

DUTIES OF INSTITUTED ACOLYTES WITHIN THE EUCHARISTIC LITURGY

The acolyte is appointed in order to aid the deacon and to minister to the priest. It is his duty therefore to attend to the service of the altar and to assist the deacon and the priest in liturgical celebrations, especially in the celebration of Mass; he is also to distribute communion as a special minister when the ministers spoken of in the Codex Iuris Canonici can. 845¹ are not available or are prevented by ill health, age, or another pastoral ministry from performing this function, or when the number of communicants is so great that the celebration of Mass would be unduly prolonged. In the same extraordinary circumstances an acolyte may be entrusted with publicly exposing the blessed sacrament for adoration by the faithful and afterward replacing it, but not with blessing the people. He may also, to the extent needed, take care of instructing other faithful who on a temporary basis are appointed to assist the priest or deacon in liturgical celebrations by carrying the missal, cross, candles, etc., or by performing other such duties. He will perform these functions more worthily if he participates in the holy eucharist with increasingly fervent devotion, receives nourishment from it, and deepens his knowledge about it.

As one set aside in a special way for the service of the altar, the acolyte should learn all matters concerning public divine worship and strive to grasp their inner spiritual meaning: in that way he will be able each day to offer himself entirely to God, be an example to all by his gravity and reverence in church, and have a sincere love for the Mystical Body of Christ, the people of God, especially for the weak and the sick.

In accordance with the ancient tradition of the Church, institution to the ministries of reader and acolyte is reserved to men.²

187. The functions that the acolyte may carry out are of various kinds and several may occur at the same moment. Hence, it is desirable that these duties be suitably distributed among several acolytes. If, in fact, only one acolyte is present, he should perform the more important duties *while the rest are to be distributed among several ministers.* (emphasis added)

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, however, the acolyte places the cross upright near the altar so that it may serve as the altar cross; otherwise, he puts it away in a dignified place. Then he takes his place in the sanctuary.

189. Through the entire celebration, it is for the acolyte 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 that, in so far as possible, the acolyte should occupy a place from which he can easily carry out his ministry either at the chair or at the altar.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

190. In the absence of a Deacon, after the Universal Prayer 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 being used, the acolyte presents the thurible to the Priest and assists him while he incenses the offerings, the cross, and the altar. Then the acolyte incenses the Priest and the people.

¹ This refers to the 1917 Code. See Canon 910 of the 1983 Code.

² Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Letter given Motu Proprio: On first tonsure, minor orders, and the subdiaconate (Ministeria Quaedam), August 15, 1972, nos. 6-7.

With A Deacon

178. After the Universal Prayer, 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....

Without a Deacon

139. When the Universal Prayer is over, all sit.... An acolyte or other lay minister places the corporal, the purificator, the chalice, the pall, and the Missal upon the altar.

140. It is desirable that the participation of the faithful be expressed by an offering, whether of the bread and wine for the celebration of the Eucharist or of other gifts to relieve 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 on the altar, while other gifts are put in another suitable place.

141. The Priest accepts the paten with the bread at the altar, holds it slightly raised above the altar with both hands and says quietly, *Benedictus es, Domine (Blessed are you, Lord God)*. Then he places the paten with the bread on the corporal.

142. After this, as the minister presents the cruets, the priest stands at the side of the altar and pours wine and a little water into the chalice, saying quietly, *Per huius aquae (By the mystery of this water)*. He returns to the middle of the altar, and with both hands raises the chalice a little, and says quietly, *Benedictus es, Domine (Blessed are you, Lord God)*. Then he places the chalice on the corporal and, if appropriate, covers it with a pall.

If, however, there is no Offertory Chant and the organ is not played, in the presentation of the bread and wine the Priest may say the formulas of blessing aloud, and the people acclaim, *Blessed be God for ever*.

143. After placing the chalice on the altar, the Priest bows profoundly and says quietly, *In spiritu humilitatis (With humble spirit)*.

144. If incense is being used, the Priest then puts some in the thurible, blesses it without saying anything, and incenses the offerings, the cross, and the altar. While standing at the side of the altar, a minister incenses the Priest and then the people.

145. After the prayer *In spiritu humilitatis (With humble spirit)* or after the incensation, the Priest washes his hands standing at the side of the altar and, as the minister pours the water, says quietly, *Lava me, Domine (Wash me, O Lord)*.

191. A duly instituted acolyte, as an extraordinary minister, may, if necessary, assist the Priest in distributing Communion to the people.³ If Communion is given under both kinds, in the absence of a Deacon, 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. In the absence of a Deacon, a duly instituted acolyte carries the sacred vessels to the credence table and there purifies them, wipes them, and arranges them as usual.

³ Paul IV, Apostolic Letter, *Ministeria quaedam*, August 15, 1972, no. 6; *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 64 (1972), p. 532.

193. After the celebration of Mass, the acolyte and other ministers return together with the Deacon and the Priest in procession to the sacristy, in the same manner and in the same order in which they entered.⁴

In the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston the instituted acolyte assists as a sacristan before and after the liturgy. The vesture for an acolyte is either suit (slacks, suit and tie) or an alb.

⁴ Numbers 187-193 are excerpts from the General Instruction of the Roman Missal.