

CELEBRATION OF THE MASS AND THE CALL TO LITURGICAL MINISTRY

Through the saving waters of Baptism, we are called to live life anew in Christ Jesus. We are called to live a life of holiness that is shaped by the Paschal Mystery, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. As members of the Body of Christ, we come together as the faithful, a holy people, to give thanks (*Eucharistia*) to God for all the blessings that we have received, and to offer the unblemished sacrificial Victim (Christ) not only by means of the hands of the priest but also together with him, so that we may learn to offer our very selves (cf. General Instruction on the Roman Missal (GIRM), no. 95).

In the Mass “the entire celebration is arranged in such a way that it leads to a conscious, active, and full participation of the faithful, namely in body and in mind, a participation fervent with faith, hope, and charity, of the sort which is desired by the Church and which is required by the very nature of the celebration and to which the Christian people have a right and a duty by virtue of their Baptism” (GIRM, no. 18; cf. *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (SC), no. 14). As baptized persons we are called to “conscious, active, and full participation” by entering into the spirit of the Mass, raising our hearts and minds together as one to God in posture, prayer, and song.

Some of the faithful are called by God to serve in various roles within the Mass. Through prayer and discernment, we come to understand the individual call that God has placed on our hearts. In response to that call, and in recognition of the gifts and talents that God has blessed us with, we may participate in a liturgical ministry.

Serving in a liturgical role requires a deeper level of understanding of the Mass and the importance of that role in service to the Church. Those serving must possess the appropriate skills and training and be committed to ongoing formation for ministry. They must also accept the personal time commitment and prayer necessary to prepare for ministry.

Although some are called to serve in one liturgical role, others may be called to serve in more than one. However, since each role is distinct and important, no one person should be given more than one role within a particular Mass. Exceptions, although rare, can be made in the instance that no other liturgical ministers are present at a Mass (cf. GIRM, no. 110).

GESTURES AND POSTURES OF PRAYER AT MASS

Sitting, standing, kneeling, genuflecting, bowing, praying, singing, signing ourselves with the cross, listening, and remaining silent are all liturgical actions. The gestures and bodily postures throughout the Mass are appropriate to each person’s role, whether bishop, priest, deacon, or lay person. “To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes. And at the proper times all should observe a reverent silence” (SC, no. 28). “Conscious, active, and full participation” in the Mass requires that we understand the various elements of the Mass, along with the appropriate responses, gestures and bodily postures required when serving in a particular role.

“The gestures and bodily posture of the Priest, the Deacon, and the ministers, and also of the people, must be conducive to making the entire celebration resplendent with beauty and noble simplicity, to making clear the true and full meaning of its different parts, to fostering the participation of all” (GIRM, no. 42). Care must be taken in exercising a liturgical role as our actions can detract from the Mass just as easily as they can add to its



beauty and noble simplicity. As liturgical ministers, we must be prepared to celebrate the Mass and to perform our designated role at the appropriate time with utmost dignity and respect for the sacredness of the Mass.

SACRED SILENCE

Sacred Silence is an often-overlooked liturgical posture. Its purpose varies throughout the Mass and offers us the opportunity to recollect ourselves, to meditate, to praise God, and to pray. Sacred Silence is to be observed at the designated times:

1. In the Penitential Act and again after the invitation to pray, individuals recollect themselves
2. After a reading or after the Homily, all meditate briefly on what they have heard
3. After Communion, they praise God in their hearts and pray to him
4. Even before the celebration itself, it is a praiseworthy practice for silence to be observed in the church, in the sacristy, in the vesting room, and in adjacent areas, so that all may dispose themselves to carry out the sacred celebration in a devout and fitting manner (GIRM, no. 45).

