

Diocesan Guidelines for Liturgical Ministers

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LITURGY AND MINISTRY

The *Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass* is the action of Christ and of God's people in which the human race adores the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit, and the faithful join themselves to Christ in giving thanks and praise to God. The *Mass* is the *Sacrament* of unity in which the faithful are nourished from the table of *God's Word* and of *Christ's Body*. This unity is expressed in common posture, in communal singing, in reverential silence, and in sharing together the one bread and the one chalice. The assumption of the *Roman Missal* is that every Sunday and feast day, the *Liturgy* will be celebrated with song, with a Cantor, preferably with two Readers, and with other assisting ministers. It is also assumed that all communicants present at *Mass*—Priest Celebrant, Deacon, ministers, and all in the assembly—will receive the *Sacrament* from bread and wine consecrated at that *Mass*, just as the Priest Celebrant must do. The liturgical books, particularly those used by the Priest Celebrant, the Deacon, and the assisting ministers, should be beautiful and appropriate rather than being disposable pages or booklets.

God's people gather at the table of *God's Word* at *Mass*. When the *Scriptures* are proclaimed at the ambo, God Himself is speaking to His people, and Christ, present in His own *Word*, is proclaiming the *Gospel*. The *Gospel* is the highpoint of the *Liturgy of the Word*. The readings from the *Old Testament* tell us of God's promises and the preparation of His people for the coming of His Son. The *New Testament* readings are reflections of Saint Paul and other contemporaries of the Lord on the life and message of Christ. In the *Acts of the Apostles*, we have a history of the early Church. All *Scripture* is inspired by the Holy Spirit. The key word in the *Liturgy of the Word* is listening. We are called to listen attentively as the Lector, Deacon, or Priest proclaims *God's Word*. We should listen as we would if Christ Himself were standing at the ambo; for in fact, it is God who speaks when the *Scriptures* are proclaimed.

Perhaps the best way to understand the readings at *Mass* and our response to them is offered by Saint John Paul II in his Instruction *Dies Domini*. He encourages those who take part in the *Eucharist*—Priest, ministers, and faithful—to prepare for the *Sunday Liturgy*, reflecting upon the *Word of God* which will be proclaimed. Saint John Paul II adds that, if we do not, it is difficult for the liturgical proclamation of the *Word of God* alone to produce the fruit we might expect. In this way, we till the soil, preparing our souls to receive the seeds to be planted by the *Word of God* so that the seed may bear fruit. The *Word of God* calls for our listening and our response in silent reflection, as well as in word and song. Most important of all, the *Word of God*, which is living and active, calls each of us individually, and all of us together, for a response that moves beyond the *Liturgy* and leads us to engage fully in the task of making Christ known to the world by what we do and say.

The Priest gathers with the people of God at the table of Christ's Body. At the Last Supper, our Savior instituted the *Eucharistic Sacrifice* of His body and blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the centuries until He should come again. It is in this way that He entrusted to His Bride, the Church, a memorial of His death and

resurrection. The celebration of the *Mass* also proclaims the sublime mystery of the Lord's real presence under the *Eucharistic* elements. Christ's presence in the *Eucharist* challenges human understanding, logic, and (ultimately) reason. His presence cannot be known by the senses, but only through faith. Christ is truly, really, substantially contained in the consecrated elements. His presence is not momentary nor simply signified, but wholly and permanently real under each of the consecrated species of bread and wine. The Priest offers the sacrifice in the person of Christ and presides over the assembly.

In addition, the nature of the ministerial priesthood puts into proper light the royal priesthood of believers. Through the ministry of the Priest, the people's spiritual sacrifice is brought to completeness in union with the sacrifice of Christ. The prayers addressed by the Priest are said in the name of the entire holy people. The faithful offer their prayers along with the Priest at *Mass*, and they offer themselves as well. The celebration of the *Eucharist* is the action of the whole Church. The *Liturgy of the Eucharist*, with the *Eucharistic Prayer* as the highpoint, calls us to respond in adoration, as well as in word and song. At the *Communion Rite*, Catholic believers are invited to come forward, as they sing the *Communion* song, to receive the *Sacrament* of life. All gather around the altar, not as spectators, but as active, conscious participants in the paschal mystery of Christ. The Second Vatican Council tells us that participation in the *Liturgy* is the **right** and **duty** of all the baptized. Nourished at the table, with Divine Food for the journey, all are sent forth from *Mass* to love and serve the Lord and one another.

The rubrics in the *Roman Missal* assume that the celebration of the *Mass* will take place in a church with a freestanding altar, an ambo for proclaiming *God's Word*, and a presidential chair to be used by the Priest at certain points during the *Liturgy*. The *Most Blessed Sacrament* should be reserved in a tabernacle in a part of the church that is truly noble, prominent, conspicuous, worthily decorated, and suitable for prayer. It is preferable that the tabernacle be located either in the sanctuary, apart from the altar of celebration, or in a chapel suitable for the private adoration and prayer of the faithful and organically connected to the church and readily noticeable by the Christian faithful. If the tabernacle is located next to the altar of sacrifice, the ministers genuflect to it only when they first approach the altar and when they leave the sanctuary, but not during the celebration of the *Mass* itself. Ministers who are carrying items in procession should simply bow.

