

THE MINISTRY OF THE DEACON AT MASS FOR DEACON CANDIDATES IN FORMATION

In general, the deacon's role is to assist the presiding celebrant at the chair and the altar. (This requires great familiarity with the ritual and attention to the actual celebration. It should not be necessary for the priest to assist the deacon.)

PREREQUISITES

A. Personal formation

- A firm and unwavering belief in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Eucharist;
- A thorough understanding that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the re-presentation of Calvary in an unbloody manner and that the Mass is primarily and profoundly sacrificial in nature and that "the Eucharistic Sacrifice is in the first place the action of Christ himself..." (*GIRM*, 11);
- A humble awareness that Mass is not ours and we are merely servants privileged to be so close to the sacred as a free and unmerited gift that comes to us through the Church;
- A desire to be faithful to the promises of ordination:
 - "consecrated for the Church's ministry...";
 - "to discharge the office of deacon...";
 - "to hold fast to the mystery of faith...";
 - "to conform your life always to the example of Christ, of whose Body and Blood you are ministers at the altar";
 - "respect and obedience".
- An awareness "that he is the servant of the Sacred Liturgy and that he himself is not permitted, on his own initiative, to add, to remove, or to change anything in the celebration of Mass." (*GIRM*, 24; *SC*, 22).

B. Prior to Mass

- Read the *Ordo* so you are familiar with the Mass of the Day.
- Ferial, memorial, optional memorial, feast, solemnity. What is prescribed...?
- Which Penitential Rite will be used?
- Read the Gospel prior to Mass (short form, long form, options)?
- Read the Universal Prayer (names, intentions)?
- Speak with the priest about particular needs of the day.

C. Vesting

Proper vesting entails:

- An alb which completely covers the collar, and reaches all the way to the top of the shoes;
- Long sleeve shirt, preferably white or light in color;
- Dark colored pants;
- Dark colored shoes, cleaned and shined;
- An amice (Cf. *GIRM*, 336 and *Roman Pontifical*);
- A cincture (Cf. *GIRM*, 336 and *Roman Pontifical*);
- A stole – appropriate color for the day;
- A dalmatic – appropriate color for the day.

D. Posture

- Move as little as possible as excessive movements are distracting.
- Hands folded in prayer, indicative that you are praying.
- Standing attentive and upright, feet flat on the floor.
- Sitting attentive and upright, feet flat on the floor.
- Walk intentionally and directly, so as to not draw attention to yourself.
- “A bow of the head is made when the three Divine Persons are named together and at the names of Jesus, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the Saint in whose honor Mass is being celebrated.” (GIRM, 275).
 - **N.B. The deacon never extends his hands during the Mass.**

INTRODUCTORY RITES AND LITURGY OF THE WORD

A. Entrance

1. When the *Book of the Gospels* is carried:

- Carry the *Book* (slightly elevated), walking in front of the priest. (When there are concelebrating priests, the deacon with the *Book of the Gospels* precedes them.)
- At the entrance to the sanctuary, without bowing, go up and place the *Book* on the altar, from behind the altar, facing the people.
- Step back until the priest approaches the altar and then, along with the priest, venerate the altar with a kiss.

2. When the *Book of Gospels* is not carried:

- Walk beside the priest, as space allows, otherwise, just before or just behind the priest.
- At the steps of the sanctuary, genuflect to the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle (bow deeply to the altar, if the tabernacle is not in the sanctuary).
 - (GIRM, 274: “If, however, the tabernacle with the Most Blessed Sacrament is situated in the sanctuary, the Priest, the Deacon, and the other ministers genuflect when they approach the altar and when they depart from it, but not during the celebration of Mass itself. Otherwise, all who pass before the Most Blessed Sacrament genuflect, unless they are moving in procession.”)
- Go up to the altar and venerate the altar with a kiss together with the priest.

B. Introductory Rites

1. If incense is used, assist the priest.
2. Go to your chair (next to the priest).
3. In Form A of the penitential act, the priest leads the *Confiteor* and the deacon (or cantor/choir) may lead the *Kyrie*.
4. In Form C of the penitential act, the deacon may lead the invocations. (This may also be done by the priest, deacon, cantor or choir.).
5. When the rite of sprinkling is used, the deacon assists. (Perhaps carrying the Holy Water).

