



## **Diocese of Superior**

# **The Deacon at Mass**

Based on the

**General Instruction of the Roman Missal (2011)**

and the

**Ceremonial of Bishops (1989)**

September 16, 2014



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# Introduction<sup>1</sup>

## General Principles

The celebration of Mass, as the action of Christ and of the People of God arrayed hierarchically, is the center of the whole of Christian life for the Church both universal and local, as well as for each of the faithful individually. For in it is found the high point both of the action by which God sanctifies the world in Christ and of the worship that the human race offers to the Father, adoring him through Christ, the Son of God, in the Holy Spirit [GIRM 16]. It is, therefore, of the greatest importance that the celebration of the Mass or the Lord's Supper be so ordered that the sacred ministers and the faithful taking part in it, according to the state proper to each, may draw from it more abundantly those fruits of the Eucharistic Sacrifice of Christ's Body and Blood [GIRM 17]. The entire celebration is to be arranged in such a way that it leads to a conscious, active and full participation of the faithful [GIRM 18].

The Mass consists of two parts, the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, with these being so closely interconnected that they form but one single act of worship. There are also certain rites that open and conclude the celebration [GIRM 28].

In texts that are to be pronounced in a loud and clear voice, whether by the Priest or the Deacon, by a reader, or by everyone, the voice should correspond to the genre of the text itself [GIRM 38]. The Christian faithful, who come together as one, are to sing together Psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles. Great importance should be attached to the use of singing in the celebration of the Mass [GIRM 39-41]. The gestures and bodily posture of the Priest, the Deacon, other 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, and to fostering the participation of all [GIRM 42-44]. Sacred silence also, as part of the celebration, is to be observed at the designated times [GIRM 45]. The parts of the Mass and their purpose are explained in the Individual Parts of the Mass section of the GIRM [GIRM 46-90].

The duties and ministries in the Mass are found in Chapter III, paragraphs 91-111, of the General Instructions of the Roman Missal (GIRM). All, whether ordained ministers or lay Christian faithful, in fulfilling their function or their duty, should carry out solely but totally that which pertains to them [GIRM 91]. After the Priest, the Deacon, in virtue of the sacred Ordination he has received, holds 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 even from the early time of the Apostles [GIRM 94].

The different forms of celebrating Mass are noted in Chapter IV of the GIRM. Sections for a Mass without a Deacon and for a Mass with a Deacon are noted. Details for Mass with a Deacon are found in 171-186. Chapters V – IX of the GIRM provide additional important information pertaining to the proper celebration of the Eucharist [GIRM 3].

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<sup>1</sup> References in parentheses refer to paragraph numbers in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 2011 (GIRM)

## Reflection on the Ministry of the Deacon

A Deacon is ordained to serve the community in charity and justice. That ministry, as in the ministries of Bishop and Priest and in the Christian witness of all the baptized, is deeply intertwined with the ministries of word and liturgy. If the Deacon's primary ministry is one of service, then his action within the Mass and in all the other rites and celebrations of the Church is modeled on that diakonia. A thorough knowledge and understanding of his functions within the liturgy are important to the Deacon's ministry within the community.

The Deacon has many other ministries in which service and liturgy intermingle. For example, the Deacon has traditionally brought communion to the sick and the dying. Such visitation of those in spiritual need is as much a diakonia of liturgy as it is a ministry of charitable service.

### Assisting at Mass

This document is offered as an aid for Deacons who will be assisting a Priest or Bishop during the Celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy. It is important that the Deacon understands the significance of his role in the liturgy and that he is prepared to carry it out that role in a reverent and efficient manner.

One, two, (and in some special episcopal liturgies three or more) Deacons may assist at Mass.<sup>2</sup> If there are two Deacons present, one Deacon usually assists as the Deacon of the Word and the other as the Deacon of the Altar. Unlike Priests, who often concelebrate at Mass, Deacons present but not specifically assisting would normally participate as a member of the Assembly (not vested or specially seated). However, in some liturgies, (such as all diocesan Masses or at a Deacon's funeral) a larger group of Deacons may be present and "vested but not assisting" (wearing their vestments and seated together in a special place but without the assignment of any specific assisting role).

