

Liturgical Minister Guidelines

For all Ministers

For most of my life I equated ministry with volunteerism: I opted to perform a ministry [serving, lectoring, etc.] inasmuch as I opted to volunteer [raking leaves, thanksgiving baskets]. Ministry is so much more than simply helping; it is the very heartbeat of the Church. I have grown to appreciate that ministry is less about what we accomplish and more about what God accomplishes through our ministry. While we are there to feed the hungry, to lector at mass, and to take communion to the homebound, ultimately, it is God working through our ministry to reach the people we encounter. Consider how this forms your ministry during the Liturgy of the Eucharist and what encounter God is trying to make through it.

Every sacrament marks a point in time when God encounters His people. Our ministry at the altar will either assist or hinder that encounter. Our actions and practices can help open people's minds and hearts to God speaking to them or distract them from that voice. It is in light of this that I am sharing with you several thoughts to help guide your ministry at the celebration of the Eucharist.

Pray First

Before mass begins take a moment to thank God for the opportunity to minister at mass. Thanksgiving nurtures our humility; humility makes way for God to work through us. It's what we should all be striving to do.

Before mass can be hectic. Your ministry is a call to help God encounter His people. Whether at home or in church, make sure to take time to pray and reflect on what you're about to do and what God desires to do through your ministry.

Movement is distracting

Movement naturally draws our attention. We are wise enough to avoid reading a book at a bustling playground. Likewise, we should be considerate of those who are praying during mass. If we are moving during the Eucharistic liturgy, we have to be deliberate and thoughtful when we do.

Try to move when the congregation moves. After the opening prayer, while the congregation is sitting down, is the perfect time for the lector to move to the ambo. The lector wouldn't start the reading while everyone is being seated because movement is distracting. When everyone is seated, we know they're ready to focus on the Word.

When this is unavoidable, moving prayerfully becomes very important. Keeping your hands folded in prayer, taking time to bow to the altar, to the tabernacle, to the sanctuary, and being mindful that you're carrying the Body of Christ in your hands are ways that we can maintain a prayerful presence so that our movement, while noticed, won't distract.

The Sanctuary is Holy Ground

What we do, and how we do it, will either create a prayerful atmosphere around the space of the Sanctuary or work against it. Moses removed his sandals for he was on Holy Ground. The Apostles fell prostrate at the transfiguration. We don't have to do that, but through some of the simplest practices we can create a peaceful, beautiful, prayerful, atmosphere in the space around the tabernacle and the Altar.

Please be thoughtful and respectful in how you use the Sanctuary. Make an act of reverence when entering and leaving the Sanctuary. Make sure to reverence the altar/tabernacle before/after you approach them. Please don't use the Sanctuary as a cut-through to get to the Sacristy.

Dress appropriately

What we wear matters. Businesses ask their employees to adhere to dress codes because the business is judged by the people who represent it. The Lector speaks on behalf of the Word of God in Scripture; a Eucharistic Minister presents the Body of Christ to others. How does your attire represent your ministry?

Consider the effect it would have, should you decide to distribute the Body of Christ wearing jeans, sandals, and a brown t-shirt with a full-frame cat face on it [yes, I have a story about this]. If we appreciate our ministry and what God can do through it, I don't doubt that we all naturally select attire that upholds that value.

Lectors

Lectors proclaim the Word of God to the congregation. You are tasked with the responsibility of relating the written Word to those who are listening. Comprehension is easier when reading than when listening. It is no small challenge to proclaim the Word of God in a way that people hearing it for the first time might comprehend and understand. To that end, you should ask God for help.

Lectors walk a fine line of proclaiming the Word of God in a way that is understandable while not becoming a distraction. They should strive to be engaging and understandable without making themselves the distraction by becoming overly dramatic.

Lector Responsibilities

Please note the responsibilities that the Deacon will have should there be a Deacon serving the mass:

- The Deacon processes in carrying the Book of the Gospels
- The Deacon will proclaim the Universal Prayers

Before Mass

- Check in at least 15 minutes before the beginning of mass.
- Find out if there is a Deacon serving this mass.
- Review the readings and universal prayers. Place the book of readings and the binder of universal prayers on the Ambo.

The Entrance Procession

With a Deacon:

- Process in following the servers; keep 4-5 pews of space
- Make an act of reverence [genuflection, profound bow, simple bow] before entering the Sanctuary
- Enter the Sanctuary and stand to the Ambo side of the altar facing the tabernacle
- When the celebrant genuflects to the tabernacle the lector bows and then goes to their seat

Without a Deacon:

- The Lector will process in carrying the Book of the Gospels
- The Book of the Gospels should be held upright below eye-level
- Process in following the servers keeping 4-5 pews of space
- Enter the sanctuary, without an act of reverence, and walk around the altar such that you're facing the congregation
- Place the Book of the Gospels flat on the altar without embellishments [no elevation, no pause etc.]
- Go and stand on the Ambo side of the altar, facing the tabernacle
- When the celebrant genuflects to the tabernacle the lector bows to the tabernacle and then goes to their seat

Liturgy of the Word

The lector proclaims the readings. A few things to note:

- Please read what is written. Do not add introductions, greetings, or preludes [e.g. "The first reading is a reading from the book of prophet Jeremiah", Good morning, etc.].
- The lector takes their seat in the sanctuary during the responsorial psalm

With a Deacon:

- After the second reading, place the book of readings on the shelf under the ambo
- You may take your seat in the congregation

Without a Deacon:

- After the second reading, place the book of readings on the shelf under the ambo
- Go to your seat in the sanctuary for the Gospel reading, the homily, and the creed
- After the creed, go to the ambo and proclaim the Universal Prayers
- Once the priest has concluded the prayer after the Universal Prayers, return to your seat in the congregation