

¹GUIDELINES FOR LECTORS AND SERVERS AT MASS

English Community – Tavira Parish

With the upcoming visit of the Bishop to the parish, and with the knowledge that we come to our service from many countries and cultures, we need to have standard practices in accord with the magisterium of the church.

While there are some differences between different priests, dioceses, and countries, the standard for attendance at the altar is set in the “*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*,” Third Typical edition, promulgated by the Holy See in 2002. This book is usually referred to as the “GIRM” (as in the word “germ”). This is a worldwide standard for the Catholic church. Any deviation must be set at the level of the conferences of Bishops in a country with the concurrence of the Curia in Rome.

As we have expanded the members of our congregation who are serving as lectors, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, and in other roles where we are at or next to the altar during Mass, it is also useful to remind ourselves of the proper protocol when at the altar, serving communion, and when interacting with our priests and bishops.

The first point of reference that anyone in a role at the altar during Mass should know is that “*you follow the priest or deacon*” **not** the congregation. With that in mind, here is more specific guidance:

1. All who serve should dress modestly and appropriately. While those in the congregation will generally be permitted to “come as they are,” ** this is not the case for servers and lectors. You do not need fancy or formal clothes, but appropriate dress is important. Those who are members of recognized lay orders or organizations, e.g., consecrated orders, Catholic Truth Society, Knights of Columbus, Knights of Malta, etc. may wear clothing appropriate to their organization. We are not wearing albs (robes) at this time.

**Note: It is also useful to know that it is never appropriate, even for congregants or visitors, to wear revealing clothing in the sanctuary, e.g., no hats, halter tops, open shirts, cutoff jeans, beach wear, clothing with slogans or pictures, etc. This is not strictly enforced in Portugal, but it is elsewhere in Europe and in other countries and is respectful of the sacred setting.

2. When a priest or bishop enter a room or the sanctuary, you should stand. When they approach you or you are at the altar in the presence of a priest or

bishop, you generally stand if they are standing. When they sit, you may sit or sit if they direct you to sit.

3. The appropriate greeting when speaking to a bishop is “*Your Excellency, Bishop {surname}*.” They may ask you to be less formal, but the choice is theirs. Bishop Dom is relaxed about this most of the time but in a formal setting, he should be addressed appropriately.
4. Lectors and those serving should arrive 10 to 15 minutes prior to the scheduled time of the Mass. On special feast days or when a larger attendance is expected, arrive a few minutes earlier than normal.
5. Prior to Mass, ensure that the candles are lit (there is normally a lighter near one of the credence tables), the missal and lectionary are in the proper places on the altar and ambo respectively, and the bell and ringer are placed in a convenient location either next to the altar or on the credence table nearest the altar. If we have printed reflections and announcements those should be on the ambo underneath the lectionary. The book of the Prayers of the Faithful should be placed on the altar next to the stand for the missal. Check to be sure that the missal, book of prayers, and lectionary are set to the proper page for the Mass that day. Turn the sound system on; the power switch is to the right of the ambo on the table. Do not adjust the sound settings on the amplifier. If there is no Mass following, turn off the power at the end of Mass.
6. Servers and lectors do not “*genuflect*” toward the tabernacle *during* Mass except if he or she accesses it to get additional hosts for the distribution of Holy Communion, or in returning consecrated hosts to the tabernacle. If we process in, it is appropriate to genuflect as you approach the altar and upon recessing at the end of Mass.
7. Servers and lectors should “*bow*” instead during Mass, particularly when the celebrant kneels or bows. If you cannot easily kneel, a bow or lowering of the head is appropriate *unless* you are holding something (e.g., the host, a thurifer, a candle) in which case, you should remain upright. You also bow or bend your head in respect of the host and chalice as it approaches or passes in front or beside you.
8. The altar is the “*altar of sacrifice*” and is a symbol of Christ and his sacrifice for us. Accordingly, unless directed by the celebrant, you should never place anything or pick up anything on the altar *during* Mass or place your hands

upon the altar. Those who are preparing the altar before, or clearing it after Mass, may do so when the celebrant has yet to arrive or has departed.