The Deacon's role in the celebration of the Eucharist is three-fold. First, reflecting his ordination as a living icon of Christ the Servant, his role is clearly one of "assisting" the presider. He may assist the Priest by very briefly introducing the faithful to the Mass of the day [GIRM 50], by guiding the assembly with suitable instructions regarding their gestures and posture [GIRM 94], by ministering to/assisting the priest as necessary [GIRM 94], and by carrying out the duties of other ministers in their absence. Second, in his role as a cleric, the Deacon may announce the invocations of the third form of the Penitential Act if used (and may also lead Kyrie which concludes the first and second forms of the Penitential Act), proclaim the Gospel, present the homily, function as an ordinary minister of Holy Communion (especially as minister of the chalice), and purify the sacred vessels. Third, as a representative of the people, the Deacon announces the intentions of the General Intercessions, calls the people to prayer, prepares the gifts, sets the altar, assists in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and sends the people forth at the end of Mass.

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<sup>2</sup> At the Chrism Mass, besides the Deacon of the Word and the Deacon of the Altar, three other Deacons are asked to function as bearers of the urns containing the Oil of the Sick, Oil of Catechumens and the Sacred Chrism.

## **Vesture**

The vestment proper to the Deacon is the dalmatic, worn over the alb and Deacon stole. The dalmatic may be omitted out of necessity or on account of a lesser degree of solemnity [GIRM 119, 338]. It is preferable to wear a dalmatic, if available, for more solemn occasions such as Easter, Christmas, Chrism Mass, and Holy Thursday. The color of the stole and dalmatic of the vested Deacon should be consistent with that of the presiding Priest.

## **Preparation for Mass**

Preparations for Mass are of utmost importance to the celebration. Ordinarily the sacristan and other ministers help with these preparations. However, if some or all of these ministers are unable to complete their usual tasks, the Deacon may be asked to fulfill these roles. The Deacon may then need to make certain that the necessary liturgical books, cloths, vessels and vestments are properly arranged for the celebration, that sufficient altar breads, wine, and water are prepared and that the tabernacle key is conveniently located. The Lectionary should be properly marked for the readings of the day and placed on the ambo [GIRM 117-119].

At weekend and some special liturgies, it is preferable that a *Book of Gospels* is used for the proclamation of the gospel and that it be carried in the opening procession by the Deacon of the Word. Alternatively, the *Book of Gospels* may be placed on the altar prior to the beginning of Mass. In the absence of a *Book of Gospels*, the gospel may be read from the *Lectionary for Mass*, however, unlike the *Book of Gospels*, the *Lectionary* is not carried in procession.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.rcbo.org/offices/images/pdfs/worship/Processing%20Lectionary.pdf> for an article explaining why.

# The Ministry of the Deacon in the Celebration of the Mass<sup>4</sup>

Guidelines for Masses with a Priest are in black and not indented.

Red, indented guidelines indicate where they differ slightly at a Mass where Bishop presides.

## Introductory Rites<sup>5</sup>

### Entrance Procession

**The Deacon's position in the procession/the *Book of Gospels*...**Vested and carrying the *Book of Gospels* with the binding to the right and with the book slightly elevated, the Deacon of the Word walks directly in front of the Priest on the way to the altar. If the *Book of Gospels* is not being carried in the procession, the Deacon (as above) walks a little ahead of the Priest.<sup>6</sup> If there are two Deacons assisting, the Deacon of the Word, with or without the *Book of Gospels*, processes directly in front of the Deacon of the Altar who walks directly in front of the Priest.<sup>7</sup>

**Number of assisting Deacons...**The *Ceremonial of Bishops* envisions “at least three Deacons” [CB 26] assisting Bishop, one completing the dual task of proclaiming the gospel reading and ministering at the altar, while the other two are there to, more generally, “assist Bishop”. However, in most circumstances, two Deacons (one functioning as the Deacon of the Word and the other as Deacon of the Altar) would suffice. In the absence of multiple Deacons, a single Deacon may assist Bishop by performing the various diaconal tasks as best he can by himself.

**Order of the opening procession including the *Book of Gospels*...**The *Ceremonial of Bishops* [CB 128] lists the order of the opening procession this way:

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<sup>4</sup> GIRM 172-174, 46-54

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> This eliminates the option found in the GIRM, where it says the Deacon may also walk at the Priest's side. (Bishop feels that most aisles are too narrow to comfortably accommodate the Deacon walking at the Priest's side, especially when a Knights of Columbus Honor Guard is present.)

