

EXCERPTS FROM THE *GENERAL INSTRUCTION OF THE ROMAN MISSAL ON THE READER*

27. At Mass—that is, the Lord’s Supper—the People of God is called together, with a priest presiding and acting in the person of Christ, to celebrate the memorial of the Lord, the Eucharistic Sacrifice.³⁷ For this reason Christ’s promise applies in an outstanding way to such a local gathering of the holy Church: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst” (Mt 18:20). For in the celebration of Mass, in which the Sacrifice of the Cross is perpetuated,³⁸ Christ is really present in the very liturgical assembly gathered in his name, in the person of the minister, in his word, and indeed substantially and continuously under the eucharistic species.³⁹

28. The Mass is made up, as it were, of two parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. These, however, are so closely interconnected that they form but one single act of worship.⁴⁰ For in the Mass the table both of God’s word and of Christ’s Body is prepared, from which the faithful may be instructed and refreshed.⁴¹ There are also certain rites that open and conclude the celebration.

Reading and Explaining the Word of God

29. When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his own word, proclaims the Gospel.

Therefore, all must listen with reverence to the readings from God’s word, for they make up an element of greatest importance in the Liturgy. Although in the readings from Sacred Scripture God’s word is addressed to all people of every era and is understandable to them, nevertheless, a fuller understanding and a greater effectiveness of the word is fostered by a living commentary on the word, that is, the homily, as part of the liturgical action.⁴²

42. The gestures and posture of the priest, the deacon, and the ministers, as well as those of the people, ought to contribute to making the entire celebration resplendent with beauty and noble simplicity, so that the true and full meaning of the different parts of the celebration is evident and that the participation of all is fostered.⁵² Therefore, attention should be paid to what is determined by this General Instruction and the traditional practice of the Roman Rite and to what serves the common spiritual good of the People of God, rather than private inclination or arbitrary choice.

A common posture, to be observed by all participants, is a sign of the unity of the members of the Christian community gathered for the Sacred Liturgy: it both expresses and fosters the intention and spiritual attitude of the participants.

44. Among gestures included are also actions and processions: of the priest going with the deacon and ministers to the altar; of the deacon carrying the Evangeliary or Book of the Gospels to the ambo before the proclamation of the Gospel; of the faithful presenting the gifts and coming forward to receive Communion. It is appropriate that actions and processions of this sort be carried out with decorum while the chants proper to them occur, in keeping with the norms prescribed for each.

Silence

45. Sacred silence also, as part of the celebration, is to be observed at the designated times.⁵⁴ Its purpose, however, depends on the time it occurs in each part of the celebration. Thus within the Act of Penitence and again after the invitation to pray, all recollect themselves; but at the conclusion of a reading or the homily, all meditate briefly on what they have heard; then after Communion, they praise and pray to God in their hearts.

Even before the celebration itself, it is commendable that silence to be observed in the church, in the sacristy, in the vesting room, and in adjacent areas, so that all may dispose themselves to carry out the sacred action in a devout and fitting manner.

99. 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 Prayer of the Faithful and, in the absence of a psalmist, proclaim the Psalm between the readings.

In the Eucharistic Celebration, the lector has his own proper office (cf. below, nos. 194-198), which he must exercise personally.

101. In the absence of an instituted lector, other laypersons may be commissioned to proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture. They should be truly suited to perform this function and should receive careful preparation, so that the faithful by listening to the readings from the sacred texts may develop in their hearts a warm and living love for Sacred Scripture.⁸⁶

119. In the sacristy, the sacred vestments (cf. below, nos. 337-341) for the priest, the deacon, and other ministers are to be prepared according to the various forms of celebration:

- a. For the priest: the alb, the stole, and the chasuble;
- b. For the deacon: the alb, the stole, and the dalmatic; the dalmatic may be omitted, however, either out of necessity or on account of a lesser degree of solemnity;
- c. For the other ministers: albs or other lawfully approved attire.⁹⁶

All who wear an alb should use a cincture and an amice unless, due to the form of the alb, they are not needed.

When there is an Entrance Procession, the following are also to be prepared: the Book of the Gospels; on Sundays and festive days, the thurible and the boat with incense, if incense is used; the cross to be carried in procession; and candlesticks with lighted candles.

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.

D. THE DUTIES OF THE LECTOR

Introductory Rites

194. In coming to the altar, when no deacon is present, the lector, wearing approved attire, may carry the Book of the Gospels, which is to be slightly elevated. In that case, the lector walks in front of the priest but otherwise along with the other ministers.

195. Upon reaching the altar, the lector 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 upon it. Then the lector takes his own place in the sanctuary with the other ministers.

The Liturgy of the Word

196. The lector reads from the ambo the readings that precede the Gospel. If there is no psalmist, the lector may also proclaim the responsorial Psalm after the first reading.

197. When no deacon is present, the lector, after the introduction by the priest, may announce from the ambo the intentions of the Prayer of the Faithful.

198. If there is no singing at the Entrance or at Communion and the antiphons in the Missal are not recited by the faithful, the lector may read them at the appropriate time (cf. above, nos. 48, 87).

