

The Priest at Mass

General Principles

- ❖ The Eucharistic sacrifice of the Mass is the action of Christ (GIRM (1) 11) and of God's people, in which the human race adores the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit (16), and the faithful join themselves to Christ in giving thanks and in acknowledging the great things God has done (78).
- ❖ The Mass is the "sacrament of unity" (91, 92) in which the faithful are nourished from the table of God's Word and of Christ's Body (28). This unity is expressed particularly in common posture (42), in communal singing (47), reverential silence (45, 56), and in sharing together of the one bread and one cup (83, 321).
- ❖ The assumption of the Roman Missal is that every Sunday and feast day, the Eucharistic liturgy will be celebrated with song (40, 115), with a cantor (104), with one or two readers (109), and with other assisting ministers (115).
- ❖ It is also assumed that all communicants present at Mass, priest celebrant, deacon, ministers and all in the assembly, will receive the sacrament from bread and wine consecrated at that Mass (85, 281, 321), just as the priest celebrant must do (85, 243). The liturgical books, particularly those used by the priest celebrant, the deacon and the assisting ministers should be beautiful and appropriate to the celebration (349) rather than being disposable pages or booklets.
- ❖ The rubrics assume that the celebration of Mass will take place in a church (288) with a freestanding altar (299), an ambo for proclaiming God's Word (309), and a presidential chair used by the priest at certain points during the celebration (310). Although the tabernacle may be located in the sanctuary (315b), all the rubrics assume that it is located in a chapel apart from the sanctuary since they make no reference to it when describing the actions of the priest celebrant and other ministers during Mass. If, however, the tabernacle is located in the sanctuary, all the ministers genuflect to it only when they first approach the altar and when they leave the sanctuary but not during the celebration of Mass itself (274).

Mass with a Congregation

Preparations

- ❖ Before the entrance procession, the altar is covered with a white cloth (304);
- ❖ lit candles are placed near or on the altar (117, 307);
- ❖ the Lectionary is at the ambo (118b);

- ❖ the Roman Missal is near the presidential chair (118a);
- ❖ and the chalice, corporal, purificator, water and bowl for washing hands, additional communion chalices and ciboria are on the side table (118c). The chalice may be covered with a veil if desired (118c).
- ❖ Elsewhere in the church, bread and wine to be carried in procession at the presentation of the gifts are placed.
- ❖ The Book of the Gospels may be placed on the altar before the celebration or carried in the entrance procession (117) by the deacon when he is present or, in his absence, by the lector. (2)
- ❖ Nothing else (306), including flowers (305), should be placed on the altar. If the blessing and sprinkling of water occurs, the vessel containing the water and sprinkler should also be available in the sanctuary (118c).

Introductory Rites

- ❖ During the entrance procession, if incense is used, the censer bearer leads, followed by the cross bearer between two ministers with candles, then the readers, followed by the deacon who carries the Book of the Gospels slightly elevated, then any concelebrants and finally the priest celebrant (120, 172). (One of the readers may carry the Book of the Gospels if there is no deacon.) The assembly joins in singing during this procession, (3) an activity meant to unite those gathered (47-48).
- ❖ When the procession arrives at the sanctuary, everyone bows before the altar, and the priests and deacon kiss the altar. (4)
- ❖ The priest celebrant incenses the cross and the altar (49, 123).
- ❖ Afterward, the priest celebrant goes to the chair where he leads the rest of the Introductory Rites (50, 124).
- ❖ There he makes the sign of the cross, greets the people, briefly introduces the liturgy of the day, and leads them in the Penitential Rite (50, 51, 124).
- ❖ On Sundays during the season of Easter, in place of the penitential rite, it is particularly appropriate to bless water and sprinkle all with it as a reminder of their baptism (51).
- ❖ When prescribed, the Gloria is sung or said, begun by the priest celebrant, cantor, or choir (53, 126).
- ❖ The Opening Prayer concludes the Introductory Rites (54, 127).
- ❖ Whenever he invites the people to pray ("Let us pray"), the priest celebrant does so with his hands joined; but while pronouncing the words of the prayer to God, he holds his hands outstretched (127).
- ❖ After the Gloria and Opening Prayer, all sit.

