

# Proclaim the Word!

## Training for Lectors



## “Seasoned” Lector Training

### Trainer’s Manual

## Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA



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Permission granted on March 25, 2008

# Proclaim the Word!

## Training for “Seasoned” Lectors

### *TRAINER’S MANUAL*

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## Eugene M. (Gene) Hayes

### A brief biography

Gene Hayes is a graduate of Boston College and has been in the "business" of education since the late 1950's. As a practitioner in New England public schools until 1970, he helped introduce the computer to campus level administration for attendance accounting, report card processing, and student scheduling. Since then among his many roles in education-related businesses, that of consultant to administrators all over the United States has been the most satisfying. Gene's career has focused on expanding the use of technology as a means of improving administrative performance and accountability in schools.

With the advent of Vatican II, Gene welcomed the opportunity as a layman to use his speaking skills and to expand his interest in helping Catholics bring the Scriptures more directly into their lives. He has been a lector since the early 1970's in a number of parishes in New England, the mid-West and in the South. Currently, he is a lector and lector-trainer at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish (Alpharetta, GA). Gene is also an active member of the Lector Training Committee of the Office of Divine Worship, Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA. Since the mid-1980's, Gene has been directly involved in lector training, particularly training men and women as they begin their lector ministry. In the late 1990's, at the request of several of his fellow lectors at St. Ignatius, Martyr Parish (Austin, TX), Gene developed a comprehensive training program aimed at improving the proclamation skills of all lectors. This experience led to the *Proclaim the Word! Training Program* he has documented in the materials of this manual. Most recently, Gene incorporated **Lectors Proclaim.org, Inc**, a non-profit organization, to help disseminate the training materials, and he developed and acts as webmaster for a website devoted to helping lectors prepare to proclaim each Sunday's readings **[www.lectorsproclaim.org](http://www.lectorsproclaim.org)**.

All work and no play can make anyone a dull person! Gene enjoys traveling, and, with this wife, "Dee," visiting children and grandchildren in Alaska, Texas and Washington State. He recently retired and moved to Georgia to live with his oldest daughter and her three children. He says that being a "live-in grandparent" has changed the lives of both he and his wife in most unexpected ways (he says the Good Lord saw the couple getting too complacent with their lives in Austin, TX, anyway!). He maintains an active contact with his and his son's software company, Hayes Software Systems, in Austin, as Chairman of the Board. Reading is always enjoyable, particularly if the book involves cultural history, philosophy, theology, cosmology, or a great detective story.

The Proclaimer's purpose:

**... to enchant the reader or the listener into the world of the story in the hope that when they emerge from the world of the story, they do so with an enhanced view of the possibilities of their lives.**

John Shea. **Spiritual Wisdom of the Gospels for Christian Preachers and Teachers** [Year C] (Chicago: Liturgical Press, 2006).  
(As paraphrased by Rev. Andrew M. Greeley in: "A Writer, or a Parish Priest Who Writes?" **America Magazine**, [January 1-8, 2007, p. 15])

# “Seasoned” Lector Training

## Introduction

The purpose of this two- to two and a half-hour, single-session training program is to help experienced lectors who may have received little or no prior training to improve their abilities with *scriptural proclamation*. This purpose consists of three objectives:

1. Become more aware of the purpose of the Ministry of the Word and the “personal religious” nature of scriptural proclamation.
2. Experience the impact of feedback as a means of improving the lector’s skills and abilities.
3. Demonstrate the roles of **Pausing, Word Stress, Emotion, Phrasing, and Parenthetical Expressions** in effective proclamation and how lectors can master them.

It is recommended that the program be offered annually and that all experienced lectors in the parish participate in this training program as frequently as they see fit. While attendance at the session probably should not be mandatory it should be encouraged. The session can also serve as an introduction to the parish’s monthly Lector Study Group program for experienced lectors which is highly recommended.

### **Purpose of the Manual**

The purpose of this “*Seasoned*” *Lector Trainer’s Manual* is to provide a structure around which an effective program of training, on-going education and adult spiritual formation can be built focused on lay Ministers of the Word. The program described in the Manual emphasizes the following:

1. The objective of the Lector is not merely to be an interesting oral reader of the Bible; it is to provide *effective proclamation of God’s Word in Scripture*. Almost any level of an individual’s public speaking skills is acceptable as a starting point. The training program provides a foundation for further skill development for all members of the ministry.
2. A person’s success as a Lector depends on how well the person knows and accepts himself or herself and is ready and willing to change those aspects of “self” that can be improved. This includes vocal skills and understanding of Scripture as well as personal faith and belief. Unless the Lector is willing to continue to grow, his or her effectiveness will rapidly diminish.
3. Effective proclamation of the Scriptures depends on the quality of how the Lector prepares. This preparation includes three areas:
  - a. Sensitivity to the meaning and significance of the specific Scriptural passage being proclaimed *personally*. One’s knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures and the events they describe, supplemented by on-going study and general religious education is essential to successful proclamation
  - b. Conviction that God is using the Lector’s skills, knowledge, and example of Christian living to reach others who most need to hear and understand God’s Word at the moment it is proclaimed. In brief, to be an *effective Witness to the Lector’s Faith*.

- c. The use of pauses, pace, voice tone, and word color and stress (emotional expression) helps the congregation paint a mental picture of what is going on in the scene or circumstances described in the Scripture passage. These also enhance the ability of the listener to process what is proclaimed so that its meaning is more readily understood and accepted.
4. Trainers of Lectors have a responsibility to continue to influence lectors beyond their initial orientation and training in the parish. The on-going leadership and support from the Trainer is required to enhance trainees' efforts to improve their self-understanding, proclamation skills, and their knowledge and understanding of Scripture. A monthly lector study group, annual retreat, and periodic, written critique of a lector's performance are recommended Trainer-activities for the members of this ministry.