The first qualification for any participation in the celebration of the *Eucharist* is that the person has been baptized into the *Body of Christ*, the Church. Each time the members of the Church gather to worship, they do so because their *Baptism* demands this of them. While all share in the priesthood of Christ, which delegates them to worship, some members of the Church are called by God to serve in the ministerial priesthood as Bishops and Priests. Bishops and Priests are privileged to act in the *Liturgy* in the very person of Christ, on behalf of the people, pronouncing the most sacred prayers of faith, presiding over the celebration of the sacred mysteries, explaining *God's Word*, and feeding God's people with the Body and Blood of Christ. A Bishop has the added responsibility of being the chief shepherd, the principal liturgist of his diocese, and in that role is the successor to the Apostles. Others, by God's grace, are ordained to the Ministry of Deacon. In the celebration of the *Mass*, Deacons proclaim the *Gospel* and assist the Bishop and Priest in exercising their sacred duties.

In addition to the ordained ministries, there are roles in the *Liturgy* which are exercised by lay people who place their time and talent at the service of the liturgical assembly. They do this as Altar Servers, Readers (Lectors), Psalmists, Commentators, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Cantors, Choir members, Instrumentalists, Ushers, and Ministers of Hospitality. Others are stewards of their time and talent when planning and organizing the *Liturgy*, keeping the church, vestments, vessels and other altar appointments clean and well-ordered—or providing decorations that reflect the spirit of the liturgical season.

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* makes clear that this variety of offices and roles is desirable and should be maintained. All, whether ordained ministers or Christian faithful, by virtue of their function or office, should do all and only those parts that belong to them. Each liturgical role should be fulfilled by one individual. Ideally, no person should assume more than one liturgical ministry at *Liturgy*. There is a wide variety of services to be performed, and it is desirable that different individuals exercise those services so that the talents and gifts God has placed within the Christian community are fully utilized and these roles of service are not monopolized by a few.

Those engaged in liturgical roles need to be well-prepared for those roles and know how to carry them out with reverence, dignity, and understanding. Obtaining the proper preparation requires a further gift of time on the part of the person being prepared, as well as those in the parish responsible for the training of liturgical ministers. The task of assigning individuals to particular *Masses* and organizing the distribution of roles is an indispensable duty in creating a well-ordered liturgical ministry within the parish.

The various liturgical ministries at *Mass* should reflect the face of the assembly gathered for worship. There are those gathered at *Liturgy* who are part of the community but who cannot receive the *Eucharist*. Members of the liturgical ministries can consist of believers fully united to the Catholic family and of believers who are divorced and remarried or not of the Catholic family. It appears reasonable to invite these members of the assembly to take on those liturgical roles that are not directly related to reception of the Body and Blood of Christ at the altar. The Ministers of Hospitality, Cantors, and members of the Choir can include people who are unable to receive the *Eucharist*.

The Church continues to affirm the dignity of every human being, and to grow in knowledge and understanding of the gifts and needs of Her members who live with disabilities. Likewise, the Church recognizes that every parish community includes members with disabilities and earnestly desires their active participation. All members of the *Body of Christ* are uniquely called by God by virtue of their *Baptism*. In light of this call, the Church seeks to support all in their growth in holiness and to encourage all in their vocations. Participating in, and being nourished by, the grace of the Sacraments is essential to this growth in holiness. Catholic adults and children with disabilities, and their families, earnestly desire full and meaningful participation in the Sacramental life of the Church. For some Catholics this is not easy, due to the physical impairments that they possess. Each faith community should reflect upon ways to lessen the barriers that physical impairments create. We should explore ways to make our

Liturgical Ministries welcoming to all, even those who suffer from physical limitations, and do what we can to make this happen.

It is understood that making all worship sites handicap accessible would be impractical, and in many cases, cost prohibitive. Nonetheless, creative ways can be developed to welcome all parishioners into participating in the Liturgical Ministries of the parish. All persons with disabilities have gifts to contribute to the whole Church. When people with disabilities are embraced, welcomed, and invited to participate fully in all aspects of parish community life, the Body of Christ is more complete.

All believers need to understand that part of their duty regarding *Liturgy* is to accept some responsibility for *Mass* and place themselves and their God-given talents at the service of the liturgical community whenever possible. All who gather at *Mass* should be reminded that a believer cannot assume a passive role. The *Liturgy* calls upon the duty and obligation of all believers to engage in full, active, and conscious participation throughout the entire liturgical celebration. The *Liturgy* is about the action of God's people, each with different offices and roles, from that of Bishop and Priest to that of Usher and Sacristan. The minister at *Liturgy* is called to that service which mirrors Christ washing the feet of His disciples and instructing His followers to imitate His example.

The remaining portions of this document describe the specific duties of Liturgical Ministers and those who help plan and organize the *Liturgy*, including the duties of the Deacon with regards to the *Mass*.

THE DEACON AT MASS

+ When present at the celebration of the Eucharist, the Deacon should exercise his ministry wearing sacred vestments. The Deacon assists the Priest Celebrant and walks at his side; ministers at the altar, both as regards the chalice and the book; proclaims the Gospel and may, at the direction of the Priest Celebrant, give the *Homily*; guides the faithful people by giving appropriate instructions; announces the intentions of the *Universal Prayer*; assists the Priest Celebrant in distributing Communion; purifies and arranges the sacred vessels; and carries out the duties of other ministers himself, if necessary, when none of them is present.

