30 Supper (in common)
7.30 Evening prayer (in common)
8.00 Evening session (in common), until 9.00 p.m.

Sunday:

8.00 Breakfast
9.15 Eucharist with parish
10.30 Presentation and discussion of theme
11.30 Talk or homily, and discussion
12.15 Sunday dinner and recreation
1.30 Prayer (in common)
2.00 Panel of resource people, and discussion
3.00 General evaluation of session
4.00 Departure

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Father Warenda states that he is happy to provide any information to persons seriously interested in this type of program for Catholic ministries.

Please contact: Rev. Chester J. Warenda, University of Sudbury, Ramsey Lake Road, Sudbury, Ontario P3E 2C6. CANADA.
PENANCE CELEBRATION  
Lent 1977

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

a) Purpose: Bible services are encouraged in a special way during Advent and Lent as one way of promoting a warm and living love for scripture among God’s people (liturgy constitution, nos. 24; 35:4). Penance celebrations help the Christian community to deepen its spirit of penance, and assist individuals as they prepare to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation (Rite of penance, nos. 36-37).

Many members of a spiritual community may benefit from a bible service celebrating God’s gift of forgiveness. This service may be used at any time during Lent. Communities should consider having several services, perhaps one near the beginning of Lent, and another during the final two weeks of the season. Preparations should begin well in advance of the date chosen.

During the final days of Lent, the Christian community is preparing for the celebration of the paschal triduum. This penance celebration should help them in making the choice of dying with Christ to sin and living with him for God.

b) Personal attention: The priest should seek to make the celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation a personal meeting of the penitent with Christ and his Church. Individual attention, in the form of instruction, advice, and encouragement, should be given to each penitent by the priest. When the sacrament is celebrated after the bible service, as suggested in this outline, more time will be available for giving each penitent the individual attention he or she needs and desires.

c) A guide: The following outline is a guide, with suggested texts. While these may be used as printed, it is usually better to adapt them to the needs of the local congregation. Other suitable readings and psalms may be found in the lectionary for Lent (nos. 22-37 and 220-260; nos. 174-175, pages 406-407), or in the liturgy of the hours for this season.

In Rite of Penance,

1 several outlines are provided for specific penitential services (Canadian edition, Appendix II, pages 113-152). As well, the rite provides an extensive list of scripture texts in nos. 101-201 (pages 86-94).

The parish liturgy committee should be encouraged to develop this service as required to meet the spiritual needs of the community.

d) Proclamation: The readings suggested are contained in the lectionary, and should be proclaimed from it or from a dignified bible. Canada’s lectionary is richly bound in red and gold to signify our respect for the scriptures and to emphasize the place of God's word in our spiritual growth.

Scripture references are to the Jerusalem Bible; in the case of the psalms, the second number refers to the Vulgate.

1 Rite of Penance, available from Publications Service (address on inside front cover) at $2.00 (six or more at $1.50 each).
e) **Participation:** The Vatican Council suggests many ways of promoting active participation in the liturgy: pastors are to encourage people to take part by their acclamations and responses, and by singing psalms, antiphons and hymns, as well as by their actions and bodily postures. Reverent silence for reflection is an essential part of good participation (see Liturgy constitution, no. 30). An effort should be made to include all or many of these methods in this celebration.

f) **Music** should help the celebration to achieve its purpose. Hymns and songs are suggested from *Catholic Book of Worship*, the Canadian hymnal. Other ideas are given in the liturgical index of the choir edition (pages i-iv at the back of the book) under *Lent, Passiontide, Christian vocation, community, penance celebrations, unity, word of God.*

g) **Full celebration:** There should be a presiding priest, a number of confessors, the reader carrying the lectionary, servers (including two with lighted candles), crossbearer, thurifer, and choir. The president presides from the chair, leads the prayers, and preaches the message of conversion. His work will be more effective when he encourages others to assume their proper roles.

h) **Team work:** A number of smaller or scattered parishes may wish to pool their efforts in celebrating penitential services in each place. A team of priests going from parish to parish on several different days will bring the benefits of this celebration to more people.

i) **People's leaflet:** Some parishes may prefer to encourage the people to use the Canadian hymnal as their response book; others may wish to prepare leaflets to help their people take a full part in the psalms and responses.

