



The Catholic Archdiocese of
Canberra and Goulburn

Ministry Of Reader - Reflection Sheet

Four biblical extracts speak of the power of God's word.

Consider each of the biblical extracts. Which one speaks most powerfully to you in your ministry as reader?

Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.
Gen 1:3

Yes, as the rain and the snow come down from the heavens and do not return without watering the earth, making it yield and giving growth to provide seed for the sower and bread for the eating, so the word that goes from my mouth does not return to me empty, without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it was sent to do.

Isa 55:10-11

The prophet Ezra gathered together the exiles in Jerusalem for a solemn reading of the Law on their return from captivity. After he finished the reading, the people called out "Amen! Amen!", prostrated themselves, their faces to the ground in a sign of adoration, and shed tears of joy at hearing God's Words. Then they began to eat and drink, to hold a feast around the Word, to rejoice mightily.

Neh 8:1-12

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Heb 4:12

Many Vatican documents encourage Catholic veneration of scripture.

When reflecting upon these Vatican statements on the Catholic veneration of Scripture does anything surprise you?

What does the consistent image of table and nourishment suggest about God's word?

The treasures of the Bible are to be opened up more lavishly, so that a richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God's Word.

Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 51

"The Mass is made up as it were of two parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. These two parts are so closely interconnected that they form but one single act of worship."
GIRM, 28.

[Christians need] to receive nourishment from God's Word at the twofold table of sacred Scripture and the Eucharist.
Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests 18.

Christ is present in his word, since it is he himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in church.
Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 7

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"... in every Eucharistic celebration, the Risen Lord is encountered in the Sunday Assembly at the twofold table of the Word, and [the table] of the Bread of Life."
On Keeping the Lord's Day Holy, 39

Extracts from the writings of Saints Caesarius and Jerome

Do you agree with Caesarius' and Jerome's insights?

What do these insights about the scriptures imply for readers?

Brothers and sisters, here is a question for you. What to you seems the greater, the Word of God or the Body of Christ?

If you want to give the right answer, you will reply that God's Word is not less than Christ's Body. Therefore, just as we take care when we receive the Body of Christ that no part of it falls to the ground, so should we likewise ensure that the Word of God which is given to us is not lost to our souls because we are speaking or thinking about something different. One who listens negligently to God's word is just as guilty as one who, through carelessness, allows Christ's body to fall to the ground.

St Caesarius of Arles, Bishop, 470-543

The Word of the Scriptures and the Lord's teaching are (also) his true body and his true blood.

St Jerome

Some Contemporary thoughts on the ministry of reader

In the light of these statements what are some responsibilities liturgical readers have?

What liturgical and technical skills do readers need?

How can these be obtained and maintained?

There is an element of the sublime in the work of the reader as well. To be chosen to proclaim God's Word to fellow believers is to participate in the mystery and struggle of their individual journeys in faith. No ministry can be more sublime, and no responsibility more humbling – for the quality of the reader's proclamation determines whether his or her service will help or hinder the hearers. A.R. Rosser. *A Well Trained Tongue*, p.2.

The ministry of presenting the Word is of critical significance in a celebration, second only to the role of the presider. The whole sacrament, the total ritual, depends on the effectiveness with which the Word is proclaimed. F. Andersen. *Eucharist: Participation in the Mystery*, p. 112.

The minister of the Word at liturgical celebrations is, in some sense, challenged in gaining the attention of a culture completely awash in a sea of voices and, to use a popular buzz phrase, "sound bytes."

The implication is obvious: While respecting the unique purpose of liturgical proclamation (communal celebration of faith), modern ministers of the Word must develop a very high degree of skill in order to gain credibility with their audiences. People who hear professional speakers through various media every day – and who are in control of the off/on buttons and volume controls – are naturally more demanding in their expectations of any speaker or reader who presumes to command their attention. All the communication skills relevant to public speaking are relevant to liturgical proclamation.

A.R. Rosser. *A Well-trained Tongue*, p.5

F. Andersen, *Eucharist: Participating in the mystery*. Australia: John Garratt Publishing, 1998.

A.R. Rosser. *A Well-Trained Tongue*. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1996.

