Instructions for Deacons
Assisting at Mass in the Diocese of Grand Rapids
In order to fully implement the General Instruction of the Roman Missal Third Edition, I, in accord with Canon 34, hereby promulgate the Instruction “Deacons Assisting at Mass in the Diocese of Grand Rapids” with an implementation date of the First Sunday of Advent, November 29, 2015.

Most Reverend David Walkowiak
November 4, 2015 | St. Charles Borromeo
Instructions for Deacons Assisting at Mass in the Diocese of Grand Rapids

INTRODUCTION

1. Ever since the calling of Stephen and six brothers to serve the widows of Jerusalem, the Order of Deacon has been held with high honor in the Church. Indeed, the Deacon holds, after the Priest, the “first place among those who minister in the celebration of the Eucharist.”

2. In communion with the Bishop and Priests, Deacons are “ministers of Jesus Christ,” who “serve the people in love and joy.” This instruction has been prepared to assist our deacons in fulfilling their diaconia by bringing into one place all that pertains to their assistance at Mass and the way these items are to be observed in the Diocese of Grand Rapids.

3. Deacons and Priests are urged to demonstrate great care for the sacred liturgy by discussing or even rehearsing beforehand those parts of the Mass that could prove clumsy without adequate preparation, such as the Entrance Procession, Penitential Act, Gospel Procession, Preparation of the Altar and Presentation of Gifts, and the Dismissal.

• Since Deacons have the duty of giving instructions to the people, they should be provided with a microphone.

VESTMENTS

4. When exercising his ministry at the Eucharistic Celebration a Deacon is to wear sacred vestments. The term “sacred vestments” means a dalmatic worn over the alb and stole. At the celebration of
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1. the Eucharist, a Deacon wears the dalmatic and stole of the liturgical color of the day. If the parish does not have the dalmatic of the liturgical color of the day, a white stole and dalmatic may be used. The dalmatic may be omitted on a day of a lesser degree of solemnity (e.g. on a weekday in Ordinary Time). A cincture and amice should be used unless, due to the form of the alb, they are not needed.  

Role of the Deacon

5. The Deacon assists the Priest during Mass and walks at his right side. The manner in which this assistance is carried out in the Diocese of Grand Rapids is presented throughout this Instruction:
   a) Ministers at the altar, with chalice as well as the Roman Missal;
   b) Proclaims the Gospel;
   c) May preach in accord with the General Instruction of the Roman Missal: “The Homily should ordinarily be given by the Priest Celebrant himself or be entrusted by him to a concelebrating Priest, or from time to time and, if appropriate, to the Deacon.”
   d) May guide the faithful by appropriate introductions and explanations;
   e) Normally announces the intentions of the Prayer of the Faithful;
   f) Assists the Priest Celebrant in arranging the sacred vessels, distributing Holy Communion, and purifying the sacred vessels;
   g) And, as needed, fulfills the duties of other ministers himself when none of them is present.  

6. In the event that there are two deacons assisting at the celebration of the Eucharist, one functions as Deacon of the Word from
The Celebration of the Mass
Introductory Rites

Entrance Procession – with the Book of the Gospels

7. Carrying the Book of the Gospels slightly elevated – so that one’s eyes see over the book – the Deacon precedes the Priest Celebrant and, if present, other vested Deacons and/or concelebrating Priests.9 (The Lectionary is never carried in the Entrance Procession.10)

8. When the Deacon reaches the altar he omits the sign of reverence and goes directly to the altar and places the Book of the Gospels on the altar, centered with decorative side up. The Deacon venerates with a kiss the altar on the right side of the Priest.11

   *If incense is used:*

9. The Deacon assists the Priest Celebrant by holding the incense boat as the priest puts the incense into the thurible.12 After incensing the altar, he goes to the chair together with the Priest, takes his place at the Priest’s side and assists him as necessary.13
Entrance Procession – without the Book of the Gospels

10. On weekdays of Ordinary Time and other days of lesser solemnity the Book of the Gospels would not be carried in procession and incense would not be used. At these times the procedure outlined below is followed:

11. The Deacon walks at the Priest’s right side in the entrance procession.¹⁴

12. When a Bishop is the Celebrant, the Deacon(s) walk behind the bishop, a few steps back.¹⁵

13. The Deacon makes a profound bow to the altar with the Priest. If the tabernacle is in the sanctuary, the Deacon genuflects with the Priest and then with him venerates the altar with a kiss.¹⁶

14. Then the Deacon goes to the chair together with the Priest and there stands at the Priest’s right side and assists him as necessary.¹⁷

