

**The General Instruction of the Roman Missal
Catechetical Outline for Deacons
Diocese of Trenton**

1. What are the sacred vestments of the deacon at the Eucharistic celebration?

The sacred vestments of the deacon at the Eucharistic celebration are the alb, the stole and the dalmatic. The dalmatic may be omitted, however, either out of necessity or for less solemnity.

2. Who prepares the sacred vessels before Mass?

Care and preparation of the sacred vessels for Mass is a major responsibility of the deacon. Therefore, the deacon must make sure that wine is poured in the proper number of chalices before Mass, so that Communion under both species may be made available to the People of God. In accordance with #106 of *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 2004, the Precious Blood of our Lord can no longer be poured into ancillary cups at the fraction rite. Therefore, it is the role of the deacon to ensure that all Communion Chalices are prepared before the Mass begins. The Communion Chalices are then covered with a pall.

Introductory Rites

3. When the deacon is present at the Eucharistic celebration how does he process?

If he is carrying the Book of the Gospels he precedes the priest. If the Book of the Gospels is already on the altar, he processes at the celebrant's side.

4. At the introductory rites, when does the deacon venerate the altar with a kiss?

After placing the Book of the Gospels on the altar, flat, the deacon, along with the celebrant, venerates the altar with a kiss. However, if he is not carrying the Book of the Gospels, he customarily makes a profound bow to the altar with the celebrant alone, and then with him venerates the altar with a kiss. [*General Instruction of the Roman Missal (hereinafter GIRM) #173*]

5. If the tabernacle is located in the sanctuary, at what point do the priest and deacon genuflect to it?

All the ministers genuflect to it only when they first approach the altar and when they leave the sanctuary, but not during the celebration of the Mass itself.

6. What is the role of the deacon in incensing the altar?

If incense is used, the deacon assists the celebrant, by holding the boat, as the celebrant places incense in the Thurible. The deacon then accompanies the celebrant as he incenses the altar and cross. (GIRM #173)

Liturgy of the Word

7. What is the role of the deacon in proclaiming the Gospel?

The deacon proclaims the Gospel. If incense is used, the deacon assists the celebrant by holding the boat, as the celebrant places incense in the thurible. This action takes place as the Alleluia, or Gospel acclamation begins. Then, standing before the celebrant, the deacon makes a profound bow, and asks for the celebrant's blessing, saying in a low voice: "Father, give me your blessing." The celebrant blesses him: "The Lord be in your heart..." The deacon signs himself with the sign of the cross and responds: "Amen."

Then he takes the Book of the Gospels which was fittingly laid on the altar and, with a bow to the altar, processes to the ambo, slightly elevating the book, with the Thurifer preceding him, and with the ministers holding lighted candles.

There he greets the people saying, with hands joined: "The Lord be with you," and then, "A reading from the Holy Gospel..." signing the book with his thumb and afterwards, himself on his forehead, mouth and breast.

He incenses the book and proclaims the Gospel reading.

After the reading, he acclaims without raising the Book of the Gospels: "The Gospel of the Lord," to which all respond: "Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ."

Then he venerates the book with a kiss and says inaudibly: "Through the words of the Gospel may our sins be washed away." He then returns the book to the celebrant or places it in another suitable place.

When the deacon is assisting the Bishop, he carries the Book of the Gospels, open to the text, to the Bishop, so that the Bishop may reverence the book with a kiss.

In more solemn celebrations, as circumstances allow, the Bishop may impart a blessing to the people with the Book of the Gospels. (GIRM #175)

8. What is the role of the deacon with the General Intercessions?

As a general norm, the petitions of the Prayer of the Faithful/General Intercessions are to be prayed by the deacon, although a lector or Reader may announce them, if there is a need. After the celebrant introduces the General Intercessions, the deacon announces the intentions

from the ambo or another suitable place. The deacon remains at his place while the celebrant prays the concluding prayer. (GIRM #71, 177)

