



Norms Governing the Liturgical Ministries Diocese of Bridgeport

General Introduction

The various ministries of liturgical service which the faithful embrace in the Sacred Liturgy serve to enhance the praise and worship of God through the exercise of ministerial participation in the rites and prayers. The division of these ministries according to a distinct hierarchical line, from ordained ministers to the lay faithful, produce an innate harmony of involvement in the exercise of worship. When these various levels of service are exercised through ritual expression consonant with the spirit of the liturgical rites, the greatness of the participation of the faithful in the mystery of Christian worship is expressed in a manner which is truly sublime.

The beauty and the harmony of the liturgy find eloquent expression in the order by which everyone is called to participate actively. This entails an acknowledgment of the distinct hierarchical roles involved in the celebration. It is helpful to recall that active participation is not *per se* equivalent to the exercise of a specific ministry. The active participation of the laity does not benefit from the confusion arising from an inability to distinguish, within the Church's communion, the different functions proper to each one. There is a particular need for clarity with regard to the specific functions of the priest. He alone, and no other, as the tradition of the Church attests, presides over the entire eucharistic celebration, from the initial greeting to the final blessing. In virtue of his reception of Holy Orders, he represents Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, and, in a specific way, also the Church herself. Every celebration of the Eucharist, in fact, is led by the Bishop, "either in person or through priests who are his helpers." He is helped by a deacon, who has specific duties during the celebration: he prepares the altar, assists the priest, proclaims the Gospel, preaches the homily from time to time, reads the intentions of the Prayer of the Faithful, and distributes the Eucharist to the faithful. Associated with these ministries linked to the sacrament of Holy Orders, there are also other ministries of liturgical service which can be carried out in a praiseworthy manner by religious and properly trained laity.¹

¹Benedict XVI, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "On the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church's Life and Mission, Sacramentum Caritatis,"* 53.



In liturgical celebrations each person, minister or layman, who has an office to perform, should do all of, but only, those parts which pertain to his office by the nature of the rite and the principles of liturgy. Servers, lectors, commentators, and members of the choir also exercise a genuine liturgical function. They ought, therefore, to discharge their office with the sincere piety and decorum demanded by so exalted a ministry and rightly expected of them by God's people. Consequently, they must all be deeply imbued with the spirit of the liturgy, each in his own measure, and they must be trained to perform their functions in a correct and orderly manner.²

The ordinary ministers of liturgical worship are the bishop, priest and deacon. Formally, instituted ministers are the acolyte and the lector. The non-ordained faithful who have not been formally instituted in ministry exercise an extraordinary level of service. These constitute the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion (hereinafter, "EMHC"), the non-instituted reader, the altar server, the usher, the sacristan and all levels of liturgical musicians, such as the organist, the choir member, the cantor and the psalmist. The proceeding sections of this document will elaborate upon some of these ministries, as well as establish their normative form of exercise in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

General Norms for all Liturgical Ministries:

1. All applicable liturgical law contained in the currently approved ritual books for the Roman Rite, especially *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal, Third Typical Edition* and the *Order of Readings for Mass*, must be followed in every Roman Rite ecclesiastical institution in the Diocese of Bridgeport.³
2. All the norms contained herein will be observed in the Diocese of Bridgeport *ad experimentum* for a period of twelve months, effective January 1, 2019. The formation requirements contained herein are effective November 1, 2018. All the norms contained herein are promulgated as particular law for the Diocese of Bridgeport, with the binding force of law.
3. All the norms contained herein shall supersede all existing sacramental guidelines that pertain to these liturgical ministries.

² Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, "*Sacrosanctum Concilium*," 28-29.

³ *The Order* can be found in the front of most editions of the Lectionary for Mass for use in the Dioceses of the United States of America.



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Norms for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

I. Introduction

The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one single sacrifice*: "The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different." "And since in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner. . . this sacrifice is truly propitiatory."⁴

While the heart of the celebration of the Eucharist is the Eucharistic Prayer, the consummation of the Mass is found in Holy Communion, whereby the people purchased for the Father by his beloved Son eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ. They are thereby joined together as members of Christ's mystical Body, sharing the one life of the Spirit. In the great sacrament of the altar, they are joined to Christ Jesus and to one another.⁵

Bishops, Priests and Deacons distribute Holy Communion by virtue of their office as ordinary ministers of the Body and Blood of the Lord. When the size of the congregation or the incapacity of the Bishop, Priest, or Deacon requires it, the celebrant may be assisted by other Bishops, Priests or Deacons. If such ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are not present, "the Priest may call upon extraordinary ministers to assist him, that is, duly instituted acolytes or even other faithful who have been duly deputed for this purpose. In case of necessity, the Priest may even depute suitable faithful for this single occasion."⁶

The extraordinary minister of Holy Communion may administer Communion only when the Priest and Deacon are lacking, when the Priest is prevented by weakness or advanced age or some other genuine reason, or when the number of faithful coming to Communion is so great that the very celebration of Mass would be unduly prolonged.⁷

⁴ CCC 1367; Council of Trent (1562) *Doctrina de ss. Missae sacrificio*, c. 2: DS 1743; cf. *Heb* 9:14,27.

⁵ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Norms for the Distribution of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds*, (Norms), 5.

⁶ The Holy See, *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 162; Norms, 27-28.

⁷ Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Instruction on Certain Matters to be Observed or to be Avoided regarding the Most Holy Eucharist, Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 158.



II. The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion

The extraordinary minister of Holy Communion (EMHC) is a lay member of the faithful or a religious who has been deputed to help distribute Holy Communion when a sufficient number of ordinary ministers are not present, available or capable, and when the priest celebrant has determined that pastoral need requires their help. When called upon to assist, the EMHC will distribute either the host or the chalice to the faithful, keeping in mind that when “communion is given under both kinds, the deacon himself administers the chalice.”⁸

Seminarians and men in formation for the permanent diaconate for the Diocese of Bridgeport ordinarily are installed as acolytes during their formation towards ordination to diaconate and priesthood.⁹ Such an acolyte is “instituted for service at the altar and to assist the priest and deacon. It is his place principally to prepare the altar and the sacred vessels and, if necessary, to distribute Eucharist to the faithful as an extraordinary minister.”¹⁰ This means that, when pastoral need requires an EMHC, if a formally instituted acolyte is present, he should be considered before others to exercise this ministry.

III. Specific Norms Governing the Service of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

1. All liturgical norms within the current ritual books of the Roman Rite which pertain to the ministerial exercise of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, especially those contained in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal, Third Typical Edition (GIRM)*, and in the *Norms for The Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds In The Dioceses Of The United States Of America*, must be followed without exception in all Roman Rite ecclesiastical institutions in the Diocese of Bridgeport.¹¹

⁸ *GIRM*, 182.

⁹ In special circumstances, a lay man who serves as a master of ceremony for the bishop may be installed as an acolyte.

¹⁰ *GIRM*, 98.

¹¹ Both documents can be found in the front of the edition of *The Roman Missal* for use in the Dioceses of the United States of America. For convenience and easy reference, these two documents are also available in a single book, *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2011 as volume 14 of their *Liturgy Documentary Series*.



2. Only those persons who are selected by his or her respective pastor or chaplain and fulfill the requirements mandated by the law of the Church are eligible to serve as EMHCs.
 - a. Those requirements include:
 - i. Being of at least 16 years old;
 - ii. Being a fully-initiated Catholic Christian who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist
 - iii. Being of good moral character, leading a life of faith and prayer which is in accord with the teachings of the Catholic Church;
 - iv. Not being bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;
 - v. Demonstrating a genuine reverence and respect for the Most Blessed Sacrament;
 - vi. If married, being in a valid marriage according to the prescriptions of the current Code of Canon Law;
 - vii. Being in full compliance with the norms of the Safe Environment Program of the Diocese of Bridgeport.
3. Priests¹² and deacons¹³ are the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion and always distribute Holy Communion during a celebration of Mass in which they participate. If there are concelebrating priests or deacons present at the Mass to which an EMHC has been assigned to serve, he or she should ask the priest celebrant of the Mass if assistance still is required.
4. Attire worn by an EMHC at Mass must be neat, clean, modest and bear some degree of formality. Albs may be used by EMHCs during their service at Mass, if permitted by the local pastor. Furthermore, athletic attire, as well as all varieties of shorts, t-shirts, jeans and sneakers never are permitted as appropriate attire. The only exception would be the use of sneakers by those who do so for safety or medical reasons.
5. Only those persons who have successfully completed all formation requirements mandated in the Diocese of Bridgeport may function as EMHCs in their respective parishes and institutions. Formation includes full completion of the diocesan program sponsored by The Leadership Institute.
6. Each candidate will submit an application to The Leadership Institute to begin formation. The application must be signed by the candidate's respective pastor or

¹² A priest, "possesses within the Church the sacred power of Orders to offer sacrifice in the person of Christ [...] gives his brothers and sisters the Bread of eternal life and partakes of it with them," *GIRM*, 93.

¹³ A deacon "holds first place among those who minister in the celebration of the Eucharist [...] At Mass the Deacon has his own part [...] in distributing the Eucharist to the faithful, especially under the species of wine," *GIRM*, 94.



chaplain and accompanied by a letter of recommendation written by the same pastor or chaplain.

7. Upon completion of the required diocesan formation, each candidate will be given a diocesan mandate to serve as an EMHC in the Diocese of Bridgeport. The mandate will be sent to the candidate's respective pastor or chaplain, indicating that all diocesan formation requirements have been fulfilled.
 - a. Mandates are for a three-year term of service, renewable for additional terms, upon the approval of the respective pastor or chaplain and the consent of the bishop.
 - b. Those candidates who receive a diocesan mandate from the bishop may serve as an EMHC only in the place designated in the mandate. No EMHC is permitted to serve in any other location without the express consent of the local pastor or priest celebrant.
 - c. If any EMHC wishes to serve on a regular basis in a parish or institution other than the one for which he or she has received a mandate, the EMHC must present his or her mandate to the pastor or chaplain of the "secondary" site and receive written approval from the same pastor or chaplain. A copy of the approval letter to serve in the secondary site must also be sent by the EMHC to The Leadership Institute for proper record keeping.
 - d. Students of sufficient age who apply for a mandate to serve in their respective Catholic high school may also receive a mandate to serve in their home parish, pending the approval of their pastor, which must accompany their application for formation.
 - e. Faculty members of any Catholic high school located in the Diocese must seek a mandate to serve in their respective parishes and if interested, can also present their mandate to the chaplain of the school where they teach to serve in their respective high school as well.
8. "In special cases of an unforeseen nature, permission can be given for a single occasion by the Priest who presides at the celebration of the Eucharist"¹⁴ to delegate a trained and prepared member of the faithful to distribute Holy Communion. Pastoral need in this instance occurs in a situation which arises suddenly and without warning.¹⁵
9. "It is not permitted for the faithful to take the consecrated Bread or the sacred chalice by themselves, and still less, to hand them on from one to another among

¹⁴ *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 155.

