1. Preparing for Mass

a. Among the liturgical ministers assisting the presider, the deacon, whose order has been held in high honor since the early Church, has first place. When present to exercise his ministry, the deacon processes with *The Book of the Gospels* or enters and recesses at the presider's side. By custom this is done at the right side.

b. Vestment colors are determined by the *Ordo* and follow traditional usage. It is desirable that the color and design of the deacon's vestments match the vestments of the presiding celebrant whenever possible, yet they should still be distinguishable from the priest’s vestments. The parish should provide a dalmatic in each liturgical color for the deacon as that is the proper vestment for a deacon to wear for the celebration of the Eucharist.

c. The duties of the deacon may be shared among several deacons who are present and vested. When there are two deacons, the duties are normally split between a Deacon of the Word and a Deacon of the Eucharist.
   - The Deacon of the Word should carry *The Book of the Gospels* and proclaim the Gospel, Penitential Rite and Prayers of Petition. The Deacon of the Word should make all the appropriate invitations and directions.
   - The Deacon of the Eucharist could make all the appropriate invitations and directions if needed. These duties may be further divided depending on the number of vested deacons.
   - If the duties of other deacons in attendance and vested are limited to the distribution of Eucharist, they should remain in places provided and not gather at the altar until the reception of the Eucharist. The appropriate time to come to the altar to help with the distribution of the Eucharist is during the Sign of Peace.
   - The deacons should remain in their assigned place during the Liturgy of the Eucharist to avoid any confusion of ministries between them and the priests who may be concelebrating the liturgy. They should assist in the distribution of Holy Communion as needed.

d. When deacons are present for, but are not called upon to function in the celebration of the Eucharist, they do not normally have to vest or occupy a specific place in the liturgy. However, there are times when deacons sit as a body of deacons when not all the deacons have liturgical responsibilities:
   - Deacons should vest and be seated together for the celebration of the ordination of a deacon or priest and at a Mass of Christian Burial of a deacon, priest or bishop.
   - They may also vest and sit as a body at the invitation of the bishop (i.e. at Chrism Mass, Red Mass or Diocesan celebration).
   - Deacons may vest at the invitation of the Bishop, Chancery or Pastor of the parish.
• When in doubt, check with the Director of the Diaconate who make the official inquiry.

e. The deacon should be certain that all is prepared for Mass as in accord with the General Instruction of the Roman Missal # 118, 288 - 318.
2. **The Introductory Rites**

   a. The usual order for the procession is incense first, then candles with cross, other servers, lectors and other lay ministers as is the parish practice, deacon with The Book of the Gospels, concelebrants, priest celebrant with Deacon of Eucharist on his right. The Lectionary is never carried in procession and is always placed on the ambo before the Mass begins.

   b. As they approach the altar, all ministers reverence the altar with a bow. If the tabernacle is within the sanctuary, all the ministers genuflect to the tabernacle. The deacon(s) and the priest approach the altar. After placing The Book of the Gospels on it, the deacon(s) and the priest venerate the altar with a kiss. If incense is used, the Deacon of the Eucharist assists the priest. A server will usually hold the Roman Missal for the presider.

   c. In the Penitential Rite form C, there is a preference for the deacon to sing the invocations. Announcing them is acceptable; however, the presider or other suitable minister may do so.

   d. If the Rite of Sprinkling Holy Water is used, the deacon assists the presider.

3. **The Liturgy of the Word**

   a. The proclamation of the Gospel is a ministerial function which belongs essentially and specifically to the deacon when the deacon is present.

   b. When incense is used, the deacon assists the presider during the singing of the alleluia or other chant. Then he bows before the presider, asks for the blessing and says in a low voice, "Your blessing, Father" The presider blesses him, "The Lord be in your heart"...The deacon answers, "Amen." If the Book of the Gospels is on the altar, the deacon takes it, elevates it, and goes to the ambo, preceded by ministers carrying incense and/or candles. The Deacon greets the people with hands together, announces the Gospel reading, then incenses the book with three sets of two swings (center, left then right) and proclaims the Gospel. All readings are done from the same ambo. After the Gospel proclamation, the deacon kisses the Book of the Gospels saying quietly, "May the Word of the Gospel wipe away our sins." If the bishop is the celebrant, the Book of the Gospels is taken to him to kiss. The Book of the Gospels is then taken to a place of honor.

