

Customary
for the Ministry of Deacons
at the
Celebration of the Eucharist
in the Diocese of Stockton

Prepared by the Office for Worship

Published with the Approval of
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November 16, 2001

INTRODUCTION

FIRST OF THE MINISTERS

After the priest, in virtue of the sacred ordination he has received, the deacon has first place among those who minister in the celebration of the Eucharist. For the sacred Order of the diaconate has been held in high honor in the Church since the time of the Apostles. At Mass the deacon proclaims the gospel reading, sometimes preaches God's word, announces the intentions of the general intercessions, ministers to the priest, prepares the altar and serves the celebration of the sacrifice, distributes the Eucharist to the faithful, especially under the species of wine, and from time to time gives directions regarding the people's gestures and posture (*IGMR*, 94).

As the first of the ministers at liturgy, it falls to the deacon to remain aware of the needs of the community and its other ministers. In the absence of a master of ceremonies, the deacon serves in this capacity *de facto*. Therefore, if some problem arises during the liturgy, the deacon has the first responsibility to make an effort to resolve the matter quickly and with as little attention as possible.

The deacon's liturgical ministry reflects his role of service in the community.

LOCATION OF THE DEACON AT MASS

At the celebration of the Eucharist, the deacon sits next to the presiding priest. Concelebrating priests sit as a group in another part of the sanctuary. Servers sit in a place in the sanctuary from where they can easily exercise their ministry. Concelebrants and servers do not sit next to the presiding priest.

BEFORE MASS

VESTURE

The dalmatic, worn over the alb and stole, is the vestment proper to the deacon. Nevertheless, the dalmatic may be omitted for some necessity or on account of a lesser grade of solemnity (*IGMR*, 338).

AGREEMENT ON DIVISION OF LABOR WITH OTHER MINISTERS

The deacon does not exercise his ministry in a vacuum. At the liturgy, the diversity of ministers—cleric and lay—manifests the diversity of the gifts bestowed on the body of the Christ. For the smooth execution of the liturgy, it is imperative that all the ministers know their areas of responsibility and perform them well.

When only one deacon is present at Mass, he normally takes those functions outlined in the *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*. When two deacons minister at the celebration of the Eucharist, the diaconal functions should be divided among them. For example, one deacon might take the spoken functions and the other deacon the active parts. Three deacons are generally used at the stationary Mass of the diocesan bishop. At these liturgies, one deacon proclaims the Gospel and announces the general intercessions. The following tables offer one way to divide the diaconal tasks.

Carries in the Book of the Gospels (unless a reader does this) Assists with the incensations Speaks the Penitential Rite (Form 3 only) (unless the cantor intones it) Proclaims the Gospel Announces the general intercessions Prepares the altar and the cup Elevates the cup at the doxology of the Eucharistic Prayer Pours the Precious Blood into the cups during the Fraction Rite Invites the assembly to exchange the sign of peace Ministers the cup to the faithful Invites the assembly to bow heads for the blessing Dismisses the assembly Processes out slightly behind the presider to his right

Table 1 – Functions When One Deacon Ministers at Mass

Deacon sitting to the Presider's Right	Deacon sitting to the Presider's Left
Assists with the incensations Prepares the altar and the cup Elevates the cup at the doxology of the Eucharistic Prayer Pours the Precious Blood into the cups during the Fraction Rite Ministers the cup to the faithful Processes out slightly behind the presider to his right	Carries in the Book of the Gospels (unless a reader does this) Speaks the Penitential Rite (Form 3 only) (unless the cantor intones it) Proclaims the Gospel Announces the general intercessions Invites the assembly to exchange the sign of peace Ministers the cup to the faithful Invites the assembly to bow heads for the blessing Dismisses the assembly Processes out slightly behind the presider to his left

Table 2 – Division of Labor When Two Deacons Minister at Mass

Deacon to the Presider's Right	Deacon to the Presider's Left	Deacon of the Gospels
Assists with the incensations Prepares the altar and the cup Elevates the cup at the doxology of the Eucharistic Prayer Pours the Precious Blood into the cups during the Fraction Rite Ministers the cup to the faithful Processes out slightly behind the presider to his right	Speaks the Penitential Rite (Form 3) (unless the cantor intones it) Invites the assembly to exchange the sign of peace Ministers the cup to the faithful Invites the assembly to bow heads for the blessing Dismisses the assembly Processes out slightly behind the presider to his left	Carries in the Book of the Gospels (unless a reader does this) Proclaims the Gospel Announces the general intercessions Ministers the cup to the faithful Processes out after the lay ministers and before other vested deacons and concelebrants (N.B. the Book of the Gospels is not varied out)

Table 3 – Division of Labor When Three Deacons Minister at Mass

ROLE AT MASS

INTRODUCTORY RITE

Entrance Procession

Generally, the deacon carries the Book of the Gospels in the entrance procession. In the procession, the deacon follows the lay ministers and is the first of the clergy. *IGMR 173* states that the deacon carrying the Book of the Gospels does not reverence the altar with a bow. Rather, he goes directly to the altar, where he places the Book of the Gospels in the horizontal position, i.e., flat on the altar.