REVERENCE OF THE TABERNACLE AND ALTAR

Knowing when and how to reverence the tabernacle and altar are important for liturgical ministers. A genuflection is made by bending the right knee to the ground. It signifies adoration and is therefore an action which is reserved for the Most Blessed Sacrament as well as for the Holy Cross on Good Friday (cf. GIRM, no. 274). The GIRM states that if the tabernacle 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" (no. 274). However, during the Mass, when the priest, deacon, and ministers approach the sanctuary, they reverence the altar with a profound bow (cf. GIRM, nos. 49, 122). A bow signifies reverence and honor shown towards a person or to the signs that represent them. Since, through its consecration, the altar represents the presence of Jesus Christ, it would be appropriate to make a profound bow toward the altar when a minister is approaching the sanctuary and when leaving the sanctuary, especially if one must cross in front of the altar. The exception is when the Deacon or Lector is carrying the Book of the Gospels or when an Altar Server is carrying something, then they may make a slight bow of the head before entering the sanctuary.

Please keep in mind that one is only expected to use these gestures and postures if they are physically able to do so, but that all ministers must always show proper reverence when fulfilling their ministries in the sanctuary of the church.

REVERENCE DURING THE CREED

A profound bow is also made when reciting the Creed at the words *and by Holy Spirit...and became man* (cf. GIRM, no 275).



THE MINISTRY OF SACRISTANS

Supplies

Please regularly check the supply of items used at Mass (hosts, wine, candles, incense, charcoal, etc.) and communicate any needs to Lisa Dumais at the Pastoral Center by calling 623-8823.

Hosts

It is most desirable that the faithful receive the Lord's Body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass so that even by means of the signs of Communion may stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated (GIRM, no. 85). Therefore, only enough hosts for the participants of the Mass as well as for those who are homebound should be prepared for consecration.

THE CARE AND CLEANING OF ALTAR LINENS

Altar Cloths

Just as the altar is a sign for us of Christ the living stone, altar cloths are used "out of reverence for the celebration of the memorial of the Lord and the banquet that gives us his body and blood." By their beauty and form they add to the dignity of the altar in much the same way that vestments solemnly ornament the priests and sacred ministers. Such cloths also serve a practical purpose, however, in absorbing whatever may be spilled of the Precious Blood or other sacramental elements. Thus the material of altar cloths should be absorbent and easily laundered.

While there may be several altar cloths in the form of drapings or even frontals, their shape, size, and decoration should be in keeping with the design of the altar. Unless the altar cloths have been stained with the Precious Blood, it is not necessary that they be cleaned in the sacarium. Care should be taken, however, that proper cleaning methods are used to preserve the beauty and life of the altar cloth. It is appropriate for those who care for sacred vessels, cloths and other instrumenta of the liturgy to accompany their work with prayer.

Corporals

Sacred vessels containing the Body and Blood of the Lord are always placed on top of a corporal. A corporal is spread by the deacon (or in the absence of a deacon, another minister) in the course of the preparation of the gifts and the altar. When concelebrants receive the Eucharist from the altar, a corporal is placed beneath all chalices or patens. Finally, it is appropriate that a corporal be used on a side table, and placed beneath the sacred vessels which have been left to be purified after Mass.

Because one of the purposes of the corporal is to contain whatever small particles of the consecrated host may be left at the conclusion of Mass, care should be taken that the transferal of consecrated hosts between sacred vessels should always be done over a corporal. The corporal should be white in color and of sufficient dimensions so that at least the main chalice and paten may be placed upon it completely. When necessary, more than one corporal may be used. The material of corporals should be absorbent and easily laundered.

Any apparent particles of the consecrated bread which remain on the corporal after the distribution of Holy Communion should be consumed in the course of the purification of the sacred vessels. Please note that the Corporal should never be left on the Altar after Mass, but should be opened and placed on the Altar during the preparation of the gifts and the altar, and then should be folded carefully following the distribution of Communion, so as to contain whatever small particles of the consecrated host that may remain. These particles should be emptied into the sacarium between Eucharistic celebrations.

