

CUSTOMARY OF THE BASILICA OF STS. PETER AND PAUL FOR SERVERS

Using the *Missale Romanum* (2002)

1. Basic Principle: When no clear indication is given in the rubrics of the Mass, all is to be done as it was in the tradition of the Roman Rite (*cf.* GIRM 42).

2. Postures and gestures – refer to the excerpts from the Ceremonial for Priests pages 13-20

3. Server Positions:

Master of Ceremonies (MC)

Thurifer

Boat Bearer

Book Bearer

Acolyte 1

Acolyte 2

Candle Bearer 1

Candle Bearer 2

Torchbearers

Bell ringer

4. Preparation Before Mass

On the Credence Table:

Chalice, purificator, paten, large host, pall, veil, burse, corporal in that order.

2 cruets of water and wine

Ciborium for communion of the faithful

2 Communion patens

2 Extra purificators

All Covered by the Humeral Veil of the Color of the Day

Under the Credence Table - the Missal opened to the proper place

On the bottom step nearest the tabernacle– bells

Six Candles – all six are lit

Book of the Gospels – placed in the center of the Altar, ribbon set to proper Gospel

Presider's Chair – Chasuble and maniple draped, with microphone magnet in place.

Thurible stand – lit thurible, with at least two but no more than three charcoals lit before Mass begins.

Boat – with crushed Frankincense and spoon – the boat should not be overfilled. Normally there should be a quarter of an inch between the lid of the boat and the level of the incense inside. Overfilling leads to spilling and is to be avoided.

4.2 Server's preparation

The server will make his way to the server's vesting room at least 15 minutes before the Mass is to begin. He should be properly dressed (*See dress code below*). In the vesting room he will quietly put on his vestments (*see note about vestments below*) in a prayerful spirit without undue talking and without disturbing the recollection of his fellow servers, maintaining a sense of reverence as he prepares to serve the altar. He will receive his assigned role from the MC and then assist with any preparations of the sanctuary as directed by the MC, senior servers, sacristan, priest or deacon.

About 5 minutes before Mass begins, the priest with the MC will lead the servers to the steps of the altar of repose before the Blessed Sacrament. There they will pray the traditional prayers at the foot of the altar. After this devotion is concluded, the servers will gather all of the things needed for the procession and make their way to the doors of the church.

5.Devotional Asperges

For the purpose of continuity, we have opted to offer the devotional celebration of the ancient *Asperges*. Therefore, the rubrics already set for this will be followed. It will take place after the procession but before the Incensation of the Altar.

6. Procession

The servers will line up in the following order:

- Thurifer
- Boat Bearer
- Processional Cross
- Candle bearers and then torches
- Other servers
- MC

Every server is to process with decorum, with a slow and deliberate pace, neither too fast nor too slow. Keep the back straight, look ahead with eyes lowered. Hands joined before the chest with fingers pointed upwards and thumbs crossed.

Servers are to process two-by-two, with the exception of the Thurifer, boat bearer and MC.

There is to be a noticeable gap between each section of the procession so as to allow for proper spacing upon arrival at the altar.

Upon arrival at the altar each server is to make the due reverence to our Lord in the Tabernacle and the Altar. For those carrying something, this is done by a pause and a bow of the head. For those not carrying anything, or for which it can be done without inconvenience, this is done by a genuflection of the right knee.

This is done outside the sanctuary before entering the gate of the altar rail.

Once the act of reverence is done, the server steps up into the sanctuary through the gate in the altar rail, immediately turns to the right and proceeds towards the chair along the rail. At the epistle side the server turns left and climbs the steps in front of the chair and proceeds to

put aside what he is carrying and then goes to his place in the sanctuary. The MC remains at the gates of the altar rail to await the priest.

If there is no devotional asperges, the thurifer and boat bearer wait in front of the chair. If there is a devotional asperges, the thurifer and boat bearer may place those items on the stand until the priest goes to his chair to put on the chasuble. At that time, they retrieve the thurible and boat and go and stand at the chair on the epistle side of the altar.