+ During the *Introductory Rites*, the Deacon carries the *Book of the Gospels* slightly elevated, The Deacon precedes the Priest as he approaches the altar or else walks at the Priest's side.

+ When he reaches the altar, if he is carrying the *Book of the Gospels*, the Deacon omits the sign of reverence and goes up to the altar. It is a praiseworthy practice for him to place the *Book of the Gospels* on the altar—after which, together with the Priest, he venerates the altar with a kiss. If, however, he is not carrying the *Book of the Gospels*, The Deacon makes a profound bow to the altar with the Priest in the customary way, and with him venerates the altar with a kiss.

+ If incense is being used, the Deacon assists the Priest in putting some into the thurible and in incensing the cross and the altar. Once the altar has been incensed, the Deacon goes to the chair, together with the Priest, and there stands at the Priest's side and assists him as necessary.

+ During the singing of the Gospel Acclamation as part of the *Liturgy of the Word*, if incense is being used, the Deacon ministers to the Priest as he puts incense into the thurible. Then, bowing profoundly before the Priest, he asks for the blessing, saying in a low voice, "Your blessing, Father." The Priest blesses him, saying, "May the Lord be in your heart." The Deacon signs himself with the *Sign of the Cross* and replies, "Amen." Having bowed to the altar, he then takes up the *Book of the Gospels*, which was placed on it, and proceeds to the ambo, carrying the book slightly elevated. He is preceded by a thurifer carrying a smoking thurible and by Alter Servers with lighted candles. At the ambo the Deacon greets the people, with hands joined, saying, "The Lord be with you." After this, while saying, "A reading from the *Holy Gospel*," he signs with his thumb the book and then himself on his forehead, mouth, and breast. He incenses the book and proclaims the *Gospel* reading. When this is done, he acclaim, "The *Gospel* of the Lord," and all reply, "Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ." He then venerates the book with a kiss, saying quietly the formula "*Per evangelica dicta*" ("Through the words of the *Gospel*"), and returns to the Priest's side.

+ When the Deacon is assisting the Bishop, he carries the book to him to be kissed, or else kisses it himself, saying quietly the formula "*Per evangelica dicta*" ("Through the words of the *Gospel*"). In more solemn celebrations, if appropriate, the Bishop may impart a blessing to the people with the *Book of the Gospels*.

+ The Deacon may carry the *Book of the Gospels* to the credence table or to another suitable and dignified place. Moreover, if there is no other suitable reader present, the Deacon should proclaim the other readings as well. After the introduction by the Priest, it is the Deacon who announces the intentions of the *Universal Prayer*, usually from the ambo.

+ After the *Universal Prayer*, as the *Liturgy of Eucharist* begins, while the Priest remains at the chair, the Deacon prepares the altar, possibly assisted by the acolyte. It is the Deacon's place to take care of the sacred vessels. He also assists the Priest in receiving the people's gifts. After this, he hands the Priest the paten with the bread to be consecrated, pours wine and a little water into the chalice, saying quietly, "By the mystery of this water, *etc.*" Then, the Deacon presents the chalice to the Priest. He may also carry out the preparation of the chalice at the credence table. If incense is being used, the Deacon assists the Priest during the incensation of the offerings, the cross, and the altar; and after this the Deacon, or the acolyte, incenses the Priest and the people.

+ During the *Eucharistic Prayer*, the Deacon stands near the Priest, but slightly behind him, so that when necessary he may assist the Priest with the chalice or the *Missal*. From the *Epiclesis* until the Priest shows the chalice, the Deacon usually remains kneeling. If several Deacons are present, one of them may place incense in the thurible for the *Consecration* and incense the host and the chalice at the elevation.

+ At the concluding doxology of the *Eucharistic Prayer*, the Deacon stands next to the Priest, and holds the chalice elevated while the Priest elevates the paten with the host, until the people have acclaimed, “Amen.”

+ After the Priest has said the prayer for the Rite of Peace and the greeting, “The peace of the Lord be with you always,” and the people have replied, “And with your spirit,” the Deacon, if appropriate, says the invitation to the *Sign of Peace*. With hands joined, he faces the people and says, “Let us offer each other the *Sign of Peace*.” Then, he receives the *Sign of Peace* from the Priest and may offer it to those other ministers who are nearest to him.

+ After the Priest’s *Communion*, the Deacon receives *Communion* under both kinds from the Priest and then assists the Priest in distributing *Communion* to the people. If *Communion* is given under both kinds, the Deacon usually administers the chalice to the communicants; and, when the distribution is over, standing at the altar, the Deacon immediately and reverently consumes all of the *Blood of Christ* that remains—assisted, if the case requires, by other Deacons and Priests.

+ When the distribution of *Communion* is concluded, the Deacon returns to the altar with the Priest, collects the fragments (should any remain) and then carries the chalice and other sacred vessels to the credence table, where he purifies them and arranges them as usual, while the Priest returns to the chair. It is also permitted to leave vessels needing to be purified on a corporal, suitably covered, on the credence table, and to purify them immediately after *Mass*, following the *Dismissal* of the people.

+ Once the *Prayer after Communion* has been said and the *Concluding Rite* begins, the Deacon makes brief announcements to the people, if indeed any announcements need to be made, unless the Priest prefers to do this himself.

+ If a Prayer over the People or a formula of Solemn Blessing is used, the Deacon says, “Bow down for the blessing.” After the Priest’s blessing, the Deacon, with hands joined and facing the people, dismisses the people, saying, “*Ite, missa est*” (“Go forth, the *Mass* is ended”).