Is all this necessary to ensure an effective Ministry of the Word in a parish? **Yes!** God's Word is worthy of the effort! The Lector is God's instrument for reaching that person or persons in the congregation that most needs to hear the *Word as proclaimed by the Lector at the moment it is proclaimed*. In addition to the words of the Scripture, themselves, the proclamation skills of the lector are required to maximize the impact of God's Word on the individual(s). Merely reading the words aloud, even dramatically, will ring hollow compared to proclaiming the words because of one's conviction as well as skill. In most parishes few lectors are polished public speakers as a result of personal education, training, or occupation. For this reason it is important, then, to provide the means and tools necessary to ensure the effectiveness of those called to this ministry. Helping lay people who are reasonably comfortable speaking before a group to express their convictions of their faith is a fundamental principle of this training program.

This manual contains all of the items used in the session and is primarily designed for the Trainer. It is divided into sections corresponding with the function of the materials in each section within the training session:

- Preparation:** Details the organization of the training space and materials copying needs.
- Methodology:** The Trainer's "script" for conducting the training session.
- Miscellaneous:** The session **Evaluation Form**  
A suggested **Agenda for a Monthly Lector Prep Session**  
Suggested **Critique Formats** used to assess a lector's skills and effectiveness.

# Preparing for the Session

## “Seasoned” Lector Training Session

### Copying and materials preparation

Prepare **Participant’s Folder** as well as the Lector Training Session Evaluation Form for the estimated number of participants to use during the session. It is strongly recommended that the Participant’s Folder be copied with colored paper stock as indicated by the sample Participant’s Folder accompanying this manual.

The pages of both the Trainer’s Manual and Participant’s Folder are formatted so that the pages “mirror” each other (with the inside margin of the page slightly wider than the outside margin. This provides for easier reading of each page. The pages should be copied “2-to-1” (two original pages to each piece of copy paper).

The color-printed “outside” cover should be printed on heavier paper stock (although it is not required that color be used or that the stock be heavier).

Drill/punch 3 holes in the left margin of each piece of paper.

Assemble the Participant’s Folder.

Keep the copies of the **Lector Training Session Evaluation Form** separate from the above (a separate page of a different color inserted as a loose page at the back of the folder or as an item distributed separately at the end of the session).

The session will begin promptly at the starting time announced. It will conclude no more than two and a half hours later. Announce the starting and closing times in publicity items for the session so that participants can plan accordingly.

### Just before the training session begins ...

1. Place a large votive candle (with matches) on a stand or small table at the front of the meeting space, either right or left of center. The Trainer will light the candle at the very beginning of the session. The height of the candle stand or table should enable seated participants to easily see the lit candle.

2. Place the participants’ binders on a table just inside the door to the training space. Include a session registration/sign-in form as well.

Place **Set the Evaluation Form** on a small table at the front of the meeting space. The Trainer will distribute these at the end of the session.

3. Place a podium or music stand at the center-front of the meeting space (will be used to place individual reading/proclamation materials on).

4. A microphone is not necessary unless the acoustics of the meeting room are poor or the number of participants will exceed 20. If a microphone is to be used it should be an adjustable, stand-alone microphone (that also can double as a hand-held microphone) since participants will be using it as well as the Trainer.
5. Depending on the size of the group, the preferred seating arrangement is one that fosters verbal interaction between the Trainer and the participants as well as ensuring that everyone can see everyone else (i.e. a semi-circle). If the church proper is used for the training session this may not be possible.
6. Provide some type of suitable name badges and markers for participants. (A sign calling attention to this table, completing a name badge before the session begins, and taking a participants' binder may be helpful if the anticipated group will be large).  
  
Provide a set of small writing paper pads (3 x 5 or 4 x 6) and extra pens and pencils for use during the session. A dozen pages per pad will be ample. Place the pads and pencils on the registration table beside participant's folders and make sure everyone has a pad of paper before the session begins..
7. A 5 minute break may be taken about the middle of the session although it may not be necessary. Refreshments are NOT recommended unless the session has been scheduled for a morning. In that case, (juice, coffee, tea, etc.) only, before the session begins, is suggested.
8. Make sure everyone knows where the restrooms are before the session begins.
9. The Trainer will introduce himself or herself together with any assistants.

Light the candle before the formal program beings.

## **Finally...**

Be sure to review all of the materials (proclamations, prayers, meditations, etc.) included in the training program materials BEFORE conducting the training session. It is very important that the Trainer be very familiar with the philosophy, methodology, and content of the program since this is not a lecture program! The active participation of attendees is absolutely necessary to the success of the training session.

# Trainer's Notes

## Training for "Seasoned" Lectors

### Methodology

#### Welcome

(5 Minutes)

1. **"Say"** Good evening/morning and welcome to our Ministry of the Word **"Seasoned" Lector training program**. I'm glad you were able to make it and I'm sure you'll find the session interesting and worth your time and effort.
2. Make sure that all attendees have registered and picked up a Participant's Folder and a pad of paper.
3. Describe how the session will "flow" (i.e. when the Break is, where the restrooms are located).
4. Provide a quick overview of the purposes of the session:
  - a. Help experienced lectors become more aware of the purpose of the Ministry of the Word and the "personal religious" nature of the scriptural proclamation.
  - b. Experience feedback from peers as a means of improving skills and abilities.
  - c. Sharpen proclamation skills and re-examine how to prepare to proclaim a passage from Scripture.

#### Opening Prayer

(5 Minutes)

It is recommended that the Pastor lead the group in a prayer, if possible. If the Trainer leads the prayer choose any commonly used prayer (i.e. **The Lord's Prayer**), the prayer included in this manual ("**A Prayer for Readers**") or, if comfortable using it, a spontaneous prayer focused on the Ministry of the Word.

1. **"Ask"** the group to stand and **begin with the Sign of the Cross**. Lead the prayer.
2. **"Tell"** the group to be seated.

**Opening Meditation: “What My Brothers Need”****(10 Minutes)****Purpose**

To ensure that trainees focus on the importance of their humility in the Ministry of the Word as well as the power Jesus has to use the skills and qualities of the lector to make His Word plain to the congregation members. It is important that every lector keep in mind that at least one person in the congregation needs to hear the particular Scripture passage proclaimed by a specific lector on the day it is proclaimed. God uses the lector’s proclamation to reach out to that person at that moment.

1. **“Tell”** the group to close their eyes, listen to the words of the meditation, and let the scene described develop in their mind.
 