When the presiding priest goes to the altar to kiss it, the deacon(s) does so with him. If incense is used at this time, the deacon assists the priest with the incense. He bows with the priest to the altar and to the cross (before it is incensed).

After the veneration of the altar, or after its incensation, the deacon accompanies the priest to the chairs.

Penitential Rite

Three forms are available for the penitential rite. The deacon has a role to play only in Form 3. After the priest has introduced the penitential rite, a period of silence follows before the invocations begin. The deacons should permit a silence the length of six breaths before he begins the invocations. Eight examples of invocations are found in the Sacramentary. A set that is appropriate for the season, readings, or sacramental ritual should be chosen.

The rubric in the Sacramentary does permit other invocations to be written. The following principles should be kept in mind when composing new invocations. They are

- Addressed to Jesus: the invocations are addressed to the Lord Jesus

- Laudatory in nature: the invocations acclaim some attribute or saving activity of the Lord. Note that all the examples in the Sacramentary are positive and do not focus on our sins.
- Brief: the invocations are brief. Again, note the models in the Sacramentary.

Sprinkling Rite

For the blessing of water, either the deacon or a server can hold the water in front of the priest. The deacon, carrying the container of water, accompanies the priest throughout the church as he sprinkles the people.

Upon returning to the sanctuary, the deacon gives the bowl of water and sprinkler to a server, who returns them to the credence table.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gospel

A period of silence should follow the reading (or psalm) before the Gospel procession begins.

If incense is used, a server brings the thurible and boat to the presider. The boat is given to the deacon, who holds it open for the priest. After the priest has imposed incense, the deacon gives the boat back to the server. When the server has moved away, the deacon stands in front of the priest, makes a profound bow, and says in a low voice: *Father, give me your blessing*. After receiving the priest's blessing, the deacon follows the thurifer to the altar. The deacon bows to the altar, approaches it, and picks up the Book of the Gospels. The deacon, following the thurifer and servers with candles, carries the Book of the Gospels to the ambo.

After the Gospel acclamation concludes, the deacons, with hands joined, says the greeting: *The Lord be with you. A reading from the holy Gospel according to N*. Please note that this ritual text is not to be changed. After the greeting, the deacon signs the Book with his thumb, and then his forehead, lips, and breast. If incense is used, he takes the censer, bows to the Book, and incenses it with three single swings. The deacon returns the censer to the server, picks up the Book and proclaims the Gospel.

At the conclusion of the Gospel proclamation, the deacon says: *The Gospel of the Lord* (again, a ritual text not to be changed), and kisses the Book, and says inaudibly: *Through the words of the gospel may our sins be washed away*.

At Masses where the Bishop presides, the deacon does not kiss the Book. Rather, after the proclamation, the deacon carries the Book of the Gospels to the Bishop at his chair. After the Bishop kisses the Book, the deacon places it on a side table and returns to his seat.

General Intercessions

After the priest introduces the general intercessions, it falls to the deacon to announce the intentions. This is done from the ambo or another suitable place.

In preparing intentions, it is helpful to remember the following points:

- The intentions are addressed to the assembly, not to God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Mary, or one of the saints. The intentions are statements of what it is the assembly is asked to pray for.
- The *Institutio Generalis* (n. 70) provides a general order for the intentions.
 - a) for the needs of the Church;
 - b) for public authorities and the salvation of the whole world;
 - c) for those oppressed by any need;
 - d) for the local community.

“In particular celebrations, such as confirmations, marriages, or funerals, the series of intercessions may refer more specifically to the occasion.”
- “The intentions announced should be sober, with a discrete freedom and composed of few words, expressing the needs of the whole community” (*IGMR*, 71).

If a response will be sung by the assembly, the deacon should be aware if the cantor will intone the invitation to prayer, or if the deacon will say this.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Preparation of the Altar and Gifts

Ordinarily, it is the deacon’s role to prepare the altar by placing the corporal, chalice, purificator, and Sacramentary on it during the Preparation of the Altar and Gifts. The servers assist in this rite by bringing the items from the credence table to the deacon at the altar. Prior to Mass, the deacon who prepares the altar should ask the presiding priest where he wants the Sacramentary positioned on the altar and the place he wants it opened to.

