

Find good readers for Mass, Pope Francis says

By [Hannah Brockhaus](#)

Vatican City, Jan 31, 2018 / 05:36 am ().- On Wednesday, Pope Francis spoke about the importance of the Liturgy of the Word, and the resulting importance of having lectors who can proclaim the readings and the Responsorial Psalm well.

“We must look for good readers!” he said Jan. 31, in off-the-cuff comments during the general audience.

Good readers and psalmists understand what they are reading and can convey it well, he continued, explaining that they need to be prepared by reading over the text before Mass.

When someone reads well, not “distorting the words,” this helps to create “a climate of receptive silence,” he said, which is important, because “it is not enough to hear with the ears, without receiving in the heart the seed of the divine Word, allowing it to bear fruit.”

On this note, Francis emphasized that it is also important that we are staying focused and listening to the readings with an open heart, not looking around at different things or making chit-chat.

“When they read the words of the Bible – the first reading, the second, the responsorial psalm, the Gospel – we must listen and open our heart,” he said. “Because it is God himself who speaks to us. Do not think about other things or talk about other things.”

Other things which are not appropriate during the Liturgy of the Word are the substitution of a non-Biblical text, or omitting a reading, he said.

Liturgically, when the same readings are proclaimed in each church, it is a way of fostering "ecclesial communion," he said, and for this reason, it is wrong to make "subjective choices" in this case.

"Replacing that Word with other things impoverishes and compromises the dialogue between God and his people in prayer."

The Pope recounted hearing of someone who would read the newspaper at Mass, "because it is the news of the day." This is not okay, he said. "The Word of God is the Word of God! We can read the newspaper later. But there we read the Word of God."

Every part of the Mass is significant, including the Liturgy of the Word, which is when "God speaks, and we listen to him, and then put into practice what we have heard."

And "we need to listen to him!" he emphasized. "It is in fact a matter of life," just as it says in the Gospel of Matthew: "one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God."

Just like in the Parable of the Sower, where we hear about the different results of the seeds that fall on different terrain, "the action of the Spirit, which makes the response effective, needs hearts that allow themselves to be worked and cultivated, so that what is heard at Mass passes into daily life," he said.

In fact, we must listen to the admonition of James the Apostle, the Pope continued, who tells us to "be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves."

Francis explained that the Word of God, especially as we hear it at Mass, is important nourishment for our daily lives. "How could we face our earthly pilgrimage, with its labors and its trials, without being regularly nourished and enlightened by the Word of God that resounds in the liturgy?" he asked.