¹⁵ An example of a valid pastoral need includes a larger than usual number of the faithful who are present for Mass and a lack of Ordinary Ministers, duly instituted Acolytes or formally mandated EMHCs present, causing the distribution of Holy Communion to become an extremely prolonged event. Conversely, it is never permitted to allow untrained individuals to act as EMHCs at a specific ceremony, such as that of the family member who wishes to participate in a unique way at a funeral mass or at a wedding.



themselves.”¹⁶ Though EMHCs distribute Holy Communion to the faithful, they ordinarily do not distribute communion to each other at Mass. It is necessary for the priest, representing Christ himself and having received His Body and Blood, or the deacon of the Mass who has received Holy Communion from the celebrant, to first distribute the Body and Blood of Christ to EMHCs so that they may then be sent to distribute Holy Communion to the faithful. At the discretion of the priest celebrant, an EMHC may distribute the cup to the other EMHCs who are serving at the same Mass, provided that there is a significant pastoral need to do so.

10. “A lay member of Christ’s faithful ‘who has already received the Most Holy Eucharist may receive it again on the same day only within a Eucharistic Celebration in which he or she is participating.’”¹⁷
11. During the celebration of Mass, EMHCs never are permitted to approach the tabernacle to retrieve the ciboria for the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass, nor are they permitted to repose the Most Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle upon completion of the distribution of Holy Communion.
12. After the completion of the distribution of the Precious Blood:
 - a. If the chalice is empty, all EMHCs must return the chalice to the credence table for proper purification.
 - i. EMHCs are not permitted to purify the sacred vessels either during or after the celebration of Mass. Only a duly instituted acolyte who has served at Mass, a deacon, or the priest celebrant is permitted to purify the sacred vessels, which ideally should take place at the credence table.¹⁸
 - b. If Precious Blood remains in a chalice upon completion of the distribution of Holy Communion, all EMHCs must bring their chalice(s) to the altar for the ordinary ministers to consume.¹⁹
 - i. EMHCs are not permitted to consume what remains in the chalice. In exceptional cases, EMHCs may consume the remaining Blood of Christ only when directly requested to do so by the priest celebrant while remaining beside the altar.
 - c. It is never permitted, under any circumstances, to pour any remaining Precious Blood into the ground or down the sacrarium.²⁰

¹⁶ *GIRM*, 160.

¹⁷ Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, can. 917; Pontifical Commission for the Authentic Interpretation of the Code of Canon Law, Response to Dubium, 11 July 1984: AAS 76 (1984) p. 746; *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 95.

¹⁸ *Norms*, 53; *GIRM*, 279.

¹⁹ “When more of the Precious Blood remains than was necessary for Communion, and if not consumed by the Bishop or Priest celebrant, the Deacon, standing at the altar, «immediately and reverently consumes all of the Blood of Christ that remains, assisted, if the case requires, by other Deacons and Priests»”, *GIRM*, 182; *Norms*, 52.

²⁰ *GIRM* 94; *Norms*, 55.



13. If a member of the faithful asks for a blessing in place of the reception of Holy Communion, the following norms must be followed:

- a. EMHCs are never permitted to bless anyone who requests a blessing during the distribution of Holy Communion. In addition, they are not permitted to offer any simulation of a blessing through making the Sign of the Cross on a communicant's forehead or in any other manner.
- b. If an adult asks a blessing for a child, the adult must first be administered Holy Communion and then the child may be given a spiritual exhortation by the person distributing Holy Communion.
- c. Without holding a consecrated host, the EMHC should offer the following spiritual exhortation for both adults and children requesting a blessing: "May you receive the Lord Jesus in your heart."

14. In preparation for the distribution of Holy Communion to the sick and infirmed outside of Mass:

- a. It is not permitted for any EMHC to obtain consecrated hosts during the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass. With the permission of the pastor, arrangements can be made for a EMHC to obtain the necessary number of consecrated hosts from the tabernacle outside the celebration of Mass.
- b. If EMHCs are dismissed after the conclusion of the Communion Rite to distribute the Blessed Sacrament to the sick:
 - i. They must leave their pyx in the proper place, as determined by the priest celebrant, before the start of Mass.
 - ii. When summoned by the priest celebrant or deacon, the EMHCs will be given their pyx and immediately be dismissed to attend to the sick.
- c. Furthermore, due to the dangers associated with the transportation and distribution of the Precious Blood, EMHCs are never permitted to bring the Precious Blood to the sick. Pastors and Chaplains are to arrange for an Ordinary Minister to visit those sick people who are unable to receive a consecrated host.²¹

15. Although the *Rite of Eucharistic Exposition and Benediction of the Holy Eucharist* allows for an EMHC to "publicly expose and later repose the Holy Eucharist for the

²¹ Ordinary ministers must observe the following norms in the distribution of the chalice alone to the sick: "Only sick people who are unable to receive Communion under the form of bread may receive it under the form of wine alone at the discretion of the Priest. If not consecrated at a Mass in the presence of the sick person, the Blood of the Lord is kept in a properly covered vessel and is placed in the tabernacle after Communion. The Precious Blood should be carried to the sick in a vessel that is closed in such a way as to eliminate all danger of spilling. If some of the Precious Blood remains after the sick person has received Communion, it should be consumed by the minister, who should also see to it that the vessel is properly purified." *Norms*, 54.



adoration of the faithful”²² in the absence of a priest or deacon, EMHCs do not have this permission in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

- a. If Eucharistic Exposition is to take place, the pastor or chaplain must make the appropriate arrangements for a priest, deacon or duly instituted acolyte to expose and repose the Most Blessed Sacrament for veneration by the faithful.
 - b. An exception to this norm may be sought by seeking written permission from the vicar general or bishop.
16. No EMHC is permitted to lead the *Rite of Distributing Holy Communion Outside Mass* or *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* in place of a parish weekday Mass without the explicit permission of the bishop or the vicar general. No pastor or dean can grant this permission for any reason without first obtaining the written consent of the vicar general or bishop. This norm does not apply to the distribute of Holy Communion to the sick, homebound or in nursing homes.

IV. Formation and Commission as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion

The process to be formed and commissioned to serve as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion in the Diocese of Bridgeport requires three steps:

Step One: Required Diocesan Formation

Those selected to serve as EMHCs by their respective pastor or the chaplain of their school or institution must receive “sufficient spiritual, theological, and practical preparation to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence,”²³ involving “instruction in eucharistic doctrine [...] the meaning of the service they provide, the rubrics to be observed, the reverence to be shown for such an august Sacrament and instruction concerning the discipline on admission to Holy Communion.”²⁴

A mandatory program of spiritual preparation, theological instruction and ministerial formation is conducted through The Leadership Institute of the Diocese of Bridgeport. Details about this program and its accompanying schedules are available from the Institute.

²² *The Roman Ritual* as renewed by decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and published by authority of Pope Paul VI, *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*, 91.

²³ *Norms*, 28.

²⁴ CONGREGATION FOR CLERGY, *Interdicasterial Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Ministry of Priest, Ecclesiae de mysterio*, no. 8, § 2.



Step Two: Formal Delegation by the Diocesan Bishop

Appointment as an EMHC is through delegation “by the diocesan Bishop, in accordance with the norm of law, for one occasion or for a specified time.”²⁵ Those who are appointed will receive their delegation from the bishop of the Diocese of Bridgeport through the reception of a diocesan mandate following completion of the required formation program offered by The Leadership Institute.

One whose term has expired or has taken an absence from service may apply again for another diocesan mandate if re-appointed by their pastor or chaplain. Further, the mandate can cease at any time by a decision of the bishop in consultation with the pastor of the parish or the chaplain of the school or institution to which the mandate applies.

When granting permission for a trained and prepared member of the faithful to distribute Holy Communion on a single occasion, the individual selected by the priest celebrant should be deputed for this one-time act of service according to the *Rite of Deputing a Minister to Distribute Holy Communion on a Single Occasion*, which is found in Appendix III of the current *Roman Missal*. It cannot be construed that this single act of deputation can in any way constitute an official commissioning as an EMHC, nor that a person temporarily deputed in this matter holds a valid diocesan mandate for regular service as an EMHC.

Step Three: Commission by the Local Dean

Once the diocesan mandate has been received, candidates are ordinarily commissioned by the respective dean in which the parish, school or institution resides. This commissioning ceremony takes place within the deanery, employing the *Order for the Commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion* contained within the *Book of Blessings* (found in Chapter 63 of the American edition).

The commissioning ceremony normally will take place once per year per deanery. Though this ceremony serves to mark the official commencement of one’s ministry as an EMHC, service as an EMHC may begin in the mandated parish, school or institution as soon as the mandate is received, even before the commissioning ceremony occurs.

With the permission of the respective dean, the commissioning of an EMHC who has received a diocesan mandate also may be done by the local pastor.

Students and faculty members who have received a diocesan mandate and wish to serve as EMHCs in their respective high schools may be commissioned during a Mass attended by

²⁵ *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 155.



their school community with the permission of the diocesan bishop. Such permission must be sought in writing.

V. Continuing Formation

An EMHC should participate in continuing formation to deepen the understanding of their service and to grow in reverence for the Most Blessed Sacrament. While such opportunities for enrichment will be provided by The Leadership Institute, pastors and chaplains should offer whenever possible similar opportunities on the local level. These include, but are not limited to, formation days, retreats, theological lectures and spiritual presentations.

Parish priests, deacons and chaplain are encouraged periodically to meet with EMHCs to discuss their service and to obtain advice regarding any ministerial challenges they may have encountered.

VI. The Service of the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion at Mass

This description of the service of the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion at Mass is based on the liturgical directives found in the *GIRM*, as well as in the *Norms for The Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America*. For this reason, they are considered normative for use in all Roman Rite ecclesiastical institutions in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

1. The Introductory Rites

EMHCs may take part in the entrance procession, at the discretion of the priest celebrant. They follow the crucifer and candle-bearers, processing before the instituted lector or reader. When the procession reaches the altar, EMHCs make a profound bow to the altar before taking their place.²⁶ If the tabernacle is situated behind the altar of sacrifice, the proper gesture is a genuflection.