+ Finally, to begin the *Recessional*, together with the Priest, the Deacon venerates the altar with a kiss, makes a profound bow, and withdraws in a manner similar to the *Opening Procession*.

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

+ Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are fully initiated members of the Church. These men and women have received *Baptism*, *Confirmation*, and *Eucharist*. They are regularly receiving the Sacraments of the Church. Once confirmed, Eleventh-Grade students may be commissioned for this ministry.

+ Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are people who possess a deep love for the *Eucharist*. These men and women are faithful to the celebration of *Mass* weekly and often daily

and possess the respect of God's people. Because of their dependence on the *Body and Blood of Christ*, they reach out in faith to the broken-hearted, the sick, the lonely, and those in need.

+ Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion function only when there are no, or not enough, ordinary ministers—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons—who are present. Instituted Acolytes, although not ordinary ministers of Holy Communion, have preference of ministry over other faithful, but not to the disruption of a normal assignment of the faith community. For *Communion* from the chalice, it is generally desirable that there be two ministers of the *Precious Blood* for each minister of the *Body of Christ*, lest the celebration be unduly prolonged.

+ Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should receive sufficient spiritual, theological, and practical preparation to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence. Their demeanor and manner in which they handle the consecrated *Bread* and *Wine* should reflect a genuine *Eucharistic* reverence.

+ Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are trained to deal with mishaps. If the *Eucharistic Bread* or some particle falls, it should be picked up reverently by the minister. It may be consumed or completely dissolved in water before being poured down the sacrarium. If the consecrated *Wine* should spill from the chalice, a purificator should immediately be placed over the area until a more thorough cleansing can be accomplished. Following *Mass*, the area should be completely washed and the water poured into the sacrarium.

+ Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are seated within the assembly during the *Mass*. After the *Sign of Peace*, the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion come from their seats within the assembly and quietly approach the sanctuary where they stand until the Priest has received *Communion*.

+ After the priest has concluded his own *Communion*, he distributes to the Deacon, and then, assisted by the Deacon, distributes to the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

+ After all Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion have received the Eucharist, the Presider and Deacon reverently hand vessels containing the Body and Blood of the Lord to the Extraordinary Ministers who will assist with the distribution to the faithful. (If present, the Deacon usually distributes the vessels.)

+ The proper form for distributing Holy Communion is to offer the consecrated *Bread* by saying, "*The Body of Christ*," and to offer the consecrated *Wine* by saying, "*The Blood of Christ*". No other words or names should be added; and the formula should not be edited in any way.

+ It is most desirable that the faithful, just as the Priest himself is obligated to do, receive the *Lord's Body* from Hosts consecrated at the same *Mass* and not from those reserved in the tabernacle. It is also desirable that the faithful partake of the chalice as a participation in the fullness of the sacrifice actually being celebrated.

+ After each communicant has received the *Blood of Christ*, the minister carefully wipes both sides of the rim of the chalice with a purificator. This action is a matter of both reverence and

hygiene. For the same reason, the minister turns the chalice slightly after each communicant has received the *Blood of Christ*.

+ Infants and small children may be recognized by the Minister of Holy Communion.

+ With most churches having elevated sanctuaries, preparing to distribute the *Eucharist* in a normal fashion might not be doable for a person in a wheelchair. However, if the Minister remained in the nave of the building and had the consecrated bread or wine brought to them by another Minister, the impaired person could fulfill this role quite easily.

+ Following distribution to the faithful, ministers return **to the altar** with any remaining consecrated elements. The *Hosts*, placed on the corporal, may be consumed or taken to the tabernacle, depending upon the amount remaining. All *Precious Blood* must be immediately consumed **at the altar** by the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion.

+ Following distribution of *Communion* and the consumption of remaining elements, the sacred vessels are taken to the credence table, or to the side of the altar, and placed on a corporal for purification by the Deacon, Priest, or—in the absence of a Deacon—an Instituted Acolyte. Following *Mass*, all vessels should be taken to the sacristy and washed in hot soapy water by the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

+ *Consecrated Hosts* are to be reserved in a vessel in sufficient quantity in the tabernacle for the needs of the faithful. They are to be frequently renewed and the oldest *Hosts* properly consumed. It is strictly forbidden to bury consecrated *Hosts* or to pour the *Precious Blood* into the ground or sacrarium.

+ Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, whether assigned or not, should dress in attire that is modest, reverent, and appropriate to the celebration of the *Eucharist*.

+ The Bishop must give permission for men and women to minister the consecrated elements of *Bread* and *Wine* at *Mass*. Pastors must submit a written request with the names of possible candidates to the Bishop.

+ Following the Bishop's approval, candidates are formally commissioned as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. Ideally, this ceremony takes place at *Sunday Mass*, with the *Order for the Commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion* in the *Book of Blessings*, Chapter 63, Numbers 1871-1896.

READERS / LECTORS

+ Readers (also referred to as Lectors) who proclaim the *Scriptures* during the celebration of the *Mass* must be Catholics who have received the *Sacraments of Baptism* and *Eucharist*. The function of proclaiming the *Readings* is by tradition not presidential but ministerial. The *Readings* are to be proclaimed by a Reader, but the *Gospel* by the Deacon or, in his absence, by another Priest.