<sup>7</sup> This is a change from what it says in the GIRM, where the Deacon of the Word would be walking directly in front of the Priest and the Deacon of the Altar would be walking at the Priest's side. (See footnote 6 above)



- A thurifer carrying a thurible with burning incense in one hand and the incense boat and spoon in the other. (The incense boat and spoon may also be carried by another server.)
- A server carrying a cross, with the image to the front, walks between two to seven servers carrying candlesticks with lighted candles.<sup>8</sup>
- The Deacon of the Word carrying the *Book of Gospels* vested in alb, stole and possibly dalmatic.
- Any other Deacons (vested but not assisting), processing two by two.
- Any concelebrating Priests, processing two by two.
- The Deacon of the Altar and any other assisting Deacons.<sup>9</sup>
- Bishop, walking alone, wearing the miter, carrying the pastoral staff in his left hand and blessing with his right.
- Finally, the servers who assist with...the miter and the pastoral staff. (Sometimes these two servers may be referred to as *vimps*.<sup>10</sup>)

**If the *Book of Gospels* is excluded from the procession...**If the *Book of Gospels* is not being carried in the procession, the Deacon of the Word may then process just in front of the Deacon of the Altar (who is processing just in front of Bishop). If a Deacon is assisting alone, he may process with the Book of the Gospels in the position mentioned above (behind the candles and cross and in front of any other clerics if applicable) or, if he is not carrying the *Book of Gospels*, he positions himself just in front of Bishop.

**Assistance with the miter/crozier including the possibility of vimps...**At Mass with Bishop presiding, there are certain times when he will need assistance with his miter and pastoral staff (crozier). The *Ceremonial of Bishops* outlines the proper times for Bishop to wear or remove his miter and when his pastoral staff is to be held by him or placed it in its stand. However, except at certain diocesan liturgies, Bishop would like to limit this assistance to:

- **Miter on/crozier in-hand...**During the Opening Procession, Bishop wears the miter and holds the pastoral staff.
- **Miter off/crozier put in stand...**Upon reaching the sanctuary steps, and before bowing (or genuflecting) toward the altar, Bishop gives the pastoral staff and miter to a server (or to two different servers). All then

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<sup>8</sup> Though not a requirement, seven altar candles may be used at a Mass where Bishop presides—this is one more than the traditional six, and therefore a sign of increased solemnity. (This is in no way an expectation on Bishop’s part.)

<sup>9</sup> Bishop departs here from the order found in the *Ceremonial of Bishops* by placing any additional assisting Deacons just ahead of him in the procession rather than a little behind him.

<sup>10</sup> These servers—miter and crozier bearers—are sometimes called “vimps” because of the veils they may wear over their shoulders. These veils (called *vimpa*, or, in the singular, a *vimpa*) are secured at the neck by ribbons or a clasp (much like a humeral veil, but without any elaborate decoration). The servers keep these veils over their hands when handling the miter or the crozier, and their use shows (in a ceremonial way) that the person carrying the item does not have the authority of a Bishop. These are certainly “extras” as far as server roles are concerned, but the assistance they provide sometimes proves useful. A Deacon could easily assist in this way instead (without wearing a *vimpa*).

bow toward the altar and ascend the sanctuary steps. The server(s) then place the crozier in its stand near Bishop's chair and store the miter until it is needed again.

- **Miter on/ crozier in-hand...**Before the final blessing at the end of Mass, immediately prior to Bishop's exchange with the assembly, "The Lord be with you"... "And with your spirit", the server offers Bishop the miter. After the final blessing, the server offers Bishop the pastoral staff.

**Bowing toward the altar and kissing the altar...**Upon arriving at the sanctuary, if he is carrying the *Book of the Gospels*, the Deacon omits bowing to the altar, walks directly to it and either lays the Book flat there or places it in a stand which holds it up [GIRM 173]. If he is not carrying the *Book of Gospels*, the Deacon makes a profound bow (or genuflection) to the altar with the Priest in the customary way before entering the sanctuary.<sup>11</sup> After placing the *Book of the Gospels* on the altar, the Deacon of the Word waits there for the arrival of the Priest (and Deacon of the Altar if there is one). Then together they venerate the altar with a kiss.