2. The Liturgy of the Eucharist

²⁶ *GIRM*, 122.



The service of the EMHC begins at the distribution of Holy Communion during the Communion Rite. An EMHC only approaches the altar to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion only after the principal celebrant of the Mass has received from the chalice.²⁷

Upon entering the sanctuary, EMHCs make a profound bow before the altar, and then proceed to the side of the altar to receive Holy Communion. This side varies from church to church and is pre-determined by the pastor or the chaplain.

The priest celebrant distributes Holy Communion to all EMHCs, assisted by the deacon if one is present. Once all EMHCs have received the Most Blessed Sacrament, they are handed the sacred vessels by the Priest (and Deacon, if present) for them to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion. In doing so, the priest celebrant must keep in mind that if a Deacon is present, and “when the Eucharist is distributed under both species, the Deacon himself administers the chalice.”²⁸

Once having received the ciborium or chalice, EMHCs take their assigned stations and begin to distribute Holy Communion once the priest celebrant begins to distribute Holy Communion to the faithful. Norms are specific on how exactly the distribution of Holy Communion is to be carried out:

The norm established for the Dioceses of the United States of America is that Holy Communion is to be received standing, unless an individual member of the faithful wishes to receive Communion while kneeling. When receiving Holy Communion, the communicant bows his or her head before the Sacrament as a gesture of reverence and receives the Body of the Lord from the minister. The consecrated host may be received either on the tongue or in the hand, at the discretion of the communicant.²⁹

Holy Communion offered under the form of bread is offered to the communicant with the words «The Body of Christ». [...] The chalice is offered to the communicant with the words «The Blood of Christ» to which the communicant responds, «Amen.» [...] After each communicant has received the Blood of Christ, the minister carefully wipes both sides of the rim of the chalice with a purificator [...] the minister turns the chalice slightly after each communicant has received the Precious Blood. It is the choice of the communicant, not the minister, to receive from the chalice.³⁰

The EMHC should never should add the communicant’s name or any other personal greeting when distributing Holy Communion during the celebration of Mass.

²⁷ *Norms*, 38.

²⁸ *GIRM*, 182; *Norms*, 26.

²⁹ *GIRM*, 160.

³⁰ *Norms*, 41, 43, 45-46.



In distributing the consecrated hosts to the faithful, EMHCs must ensure hosts that have been distributed to the faithful have been properly consumed in their presence before the communicant walks away.³¹ If the EMHC observes that a person has not consumed the host, the EMHC must with discretion befitting the sacred moment, instruct the person to consume the host immediately.

If a person wishes to receive the Eucharist by hand, the EMHC is never permitted to place the consecrated host in a hand that is gloved or when any article of clothing or bandage covers the hand.

In the distribution of the chalice, EMHCs allow communicants to take the chalice into their own hands to receive from it, while being watchful to ensure that it is not accidentally dropped in the process. EMHCs also must be mindful of the level of Precious Blood contained within, so that none accidentally spills onto the floor.

If the Precious Blood within a chalice has been completely consumed before the distribution of Holy Communion is finished, and additional chalices are available containing the Precious Blood, the EMHC must return the empty chalice to the credence table, placing its purificator over it, and after obtaining an additional chalice and purificator from the altar, return to his or her station for continued distribution.

Once the distribution of Holy Communion is complete, EMHCs return all sacred vessels that contain the Body or Blood of Christ to the altar, so that the priest celebrant or the deacon may repose all remaining hosts in the tabernacle and consume whatever remains of the Precious Blood.

Pastors are encouraged to maintain an ablution dish with water and purificator at the credence table so that EMHCs may cleanse their fingers of any consecrated particles that may have stuck to them. EMHCs leave the sanctuary together, once the Most Blessed Sacrament is reposed, bowing in front of the altar when returning to their appointed place with the assembly.

3. Concluding Rites

³¹ "Special care should be taken to ensure that the host is consumed by the communicant in the presence of the minister, so that no one goes away carrying the Eucharistic species in his hand. If there is a risk of profanation, then Holy Communion should not be given in the hand to the faithful," *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 92.



During the recessional, the EMHCs take their place following the crucifer and candle-bearers, but before the instituted lector or reader.

VII. Ministering to the Sick and Homebound

When EMHCs are sent from their parish to the home of the sick or to a health care institution, the following procedures are to be followed:

1. If EMHCs do not have their own pyx, they should obtain one from their parish, school or institution, as well as a sufficient quantity of hosts from the tabernacle. It is ideal to carry the pyx containing the Most Blessed Sacrament in a leather *bursa* that can be worn around one's neck when performing this important service.
2. Ministry to the Sick and Homebound requires use of the rites contained within the *Administration of Communion and Viaticum to the Sick by an Extraordinary Minister*, found in Chapter 2 of the ritual book *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*.
3. Once consecrated hosts have been obtained, the EMHC should go about their ministerial rounds without delay and without interruption, mindful that they are carrying the Most Blessed Sacrament. During this time of service, personal interaction or telephone conversations while in transit are to be avoided out of respect due to the Blessed Sacrament. The time during which EMHCs travel to the sick and infirmed is a time of silence and prayerful reverence.
4. When bringing Holy Communion to the infirmed at home, "those who are with the sick should be asked to prepare a table covered with a linen cloth upon which the blessed sacrament will be placed. Lighted candles are prepared and, where it is customary, a vessel of holy water. Care should be taken to make the occasion special and joyful."³²
5. In their visitation of the sick, EMHCs must be courteous and conscious of patient confidentiality so that they operate in accordance with the norms of the *Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act* (HIPAA).
6. An EMHC and deacon must never simulate the *Rite of the Anointing of the Sick*.

³² *The Roman Ritual* as renewed by decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and published by authority of Pope Paul VI, *Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum*, 74.



7. Once their ministerial obligations have been completed, EMHCs are immediately to return any remaining consecrated hosts to the tabernacle in their parish, school or institution. Since only priests may self-communicate, EMHCs cannot consume what remains of the Most Blessed Sacrament. Purification of the pyx by the EMHC takes place following the reposition of the consecrated hosts, when any materials borrowed from the parish, school or institution are returned.
8. A log of the ministrations performed by EMHCs must be made in the parish records, typically found in the appropriate register. The pastor or chaplain instruct EMHCs on how to use this register and where it may be found, should they wish them to make the entries themselves. All entries must be made on a timely basis.



Norms for Readers

I. Introduction

In the Mass is spread the table both of God's Word and of the Body of Christ, and from it the faithful are to be instructed and refreshed [...] When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his word, proclaims the Gospel³³. In the hearing of God's Word the Church is built up and grows, and in the signs of the liturgical celebration God's wonderful, past works in the history of salvation are presented anew as mysterious realities. God in turn makes use of the congregation of the faithful that celebrates the Liturgy in order that his word may speed on and be glorified and that his name be exalted among the nations. Whenever, therefore, the Church, gathered by the Holy Spirit for liturgical celebration, announces and proclaims the word of God, she is aware of being a new people in whom the covenant made in the past is perfected and fulfilled.³⁴

In the celebration of the Mass with the people, the readings are always read from the ambo. The function of proclaiming the readings is by tradition not presidential but ministerial. Therefore, the readings are to be read by a reader, but the Gospel by a Deacon or, in his absence, by another Priest.³⁵

The lector is instituted to proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture, with the exception of the Gospel. He may also announce the intentions for the Universal Prayer and, in the absence of a psalmist, recite the Psalm between the readings.³⁶

In the absence of an instituted lector, other lay people may be deputed to proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture, people who are truly suited to carrying out this function and carefully prepared, so that by their hearing the readings from the sacred texts the faithful may conceive in their hearts a sweet and living affection for Sacred Scripture.³⁷

³³ The Holy See, *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, (GIRM), 28-29.

³⁴ The Holy See, *Order of the Readings for Mass*, 7

³⁵ GIRM, 59.

³⁶ GIRM, 99.

³⁷ GIRM, 101.



II. The Ministry of Reader

In this document, the term “reader” refers to any member of the faithful who has been deputed – in the absence of an instituted Lector – to proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture at Mass, except the Gospel. At Masses without a deacon, a reader also announces the intentions during the Universal Prayer of the Faithful. Readers also may be employed to make parish announcements, typically before Mass or following the Prayer after Communion. “If there is no singing at the Entrance or at Communion and the antiphons given in the Missal are not recited by the faithful, the reader may read them at the appropriate time.”³⁸

The following norms recognize that there is a distinction between an instituted Lector and a member of the faithful who has been deputed to proclaim the readings of Sacred Scripture at Mass. Magisterial documentation frequently will refer to instituted lectors as “readers,” as well as to the ministry of reader, which is equivalent to that of the lector. In the Diocese of Bridgeport, only seminarians and deacons are installed formally as lectors; this occurs during their formation. Thus, in this document, the term “reader” always refers to a person deputed to proclaim the Sacred Scriptures according to the norms prescribed herein.

Readers also may be employed to proclaim the Word of God in the various liturgical rites, which within the context of parochial life include the *Rite of Baptism*, the *Pastoral Care of the Sick*, the *Rite of Confirmation*, the *Order of Christian Funerals*, the *Rite of Marriage*, the *Liturgy of the Hours*, and celebrations of the Word of God. Such celebrations may occur on pilgrimage, mission, retreat and special days of penance.

III. Specific Norms Governing the Service of Readers

1. Only those persons who are selected by their respective pastor or chaplain and fulfill the requirements mandated by the law of the Church are eligible to serve as readers in the Diocese of Bridgeport. Those requirements include:
 - a. Being at least 16 years old;
 - b. Being a fully-initiated Catholic Christian who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist;
 - c. Being of good, moral character, leading a life of faith and prayer which is in accord with the teachings of the Catholic Church;
 - d. Not being bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;

³⁸ *GIRM*, 198.