+ Readers (Lectors) are people with a deep love of *Scripture*. They prepare the *Readings* with prayerful reflection. They are instruments of God, for when *Scripture* is proclaimed at *Mass*, God Himself is speaking to His people. Readers practice their *Reading*; they are skilled in clear and distinct pronunciation, strong projection, voice tone, pausing, eye contact with the assembly, and prayerful proclamation.

+ The *Liturgy of the Word* must be celebrated in such a way as to promote meditation. Any kind of haste which would impede recollection must be avoided. A reverent period of silence is to be observed after the *First Reading* and again after the *Second Reading*.

+ Ideally, there is an appointed Reader for each sacred text at *Liturgy*. At *Sunday Mass*, there are two *Readings*; one from the *Old Testament* (or from the *Acts of the Apostles* in the Easter Season), and the other usually from a *New Testament* letter. Each *Reading* should have a separate Reader. In 1966, the Bishops of the United States highly recommended this practice—and, in 2010, the *Third Edition of the Roman Missal* applauded this practice.

+ All *Scripture* is proclaimed from the same ambo – *First Reading, Psalm, Second Reading, and Gospel*. Lectors always proclaim the *Word of God* from the *Lectionary*; it would be improper to read from a booklet, piece of paper, or a missalette.

+ When the Deacon is carrying the *Book of the Gospels* in the procession to the altar, the Readers walk in front of the Deacon and the Priest Celebrant. If the Psalmist is someone other than the Cantor, that person joins the Readers in the *Opening Procession*. In the absence of a Deacon, one of the Readers may carry the *Book of the Gospels* slightly elevated. (The *Lectionary* is never carried in procession.) Only clergy process behind the *Book of the Gospels*.

+ Upon reaching the altar, the Readers make a profound bow with the other ministers. If a Reader is carrying the *Book of the Gospels*, that reader does not bow but goes around the altar and places the book flat on the altar. The *Book of Gospels* should be placed more in the center of the altar and not near the edge. This placement provides space for the Priest(s) to kiss the altar without having to move the *Book of Gospels* out of the way. Then, both Readers (and the Psalmist) take their places with the other ministers, preferably in the sanctuary.

+ Following the *Second Reading* and the prescribed silence, the Readers (and Psalmist) return to their places within the assembly.

+ For a person who is deaf or has a speech impediment, they could use sign language to proclaim the *First Reading, Second Reading, or the Universal Prayer*, while a second Reader could be assigned to proclaim in voice what is being signed. For people who are blind or have visual impairments, a reading script could be obtained or created in Braille.

+ Whether assigned or not, Lectors should dress in attire that is modest, reverent, and appropriate to the celebration of the *Eucharist*.

+ Readers may be formally blessed, ideally at *Sunday Mass*, with the *Order for the Blessing of Readers* in the *Book of Blessings*, Chapter 61, Numbers 1827-1846.

PSALMIST

- + The Psalmist who leads the *Psalm* during the celebration of the *Mass* must be a Catholic who has received the *Sacraments of Baptism* and *Eucharist*. The Psalmist should be accomplished in the art of singing *Psalms* and have experience in public speaking and elocution.
- + The *Responsorial Psalm* is always prayed from the ambo where the *First Reading*, *Second Reading*, and *Gospel* are proclaimed. It is preferable that the *Responsorial Psalm* be sung, at least as far as the people's response is concerned.
- + When the Psalmist is someone other than the Cantor, then this minister is part of the *Opening Procession*. The Psalmist processes in with the Readers and takes a place with the two Readers, preferably in the sanctuary.
- + After the *First Reading* and the prescribed silence, the Psalmist approaches the ambo for the singing of the *Responsorial Psalm*. Once the *Psalm* has been completed, the Psalmist returns to the place in the sanctuary with the Readers. After the *Second Reading* and the prescribed silence, the Readers and Psalmist return to their places in the assembly.
- + The selected *Psalm* is normally sung by the Psalmist and the assembly sings the refrain. This unique and very important song is the response to the *First Reading*. The *Psalm* may be the one assigned in the *Lectionary* or an appropriately-approved Psalm.
- + The music for the *Responsorial Psalm* should be enclosed in a case or notebook dignifying the sung *Word of God*. The Psalmist should never approach the ambo with sheets of paper or a missalette.
- + Like the Readers and the Choir, the Psalmist should always, whether assigned or not, dress in a manner that reflects the reverence and respect due the celebration of *Mass*.
- + The Psalmist may be blessed, ideally at *Sunday Mass*, with the *Order for the Blessing of Altar Servers, Sacristans, Musicians, and Ushers* in the Book of Blessings, Chapter 62, Numbers 1847-1870.

CANTOR

- + A Cantor is baptized and possesses the talent to lead the assembly in song. A Cantor leads the assembly through the ministry of singing, creating a unity among believers gathered for *Mass*.
- + The faithful who gather to await the Lord's coming are instructed by the Apostle Paul to sing psalms, hymns, and inspired songs (*Colossians 3:16*). Saint Augustine says, "To sing belongs to lovers." There is also the ancient proverb: "One who sings well prays twice." The Cantor aids the gathered assembly to voice their praise and thanksgiving in song.