**“Explain”** that the author of the meditation wrote it in the first person and, although not the Trainer’s actual, personal experience, all lectors need to experience something close to the experience described. In fact, they will have the experience more than once over their service years.
2. **“Read the meditation aloud”** in a strong voice
 

**“Make sure”** the pace of the reading is neither too fast nor very slow. Pause briefly at the end of each sentence.
3. **“Remain silent”** for two or three minutes after presenting the meditation. Then,
4. **“Ask”** **What did this meditation mean to you?**  
**How do you think the meditation applies to Ministers of the Word?**
5. **“Tell”** the group that a copy of the meditation will be made available at the end of the training session (or is in their binder toward the back).

## **What My Brothers Need**

**I belong to a religious order, and [was asked to give a presentation with two other theologians in my own community].**

**[In the audience were] the men with whom I live and teach. I have given so many speeches in public I am rarely nervous. But this night I was definitely nervous.... So, while the other two theologians ... were giving their presentations before mine, I was silently praying. I asked Jesus to raise his becalming hand over me. Pour your peace into me. Help me to relax and do well.**

**Nothing happened. I mean nothing.... So I examined my nervousness, in consultation with the divine physician, Jesus. I heard his diagnosis, and the words I heard inside me that night have had a profound effect upon ... my life. He said:**

**“You are nervous because you are getting ready to give a performance. You want to impress your brothers, to make sure they realize what a “gem” they have in you. I don’t want a performance. I want an act of love. Your brothers do not need you to impress them, but to love them.”**

**In this communication, Jesus reached very deeply into my life.**

John Powell, S.J.

**Quiet Moments**

[Selected & Edited by Nancy Sabbag  
(Servant Publications, 2000) Number 14,  
from John Powell, **Touched by God**,  
(Allen, TX, Thomas More, 1974)]

**The Importance of Words****(10 Minutes)**

1. “**Ask**” the group to turn to the **third page** of the materials they picked up when they came in. Ask for a volunteer to complete the sentence: (“**Ask not what your country can do for you, ... [ask what you can do for your country.]**”)
2. “**Encourage**” a discussion as to why these words by President Kennedy are still so well known, today (they were delivered as part of his Inaugural Address in January, 1960) even though he spoke them only once (although they have been heard many times on television and radio since then).

1. Several lectors in attendance may not have been born when the words were spoken yet they know them!
2. The sentence is a modern day example of the impact of words on people – just as the words of Scripture have an impact on us even today, some 2,000+ years after they were spoken as stories to the gatherings of Hebrews and followers of “The Way” (which was what Jesus’ teachings were called after His death).
3. As lectors, our task is to bring the Scriptures “to life” – to be God’s instruments in His efforts to reach out to those in the Assembly who most need to hear him, today.

**Stressing Words Can Change How They Are Interpreted****(25 Minutes)**

1. “**Ask**” Ask for a volunteer to help you with the next part of the session. The volunteer will have to bring the materials for the session with them from their seat.

After the volunteer is in front of the group, ask him/her to read the sentence on the second half the third page (“**I didn’t know she kissed him.**”) but do so six (6) times, stressing a different word each time. Start with the 1<sup>st</sup> word the first time through, the 2<sup>nd</sup> the second time through, etc.

**[Give instructions that the words are to be stressed, individually but with no noticeable emotion.** Almost as though the reader was using a monotone.]

(after the volunteer has recited the line the six times...)

2. “**Ask**” the members of the group to tell what was going through their mind as they listened to the same words each time. Ask them to explain their comments.

Then, ... ask for another volunteer to come up to help you.

3. **“Tell”** the group that you want the volunteer to repeat the exercise just as before but this time with the strong emotion of anger or rage in their voice – a strong emotional overtone to how the words are recited. The volunteer is to attempt to convince the assembly that he or she is very angry!

(after the volunteer has recited the line *with anger* the six times...)

4. **“Ask”** the members of the group to tell you what was different this time around.

1. A common observation is that the **“pace”** of the reading changed! It usually is somewhat slower.  
**Observation:** listeners need time to picture the scene – the emotional overtone of the words on the scene.
2. A second observation is that the focus of the listener is now on the one saying the words – the words are personal!  
**Observation:** as lectors, we bring our personal witness of what the Scripture means to us, personally, by the way we proclaim a reading. Our willingness to let our emotions enter our proclamation makes a great deal of difference in how individuals in the Assembly “hear” the proclamation.
3. In many Scripture passages, God is angry! How does he sound?  
**Observation:** we have a responsibility to the Assembly to help them “see” God as He is.
4. Some will object to the use of emotion as being “too dramatic!”  
**Observation:** as Catholics we are seldom known for being “dramatic” in church! An honest expression of emotion, however, is never perceived as being dramatic. It is always those who are “acting” that are labeled as being dramatic (the “drama queen” label).

5. **“Repeat”** Step #4, above, [if there is time] but ask the volunteer to use some other emotion (i.e. joy, surprise or regret).

**BREAK** (if desirable)

**(5 Minutes)**

**Pause for Clarification**

**(5 Minutes)**

1. **“Ask”** the group if anyone has any questions about anything that came up during the first part of the training session.
2. **“Distribute”** the pads of paper to each participant (if not already picked up at Registration). Explain that they will use the pads of paper during this part of the training session.

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3. **“Ask”** the group to turn to the three proclamation texts (pp. 7-10) included in the materials they picked up as they came into the session earlier.

## **Proclaiming the WORD**

**(45 Minutes)**

1. **“Say”** **I want you to take a few minutes to look over the first proclamation text (the reading from Ash Wednesday) and prepare to proclaim it. I’ll ask for a volunteer to proclaim the text to us. I want us all to realize that I am aware that a few minutes to prepare a proclamation is certainly not enough time to properly prepare to do so; but, I want you to do the best you can.**

Make sure everyone has the correct proclamation text to review.

Allow the group about 3 minutes to prepare the text. Then...

2. **“Say”** **Do we have a volunteer to read?** (Choose someone if there are no volunteers.)

When the volunteer comes up to the podium ...and finishes proclaiming the reading ...

3. **“Explain”** How the group will use the pads of paper.

