

PROCLAIMING THE WORD OF GOD

Basic Skills for Readers

1. Understand what you are going to chant (read) before the Liturgy begins. Always prepare ahead of time. Prayer is the first step in preparing to proclaim the Word of God. Offer a prayer asking the Holy Spirit to enlighten your heart and mind, so that you may proclaim His words with great power in the midst of the assembly. Locate the passage you will be reading in your own Bible at home, or obtain a copy from the Lectionary. Read through the passage you will be proclaiming. Meditate upon the meaning of the text so that it makes sense to you. Be attentive to the proper pronunciation of words, accents, content, and where to make meaningful pauses. If you come across a word or phrase you do not understand, do some research to clarify the meaning of the text; and if in doubt, contact your pastor.

2. Take the sound system into account. When you come to church, check the microphone to ensure that it is working properly. Every sound system is unique, so it is important to learn the proper use of the sound system. Some microphones are extremely sensitive (you do not want it too close to your lips as you speak); whereas other microphones are much less sensitive (they will not pick up your voice unless you are up very close - right up against them). Experiment and make sure you take into account the peculiarities of the sound system you will be using. Adjust the height of the microphone so that it picks up your voice properly. If necessary, adjust the sound level.

3. If there is no sound system, take the acoustics of the church into account. If there is no sound system, the best place to proclaim the Scripture reading is usually the centre of the nave, beneath the dome. The dome will amplify your voice. It is important to speak up, to speak clearly, and to articulate your words, even if you are proclaiming the word of God in a small space. Hold the lectionary in such a manner so that you keep your head upright when reading and that your words are not muffled by being bounced off the pages of the lectionary.

4. Approach the lector stand during the Trisagion.

Make your way to the designated place (this may be a lector stand) while the congregation is singing the “Glory be” during the Trisagion. If it is the custom, this will allow you to chant (read) the psalm verse for the prokimenon.

5. Wait until the assembly is seated and attentive.

Do not begin the reading immediately, but wait for a moment, until the assembly is seated and attentive. Begin the reading only when there is silence.

6. Chant (speak) clearly. In our everyday speaking we tend to have “lazy mouth.” We don’t articulate words properly. This may be fine for everyday conversation but not for public reading. When standing in front of the assembly to proclaim the word of God, it is important to chant (read) each word clearly and to articulate distinctly, yet in very a natural manner.

7. Chant (read) at a steady pace, not too fast, not too slow. It is better to read a little too slowly that to read too fast. The ideal is a natural, unhurried pace. If you read or chant too slow, that may distract people as much as chanting (reading) too fast. For most of us, however, the challenge is to slow down. Read so that others may apprehend easily what they are hearing. Rely on the judgment of those who listen to you. If they think you are chanting (reading) too fast, slow down. If they think you read too slow, pick up the pace a bit.

8. Proclaim the word from the heart, not from the head. Whether you are chanting or reading the word of God, let your voice reflect your understanding of the text. Chant (read) as if what you are proclaiming is important and meaningful for you, personally. At the same time, do not try to dramatize the reading or exaggerate so your reading comes across as being artificial. The best advice is to read from the heart, not from the head. Proclaim the Scriptures from your deepest centre where God dwells in silence. If the meaning of the text reverberates in your own being as you chant (read), it will also reverberate in the hearts and mind of those who are listening.

Prepared and printed by the Eparchy of Edmonton Liturgical Commission (EELC) with the blessing of Bishop David Motiuk, 2010.