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LITURGICAL DIRECTIVES FOR INSTITUTED LECTORS AND ACOLYTES ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA

DIRECTIVES IN GENERAL

Pope Paul VI established the discipline for the formally instituted Lector and Acolyte on 15 August 1972 through the Motu Proprio *Ministeria quaedam*. Summaries from this apostolic letter of the duties of the Lector and the Acolyte are listed below.

THE LECTOR IS APPOINTED TO:

- Read the word of God, except for the gospel reading, in the liturgical assembly;
- Recite the psalm between the readings when there is no psalmist;
- Present the intentions for the general intercessions in the absence of a deacon or cantor;
- Direct the singing and the participation by the faithful;
- Instruct the faithful for the worthy reception of the sacraments;
- Prepare other faithful who are appointed on a temporary basis to read the Scriptures in liturgical celebrations [*Ministeria quaedam*, n. 5].

THE ACOLYTE IS APPOINTED TO:

- Aid the deacon and minister to the priest in liturgical celebrations;
- Attend to the service of the altar and to assist the deacon and priest in the celebration of Mass;
- Distribute Communion as an extraordinary minister in the true absence of deacons and/or priests;
- Again in the true absence of deacons and/or priests expose the Blessed Sacrament for adoration by the faithful and afterward repose it, but without the blessing;
- Instruct 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 [*Ministeria quaedam*, n. 6].

The acolyte may also distribute Communion outside of Mass and participate in the care of the sick according to what is described and permitted in *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass* and *Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum*.

DIRECTIVES FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* [March 2002], Nos. 98-99, 187-198, outlines the functions of the Acolyte and the Lector during the celebration of the Eucharist. This information from the *General Instruction* is repeated below from the current English study translation provided by the Secretariat for the Liturgy of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops [July 2000]. What is described in the *General Instruction* for these ministries directs their participation in the celebration of all liturgical rites in addition to what is provided in the respective liturgical books.

INSTITUTED ACOLYTES AND LECTORS

- 98 The acolyte is instituted to serve at the altar and to assist the priest and deacon. In particular, it is for him to prepare the altar and the vessels and, if necessary, as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, to give Communion to the faithful. In the ministry of the altar, the acolyte has special duties (Nos. 187-193), which he alone ought to perform.
- 99 The lector is instituted to proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture, with the exception of the gospel reading. He may also announce the intentions for the general intercessions and, in the absence of the psalmist, sing or read the psalm between the readings. In the celebration of the Eucharist, the reader has specific duties (Nos. 194-198), which he alone ought to perform, even though ordained ministers may be present.

FUNCTIONS OF THE ACOLYTE

- 187 The acolyte may have functions of various kinds and several may occur at the same time. It is therefore desirable that these functions be suitably distributed among several acolytes. But if there is only one acolyte present, that acolyte should perform the more important functions and the rest are distributed among several ministers.

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 near the altar so that it may be used as the altar cross during Mass; otherwise, he places it in a dignified place. Then he assumes his place in the sanctuary.
- 189 Throughout the celebration it belongs to the acolyte to go to the priest or 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, if possible, acolytes have a place from which they can conveniently carry out their ministry both at the chair and at the altar.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

- 190 After the general intercessions, when no deacon is present, the acolyte places the corporal, purificator, and missal on the altar, while the priest remains at the chair. Then, if necessary, the acolyte assists the priest in receiving the gifts of the people and may bring the bread and wine to the altar and hand them to the priest. If incense is used, the acolyte gives the censor to the priest and assists him in incensing the gifts, the cross and the altar. Then he incenses the priest and people.
- 191 A formally instituted acolyte may, if necessary, assist the priest as an extraordinary minister in giving Communion to the people. 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 when Communion is given by intinction.
- 192 Likewise, a formally instituted acolyte helps the priest or deacon to cleanse and arrange the vessels after Communion. In the absence of a deacon, the acolyte carries the sacred vessels to the side table, wipes and arranges them in the customary manner.
- 193 After the celebration of Mass, the acolyte and other ministers return in procession to the sacristy with the deacon and the priest in the same way and in the same order in which they entered.

FUNCTIONS OF THE LECTOR

INTRODUCTORY RITES

- 194 In the procession to the altar, when no deacon is present, the lector, wearing the appropriate vesture, may carry the *Book of the Gospels* elevated slightly. In that case, he walks in front of the priest, otherwise with the other ministers.
- 195 Upon reaching the altar he makes a profound bow with the others. If he is carrying the *Book of the Gospels*, he goes to the altar and places the *Book of the Gospels* [flat] on it. Then, he takes up his position in the sanctuary with the other ministers.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

- 196 At the ambo the lector proclaims the readings that precede the gospel reading. If there is no psalmist, the reader may also sing or recite the responsorial psalm after the first reading.
- 197 After the priest gives the introduction to the general intercessions, the lector may announce the intentions from the ambo when no deacon is present.
- 198 If there is no opening liturgical song or communion song and the antiphons in the Missal are not said by the faithful, the lector may recite them at the appropriate time.

Instituted Acolytes and Lectors wear the alb or cassock and surplice for liturgical celebrations (see *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, nos. 336, 339).

DIRECTIVES FOR PREACHING

The preaching of the homily during the celebration of the Eucharist is reserved to the sacred minister, priest or deacon [*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, nos. 65-66]. “[T]he practice...of entrusting the preaching of the homily to seminarians or theology students who are not clerics is not permitted. Indeed, the homily should not be regarded as a training for some future ministry [*Ecclesiae de mysterio*, August 15, 1997, art. 3§1].”

Particular law for the dioceses of the United States of America [January 2002] legislates when the lay faithful may indeed preach outside of the celebration of the Eucharist. This legislation directs the diocesan bishop when he may admit the lay faithful to preach. In the Archdiocese of Philadelphia the Acolyte and the Lector do not have permission to preach. The liturgical books, although, do provide instances when these ministers may explain God’s word for the instruction of the faithful.

The Acolyte and the Lector may give a scriptural based reflection, in the true absence of a priest and/or deacon, during the celebrations of the Word of God described in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, the *Communion of the Sick*, the *Vigil for the Deceased* and the *Rite of Committal*. The Acolyte and the Lector may give a reflection in celebrations of popular devotion.