THE LECTOR’S DOZEN

1. Read the Bible privately on a regular basis.

2. Engage in Bible study, if it is available. If not, read carefully the introductions to the various Biblical books and the footnotes provided.

3. Get to know Paul, Matthew and Jeremiah so well that you can anticipate the way they think.

4. Never read publicly what you have not first read privately. Even the most seasoned reader can be caught off guard by a passage not seen recently.

5. Be aware of the importance of your service to your fellow worshippers. If they read silently while you read aloud, they express a lack of confidence in the reader, the microphone, and/or your church acoustics. Resolve to read so well that they will take their eyes up from those noisy booklets so as not to lose a syllable of the Word of God.

6. It is important to acquire the skill of maintaining some eye contact with your hearers. Lift the book, if necessary, in order to make eye contact. It is also important to be heard clearly by all.

7. Be aware of your responsibility to the homilist. If your reading of the Word has not been understandable, you have interfered with the ministry of the priest or deacon who preaches from the Lectionary.

8. Approach the place from which you will read with modest but confident bearing, as if something important were about to happen. It is.

9. Look around calmly to assure your hearers that you are about to read to them. Catch the eyes of several in the congregation who are looking up at you.

10. Let the stress in your voice fall on that which the author intends chiefly to affirm, to deny, or to call into question.

11. Verbs are more important than adverbs; nouns are more important than adjectives. Let your stress fall on them, not their helpers. Prepositions should ordinarily not be stressed. (Only in a sentence such as “… of the people, by the people, and for the people….” should prepositions be stressed.)

12. If you are an inexperienced public reader you should read beforehand to a competent critic. Tape recorders are not critics. They can confirm you in your worst weaknesses. Find a person who knows how to read publicly and who will tell you the truth.