Liturgy of the Eucharist

9. Who prepares the altar?

After the General Intercessions everyone sits for the Preparation of the Gifts. The deacon, assisted by the acolyte/servers, prepares the altar to receive the gifts of bread and wine. The deacon goes to the altar and waits for the acolyte/servers to bring the following items needed for the celebration of Mass: The Sacramentary, appropriate linens for Mass, those Communion Chalices for the faithful and concelebrants, and the celebrant's chalice which should be larger than the other chalices. (RS #105) These items are brought from the credence table to the deacon, so that he may place them on the altar. Once the altar has been prepared, then the deacon accompanies the celebrant to the place within in the sanctuary where the gifts are to be received. (GIRM #100, 178)

10. Who prepares the Chalice?

The deacon hands the celebrant the paten with the bread to be consecrated then he pours wine and a little water into each of the chalices placed on the altar. The deacon says once, inaudibly: "By the mystery of this water and wine...", then passes the primary chalice to the celebrant. The deacon may also prepare the chalice at the credence table.

If time or size of the altar prevents the deacon from preparing all chalices at the Preparation of the Gifts, then the appropriate number of Communion chalices may be prepared before Mass. These chalices are brought to the altar at this time.

11. What is the role of the deacon when the gifts are incensed?

If incense is to be used, the deacon assists by holding the boat, as the celebrant places incense in the thurible. The celebrant incenses the gifts, the altar and the cross. The deacon may accompany the celebrant as this takes place. Once the gifts have been incensed, the deacon incenses the celebrant, other concelebrants, and the assembly. The decision to use incense, and what to incense should be decided before Mass begins. (GIRM #178)

12. Where does the deacon stand after the Preparation of the Gifts?

During the Eucharistic Prayer, the deacon stands near, but slightly behind the celebrant, so that when needed, he may assist the celebrant, with the Sacramentary and the chalice. The deacon stands behind any concelebrants that may be present at Mass. If the deacon is behind several concelebrants, then he moves between them when he approaches the altar to assist.

13. What is the posture of the deacon during the Eucharistic Prayer?

The deacon stands at the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer. At the epiclesis, the deacon kneels and remains kneeling until the Memorial Acclamation. It is appropriate for the deacon to kneel off to the side of the altar. After the Memorial Acclamation, the deacon stands and remains standing for the rest of the Eucharistic Prayer. As a general liturgical directive, the deacon should only kneel as long as he is able, and when his getting down and getting up will not cause a distraction. Issues of age, physical health and ability must be taken into consideration on personal basis. (GIRM #43)

If there are several deacons assisting at the liturgy, the decision on posture during the Eucharistic Prayer should be decided before the liturgy begins. If one assisting deacon cannot kneel, then all deacons are to stand during the Eucharistic Prayer. They are to bow after the elevation of the Host and the Chalice.

If there are several deacons present, the directives allow for one deacon to kneel with the thurible, and incense the Host and Chalice, as they are elevated during the words of Institution.

14. What is the role of deacon at the final doxology of the Eucharistic Prayer?

At the end of the Eucharistic Prayer, the deacon stands next to the celebrant and receives and elevates the chalice as the celebrant raises the paten and intones the doxology. The chalice and paten remain elevated until the assembly responds with the Great Amen. (GIRM #180)

The Communion Rite

15. How does the deacon invite the congregation to exchange the sign of peace?

After the celebrant has said the prayer for peace and the greeting “The peace of the Lord be with you always” the deacon may invite all to exchange the sign of peace, saying, with hands joined and facing the people: “Let us offer one another the sign of peace.” The deacon receives the sign of peace from the celebrant and may offer it to the other ministers near him. The deacon and the celebrant do not leave the sanctuary, unless circumstance warrants it. (GIRM #181)

16. Who are the ordinary ministers of Communion?

Bishops, priests and deacons distribute Holy Communion by virtue of their offices as ordinary ministers of the Body and Blood of the Lord.

As the Agnus Dei or Lamb of God is begun, the bishop or celebrant alone, or with the assistance of the deacon, and if necessary, of concelebrating priests, breaks the Eucharistic bread.

