

Non-Verbal Communication

- **Most communication is non-verbal**: rightly or wrongly, everything about our demeanour, our appearance, how we walk, how we behave, etc. is communicating something to the congregation who are watching us—albeit unconsciously.
- Hopefully our NVC will **convey reverence for God's Word**, and the liturgy we're serving and leading.



Liturgical Leadership: General principles

- We're servants of the Liturgy: God is giving a gift through us, so let's try not to get in the way!
- An act of worship to God: although we're looking at the congregation and doing our best to proclaim the Scriptures to them, we're first and foremost **performing an act of worship, addressed to almighty God**.
- Help others to participate in that worship: our ministry to the people is to help them participate in this worship, both by making sure that they can *hear* the words, and by leading them effectively to make their responses.



How can we proclaim God's Word most powerfully?

Preparation Beforehand

- **Practice** the reading.
 - Rehearse aloud, especially any complicated sentences.
 - Search online the pronunciation of long words (or weird names!)
 - Research to understand the meaning.
 - Notice the key moments in the text.
- **Pray** the reading.
 - What is God saying *to me*?
 - What might God be saying to *our parish*?
 - How can I best convey that message?
- On the day...
 - Arrive in plenty of time to be prayerful before Mass.
 - Check whether the Psalm or Gospel Acclamation are being sung.
 - Pray to the Holy Spirit that you would be anointed as you read, and the hearts of your listeners would be opened to receive God's Word.



First Impressions

- Sit near the front, walk up purposefully, bow to the altar.
- Adjust the microphone to your height.
- Announce clearly: 'A reading from...'
 - Leave a pause before starting the reading (take a breath)
- Look up at the beginning and end.
 - It really helps to establish a rapport with the congregation – you're about to give them an amazing gift.

Make Yourself Heard

Imagine there's someone hard-of-hearing, right at the back, with the church full of noisy children, and the microphone's not working. How can you ensure that they hear?

- Read **slowly**
 - About $\frac{1}{2}$ your normal talking pace
 - Slow down to emphasise key moments in the passage
 - Readers are very rarely too slow, but often too fast for us to keep up!
- Use **silence**
 - Include pauses to observe punctuation: commas, full-stops, and paragraphs
 - Allow the text to breathe, and the congregation to receive: people need time to absorb what they're hearing
- Read **clearly**
 - Enunciate the consonants, especially at the ends of words
 - Keep it simple: neither a monotone, nor over-dramatised: try to *convey* the drama without *becoming* the drama!
- Read **loudly**
 - Project your voice as best you can, without straining... (remember that person at the back!)
 - Breathe deeply – use your pauses to fill your lungs



- Use the **microphone** effectively
 - Make sure it's pointed towards you, and don't move your head from side to side
 - BUT don't rely on the microphone – in fact, project your voice as if weren't there.

At the end of a reading

- Leave a longer **pause** (deep breath in & out) before **looking up** and saying, 'The Word of the Lord'.
 - This is a proclamation that what we've heard is not just God's word from long ago, but His message to us TODAY.
 - A message from the Lord should leave us with a **sense of awe**.
- Turn & bow to the altar before returning to your seat.



Follow the Script

You're the conductor at this point, facilitating the congregation's responses... so skills of liturgical leadership are required!

- Just read the words printed in the book, no need to add any more.
 - ✓ 'A reading from...'
 - X 'Our first reading is taken from...'
 - ✓ BUT remember 'This is the Word of the Lord'.
 - With good leadership, you shouldn't need to announce what's next ('The Responsorial Psalm!') or give verbal cues ('Please stand!')—communicate like a conductor!
- Especially with the Psalm.
 - No need to say: 'The response to the psalm is: *O praise the Lord all ye nations.*' Instead, simply read the congregation's line, then look up, and repeat it along with them.
 - At the end of each verse, no need to say 'Response!' Instead, lead into it by your inflection in the last line of the verse, **pausing, looking up, and repeating** the response with them.