- e. Demonstrating a reverence and respect for Sacred Scripture;
 - f. If married, being in a valid marriage according to the prescriptions of the current Code of Canon Law;
 - g. Being in full compliance with the norms of the Safe Environment Program of the Diocese of Bridgeport.
2. Attire worn by a reader at Mass must be neat, clean, modest and bear some degree of formality. Albs are not permitted for use by readers in the Diocese of Bridgeport. Furthermore, athletic attire, as well as all varieties of shorts, t-shirts, jeans and sneakers never are permitted as appropriate attire.³⁹ The only exception would be the use of sneakers by those who do so for safety or medical reasons.
 3. In the Diocese of Bridgeport, students under the age of 16 may function as a reader at Masses celebrated at by his or her school or during the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation, provided that such service is considered extraordinary in nature and is permitted only with proper permission from the pastor or episcopal chaplain solely on a case-by-case basis. Such instances require that the student be properly prepared and competent to exercise the ministry.⁴⁰
 4. Readers always must proclaim the scriptural readings within the liturgical rites using the editions of the *Lectionary for Mass for Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America*.
 - a. The scriptural readings prepared in the *Lectionary for Mass* are based on the Neo-Vulgate as the typical edition of Sacred Scripture for liturgical use. The English translation contained in the *Lectionary for Mass* has been approved as the sole translation to be used in the celebration of Mass in all the dioceses of the United States of America. It is therefore unlawful to use any other translation of Sacred Scripture for the celebration of Mass other than that provided in the *Lectionary for Mass*.
 - b. Since liturgical books serve as “signs and symbols of higher realities, care must be taken to ensure that they truly are worthy, dignified and beautiful.”⁴¹ For these reasons, “the books of readings used in the celebration are not to be replaced by pastoral aids, for example, by leaflets printed for the

³⁹ “During the celebration of the Mass with a congregation a second priest, a deacon and an instituted reader must wear the distinctive vestment of their office when they go up to the ambo to read the word of God. Those who carry out the ministry of reader just for the occasion or even regularly but without institution may go to the ambo in ordinary attire, but this should be in keeping with customs of the different regions,” *Order of the Readings for Mass*, 54.

⁴⁰ “It should not be presumed that children should proclaim the word of God in the celebrations in which this *Lectionary* is used. Some younger children are able to read the Scriptures competently, but the witness of older children, teenagers, or adults, ministering graciously and reverently to young children engaged in liturgical prayer, is more conducive to the children’s growing reverence for the word of God, than the peer ministry of embarrassed or ill-prepared children,” *Introduction to the Lectionary for Masses with Children*, 23.

⁴¹ *Order*, 35.



- preparation of the readings by the faithful or for their personal meditation.”⁴²
- c. It is prohibited to use electronic devices from which to read Sacred Scripture during the celebration of the Liturgy.
5. The *Lectionary for Masses with Children* is principally intended for use at Masses which are primarily for children and not the ordinary Sunday Mass.⁴³
- a. “Therefore, priest celebrants should not use this *Lectionary for Masses with Children* exclusively or even preferentially at Sunday Masses, even though large numbers of children are present.”⁴⁴
 - b. The scriptural readings that are contained in *the Lectionary for Masses with Children* “may be used at Sunday masses when a large number of children are present along with adults, or when the children have a separate liturgy of the word, or for masses at which most of the congregation consists of children (e.g., school masses).”⁴⁵ In making the decision for its use at Mass, pastors and chaplains must realize that the age level of the intended audience of children of the *Lectionary for Masses with Children* “are children of elementary grades (preadolescents).”⁴⁶
6. Upon completion of the required diocesan formation, each candidate will receive a diocesan mandate to serve as a reader in the Diocese of Bridgeport. The mandate will be sent to the candidate’s respective pastor or chaplain, indicating that all diocesan formation requirements have been fulfilled.
- a. Mandates are for a three-year term of service, renewable for additional terms, upon the approval of the respective pastor or chaplain. This renewal does not require the approval of the diocesan bishop.
 - b. Those candidates who receive a diocesan mandate from the bishop may serve as a reader only in the place designated in the mandate. No reader is permitted to serve in any other location without the express consent of the local pastor or priest celebrant.
 - c. If any reader wishes to serve on a regular basis in a parish or institution other than the one for which he or she has received a mandate, the reader must present his or her mandate to the pastor or chaplain of the “secondary” site and receive written approval from the same pastor or chaplain. A copy of the approval letter to serve in the secondary site must also be sent by the reader to The Leadership Institute for proper record keeping
 - d. Students of sufficient age who apply for a mandate to serve in their respective Catholic high school also may receive a mandate to serve in their

⁴² *Order*, 37.

⁴³ National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Forward to the Lectionary for Masses with Children*.

⁴⁴ National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Introduction to the Lectionary for Masses with Children*, 13.

⁴⁵ *Introduction*, 12.

⁴⁶ *Introduction*, 15.



home parish, pending the approval of their pastor, which must accompany their application for formation.

- e. Faculty members of any Catholic high school located in the Diocese must seek a mandate to serve in their respective parishes and if interested, may also present their mandate to the chaplain of the school where they teach to serve in their respective high school as well.
7. Sufficient pastoral need does allow the temporary deputation of a person to read at a specific ceremony, such as that of the family member who wishes to participate in a unique way at a funeral Mass or at a wedding. Such permission can be given by the respective pastor or chaplain on a case by case basis. However, permission must not be given in situations where there is merely a desire to accommodate a family's request to have a person who is unqualified to serve in this ministry.
 8. Permission for a non-Catholic Christian to read during the celebration of Mass must be obtained from the pastor or vicar general.⁴⁷
 - a. A non-Catholic Christian student who attends a Catholic school within the Diocese may read at sacramental celebrations celebrated with the school only with the explicit permission of the local pastor or school chaplain.
 - b. A non-baptized person never may serve as a reader at any sacramental celebration.

IV. Formation and Installation as a Reader

To exercise the ministry of reader, each candidate must complete the following three steps:

Step One: Required Diocesan Formation

Those selected to be readers by the pastor of their parish or chaplain of their school or institution must be “truly suited to carrying out this function and carefully prepared,”⁴⁸ involving a special level of preparation which enables them to proclaim the Word of God. This becomes even more important in the liturgical context when one realizes that “every liturgical action is by its very nature steeped in Sacred Scripture.”⁴⁹

Sacred Scripture is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy. From it are taken the readings, which are explained in the homily and the psalms that are

⁴⁷ “The reading of Scripture during a Eucharistic celebration in the Catholic Church is to be done by members of that Church. On exceptional occasions and for a just cause, the Bishop of the diocese may permit a member of another Church or ecclesial Community to take on the task of reader,” Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, 133.

⁴⁸ *GIRM*, 101.

⁴⁹ Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “On the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church *Verbum Domini*,” 52.



sung. From Scripture the petitions, prayers and liturgical hymns receive their inspiration and substance. From Scripture the liturgical actions and signs draw their meaning.⁵⁰

Unlike other forms of oratory, the proclamation of Sacred Scripture requires a unique focus of attention, based on two principal areas of concentration: a particular stress on the varied spiritual elements involved in Sacred Scripture, and a familiarity behind the technical requirements involved in delivery. This means that the type of formation required of those considered to become readers is a spiritual preparation encompassing both biblical and liturgical elements, while exposing them to the technical demands involved in presentation:

The spiritual preparation presupposes at least a biblical and liturgical formation. The purpose of the biblical formation is to give readers the ability to understand the readings in context and to perceive by the light of faith the central point of the revealed message. The liturgical formation ought to equip the readers to have some grasp of the meaning and structure of the Liturgy of the Word and the significance of its connection with the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The technical preparation should make the readers more skilled in the art of reading publicly, either with the power of their own voice or with the help of sound equipment.⁵¹

These essential elements are examined in the mandatory program of spiritual preparation, scriptural instruction and ministerial formation for readers conducted through The Leadership Institute of the Diocese of Bridgeport. Details about this coursework and its accompanying schedules are available from the Institute.

Step Two: Formal Delegation by the Pastor or Episcopal Chaplain

All diocesan mandates are issued directly by the bishop, declaring a candidate to be eligible to serve in his or her designated parish, school or healthcare facility. Each mandate applies solely to the exercise of this ministerial service in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

The final decision to install and allow a candidate to exercise the ministry of reader rests with the local pastor or chaplain.

The mandate to read the scriptural readings in the Diocese of Bridgeport automatically terminates if the person moves out of the Diocese. The mandate can cease at any time by decision of the bishop in consultation with the pastor of the parish or the chaplain of the school or institution to which the mandate applies. Those who have taken an absence from

⁵⁰ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 24.

⁵¹ *Order*, 55.



service for one year or longer may apply again for another diocesan mandate if re-appointed by their pastor or chaplain.

Step Three: Commission by the Local Dean or Pastor

Appointment as a reader is through approval by one's respective pastor or chaplain, after the Bishop has received an attestation that a candidate has fulfilled all formation requirements and issued a diocesan mandate.

Once the diocesan mandate has been received, all candidates for the ministry of reader ordinarily will be commissioned by the respective dean in which the parish, school or institution resides. This ceremony normally will take place once per year per deanery, employing the *Order for the Blessing of Readers* contained within the *Book of Blessings* (found in Chapter 61 of the American edition). Though this ceremony serves to mark the official commencement of one's ministry as a reader, service as a reader may begin in the mandated parish, school or institution as soon as the mandate is received, even before the blessing occurs.

With the permission of the respective dean, the commissioning of a reader who has received a diocesan mandate also may be done by the local pastor or episcopal chaplain.

Students and faculty members who have received a diocesan mandate and wish to serve as readers in their respective high schools may be commissioned during a Mass attended by their school community with the permission of the diocesan bishop. Such permission must be sought in writing.

V. Continuing Formation

Readers should strive to develop their abilities as proclaimers of God's Word beyond their initial training. Preparation, prayer, study, and practice are keys to their development as effective readers, and these practices should be fostered by one's own parish, school or institution. This continuing formation at the parish level should help readers "to discern God's will through a familiarity with the word, read and studied in the Church under the guidance of her legitimate pastors,"⁵² as well as help them "to appreciate and experience the essential meaning and value of the liturgical action [...] in which the word of God is

⁵² *Verbum Domini*, 84



celebrated as a timely and living word.”⁵³ Such formation can only help readers to deepen their love of Sacred Scripture and of its relation to the liturgical rites.

While such opportunities for enrichment will be provided by The Leadership Institute, pastors and chaplains should whenever possible offer similar opportunities to their readers. These opportunities include, but are not limited to, formation days, retreats, theological lectures and spiritual presentations. Parish priests, deacons and chaplain are encouraged periodically to meet with readers to review their service and to obtain advice regarding any ministerial challenges which they may have encountered.