j) **Prayer for sinners:** The people of God are called to be people of prayer. The entire Church prays for sinners, asking God in his mercy to bring them back to full life in his family; this should be particularly true throughout the lenten season. During the penance celebration, the president should invite and encourage the congregation to pray for sinners: for themselves, for members of the community, and for sinners throughout the world (see 1 Jn. 5:16).

k) **Prayer and fasting:** During the week before the penance celebration, members of the parish may be invited to prepare for it by prayer, fasting and penance on one or more weekdays. By their communal prayer and fasting they will plead for God’s mercy on sinners and help for all his people in this community (see Bulletin 42, pages 16-18).

l) **Suitable days:** A weekday — especially Wednesday or Friday, the Church’s traditional days for fasting and penance — is more appropriate for a penance celebration than is the Lord’s day. In planning these services, pastors should lead their community into greater accord with the practice of the universal Church.

m) **Banners and posters** based on the theme, or reflecting the spirit of Lent, may help to set the mood for this celebration.
CELEBRATION OUTLINE

Theme

"Set free from wickedness." The theme may be explained in a few sentences before the service begins, after the greeting, or in any leaflet distributed to the congregation.

Entrance rite

1. Song

From the depths of sin and sadness
Forgive our sins
Psalm 100 (99)

or another seasonal hymn

2. Enthroning the word of God

The lectionary, the book of God's word, is carried in procession by the reader, accompanied by servers with lighted candles, and the others mentioned in (g) above. He or she places the book in a place of honor (reading stand or lectern), and the candles are placed nearby. The presiding priest incenses the book after it has been enthroned.

3. Greeting

After all make the sign of the cross, the president greets the assembled community with one of the following, adapted as necessary: 1 Pet. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; or the following greeting from St. Clement of Rome:

All grace and peace to you
from almighty God
through Jesus Christ.

And also with you.

The president or one of his assistants may explain the theme briefly, if this has not already been done.

4. Opening prayer

The president may choose a suitable prayer from the lenten liturgy; he is encouraged to compose his own, based on the theme as developed in the readings chosen from this celebration. One example of this prayer:

Let us pray to God our Father,
and praise him for sending his Son Jesus
to set us free from wickedness.

All pause for silent prayer
Blessed are you, Father of all, 
ruler of the universe: 
you have loved us so fully 
that you sent your Son to save us. 
He loved us and gave his life for us, 
dying so that we might die to sin, 
rising in order to raise us to life in you. 

We praise you for saving us from sin 
and for making us your beloved people. 
Help us to love others 
as Jesus has loved us. 

All glory and praise are yours, Father, 
for ever and ever.

Liturgy of the Word

God's word invites us to conversion and renewal of our life by proclaiming that Christ's death and rising have freed us from slavery to sin.

5. Readings from the word of God

The first reading may be chosen from Rom. 5:12, 17-19 (lectionary, no. 22, shorter version); Eph. 5:8-14 (no. 31); Eph. 2:4-10 (no. 32); Rom. 8:31-34 (no. 26).

6. Meditative silence

A few moments of silence should follow the reading, allowing all to reflect and pray in response to the word they have heard in faith.

7. Psalm

After silent prayer, a psalm or hymn is sung:

Psalm 91 (90): lectionary, page 407 CBW, no. 177
Psalm 130 (129): lectionary, page 407 nos. 178, 245, 247
Lord, who throughout no. 278

8. Second Reading

If a second reading is used, it may be chosen from one of NT texts above, or from readings in the seasonal lectionary. A moment of silent prayer follows this reading.

If an acclamation is to be sung, it may be chosen from CBW, nos. 209-210.

9. Gospel reading

The deacon (or another priest, but not the president) takes the gospel book and prays for God's help. After receiving the blessing of the presiding priest, he goes in solemn procession with candles and incense to the lectern. He incenses the book solemnly, and then proclaims the gospel.
Lk. 13:1-9
Jn. 3:14-21
Jn. 8:1-11

*near the beginning of Lent:*
Mt. 6:1-6, 16-18

10. **Homily**

The president proclaims the wonderful works and mercy of God as revealed in the scripture texts, and leads the assembly to prayer for sinners, to a reflective examination of conscience, and to repentance.