C. Liturgy of the Word

1. Sit next to the priest, at the same time the priest sits. (Always sit and rise in unison with the priest). If no other minister is available for the readings, the deacon proclaims the Word of God.

2. Proclamation of the Gospel:

During the Gospel acclamation:

- (If incense is used, assist the priest as he places incense in the thurible.)
- Bow low before the priest (kneel before the bishop) and — in a low voice — ask for the blessing with the exact words: “**Your blessing, Father.**” Make the sign of the cross as you receive the blessing and respond “**Amen.**” Then stand up straight.
- If the *Book of the Gospels* is on the altar, bow to the altar, pick up the *Book of the Gospels*, and carry the *Book* (slightly elevated) to the ambo (preceded by the incense and accompanied by candles, if these are used.)
 - Never leave the sanctuary or make demonstrative movements such as waving the *Book of the Gospels*.
- At the ambo, with hands joined, greet the people with the exact words: “**The Lord be with you.**” Then, announce the Gospel in the exact words: “**A reading from the holy Gospel according to _____.**” Make the sign of the cross with your thumb, first on the cross in the *Book of the Gospels*, and then on your forehead, mouth, and breast.
 - Do not extend hands as you are proclaiming, not presiding.
 - Do not add or subtract any words.
- If incense is used, incense the *Book of Gospels* (deep bow; two swings of the thurible three times; deep bow).
 - **NB.** Hold the chain as close to the thurible as possible!
- Then proclaim the Gospel.
 - **NB.** “The greeting, the announcement of the reading, the concluding acclamation and even the entire Gospel may be sung. Musical settings should be easily understood and enhance rather than obscure the meaning of the sacred text.” (*Book of the Gospels*, Introduction, n. 19, see also Lectionary for Mass n. 17, 14).
- At the conclusion, with hands together, say or sing, “**The Gospel of the Lord.**”
 - (Do not show the *Book* to the people – the Gospel is what we just heard, not the physical *Book of the Gospels*).
- After the response of the people, kiss the book saying quietly, “**Through the words of the Gospel, may our sins be wiped away.**”
- (If assisting a bishop, unless instructed otherwise, do not venerate the Gospel yourself; rather take the book to His Excellency, hold it open so that he can kiss the book, and the Bishop may take the book to bless the people. Then he will return it to you or to another minister.)

3. Go to your chair if you are not designated to offer the homily. If you are called upon to offer the homily, do so from the ambo.

4. When the *Profession of Faith (Creed)* is prescribed, bow deeply at the words, "By the power of the Holy Spirit...became man." (On the solemnities of Christmas and the Annunciation, genuflect during these words.)

5. After the priest introduces the Universal Prayer, the deacon announces the intentions, as a rule from the ambo. (These may also be led by the cantor, especially if sung). (Cf. *GIRM*, 171d).

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

A. Preparation of the Altar and Gifts

1. While the priest remains at the chair, prepare the altar (corporal, *Roman Missal*, chalice, purificator, ciboria). Servers assist, as needed.

- **N.B.** The deacon prepares the altar, assisted by the acolyte, but it is the deacon's place to take care of the sacred vessels himself.

2. Assist the priest to receive the gifts from the people (in front of the altar, at the chair, or at another suitable place).

- **N.B.** The deacon never receives the gifts on behalf of the priest.

3. At the altar, offer the paten of bread to the priest to set upon the corporal. All sacred vessels are to be placed on the corporal(s).

4. Pour wine into the chalice(s). Add a drop of water into each chalice (**not** into the cruet or flagon), careful not to dilute the wine to be consecrated, quietly praying the exact words "**By the mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity.**" Pass the chalice to the priest to set upon the altar. (The preparation of the chalices by the deacon may also take place at the credence table if several chalices are used.) "The most holy Eucharistic sacrifice must be offered with bread and with wine in which a little water must be mixed." (*CIC*, c. 924).

- **N.B.** Be sure to add enough wine for all concelebrating priests, since they are obliged to receive Holy Communion under both species, and always with hosts consecrated at the same Mass. (Cf. *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 98).