Introduction to the Liturgy of the Day

15. After the greeting of the people the Priest, Deacon or lay minister may very briefly introduce the faithful to the Mass of the day.¹⁸

Penitential Act

16. The Priest Celebrant leads “Form A” (Confiteor) or “Form B.”

17. The Priest Celebrant, Deacon, cantor, or choir may say or chant the tropes of “Form C” of the Penitential Act, in accord with the rubric.
The Concluding Rite

Announcements

59. Unless the Priest prefers to make the announcements himself (or delegates this task to a qualified layperson), the Deacon makes any brief announcements following the Prayer After Communion. The announcements are made from the chair, if the Deacon is wearing a microphone, or from the cantor/commentator stand, but never from the ambo.

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Final Blessing and Dismissal

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59. When a Prayer over the People or a formula of Solemn Blessing is used, the Deacon, using these words says, “Bow down for the blessing.”

60. After the Priest’s blessing, the Deacon, with hands joined and facing the people, dismisses them, saying one of the following formularies provided in the Missal:

◊ “Go forth, the Mass is ended.”
◊ “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.”
◊ “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.”
◊ “Go in peace.”

The Recessional

62. The Deacon does not carry out the Book of the Gospels since all of the members of the liturgical assembly carry God’s Word in them as they go to live the mission of Christ.

63. With the Priest, the Deacon venerates the altar with a kiss, makes a profound bow, and withdraws in a way similar to the en-

Liturgy of the Word

Readings

18. If there is no lector present the Deacon should proclaim the readings.

Gospel Acclamation and Procession

19. When the Priest stands, the music for the Gospel Acclamation begins and all present stand. The Deacon makes a profound bow before the Priest and asks for his blessing, saying in a low voice, “Your blessing, Father.”

If a Bishop is the Celebrant:

After an appropriate moment of silence, the Deacon stands for the Gospel Acclamation, and all stand. The Bishop remains seated for the blessing, using the same formulary as the priest.

20. The priest says in a low voice, “May the Lord be in your heart and on your lips, that you may proclaim his Gospel worthily and well, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, ☩ and of the Holy Spirit.”

21. The Deacon signs himself with Sign of the Cross as the blessing is given and responds, “Amen.”

22. The Deacon then approaches the altar and makes a profound bow. Then, the Deacon takes up the Book of the Gospels and immediately proceeds to the ambo carrying the book slightly elevated – so his eyes see over the book – and places it on the ambo.

The Gospel

23. After placing the book on the ambo the Deacon greets the people, with hands joined, saying, “The Lord be with you.”
24. At the words, “A reading from the holy Gospel,” he signs with his thumb the book and then himself on his forehead, mouth, and breast.  

If incense is used:  

25. On Sundays and Holy Days and at other significant celebrations, e.g. solemnities, ordinations, the anniversary of the parish, etc. incense may be used. In this scenario the Deacon assists the priest or bishop by presenting the incense boat as he puts incense into the thurible during the singing of the Alleluia or other chant.  

26. After the thurible has been prepared, the Deacon asks for and receives the blessing and takes up the Book of the Gospels as described above. The Deacon is preceded to the ambo by a thurifer and by servers with lighted candles.  

27. The Deacon makes a profound bow to the Book of the Gospels and incenses it with three swings of the thurible and then makes another profound bow.  

28. The Deacon proclaims the Gospel and at the conclusion of the reading acclaims, “The Gospel of the Lord,” without raising the book, and all respond, “Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.”  

29. The Deacon venerates the book with a kiss, saying privately, “Through the words of the Gospel may our sins be wiped away.”  

30. The Deacon may carry the Book of the Gospels to the credence table or another suitable and dignified place. Or it may remain on the ambo.  

31. The Deacon then returns to his chair at the Priest’s side.  

ber of deacons and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion who are present at the Mass.  

54. If there is Precious Blood remaining in the chalice, standing at the altar, the Deacon immediately and reverently consumes all of the Precious Blood that remains, (assisted if necessary, by other Deacons and Priests) and gathers the hosts, if any remain. All Precious Blood must be consumed before the Prayer after Communion.  

55. At Masses where a number of cups are used, the ministers may take their cups to the credence table, sacristy, or other designated location for the consumption of any remaining Precious Blood. Extraordinary ministers are not to communicate to themselves, but offer the cups to one another, stating “The Blood of Christ.”  

56. After the hosts are reserved in the tabernacle, the chalice and other sacred vessels are carried to the credence table where the Deacon purifies and arranges them in the usual way.  

