

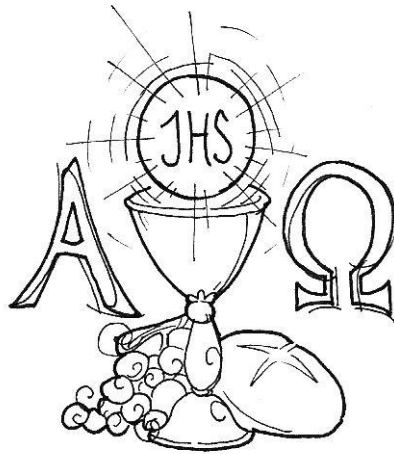


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# MINSTERING AT MASS

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Norms for Readers and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion in the  
Parishes of St Mark's Ipswich with Holy Family Brantham and St Mary  
Magdalen Ipswich



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**Readers at Mass and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EM)  
Liturgical Norms and principles for St Mark's, Holy Family and St Mary  
Magdalen Parish**

The Sacred Liturgy is the work of the whole people of God (The Church), it is service that we render to God, as right and proper worship. Readers and EM's are delegated by the priest to perform a ministry of service at the liturgy for the glorification of God and the sanctification of God's Holy people.

The Mass (Eucharist) is the source and summit of the Christian life. What we do on a Sunday is done for worship of Almighty God, therefore half measures are not enough.

All of us participating in the Mass must endeavor to offer the best we have to God. As we perform a ministry, we are serving our brothers and sisters in helping them enter into the celebration of the Mass.

Mass should be reverent, prayerful and beautiful. We should think to ourselves: Am I giving of my best? Am I helping people to enter into the beauty of the Mass? Am I conducting myself reverently?

**Prayer**

The Mass is the greatest prayer we can pray, for in the Mass we are joined to Jesus as he offers himself to the Father on our behalf. The Mass is both Christ's sacrifice and Christ's banquet where he nourishes us with his Body and Blood. To minister at the Mass is a huge privilege for us as well as a gift we offer to God and to others. Personal prayerful preparation is a must. On Sunday Masses before Mass starts, Readers and EM's should join the priest and servers in the sacristy in a moment of prayer.

**Apparel**

When performing a ministry ministers should be dressed in appropriate attire, as to speak to the dignity of the proclamation of the Word of God and ministration of the Body and Blood of Christ. Hats, coats and scarves should be removed and clothes appropriate for Church should be worn. The wearing

of flip-flops, sliders or similar shoes are not appropriate for moving around the sanctuary and handling the Blessed Sacrament.

### **Liturgical gestures and movements for Readers**

We must be careful to move around the sanctuary with care, reverence and precision. As ministers visible at Mass we are called to model the reverence that all should show.

During the celebration of the Mass the proper act of reverence when approaching the altar or walking past the altar on the sanctuary is a solemn/profound bow. Not genuflection. A profound bow is designated as a bow from the hips as opposed to simple bow which is made with the nod of the head only.

Genuflection to the Tabernacle only takes place at the beginning and the end of Mass. (and to the cross on Good Friday) During the Mass, the tabernacle is not revered (except when the priest goes to the tabernacle to collect the reserved Blessed Sacrament). Instead, the altar as the place of sacrifice and the symbol of Christ is revered by a solemn bow. (Genuflection may also occur to the Blessed Sacrament consecrated at that Mass i.e. before Holy Communion)

When Reader(s) approach the altar, they are to make a bow and then walk to the Ambo (Lectern) approaching it from the outer side before stepping on to the sanctuary. If there is more than one Reader for the scripture readings they should both approach the altar at the same time and the reader who is not reading shall wait, standing side-on for the duration of the reading, until it is their turn to read. After the readings have finished, both readers return to the centre of the sanctuary, bow and return to their place to hear the proclamation of the gospel.

As soon as the gospel acclamation has been read, or sung, readers need to remove themselves from the sanctuary so as to not cause congestion to the Gospel procession. There should not ever be the situation where the Priest, and servers are waiting for the readers to leave the ambo.

The reader designated to read the general intercessions should approach the altar in the same way as any other reader, coming to the centre, bowing and then going to the ambo, approaching the ambo from the outer side.

He/she should already be moving by the end of the Creed so that as soon as the priest prays the opening prayer he/she is ready to announce the intercessions with minimal delay. The reader should stay at the ambo for the duration of the Hail Mary and the concluding prayer and only move after the congregation has said 'Amen'.

### **Gospel Book Procession**

In Masses where the Gospel book is processed into Church (and there is no Deacon) a designated reader should walk in the procession at the beginning of Mass. The reader walks in front of the priest, (behind the acolytes cross and thurifer) holding the Gospel Book slightly elevated. When the procession get to the altar, without bow or genuflection the reader goes up to the altar and places the Gospel book face up on the centre of the altar. He/she then peels off to one side, exits the sanctuary and goes to his/her seat. If, however, the reader is unable to process with Gospel, the Gospel Book maybe placed on the altar prior to Mass starting.

### **Norms for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EM)**

EM's are to approach the altar and follow all the same principles that are given to Readers except in those areas specific to Eucharistic ministry.