7. Incensation of the Altar

If the devotional Asperges takes place - After assisting the priest to put on the Chasuble and manipule at the chair, the MC will proceed in single file behind the priest down the steps, along the rail to the center, turn towards the altar, genuflect at the right side of the priest, assist the priest to make the first step, then follow behind the priest to the altar and form up to his right for the incensation.

If there is no devotional asperges - After arriving at the foot of the altar, the priest hands the MC his biretta, the two genuflect with the MC on his right. After assisting the priest with the first step, the MC turns to his right, moves all the way to the chairs, turns, climbs the steps and deposits the biretta on the chair. The MC then turns towards the altar and accompanies the thurifer and boat bearer to the center for the incensation.

As soon as the priest has kissed the altar, the thurifer and boat bearer should approach with the MC for the imposition of incense. The MC takes the boat from the boat bearer and presents it to the priest. The thurifer opens the thurible and presents it to the priest. After he has made the sign of the cross over the burning coals, the MC returns the boat to the boat bearer and receives the thurible from the thurifer and then in turn presents it to the priest.

The MC accompanies the priest as he incenses staying behind him one pace. When crossing the center, genuflect with him to his right and proceed ahead of him to the epistle side where you will receive the thurible and hand it to the thurifer. During the incensation, the thurifer and boat bearer stand in front of the chair on the epistle side in such a way as to give clear passage to the priest and MC as they come around the altar.

After the incensation, the MC will lead the priest to the chair and direct the book bearer to come forward for the Introductory Rites

8. Introductory Rites

The book bearer will stand in front of the priest and slightly to the priest's right, that is, slightly towards the tabernacle. He shall hold the book on his chest and his hands supporting at the bottom but not constricting the ribbons or preventing the pages from being turned. The MC will ensure that the proper page is presented for the Introductory Rites.

After the *Confiteor*, the book bearer may temporarily move to the side of the MC for the *Kyrie* and the *Gloria*, however, he is to remain attentive for the moment to return to the previous position for the Collect. When given the signal for returning to the position in front of the priest, he is to resume his place with the proper page for the Collect having been selected either by the MC or the Priest himself.

After the Collect is read, the book bearer returns the Missal to its stand under the Credence Table.

9. Readings

Once the Collect has finished, the priest is seated and puts on the biretta in the manner described in the Tradition of the Roman Rite, that is, the MC hands it to him once he is seated and he doffs it any time the name of Jesus is mentioned.

However, if the priest himself is to chant the readings, he immediately turns towards the Ambo for the First Reading, the MC follows and stands at his right side. Once the reading is finished, the MC leads the priest to the chair, and after being seated, the MC hands the priest the biretta to wear during the gradual.

After the gradual, the priest takes off the biretta, handing it to the MC, who then puts it on the chair. The priest stands and turns towards the Ambo. He reads the second reading in the same manner as the first. If the Alleluia is long he returns to the chair in the same way. If it is shorter, he proceeds with the MC to the bottom of the steps, turn and move in single file to the center, genuflect, and approach the center of the altar as at the beginning of Mass.

While the second reading is being intoned, the thurifer, boat bearer and candle bearers prepare for the gospel by retrieving what they are to carry. Then, when the Alleluia begins, (or if it is a longer one, when the priest stands), the thurifer, boat bearer and two candle bearers process in single file to their position in front of the chair on the epistle side. The order of this procession should be: first candle bearer, boat bearer, thurifer, then second candle bearer.

Once they arrive at their position they should turn to face the altar. Once the priest is at the altar and turns towards the chair, the thurifer and boat bearer approach in the same manner as at the beginning of Mass. Once the incense is imposed, the thurifer and boat bearer return to the line and all turn for the procession down the steps, across the altar rail to the center. Once at the center they should turn, facing the altar and wait for the priest to finish his preparation.

When the priest, holding the Book of the Gospels, genuflects and turns, all the servers should do likewise. The MC will accompany the priest by leading him to the High Ambo and then standing at the base of the stairs. The candle bearers should proceed directly to their position in front of the High Ambo on the level of the altar rail. The candle bearers, once they reach their position, should turn slightly inward towards the High Ambo.

