

## **Excerpts from the General Instruction of the Roman Missal For Instituted Acolytes**

### *The Ministry of the Instituted Acolyte and Lector*

98. The acolyte is instituted to serve at the altar and to assist the priest and deacon. In particular, it is his responsibility to prepare the altar and the sacred vessels and, if it is necessary, as an extraordinary minister, to distribute the Eucharist to the faithful.<sup>84</sup>

In the ministry of the altar, the acolyte has his own functions (cf. below, nos. 187-193), which he must perform personally.

### *Other Ministries*

100. In the absence of an instituted acolyte, lay ministers may be deputed to serve at the altar and assist the priest and the deacon; they may carry the cross, the candles, the thurible, the bread, the wine, and the water, and they may also be deputed to distribute Holy Communion as extraordinary ministers.<sup>85</sup>

### **I. Mass With a Congregation**

116. If a deacon is present at any celebration of Mass, he should exercise his office. Furthermore, it is desirable that, as a rule, an acolyte, a lector, and a cantor should be there to assist the priest celebrant. In fact, the rite to be described below foresees a greater number of ministers.

### **MASS WITHOUT A DEACON**

#### *The Introductory Rites*

120. Once the people have gathered, the priest and ministers, clad in the sacred vestments, go in procession to the altar in this order:

- a. The thurifer carrying a thurible with burning incense, if incense is used;
- b. The ministers who carry lighted candles, and between them an acolyte or other minister with the cross;
- c. The acolytes and the other ministers;
- d. A lector, who may carry the Book of the Gospels (though not the Lectionary), which should be slightly elevated;
- e. The priest who is to celebrate the Mass.

If incense is used, before the procession begins, the priest puts some in the thurible and blesses it with the Sign of the Cross without saying anything.

#### *The Liturgy of the Eucharist*

139. When the Prayer of the Faithful is completed, all sit, and the Offertory chant begins (cf. above, no. 74).

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An acolyte or other lay minister arranges the corporal, the purificator, the chalice, the pall, and the Missal upon the altar.

140. It is appropriate for the faithful's participation to be expressed by an offering, whether of the bread and wine for the celebration of the Eucharist or of other gifts for the relief of the needs of the Church and of the poor.

The offerings of the faithful are received by the priest, assisted by the acolyte or other minister. The bread and wine for the Eucharist are carried to the celebrant, who places them upon the altar, while other gifts are put in another appropriate place (cf. above, no. 73).

162. The priest may be assisted in the distribution of Communion by other priests who happen to be present. If such priests are not present and there is a very large number of communicants, the priest may call upon extraordinary ministers to assist him, e.g., duly instituted acolytes or even other faithful who have been deputed for this purpose.<sup>97</sup> In case of necessity, the priest may depute suitable faithful for this single occasion.<sup>98</sup>

These ministers should not approach the altar before the priest has received Communion, and they are always to receive from the hands of the priest celebrant the vessel containing either species of the Most Holy Eucharist for distribution to the faithful.

178. After the Prayer of the Faithful, while the priest remains at the chair, the deacon prepares the altar, assisted by the acolyte, but it is the deacon's place to take care of the sacred vessels himself. He also assists the priest in receiving the people's gifts. Next, he hands the priest the paten with the bread to be consecrated, pours wine and a little water into the chalice, saying quietly, *Per huius aquae (By the mystery of this water)*, and after this presents the chalice to the priest. He may also carry out the preparation of the chalice at the credence table. If incense is used, the deacon assists the priest during the incensation of the gifts, the cross, and the altar; afterwards, the deacon himself or the acolyte incenses the priest and the people.

### **C. THE DUTIES OF THE ACOLYTE**

187. The duties that the acolyte may carry out are of various kinds and several may coincide. Hence, it is desirable that these duties be suitably distributed among several acolytes. If, however, only one acolyte is present, he should perform the more important duties while the rest are to be distributed among several ministers.

#### *The Introductory Rites*

188. In the procession to the altar, the acolyte may carry the cross, walking between two ministers with lighted candles. Upon reaching the altar, the acolyte places the cross upright near the altar so that it may serve as the altar cross; otherwise, he puts it in a

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worthy place. Then he takes his place in the sanctuary.