VI. The Ordinary Exercise of the Ministry of Reader

This description of the ministerial service of the reader is based on the liturgical directives found in *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal, Third Typical Edition* and those found in the *Order of the Readings for Mass*. For this reason, they are considered normative for use in all Roman Rite ecclesiastical institutions in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

1. The Introductory Rites

Readers may process in with the celebrant at the beginning of Mass and recess out with him at the end of Mass. In the entrance processional, they would follow the instituted acolytes and EMHCs. If there is no deacon, and if the priest celebrant of the Mass so desires it, the reader may process in holding the *Book of the Gospels*, slightly elevated.⁵⁴ Readers do not process with the *Lectionary for Mass*.

“Upon reaching the altar, the reader makes a profound bow with the others. If he is carrying the *Book of the Gospels*, he approaches the altar and places the *Book of the Gospels* on it. Then the reader takes his own place in the sanctuary with the other ministers.”⁵⁵ Since one’s ministerial service as a reader is focused on the word of God, it is proper for readers to be seated close to the ambo during the Liturgy of the Word. This not only helps to focus their attention on the proclamation of the Word, but also minimizes unnecessary movement back and forth between the ambo and the nave.

When placing the *Book of the Gospels* on the altar, the reader is to process into the sanctuary around to the center of the altar facing the people and place it face up directly on the central axis of the altar. The reader then walks back in front of the altar, makes a

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁵⁴ *GIRM*, 120.

⁵⁵ *GIRM*, 195.



profound bow to the altar while standing directly in the middle and in front of it, and then proceeds to sit where assigned.

2. The Liturgy of the Word

Following the opening Collect of the Mass, as the assembly seats itself, “the reader goes to the ambo and, from the Lectionary already placed there before Mass, proclaims the First Reading, to which all listen. At the end, the reader pronounces the acclamation ‘*The Word of the Lord*’, and all reply, ‘*Thanks be to God*’. Then a few moments of silence may be observed, if appropriate, so that all meditate on what they have heard.”⁵⁶

If the instituted lector or reader is so trained, “the reading, taken from the approved editions, may be sung in a way suited to different languages.”⁵⁷ Chanting the Scriptural readings is most appropriate, especially on more solemn occasions. If the readings are so chanted, the singing “must serve to bring out the sense of the words, not obscure them.”⁵⁸

While “as a rule the responsorial psalm should be sung,”⁵⁹ if there is no psalmist or cantor to chant the Psalm, the reader will recite the psalm at the ambo “in a manner conducive to meditation on the word of God.”⁶⁰ If the responsorial psalm is chanted, the reader takes his seat near the ambo while the psalmist or cantor chants the psalm.

“If there is to be a Second Reading before the Gospel, the reader proclaims it from the ambo. All listen and at the end reply to the acclamation [...] Then, if appropriate, a few moments of silence may be observed.”⁶¹ This reading may also be chanted.

If the *Book of the Gospels* is employed at the Mass, the reader will take the Lectionary off the ambo at the end of the Second Reading and place it either on the ambo shelf or on a table located nearby, to make ready for the *Book of the Gospels*. If a deacon is ministering at the Mass, the reader will then leave the ambo and return the reader’s assigned place in sanctuary, bowing to the altar if necessary. If there is no deacon ministering at the Mass, the reader will remain in place near the ambo while waiting to announce the intentions listed in the Universal Prayer of the Faithful.

During the Acclamation before the reading of the Gospel, the reader stands at his place and either sings or recites the Acclamation, as does the assembly. The reader remains standing during the reading of the Gospel and should be seated during the homily.

⁵⁶ *GIRM*, 128.

⁵⁷ *Order*, 14.

⁵⁸ *Order*, 14.

⁵⁹ *Order*, 20.

⁶⁰ *Order*, 22.

⁶¹ *GIRM*, 130.



When there is no deacon assisting at Mass, and when the reader is engaged to announce the intentions during the Universal Prayer of the Faithful, he/she walks to the ambo when the period of silence after the homily is complete, to arrive at the ambo in time for the priest celebrant to introduce the Universal Prayer. At Masses on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, when the Profession of Faith (also known as the symbol or creed) is recited following the homily, the reader should begin to approach the ambo at the final *credo* (“I believe in the Holy Catholic Church”). “For the prayer of the faithful the celebrant presides at the chair and the intentions are announced at the ambo.”⁶²

Once the priest celebrant introduces the Universal Prayer, the reader announces first the supplication of the faithful, and then the intentions, individually. After all the intentions of the faithful have been announced by the reader, he/she waits at the ambo until the priest celebrant concludes the Universal Prayer.

Since the ministry of the reader at Mass is complete at the end of the Liturgy of the Word, it is appropriate for readers to exit the sanctuary following the Universal Prayer and take their place in the front row before the Sanctuary entrance, with the EMHCs.

If readers are to make parish announcements, they should be made before the Processional Hymn or after the Prayer after Communion, or at the discretion of the pastor of the parish or the chaplain of the school or institution. Ideally, announcements should be made from a pulpit that is distinct from the ambo, as these are public service announcements which have neither a liturgical purpose nor a scriptural connection.

3. The Concluding Rites

Readers recess out during the recessional, taking their place as before following the instituted acolytes and EMHCs. Readers should refrain from leaving before the priest celebrant reverences the Processional Cross at the end of the recessional. The *Book of the Gospels* is never recessed out.

VII. The Reader at Ritual Masses and Liturgical Celebrations

Ritual Masses such as those of Christian Funerals and Matrimony have their own readings; readers must consult the priest celebrant to ascertain which readings will be proclaimed at these Masses. Readers should follow the norms elaborated above in exercising their ministry.

⁶² *Order*, 31.



Norms for Liturgical Musicians

I. Introduction

Liturgical worship is given a more noble form when the divine offices are celebrated solemnly in song, with the assistance of sacred ministers and the active participation of the people.⁶³ Religious singing by the people is to be intelligently fostered so that in devotions and sacred exercises, as also during liturgical services, the voices of the faithful may ring out according to the norms and requirements of the rubrics.⁶⁴

Liturgical musicians are first of all disciples, and only then are they ministers. Joined to Christ through the Sacraments of Initiation, musicians belong to the assembly of the baptized faithful; they are worshipers above all else. Like the other baptized members of the assembly, pastoral musicians need to hear the Gospel, experience conversion, profess faith in Christ, and so proclaim the praise of God.⁶⁵ All pastoral musicians – professional or volunteer, full-time or part-time, director or choir member, cantor or instrumentalist – exercise a genuine liturgical ministry.⁶⁶

From the smooth coordination of all – the priest celebrant and the deacon, the acolytes, the altar servers, the readers, the psalmist, the *schola cantorum*, the musicians, the cantor and the assembly – flows the proper spiritual atmosphere which makes the liturgical moment truly intense, shared in and fruitful. The musical aspect of liturgical celebrations cannot, therefore, be left to improvisation or to the arbitration of individuals but must be well conducted and rehearsed in accordance with the norms and competencies resulting from a satisfactory liturgical formation.⁶⁷

II. Liturgical Musicians

Liturgical musicians provide a very important service to the People of God assembled to give praise and worship to the Lord. Through the exercise of their musical talents, they add the element of song to the spoken word and contribute the non-verbal communication of

⁶³ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Constitution On the Sacred Liturgy, “*Sacrosanctum Concilium*,” 113.

⁶⁴ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 118.

⁶⁵ UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS, *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, 49.

⁶⁶ *Sing to the Lord*, 50.

⁶⁷ JOHN PAUL II, Chirograph for the Centenary of the *Motu Proprio Tra le Sollecitudini* On Sacred Music, 8.



musical expression to the liturgical aesthetic. As such, it is the primary task of liturgical musicians to encourage the active participation of the People of God in the sacred rites, assisting them to lift their emotions to the Lord by means of their voice from an appropriate interior disposition and to find exterior expression in harmony and melodious song.

Liturgical musicians are either vocalists, instrumentalists or directors. When possible, a Director of Music Ministries should be appointed to coordinate personally with the pastor of the parish, or chaplain of the school or institution, in leading all those participating in the Sacred Music ministry, and especially to organize the efforts of this program in general.

III. Specific Norms Governing the Service of Liturgical Musicians

1. All liturgical musicians must follow the norms within the current ritual books of the Roman Rite which pertain to the exercise of sacred music and liturgical music within them, especially those norms contained in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal, Third Typical Edition (GIRM)*, and in *The Order of Readings for Mass*.

2. In establishing and maintaining their sacred music program, all salaried liturgical musicians must be knowledgeable of the prescriptions regarding the use of sacred music in the liturgical rites found in the magisterial documentation of the Second Vatican Council, especially those contained in chapter 6 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and in *Musica Sacram*.

- a. They should have familiarity with the musical prescriptions of post-conciliar documentation, including those found in *On Inculturation and the Roman Liturgy, (Varietates legitimæ)* and those of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *On the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church's Life and Mission, (Sacramentum caritatis)*.
- b. They must follow the prescriptions established by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops regarding music in the liturgical rites found in the document *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*.⁶⁸
- c. All salaried liturgical musicians are to instruct those liturgical musicians hired per diem or those acting in a volunteer capacity regarding these prescriptions as is necessary.

3. All those who wish to participate in the sacred music program of a parish or institution of the Diocese of Bridgeport, including salaried employees, volunteers or those hired per diem, must fulfill certain requirements. These include:

⁶⁸ This document was published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2007 as volume 4 of their *Pastoral Liturgy Series*.



- a. Being a baptized Christian; (i.e., an exception can be made by any pastor if there is genuine lack of availability of competent musicians to assist in the celebration of the liturgy)
 - b. Seeking to lead a life of Christian faith and prayer;
 - c. If a Catholic, not being bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;
 - d. If a married Catholic, being in a valid marriage according to the prescriptions of the current Code of Canon Law;
 - e. Possessing sufficient training and demonstrating adequate proficiency in their field of musical expertise, whether as a vocalist, an instrumentalist or a director;
 - f. Possessing competency in liturgical music, including a proper awareness of the nature of sacred music, of the purpose of musical expression in the rites and prayers, and a familiarity with the liturgy of the Roman Rite;
 - g. Being in full compliance with the requirements of the Safe Environment Program of the Diocese of Bridgeport.
4. All salaried liturgical musicians must be knowledgeable of and follow the musical prescriptions of *The Roman Pontifical* and *The Ceremonial of Bishops*, as applicable.
 5. All liturgical musicians, both salaried employees and volunteers, must successfully complete the appropriate formation requirements of the Diocese of Bridgeport to function as liturgical musicians in their respective parishes and institutions.
 - a. Those liturgical musicians who are hired per diem are exempted from this requirement unless they are hired as such for more than four (4) occasions within the calendar year by a particular parish or institution.
 - b. Liturgical musicians who become salaried employees resulting from an emergency or urgent need as determined by their pastor or chaplain have a grace period of no longer than three (3) months to complete these formation requirements. They must be notified of this requirement in their offer letter before the agreement to hire is finalized.

