

Ministries at Mass

1. The office of priesthood is essentially linked to the Eucharist. Therefore, the service of the priest is unique in the Eucharistic Assembly. His participation is pivotal. By virtue of his office, he convenes the Christian faithful for the celebration of Mass. There he presides at the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and sends the Christian faithful forth to love and serve the Lord.
2. The description of the offices and roles of individuals who assist the priest in their participation at Mass is explained in detail in the General Instruction. (GIRM, #91-111) of the Roman Missal.
3. Ordinarily the deacon, the lector, and the acolyte are the persons who assist the priest by virtue of their office and ministry. (GIRM, #94, #98)
4. In extraordinary circumstances, which are common today, assistants, namely Readers in the absence of instituted Lectors, and Eucharistic Ministers in the absence of instituted Acolytes, assist the priest, according to the General Instruction. (GIRM, #100, #101)

Purification of Sacred Vessels after Holy Communion

1. The General Instruction makes no provision for laypersons to assist in the preparation and purification of sacred vessels at Mass.
2. Several years ago, the Holy See did grant permission to the dioceses of the United States to engage laypersons (sacristans and Eucharistic Ministers) to assist the priest in the purification of sacred vessels at Mass. When the renewal of this permission was sought in 2006, it was not granted.
3. Note that there is a distinction between “purifying” sacred vessels and “cleaning” them.
 - a. Purification of sacred vessels includes putting some water in the sacred vessels and then consuming the remains of the consecrated bread or wine. This action belongs to the ministry of the bishop, priest and deacon.
 - b. The “cleaning” of sacred vessels, including washing the vessels after being purified may be done by a deacon or priest and also by a layperson designated by the pastor to do so.

The following practices are to be observed in all celebrations of the Mass in the Diocese of Manchester.

1. Following the distribution of the Precious Blood, the Eucharistic Ministers consume what remains in their cups at the credence table, or, if necessary at the altar.
2. The priest or deacon then purifies the sacred vessels either at the credence table or altar, using the appropriate prayer associated with this purification.¹ For a large number of sacred vessels, it may be advisable to wait until after Mass to do this. (GIRM, #183).
3. If the sacred vessels are to be purified after Mass, they are brought to the credence table and suitably covered with a clean cloth. After Mass, the sacred vessels are taken to the sacristy where they are purified by the priest or the deacon. Following the purification of the sacred vessels, they are then cleaned by the sacristan or designated layperson.

Note: When sacred vessels are purified, the deacon or priest may purify by pouring water into the first cup, swirling the water around in the customary manner, and then pouring it into the next cup, and then into the next, etc. After he has done so with the last cup to be purified, he consumes the ablution. The vessels are then set aside to be cleansed.

4. As part of the ongoing formation of Eucharistic Ministers and sacristans, these Directives along with the rationale for making the change from current practice, should be made known and explained to them by the pastor of the parish or the person responsible for the formation of Eucharistic Ministers, at an opportune time no later than **Sunday March 4, 2007, the effective date of this Policy.**

¹ *Lord, may I receive these gifts in purity of heart. May they bring me strength and healing, now and forever.*