**“Say”** **I want all of you to take a minute to jot down a word or two that describes each the things you liked about (the volunteer’s) proclamation. Then, I want you to tear the page from the pad and on the back of the paper/page write down a word or two that describes the one thing you think (the volunteer) should pay more attention to. I’ll collect your papers in a couple of minutes.**

4. **“Repeat”** (optional) the above exercise with one or two more volunteers.

- 5.. **“Quietly”** have each of the volunteers turn to the ANNOTATED VERSION of the Ash Wednesday proclamation (p. 29 of their folder) and ask him/her to review it and prepare to present the reading, again, but using the Annotated Version page. Quietly explain (to the volunteer) that you will collect the papers from the group and then tell (the volunteer“)

**“Say”** **you will present the reading again after I collect the papers.**

After collecting the papers and when (the volunteer) has completed the reading give him/her the papers. Then ...

6. **“Ask”** the group what they found different between the two presentations

1. A common response will be that the pacing was slower and/or that the reader paused more.
2. Encourage the reader to respond to what the group has to say about the difference(s) between the two proclamations.

Then...

7. **“Ask”** (the volunteer) to briefly summarize what the group said were the “good things” about his/her reading. Then ... ask (the volunteer) to tell the group the most frequently mentioned thing he/she needs to pay more attention to.
8. **“Distribute”** the Annotated Version of the Ash Wednesday reading to the group.
9. **“Say”** **The big difference between the two proclamations was the speed at which the proclamation was delivered. This was the result of the pausing that (the volunteer) used. Remember, we must help the people in the Assembly to “paint a picture” in their minds of what we are proclaiming. Pauses help give the listener the time needed to put the picture together.**

**What you have is one approach to helping each of us do a better job. Use the “Pause” to help you separate the different elements of the picture you’re painting. People will better understand you and understand the Scripture you are proclaiming. Was there anything else you noticed that was different between the two proclamations?**

Allow time for some discussion and interaction.

**2 Corinthians 5:20—6:2****2Corinthians, Chap. 5, verse 20 to Chap. 6, verse 2****A reading from the second Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians**

Brothers and sisters:

We are ambassadors for Christ,  
as if God were appealing through us.

We implore you on behalf of Christ,  
be reconciled to God.

For our sake he made him to be sin  
who did not know sin,  
so that we might become the righteousness  
of God in him.

Working together, then,  
we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain.  
For he says:

*In an acceptable time I heard you,  
and on the day of salvation I helped you.*

Behold, now is a very acceptable time;  
behold, now is the day of salvation.

**The Word of the Lord.**

**ANNOTATED VERSION****2 Corinthians 5:20—6:2****2 Corinthians, Chap. 5, verse 20 to Chap. 6, verse 2****A reading from the second Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians**

Brothers and sisters:

**(Pause)**We are ambassadors for Christ,  
as if God were appealing through us.**(short Pause) (Word stress)****(short Pause)**We implore you  
on behalf of Christ,  
be reconciled to God.**(short Pause)****(short Pause)**For our sakehe made him to be sin who did not know sin,  
so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.**(short Pause) (Word stress)****(Word stress)**

Working together, then,

we appeal to you  
not to receive the grace of God in vain.**(Word stress)**

For he says:

**(short Pause)**In an acceptable time I heard you,  
and on the day of salvation  
I helped you.**[What does God sound like?]****(short Pause)**

Behold,

now is a very acceptable time;  
behold,  
now is the day of salvation.**(switch to Paul's voice) (Word stress)****(Word stress)****The Word of the Lord.**

10. **“Repeat”** Steps 1 through 8 but use the Christmas Midnight proclamation text. This time, have two or three (2-3) volunteers present the reading. In between the two, ask the group to note the things they “liked” about each presentation and the ONE thing they think the volunteer needs to pay more attention to.

Then ... **Select one of the two volunteers** to present the *annotated version* of the reading. Then ...

11. **“Say”** [after the group has had a moment to review the annotations]  
**It is always necessary to keep in mind that stressing important words can help the listener be clear about what you want him or her to be sure to hear. It is also important to keep in mind that the Lectionary doesn’t always display the lines of the text as we would actually say them out loud. It is your job to help the listener make sense out of the text by grouping the words together the way they make the most sense to you.**

**Isaiah 9:1-6****Isaiah, Chap. 9, verses 1-6****A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah**

The people who walked in darkness  
     have seen a great light;  
 upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom  
     a light has shone.  
 You have brought them abundant joy  
     and great rejoicing,  
 as they rejoice before you as at the harvest,  
     as people make merry when dividing spoils.  
 For the yoke that burdened them,  
     the pole on their shoulder,  
 and the rod of their taskmaster  
     you have smashed, as on the day of Midian.  
 For every boot that tramped in battle,  
     every cloak rolled in blood,  
     will be burned as fuel for flames.  
 For a child is born to us, a son is given us;  
     upon his shoulder dominion rests.  
 They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero,  
     Father-Forever, Prince of Peace.  
 His dominion is vast  
     and forever peaceful,  
 from David's throne, and over his kingdom,  
     which he confirms and sustains  
 by judgment and justice,  
     both now and forever.  
 The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this!

**The Word of the Lord.**

ANNOTATED VERSION**Isaiah 9:1 -5****Isaiah, Chap. 9, verses 1-5****A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah**

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; (short Pause) (one sentence/thought?)  
 upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom (short Pause)  
 a light has shone. (Word stress)

You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing, (one sentence/thought?) (Word stress)  
 as they rejoice before you  
 as at the harvest, (Excited?)  
 as people make merry when dividing spoils. (Pause)

For the yoke that burdened them, (short Pause) (Word stress)  
 the pole on their shoulder, (short Pause) (Word stress)  
 and the rod of their taskmaster (short Pause) (Word stress)  
 you have smashed, (short Pause) (Word stress) (What does “smashed” sound like?)  
 as on the day of Midian. (short Pause)

For every boot that tramped in battle, {Word stress} (short Pause)  
 every cloak rolled in blood, {  
 will be burned as fuel for flames. { (Pause)

For a child is born to us, (short Pause) (Word stress) {Wonder?  
 a son is given us; (short Pause) (Word stress)  
 upon his shoulder dominion rests. (Pause) (Word stress)

They name him Wonder-Counselor, (short Pause)  
 God-Hero, (short Pause) (How show AWE?)  
 Father-Forever, (short Pause)  
 Prince of Peace. (Pause) (Different tone?)