IV. Formation and Blessing as a Liturgical Musician

To exercise the ministry of liturgical musician, each candidate must complete the following:

Step One: Required Initial Formation

Since music is one of the various kinds of language that Sacred Liturgy employs in its ritual aesthetic, it is of paramount importance that those who serve as liturgical musicians possess an appropriate level of formation in the nature and qualities of music which can be admitted into divine worship, known as sacred music. The basis of this formation begins



with the understanding that the fundamental purpose of sacred music is “the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful.”⁶⁹ In fact, the underlying maxim is that “sacred music is to be considered the more holy in proportion as it is more closely connected with the liturgical action, whether it adds delight to prayer, fosters unity of minds, or confers greater solemnity upon the sacred rites”⁷⁰; “consequently everything – texts, music, execution – ought to correspond to the meaning of the mystery being celebrated, the structure of the rite and the liturgical seasons.”⁷¹

As such, music in service to the sacred possesses different qualities than the musical expression found in many aspects of ordinary life, for its purpose rests in its connection with the mystery at the heart of the liturgical rites. Since musical expression in the liturgy serves to uplift the minds and hearts of the faithful to their sanctification and redemption, “the community of the faithful has a right to expect that this service will be provided competently.”⁷² Therefore, liturgical musicians “should receive appropriate formation that is based on their baptismal call to discipleship; that grounds them in a love for and knowledge of Scripture, Catholic teaching, Liturgy, and music; and that equips them with the musical, liturgical, and pastoral skills to serve the Church at prayer.”⁷³

These essential elements are examined in the program of ministerial formation for liturgical musicians conducted through The Leadership Institute of the Diocese of Bridgeport. Details about the formation program and its accompanying schedules are available from the Institute.

Step Two: Commission by the Local Pastor

Appointment as a liturgical musician is through approval by one’s respective pastor or chaplain. All liturgical musicians will be commissioned by their local pastor or chaplain, employing the *Order for the Blessing of Altar Servers, Sacristans, Musicians and Ushers* contained within the *Book of Blessings* (found in Chapter 62 of the American edition).

V. Continuing Formation

⁶⁹ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 112.

⁷⁰ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 112.

⁷¹ BENEDICT XVI, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “On the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church’s Life and Mission, Sacramentum Caritatis,”* 42.

⁷² *Sing to the Lord*, 50.

⁷³ *Sing to the Lord*, 50.



Liturgical musicians should strive to continually develop their musical abilities, as well as to keep current with musical literature so that they can remain effective liturgical music ministers to the People of God. In fact, study of the treasury of sacred music should remain constant in the continuing formation of the liturgical musician. For “the musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater than that of any other art;”⁷⁴ indeed, “in the course of her two-thousand year history, the Church has created, and still creates, music and songs which represent a rich patrimony of faith and love.”⁷⁵ For this reason, “the treasure of sacred music is to be preserved and fostered with great care.”⁷⁶ Study of this rich tradition provides the liturgical musician with an historical and cultural context which ultimately will assist in selecting appropriate musical repertoire in the liturgical rites of the modern era.

Preparation, prayer, study, and practice are key to one's development as an effective liturgical musician. “Preparation for music ministry should include appropriate human formation, spiritual formation, intellectual formation, and pastoral formation.”⁷⁷ To promote such comprehensive preparation, liturgical musicians should be encouraged by their pastors “to take part in ministerial formation opportunities offered by universities, colleges, seminaries, ministry formation programs, dioceses, and national ministry associations.”⁷⁸

Liturgical ministers are encouraged to meet with their pastor or chaplain to review and discuss their service and personal spiritual growth, as well as to obtain advice regarding any ministerial situations which they have encountered.

VI. The Various Types of Liturgical Musician within the Liturgical Rites

While there are many types of musician, those who exercise ministry within Sacred Liturgy as liturgical musicians fall into one of three categories: vocalists, instrumentalists and directors. This section will elaborate further on the ministerial service provided by each type of musician within the liturgical context.

1. Vocalists

⁷⁴ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 112.

⁷⁵ *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 42. ⁷⁶

Sacrosanctum Concilium, 114. ⁷⁷

Sing to the Lord, 51.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.



The role of the vocalist is the foundation of any sacred music program, promoting the faithful's active participation in rites and prayers. Through sung response to ritual action, members of the congregation are assisted in uplifting their minds and hearts to the Lord. For this reason, any sacred music program must begin with an emphasis on sung vocal participation of the faithful within the liturgical rites. Vocalists can contribute to the sacred music of Sacred Liturgy either as choristers, soloists, cantors or psalmists. Each has a contribution to the beauty of the liturgical musical aesthetic, and towards encouraging the active participation of the faithful within.

a. Choristers

A chorister is a member of an organized choir of voices, who sing together either in unison or in harmony. In the liturgical rites, the use of the choir takes on various levels of significance. It can symbolize the angelic choir of angels who sing ceaselessly before the Almighty in the celestial liturgy of the new and eternal Jerusalem, as when the *Gloria in excelsis* is sung, or when the choir sings in dialogue with the assembly. Further, a choir can signify the assembly itself, as when they sing psalms, hymns or anthems in their place during the liturgical action. Choirs also encourage the sung vocal participation of the faithful through joining together with them in sung response to the invocations chanted by the priest or deacon.

Musicam Sacram underscores these various levels of significance in stressing that the liturgical ministry of the choir “deserves particular mention. Its role has become something of yet greater importance and weight by reason of the norms of the Council concerning the liturgical renewal. Its duty is, in effect, to ensure the proper performance of the parts which belong to it, according to the different kinds of music sung, and to encourage the active participation of the faithful in singing.”⁷⁹ It is for these reasons that that “choirs must be diligently promoted, especially in cathedral churches; but bishops and other pastors of souls must be at pains to ensure that, whenever the sacred action is to be celebrated with song, the whole body of the faithful may be able to contribute that active participation which is rightly theirs.”⁸⁰

There are various possibilities behind the makeup of a choir, for the human voice has a wide dynamic range with the inclusion of the voices of both sexes, both immature and mature. The complete tonal human voice composition consists of

⁷⁹ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, *Instruction on Music in the Liturgy*, “*Musicam Sacram*”, 19.

⁸⁰ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 114.



trebles, sopranos, mezzo-sopranos, altos, contraltos, countertenors, tenors, baritones and basses.

b. Soloists

Soloists are vocalists who take a specific vocal part in a composition that is written to be sung alone. While soloists are more frequently employed in concert or operatic works, they can be of assistance to a liturgical choir as a section leader of a voice tone, where by the strength of their voice they can help maintain integrity of tone and pitch. When they operate in this fashion, they must be careful to restrain their voices to remain in unison with the other choristers of their voice tone.

c. Cantors

Cantors are soloists who promote the active participation of the faithful in encouraging their sung response, as “both a singer and a leader of congregational song. Especially when no choir is present, the cantor may sing in alternation or dialogue with the assembly [...] the cantor may serve as psalmist, leading and proclaiming the verses of the responsorial psalm.”⁸¹ When a cantor acts as leader of congregational song, the cantor sings alongside the assembly to promote their sung vocal participation. In this role, care must be exercised, for “the cantor’s voice should not be heard above the congregation.”⁸² In the exercise of this ministry, the cantor must realize that “as the congregation finds its voice and sings with increasing confidence, the cantor’s voice should correspondingly recede”⁸³ and that the use of “gesture that invites participation and clearly indicates when the congregation is to begin [...] should be used sparingly and only when genuinely needed.”⁸⁴

As far as location is concerned, “cantors should lead the assembly from a place where they can be seen by all without drawing attention from the liturgical action,”⁸⁵ exercising their ministry “from a conveniently located stand, but not from the ambo.”⁸⁶ However, when a congregation is singing very familiar responses, acclamations or songs that do not include verses for the cantor alone, the cantor need not be visible.

⁸¹ *Sing to the Lord*, 37.

⁸² *Sing to the Lord*, 38.

⁸³ *Sing to the Lord*, 38.

⁸⁴ *Sing to the Lord*, 38.

⁸⁵ *Sing to the Lord*, 39.

⁸⁶ *Sing to the Lord*, 39.



d. Psalmists

“The psalmist, or cantor of the psalm, is responsible for singing, responsorially or directly, the chants between the readings – the psalm or other biblical canticle, the gradual and *Alleluia*, or other chant. The psalmist may, as occasion requires, intone the *Alleluia* and verse.”⁸⁷ “To carry out this function correctly, it is necessary for the psalmist to be accomplished in the art of singing Psalms and have a facility in public speaking and elocution.”⁸⁸ “As one who proclaims the Word, the psalmist should be able to proclaim the text of the Psalm with clarity, conviction, and sensitivity to the text, the musical setting, and those who are listening.”⁸⁹ The psalmist “sings the Psalm verses at the ambo or another suitable place, while the whole congregation sits and listens, normally taking part by means of the response, except when the Psalm is sung straight through, that is, without a response.”⁹⁰

2. Instrumentalists

Instrumentalists accompany vocalists in their task of promoting the musical active participation of the faithful. Their role “is to lead and sustain the singing of the assembly and of the choir, cantor and psalmist, without dominating or overpowering them.”⁹¹ The use of musical instruments within the liturgical rites “to accompany the singing can act as a support to voices, render participation easier, and achieve a deeper union in the assembly. However, their sound should not so overwhelm the voices that it is difficult to make out the text; and when some part is proclaimed aloud by the priest or a minister by virtue of his role, they should be silent.”⁹² The sonority and tone of musical instruments “add varied and colorful dimensions to the song of the assembly, especially with the addition of harmonization”⁹³ and as such are “very useful in sacred celebrations, whether they accompany the singing or whether they are played as solo instruments.”⁹⁴

In the selection of the musical instruments to be employed in the liturgical rites, “the pipe organ is to be held in high esteem, for it is the traditional musical instrument which adds a wonderful splendor to the Church’s ceremonies and powerfully lifts man’s mind to God and

⁸⁷ THE HOLY SEE, *Order of the Readings for Mass*, 56.