- + The Cantor must practice regularly. Tone quality, diction, projection, and a confidence in the musical selections are essential for this ministry. Singing is prayer. The Cantor leads the assembly in lifting up hearts and voices to God. A well-prepared, joyful Cantor does much to evoke the participation and enthusiasm of all. The Cantor should never dominate or overpower the singing. The goal of the Cantor is to bring the assembly into full, active, and conscious participation through the ministry of song.
- + The Cantor leads the singing from a lectern or a stand independent of the ambo. The ambo is reserved for the proclamation of *Scripture*, the singing of the *Responsorial Psalm*, the *Homily*, and the *Universal Prayer*. The Cantor's lectern should be in full view of the assembly and equipped with a microphone.
- + The Cantor is positioned by the cantor's stand throughout the *Eucharistic* celebration. Like all in the assembly, the Cantor kneels (near the stand) during the *Eucharistic Prayer*.
- + Whether assigned or not, the Cantor should dress in a manner that reflects the reverence and respect due the celebration of the *Eucharist*.
- + Cantors may be formally blessed, ideally at *Sunday Mass*, with the *Order for the Blessing of Altar Servers, Sacristans, Musicians, and Ushers* in the Book of Blessings, Chapter 62, Numbers 1847-1870.

CHOIR, ORGANIST, AND INSTRUMENTALISTS

- + Ideally the Choir and Choir Director are placed in a location within the assembly. In churches with choir lofts and organs within the loft, it is important to have the Choir supplement the singing of the assembly.
- + At *Mass*, all gathered for worship are to sing the two processions, *Entrance* and *Communion*, and the acclamations – the *Gospel Acclamation*, the *Holy, Holy*, the *Mystery of Faith*, the *Great Amen*, and the *Lamb of God*. The Choir and/or Cantor assist the assembly in the singing of the *Responsorial Psalm*. The Choir and Cantor function to aid the assembly in full and active participation in all sung parts.
- + Aside from the two sung processions and the sung acclamations, the Choir may sing by themselves at the *Preparation of the Gifts*, the *Communion Meditation* (this is in addition to the *Communion* song which is sung during the reception of *Holy Communion*), and at the conclusion of *Mass*. Here the Choir may play a fuller role, for there is no question of usurping the people's part.
- + The selection of music should compliment liturgical action. Music and singing balance a particular rite within the *Liturgy*. Antiphonal music helps when there is movement within a particular liturgy, such as the *Communion Procession*. A selection with a refrain and numerous

verses accompanies the liturgical action and can be concluded once that particular action is completed.

+ The organ is the preeminent instrument in the Church's musical tradition. Other instrumentation—strings, reeds, brass, and percussion—can add to the joy and solemnity of the *Liturgy*. There are contemporary compositions that call for the use of a piano and guitars. Ideally, musical instrumentation is located near the Choir.

+ Membership in the Choir is determined on the ability of each person's singing talents. Requirements are to be determined by the particular faith community.

+The Choir seeks to possess quality sound, accurate pitch, blended tone, breath support, and diction.

+ The Choir, like all in the assembly, should kneel for the *Eucharistic Prayer*. If kneeling is not possible, then the Choir would stand (never sit) and make a profound bow to the consecrated elements when the priest genuflects after showing the *Body and Blood of Christ* to the assembly.

+ For the blind, music is available in Braille, and singers can be taught pieces by ear as well. For those who are deaf, it is not impossible to consider joining the choir. Someone who has a speech disability or is deaf, and who knows sign language, can function as a sign interpreter. This means that the person would have a copy of the music and would sign as everyone in the Choir sings. This person is, by his or her actions, singing as one of the Choir. A more common problem for those who are physically disabled is not having access to a choir loft, if one is used. In cases where stairs become an issue, the Choir may need to relocate to the sanctuary or the body of the church. (These same suggestions may also apply to Psalmists and Cantors.)

+ Choir members should always dress with decorum. As members of the worshipping assembly, their attire is reflective of the reverence and respect accorded the celebration of the *Mass*.

+ Choir members, organists and instrumentalists may be blessed, ideally at *Sunday Mass*, with the *Order for the Blessing of Altar Servers, Sacristans, Musicians, and Ushers* in the Book of Blessings, Chapter 62, Numbers 1847-1870.

MINISTERS HOSPITALITY

+ Ministers of Hospitality (Greeters and Ushers) are members of the faith community who extend a kind word and warm smile to those whom they serve in the assembly. This ministry is open to families, men, women, and children.

+ The Ministry of Hospitality is essential as believers gather for the celebration of the *Eucharist*. The presence of Hospitality Ministers evoke warmth and welcome. People are greeted at the

door as they arrive for *Mass* and are directed to their seats. Late arrivals are seated at appropriate intervals within the *Liturgy*.

+ These ministers direct processions such as the *Communion Procession* and seasonal processions, as on Palm Sunday and the Easter Vigil. Attention must be given to instruct these ministers about special liturgies throughout the Church's year. Their knowledge of these particular rites will assist in creating a smooth and prayerful celebration.

+ Ministers of Hospitality are responsible for the collection of money. The monetary gifts should be placed in one container and carried with the bread and wine at the *Presentation of the Gifts*.

+ After the *Liturgy*, Hospitality Ministers hand out copies of any material to be distributed. The parish bulletin is appropriately distributed at the end of *Mass*. This distribution is done with warmth and friendliness.