11. **Prayer for sinners**

The presiding priest introduces this prayer; he may use ideas from introductory note (j). Then he invites all to prayer:

*Let us pray for sinners*
*and ask God to forgive them:*

All pause for silent prayer

*Heavenly Father,*  
*you do not want sinners to die,*  
*but to live in grace and serve you in love.*  
*Look upon the people of the world*  
*and draw them back to you through Christ.*

*With him we pray:*
*Father, forgive them,*  
*for they know not what they do!*

*Send your Spirit to soften hard hearts,*  
*to bend rigid wills*  
*and to warm those who are indifferent to you.*

*Father, forgive us our sins*  
*and listen to our prayers for all sinners.*  
*Bring them back to your love through our example,*  
*so that with them we may praise you*  
*and celebrate our thanks*  
*through Christ our Lord.*

12. **Hymn**

If desired, a hymn may be sung:

*O crucified redeemer*  
*Into your hands*  
*Creator of the earth and skies*
Examination of our Christian Living

The points below are suggestions. The liturgy committee may work on developing others. Care should be taken, however, not to omit the ones that disturb you or the community: these are probably the questions that most need to be asked. (Other forms of the examination are given in past issues of the Bulletin: nos. 32, 36, 37, 41, 42, 46, 47, 51, 52, and 55. Another form is given in Sunday Mass Book, pages 1108-1112.)

The questions should be read slowly, and a pause is to be made for reflection after each group. The examination of conscience is the heart of the penance service: unless suitable time is given for reflection during it, it becomes a waste of everyone's time.

13. Examination of conscience

Presiding priest:

Let us turn to God our Father
and ask his mercy,
that we may repent of our sins
and turn back to him in love.

Reader:

Jesus has told us to love God
with our whole heart and soul,
and with all our strength:

As individuals,
do we praise God for his glory?
Do we thank him for his gifts to us?
Do we praise him for helping us to overcome sin?

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.

Do we pray to God each day?
Do we come to God each day through Christ?
Do we remember that the Spirit is living within us?

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.

Do we try to use God's name in the right way?
Are we trying to be good members of our parish?
Are we using our talents for others and for the Church?
Do we take part fully in our community worship?

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.

As a community,
are we trying to offer better worship to God?
Is our Sunday celebration as good as it should be?
Are we devoting enough time and effort to God's service?

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.
Jesus has told us to love our neighbor 
as we love ourselves, 
to love one another as he has loved us:

As individuals, 
are we trying to live our family life 
according to the gospel of Jesus? 
Is prayer important in our home? 
Are we concentrating on our own entertainment 
more than on the needs of others?

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.

Are we respectful toward the law and institutions 
of our civil community? 
Do we reject or despise laws made for the good of all?

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.

Do we respect the gift of life 
that God has given to us and to other people? 
Do we stand up with the Church 
to defend the right to life?

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.

Are we honest in our dealings 
with God, ourselves, and others? 
Do we bend, ignore, or distort the truth? 
Do we look at all things in the light of Christ?

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.

Do we listen to Christ and his Church 
in our marriage and family life? 
Do we believe Christ or the world 
when it comes to what is right or wrong? 
Are we followers of the gospel of Jesus?

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.

Do we carry out our civil responsibilities 
by obeying the law, 
by voting with care, 
by paying our taxes, 
by supporting good causes, 
by speaking out against abuses?

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.

As a parish, 
do we seek to love others as Christ has loved us? 
Are our parish funds used in the service of others? 
Do we let petty matters interest us 
more than they should?

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.
As a community of Christ's brothers and sisters, do we consider bingo more important than bread for others? Are card parties as important as proper housing? Do we spend more time on rummage sales than on the rights of our brothers and sisters? What are our parish priorities—prayer and service for others, or fun and entertainment for ourselves?

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.

Have we more concern with preserving property than with protecting and promoting life? Are we letting Christ or the world direct our thoughts, our values, our lives?

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.

The parish council or liturgy committee may wish to add other reflective questions at this point. The examination of conscience concludes in this way:

Are we living as followers of Jesus Christ? Do we live as the people of God, holy and blameless in his sight? Do we ask the Holy Spirit for guidance and strength to love others as Jesus has loved us?

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.

* * *

Presiding priest (he may extend his hands over the congregation):

People of God, Christ is calling us to turn away from our sins. Die to sin, and live with Jesus for God. Let his Spirit lead you back to him, forgiving you and filling with his love.