The thurifer and boat bearer shall break away from the line by turning right up the stairs to the gospel side of the altar and then turn left towards the back of the High Ambo. The Thurifer should ascend the stairs of the High Ambo behind the priest. The boat bearer should remain next to the MC.

The thurifer should move up the first two steps of the High Ambo and wait for the priest to turn to him. The MC and the boat bearer should stand at the bottom of the steps. Once the priest has incensed the Gospel, the thurifer goes down the steps and takes up his position below the High Ambo for the reading of the Gospel. The boat bearer follows him. He makes slow and deliberate long swings with the full length of the thurible, in a manner that is not distracting to the faithful.

Once the Gospel has concluded, the candle bearers, thurifer, and boat bearer all rejoin at the center of the altar in front of the altar rail (the thurifer and boat bearer may proceed outside the rail and come in through the center gate to take their place in the line). As a group, they genuflect, turn to their right, proceed towards the chair and ascend the steps on the epistle side of the altar and return the candles, thurible and boat to their places and go to their seats for the homily.

Care should be taken by the thurifer that as he imposes new coals in the thurible, he is not to make unnecessary noise, and ordinarily it will only entail the placing of new charcoal into the bowl of the thurible on top of the already burning ones and no new lighting is needed.

10. Creed

When the Homily concludes, the MC leads the priest to the bottom of the steps, along the rail, genuflecting at the center of the altar when crossing, towards the chairs on the epistle side, turning and climbing the stairs and then proceed directly to the chair. If the priest sits for a moment of reflection, he puts on the biretta. If not, he remains standing and immediately intones the creed.

All remain standing for the creed, but at the mention of the incarnation, all bow or genuflect.

11. Preparation of the Altar

Once the creed concludes, the book bearer will take up the Missal and its stand and wait for the MC. The MC turns towards the credence table. The humeral veil is removed from the table and the MC puts it on. Using the edges of the veil he picks up the chalice and burse with both hands and proceeds behind the book bearer to the altar. They proceed in single file down the steps, turn and proceed to the center, turn to face the altar, genuflect together and approach the altar. The MC places the veiled chalice on the epistle side of the altar ensuring that the veil is facing the people. He places the burse with the corporal inside to the left nearer the center of the altar. The book bearer places the Missal and stand to the left side of the center slightly at an angle. The two then come to the center of the altar, genuflect and then turn to the right and proceed to the chair where the MC takes off the Humeral Veil assisted by the book bearer.

In the meanwhile, another server brings over the ciborium filled with hosts for the communion of the faithful and sets it on the epistle side near the veiled chalice. If the gifts are brought up in procession, the priest will bring the ciborium and the cruet of wine to the altar.

12. Offertory

The priest approaches the altar from the bottom of the steps in the usual way. The priest will lay out the corporal and set the book. At this time, one of the servers is designated to descend to the altar rail and close the gate. This server may come from either the epistle side or the gospel side, descend to the bottom, turn towards the center, close the gate and latch it and then return to his place in the same way he came.

After unveiling the chalice, the bell-ringer should ring the bell once. Then the two acolytes prepare the cruets of water and wine and bring them to the epistle side. When the priest turns towards the epistle side to fill the chalice with water and wine, the acolytes hand him the

cruets with the handle facing the priest. The wine is offered first, then the water. Both acolytes bow towards the altar together, turn towards each other and return the cruets to the credence table. The two acolytes then prepare for the lavabo by acolyte one taking up the bowl and pitcher and acolyte two taking up the hand towel, unfolding it completely and stretching it between his hands.

In the meanwhile, as soon as the bell is rung when the veil comes off, the thurifer and boat bearer come and stand in front of the chair. Upon the signal from the MC, they approach the center of the altar and incense is imposed and the thurible handed over in the usual manner. The thurifer and boat bearer, once again stand in front of the chair on the epistle side in such a way as to give clear passage to the priest and MC as they come around the altar.