When corporals are cleansed they should first be rinsed in a sacarium and only afterwards washed with laundry soaps in the customary manner. Every church or chapel should be equipped with a sacarium. However, if no sacarium is present, the linens should be rinsed or hand-washed in a basin before being washed in the laundry. The water in the basin should then be reverently poured into the ground at an appropriate spot on the church property.

Corporals should be ironed in such a way that their distinctive manner of folding helps to contain whatever small particles of the consecrated host may remain at the conclusion of the Eucharistic celebration.

Folding the Corporal

The Corporal is a square cloth with [usually] an embroidered cross at the center-bottom. First, iron the starched cloth flat. Folding the corporal: with the right/good side facing up, fold into ninths as follows:

- Bottom third (with embroidered cross), fold up
- Top third, fold down
- Left third, fold in
- Right third, fold toward left forming a square
- Iron the edges

Purificators

Purificators are customarily brought to the altar with chalices and are used to wipe the Precious Blood from the lip of the chalice and to purify sacred vessels. They should be white in color. Whenever the Precious Blood is distributed from the chalice or even accidentally spilled, purificators should be used to absorb the spill. The material of purificators should be absorbent and easily laundered. The purificator should never be made of paper or any other disposable material.

Because of their function, purificators regularly become stained with the Precious Blood. It is, therefore, essential that they should first be cleansed in a sacrarium and only afterwards washed with laundry soaps in the customary manner. Purificators should be ironed in such a way that they may be easily used for the wiping of the lip of the chalice.

Folding the Purificator

The Purificator is generally rectangular, but may be square, with [usually] an embroidered cross in the center. First, iron the starched cloth flat. Folding the purificator: with the right/good side facing down, fold as follows:

- Fold the long way in thirds
- Then fold in half
- Iron the edges

Lavabo Towels

The Order of Mass calls for the washing of the hands (lavabo) of the priest celebrant in the course of the preparation of the gifts and the altar. Since it is his hands and not only his fingers (as in the former Order of Mass) which are washed at the lavabo, the lavabo towel should be of adequate size and sufficiently absorbent for drying his hands. Neither the color nor the material of the lavabo towel is prescribed, though efforts should be made to avoid the appearance of a "dish towel," "bath towel" or other cloth with a purely secular use.

Other Cloths

Other cloths may also be used at Mass. A pall may be used to cover the chalice at Mass in order to protect the Precious Blood from insects or other foreign objects. In order that palls may be kept immaculately clean they should be made with removable covers of a worthy material which may be easily washed in the sacrarium and then laundered. Chalice veils either of the color of the day, or white may be fittingly used to cover the chalice before it is prepared and after it has been purified.

Disposal of Worn Altar Linens

Consistent with the disposal of all things blessed for use in the liturgy, it is appropriate that altar linens, which show signs of wear and can no longer be used, should normally be disposed of either by burial or burning.

Sacred Vessels

Among the requisites for the celebration of Mass, the sacred vessels are held in special honor, and among these especially the chalice and paten. The General Instruction on the Roman Missal (GIRM, no. 328) notes: "Sacred vessels should be made from precious metal. If they are made from metal that rusts or from a metal less precious than gold, they should generally be gilded on the inside." It goes on to say that in the Dioceses of the United States, "sacred vessels may also be made from other solid materials which in the common estimation in each region are considered precious or noble... provided that such materials are suitable for sacred use" (GIRM, no. 329). The GIRM goes on to speak about chalices and other vessels that are intended to serve as receptacles for the Blood of the Lord, noting that, "they are to have a bowl of material that does not absorb liquids" (GIRM, no. 330). If materials other than precious metal are used, "preference is always given to materials that do not easily break or deteriorate" (GIRM, no. 329).

Sacred vessels that do not meet the expectations of the liturgical law are no longer to be used and may be properly disposed of by burial on church grounds or in a catholic cemetery. Please note: Glass, ceramic, and clay chalices and patens are not appropriate for use in the liturgy, since they easily break.

