

The Art of Proclaiming

Although ministering the word is fundamentally about witnessing to faith, we will do this better if we also remember the importance of the arts of proclaiming. Here are a few reminders of the practicalities.

- Knowing how to project the voice (how to throw it). A good way of doing this is to project the sound onto the hard palate. In this way, very little sound is lost; the lips, teeth, head and chest act as resonators. They vibrate with the sound and amplify it.
- Articulating properly by linking together the vowels and consonants, by opening the mouth sufficiently wide and by reading slowly.
- Breathing and breath control are the keys to the volume of the reading, the degree of loudness. We must learn to develop abdominal breathing, breathe only through the nose, inhaling a good quantity of air, retaining it for some time, then releasing it gradually in a controlled way. Microphones cannot compensate for weak proclamation. Energy and life needs to be in the voice to start with.
- Liveliness of voice means controlling, regulating the voice: it includes changing the speed, the pitch, the volume, according to the meaning of the text. Varying the voice adds to the meaning and helps the listeners to hear and to follow. The success of our reading depends absolutely on the quality of the sound we produce. Pauses of course, play a vital part, making it so much easier for those we serve to receive and understand what we minister to them.
- Begin with a pause. Use pauses again in the course of the reading, to express the divisions of thought (e.g. separate paragraphs, sentences, phrases, other sub sections, proper nouns). Use 'stress pauses', to highlight speech and to indicate reverence for the word proclaimed. All enables the message to hit home.
- Pauses, pace, intensity and volume all contribute to good reading. Shy readers usually read too fast, often losing the meaning of the reading.
- Eye contact is a necessary and unavoidable part of communicating. We learn to see the whole phrase or sentence, then look up, keeping the place with one hand. A good reader will know how and when to look at the people (by directing the eyes to the back of the church), when to pause and when to vary the voice.

There remains the preparation of how the reading is to be delivered. In *Lector Becomes Proclaimer*, J & G DuCharme offers four simple steps which are easily memorized:

Pray, Prepare, Practice, Proclaim.

An article of this length cannot develop these steps but here are a few tips:

- After praying with the text and preparing it (difficult words, length of sentences etc) practice reading it aloud to someone who will give honest feed back and so help you to improve.
- Finally, proclamation has one objective only, to touch the people in such a way that they are drawn into a shared experience of God. The Word of God is for the here and now, it is never too old, outdated nor over-familiar. It transforms us all, calling us at each hearing, to live its message more deeply year by year.

Recommended is *The St Paul Sunday Missal*, published every year, including a useful list of Sundays and Holy Days and their dates. The 2010 edition is priced at £7.00 and can be ordered from our repository.