**Assistance with the miter/crozier without vimps, bowing toward/kissing altar...**If there is one assisting Deacon and no vimps, the Deacon, assists the Bishop by:

- First, receiving the crozier and miter from him;
- Second, bowing toward the altar with him before ascending the sanctuary steps;
- Third, correctly placing the crozier in the stand near Bishop's chair and storing the miter until it is needed again—most often the end of Mass;
- Fourth, returning to the altar to kiss it with Bishop.

The Deacon should perform the miter and crozier tasks as efficiently as possible so that his participation in the kissing of the altar, which follows closely, is not unduly hindered. If this one Deacon is processing in with the Book of Gospels, the book must be placed on the altar ahead of the assistance he provides to Bishop with the miter and crozier as described above. This may be a reason to choose not to process with the Book in this case, depending on if there is a "time buffer" of additional clergy processing behind the Deacon of the Word which would help to cover this movement.

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<sup>11</sup> **If the tabernacle is located in the sanctuary**, the Priest, Deacon and other ministers (who are not carrying articles used in the celebration) should genuflect when they approach the altar before entering the sanctuary. They should do this again when they leave the sanctuary at the end of the Mass, *but not during the celebration of Mass itself*. Ministers who are carrying the processional cross, candles or Book of Gospels bow their heads instead of genuflecting [GIRM 274]. This practice of genuflection, while the most correct, may be modified in our diocese to bowing due to physical incapacity or as local custom suggests. (It is interesting to note that the *Ceremonial of Bishops* only mentions bowing at this point in the Mass.)

If there are two assisting Deacons and no vimps, both Deacons may share aspects of the miter and crozier tasks as described above, as local circumstances suggest.

### **Incensation of the altar and cross**

If incense is being used, the censer (and incense boat) bearer approach the altar. The Deacon assists the Priest in putting some incense into the thurible. The GIRM then describes the Deacon(s) as “assisting” the Priest in the process of incensing the cross and altar. (Practically speaking, what this assistance specifically consists of is difficult to visualize, and so in most cases may not be necessary.)<sup>12</sup>

After the incensation, the Deacon goes to the chair with the Priest, sits next to him, and assists him as required.

### **Penitential Act**

If the third option of the Penitential Act is used, the *Roman Missal* specifically states that, besides the Priest, the Deacon (or another minister) may announce or sing the invocations along with leading the *Kyrie, eleison*. If the first (*Confiteor*) or second (“Have mercy on us, O Lord...For we have sinned against you...”) options are used the Missal prescribes that these forms are to conclude with the *Kyrie, eleison* without invocations. The rubric is silent about any allowance for someone other than the Priest celebrant to lead this concluding *Kyrie* in either of the first two forms. However, upon inquiry, a representative of the USCCB Committee on Divine Worship stated that the Deacon (or another minister) may also lead the *Kyrie, eleison* which concludes the first two forms. In all forms of the Penitential Act there should be a brief pause for silence between the Priest celebrant’s initial invitation and the part which follows.

### **Sprinkling Rite**

The rubrics at the Sprinkling Rite do not specifically mention the Deacon(s) assisting the Priest in this action, but it is thought that it may be helpful at times if the Deacon(s) would assist the presider with sprinkling the people as requested.

If the Sprinkling Rite is used at a Mass with Bishop, the *Ceremonial of Bishops* envisions Bishop receiving the sprinkler from one of the Deacons and the Deacons then accompanying Bishop through the church as he sprinkles the

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<sup>12</sup> Other than by presenting the incense boat to the Priest and possibly by putting incense into the censer, it is somewhat difficult to say how the Deacons are to specifically “assist” with the incensation of the altar and cross. In the *Ceremonial of Bishops* it mentions that the two Deacons “accompany” Bishop while he incenses the altar and cross [CB 131]. It does not define the precise manner in which they are to “accompany” him.

people. Exactly what this assistance consists of is not made clear, and Bishop finds it easiest to hold the vessel of water himself. However, especially depending on the size of the worship space, the Deacon(s) may be asked assist Bishop with the task of sprinkling the people.

## Liturgy of the Word<sup>13</sup>

**Proclamation of the readings...**The Deacon remains seated at his place for the Liturgy of the Word until the time of the Gospel. If the scheduled readers are absent and no suitable replacements can be found, the Deacon may proclaim the other readings as well. However, every effort should be made to ensure the presence of readers for the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy.