17. Who prepares the ancillary vessels?

Acolytes/Servers bring the ancillary vessels, (extra ciboria/patens) to the altar during the Sign of Peace. The celebrant and the deacon distribute the Body of Christ into the ancillary vessels. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are not permitted to assist in this action. The distribution of the Sacrament into ancillary vessels usually takes place at the altar, so that the sharing of all from the one bread and the one cup is signified. In the case of large assemblies, it may be done at the side table within the sanctuary. (GIRM #182)

18. When does the deacon receive Holy Communion?

The deacon receives Holy Communion, under both elements, after the celebrant has taken Holy Communion. The deacon then assists the celebrant in distributing Holy Communion to the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. The deacon may also assist in handing the vessels to the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, and by directing all those who will assist with the Communion Rite to their stations. The deacon is the ordinary minister of the cup.

If there are a large number of concelebrants, the deacon will assist in bringing the Body of Christ to the concelebrants where they stand. In assisting in the distribution of the Hosts to concelebrants, the deacon holds the paten and allows the concelebrant to take the consecrated hosts. The deacon does not say anything to the concelebrants. The same may be done with the Chalice. The Deacon only hands the Chalice to the concelebrants, who take it and drink from it, returning the chalice to the deacon.

Deacons and Lay Ministers may never “Take” Holy Communion, in the manner of concelebrants. Deacons and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are to “receive” Holy Communion. There is no liturgical directive established that allows ordinary and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to receive Holy Communion at the end of the Communion Rite. All those who will assist with the distribution of Holy Communion are to receive Holy Communion before the distribution of Holy Communion to the congregation.

19. What is the role of the deacon when Holy Communion is distributed under both elements?

The deacon always administers the chalice.

20. Who consumes any remaining Blood of Christ?

When the distribution is completed, the deacon immediately and reverently consumes at the altar all of the Blood of Christ which remains. He may be assisted, if

needs dictate, by other deacons and priests or, in their absence, by Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

21. What is the role of the deacon after Communion?

As the distribution of Holy Communion ends, the various ministers bring their ciboria/patens and cups to the Altar. The deacon returns to the altar, with the priest and collects any fragments of the Body of Christ. What remains of the Body of Christ is returned to the Tabernacle, by the deacon or an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. The deacon then removes the chalice and other vessels to the credence table, where he purifies them and arranges them in an orderly manner, as the celebrant returns to the chair. It is permissible and encouraged, especially if there are a number of vessels, to purify the vessels after the Mass. If this is the practice, then the vessels are placed on the credence table and covered with a corporal. The purification takes place immediately after Mass following the dismissal of the people.

In the Diocese of Trenton, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion have been given permission to assist with the purification of the vessels after Mass.

22. Why is it necessary to carefully measure the amount of wine and bread to be consecrated?

The amount of wine to be consecrated should be carefully measured before the celebration so that none remains afterward. It is strictly forbidden to pour the Precious Blood into the ground or into the sacrarium.

Similarly, consecrated hosts are to be reserved in a ciborium or another appropriate vessel in sufficient quantity for the needs of the faithful. They are to be frequently renewed and the old hosts properly consumed.” Burying the Blessed Sacrament is strictly forbidden.

Concluding Rite

23. Who makes the announcements?

Following the Prayer after Communion, if there are any brief announcements, the deacon may make them, unless the celebrant prefers to do so himself. It is also permissible for the lector or cantor to make the announcements. The announcements should be short and to the point.

24. What is the deacon’s role when a solemn formula is used?

When a more solemn formula for blessing is used, or a prayer over the people, the deacon says: “Bow your heads and pray for God’s blessing.”

25. How does the deacon dismiss the people?

After the celebrant's blessing, the deacon, with hands joined and facing the people, dismisses them, saying: "Go in the peace of Christ" or using one of the other approved formulas found in the Roman Missal.

26. How do the celebrant and deacon venerate the altar at the conclusion of the Mass?

Along with the celebrant, the deacon venerates the altar with a kiss, makes a profound bow, and leaves in the manner prescribed for the entrance procession.