Liturgy of the Word

- ❖ The readings are always proclaimed at the ambo (58, 260),
- ❖ each reading from the Lectionary for Mass proclaimed by a different reader (59, 109).
- ❖ The psalmist also sings the responsorial psalm at the ambo (61, 309).
- ❖ If a deacon or another priest is present, he, rather than the priest celebrant, should proclaim the Gospel (59).
- ❖ Before the Gospel, all stand to sing the Alleluia [or Lenten acclamation] (62, 131) during which incense is prepared, if used.
- ❖ During the Gospel acclamation, a deacon asks for a blessing from the priest celebrant (or, in the absence of a deacon, a concelebrating priest from a bishop) (175, 212). Otherwise the priest (or a concelebrant) prepares himself to proclaim the Gospel by a silent prayer (132, 212).
- ❖ After each of the readings and the homily, a period of silence is appropriate (45, 56).
- ❖ After the Gospel proclamation, the priest celebrant preaches the Homily (66).
- ❖ He may do this standing at the chair, at the ambo, or at some other suitable place (136).
- ❖ After a period of silence, all stand for the Profession of Faith (67-68, 137), begun by the priest (or, if sung, by the cantor or choir).
- ❖ Then, at the chair, the priest celebrant introduces the General Intercessions by inviting the people to pray (71, 138). (5)
- ❖ The deacon, or in his absence, another minister, announces the intentions from the ambo or another suitable place (71, 138, 309), and the priest celebrant concludes the General Intercessions with a prayer (71, 138).
- ❖ After the concluding prayer to the General Intercessions all sit (139)

Liturgy of the Eucharist

- ❖ It is appropriate that a collection be taken up at this time so that the money may be brought to the sanctuary as part of the procession with the gifts (73).

The Liturgy of the Eucharist is patterned on the biblical narratives of the Last Supper (72) that describe the Lord as taking bread and the cup, giving thanks, breaking the bread, and giving the bread and cup to his disciples. Thus, during the preparation, bread and wine, the elements Jesus took into his hands, are brought to the altar (72.1). Thanks are given to God in the Eucharistic Prayer (72.2). Then the bread is broken and the consecrated elements are given to the faithful in Communion (72.3).

- ❖ The preparation begins with the ministers placing the corporal, purificator,

- chalice (unless it is prepared at the side table), and Roman Missal on the altar (73, 139). (6)
- ❖ Then the faithful bring the bread and wine forward (along with monetary offerings).
 - ❖ These are received by the priest celebrant or deacon at an appropriate place (73, 140, 178).
 - ❖ The priest celebrant says the prescribed prayer while holding the vessel with Eucharistic bread slightly above the altar (141) and only then places it on the altar.
 - ❖ Meanwhile the deacon pours wine and water into the chalice at the side of the altar or at the side table (178) and hands the chalice to the priest celebrant. He then says the appropriate prayer while holding the chalice slightly above the altar (142) and only then places it on the altar.
 - ❖ The priest celebrant bows to say the next prayer silently. (143).
 - ❖ He then prepares the incense, if used, incensing the gifts with three swings of the censer or a simple sign of the cross (75, 144, 277), followed by incensing the cross and altar, and the people (75).
 - ❖ Afterward, the priest celebrant washes his hands at the side of the altar (76, 145). The prayers of the priest celebrant and deacon during the preparation of the gifts are to be said inaudibly (141-145). When there is no singing, it is permitted (but not required) for the priest celebrant to say the "Blessed are you..." prayers aloud (142).
 - ❖ The priest returns to the center of the altar and the people stand, unless they are already standing after having been incensed.
 - ❖ The priest celebrant then greets the people, inviting all to pray. After the people stand and respond, the priest celebrant says the Prayer Over the Gifts (77, 146).
 - ❖ The priest celebrant then begins the Eucharistic Prayer, the "center and summit of the entire celebration" (78, 147).
 - ❖ It is appropriate for the priest celebrant to sing parts of the prayer (147); the people should also sing the various acclamations that are part of the prayer.
 - ❖ Incense may be used during the consecration when the host and the chalice are shown to the assembly (150, 179, 276e).
 - ❖ During the final doxology, the priest celebrant elevates the paten with the host on it and the deacon elevates the chalice [in the absence of a deacon, the priest celebrant elevates both elements by himself] (151, 180).
 - ❖ After the Eucharistic Prayer, all stand to pray the Lord's Prayer (81, 152).
 - ❖ After the prayer for peace (82, 154), the deacon invites all to exchange a sign of peace which everyone immediately shares with those nearby (82, 154). So as not to disturb the celebration, the priest celebrant normally remains in the sanctuary (154).

However, for pastoral reasons the priest celebrant may extend a sign of peace to some members of the liturgical assembly near the sanctuary, for example, in the case of a funeral or wedding or when civic leaders are present (Appendix 82).