14. Silent prayer

For about five minutes, all remain in silence. Sitting or kneeling as they wish, they discuss their way of life with the Lord.

For those who wish it, the sacrament of reconciliation will be celebrated after this bible service.²

² The act of satisfaction (formerly known as "the penance") is to be personal and must be given individually, in a way that is fitting to each person's sins and sorrow. It is contrary to the mind of the Church to impose a general or universal act of satisfaction on all members of the congregation before or after the individual celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation (see rite, no. 55).
15. Community act of sorrow

In this prayer, the Lord, have mercy may be sung from CBW, nos. 165-169, or with a tune familiar to the community.

Reader or president:

Lord, have you called us to be the people of love:
forgive us for choosing hatred and sin.
Lord, have mercy.

All:

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, you have chosen us to do good,
to help others in your spirit of love:
forgive us for preferring to serve ourselves.
Christ, have mercy.

All:

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, you have taught us to be the light of the world;
forgive us for failing to be people of light.
Lord, have mercy.

All:

Lord, have mercy.

16. Acclamation

A hymn may be sung:

Prayer of St. Francis  CBW, no. 404
All glory, land, and honor  no. 285

Or a brief prayer of the faithful may be based on the theme, ending with the Lord's prayer, no. 17, below.

Conclusion of the Rite

17. Lord's prayer

This prayer is best sung by all, as at Mass (CBW, nos. 221-223). The president may prepare an introduction to this prayer, based on the theme of the service. For example:

God has given us his Son
to save us from our sins.
Let us pray with Jesus to our Father:

Our Father . . .
18. Sacred action

The presiding priest invites all to share the peace of Christ with one another. This may be done as at Sunday Mass, or less formally. He may introduce the rite in this way:

Jesus gives his forgiveness and peace
to all the people of God.
Let us share his peace and love with one another.

19. Invitation to the sacrament

The president invites the congregation to celebrate the sacrament of penance after the bible service has ended. The various locations for a personal encounter with Christ through the priest (see introductory note, b) should be mentioned in a positive way. (They could also be described in the parish bulletin on the previous Sunday, with a strong mention of the spiritual opportunities being offered on this occasion of grace.)

20. Blessing

The presiding priest may conclude with a simple blessing, or may use this form:

May God bless you with all good,
and protect you from all evil.

All:

Amen!

May his life-giving wisdom enlighten your hearts,
and give you everlasting understanding.

All:

Amen!

May he look upon you with mercy,
and raise you to unending happiness.

All:

Amen!

May almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the + Son, and the Holy Spirit.

All:

Amen!
21. Concluding hymn

As the priests move toward the places for individual reconciliation, all sing a seasonal hymn or song of praise:

When I behold CBW, no. 286
O merciful redeemer no. 283
or another hymn may be chosen: nos. 276-288

Sacrament of Penance

Those who wish to receive individual guidance and sacramental absolution are encouraged to take the opportunity provided by the presence of a number of priests. The choir might sing meditative or seasonal hymns or psalms in a quiet manner for the first five or ten minutes after the communal service ends.
BRIEF BOOK REVIEWS


The previous volumes of this work were reviewed and recommended in Bulletin 48, page 143 (year A), and in Bulletin 53, page 123 (year B). In the book for year C, the author continues his simple outline of the contents of each Sunday's readings, in order to help readers proclaim the word of God with faith and enthusiasm. Each week is given about a page and a half of notes.

As will be seen from the article on Formation of readers in this Bulletin, this book is based on practical experience.

We recommend the set of three volumes to all readers who are sincere in their efforts, and encourage parishes and liturgy committees to make them available as an inexpensive guide to the Sunday texts.

* * *

Designing an Advanced Lector Training Program, by the Liturgy Training Program of the Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission (5947 N. Manton Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60646).

This kit of six training sessions is the third step in a program of reader training. Practical guidelines, exercises, self-evaluation sheets, and suitable bible services are included.

* * *


Magazine articles tend to be ephemeral, like conversations at a street corner. One can say things strongly, with great emphasis. When printed in an anthology, however, these articles (especially undated ones) can take on a more permanent value than sometimes they deserve.

In this book of reprints from Folk Mass and Modern Liturgy, many good points are expressed, though one is tempted to wonder just what some of the authors are really pushing. The book has many positive values and asks many necessary questions, but discretion is needed in putting everything it says into immediate action.