The MC accompanies the priest in the same manner as the first incensation of the altar. However, once he receives the thurible from the priest at the epistle side, he bows towards the priest and incenses him with three double swings. The MC then hands the thurible to the thurifer and crosses to the priest's left at the center, genuflecting as he passes the tabernacle. The boat bearer returns to his place. The thurifer proceeds down the steps and then turns to the center of the altar where, after genuflecting, he incenses any clergy in choir, then the MC and servers. He then turns to the people and bowing towards them, he incenses them in the usual manner. After bowing to the people, he then turns to his left towards the chair, climbs the stairs at the epistle side and proceeds to the thurible stand and ensures that the coals are ready for the incensation at the consecration.

As soon as the thurifer is ready, the thurifer, boat bearer, candle bearers and torch bearers proceed according to custom to the back of the church.

In the meanwhile, the priest, turning to face the people, will recite the "*orate fratres*". The MC should assist the priest in this by presenting to him the hand-card with the texts of the dialogues done '*versus populum*'.

13. Sanctus

During the Sanctus, the thurifer boat bearer, candle bearers and torch bearers process into the sanctuary. The candle bearers and torches form two lines, one on the epistle side and one on the Gospel side. The thurifer and boat bearer stand at the bottom step in the center. Once all are in place, the signal is given for them to kneel and all kneel in place for the Eucharistic Prayer. If needed, this is the only time the thurifer is permitted to impose a small amount of incense on the coals.

14. Eucharistic Prayer

During the Eucharistic Prayer, all the server's attention should be focused at what is happening at the altar. Thus, their heads and bodies should be slightly turned towards the altar.

The bellringer will kneel at his place on the bottom step near the tabernacle.

The MC will stand or kneel as appropriate at the priest's left-hand side. He will assist with the turning of the pages.

At the time of the consecration, the MC will lift the hem of the chasuble in the customary way.

The bells will be rung in the customary way at the consecration. The bells are rung once when the priest's hands are joined and hover over the bread and wine at the epiclesis. The bells are rung three times when the host and chalice are elevated, and once when the priest genuflects.

When the *Per Ipsum* is sung and the Great Amen is concluded, the thurifer, boat bearer, candle bearers and torchbearers all stand and proceed behind the reredos to replace their items in the proper place. During the singing of the Our Father, they then proceed with all the servers to their places for the Communion Rite. Along the way, the two acolytes take up the communion patens from the credence table and bring them to the place they will receive communion.

At the *Pax*, the MC steps to his left, turns with the priest and presents the hand-card with the dialogue if the priest needs it.

15. Communion Rite

After the priest has concluded his prayers of preparation, the MC genuflects with him at the altar and turns with him facing the people holding the hand-card for the *Ecce Agnus Dei* should he need it. After the *Ecce Agnus Dei*, the priest receives communion and then Acolyte 1 approaches the first server communicant with the paten and waits for the priest to distribute communion first to him then to all the servers. Acolyte 1 then goes with the priest to distribute communion to the faithful along the altar rail. If there is a second priest or a deacon distributing communion also, acolyte 2 will accompany him in the same manner.

Once the servers have received communion, they stand and return to their seats where they may either kneel or be seated. They are to keep decorum by sitting still and quiet, meditating on the great mystery they have just received. But servers are always to be attentive to the needs of the priest celebrant, and the faithful should anything occur that would need their assistance. For instance, all servers, but especially the MC, should be ready to promptly assist with the water cruet and the extra purificators if a host falls on the floor.

As soon as communion has concluded, the priest will return to the altar. When he does so, all the servers should kneel and remain kneeling until the remaining hosts are placed in the tabernacle. Once the ciborium is in the tabernacle, Acolyte 1 and 2 immediately go to the credence table, retrieve the water and the wine and proceed to the epistle side of the altar.

Once the priest comes to the epistle side with the chalice, Acolyte 1 pours in a small drop of wine aiming to avoid the priest's fingers. Acolyte 2, however, then pours in a copious amount of water directly onto the fingers of the priest until the priest indicates he should stop by slightly raising his fingers. Both acolytes then bow towards the altar, turn towards each other and proceed to the credence table where they replace the cruets and return to their seats.