5. Place the pall on the chalice after the priest places the chalice on the altar.

6. If incense is used, assist the priest in the incensation of gifts and altar. Afterward, the deacon (or another minister) may incense the priest and the people (deep bow; three single swings; deep bow).

7. Step aside so that the priest may wash his hands. (If the server needs assistance, the deacon assists with the finger towel.)

B. Eucharistic Prayer

1. Stand next to, but somewhat behind, the priest. Similarly, he should be behind the concelebrating priests. (The deacon should have access to help with *Roman Missal* and chalice, but not appear as a concelebrating priest.)

2. If helpful for the priest, the deacon turns the pages of the *Roman Missal*.

3. Remove the pall **before** the epiclesis and then kneel:

- Eucharistic Prayer I: at the words, "... save us from final damnation..."
- Eucharistic Prayer II: at the words, "...you are indeed Holy, O Lord..."
- Eucharistic Prayer III: at the words, "... from the rising of the sun to its setting..."

4. Kneel from the epiclesis through the consecration of the chalice. Rise simultaneously when the priest rises from the genuflection. The deacon stands, places the pall on the chalice, and steps back.

5. The Memorial Acclamation is introduced by the priest. The deacon remains standing and, at the conclusion of the Eucharistic Prayer, before the final doxology, the deacon removes the pall from the chalice at these words and waits next to the priest to complete the prayer:

- Eucharistic Prayer I: at the words, "...you sanctify them, fill them with life..."
- Eucharistic Prayer II: at the words, "...we may merit to be coheirs to eternal life..."
- Eucharistic Prayer III: at the words, "...through Christ our Lord, through whom..."

6. Then, the deacon receives the chalice from the priest and elevates the chalice as the priest lifts the paten for the doxology, "per ipsum," until the faithful have concluded the Great Amen.

- Only priests say / sing the doxology itself.
- The priest hands chalice to you.
- Hold the chalice at the same height as the paten and host.

C. Communion Rite

1. During the Lord's Prayer, the deacon stands with hands together.

2. After the priest greets the people with peace ("The peace of the Lord be with you..."), if peace is to be exchanged, with hands joined, call for the sign of peace with the exact words "**Let us offer each other the sign of peace.**" Then receive the sign of peace from the priest and share with others only if nearby.

- **NB.** Exchange peace first with the priest "in a sober manner," then others nearby. Never leave the sanctuary! (See the Diocese of Rochester's *Policies for the Administration of the Sacraments*, Addendum 2: Ritual Expression of the Gift of Peace at Mass.)

3. The deacon or the priest retrieves the Blessed Sacrament from the tabernacle, as necessary, opening the tabernacle door, genuflecting, removing the Blessed Sacrament and carrying Our Lord with due decorum to the altar.

4. Assist with the fraction rite, as needed (i.e., by filling extra patens.)

- **NB.** It is indecorous to dump, pour, or grab handfuls of the Most Blessed Sacrament. Be slow, deliberate and reverent.
- Chalices of the Precious Blood are never to be poured into other chalices.

5. After the priest receives Holy Communion, the deacon receives Communion from the priest under both forms and then help the priest distribute Holy Communion to the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, if needed, and then the faithful.
 - **NB.** It is never appropriate for a deacon, as an *ordinary* minister of Holy Communion, to absent himself from the distribution of Holy Communion if *extraordinary* ministers of Holy Communion are used.
 - **NB.** Be ever mindful that the sacred species you handle really, truly and substantially is the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ.

6. When Holy Communion is offered under both forms, the deacon normally ministers the chalice.
 - **NB.** Be ever mindful that the sacred species you handle really, truly and substantially is the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ.

7. When distributing the Sacred Host, be vigilant that the communicant both receives and immediately consumes the Blessed Sacrament. "...special care should be taken to ensure that the host is consumed by the communicant in the presence of the minister, so that no one goes away carrying the Eucharistic species..." (*Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 92).

8. Particularly at weddings and funerals, many in attendance are not Catholic or do not receive Holy Communion. If they come forward with arms crossed, simply invite them to faith by saying "May Jesus be in your heart," or "May God bless you and keep you," most appropriately without making the sign of the cross.

9. "If a host or any particle should fall, it is to be picked up reverently; and if any of the Precious Blood is spilled, the area where the spill occurred should be washed with water, and this water should then be poured into the sacrarium in the sacristy." (*GIRM*, 280).

