Lector Guidelines and Norms at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart

1. Preparation: Practice, reflect and dress appropriately.
Readings will be emailed to you in advance. Please reply to the email as soon as possible. Practice reading the text aloud, engage a critical listener and familiarize yourself with punctuation, diction, grammar, etc. Most importantly, take time to reflect upon the reading and its meaning. Also, please make certain your attire is in accord with the place, occasion and role of being a lector at the Basilica. For the Saturday Vigil Mass, the 8 a.m. Football Weekend Mass and the 10 a.m. Sunday Solemn Mass, this means jacket and tie for men, and equally formal wear for women. Email Lector Coordinator Harv Humphrey at humphrey.17@nd.edu about attire for post-game Masses.

2. Arrival: Arrive early in order to be in the right state of mind.
Arrive 15 to 30 minutes before Mass. This courtesy will enable us to brief you concerning any changes in protocol. In addition, it is desirable that you do not begin Mass feeling rushed but rather that you have had an opportunity to prepare prayerfully for proclaiming the Word of God. In the sacristy, before Mass, the first reader should ensure that the ribbon is set to the correct reading in the Book of the Gospels.

3. Processional: Your ministry is important and sets the tone for the worshipers. Make sure you know the procedures.
Sing out with full heart and voice! The assembly follows the example set by you, the liturgical ministers. If there are three lectors, the first processes carrying the Book of the Gospels just below eye-level directly behind the cross and candles. The front of the book should face the assembly with the binding in the right hand. The second and third readers follow behind side-by-side. If there is a responsorial psalmist in the procession, he or she would follow the lectors. When there are only two lectors, they should process one in front of the other behind the cross and candles, the first carrying the Book of the Gospels. If there is no Book of the Gospels and only two lectors, they process side-by-side. All readers pause at the sanctuary steps. The lector carrying the Gospels bows only with the head; the other readers bow at the waist (Note: This is the only time you bow while moving from one point to another. You do not bow when you ascend or descend the ambo, nor do you bow during the recessional). Lectors follow the procession around the right side of the altar. The lector with the Book of the Gospels places it on the altar, standing upright and centered with the front facing the assembly. This reader then joins the other readers in the sanctuary, standing in front of their chairs. At the Saturday Vigil Mass and the 11:45 a.m. Sunday Mass, the procession is the same but without the use of the Book of the Gospels.

4. Delivery: Having practiced beforehand, stay calm and read clearly and slowly.
Before beginning, take a deep breath lest in your haste you jump in forgetting all of your preparation. Do not adjust the microphone. Do not lean into the microphone while reading. If you are tall you may lift the book. Read the text, including introduction and conclusion, exactly as written. For example, do not announce, "Our first reading is a reading from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians." Simply announce the reading as it appears in the lectionary, "A reading from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians." Project your voice. Read at a mindful pace clearly enunciating each word and allowing echoes to die out so as to prevent words from becoming tangled with each other. BEFORE YOUR FIRST ASSIGNMENT, schedule a practice time with the Lector Coordinator to familiarize yourself with the sound system and acoustics of the Basilica.
5. First Reading: Prepare the book in the ambo before the service and wait for the congregation's response.
Following the opening prayer, the first reader ascends the ambo while the other readers and congregation are being seated. When the assembly is settled and quiet in the pews (about five seconds), the first reader begins the proclamation. At the end of the reading, look down for a brief moment, then look up to announce, "The word of the Lord." Wait for the assembly to respond, "Thanks be to God" before turning to exit the ambo. Do not turn the page(s) for the second reader (Note: Before Mass, go to the ambo to ensure that the book is turned to the correct reading).

6. Second Reading: Wait for the congregation's response; be sure to remove the lectionary from the ambo after the reading.
When the Responsorial Psalm is over, stand (even though the psalmist is still in the ambo) and ascend the ambo when the way is clear. At the end of the reading, wait for the congregation to respond, "Thanks be to God", before descending the ambo (Note: At the 10 a.m. Sunday Solemn Mass, the second reader is responsible for removing the lectionary from the ambo following the reading and placing it on the credence table behind the ambo). Exit the ambo the same way you entered (the sanctuary side), go around the credence table and from the small flight of stairs, and place the book on the lower shelf. For all other liturgies, the lectionary remains on the ambo for the proclamation of the Gospel (there is no Book of the Gospels).

7. The Creed: Bow from the waist.
At the phrase, “By the Power of the Holy Spirit...” make a profound bow from the waist.

8. Intercessions: The readings will be in the ambo. Do not leave the ambo until after the concluding prayer.
At the "Amen" of the Creed, before the priest's introduction to the prayers, ascend the ambo. The intercessions will be in a three-ring binder on the small shelf in the ambo (Note: It is good practice to confirm, before Mass, that the binder, with the correct intercessions, is on the shelf). After the cantor sings the response for the first time, the reader offers the first intention. The Intercessions are distinct from the Word of God. The former are the prayers of the people being offered to God; the latter is God's Word being delivered to us. Be mindful of the fact that the Prayers of the Faithful are giving voice to the collected intentions, desires and needs of the entire assembled community. After the final intention, do not close the binder or return it to the shelf and do not exit the ambo. Wait until the presider has offered the concluding prayer. Then, as the assembly is being seated, close the binder, return it to the shelf and exit the ambo.

At the Consecration, make a profound bow from the waist when the priest genuflects (and concelebrants bow) after the Elevation of the Host and the Elevation of the Cup.

10. Communion: Sit down after receiving communion.
Readers will receive communion in the sanctuary along with the servers. After you receive communion, sit down - do not remain standing.

11. Recessional: Leave in the same order as the entrance.
Process in the same order as the entrance, but WITHOUT the Book of the Gospels or the lectionary. The Book of the Gospels remains on the ambo; the lectionary either on the ambo or credence table.

12. Decorum: Be mindful of your role as a liturgical minister, a proclaimer of the Word of God.
In the sanctuary keep your feet flat on the floor. It is acceptable to cross your ankles, but do not cross your legs (you're not home watching a football game). Hand your program to the person next to you when you leave your seat to proclaim. This will avoid an awkward recovery of your program when you return to your seat.

13. Replacement: If you cannot serve, contact the Lector Coordinator.
If you are unable to read on your scheduled date, please email Lector Coordinator Harv Humphrey at humphrey.17@nd.edu in advance. If you have a substitute in mind, advise the Coordinator. The Lector Coordinator will make the final assignment.