His dominion is vast and forever peaceful, (Pause) (One phrase or idea ?)  
 from David’s throne, and over his kingdom, (Word stress) (Who’s kingdom?)  
 which he confirms and sustains by judgment and justice, (short Pause)  
 both now and forever. (Pause)

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this! (Word stress) (Excited; eager; emphatic!!)

**The Word of the Lord.**

12. **“Repeat”** Steps 1 through 9 but use the Easter Vigil proclamation text [Romans 6:3-11] (if time permits). Use two or three (2-3) volunteers, here, also.

Then ...

13. **“Say”** **There are some parts of Scripture that help us to better understand the meaning of a passage. Using “parenthetical expressions” is a device that many authors use to help us understand what is more important in a sentence vs. other parts of the passage. St. Paul, in particular, uses such parenthetical expressions. By changing the tone of voice or the volume of our voice we can help the Assembly “hear” the differences between the parts of a sentence in the text. Combining all of this “pausing,” “word stress,” and “parenthetical expressions”) we can easily help the listener to understand the importance of what we are proclaiming.**

**Romans 6:3—11****Romans, Chap. 6, verses 3--11****A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans**

Brothers and sisters:

Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus  
were baptized into his death?

We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death,  
so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead  
by the glory of the Father,  
we too might live in newness of life.

For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his,  
we shall also be united with him in the resurrection.

We know that our old self was crucified with him,  
so that our sinful body might be done away with,  
that we might no longer be in slavery to sin.

For a dead person has been absolved from sin.

If, then, we have died with Christ,  
we believe that we shall also live with him.

We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more;  
death no longer has power over him.

As to his death, he died to sin once and for all;  
as to his life, he lives for God.

Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as being dead to sin  
and living for God in Christ Jesus.

**The Word of the Lord.**

[Annotated Version]

Romans 6:3—11

Romans, Chap. 6, verses 3--11

## A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

Brothers and sisters:

(Pause)

Are you unaware that we

(Word stress)

*who were baptized into Christ Jesus*

[Parenthetical expression]

were baptized into his death?

(Pause)

We were indeed buried with him

(Word stress)

through baptism

into death,

so that,

(short pause)

just as Christ was raised from the dead

*by the glory of the Father,*

[Parenthetical expression]

we too might live in newness of life.

(Word stress)

For if we have grown into union with him

*through a death like his,*

[Parenthetical expression]

we shall also be united with him

(short pause)

in the resurrection.

(Word stress)

We know that our old self was crucified with him,

(Word stress)

*so that our sinful body might be done away with,*

[Parenthetical expression]

that we might no longer be in slavery to sin.

(Pause) (Word stress)

For a dead person has been absolved from sin.

(Pause)

If, then, we have died with Christ,

(Word stress)

we believe that we shall also live with him.

(Word stress)

We know that Christ,

(take your time for the remainder of passage!)

*raised from the dead,*

[Parenthetical expression]

dies no more;

death no longer has power over him.

As to his death,

(Word stress)

he died to sin

once

and for all;

as to his life,

(Word stress)

he lives for God.

Consequently,

you too must think of yourselves as being dead to sin

(Word stress)

and living for God

(Short Pause) (Word stress)

in Christ Jesus.

**The Word of the Lord.**

**Study Group (Optional)****(5 Minutes)**

This would be an excellent time to introduce the concept of the Monthly Lector Study Group.

Explain that the parish will start this program (name the date, time, and place). It will be an opportunity to work as a group of proclaimers all interested in the same goal – helping the Assembly better appreciate the Word of God.

**NOTE:** A sample agenda is elsewhere in this manual.

## **Closing**

1. **“Ask”**      **Are there any questions about what we have covered in this training session?**
2. **“Tell”**      the group to complete the Evaluation Form and leave it on the “registration” table before they leave.
3. **“Ask”**      the group to stand and **“lead”** the group in the **Sign of the Cross**.

Then, **“lead”** the group in the recitation of the **“Lector’s Prayer”** as the Closing activity.

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## LECTOR'S PRAYER

Jesus, my friend, my brother, my Lord, my God!  
Help me to proclaim your living word.

Let me always remember  
that you have called me to be your instrument;  
a hollow reed through which the meaning of your word  
comes to my fellow disciples.

This candle's flame reminds me that you are always present to me.  
Help me to see your presence in everyone to whom I speak.

Give me the strength and courage to proclaim your word in such a  
way  
that everyone trying to understand you,  
everyone striving to be faithful to you,  
and everyone seeking your forgiveness,  
will gain from my efforts.

Remind me always that it is Your Will I must do,  
not mine.

AMEN.

Gene Hayes  
Unpublished, 1998  
Used with permission

**Thank everyone for coming to the training session.**

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## The Joy of Being a Lector.

Mitch Finley

(Mineola, NY. Resurrection Press, 2000)

In its *Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy* (1963), the Second Vatican Council declared that Christ “is present in his word since it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church” (n.7). This means that, as a lector, when you proclaim the Scriptures during the Liturgy of the Word, Christ speaks through you. By fulfilling the ministry of lector you *make Christ present* in a special and important way. This is a great privilege indeed.

Think about this for a moment. You, the lector, are not merely someone who stands before the eucharistic assembly and reads aloud some sacred words from a printed page. When you proclaim the scriptural readings something happens – a great mystery – that would not happen if everyone in the congregation silently perused the readings for themselves....

The dynamic of *hearing* the Scriptures as they are read aloud, or *proclaimed*, in church in the context of the Mass, is the means by which Christ becomes present. Therefore, *how* you proclaim the Scriptures is vitally important to the quality of the experience for the entire congregation.

pp. 35-36

...the Word of God is, first of all, a *spoken* word, a *dynamic* word, a “word” spoken to us *by God*. This is why the ministry of lector is so important to the liturgy.

As a lector, it is your ministry to proclaim the word of God. Or rather, it is your ministry to allow God to speak his word through you to the eucharistic assembly. When you proclaim the word of God it comes alive, and it is your role to let the word of God come alive in you so that it may come alive for the entire congregation.