### Gospel Reading

**Assistance with putting incense in the thurible...**If incense is used during the procession with the Book of the Gospels to the ambo, the Deacon may assist the Priest as he places incense in the thurible during the singing of the *Gospel Acclamation* prior to the procession. If incense is not used in the procession, but will be used at the incensation of the Book, the Deacon who proclaims the gospel then waits to place incense in the thurible immediately prior to that incensation.

**Asking for the Priest's blessing...**Before beginning the procession to the Ambo, the Deacon makes a profound bow before the Priest and asks for the blessing, saying in a low voice, "*Your blessing, Father.*" The Priest blesses him, "*May the Lord be in your heart and on your lips that you may proclaim His Gospel worthily and well, in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.*" The Deacon signs himself with the sign of the cross and responds, "*Amen.*"<sup>14</sup>

**Assistance with incense boat, asking Bishop's blessing while standing...**When the gospel acclamation begins, everyone but the Bishop stands. If incense is used during the procession with the *Book of Gospels* to the ambo, the Thurifer takes the thurible to the Bishop, and the Deacon holds the incense boat while Bishop (who is seated) spoons the incense into the thurible and blesses it.

After Bishop stands, the Deacon makes a profound bow before him and asks for the blessing, saying in a low voice, "*Your blessing, Father.*"<sup>15</sup> Bishop blesses

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<sup>13</sup> GIRM 175-177, 55-71

<sup>14</sup> *Roman Missal*; The Order of Mass; The Liturgy of the Word; #14

<sup>15</sup> Note that the same words (including the specific word "Father") are used whether asking for the blessing from a Priest or a Bishop [*Ceremonial of Bishops*, 140]. The formula from the *Ceremonial of Bishops* has been adapted here to match that contained in the current *Roman Missal*, but the word "Father" is common to both.

him, "*May the Lord be in your heart and on your lips that you may proclaim His Gospel worthily and well, in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.*" The Deacon signs himself with the sign of the cross and responds, "*Amen.*"

**Assistance with incense boat, asking Bishop's blessing while kneeling...**Alternatively, if desirable, the Deacon may kneel in front of Bishop (who is seated) prior to assisting him with the incense boat. In this option, the deacon assists him with the boat while still kneeling, omits the profound bow, and remains kneeling during the spoken exchange prior to Bishop's blessing. Both Bishop and the Deacon stand after the blessing.

**Retrieval of the *Book of Gospels*...**If the *Book of Gospels* is being used, the Deacon walks to the altar where it has been placed, bows to the altar, picks the book up and holds it up. With the book slightly elevated, the Deacon then processes with it to the ambo. Servers with lighted candles may precede the Deacon. If incense is being used, the procession is led by the thurifer with smoking thurible followed by servers with lighted candles and then the Deacon. If the *Book of Gospels* is not used, the Deacon goes directly to the ambo without a procession.

**Announcing the Gospel reading...**At the ambo the Deacon opens the book and greets the people (with hands joined) saying, "*The Lord be with you.*" After the people respond he signs a cross on the page with his thumb while saying, "*A reading from the holy Gospel according to \_\_\_\_\_.*" He then signs a cross with his thumb on his forehead, mouth and breast.

**Incensation of the *Book of Gospels*...**If the *Book of Gospels* is to be incensed and incense was not used during the procession to the ambo, the Deacon who proclaims the Gospel places incense in the thurible at this point. If incense was used during the procession, more may be placed in the thurible at this point if necessary. He then bows to the *Book of Gospels*, incenses the book with three swings of the thurible, (in the center, to the left, and to the right<sup>16</sup>) bows again, returns the thurible to the thurifer and proclaims the Gospel reading.

**After the proclamation...**After the reading, the Deacon acclaims, without raising the book, "*The Gospel of the Lord,*" to which all respond, "*Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.*" The Deacon then, without raising the book, venerates it with a kiss and says quietly, "*Through the words of the Gospel may our sins be wiped away*".

**Veneration of the Book of Gospels/Imparting a Blessing with the Book of Gospels...**Before Mass, the Deacon who will be proclaiming the Gospel should verify with Bishop whether he wishes to venerate the *Book of Gospels* and also possibly impart a blessing with it at the conclusion of the proclamation.