The deacon receives the gifts with the priest. In Masses with the Bishop, the gifts are received by the Bishop at the chair. To the extent possible, the deacon gives the plate of bread to the priest at the altar. The deacon then prepares the chalice. A little water is added only to the chalice or to the flagon of wine (before some of it is poured into the chalice); water is not added to the flagon and to the chalice. After preparing the chalice, the deacon hands it to the priest and places the flagon on the corporal.

If incense is used, the deacon takes the boat from the thurifer and holds it open for the presider. After incense has been imposed, the deacon returns the boat to the server. The deacon accompanies the priest as he incenses the gifts and the altar. Next, the deacon takes the thurible from the priest, and facing him, bows and incenses him with three single swings. The deacon bows to the priest again. If there are concelebrating priests, the deacon goes to them and incenses them as a group with three single swings, bowing before and after. Finally, the deacon goes to the assembly. After the faithful have stood, the deacon bows, incenses them as a group with three single swings, and bows again. The deacon returns the thurible to the server.

Eucharistic Prayer

During the Eucharistic Prayer, the deacon stands near but slightly behind the priest. If there are concelebrants, the deacon is not to be between them and the altar. Oftentimes, the deacon can stand at the end of the altar, permitting the concelebrants to stand around the

presider. The *Institutio Generalis* specifies that, “as a general rule,” the deacon kneels from the epiclesis through the showing of the chalice. However, because of the requirement that the deacon be ready to help with the book, and the physical difficulties many deacons have in kneeling, the Bishop has determined that deacons in the Diocese of Stockton will remain standing for the entire Eucharistic Prayer. Therefore, in accord with *IGMR* 43, “those who do not kneel at the consecration ought to make a profound bow when the priest genuflects after the consecration.”

Deacons are reminded that, except for approved acclamations, only the priest proclaims the text of the Eucharistic Prayer. This includes the invitation to the memorial acclamation and the doxology.

Just prior to the doxology, the deacon approaches the altar and takes the chalice. He elevates it while the priest elevates the consecrated bread. After the Great Amen, the deacon places the chalice on the corporal and returns to his place.

Sign of Peace

After the priest wishes the assembly Christ’s peace, the deacon turns to the faithful and says: *Let us offer one another a sign of peace*. After receiving the sign of peace from the presider, the deacon offers it to ministers near him. Ordinarily, the deacon remains in the sanctuary in preparation for the Fraction rite.

Fraction Rite

The norms for Communion under both kinds in the United States are governed by *This Holy and Living Sacrifice*. When the *Agnus Dei* begins, the deacon assists the priest with breaking the Eucharistic bread and/or pouring the consecrated wine into the cups. When the number of concelebrants is large, the deacon passes a plate of Eucharistic bread among them.

Communion

The priest ministers Communion to the deacon. If Communion is given under both kinds, the deacon ministers the cup to the faithful with the words *The blood of Christ*. After the communicant returns the cup to the deacon, the deacon wipes the inside and outside of the cup’s rim with a purificator and turns the cup for the next person.

After Communion is finished, the deacon returns to the credence table with his cup. He consumes any Precious Blood remaining. He should also ensure that any remaining Precious Blood in other cups is also consumed, either by himself or by other ministers.

The cleansing of the Communion vessels most appropriately takes place after Mass.

CONCLUDING RITE

Announcements

If there are any announcements to be made, they are made at this time, i.e., after the Prayer after Communion. The proper place for announcements is at a location other than the ambo, which is reserved for the proclamation of God's word.

Blessing

The blessing begins with the priest's greeting, *The Lord be with you*. After the people respond, and if a solemn blessing or a prayer over the people is used, the deacon immediately says: *Bow your heads and pray for God's blessing*. The deacon assists the assembly in its response by emphasizing the *Amen* at the conclusion of each invocation.

Dismissal

After the priest blesses the people, the deacon dismisses the assembly using one of the approved formulas. During the Easter octave and on Pentecost, the dismissal with double alleluia is sung.

Procession

The deacon venerates the altar with a kiss. He and the priest reverence the altar with a bow, unless the Blessed Sacrament is reserved directly behind the altar. Since the Book of the Gospels is not carried in the procession out of the church, the deacon walks next to the priest, though slightly behind him.

AFTER MASS

PURIFICATION OF THE VESSELS

If the parish does not designate extraordinary ministers of Communion or a sacristan to purify and wash the vessels after Mass, it is the deacon's responsibility to make sure this is done. After purifying the plates and cups used for Communion, the vessels are to be washed thoroughly with soap and water.