In the meanwhile, the MC, assisted by the book bearer, puts on the humeral veil again and the two of them proceed to the altar by the usual route. Once at the altar, the book bearer takes up the Missal and stand and waits for the MC. The MC, with his hands covered by the humeral veil, takes the chalice and burse, turns towards the center with the book bearer, bows and then turns to his right and the two process directly to the credence table. The MC places the veiled chalice and burse on the credence table and covers everything once again with the humeral veil. The book bearer places the stand in its proper place but retains the Missal ready for the concluding rites.

The MC goes to stand beside the priest indicating that all is ready for the concluding rites.

16. Concluding Rite

Once the priest has given the signal, he takes off his biretta in the usual way, stands and says the *Oremus*. The book bearer returns to the same place as he had during the introductory rites. After the prayer after communion, if there are announcements, the book bearer stands aside as he did during the *Kyrie* and *Gloria*. However, if there are no announcements at that time, he remains at his place until the priest indicates he is free to return the missal to the stand.

All servers should kneel when the priest gives the blessing.

On special occasions there is a prayer over the people. If that is the case, the book bearer will remain but will shift his position towards the people and angled in such a way that the priest, now turning towards the people may extend his hands over them for the blessing. When this has concluded, the book bearer returns the missal to its stand below the credence table.

17. Recessional Procession

As soon as the priest has given the blessing and intoned the *Ite Missa Est*, all servers should proceed to retrieve whatever they are to carry and form up for the recessional procession.

The priest will go to the center of the altar to recite the St. Michael Prayer and Salve Regina. The MC will accompany him with the biretta.

During the praying of the prayer and Marian antiphon, the servers should process down to the center aisle in the same manner as when they came in, with the exception that they should form up in the procession in the aisle and then turn facing the altar and await the signal of the MC for the genuflection.

Upon receiving the signal from the MC, all genuflect, turn around and process out in the same ordered way as when they entered.

Upon arrival in the vestibule, the processional cross should be flanked by the two candle bearers and the torch bearers and other servers should form two lines on either side awaiting the priest. Once the priest arrives, he will say, "*prosit*" to which the response, "*omnibus et singulis*" is given. Then all kneel while the priest gives a devotional blessing to the servers. The MC may invoke this blessing by saying, "*benedicte pater reverende*".

After this blessing, all stand and proceed to the sacristy to assist in the reordering of the sanctuary after Mass, extinguishing the candles and assisting the MC or sacristan with whatever is needed. Only after they have been dismissed by the MC should they proceed to the vesting room to divest.

The servers are encouraged to spend a moment in prayer giving thanks for the gift of the Eucharist as well as the privilege of serving the Mass. They are encouraged to do so before they leave the sanctuary.

18. Dress Code

All servers will be required to dress appropriately for service at the Altar.

Shoes should normally be dark dress shoes that do not draw attention to the server.

Black dress socks are preferable.

Normally black dress pants should be worn, but nothing that if seen beneath the vestments would cause distraction. Shorts should never be worn.

Bright colored shirts are to be avoided. Normally a white dress shirt is preferred.

19. The vestments worn by servers are:

The Alb for novice servers with the proper color cincture. The length should come all the way to the ankle and should not be too long so as to trip, nor too short so as to reveal the legs.

The black cassock and surplice is worn by our senior servers. It is an acknowledgement of their training and competency as a server and as one dedicated to service at the altar. It is also meant to encourage the young man to open his heart and consider whether God might be calling him to service of the Church as a priest. Wearing the cassock carries with it an expectation of leadership, especially among the novice servers.

The red cassock is given to those who are advanced to Master of Ceremonies (MC). It is an acknowledgement of the server's demonstrated competency, leadership and proven dedication to service at the altar. The wearer of the red cassock is looked to by the priest as being in charge of company of servers and is tasked with proper discipline and order of the company as well as training and encouragement towards advancement of the younger servers.

There will only be one MC vested in the red cassock at any given Mass, even if others serving in other capacities may have obtained that rank.

sources: Traditional Roman Rite and experience of this community celebrating the 1962 Roman Missal, GIRM 2002, Ceremonial for Priests (2023).