The Purification of Sacred Vessels

In 2005, a special permission (indult) expired, which allowed extraordinary ministers in the United States (unlike elsewhere) to assist in the purification of the sacred vessels. The indult was not renewed by the Vatican, and therefore the purification of the vessels is reserved to the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

Paragraph 279 of the GIRM says: "The sacred vessels are purified by the Priest, the Deacon, or an instituted acolyte after Communion or after Mass, in so far as possible at the credence table. The purification of the chalice is done with water alone or with wine and water, which is then consumed by whoever 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."

Conclusion

The manner in which we treat sacred things (even those of lesser significance than the chalice, paten, liturgical furnishings, etc.) fosters and expresses our openness to the graces God gives to His Church in every celebration of the Eucharist. Thus, by the diligent care of altar linens and sacred vessels, the Church expresses her joy at the inestimable gifts she receives from Christ's altar.



THE MINISTRY OF ADULT ALTAR SERVERS

Altar Servers have a special role in the Mass of assisting the priest and serving the needs of the assembly in various ways. To serve well, Altar Servers need to know the church building and the liturgy. In addition, they need to know how to move, how to carry sacred things, how to be a model of participation in the Mass, and how to keep stillness and silence. Altar Servers may serve alone, or as part of a team during Sunday Mass, or at other rites such as weddings, funerals, or Stations of the Cross.

Movement During the Mass

To aid in less movement during the Mass, the server holding the Missal for the priest should sit on the same side as the priest during the Introductory Rite and Dismissal. If there is only one server, after processing in and placing the Processional Cross in its place, the server then proceeds to sit on the same side as the priest. The server would cross over to assist with the preparation of the altar but would then return to sit on the same side as the priest for the prayer after communion and the dismissal.

Ring of the Bells at Mass

"A little before the Consecration, if appropriate, a minister rings a small bell as a signal to the faithful. The minister also rings the small bell at each elevation by the Priest, according to local custom" (GIRM, no. 150). Therefore, the bells should be rung one time during Epiclesis (Lord, let your Spirit come upon these gifts). Look for priest moving his hands to call down the Holy Spirit. Then rung one time during consecration of bread in the Body of Christ when the Host is elevated and then again one time during the consecration of the wine into the Blood of Christ when the Cup is elevated.

MINISTERS OF THE WORD/LECTOR

Lectors are members of the faithful who have been called and gifted for publicly proclaiming the Sacred Scriptures to the gathered Christian faithful. “When the Sacred Scriptures are read in Church, God himself speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his word, proclaims the Gospel” (GIRM, no. 29).

“The reader proclaims the readings from Sacred Scriptures, with the exception of the Gospel. The reader may announce the intentions for the Universal Prayer in the absence of the Deacon, and may recite the Psalm in the absence of a psalmist” (GIRM, no. 99).

“Texts are to be pronounced in a loud and clear voice that should correspond to the genre of the text itself” (GIRM, no. 38). The lector should have a basic knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures, including an understanding of both the Old and New Testaments and the various literary forms found in each book. The lector also needs to have the oral skills necessary to effectively proclaim the Sacred Scriptures, including pronunciation, projection, volume, pace, gesture, eye contact, and use of microphone. This requires planning, familiarization with the readings, and practice.

Before Mass, adjust the microphone as needed and ensure that the Lectionary, Announcements, and General Intercessions are on the Ambo.

It is preferable to have separate lectors for each reading from Sacred Scripture. One lector may read the Announcements before Mass and the other lector may lead the Universal Prayer in the absence of a Deacon.

If there are two lectors for a Mass, one will read the announcements before Mass and the other will process in with the Book of the Gospels. The lector carries the Book of the Gospels, slightly elevated, in the procession. Upon reaching the sanctuary, the lector makes a slight bow of the head, then proceeds to go around the altar to place the Book of the Gospels upon it (cf. GIRM, no. 120). Please do not reach over the front of the altar to place the book upon it. If a Deacon is present, no lectors will process in.

When entering and leaving the sanctuary, lectors will make a profound bow before the altar.

It is helpful if the lector reading the first reading turns the page to the next reading.