D. After Communion:

1. Return to the altar with the priest. There, consume any of the Precious Blood which remains and/or return the ciborium to the altar where any remaining fragments of the consecrated hosts are collected, carefully placed into the covered ciborium which is reserved in the tabernacle. (The Blessed Sacrament is then taken directly and quietly to the tabernacle by the deacon or priest.)

2. Purification of the sacred vessels:
 - The sacred vessels are purified by the priest, the deacon, or an instituted acolyte after Communion or after Mass. "The purification of the chalice is done with water alone or with wine and water, which is then consumed by whoever [priest or deacon] does the purification. The paten is wiped clean as usual with the purificator. Care is to be taken that whatever may remain of the Blood of Christ after the distribution of Communion is consumed immediately and completely at the altar." (*GIRM*, 279).
 - The sacred vessels are only purified on the altar by the priest (Cf. *GIRM*, 163), (to which the deacon may assist) or on the credence table to be purified immediately by the priest, deacon or instituted acolyte at that time, or immediately at the conclusion of Mass.

- If the sacred vessels are left to be purified, they should be suitably covered and on a corporal, immediately after Mass following the dismissal of the people. (Cf. *GIRM*, 183).
- The ritual of purification is to be done in a prayerful, reverent way, and is only to be carried out only by priests, deacons, or instituted acolytes.
- When sacred vessels are purified, the priest, deacon or acolyte purify by pouring water into the first chalice, carefully swirling the water around in the customary manner, and then pouring it into the next chalice, and then into the next, etc. After he has done so with the last chalice to be purified, he consumes the ablution. All vessels should be dried with a purificator. The vessels are then set aside to be cleansed.
- **NB.** “The Eucharistic presence of Christ begins at the moment of the consecration and endures as long as the Eucharistic species subsist. Christ is present whole and entire in each of the species and whole and entire in each of their parts, in such a way that the breaking of the bread does not divide Christ.” (CCC, no. 1377).
- **NB.** The final washing, different from ritual purification of the vessels, which may be done by any trained sacristan. All vessels should be rinsed and dried after they are purified to remove oil from fingers, lipstick, etc. which will cause damage over time.
 - The **purification** is concerned with the *particles* of the Blessed Sacrament and the *remaining drops* of the Precious Blood;
 - The **final washing** is concerned with *the cleanliness and care of the sacred vessels* so they are worthy to be used at the next Mass.

E. Concluding Rites

1. Following the Prayer after Communion, if there are any brief announcements, the deacon may make them, unless the priest prefers to do so himself. (Cf. *GIRM*, 184).
2. If there is a Solemn Blessing, or even a prayer over the people, the priest says, “The Lord be with you.” The faithful respond, “And with your spirit.” The deacon, using the exact words, says: “**Bow down for the blessing.**”
 - **NB.** It may prove helpful to, after a brief pause, instruct the faithful by saying, “Please respond ‘Amen’ to the three invocations.”
3. After the priest’s blessing, the deacon, with hands joined and facing the people, dismisses them, saying, in exact words: “*Go forth, the Mass is ended.*” or using one of the other formulas of the *Roman Missal*. (Cf. *GIRM*, 185).
 - **NB.** For the octave of Easter and then again at the Masses of Pentecost, the dismissal includes the double “Alleluia.”
4. Along with the priest, the deacon venerates the altar with a kiss, genuflects to the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle, makes a profound bow to the altar, and leaves in the manner prescribed for the entrance procession. (Cf. *GIRM*, 186).
 - **NB.** “If, however, the tabernacle with the Most Blessed Sacrament is situated in the sanctuary, the Priest, the Deacon, and the other ministers genuflect when they approach the altar and when they depart from it, but not during the celebration of Mass itself. Otherwise, all who pass before

the Most Blessed Sacrament genuflect, unless they are moving in procession." (GIRM, 274).

- The *Book of the Gospels* is not carried out in procession.

Resources:

Sacrum diaconatus ordinem, Apostolic Letter of Blessed Pope Paul VI.

Roman Pontifical, De Ordinatione Episcopi, presbyterorum et diaconarum, editio typica altera, 2012.

General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 2011.

Redemptionis Sacramentum, 2004.