- ❖ The Agnus Dei begins, during which the priest celebrant breaks the host (83, 155).
- ❖ The host used by the priest celebrant should be large enough so that at least some particles from it can be distributed to some of the people (321).
- ❖ The priest celebrant may be assisted by some of the concelebrants and the deacon as he distributes the consecrated hosts into other vessels.
- ❖ Other empty chalices and ciboria or patens are then brought to the altar if this is necessary.
- ❖ The deacon pours the Precious Blood into the chalices (83, 240). The deacon or priest places the consecrated bread in several ciboria or patens and, if necessary, pours the Precious Blood into enough additional chalices as are required for the distribution of Holy Communion. If it is not possible to accomplish this distribution in a reasonable time, the celebrant may call upon the assistance of other deacons or concelebrating priests but not upon Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.
- ❖ After, the priest celebrant places a small piece of the host into the chalice while he recites the accompanying prayer for the commingling (83, 155).
- ❖ Then, he prepares himself for Communion by reciting inaudibly one of the preparation prayers found in the Roman Missal (84).

- ❖ The priest celebrant genuflects and then shows the faithful the host held above the chalice (or above the paten) and invites them to communion (84, 157, 243, 268). After all recite, "Lord, I am not worthy ..." the priest celebrant receives communion upon which the singing of the communion song begins immediately (86, 157-59).
- ❖ The priest celebrant then gives communion to the deacon (182), to the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (THLS 39-40), and to the other liturgical ministers.
- ❖ Then he gives the Extraordinary Ministers Of Holy Communion the appropriate vessels containing the consecrated species (162). After the faithful receive Communion, (7) the extra Precious Blood is consumed immediately (163, 182).
- ❖ The excess consecrated hosts are either consumed or brought to the place of reservation (163).
- ❖ The sacred vessels can be cleansed at this time or be brought to the side table and cleansed immediately after Mass (163, 279). They may be cleansed by a priest, deacon, an instituted acolyte (279), or an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion.
- ❖ The priest celebrant then returns to the chair and, with the assembly, observes a period of silence (45, 88, 164).

- ❖ If desired, a hymn of praise may be sung by all (88, 164).
- ❖ To conclude the Communion Rite, all stand to pray. The priest celebrant invites the assembly to join him in prayer and then prays the Prayer After Communion (89, 165).

Concluding Rites

- ❖ Brief announcements may then be made (90a, 166, 184). No announcements should be made prior to this time, e.g., in the period of silence after Holy Communion.
- ❖ The priest celebrant next greets the people. If a "Solemn Blessing" or "Prayer Over the People" is used, the deacon (or in his absence, the priest celebrant) invites the assembly to ask for God's blessing.
- ❖ The priest celebrant then recites the formula of blessing after which the deacon dismisses the people (90b-c, 167-68, 185).
- ❖ The priest celebrant and deacon kiss the altar, and they, along with all the other ministers make a profound bow to the altar (8) (90d, 169, 186) and leave in the manner prescribed for the entrance procession (186, 193).

Notes

1. All subsequent numbers are from the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) unless otherwise noted.
2. GIRM, no. 120d: A reader may carry the Book of the Gospels elevated slightly. The Lectionary is never carried in procession.
3. Ibid., no. 47: The purpose of this liturgical song is to open the celebration, intensify the unity of those who have assembled, lead their thoughts to the mystery of the season or feast, and accompany the procession of the priest and ministers.
4. Ibid., no. 274. "If there is a tabernacle with the Blessed Sacrament in the sanctuary, the priest, deacon and other ministers genuflect to it when they approach or leave the altar, but not during the celebration of Mass itself."
5. The first address is an invitation to the assembly to pray. The concluding prayer should be addressed to God.
6. Ibid., no. 306. "On the mensa of the altar should be placed only those things required for the celebration of the Mass, that is, from the beginning of the celebration until the proclamation of the Gospel, only the Book of the Gospels, while from the Presentation of the Gifts until the cleansing of the vessels, only the chalice with the paten, the pyx as necessary, and finally, the corporal, purificator and Roman Missal."
7. GIRM, no. 85. "It is most desirable that the faithful, just as the priest himself is bound to do, may receive the Lord's body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and that, in the instances when it is permitted, they share in the chalice. Then even through the signs communion will stand out more clearly as a sharing in the sacrifice actually being offered."
8. See footnote 4.

Based on material developed by:

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