9. Anyone who has not been ordained, e.g., not a priest or deacon, should not extend your arms with the hands open at any time as is done by the celebrant during the consecration of the host. It is acceptable, during the Lord's Prayer, to hold your hands out slightly with the palms open. When the prayer concludes, return them to your sides or together in front of you. You do not hold out your hands for the "Final Doxology" that follows, i.e., "*for the Kingdom and the power...*"
10. If you are an extraordinary minister, it is recommended to use hand sanitizer prior to receiving communion and allow sufficient time for it to dry before touching the host. If you are assisting with the low gluten wafers, it is best not to touch the ordinary host when you take communion; instead, take communion on your tongue if possible. Take the placard for low gluten with you when you serve and stand behind and to the right of the celebrant with the placard around your neck. If someone approaches you and they are not known to need the low gluten host, then gently say "*I only have low gluten hosts*". If they still request the host or do not return to the other line, serve it to them without further comment.
 - a. Hold the paten or ciborium with one hand and offer the host to the congregant (when they approach) with the other hand. Raise it a few inches above the paten and place it in their open hands. If they do not show their hands but offer their tongue instead, place it in on their tongue. When serving the host say: "*The Body of Christ*". The congregant should reply with "*Amen*". If they cross their hands in front of their body or are a child too young to have been confirmed and accompanied by a parent, then bless the individual by placing your hand on their head or shoulder while saying "*May God bless you*". You do not make the sign of the cross. Do not touch very young children or infants but instead hold your hand over them.
 - b. If they present a gold container, known as a *pix*, then place the wafer into the *pix*. They may do this in addition to receiving the host or instead of reception.
 - c. When you have exhausted the available hosts, return to the altar, and place the paten on the altar next to the water and oils. If there are hosts remaining, then wait and when the celebrant has finished offering

hosts to the other congregants, gently tip the paten and pour the hosts into the ciborium so they may be returned to the tabernacle.

- d. If you need to obtain additional hosts before consecration or return the hosts to the tabernacle after communion is served, the key to the tabernacle is underneath the tabernacle. The lock is recessed and inside the opening at the bottom of the tabernacle.
- e. In the event that there are not low gluten hosts, or the celebrant does not consecrate them, it is acceptable to offer the chalice instead to those who cannot consume the regular hosts. This is however dependent on the priest having consecrated sufficient wine.

When serving with the chalice, hold it up at a position comfortable based on their height and say, "*The blood of Christ*" and the congregant should reply with "*Amen*". Before serving the next person in line, use the purificator (the cloth) and wipe the rim inside and out, and turn the chalice one quarter (90⁰). If any wine should drip, place a purificator over the spill and inform the celebrant. Do not clean the spot. If the host becomes soiled, return to the altar and retrieve another purificator if possible.

- f. Congregants and EMs should not dip the host into the wine, known as "*intinction*". Extraordinary ministers should not allow this. If they insist, you may dip the host for them and place the host on their tongue, *but this is not proper procedure and is strongly discouraged*. Note that only ordinary ministers (this is, those who have been ordained), are generally permitted to do this (*c.f. GIRM:245*) and only they may offer hosts dipped in wine to congregants.
- g. In the event someone is unable to stand in line it is permissible to go to their seat and serve them in the pew and then return to your place near the celebrant or to the altar if you are finished serving.

11. When a server/lector/extraordinary minister and at the altar:

- a. Stand: when the celebrant enters the sanctuary or the altar.
- b. If we process in, you enter before the celebrant and when reaching the altar, stand to the side, and genuflect or bow with the celebrant and then proceed to the altar and take your seat. If the missal has not already been placed at the altar, carry the missal holding it in front of

you and at the level of your head. You proceed to the altar ahead of the celebrant and place it on the altar.