As a lector, you become the means by which God’s word touches the hearts of those gathered together for precisely this purpose.

pp. 36-37

## LECTOR'S PRAYER

**Jesus, my friend, my brother, my Lord, my God!  
Help me to proclaim your living word.**

**Let me always remember  
that you have called me to be your instrument;  
a hollow reed through which the meaning of your word  
comes to my fellow disciples.**

**This candle's flame reminds me that you are always present to me.  
Help me to see your presence in everyone to whom I speak.**

**Give me the strength and courage to proclaim your word in such a  
way  
that everyone trying to understand you,  
everyone striving to be faithful to you,  
and everyone seeking your forgiveness,  
will gain from my efforts.**

**Remind me always that it is Your Will I must do,  
not mine.**

**AMEN.**

## A Creed For the Sowing of Seeds

(from *Fresh Bread* by Joyce Rupp)

I believe that this is one of the earth's finest moments, that the sun lifting yellows and greens into life of tiny poplar leaves is much like God's own Spirit of love lifting life into me.

I believe that the Word of God has many times been planted in my life, often because of another who received the seed in ready soil, brought forth a harvest, and shared that goodness with me.

I believe that the call to be a sower of the Word is a privilege and a blessing, that no one can ever earn the right or claim the duty, that it is a gift freely given and a ministry to be constantly celebrated in gratitude.

I believe that great things can come forth from even the tiniest seed planted in love and cared for tenderly in the heart of another.

I believe that usually only God knows what sprouting and greening will come from the Word planted through my ministry. I am content in knowing that I have tried, with the Sower's grace, to seed that Word in faith and joy.

I believe that even the most insignificant aspects of life can be the seed of God's gifting, that deeper faith can root and mature in very ordinary soil.

I believe that some dying of seed has to take place before it can give itself over to life, that every heart has its germination time, its dark moment, before the future hallowedness of harvest comes.

I believe that it takes much patience to sow a seed, to freely give it away to the heart of the earth, to allow it to take root and to grow in its own good time.

I believe that my life will always know its season of hope, that I will find flowers after every finality of ice and snow, that I will find green, growing things after every harsh, barren reign of winter's rage.

And most of all...

I believe in the Sower of all seeds, in the God of Springtime, in the Giver of all good and growing things, my Lord and my God!

Joyce Rupp  
**Fresh Bread**

[Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1985, pp. 73-74]

# STORYTELLING: Life-Giving Energy of Celebration

Eugene A. Walsh, S.S.

## TELLING THE STORY (Section I: Storytelling: History and Value)

Storytelling is the one, single, most important energy of all religious celebration. There is no culture, no civilization, no religion that does not hold, in its deepest heart, **THE STORY**. Race after race, culture after culture, civilization after civilization, have come to be who they are through their storytelling. In times that reach beyond the horizon of history, people gathered together to tell their story. They gathered to tell the stories of their gods and their heroes.

Through their storytelling these people gained their identity as people. Through their storytelling different peoples developed their culture and came to be those people, that race, that culture unique to itself and different from others. The Athenians became Athenians through the telling over and over again the stories of their gods and of their heroes, like Ulysses and Achilles. The stories got written down centuries later. But long before the writing of the story it was the oral tradition that carried the life-line and the life-blood of the culture.

The Israelites gained their identity through their storytelling. The stories of Abraham as father of his people, the story of Moses as great liberator, lived many centuries in the telling before they got written down in the five books of the Pentateuch.

These stories of origins and beginnings grew and grew, became more and more embellished as they passed from generation to generation. (In scripture this is what we call midrash.) And so, through the storytelling of their encounter with the one true God, Israel forged itself into the unique monotheistic people they became in the history of the world.

At the heart of every culture and every civilization lives the “myth,” the story, by which that culture has determined its origins, its way, its heroes, its destiny. More than that, the downfall of civilizations and cultures can be identified with the loss of story. Either they stopped telling the story or it became shriveled up in the written word. A living story tends to become a dead story when it gets written down. A living story begins to lose its power when it is no longer told as a story in living images and in living songs that are sung, dances that are danced. These are the living carriers of the living legend that keeps a people alive.

We Americans are no different from the ancients. Apart from historical documentation, there is the living American **story** passed down through the generations ... Washington, Ben Franklin, Abraham Lincoln, the Alamo, Padre Serra, George Washington Carver, the Selma Marches, the “I Have A Dream” speech and all the rest of it ... all bigger than life, and all an intimate part of who we Americans are.

There is a sort of Catch 22 here. We have got to record a story in order to preserve it. But in the same moment that we lay it to rest in the book or in the artifacts that will hold it for posterity, we begin to lay it in its cave and so cut off its continued life and growth. No matter how much we possess and cherish the written word we cannot, must not, become a slave to it. If we are to live, we have got to tell our story in a living manner.

Storytelling lies at the heart of worship. In the ancient days, celebration of feast and festival and holiday were one and the same thing. Leisure is the basis of culture, as Joseph Pieper so beautifully wrote some decades ago. Feast day is holy day. Holy day is holiday. On feast days, on holy days, people stopped working. They took time off from the day-to-day business by which they gained their food and their keep. They closed the “business” world, left their shops and went into the world of celebration. They gathered together for worship. They gathered to celebrate the stories of their heroes and their gods, the stories of their origins, because that was their religious celebration.

It went something like this. They gathered. The storytellers began to tell the story in a ritual manner, to the accompaniment of musical instruments, often percussion, like lyre and harp, to the accompaniment of ritual gesture. They had a simple and common understanding of what they were doing and why they were doing it. Their understanding is the magic heart of all storytelling that has, perhaps more than any other symbol, the power for transforming lives.

When you tell a story, if you tell it well, some very important things happen. First off the storyteller gets involved and caught up in the story. The storyteller begins to live inside the story because he [or she] has owned the story. It has become his story. He possesses the story and is possessed by the story. Likewise the listeners. They are drawn irresistibly into the story. They leave their world of everyday existence behind and enter into the story-world. Both storyteller and listeners begin to live the story all over again. In this “time outside of time,” which becomes the real time, they renew for themselves all the original energies of the story. They absorb these energies into their own being and become a fresh new people all over again.