If Bishop does choose to venerate the book after the proclamation, the Deacon then does not venerate the book himself, but rather takes the *Book of Gospels* directly to Bishop who will venerate it with a kiss. For this veneration the book may be kept open as it is being carried by the Deacon to Bishop, unless it is more convenient for the Deacon to carry it closed. If it is carried closed, the page

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<sup>16</sup> *Ceremonial of Bishops*, 74.

should be held with a finger so the Deacon is able to reopen the book to the correct page before handing it to Bishop for veneration.

In more solemn celebrations, after Bishop venerates the book he may also impart a blessing over the people with it, much like the Eucharistic Blessing performed with a Host in a monstrance. If so, Bishop, after venerating the open book, may be assisted by the Deacon with closing it. Holding the closed book, Bishop then makes the sign of the cross with it over the people before returning the book to the Deacon. In either situation, the Deacon receives the book back from Bishop and then puts it in its usual place.

If Bishop does not choose to venerate the *Book of Gospels*, the Deacon venerates the book with a kiss and says quietly, "*Through the words of the Gospel may our sins be wiped away*". He then puts the book in its usual place.

**The Deacon as homilist...**After placing the *Book of Gospels* in its usual place, the Deacon returns to his chair unless he is presenting the homily. While the Priest is the usual homilist, he may delegate the Deacon to do so.

### **General Intercessions**

After the Priest introduces the General Intercessions (or Prayer of the Faithful or Universal Prayer), the Deacon announces or sings the intentions from the ambo or another suitable place. (See the *Roman Missal*, Appendix V, Examples of Formularies for the Universal Prayer 1-11) He remains at the ambo while the Priest concludes the intercessions with a prayer [GIRM 94, 171, 177].<sup>17</sup> In the absence of a Deacon or in special circumstances, a cantor, lector or members of the lay faithful may announce the intentions of the Prayer of the Faithful [GIRM 71].

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<sup>17</sup> Writing and presenting intercessions in the name of the assembly has traditionally been the role of the Deacon because he, by serving as a minister of charity among the people, knows well the needs of the community and gives voice to those needs. In a sense the general intercessions are the prototype of diaconal prayer.

## The Liturgy of the Eucharist<sup>18</sup>

### Receiving the Gifts and Preparing the Altar

**Placement of the corporal and vessels...**After the Prayer of the Faithful, while the Priest remains at the chair, the Deacon prepares the altar. He may be assisted by the acolyte, but it is the Deacon's place to take care of the sacred vessels himself. The Deacon oversees the arrangement of the corporal, the paten, the vessels and the *Roman Missal*.

**Receiving the gifts...**After the altar is prepared, the bread and the wine are brought forth by the people to an appropriate place. The Deacon assists the Priest in accepting the gifts of the people according to the local custom.

**Preparation of the altar...**After the gifts are brought to the altar, the Deacon presents the paten with the bread to be consecrated to the Priest, who says, "*Blessed are you...*" All respond, "*Blessed be God forever.*" Meanwhile, the Deacon pours wine into the primary chalice and additional cups if they have not been filled prior to being placed on the altar. According to local custom, the Deacon may add a little water to the carafe before filling the chalices or he may pour a little water into the primary chalice only after all the chalices have been filled.

While adding the water he quietly says, "*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.*" Then the Deacon presents the primary chalice to the Priest who again says the prayer with the peoples' response while the Deacon positions the cups appropriately for the Eucharistic Prayer.

Alternatively, the Priest may prefer to remain seated and approach the altar only after the chalice(s) have been filled and placed by the Deacon. In that case, the Deacon presents the paten to the Priest upon his arrival at the altar (or even as a signal to the Priest that the altar has been prepared). After the people have responded, "*Blessed be God for ever.*" the Deacon then hands the Priest the primary chalice.

**Preparation of the altar with two Deacons...**Due to the large number of chalices required for distribution of the Precious Blood at some diocesan liturgies, two Deacons may be asked to prepare them simultaneously. After the gifts are brought to the altar, the Deacons position the main chalice and additional chalices and then pour wine into them (if they were not filled prior to being placed on the altar, which is the case at Priestly Ordinations). The Deacon then pours a little water into the primary chalice only, saying quietly, "*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.*" After all is prepared, the Deacon then presents the paten to Bishop upon to his arrival at the altar. Bishop says, "*Blessed are you...*" All respond, "*Blessed be God forever.*" Then the Deacon presents the primary chalice to the Bishop who again says the prayer with the peoples' response.