+ Ministers of Hospitality are seated within the assembly throughout the *Eucharist*. They are best seated by the church doors to exercise the ministry of welcoming and to offer helpful assistance. If illness or a special need arises during the *Liturgy*, Hospitality Ministers respond appropriately. These liturgical ministers are ready to serve any needs that may arise once worship has begun. In case of an emergency, the Hospitality Ministers are responsible for calling 911.

+ The role of the Ministers of Hospitality also entails helping to protect the congregation. Medical issues may arise within the assembly, and Hospitality Ministers should know what to do when such situations arise. They should include know where medical supplies are stored, be able to identify congregation members who are trained to handle these situations, and have the ability to contact outside help and assist the help when it arrives. If some other abnormalities occur, such as a fire or the loss of power, these Ministers need to know where the exits are and assist the congregation in making a safe egress.

+ Considering the world in which we currently live, Hospitality Ministers can also serve as the first line of defense if a threat develops. Parish Pastoral Councils should call upon local police departments and emergency medical responders to help bring awareness to Hospitality Ministers, and even the parishioners, of the dangers that exist and how to react to them.

+ Having Ministers of Hospitality who are impaired welcoming visitors and members of the faith community is a wonderful way to honor and display the parish's respect for all of its parishioners. Although this ministry can be opened to all, several accommodations should be made. A person in a wheelchair should be paired with a person who can physically respond if an emergency arises or if a visitor needs special assistance. If a minister is blind or deaf, they too should be accompanied by someone who can assist them in communicating with visitors.

+ Ministers of Hospitality should always dress with decorum. Their attire should reflect the reverence and respect due the celebration of the *Mass*. *Name Tags* can aid in giving these ministers easy identity among the *People of God* assembled for worship.

Ministers of Hospitality may be formally blessed, ideally at *Sunday Mass*, with the *Order for the Blessing of Altar Servers, Musicians, and Ushers* in the Book of Blessings, Chapter 62, Numbers 1847 – 1870.

ALTAR SERVERS

+ Although institution into the *Ministry of Acolyte* is reserved to lay men, the liturgical functions carried out by the Instituted Acolyte may be carried out by Altar Servers. Men, women, boys, and girls of the faith community may be deputed to serve at the altar.

+ No distinction should be made between the functions carried out in the sanctuary by men and boys and those carried out by women and girls. The term “Altar Boys” should be replaced by “Altar Servers.” The term Altar Server should be used for those who carry out the functions of the Instituted Acolyte. Instituted Acolytes wear an alb and cincture, and have specific altar responsibilities, such as purifying vessels. (Altar servers do not purify vessels.)

+ Altar Servers should be mature enough to understand their responsibilities and to carry them out well and with appropriate reverence. Altar Servers are members of the assembly and must have received both *Baptism* and *Eucharist*.

+ Altar Servers must receive proper formation before they begin to function in ministry. Each parish assumes responsibility to develop a ministry description for Altar Servers. Training should include appropriate instruction on the *Mass*, its meaning and structure, and the various functions of the Altar Server during the *Mass* and other liturgical celebrations. Training should also include the names and usage of various objects used in the *Liturgy* (for example: chalice, paten, *Roman Missal*, *Lectionary*, corporal, purificators, cruet, etc.). Appropriate guidance on maintaining proper decorum at *Mass*, as well as other functions, should also be provided.

+ Altar Servers light the candles before *Mass*, carry the Processional Cross and candles, hold the *Roman Missal* for the Priest Celebrant when he is not at the altar, carry incense and the censer (thurible), assist the Celebrant when he receives the gifts from the people, present the bread, wine, and water to the Priest during the *Preparation of the Gifts*, provide water and the towel to the Priest to wash his hands, and assist the Priest Celebrant and Deacon as necessary.

+ If it is the local custom to ring bells, an Altar Server may signal the faithful that the *Consecration* is about to begin by ringing a bell. That Server may also ring the bell at each elevation by the Priest.

+ If incense is being used, when the Host and the Chalice are elevated and shown to the people after the Consecration, the Altar Server may incense the consecrated elements. Incensation is performed at the consecration—and, in the absence of a Deacon, the Altar Server may perform this function.

- + Altar Servers respond to the prayers and dialogues of the Priest along with the assembly. They also join in singing the hymns and acclamations of the *Liturgy*.
- + Altar Servers should be seated in a place from which they can easily assist the Priest Celebrant and Deacon. The place next to the Priest is normally reserved for the Deacon. Altar Servers kneel from the *Holy, Holy* until the *Great Amen* of the *Eucharistic Prayer*.
- + Since the role of Altar Server is integral to the normal celebration of the *Mass*, at least one Altar Server should assist the Priest. On Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, three Altar Servers or more should be assigned to carry out the various functions normally entrusted to these ministers.
- + Although it may be impractical for a disabled person to satisfy all the duties of an Altar Server, there is no reason why they should be barred from this ministry. The duties of this person might need to be slightly adjusted, and those who minister alongside might need to assist in some way.
- + Altar Servers may wear the server alb, other suitable vesture, or dignified clothing. Whether assigned or not, Altar Servers should always dress in a manner that is befitting the celebration of the *Eucharist*.
- + Altar Servers may be formally blessed, ideally at *Sunday Mass*, with the *Order for the Blessing of Altar Servers, Sacristans, Musicians, and Ushers* in the Book of Blessings, Chapter 62, Numbers 1847 – 1870.