189. Through the entire celebration, the acolyte is to approach the priest or the deacon, whenever necessary, in order to present the book to them and to assist them in any other way required. Thus it is appropriate, insofar as possible, that the acolyte occupy a place from which he can conveniently carry out his ministry either at the chair or at the altar.

### *The Liturgy of the Eucharist*

190. If no deacon is present, after the Prayer of the Faithful is concluded and while the priest remains at the chair, the acolyte places the corporal, the purificator, the chalice, the pall, and the Missal on the altar. Then, if necessary, the acolyte assists the priest in receiving the gifts of the people and, if appropriate, brings the bread and wine to the altar and hands them to the priest. If incense is used, the acolyte presents the thurible to the priest and assists him while he incenses the gifts, the cross, and the altar. Then the acolyte incenses the priest and the people.

191. A duly instituted acolyte, as an extraordinary minister, may, if necessary, assist the priest in giving Communion to the people.<sup>100</sup> If Communion is given under both kinds, when no deacon is present, the acolyte administers the chalice to the communicants or holds the chalice if Communion is given by intinction.

192. Likewise, when the distribution of Communion is completed, a duly instituted acolyte helps the priest or deacon to purify and arrange the sacred vessels. When no deacon is present, a duly instituted acolyte carries the sacred vessels to the credence table and there purifies, wipes, and arranges them in the usual way.

193. After the celebration of Mass, the acolyte and other ministers return in procession to the sacristy, together with the deacon and the priest in the same way and order in which they entered.

### *The Communion Rite*

247. The deacon reverently drinks at the altar all of the Blood of Christ that remains, assisted, if necessary, by some of the concelebrants. He then carries the chalice over to the credence table and there he or a duly instituted acolyte purifies, wipes, and arranges it in the usual way (cf. above, no. 183).

249. If the concelebrants' Communion is by intinction, the principal celebrant receives the Body and Blood of the Lord in the usual way, but making sure that enough of the precious Blood remains in the chalice for the Communion of the concelebrants. Then the deacon, or one of the concelebrants, arranges the chalice as appropriate in the center of the altar or at the side on another corporal together with the paten containing particles of the host.

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The concelebrants approach the altar one after another, genuflect, and take a particle, dip it partly into the chalice, and, holding a purificator under their chin, consume the intincted particle. They then return to their places as at the beginning of Mass.

The deacon also receives Communion by intinction and to the concelebrant's words *Corpus et Sanguis Christi (The Body and Blood of Christ)* makes the response *Amen*. The deacon, however, consumes at the altar all that remains of the Precious Blood, assisted, if necessary, by some of the concelebrants. He carries the chalice to the credence table and there he or a duly instituted acolyte purifies, wipes and arranges it in the usual way.

### *The Purification*

279. The sacred vessels are purified by the priest, the deacon, or an instituted acolyte after Communion or after Mass, insofar as possible at the credence table. The purification of the chalice is done with water alone or with wine and water, which is then drunk by whoever does the purification. The paten is usually wiped clean with the purificator.

Care must be taken that whatever may remain of the Blood of Christ after the distribution of Communion is consumed immediately and completely at the altar.

### *Communion under Both Kinds*

284. When Communion is distributed under both kinds,

- a. The chalice is usually administered by a deacon or, when no deacon is present, by a priest, or even by a duly instituted acolyte or another extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, or by a member of the faithful who in case of necessity has been entrusted with this duty for a single occasion;
- b. Whatever may remain of the Blood of Christ is consumed at the altar by the priest or the deacon or the duly instituted acolyte who ministered the chalice. The same then purifies, wipes, and arranges the sacred vessels in the usual way.

Any of the faithful who wish to receive Holy Communion under the species of bread alone should be granted their wish.

## **IV. Sacred Vestments**

339. In the dioceses of the United States of America, acolytes, altar servers, lectors, and other lay ministers may wear the alb or other suitable vesture or other appropriate and dignified clothing.