- c. Strike your breast three times: during the “Confiteor” at the words: “*through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault;*”
- d. Sit: during the 1st reading, Psalm, and 2nd reading. When the lectors exchange roles, stand next to each other, face the altar, and bow together before sitting or moving to the ambo.
- e. Stand: during the Alleluia and Gospel. Make the sign of the cross with your thumb or fingertip to your forehead, mouth, and breast when the celebrant does so.
- f. Sit: during the reflection or homily. The reader should return to their seat following the reflection and remain sitting until the celebrant stands.
- g. Stand: during the intercessory Prayers of the Faithful.
- h. Profound bow: during the Creed at the “*and by the Holy Spirit... and became man.*”
- i. Stand or kneel: throughout the preparation, prayers, and the communion. (The congregation may kneel, but you should only stand or kneel, not sit! You are in the presence of the Lord!). Remain standing throughout communion.
- j. Stand: during the Great Amen and the Sign of Peace. It is appropriate to share the sign of peace with others near the altar and you may acknowledge the congregation, but you should remain in place at the altar.
- k. It is generally the custom in Portugal to ring the bell during the showing of the body and blood of Christ; first at the time the priest lifts the host and again when he raises the chalice. The bell should be rung *once* for each and sufficiently loud to be heard throughout the church but not so loud that it startles those nearby. While it is common in many places to also ring the bell three times during the consecration we do it just once in accord with local practice. Likewise, during the invocation or epiclesis we do not ring the bell (this is when the priest holds his hands over the ciborium and chalice).
- l. Bow or kneel: when the celebrant kneels during the consecration.

- m. If the celebrant, following communion, returns to the chair and sits, you may sit until he stands again.
- n. If the celebrant remains standing during the announcements, you should also. If he bows during the closing prayers, do likewise.
- o. If there is no recession, remain standing, in place, until the celebrant departs, and then post-Mass actions may begin.
- p. If there is a recession, you stop and genuflect or bow with the celebrant as you depart *unless* you are holding something.

12. The protocol for the liturgical introductions to the readings is as follows:

- a. *A reading from the Book of Genesis (or Exodus, Joshua, Proverbs, Job, etc., for most OT books).*
- b. *A reading from the first (or second) Book of Samuel (or Kings, Chronicles, Maccabees).*
- c. *A reading from the Book of the prophet Isaiah (or Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, etc., for all prophets).*
- d. *A reading from the Song of Songs. (the only OT text not “from the Book of...”)*
- e. *A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew (or Mark, Luke, John).*
- f. *A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.*
- g. *A reading from the Letter of Paul to the Romans (or Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians).*
- h. *A reading from the first (or second) Letter of Paul to the Corinthians (or Thessalonians).*
- i. *A reading from the first (or second) Letter of Paul to Timothy.*
- j. *A reading from the Letter of Paul to Titus (or Philemon).*
- k. *A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews. (not “...of Paul to the Hebrews”)*
- l. *A reading from the Letter of James (or Jude).*
- m. *A reading from the first (or second, or third) Letter of Peter (or John).*
- n. *A reading from the Book of Revelation. (not plural “Revelations”)*

- o. Although Paul is called “Saint,” Timothy and Titus are not. The Lectionary says, “*A reading of the first Letter of Saint Paul to Timothy,*” rather than “...Saint Paul to Saint Timothy” (or Saint Titus).

Liturgical Conclusions:

- p. *After the 1st and 2nd readings:*

Lector: “*The Word of the Lord.*” (*not* “This is the Word of ...”)

Response: “*Thanks be to God.*”

- q. *After the Gospel proclamation:*

Deacon or Priest: “*The Gospel of the Lord.*” (*not* “This is the Gospel of ...”)

Response: “*Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.*”

13. Following Mass, return the books and the placard for low gluten wafers to the credence table nearest the doors to the office, remove the printed reflection and announcements from the ambo, and place the Portuguese missal on the altar. If a Portuguese Mass follows, leave the candles lit.

¹ References:

General Instruction of the Roman Missal: Sections 43, 49-50, 122, 124, 128, 131, 134, 137, 146, 173, 195, 210-211, 245, 251, 256, 274-275

The Order of the Mass

Ceremonial of Bishops, section 72.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church

Liturgical Introductions and Conclusions for Scripture Readings, Felix Just, S.J., catholic-resources.org

Rev. 2: 27 January 2025