- Purification of the vessels at the credence table rather than the altar is the preferred practice. However, it is also permissible to leave the vessels that need to be purified, suitably covered, at the credence table on a corporal, and for the Deacon, or the Priest, to purify them immediately after Mass following the Dismissal of the people.  

57. The corporal is removed from the altar.  

58. The Deacon then returns to his place at the chair beside the Celebrant.
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The Sign of Peace

46. The Deacon invites all, with hands joined, to exchange the sign of peace, by saying, “Let us offer each other the sign of peace.”

47. The Deacon receives the sign of peace from the Priest and may offer it to other ministers who are in close proximity to him.

The Fraction Rite

48. The Deacon may assist the Priest as circumstances suggest, such as with the arrangement of the vessels and the distribution of the appropriate number of hosts into the additional ciboria.

Holy Communion

49. After the Priest’s Communion, the Deacon receives Communion under both species from the Priest himself.

50. If there are extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, the Deacon assists the Priest in administering Holy Communion to them. The deacon may also assist in handing the vessels containing the Body and Blood of the Lord to the extraordinary ministers.

51. If Communion is given under both species, the Deacon administers the chalice to the communicants.

52. At diocesan or parish Masses where there are a large number of ministers for the distribution of the Holy Eucharist, Priests will distribute the hosts and Deacons will administer the chalice insofar as this is possible.

After the Distribution of Holy Communion

53. Details regarding the consumption of any remaining Precious Blood and the clearing of the altar will need to take into account whether Holy Communion is offered under both kinds and the number of ministers present.

If a Bishop is the Celebrant:

32. The Deacon carries the Book of the Gospels to the Bishop to be kissed, and then returns it to the ambo.

The Homily

33. “The Homily should ordinarily be given by the Priest Celebrant himself or be entrusted by him to a concelebrating Priest, or from time to time and, if appropriate, to the Deacon.”

The Universal Prayer

34. After the introduction by the Priest, it is the Deacon himself who normally announces the intentions of the Universal Prayer, usually from the ambo. The Deacon remains at the ambo until the priest finishes the concluding prayer.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Preparation of the Altar and Gifts

35. After the Universal Prayer, the Deacon prepares the altar, assisted by the acolyte. He takes care of the sacred vessels and assists the Priest in receiving the people’s gifts or receives them himself.

36. In a Mass with communion under both species if one chalice is not sufficient for Holy Communion to be distributed under both kinds to the Priest concelebrants or Christ’s faithful, several chalices are placed on a corporal on the altar in an appropriate place, filled with wine. Any vessels on the altar containing bread and wine to be consecrated are to be on a corporal.
37. The Deacon hands the Priest the paten with the bread to be consecrated. 

38. Then he pours wine and a little water into the chalice, or into the principal chalice if there are several, saying quietly, “By the mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.” Then he presents the chalice to the Priest. If incense is used:

39. The Deacon assists the Priest during the incensation of the offerings, the cross, and the altar. After the Priest incenses the gifts, the cross and the altar the Deacon incenses the Priest and the people by:

- Making a profound bow to the Priest Celebrant and incensing him with three swings of the thurible;
- Making a profound bow to any concelebrating Priests who are in the sanctuary and incensing them with three swings of the thurible;
- Then making a profound bow to the faithful and incensing them with three swings of the thurible.

The Eucharistic Prayer

40. 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 Missal. If there are concelebrating Priests, he stands behind them. The deacons’ hands are kept folded during the Eucharistic Prayer.

41. From the epiclesis (when the Priest extends his hands over the gifts in each of the Eucharistic Prayers) until the Priest has shown the chalice, the Deacon usually remains kneeling. If the Deacon is not physically capable of kneeling, or kneeling and then standing is difficult, he remains standing.

- If more than one Deacon is assisting at the altar, both should assume the same posture (i.e., if they can both kneel, they kneel; if only one can kneel, they both stand).
- The deacon makes a profound bow when the Priest genuflects following the consecration, if he is standing. If kneeling, no bow is necessary.

42. Regarding occasions when Deacons are vested and attending Mass but not assisting the Celebrant in the sanctuary, they follow the general instruction that all are to kneel during the Eucharistic Prayer from after the Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy) until after the Amen.

43. The Priest, not the Deacon, says “The mystery of faith.”

44. At the final doxology the Deacon, standing next to the Priest, receives from the Priest the chalice. The Priest elevates the paten and the Deacon the chalice. Both vessels are elevated until the Great Amen has been completed. The deacon places the chalice on the altar himself.

45. During the Lord’s Prayer, the deacon’s hands are folded or held in the orans position.