It should be established before Mass begins which minister is present and whether they are assisting with the host or the chalice.

At the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God) The minister approaches the Sanctuary but waits standing either off to the side of the sanctuary or at the foot of the sanctuary depending on the design of the Church. When the priest has received from the chalice ministers are to move up to the altar and stand side-on waiting for the priest to minister Holy Communion to them.

Holy Communion will be given either under one or two kinds as preferred by the EM. The priest will then hand the chalice or ciborium to the EM who will hold it and stand aside for the priest. At no point does the EM take a chalice or ciborium from the altar, it is always given.

EM's should only move to their designated positions for distribution of Holy Communion after the priest has moved first. (At St Mark's the Priest gives

Holy Communion to the frail and elderly who cannot move out of their seats first, during this time the EM should stay in place on the sanctuary. Only when the priest returns to the centre of the sanctuary to administer Holy Communion should the EM move to their designated distribution point.

The chalice is rotated and wiped with a purificator between each sip. If all the Precious Blood is consumed the purificator is held over the top of the chalice but the EM stays in place until the priest and all other ministers have completed the ministering of Holy Communion.

After the distribution of Holy Communion the EM should return the chalice to the altar and if able should consume the remaining precious blood (Some EM's may not want to do this, in which case the priest will do it) The chalice should be placed on the corporal (white square cloth) on the altar. If any of the Blessed sacrament remains on the altar the EM genuflects to the Blessed Sacrament on the altar, then after washing hand if necessary walks to the front step of the sanctuary (waits for any other ministers to join them) bows reverently and goes back to their place.

The priest only (unless for a just or reasonable cause) will purify the vessels.

### **Useful Websites Books and Resources**

<https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/>

<https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/index.shtml>

On the resources page particularly “The General Instruction on the Roman Missal” and “Celebrating the Mass”

<https://universalis.com/>

**Read:** Bread of Life by Luke Goymour Verbum Publications, 2024

Handbook for Readers at Mass (ebook) Catholic Truth Society

**Going Deeper:** The Lamb's Supper: Scott Hahn (On the Mass)

The Jewish Roots of the Eucharist: Brant J Pitre

## ***Appendix***

### ***Excerpts from The General Instruction of The Roman Missal***

#### ***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.[\[42\]](#)

#### ***Movements and Posture***

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.

### **B. The Liturgy of the Word**

55. The main part of the Liturgy of the Word is made up of the readings from Sacred Scripture together with the chants occurring between them. The homily, Profession of Faith, and Prayer of the Faithful, however, develop and conclude this part of the Mass. For in the readings, as explained by the homily, God speaks to his people,[\[58\]](#) opening up to them the mystery of redemption and salvation, and offering them spiritual nourishment; and Christ himself is present in the midst of the faithful through his word.[\[59\]](#) By their silence and singing the people make God's word their own, and they also affirm their adherence to it by means of the Profession of Faith. Finally, having been nourished by it, they

pour out their petitions in the Prayer of the Faithful for the needs of the entire Church and for the salvation of the whole world.

### ***The Biblical Readings***

57. In the readings, the table of God's word is prepared for the faithful, and the riches of the Bible are opened to them.<sup>[61]</sup> Hence, it is preferable to maintain the arrangement of the biblical readings, by which light is shed on the unity of both Testaments and of salvation history. Moreover, it is unlawful to substitute other, non-biblical texts for the readings and responsorial Psalm, which contain the word of God.<sup>[62]</sup>

58. In the celebration of the Mass with a congregation, the readings are always proclaimed from the ambo.

59. By tradition, the function of proclaiming the readings is ministerial, not presidential. The readings, therefore, should be proclaimed by a lector, and the Gospel by a deacon or, in his absence, a priest other than the celebrant. If, however, a deacon or another priest is not present, the priest celebrant himself should read the Gospel. Further, if another suitable lector is also not present, then the priest celebrant should also proclaim the other readings.

After each reading, whoever reads gives the acclamation, to which the gathered people reply, honoring the word of God that they have received in faith and with grateful hearts.

60. The reading of the Gospel is the high point of the Liturgy of the Word. The Liturgy itself teaches that great reverence is to be shown to it by setting it off from the other readings with special marks of honor: whether on the part of the minister appointed to proclaim it, who prepares himself by a blessing or prayer; or on the part of the faithful, who stand as they listen to it being read and through their acclamations acknowledge and confess Christ present and speaking to them; or by the very marks of reverence that are given to the *Book of the Gospels*.

## **IV. SOME GENERAL NORMS FOR ALL FORMS OF MASS**

### ***Veneration of the Altar and the Book of the Gospels***

273. According to traditional practice, the altar and the *Book of the Gospels* are venerated by means of a kiss. Where, however, a sign of this kind is not in harmony with the traditions or the culture of some region, it is for the

Conference of Bishops to establish some other sign in its place, with the consent of the Apostolic See.

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. 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 . . . and became 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.

Excerpts from the GIRM taken from vatican.va

[https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccdds\\_doc\\_20030317\\_or\\_dinamento-messale\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20030317_or_dinamento-messale_en.html) [accessed 15/11/24]