⁸⁸ THE HOLY SEE, *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 102.

⁸⁹ *Sing to the Lord*, 35.

⁹⁰ *GIRM*, 61.

⁹¹ *Sing to the Lord*, 41.

⁹² *Musicam Sacram*, 64.

⁹³ *Sing to the Lord*, 42.

⁹⁴ *Musicam Sacram*, 62.



to higher things.”⁹⁵ Instruments other than the pipe organ may also be used, “provided that the instruments are suitable to sacred use, or can be adapted to it, that they are in keeping with the dignity of the temple, and truly contribute to the edification of the faithful.”⁹⁶ When selecting appropriate musical instruments for divine worship, “the culture and traditions of individual peoples must be taken into account. However, those instruments which are, by common opinion and use, suitable for secular music only, are to be altogether prohibited from every liturgical celebration and from popular devotions.”⁹⁷

Discernment and prudence should be employed in the application of electronic and digital instruments, for, as virtual reality devices, their phenomenological experience in the faculty of human sense perception is quite different from that encountered from a physical musical instrument. In the simulation of musical instrumentation that can be accomplished in the modern age through digital playback over a loudspeaker, there is a genuine loss of acoustic resonance perceived by the human ear, as well as an absence of sonic presence typically felt by the human body through sense perception. One must remember that the experience of the sacred has physical properties as well as spiritual elements, and virtual reality instruments do not resound within sacred structures as does the beauty of a genuine musical instrumental ensemble. Caution must be exercised in their admittance to the mysterious and sacred nature of divine worship.

In their ministry as liturgical musicians, instrumentalists must be mindful that their musical instrument “should be used in such a way that it meets the needs of the liturgical celebration and is in the interests both of the beauty of worship and the edification of the faithful.”⁹⁸ Instrumentalists “should not only possess the skill to play properly the instrument entrusted to them: they should also enter into and be thoroughly aware of the spirit of the liturgy, so that even when playing *ex tempore*, they will encourage the sacred celebration according to the true nature of each of its parts, and encourage the participation of the faithful.”⁹⁹ In supplementing ritual action with music instrumentation, liturgical musicians must have a keen awareness of their capabilities, especially where the musical tradition of improvisation is concerned: “The art of improvisation requires its own special talent and training. More than mere background sound is called for. When worthy improvisation is not possible, it is recommended that musicians play quality published literature, which is available at all levels of difficulty.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 120.

⁹⁶ *Musicam Sacram*, 62.

⁹⁷ *Musicam Sacram*, 63.

⁹⁸ *Musicam Sacram*, 63.

⁹⁹ *Musicam Sacram*, 67.

¹⁰⁰ *Sing to the Lord*, 43.



3. Directors

Just as a symphony orchestra cannot operate without the artistic direction of a conductor, so also the various musical ensembles that make up a Sacred Music program require artistic direction by individuals who are not merely experienced musically but are sensitive liturgically. Such directors of music must have an intimate knowledge of the inherent needs of the rites and prayers, as well as that of their corresponding ritual action, so that they may ensure that musical expression will complement the sacred mysteries which the faithful actively participate in, rather than detract from them.

“It is fitting that there be a cantor or choir director to direct and support the people’s singing.”¹⁰¹ While there may be choir directors and conductors of instrumental ensembles, it is preferred for there to be an overall director of music ministries: “The director of music ministries fosters the active participation of the liturgical assembly in singing; coordinates the preparation of music to be sung at various liturgical celebrations; and promotes the ministries of choirs, psalmists, cantors, organists, and all who play instruments that serve the Liturgy.”¹⁰² The director of music ministries must work directly with their respective pastor or chaplain in planning, overseeing and coordinating all aspects of a Sacred Music program, especially to ensure that the music admitted to divine worship is that which is sacred and liturgical in nature.

¹⁰¹ *GIRM*, 104.

¹⁰² *Sing to the Lord*, 43.



Norms for Altar Servers

I. Introduction

These norms and related commentary are intended to offer a synthesis of ecclesial documentation concerning the role of the altar server, while also clarifying the role of the acolyte, within the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy.

II. The Ministry of Altar Server

The role of the altar server in the Liturgy is unique. The server is both a member of the assembly and a minister in the sanctuary. Because the altar server is involved in many parts of the liturgy, the server assists not only the priest but also assists the deacon, the EMHCs, and the reader as well.

The altar server plays an important role in the preparation and celebration of the Liturgy by anticipating and serving the needs of the priest and deacon, before, during and after the celebration of the Liturgy with attention, dignity and reverence. Their role is one of service and support. Their specific responsibilities are established by the priest, the Church and the celebration in which they take part.

There needs to be clarification between the roles of the instituted acolyte versus that of the altar server, who performs many of the same duties when present at the Liturgy. They both take on the role in service and support to the priest and deacon during the Liturgy.

The Acolyte is instituted for service at the altar and to assist the Priest and Deacon. It is his place principally to prepare the altar and the sacred vessels and, if necessary, to distribute the Eucharist to the faithful as an extraordinary minister.¹⁰³

The altar server serves when an instituted acolyte is not present.

In the absence of an instituted acolyte, there may be deputed lay ministers to serve at the altar and assist the Priest and Deacon; these carry the cross, candles, the thurible, the bread, the wine and the water or who are even deputed to distribute Holy Communion as extraordinary ministers.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ *GIRM 98.*

¹⁰⁴ *GIRM 100.*



III. Specific Norms Governing Altar Servers

1. Although the institution into the ministry of acolyte is reserved for lay men, the liturgical functions carried out by altar servers as described herein may be performed by men, women, boys and girls in the Diocese of Bridgeport.¹⁰⁵
2. Only those persons who are selected by their respective pastor or chaplain and fulfill the following requirements are eligible to serve as altar servers in the Diocese of Bridgeport. Those requirements include:
 - a. Being baptized and having already made their First Penance and First Holy Communion;
 - b. Those 16 years of age and older must have received the Sacrament of Confirmation;
 - c. Those 18 years of age or older must be in full compliance with the norms of the Safe Environment Program of the Diocese of Bridgeport.
3. All those admitted to this ministry must complete the prescribed formation and training program as required in their local parish, school or institution.
4. The proper vesture for service at the altar may be decided by the local pastor or respective chaplain, in keeping with the following norms:
 - a. Dress for those under the age of 18 includes the use of an alb or cassock and surplice.
 - b. Pastors may give permission for adult servers to dress in clean business attire.
 - c. The use of a Catholic school uniform is acceptable also during the celebration of a school Mass.
5. Altar servers carry out all the functions listed in no. 100 (with the exception of the distribution of Holy Communion), nos. 187-190 and no. 193 of the GIRM.

In addition to the above-mentioned norms, the following qualifications should be considered when anyone is selected to serve in this ministry:

- Be familiar with the essential elements of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, including knowledge of the responses at Mass and all proper gestures;
- Be an active member of the parish community;

¹⁰⁵ *Redemptionis Sacramentum* No. 47; *Code of Canon Law, 1983, c. 230.*; *The Letter of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, dated July 27, 2001*, reminds those in dioceses where female altar servers are allowed, “such an authorization may not, in any way, exclude men or, in particular, boys from service at the altar, nor require that priests of the diocese would make use of female altar servers, since ‘it will always be very appropriate to follow the noble tradition of having boys serve at the altar’” *Notitiae* – 421-422 Vol 37 (2001) Num/ 8-9 – pp 397-399.



- Follow the teachings of the Catholic Church;
- Believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist

IV. Twofold Process to Function as an Altar Server

To function as an altar server, each candidate must complete the following two steps:

Step One: Required Formation

Individuals who wishes to serve at the altar must participate in a program of formation before beginning their ministry as altar servers. This program of formation will be conducted on the local level (either in one's respective parish, school or on a regional basis, with the cooperation of the local dean). Resources will be provided by The Leadership Institute.

Formation will include but not be limited to:

- Reflection on the role of altar server;
- Dress and vesture;
- Order of the Liturgy;
- Items used during Liturgy;
- Movement and Serving during Liturgy.

Step Two : Commission

New and returning altar servers are commissioned by their respective pastor or chaplain, using the Rite of Blessing of Altar Servers (i.e., *Book of Blessings*, Ch. 62). This commissioning will usually take place once a year in the parish or school in which they serve. This ceremony serves to mark the beginning of the service for each commissioned individual. Service as an altar server can begin, however, as soon as the required formation is completed even if the commissioning ceremony has not taken place yet.

V. Continuing Formation

Altar servers should strive to continue to develop their skill sets for their ministry of service to the priests and deacons during the Liturgy. They can accomplish this by continued preparation, prayer, study and participation in educational initiatives through their parish and courses offered through The Leadership Institute.



VI. The Ordinary Exercise of Ministerial Service

Even though each sanctuary may be configured uniquely, this does not affect the role of the altar server. The role remains the same: to assist the ordinary ministers in the celebration of the Liturgy. Liturgy.



**Appendix A: Pastoral Considerations for
Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion**

1. When do I bow or genuflect before the altar and the tabernacle?

Because the altar symbolizes Christ, and is consecrated as the place “on which is effected the Sacrifice of the Cross made present under sacramental signs,”¹⁰⁶ it is appropriate for all ministers to bow profoundly when passing before the altar during Mass. “If, however, the tabernacle with the Most Blessed Sacrament is situated in the sanctuary, the Priest, the Deacon, and the other ministers genuflect when they approach the altar and when they depart from it, but not during the celebration of Mass itself.”¹⁰⁷

The only time that you would not bow to the altar nor genuflect to the tabernacle would be when passing in front of them while holding the Most Blessed Sacrament in your hands or when holding a ciborium or chalice, even if empty.

2. Can I distribute communion as an EMHC if I myself do not receive communion?

No. Part of the nature of the distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful is the significance that Christ gives himself to his people, contained within the sacramental re-presentation of his sacrificial offering. When an EMHC does not first receive the sacrament of Holy Communion before distributing to others, that connection is broken, preventing the person to distribute Holy Communion to others.

3. What should I do if an instituted Acolyte shows up to serve at the same Mass at which I’ve been assigned to distribute Holy Communion?