This is the dynamic of myth. This is the meaning of myth. This is the power of myth. When you celebrate your religion by telling the stories of your gods and heroes you enter into the world of those same gods and heroes, you touch them and are touched by them in that moment. In and through that “experience” you are changed and transformed, in a sense divinized. And so you return to your everyday world with new life and new strength and new hope and new courage to go on some more. This belief is deep in the human psyche and the collective psyche because it is a profound human symbol. Symbols exist and are discovered. They cannot be made up.

In the Greek mystery religions that so filled the Mediterranean world immediately before and during the time of Christ, the myth of Isis and Orsiris, for example, called their devotees into the same kind of storytelling and ritual. They gathered secretly and listened to the story of the gods, usually a story of dying and rising. They touched the sacred articles associated with the gods. And thus they knew themselves as made new again. Divinized somewhat and made like the gods. Ancient as the world is storytelling as religion.

We are very familiar with this Storytelling and its power because we are doing it all the time. Storytelling is the living and life-giving center of our own family life. We may not realize that we are engaged in the ages-old ritual of storytelling. But we are, because this is the way in which we celebrate all our special family days. On birthdays and anniversaries, at marriage feast and at funeral feasts we gather to tell our story. In the telling of the story we remember all over again who we are. We refresh our memories, we enter again into the world of ancestors and family and friends. We forge and strengthen old bonds and make new ones. At Christmas and Easter it is the same.

Our story changes as people come and go in our lives. But the storytelling goes on. And that is how we touch our roots. That is how we touch our tradition and pass it along to those who are coming along after us. That is how we give life and wings to our children. And so from generation to generation we gather to tell our story. We ritualize our story in feasting and fasting, in joy and in pain.

Our story, told and retold, ever the same, ever changing, is the heartbeat of human living. And so it has got to be with our life of faith, our Christian life. In a very real sense, **we have forgotten how to tell our story when we gather for Sunday mass**. We have gotten pretty far off track. We don't even know that the whole business of gathering on Sunday is for the purpose of telling our story.

Tell a story? Tell our story? Whatever are you talking about? I go to mass because I want to and I hope I get something out of it. Or, I go to mass because I have to and I hope it doesn't last too long.

And so it goes.

There are many reasons why we have lost our sense of storytelling as the heart of our religious and sacramental celebrations. We are not minded to go into the reasons here. Sufficient to say that we stand on the edge of a new world. You may or may not have noticed, but storytelling is coming on big again: in family life, in church, in schools, in theology, even in high-tech circles: stories of faith, stories of the past that break into the future. There is a new life in the land because of the recovery of storytelling.

Above all we are being urged by the leaders in scripture and bible renewal to understand scripture as those stories through which God is revealing to us God's faithful, covenant love, God's plan of salvation for all people in and through Jesus.

We are being urged most of all to understand the gospels as those collections of sayings and stories which the earliest Christian-Jewish communities told again and again so that they would remember. We are learning how the gospel-writers wove much of the same materials into their stories and with different points of view, with differing emphases and for different people. We are learning that these gospel stories were written, not as history but as a way of remembering. We have learned as well that the first and more important purpose of all scripture, both Hebrew and Christian, was that it be proclaimed in the midst of the assembly. We are learning that the first purpose of God's word today is to be proclaimed in the midst of the assembly.

Now that we know, it is our job to make it happen. A sizeable job it will be, but really worthwhile. Certainly worth the effort of the most stalwart among you. For this task the church is looking for recruits. Are you available? ....

**Eugene A. Walsh, S.S.**  
**MY PEOPLE! MY PEOPLE!**  
**"The Parish Assembly Celebrates the Word of God"**  
 [Daytona Beach, **Pastoral Arts Association of North America**, 1986]  
 (This publication is no longer in print; its publisher no longer exists)

## What My Brothers Need

**I belong to a religious order, and [was asked to give a presentation with two other theologians in my own community].**

**[In the audience were] the men with whom I live and teach. I have given so many speeches in public I am rarely nervous. But this night I was definitely nervous.... So, while the other two theologians ... were giving their presentations before mine, I was silently praying. I asked Jesus to raise his becalming hand over me. Pour your peace into me. Help me to relax and do well.**

**Nothing happened. I mean nothing.... So I examined my nervousness, in consultation with the divine physician, Jesus. I heard his diagnosis, and the words I heard inside me that night have had a profound effect upon ... my life. He said:**

**“You are nervous because you are getting ready to give a performance. You want to impress your brothers, to make sure they realize what a “gem” they have in you. I don’t want a performance. I want an act of love. Your brothers do not need you to impress them, but to love them.”**

**In this communication, Jesus reached very deeply into my life.**

John Powell, S.J.  
**Quiet Moments**  
[Selected & Edited by Nancy Sabbag  
from John Powell, **Touched by God**,  
(Allen, TX, Thomas More, 1974)]  
(Servant Publications, 2000) Number 14

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## A Suggested Method of Preparation for Proclaiming a Reading

It is recommended that you follow this suggested methodology each day over 3-5 days (or more) before your scheduled reading.

1. Silently read the passage to yourself at least 2 times (more if desired).
2. Read the entire chapter in the Bible from which the reading is taken.  
Think about what the whole chapter is about:
  - a. What is going on in the chapter – events, personalities, etc?
  - b. How does the selection of the verses in the reading “fit” with what you see as the purpose(s) and/or overall “story” of the chapter?
    - [1] Do the verses leave out anything important? If so, can you imply the important missing parts through emotion, expression, etc. in your voice?
    - [2] What do the selected verses “highlight” in the chapter?
3. Re-read the passage to yourself 1-2 times but this time with some “meaning” – what you think the author intended and how he/she intended it.
4. “Say” the reading to yourself, silently, in your head. “Hear” yourself proclaiming it.
  - a. Did it sound right?
  - b. What needs to change? Why?
  - c. Do you sound sincere, convinced, etc. that you know what you’re talking about?
5. Read the “notes” at the bottom of the page for this particular proclamation in the *Workbook....*
6. Say the reading out loud at least 3 times with as much expression as you can. After each of these “proclamations” ask yourself:
  - a. Did it sound right to me? What do I want to change?
  - b. Am I comfortable with myself proclaiming that way? If not, why?
  - c. Will the Assembly understand what I’m proclaiming?  
Then, hold a quiet conversation with Jesus. Tell him what you’re trying to accomplish and ask for His help – Wisdom, Courage, Understanding, and Love of my fellow disciples. And then be still for a few minutes while Jesus talks back to you.
7. Check the marginal notations in the *Workbook....* for suggested pronunciations, word stress, etc.
8. “Say” the reading out loud again, at least 3 times, as you now intend to proclaim it. Are you satisfied?