Genuflections and Bows

274. A genuflection, made by bending the right knee to the ground, signifies adoration, and therefore it is reserved for the Most Blessed Sacrament, as well as for the Holy Cross from the solemn adoration during the liturgical celebration on Good Friday until the beginning of the Easter Vigil.

During Mass, three genuflections are made by the priest celebrant: namely, after the showing of the host, after the showing of the chalice, and before Communion. Certain specific features to be observed in a concelebrated Mass are noted in their proper place (cf. above, nos. 210-251).

If, however, the tabernacle with the Most Blessed Sacrament is present 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.

Otherwise all who pass before the Most Blessed Sacrament genuflect, unless they are moving in procession.

Ministers carrying the processional cross or candles bow their heads instead of genuflecting.

275. A bow signifies reverence and honor shown to the persons themselves or to the signs that represent them. There are two kinds of bows: a bow of the head and a bow of the body.

a. A bow of the head is made when the three Divine Persons are named together and at the names of Jesus, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the Saint in whose honor Mass is being celebrated.

b. A bow of the body, that is to say a profound bow, is made to the altar; during the prayers *Munda cor meum* (*Almighty God, cleanse my heart*) and *In spiritu humilitatis* (*Lord God, we ask you to receive*); in the Creed at the words *Et incarnatus est* (*by the*

power of the Holy Spirit . . . made man); in the Roman Canon at the words *Supplices te rogamus* (*Almighty God, we pray that your angel*). The same kind of bow is made by the deacon when he asks for a blessing before the proclamation of the Gospel. In addition, the priest bows slightly as he speaks the words of the Lord at the consecration.

294. The People of God, gathered for Mass, has a coherent and hierarchical structure, which finds its expression in the variety of ministries and the variety of actions according to the different parts of the celebration. The general ordering of the sacred building must be such that in some way it conveys the image of the gathered assembly and allows the appropriate ordering of all the participants, as well as facilitating each in the proper carrying out of his function.

The faithful and the choir should have a place that facilitates their active participation.¹¹⁴

The priest celebrant, the deacon, and the other ministers have places in the sanctuary. Seats for concelebrants should also be prepared there. If, however, their number is great, seats should be arranged in another part of the church, but near the altar.

All these elements, even though they must express the hierarchical structure and the diversity of ministries, should nevertheless bring about a close and coherent unity that is clearly expressive of the unity of the entire holy people. Indeed, the character and beauty of the place and all its furnishings should foster devotion and show forth the holiness of the mysteries celebrated there.

The Ambo

309. The dignity of the word of God requires that the church have a place that is suitable for the proclamation of the word and toward which the attention of the whole congregation of the faithful naturally turns during the Liturgy of the Word.¹¹⁷

It is appropriate that this place be ordinarily a stationary ambo and not simply a movable lectern. The ambo must be located in keeping with the design of each church in such a way that the ordained ministers and lectors may be clearly seen and heard by the faithful.

From the ambo only the readings, the responsorial Psalm, and the Easter Proclamation (*Exsultet*) are to be proclaimed; it may be used also for giving the homily and for announcing the intentions of the Prayer of the Faithful. The dignity of the ambo requires that only a minister of the word should go up to it.

It is appropriate that a new ambo be blessed according to the rite described in the Roman Ritual¹¹⁸ before it is put into liturgical use.

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.

FOOTNOTES

37. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, no. 5; Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 33.

38. Cf. Ecumenical Council of Trent, Session 22, *Doctrina de ss. Missae sacrificio*, 17 September 1562, chapter 1: Denz-Schön, 1740; Paul VI, Solemn Profession of Faith, 30 June 1968, no. 24: AAS 60 (1968), p. 442.

39. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 7; Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Mysterium fidei*, On the doctrine and worship of the Eucharist, 3 September 1965:

- AAS 57 (1965), p. 764; Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Eucharisticum mysterium*, On the worship of the Eucharist, 25 May 1967, no. 9: AAS 59 (1967), p. 547.
40. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 56; Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Eucharisticum mysterium*, On the worship of the Eucharist, 25 May 1967, no. 3: AAS 59 (1967), p. 542.
41. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 48, 51; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, 18 November 1965, no. 21; Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, no. 4.
42. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 7, 33, 52.
52. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 30, 34; cf. also Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Musicae sacram*, On music in the Liturgy, 5 March 1967, no. 21.
54. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 30; Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Musicae sacram*, On music in the Liturgy, 5 March 1967, no. 17: AAS 59 (1967), p. 305.
86. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 24.
96. Cf. Interdicasterial Instruction on certain questions regarding the collaboration of the non-ordained faithful in the sacred ministry of priests, *Ecclesiae de mysterio*, 15 August 1997, art. 6: AAS 89 (1997), p. 869.
114. Cf. Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Inter Oecumenici*, on the orderly carrying out of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 26 September 1964, nos. 97-98: AAS 56 (1964), p. 899.
117. Cf. Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Inter Oecumenici*, on the orderly carrying out of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 26 September 1964, no. 92: AAS 56 (1964), p. 899.
118. Cf. The Roman Ritual, Book of Blessings, *editio typica*, 1984, Order for a Blessing on the Occasion of the Installation of a New Ambo, nos. 900-918.