In the book of Daily Mass Intercessions used for weekday Mass, please only read the indented intercessions, not the prayers of the priest.

Lectors must always prepare well in advance by utilizing the provided Lector Workbook. Each lector has been issued a Lector Workbook and can be found in the Sacristy of the church where he/she typically serves. There is also a pronunciation guide available for use in each sacristy. A free online resource is also available at:

<https://www.lectorprep.org/>

THE MINISTRY OF MUSIC

Singing is the sign of the heart's joy (cf. GIRM, no. 39; Acts 2:46)

Ministers of Music help the gathered faithful enter into "full, conscious and active participation" in the Mass through singing.

An understanding of the Mass, along with its various parts, and the Liturgical Seasons is important for all Ministers of Music. Knowledge of the document Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship is also extremely helpful for those who are involved with planning music for Mass.

It is important to remember that Sacred Silence is posture of prayer and must not be overlooked. Care should be taken in the practicing of music or musical preludes before Mass so that there is ample time for all the faithful to prepare their hearts and minds for celebrating the Mass. Any music before Mass should cease a few minutes before the lector welcomes the assembly to offer any announcements. "Sacred silence also, as part of the celebration, is to be observed at the designated times. Its nature, however, depends on the moment when it occurs in the different parts of the celebration. For in the Penitential Act and again after the invitation to pray, individuals recollect themselves; whereas after a reading or after the Homily, all meditate briefly on what they have heard; then after Communion, they praise God in their hearts and pray to him. Even before the celebration itself, it is a praiseworthy practice for silence to be observed in the church, in the sacristy, in the vesting room, and in adjacent areas, so that all may dispose themselves to carry out the sacred celebration in a devout and fitting manner" (GIRM, no. 45).

In choosing the parts of the Mass to be sung, preference is given to those that are of greater importance and especially to those which are to be sung by the priest or the Deacon or the reader, with the people replying, or by the Priest and the people together (GIRM, no. 40).

It is preferable for the Responsorial Psalm to be sung. Since the Responsorial Psalm is the Word of God, the psalmist or cantor should sing from the ambo. If no psalmist or cantor is present, then it should be recited from the ambo in a way that is particularly suited to fostering meditation on the Word of God (GIRM, no. 61).

Please be mindful of where the priest is with the Preparation of the Gifts. Music should end in a timely fashion when the altar is prepared. Please do not begin a new verse when time is short, rather bring the song to a conclusion or move into an instrumental as the altar preparations conclude.

While the Priest is receiving Holy Communion, the Communion Chant is begun, its purpose being to express the spiritual union of the communicants by means of the unity of their voices, to show gladness of heart, and to bring out more clearly the "communitarian" character of the procession to receive the Eucharist. The singing is prolonged for as long as the Sacrament is being administered to the faithful (cf. GIRM, no. 86). Therefore, the Communion Song should end when the distribution of Holy Communion ends, which allows for a time of silence for all to meditate on the mystery which they have partaken. "When the distribution of Communion is over, if appropriate, the Priest and faithful pray quietly for some time" (GIRM, no. 88). Especially during Advent and Lent, there should be quiet until the priest concludes the Communion Rite with the Prayer after Communion.



THE MINISTRY OF EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION IN CHURCH AND TO THE SICK AND HOMEBOUND

See the full St. Michael Parish Guidelines revised December 2021.

RESOURCES

- General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), Third Typical Edition, 2002—detailed directives on how the Mass is to be celebrated, <https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/general-instruction-of-the-roman-missal>
- Ministries and Roles Within the Liturgical Assembly at Mass, United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, <https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/ministries-and-roles-within-the-liturgical-assembly-at-mass>
- Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy - Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC), 1963, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html
- Workbook for Lectors and Gospel Readers, Liturgical Training Publications -annual resource provided by the parish for each lector and is available in the sacristy.
- USCCB Committee on the Liturgy, Statement on the Care and Cleaning of Altar Linens, March 19, 2001.