Repeat the above (but without re-reading the entire chapter in the Bible or referencing the *Workbook....* [unless you feel you need to]) on successive days before your scheduled reading. On the morning of your scheduled reading, go through the above exercise once or twice **but stop at least a half hour before you leave for church!** Let your mind do its work! Perhaps on the way to church, or just before you rise to proclaim, ask Jesus to help you be more aware of His presence throughout the liturgy. *“Not my will but yours be done!”*

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## Critique Form for Lectors

Lector: \_\_\_\_\_ Liturgy: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Critic: \_\_\_\_\_

### Verbal Considerations

#### Communication of Intellectual Content

5 ----- 4 ----- 3 ----- 2 ----- 1  
*Clearly understands the meaning* *Seems uncertain of the meaning*

#### Communication of Emotional Content

5 ----- 4 ----- 3 ----- 2 ----- 1  
*Clearly senses the mood and feeling* *Seems unaware of the mood and feeling*

#### Quality of Sharing

5 ----- 4 ----- 3 ----- 2 ----- 1  
*Sensitive to Assembly, eager to share* *Seems unaware of the Assembly*

#### Vocal Projection

5 ----- 4 ----- 3 ----- 2 ----- 1  
*Voice fills the space clearly, distinctly* *Voice seems subdued, inadequate*

#### Vocal Tone/Range/Melody

5 ----- 4 ----- 3 ----- 2 ----- 1  
*Wide use of vocal Tone -- appropriate to text* *Monotone; lacks variety*

#### Rate

5 ----- 4 ----- 3 ----- 2 ----- 1  
*Varied and appropriate; energetic* *Too fast/too slow; dull*

#### Pauses

5 ----- 4 ----- 3 ----- 2 ----- 1  
*Effective, enhancing the meaning* *Awkward, conflicting with meaning*

#### Volume

5 ----- 4 ----- 3 ----- 2 ----- 1  
*Easy to hear* *Inadequate – hard to hear or excessively loud*

#### Articulation

5 ----- 4 ----- 3 ----- 2 ----- 1  
*Distinct, clear, easy to understand* *Indistinct, imprecise or overdone*

#### Emphasis/Word Stress

5 ----- 4 ----- 3 ----- 2 ----- 1  
*Well-placed, enhancing meaning* *Ill-placed, awkward, inconsistent with meaning*

### Nonverbal Considerations

#### Posture

5 ----- 4 ----- 3 ----- 2 ----- 1  
*Alert, strong, yet relaxed* *Stiff, rigid, too casual, unnecessary movements*

#### Attitude

5 ----- 4 ----- 3 ----- 2 ----- 1  
*Genuine, sincere, warm* *Uptight, severe or nonchalant (blank)*

#### Dress

5 ----- 4 ----- 3 ----- 2 ----- 1  
*Modest, subdued, appropriate* *Too flashy, too casual, inappropriate*

### Proclamation Environment Considerations

#### Use of microphone

5 ----- 4 ----- 3 ----- 2 ----- 1  
*Clearly comfortable with microphone* *Seems unfamiliar with microphone*

#### Processional/Recessional

5 ----- 4 ----- 3 ----- 2 ----- 1  
*Poised, comfortable, natural* *Rigid or too casual, awkward*

### Other Comments

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Aelred R. Rosser. **A Well-Trained Tongue**  
 (Chicago: LTP, 1996), p.115

[Slightly modified by Gene Hayes,  
**lectorsproclaim.org**]

## Monthly Lector Prep Session

### AGENDA

#### **Opening Prayer**

A formal or impromptu prayer led by the Lector Trainer or one of the session's participants.

**NOTE:** If a participant, make sure that person knows in advance that they have this responsibility.

#### **Brief Meditation**

Choose a brief story, poem, commentary, prose piece, or similar item.

Read it aloud to the group slowly and thoughtfully.

Allow 2-3 minutes for the group to consider the significance of the meditation in their lives.

**ASK:** "How did the meditation "hit" you?"  
"How is it significant in your life?"

**NOTE:** As the group becomes more comfortable with the process, ask a participant to prepare and lead the meditation for the next meeting.

#### **Proclamations for the coming month**

Identify who among the session's participants have been assigned during the next month.

Ask each, in turn, to proclaim their assigned reading.

Allow time for feedback from the group to the presenter

**NOTE:** Ask the presenter to state what they were trying to do with their proclamation.

Ask the group to stress the positive things in the first round of comments.

Then, have fellow lectors comment on the negatives they perceived in the proclamation.

Encourage and exchange of views, thinking, etc.

#### **Concluding Prayer**

Lead the group in a simple prayer (it may be recited as a group as well).

**Monthly meetings should rarely exceed 2 hours.**

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Lector Training Program Evaluation Form

**To the Participant:**

Please, as a favor, take a few minutes to complete this form and return it to the trainer before you go home. Your feedback will be very valuable to us. Thank you!

On a scale of **1 = Very Good** to **4 = Poor** please rate each of the following:

	Very Good			Poor
Handouts and materials used in the training program.	1	2	3	4
Overall structure of the training program and its flow.	1	2	3	4
Trainer's presentation style, manner, and effectiveness.	1	2	3	4
Your involvement with the program; its meaning for you.	1	2	3	4

**Please comment on each of the following** (use the back of the paper if necessary):

What part(s) of the training program did you like *most*? How can it/they be improved?

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What part(s) of the training program did you like *least*? How can it/they be improved?

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Would a different training program be helpful to you? Why?

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Any other comment you believe would be helpful:

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**Your name (*optional*):** \_\_\_\_\_