PRESENTING GIFTS: BREAD AND WINE, MONETARY GIFTS

- + Members of the *Eucharistic* assembly are invited to bring the gifts to the altar at the beginning of the *Liturgy of the Eucharist*. *The Second Vatican Council restored this ancient practice*. Men, women, boys, and girls, married and single—a mix of genders and ages—are welcome to participate in this ministry. While several members of the assembly may participate in the procession of gifts, the Priest Celebrant is presented with only one vessel containing the bread and only one vessel holding the wine. The monetary offering is also placed in one container.
- + At the beginning of the *Liturgy of the Eucharist*, normally after the altar is prepared and the collection is finished, the gifts are presented to the Priest Celebrant.
- + Each faith community will determine the best procedure for selecting members of the assembly to present the gifts.
- + These ministers of gifts are seated within the assembly throughout *Mass*. It is important that they know where the bread and wine are placed and when to begin the presentation of the gifts.

COMMENTATOR

- + The Commentator may provide the faithful with brief explanations and exhortations that direct their attention to the celebration of the *Mass* and ensure that they are better disposed for understanding the *Liturgy*. These remarks should be thoroughly prepared and restrained. In performing this function, the Commentator should stand in a suitable place within sight of the faithful, but not at the ambo.
- + The Commentator—man, woman, boy, or girl—must have clear pronunciation, strong projection, good voice tone, and conscious pausing.
- + In the absence of the Deacon, the Commentator may pray the *Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)*.
- + The *Universal Prayer* may be prayed from the ambo or another suitable place within sight of the faithful.
- + The lay Commentator is seated within the assembly and is in place for the intercessions at the end of the *Profession of Faith*. The *Universal Prayer* always begins with an introduction, followed by the intercessions, and concludes with a prayer by the Priest Celebrant. The Commentator returns to the assembly following this concluding prayer.

SACRISTAN

- + The Sacristan diligently arranges the liturgical books, the vestments, the liturgical vessels, and other things that are necessary for the celebration of *Mass*. The Sacristan oversees the good order of the worship space and the organization of the sacristy.
- + The Sacristan ensures that the altar, ambo, chair, and other sanctuary appointments receive regular cleaning. This minister maintains the cleanliness of all vestments and vessels. The Sacristan sees that albs and vestments are laundered and dry-cleaned. Purificators and corporals are initially washed of the consecrated elements and then laundered.
- + The Sacristan prepares not only for the regular Sunday and daily *Masses*, but also for the particular liturgies throughout the Church's calendar. Special preparations are needed for the Triduum, Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion, Ash Wednesday, Presentation of the Lord, the Feast of Saint Blaise, funerals, weddings, baptisms, anointings, and other rites.
- + The Sacristan works with the Pastor and various liturgical ministers. The Sacristan should be an active member of the Parish Liturgy Committee.

PLANNING AND ORGANIZING *THE LITURGY*

- + Members within each faith community who assume responsibility for the planning of the *Liturgy* work closely with the Pastor and the Parish Liturgy Committee.
- + These ministers are aware of the Church's Liturgy. Both the *Roman Missal* and the *Lectionary* direct their work. Knowledge of the Church's seasons throughout the year guides the organization of the *Liturgy*.
- + Musical selections reflect the liturgical seasons. Customs particular to a faith community complement the liturgical season and the spirit of the *Liturgy* as stated in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*.
- + There should be harmony and diligence among all those involved in the effective preparation of each liturgical celebration in accordance with the *Roman Missal* and other liturgical books, both as regards the rites and as regards the pastoral and musical aspects. The Presider always retains the right of arranging those things that pertain to him.

SCHEDULING OF LITURGICAL MINISTERS

- + Ideally, a liturgical minister functions in only one ministry at one *Mass*.
- + Responsibility is assumed in every faith community to schedule Liturgical Ministers each week.
- + Families that participate in different ministries should be scheduled for the same *Mass*.
- + Ideally, there should be enough ministers so that no one is scheduled every week.
- + The faith community is always open to members coming forward to fulfill the various liturgical ministries. Each liturgical ministry demands training and preparation.

CHURCH DECORATIONS

- + There are those within each faith community who assume leadership for decorating the church. Such decorations always complement the particular liturgical season. Decorations help accentuate the seasonal changes throughout the Church's calendar.
- + A guiding principle for decorations is noble simplicity. More is not necessarily better; less can be beautiful and noble. The altar, ambo, and chair are always to be unimpeded by decorations. Floral decorations should show moderation. Real plants and flowers are always preferred; artificial plants are not proper to *Liturgy*.

+ Decorations need not be limited to the sanctuary area; the entire church is God's house of prayer.

+ This ministry relies on the amount of monies allocated in the annual parish budget.

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Appendix: DRESSING THE ALTAR AT THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

- + Only a few churches, such as cathedrals, include a ministry to dress the altar during the *Liturgy of the Eucharist*.
- + At the conclusion of the *Universal Prayer*, the altar cloth may be placed on the altar. For Mass, like all ministries, this function deserves practice before the Liturgy. The placing of the cloth is done with reverence and respect.
- + Men, women, boys, girls, or families from within the assembly are welcome to assume this ministry. It is a rich opportunity for families to become involved at *Mass*.
- + These ministers are seated within the assembly during the *Mass*.
- + Once everyone in the assembly has received the *Body and Blood of Christ* and remaining consecrated elements have been consumed at or removed from the altar, these ministers may remove the cloth from the altar.