* * *


This book is written for persons who suffer scruples and who are paralyzed by fear of sin, and offers some guidelines to free them. Problems are faced, and positive solutions go beyond symptoms to root causes. Unfortunately, the language of chapter 10 ignores the renewal in the sacrament of reconciliation, and constantly speaks of confession and confessional box. A positive chapter on the meaning and celebration of the sacrament of penance today would have done much for scrupulous persons and for this publication.

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Planning Tomorrow’s Parish, a self-evaluation and planning guide, prepared for the National Conference of Religious Education Directors-CCD, by William V. Coleman, PhD. Two editions: leader’s and members’ guides (1976, Twenty-Third Publications, P.O. Box 180, West Mystic, Ct. 06388). Leader’s edition (8¼ by 11 inches), 79 pages; committee member’s edition (5½ by 8½ inches), 32 pages.

Anyone interested in asking what a parish is, or in evaluating what parishes are doing today, should obtain these books. Parish councils, liturgy committees, religious educators, clergy, bishops, and diocesan workers can benefit from the many approaches discussed.

* * *


In what seems to be the best of the Together in Peace series, this book is intended to help children of 8-12 in their celebration of the sacrament of penance. Though pleasing to the eye, the book suffers from the fact that wide margins often obscure senselines in prayers. Some careful editing and layout could improve this book greatly.

* * *


This manual provides a practical system for maintaining a church building. Records, plans, policies, and other documents are kept together and in order. Suggestions and schedules for regular maintenance are included. Heavy paper and a strong 4-ring binder make sure it will last.

While written for an Irish setting, the idea could easily be adapted at a diocesan level for use here. It could also be extended to cover other church buildings, including schools, parish halls, and rectories.

* * *


The author helps us to understand the sacraments a little better by sharing many insights with us from modern sciences and from the liturgical renewal. It would have seemed more desirable if he had presented the sacraments of Christian initiation together, and then the others in relationship to these. He asks many important questions in his text.
SYMPOSIUM ON CHRISTIAN INITIATION

Worship '77 is a Canadian liturgical symposium on Christian initiation, sponsored by the Canadian Liturgical Society. It takes place in Winnipeg, Manitoba, on May 24-27, 1977.

Intended for clergy and others with a special interest in all aspects of Christian initiation today, the symposium will provide three days for exploring and discussing initiation from liturgical, theological, historical, and pastoral points of view.

An important group of speakers has been arranged for the symposium:

- Rev. Aidan Kavanagh, OSB, keynote speaker — Christian initiation.
- Rev. Dr. Eugene L. Brand — Christian initiation: pastoral considerations.

Canadian liturgists and scholars will contribute to the development of the main papers. Field trips will be available.

Registration and payment of fees must be made before May 2, 1977: $120.00, single; $115.00, double; $50.00 for registration only. Please contact:

The Canadian Liturgical Society
117 Bloor St. East
Toronto, Ontario M4W 1A9
Canada

(416) 929-0811

FAMILY TRADITION

Over the past decade or so, most parishes have formed and trained a corps of readers to proclaim the word of God during the Mass and other liturgical services.

One rural parish we know has encouraged its readers to train their sons and daughters, when they become old enough, to follow their fathers or mothers as readers.

By encouraging the development of such a family tradition, the parish liturgy is helping to establish new customs to build the Church of the twenty-first century.

What are you doing in your worshipping community to develop and build the body of Christ?
LITURGICAL MINISTRY

Priests are to work to develop a suitable knowledge and ability in celebrating the liturgy. In this way, by their personal liturgical ministry, they will be able to lead the believing community entrusted to their care to give ever more fitting praise to God: Father, Son, and Spirit.

_Based on no. 5,
Ministry and life of priests_

PASTORAL CARE OF THE SICK

Late in 1975, the National Liturgical Office made a national survey on the rites for the pastoral care of the sick and the dying.

The replies received from across the country have been shared with an international committee; from these letters came many positive suggestions for revised rites.

Gradually a pastoral rite is being developed. Further details will be shared in future issues of the National Bulletin on Liturgy.

Let us continue to pray that the Church's rites for the sick and the dying will become a fruitful source of the true Christian spirit for all involved in celebrating them.