   3. The homily should ordinarily be given by the priests celebrant himself. However, he may occasionally entrust it to the deacon.

   d. Following the homily, there is an appropriate time of silent reflection on the readings. The Profession of Faith follows. During the words “...and by the Holy Spirit . . . and became man” all make a profound bow; but on the solemnities of the Annunciation and of the Nativity of the Lord, all genuflect.
e. The preferred option for the General Intercessions is to sing them. The presider introduces the intercessions. If the intercessions are composed by the deacon, he then leads the petitions. They are to be sung or announced from the ambo or other suitable place by the deacon, or by a cantor, lector or one of the lay faithful. The presider presents the concluding prayer.

4. The Liturgy of the Eucharist

a. At the Presentation of the Gifts, while the presider remains at the chair, the deacon prepares the altar, assisted by other ministers with book, corporal, purificator, pall when used, paten and all the communion cups. The bread and wine to be consecrated are ordinarily brought forward in the offertory procession. The deacon assists the presider in receiving the gifts of the assembly.

b. When the gifts are brought to the altar there should be one plate and one pitcher or flagon of wine. A small amount of water is added to the wine and then the wine is poured into the chalice and communion cups. The cups are arranged around the presider’s chalice, but not where they could be spilled by the presider or deacon tending to the Roman Missal. The empty pitcher or flagon is then taken to the credence table. The wine may also be placed into the communion cups at the credence table and brought to the altar.

c. When incense is used at this time, the deacon assists the presider in preparing the censer as it is presented by a minister. After the presider incenses the gifts, the deacon incenses the presider, concelebrants, the people and ministers with three sets of two swings with thethurible.

d. During the Eucharistic Prayer, the deacon stands near but slightly behind the presider. This is true even when there are concelebrants. The proper positioning of the deacon is always slightly behind the celebrant or to the side of the altar and not with other priests. When the presiding priest genuflects following the words of institution, the deacon bows. The deacon may assist by turning the pages of the Roman Missal for the presider. Note - The GIRM mentions that normally a deacon kneels from the epiclesis until the consecration and elevation of the chalice. Because of the age and possibility of difficulty for the deacon to kneel (due to distraction or physical inability on the part of the deacon), The Directives (and Commentary) on the Implementation of the GIRM (third typical edition) in the Diocese of Columbus has indicated that the deacon will remain standing throughout the whole Eucharistic Prayer. This directive is a sign of unity with those within the sanctuary. Kneeling and standing are not to distract from the action taking place on the altar. Deacons are asked to abide by this guideline in order to not cause confusion as to why some deacons kneel and some deacons do not kneel. Deacons assisting in a diocese where they are to kneel at the epiclesis are to follow the directions of the specific diocese.

e. As the Final Doxology is sung or spoken only by the presider and concelebrants, the deacon holds up the chalice as the celebrant raises the plate of consecrated hosts, until the people
have responded "Amen." As the priest lowers the consecrated hosts, the deacon lowers the chalice.

f. At the Sign of Peace, the presider says the prayer for peace and greets the assembly. The deacon invites the assembly to share the sign of peace then he and the other ministers in the sanctuary exchange the sign of peace.

g. After the Sign of Peace the bread is broken and apportioned into as many plates as are required while the Lamb of God is sung.

h. Before the presider (and concelebrants) consume the consecrated host and drink the Precious Blood from the chalice the deacon steps back from the altar. After the presider (and concelebrants) consume, the deacon(s) then comes forward and receives Communion form the presider. The deacon does not consume in the same manner as the presider; he consumes after the presider from the priest himself. The deacon makes a gesture of reverence by bowing his head for both the consecrated host and the Precious Blood before reception. The presider assisted by the deacon with the chalice then offers Communion to the extraordinary ministers of communion who make the same gesture of reverence before they receive. The priest and deacon then hand each of the extraordinary ministers a communion plate of consecrated hosts or communion cup with the Precious Blood. All go to their stations.