The ministry of the instituted acolyte is universal and not particular: while an EMHC is mandated to serve in a specific parish, school or institution, the ministry of the acolyte applies to the universal Church. For this reason, an acolyte must exercise his ministry before an EMHCs is asked to do so. This is required because the acolyte “is instituted for service at the altar and to assist the Priest and the Deacon [...] and, if necessary, to distribute the Eucharist to the faithful as an Extraordinary

¹⁰⁶ *GIRM*, 296.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 274.



Minister.”¹⁰⁸ These are “his own proper functions which he must carry out in person.”¹⁰⁹

When such instituted acolytes act as EMHCs at Masses without a deacon present, “the acolyte administers the chalice to the communicants.”¹¹⁰ It is also the task of the instituted Acolyte to assist in the purification of vessels, especially in the absence of a deacon.¹¹¹

4. What should I do when I am distributing the Precious Blood and someone comes up to dip the host into the chalice (*which is the practice of intinction*)?

“The communicant, including the extraordinary minister, is never allowed to self-communicate, even by means of intinction.”¹¹² Practically, this means that the person approaching the minister must consume the host before receiving from the chalice.

5. What do I do when an accident occurs during the distribution of communion?

“If a host or any particle should fall, it is to be picked up reverently; and if any of the Precious Blood is spilled, the area where the spill occurred should be washed with water, and this water should then be poured into the *sacrarium* in the sacristy.”¹¹³ Care should be taken that these remedies should not be delayed, so that further foot traffic in any affected areas would be prevented.

Therefore, if a consecrated host falls on the ground, immediately pick it up and place it on the priest’s paten on the altar, so that he may consume it at the proper time. If the Precious Blood accidentally spills on the ground, immediately wipe up the spillage with your purificator, and placing it on the Credence table, obtain a fresh purificator for continued distribution. Obtain an additional clean purificator to place over the affected area of spillage to mark it for cleansing with water after the Mass concludes.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 98.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 99; “It is the office of an acolyte who has been properly instituted to give communion as a special minister when the priest and deacon are absent or impeded by sickness, old age, or pastoral ministry or when the number of the faithful at the holy table is so great that the Mass or other service may be unreasonably protracted,” *Eucharistic Worship Outside Mass*, 17.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 191.

¹¹¹ *GIRM*, 192; *Norms*, 53.

¹¹² *GIRM*, 50.

¹¹³ Ibid, 280.



6. What are the considerations I must know regarding the distribution of Holy Communion to someone who is gluten intolerant?

A person who has gluten intolerance and who desires to receive Holy Communion needs to discuss their situation with their pastor or chaplain to determine the most appropriate and health-conscious way that the person can receive the Body and Blood of our Lord.

It is important to remember that, when low-gluten hosts are consecrated at Mass, they are to be kept in a separate *ciborium* or on a separate paten to segregate them from ordinary hosts. Due to the sensitive nature of gluten intolerance, even the slightest contact with a normal host can have difficult – if not disastrous – effects in someone with gluten intolerance.

7. I know that I must observe a fast for an hour before receiving Holy Communion. Is there a period of fast for a sick person?

Though there is a normative fast from solid food, alcoholic drink and beverages for a period of one hour, the Eucharistic fast is reduced to about 15 minutes for “the sick who are living in hospitals or at home, even if they are not confined to bed; the faithful of advanced age, even if not bedridden, whether they are confined to their homes because of old age or live in a nursing home; sick priests, even if not bedridden, or elderly priests, whether they are able to celebrate Mass or to receive communion; persons who care for the sick or aged, and the family of the sick or aged, who wish to receive communion with them, when they cannot conveniently observe the fast of one hour.”¹¹⁴

8. What should I do when the sick person is unable to finish consuming the host?

If the sick person is unable to consume an entire host, a smaller piece may be given to him or her by reverently breaking the host into a size that is capable of consumption. Care must be taken to avoid the unnecessary creation of consecrated particles. A glass of water may be provided to assist the sick person in consuming the host.

If the host is rejected by the sick, it should be wrapped in a purificator and brought back to the Church or Chapel from which the EMHC was sent. There, the EMHC must contact his or her pastor or chaplain to attend to the proper disposition of the partially consumed host.

¹¹⁴ *Eucharistic Worship Outside Mass*, 24.



Appendix B: Pastoral Considerations for the Ministry of Reader

1. What is the best way for me to proclaim readings from Sacred Scripture?

The *Order of Readings* specifies that “a speaking style on the part of the reader that is audible, clean and intelligent is the first means of transmitting the word of God properly to the congregation.”¹¹⁵ The *Order* also emphasizes that “the Liturgy of the Word must be celebrated in a way that fosters meditation; clearly, any sort of haste that hinders recollection is to be avoided.”¹¹⁶ One should take these observations into account when forming your reading style so that you can successfully render a scriptural passage to the assembly. When proclaiming the readings, try to have an unhurried, purposed disposition that is focused on expressing the spiritual and salvific content of the readings. In the proclamation, take care to avoid any dramatic or theatrical flair which would only serve to tarnish and obscure the profundity of the passages you read. To make your proclamation a living word, emphasize words that are important to the passage.

It is helpful to realize that the formulation of the scriptural readings found in most editions of the *Lectionary* in the United States have distributed the passages of Sacred Scripture into what are known as “sense lines.” These assist the reader to create natural breaks, pauses, and emphasis in the scriptural text, facilitating the proclamation of what can at times be a difficult and lengthy passage. Remember as well that most churches contain voice amplification systems which employ the use of microphones. When using a microphone, it is especially important to be cognizant of the volume and diction of your speech when proclaiming the readings.

One of the most important elements of a successful proclamation is preparation. Readers should thoroughly prepare themselves to proclaim the Word of God through study, prayer, and practice. Familiarity with the text, its role within the context of the whole of Sacred Scripture, and its relationship to the other readings for the day should be carefully considered. It is helpful to set aside time for prayer along with the texts to be proclaimed. Practice your proclamation aloud at home and be sure to pay special attention to the pronunciation of difficult words or phrases.

¹¹⁵ *Order*, 14.

¹¹⁶ *Order*, 28.



2. What is the *Book of the Gospels* and when is it used?

The proclamation of the Gospel is the apex of the Liturgy of the Word, the moment when the teaching of Christ the Lord is proclaimed to the assembly. “The liturgical traditions of both West and East has consistently made a certain distinction between the books for the readings. The *Book of the Gospels* was always fabricated and decorated with the utmost care and shown greater respect than any of the other books of readings.”¹¹⁷

The *Book of the Gospels* bears such importance that it “is presented to a deacon at his ordination and that at an ordination to the episcopate [it] is laid upon the head of the bishop-elect and held there.”¹¹⁸ It is used at Mass at the discretion of the priest celebrant, typically on more solemn occasions.

3. Another reader came to the same Mass at which I have been assigned to read. Can we divide the scriptural readings between us?

“If there are several present who are able to exercise the same ministry, nothing forbids their distributing among themselves and performing different parts of the same ministry or duty. For example [...] if there are several readings, it is well to distribute them among a number of readers.”¹¹⁹ However, it is not possible for ministers to “divide a single element of the celebration among themselves, e.g., that the same reading be proclaimed by two readers, one after the other, with the exception of the Passion of the Lord.”¹²⁰

When there are several readers at the same Mass, the priest celebrant will determine whether the task of proclaiming the scriptural readings will be divided between them.

4. A period of silence is suggested after each of the scriptural readings and after the homily. What is its purpose and how long should this silence be observed?

The period of silence which the liturgical rites encourage during the Liturgy of the Word is meant to foster prayer and meditation: “The dialogue between God and his people taking place through the Holy Spirit demands short intervals of silence,

¹¹⁷ *Order*, 36.

¹¹⁸ *Order*, 36.

¹¹⁹ *GIRM*, 109.

¹²⁰ *GIRM*, 109.



suited to the assembled congregation, as an opportunity to take the Word of God to heart and to prepare a response to it in prayer.”¹²¹ Since our modern world is extremely busy, the employment of a period of silence might initially feel slightly uncomfortable. A recommended action for successful implementation of a period of silence would be to begin with shorter periods of about 10-15 seconds before moving to longer periods, such as 30 seconds or more. This will help to eventually establish an appropriate period of time during the Liturgy of the Word for silent prayer and meditation.

5. What is a Commentator?

The commentator “provides the faithful briefly with explanation and exhortations so as so to direct their attention to the celebration and ensure that they are better disposed for understanding it.”¹²² If the priest celebrant decides to employ the use of a commentator, his “remarks should be thoroughly prepared and notable for their restraint,”¹²³ performing his function “in a suitable place within the sight of the faithful, but not at the ambo.”¹²⁴

¹²¹ *Order*, 28.

¹²² *GIRM*, 105b.

¹²³ *GIRM*, 105b.

¹²⁴ *GIRM*, 105b.



Appendix C: Pastoral Considerations for the Altar Server

1. What are some best practices when selecting candidates to serve at the altar?

The following best practices are suggested when selecting candidates:

- An initial interview should be conducted by the pastor, deacon, chaplain or lay leader in charge of this ministry and its formation with the candidate to make sure they are of the right mind set and disposition to carry out their role in this ministry.
- Verification must be obtained regarding the candidate's reception of the Sacraments of Baptism, Holy Communion and if applicable, Confirmation.
- An orientation meeting should take place for all Candidates to review the scope of the ministry, formation requirements, expectations, etc.
- Formation for this ministry can take many forms, including online sessions coordinated by The Leadership Institute..
- Offer opportunities to serve at other Liturgies, such as Funerals, Weddings, Christmas, Easter, etc. depending on expertise and provide appropriate training for such venues.

2. Where do I sit during Mass?

This will depend on the layout of your church's worship space and your assigned responsibilities. Simply, you should sit as close as possible to where you will be performing your liturgical functions. Ultimately, your pastor, liturgist or liturgical ministry coordinator will instruct you regarding where you are to sit.

3. Is there a certain way I should bow?

There are two types of bows: bow of the head and a profound bow. The bow of the head is simply a slight bend forward of the head. A profound bow is made from the waist. A profound bow is made when crossing in front of the altar and during the Creed at the words "and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and Became Man."

4. What does it mean to "purify" the sacred vessels?



The rite of purification is carried out by a priest, deacon or instituted acolyte. Purification ensures that any remnants of the sacred species are reverently consumed. No altar server is permitted to purify the sacred vessels for any reason.