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<sup>18</sup> GIRM 178-181, 72-83



**Incensation of the altar, gifts, presiding Priest, other clerics and assembly...**If incense is used, the Deacon assists the Priest as he places incense in the thurible and, according to the *Missal*, may then assist the Priest with the incensation of the gifts, the cross and the altar.<sup>19</sup> After this, depending on the solemnity of the occasion, the Deacon may then incense the Priest celebrant. While the Priest washes his hands, the Deacon may then also incense any vested clerics (as a group) and then also the people (as a group or by section—depending on local circumstances). The Priest and the people are each incensed with three swings of the thurible. A profound bow both precedes and follows the incensation of each group.

**The Deacon receiving the thurible from Bishop...**At a Mass with Bishop presiding, if servers are assisting with the thurible and incense boat, it may be best for them to be trained to have the Deacon receive the thurible after Bishop's incensation of the altar and gifts, as this facilitates the Deacon's incensation of Bishop which follows closely.

### **Eucharistic Prayer**

**Position of the Deacon(s)...**During the Eucharistic Prayer, the Deacon stands near but slightly behind the Priest, so that when necessary he may assist with the chalice or the *Roman Missal*.

**The option of kneeling...**As a general rule, the Deacon kneels from the epiclesis until the elevation and showing of the chalice. That is, he kneels when the Priest extends his hands over the gifts and remains kneeling until he says, "*The mystery of faith*." If age or physical condition makes it difficult for the Deacon to kneel or the presiding Priest needs his assistance because of age or physical condition, the Deacon may remain standing. If there are two Deacons assisting at a Mass and one is unable to kneel, both should remain standing to maintain a uniform posture.

**Incensation during the elevations...**When incense is used and if there are several Deacons present, one of the Deacons may go to place incense in the thurible for the consecration and then, with three swings of the censer, incenses the host and the chalice at their respective elevations. Because of the movement involved, it is thought that this option would be less desirable if only one Deacon was assisting at Mass.

**Assistance with the chalice at the doxology...**At the concluding doxology of the Eucharistic Prayer, the Deacon stands next to the Priest, and holds the chalice elevated while the Priest elevates the paten with the host, until the people have acclaimed, "*Amen*." (The doxology is the prayer of the Bishop, Priest celebrant and concelebrating Priest alone.)

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<sup>19</sup> As with the incensation of the altar and cross after the opening procession above, it is difficult to say just what the Deacon's assistance to the Priest would be at this point (not with the placement of the incense in the thurible prior to the incensation, but with the actual task of incensation itself). Because of this it may be best for the Deacon(s) to simply remain standing stationary and somewhat back from the altar as the Priest incenses the gifts, the cross and the altar.



## The Communion Rite<sup>20</sup>

**The Deacon's invitation at the Sign of Peace...**After he has said the prayer for peace, the Priest greets the people, saying, "*The peace of the Lord be with you always.*" After the people respond, "*And with your spirit*", the Deacon invites all to exchange the sign of peace, saying, with hands joined and facing the people, "***Let us offer each other the sign of peace***". He himself receives the sign of peace from the Priest and may offer it to the other ministers near him.

**Assistance with portioning the consecrated hosts...**As the *Agnus Dei* or *Lamb of God* is begun, the Priest alone, or with the assistance of the Deacon and if necessary of concelebrating Priests, breaks the Eucharistic Bread. Other empty ciboria are then brought to the altar if this is necessary. The Deacon or Priest places the consecrated bread in several ciboria or patens for the distribution of Holy Communion. If it is not possible to accomplish this distribution in a reasonable time, the Priest may call upon the assistance of other Deacons or concelebrating Priests [Norms Part II, No. 37].

**Assistance with distributing consecrated hosts to any concelebrating Priests...**After the *Agnus Dei*, the Deacon may be asked to assist with the distribution consecrated hosts to the concelebrating Priests. The Deacon does not hand the host to a vested Priest; the Priest himself takes the host from the paten or ciborium.

**Reception of Holy Communion/distribution to the assembly...**After the presiding Priest's communion, the Deacon receives under both kinds from the Priest himself. When communion is given to the congregation under both kinds, those Deacons who assist with distribution normally serve as ministers the chalice, although as Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion they may assist with either the paten or the chalice.

**Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion...**If extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are required by pastoral need, they approach the altar after the Priest receives Communion. After the Priest has concluded his own Communion and the Deacon has received, the Priest distributes Communion to the extraordinary ministers, assisted by the Deacon, and then the Priest and/or the Deacon hands the sacred vessels/purificators to them for distribution of Holy Communion to the assembly [Norms Part II, No. 38].

**Reverent consumption of the remaining Precious Blood...**When the distribution is completed, the Deacon immediately and reverently consumes at the altar all of the Blood of Christ which remains. He may be assisted with this, as needs dictate, by other Deacons and Priests or by Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion [Norms No. 52].

**Collection of remaining hosts/purification of the vessels...**The Deacon collects any remaining consecrated hosts to be returned to the tabernacle. Purification of the chalice and other vessels may take place at the altar, or at the credence table, or another side table. This is done by the Deacon and/or Priest, according to local custom. It is also permissible to leave the vessels on a corporal and suitably covered on the side table to be purified immediately following the dismissal of the people at the end of Mass. The Deacon is to ensure that this important matter is tended to with reverence and all due haste. An instituted

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<sup>20</sup> GIRM 181-183, 84-89 and Norms for Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion found in the Roman Missal following the GIRM

acolyte may assist in the purification of the vessels, but other lay people may not [Norms No. 53]. It is appropriate to say the following prayer during the purification of the sacred vessels, "***Lord, may I receive these gifts in purity of heart. May they bring me strength and healing, now and forever. Amen.***"

**Washing the vessels...**After Mass (and only after being correctly purified) extraordinary ministers or other lay people may assist in the task of washing/drying the vessels.

## **The Concluding Rites<sup>21</sup>**

**Announcements...**Following the *Prayer after Communion*, if there are any brief announcements, the Deacon may make them, unless the Priest prefers to do so himself.

**Miter on/ crozier in-hand...**Before the final blessing at the end of Mass, immediately prior to Bishop's exchange with the assembly, "The Lord be with you"... "And with your spirit", the Deacon offers Bishop the miter. After the final blessing, the Deacon offers Bishop the pastoral staff.

**Instruction prior to Solemn Blessing or Prayer Over the People...**If a solemn formula for the blessing or a prayer over the people is used, the Deacon says, "***Bow down for the blessing.***"

**Dismissal...**After the final blessing, the Deacon, with hands joined and facing the people, dismisses them, saying one of the following formulas from the Roman Missal:

***"Go forth, the Mass is ended."***

or

***"Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord."***

or

***"Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life."***

or

***"Go in peace."***

**Recession...**Together with the Priest, the Deacon venerates the altar with a kiss, and makes a profound bow (if the tabernacle is in the sanctuary, all genuflect) upon leaving the sanctuary. The procession to the rear of the Church is in the same order as the entrance procession.

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<sup>21</sup> GIRM 184-186, 90

## **Addendum**

1. In the reformed liturgy of the Roman Rite, especially as outlined in the Roman Pontifical, the Deacon always assists the Bishop, whether in the cathedral or in a parish church. Deacons assist the Bishop in all the rites of ordination, not just those of Deacons but also in the ordinations of Bishops and Priests. Deacons assist the Bishop at the altar even if Priests are present for it is not the role of Priests to assist at the altar unless a Deacon is absent [GIRM 116].
2. As noted above, the procedure for a Mass with a Deacon is also followed in the usual way for a concelebrated Mass. A concelebrating Priest does not assume the diaconal functions at the Mass when a Deacon is present [GIRM 116, 171, 208, 215].
3. When using incense, a single series of three swings is used if incensing an individual or an object. If incensing the Blessed Sacrament, (e.g. at Benediction), three series of three swings each (in the center, to the left, and to the right) [CB 74] should be used from a kneeling position.
4. When assisting at Mass, the norm for the Deacon is to avoid using the orans position. The orans position may be appropriate when the Deacon is presiding at other prayer services or rites.
5. After Communion, the corporal should always be folded in a manner that ensures that any remnants of consecrated hosts that may have fallen onto the corporal will remain in the folded corporal for proper disposal after Mass.
6. Ordinarily during Mass, no specific persons or objects (water, gifts, gift bearers, etc.) are blessed by the Deacon.