i. The deacon is always the minister of the chalice unless the Precious Blood is not offered to the assembly. After each communicant has received the Precious Blood, both sides of the rim of the communion cup are wiped with the purificator. However, deacons are ordinary ministers of the Eucharist and may also distribute the sacred host. This should be according to the parish custom.

j. Another minister may bring reserved hosts from the tabernacle after the priest(s) deacon(s) and extraordinary ministers of communion have moved to their stations. These reserved hosts should only be used when it becomes apparent that addition hosts are needed. The reserved hosts should not be placed in the vessels used by the ministers before distribution begins.

k. After Communion, any remaining Precious Blood must be consumed either at the altar or the credence table; it should not be taken to the sacristy to be consumed. The Precious Blood cannot be poured into the sacrarium or disposed of in any other fashion. The consecrated hosts that remain are taken to the tabernacle.

l. The vessels may be cleansed at this time or after the liturgy.
5. **The Concluding Rite**

   a. The presider and the deacon return to the chair for a brief period of quiet prayer and meditation.\(^{45}\) The prayer after communion is then presented.

   b. Announcements, following the prayer after communion, may be made by the presider, the deacon, or other suitable person.\(^{46}\)

   c. When the Solemn Blessing is given, or the Prayer over the People said, the deacon says "Bow down for the blessing."\(^{47}\)

   d. Immediately after the blessing, the Dismissal is given. The deacon dismisses the people with the appropriate words.\(^{48}\) Singing the dismissal is preferred.

   e. The presiding priest and the deacon then venerate the altar with a kiss.\(^{49}\) They then join the other minister and reverence the altar with a bow. If the tabernacle is within the sanctuary, all the ministers genuflect to the tabernacle.\(^{50}\) Then they process out in the usual manner.

   f. Neither the *Book of the Gospels* nor the *Lectionary* is carried out in the procession at the end of Mass.\(^{51}\)

   g. The pace of the recessional is not rushed, but is at a slightly quicker pace than the processional.

6. **Following Mass**

   a. The deacon takes time for hospitality with those gathered for the celebration and upon returning to the sacristy oversees the proper purification of vessels, return of vestments to the racks. He assists the presider as needed in the normal care of the worship space after Mass as needed.

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**END NOTES:**


2. The *Book of the Gospels* is venerated above all the books of readings by the Church. Its binding is worthy, dignified, and beautiful. It is a sign of Christ present in the liturgy. It is revered with the same holy kiss given to the altar. The *Book of the Gospels* is a sign of the presence of Christ in his word and proclaimed with great honor in the Church’s liturgy. It is borne by the deacon in solemn procession for the veneration of the entire congregation and accompanied by candles and incense at
Mass.

The presentation of the Book of the Gospels to the newly ordained deacon symbolizes the office of the deacon to proclaim the Gospel in liturgical celebrations and to preach the faith of the Church in word and deed. The enshrinement of the Book of the Gospels whenever the Church gathers in a council or synod is a sign of the presence of Christ himself as teacher and guide. The Church acknowledges the preeminent place of the Gospels by according special marks of honor to their proclamation. The proclamation of the Gospel is reserved to the deacon; only in his absence may a priest proclaim the Gospel. A Gospel procession, which marks the coming of Christ, may be accompanied by particular marks of reverence, incense and lighted candles, the special minister appointed to read the Gospel (the deacon) prepares himself with a blessing, the faithful stand as they listen to it being proclaimed and acknowledge and confess Christ is present and speaking to them. (Book of the Gospels (BG) #7-8; GIRM #60).

3. GIRM #171a, #172.

4. GIRM #119b; Redemptoris Sacramentum - On Certain Matters to Be Observed or to Be Avoided Regarding the Holy Eucharist (RS) #125.


7. GIRM #118b.


9. GIRM #274; DD #9.

10. GIRM #49, #173.

11. GIRM #52.

12. GIRM #59; BG #20; DD #15, (also see Endnote 2 above).

13. BG #7-8.

14. GIRM #277; BG #18.

15. GIRM #58, #260; DD #15.

16. GIRM #175.

17. BG #21.

18. GIRM #66.

19. GIRM #45; DD #2.
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46. GIRM #184.
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48. GIRM #185.
49. GIRM #186; DD #45.
50. GIRM #274; DD #9.
51. BG #22; DD #44.