The Liturgical Praxis of the Deacon

Diocese of Marquette

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Roles of the Deacon

Roles are arbitrary! Deacon assists at Mass – outlined in the GIRM.

One Deacon

Deacon of the Mass – Does all the deacon parts.

Two Deacons

Deacon of the Gospel

Carries the Book of Gospels in the procession

Usually proclaims the Gospel

Does all the speaking parts

Helps at communion and with purification

Deacon of the Altar

Supervises the setting of the altar – Brings over the chalice

Assists presider at altar

Helps at communion – usually the cup

Helps or does purification

Three Deacons

Deacon of the Gospel

Carries in the Book of Gospels

Usually does not sit next to the presider
Proclaims the Gospel - ONLY

Deacon of the Altar – Speaking

Penitential Act, Universal Prayers, all speaking parts

Helps at communion – usually the cup

Helps or does purification

Deacon of the Altar – Action

Helps at all incensations

Supervises the setting of the altar – Brings over the chalice

Assists presider at altar

Helps at communion – usually the cup

Helps or does purification
Vesture

(established by Bishop Alexander Sample)

Two Options exist.

1. Alb / Stole / Dalmatic
   a. This is the usual vesture for a deacon assisting at Mass.
   b. The dalmatic is optional but the alb and stole are required.
   c. A cincture may also be worn over the alb.
   d. This vesture is always reserved for liturgically active deacons.
   e. Exception - for all deacons in the procession at
      i. The Chrism Mass (Diocesan – white)
      ii. The Ordination of a Deacon (Diocesan – white)
      iii. The funeral of a deacon (purple)

2. Choir Dress – Cassock and Surplice
   a. A collar is always worn under a cassock.
   b. This is worn when the deacon is not directly liturgically active
      but participating in the procession at all other times not listed
      in 1e. This does include the funeral of a priest.
### Location of Deacons in the Procession / Recessional

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Deacons</th>
<th>Priest</th>
<th>Bishop</th>
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<td></td>
<td>In</td>
<td>Out</td>
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<tr>
<td>One - w/ Book of Gospels</td>
<td>Behind Candles</td>
<td>Next to Presider</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two - Altar</td>
<td>Next to Presider</td>
<td>Behind Presider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two - Gospel</td>
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**NOTE:** “Behind Presider” means one step back and one step to the side.
**Incensing**

Procedure is always the same no matter what we are incensing!

The Deacon incenses >>>

- Book of Gospels
- Presider
- People
- Blessed Sacrament

1. **Bow**
2. Three Double Swings – Center - Left - Right
3. **Bow**

At Gospel – Incense is always charged before the deacon asks for a blessing.

Deacon bows when asking for blessing – never kneels!

“Your Blessing, (Most Reverend) Father.”

Priests should be standing but the Bishop should be seated for this blessing.
Preparing the Gifts

As a guide for the actions of the Deacon, we can look to the Old Testament action of the Levites.

2 Chron 29:34 - "Since there were too few priests to skin all the victims for the burnt offerings, their fellow Levites assisted them until the task was completed and the priests had sanctified themselves. The Levites, in fact, were more careful than the priests to sanctify themselves."

2 Chron 30:16 "They stood in the places prescribed for them according to the law of Moses, the man of God. The priests splashed the blood given them by the Levites;"

The Levites always prepared the sacrifice and gave them to the priests. Priests always offered them then placed them on the altar.

Our action at the altar should mirror this pattern by -

Preparing the gifts at the side of the altar.

Hand the paten then the chalice to the priest.

Then pour the wine into the chalices.

Psalm 135 (Current Equivalents): (relates to Deacon-Levite relationship)

House of Israel (All Baptized), bless the Lord
House of Aaron (All priests), bless the Lord
House of Levi (All deacons), bless the Lord
Adding Water to the Wine

Add water only to the main chalice.

Everything we do at Mass is sacramental; adding water to the wine is no different.

Sacramental – Pointing to something else.

We “sacramentally” add water to all the wine –
    in all the chalices –
    but this is not done physically.
    It is done sacramentally!
Posture during the Eucharistic Prayer

GIRM # 179:

"During the Eucharistic Prayer, the Deacon stands near the Priest, but slightly behind him, so that when necessary he may assist the Priest with the chalice or the Missal.

From the epiclesis until the Priest shows the chalice, the Deacon usually remains kneeling. If several Deacons are present, one of them may place incense in the thurible for the Consecration and incense the host and the chalice at the elevation."

NOTE:

1. Stand slightly behind the priest so you can help him with the Chalice or Missal.
2. Deacon usually kneels, but can stand if it is difficult to kneel. If there are two deacons, they should both use the same posture.
3. If incensing in front, do not incense at the epiclesis!
Our Father Hand Position

Orans position is ALWAYS reserved for the priest.

Pope Pius XII in his liturgical reform in *De musica sacra et sacra liturgia* #32:

"Since the Pater Noster is a fitting, and ancient prayer of preparation for Communion, the entire congregation may recite this prayer in unison with the priest in low Masses; the Amen at the end is to be said by all. This is to be done only in Latin, never in the vernacular." 1958

Bishops realized the people’s hand position inconsistency was going to be a problem, wrote a letter to the Holy See.

The Holy See respectfully declined to do anything.

USCCB left this up to the individual Bishop.

The deacon should be a good example by clasping hands together during the Our Father and instructing servers to do the same.
Assisting at Communion

During the Lamb of God -

When concelebrating Priests are present -

Give them the Sacred Body consecrated at that Mass. If these hosts come from the tabernacle, it will not be a licitly concelebrated Mass.

“It is an illicit act that contravenes what is explicitly set forth in the instruction "Redemptionis Sacramentum," No. 98:

"The Communion of Priest concelebrants should proceed according to the norms prescribed in the liturgical books, always using hosts consecrated at the same Mass and always with Communion under both kinds being received by all of the concelebrants."

A key to understanding why this is so is found in the norm that follows in the next sentence of the same number:

"It is to be noted that if the Priest or Deacon hands the sacred host or chalice to the concelebrants, he says nothing; that is to say, he does not pronounce the words 'The Body of Christ' or 'The Blood of Christ.'"

The reason why these words are omitted is because each concelebrating priest truly offers the sacrifice of the Mass and he must complete his part of the sacrifice by partaking of both species offered at that Mass just as if he were celebrating alone.” Zenit, Oct. 12, 2004.

The deacon’s primary ministry is the cup but that role is at the discretion of the presider.

Purification should be at the altar if assisting the priest or at the credence table.