

ROMANITAS PRESS



THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES  
OF CEREMONIES  
OF THE ROMAN RITE

FOR INFERIOR MINISTERS

LOUIS J. TOFARI

THE  
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ROMANITAS PRESS  
Abridged Edition

By Louis J. Tofari

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*Dedicated to St. Stephen the Protomartyr,  
patron of altar servers.*

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# AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This booklet is an abridged version of a forthcoming comprehensive edition. This shortened edition deals strictly with inferior ministers when performed by laymen in a typical parish situation. As such, the following items are not addressed in this edition:

- The use of the biretta (as inferior ministers never wear one).
- The Pax (which normally laymen do not receive nor give even when acting as inferior ministers).
- Rules strictly applicable to the sacred ministers.

Also omitted is the subject of incensing, which could not be included in this edition as publishing time did not allow for the proper development (*e.g.*, the inclusion of photographs) of this topic. The reader will also find that like many other rubrical works, this booklet will not treat of pontifical ceremonies or other matters related to bishops or greater prelates, though it is hoped that such useful information will be presented in the forthcoming edition. Despite these omissions, it is hoped that this booklet will be of great value for the layman who serves at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

My special thanks to my wife, Rachel, for her enduring patience and encouragement with this lengthy project, Fr. Christopher J. Pieroni, who posed for the pictures, Mr. Michael Sestak for the photography, Fr. Scott J. Gardner and Mr. Ian Palko for critical editing and making valuable suggestions, and Mr. Simon Townshend for typesetting and formatting the images and diagrams.

St. Francis Regis  
16 June 2008

LOUIS J. TOFARI

# SOURCES AND THEIR ABBREVIATIONS

Accompanying the listing of each source in square brackets [ ] is the abbreviation used to cite the particular work within the booklet.

## LITURGICAL BOOKS

*Caeremoniale Episcoporum* (typical edition, 1886) [C.E.]

*Missale Romanum* (typical edition, 1962); there are three sections that are quoted within this book: *Rubricae generales* (general rubrics) [Rub. Gen.], *Ritus servandus in celebratione Missae* (the rite of celebrating the Mass, which contains basic rubrics for the sacred ministers and even some of the actions of the inferior ministers) [Rit. Serv.], *Ordo Missae* (the ordinary parts of the Mass which includes the *Canon Missae* section) [quoted by section].

## RUBRICAL BOOKS

Following are the primary rubrical sources quoted within this book, which in themselves quote a vast number of other sources not necessary to repeat here.

*Caeremoniale in Missa Privata et Solemni*, C. Callewaert (Beyaert, 1941 — reprinted by Romanitas Press, 2009) [Callewaert].

*Decreta Authentica Congregationis Sacrorum Rituum*; in seven volumes from 1588-1926 (Vatican Polygot Press, Rome) [SRC]. From 1927 onwards, the



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rescripts and decrees were printed in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (Vatican Polygot Press) [AAS].

*The Altar Servers' Handbook*, Archconfraternity of St. Stephen. This guild for altar servers originated in 1905 at Westminster Cathedral in London, England and promotes high standards of serving. It specifically states in its object that the Guild aims to sanctify the server “*by instructing him the manner of observing the rites and ceremonies of the Church according to the rubrics and to the decrees of the Sacred Congregation of Rites and the interpretations of the most generally accepted authorities*” (p. 1; Guild, 1962 — reprinted by Society of St. Pius X, 2002). [St. Stephen's Guild].

*The Book of Ceremonies*, Very Rev. Laurence O'Connell (Bruce, 1956) [L. O'Connell].

*The Ceremonies of the Roman Rite Described*, Dr. Adrian Fortescue (Burns & Oates, 1962 — reprinted by St. Austin Press, 1996) [Fortescue].

*The Celebration of Mass*, Canon J.B. O'Connell (Bruce, 1964 — reprinted by Preserving Christian Publications, 2007) [J.B. O'Connell].

### **NOTE ABOUT THE BOOKLET'S SOURCES CITED**

Where it has been considered necessary (because the point might not been well-known or is commonly misunderstood), particular citations have been provided to show the authority for a rule given. This has not been done in every case as this is unnecessary (and impractical), and a brief review of the previously cited sources will show the congruity of the rules given within this booklet with major rubrical authorities.

## Sources and their Abbreviations

It will be noticed that L. O'Connell is frequently cited as a source, in fact sometimes the only source. The cause for this is simple: he is the only writer in English who has systematically provided the general principles in great detail, even improving upon what some of his predecessors did in Latin or French. Also, L. O'Connell himself sources a vast number of other rubricists (as seen in his Bibliography section) which is usually unnecessary to cite further.

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# ROMANITAS AND THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES

As its name would suggest, the defining element of the Roman Rite is *romanitas*, an ancient Latin term that refers to *what it is to be Roman*. As admirably described by Mr. Edmund Bishop in *The Genius of the Roman Rite*<sup>1</sup> and further elaborated upon by Dom Ferdinand Cabrol within his article, *The Excellence of the Roman Mass*,<sup>2</sup> the Roman Rite:

is composed of simplicity and common sense, of sobriety and discipline, of gravity and dignity. In liturgical matters the Roman spirit is neither creative nor original, nor is it symbolic...<sup>3</sup>

and Cabrol reinforces this statement by continuing:

But again, in all this there is nothing useless, purely ceremonial, or symbolic. All is logical, practical, sensible, and at the same time dignified — sometimes even imposing.<sup>4</sup>

The embodiment of this *romanitas* by the Roman Rite's ceremonial principles can be summed up into

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop gave this conference in May 1899 which was subsequently serialized in three articles in the *Weekly Register*. In 1918, it was printed again without amendment in Bishop's *Liturgica Historica* published by Clarendon Press.

<sup>2</sup> Published in *The Clergy Review* in 1931, and reprinted in abridged form in *The Catholic Quarterly Review* in 1992 (Vol. 6, No. 2). Both periodicals are based in Great Britain.

<sup>3</sup> An excerpt from Cabrol's article, wherein he attributes this description to Bishop.

<sup>4</sup> Again Cabrol intermixing his own comments with Bishop's. It should be noted that their comments about the Roman Rite not being "*purely ceremonial, or symbolic*" do not mean that the various rites are not performed ceremoniously or that they lack symbolic value, but rather they were not developed merely for these reasons alone; that is, they were developed primarily for practical reasons.

the two elements of **logic** and **simplicity**. Logic dictates that the liturgical actions are based upon reason and are not superfluous actions, and simplicity, that the actions are enacted in a practical, yet solemn manner.

These principles are nothing more than liturgical common sense and form the foundation for *particular* rubrics. Thus as attested by L. O'Connell:

Experience in teaching ceremonies has shown that the easiest approach to a new ceremony is through its principles. Mastering the principles of a ceremony is not only the easiest way to learn one ceremony, but it also makes the mastery of that ceremony the preparation for learning others.<sup>5</sup>

Though not listed systematically, the general principles are innately present in the *Missale Romanum*,<sup>6</sup> *Caeremoniale Episcoporum*,<sup>7</sup> the *Memoriale Rituum*<sup>8</sup> and the Clementine Instruction.<sup>9</sup> Where these liturgi-

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<sup>5</sup> L. Connell in his Author's Preface, p. ix.

<sup>6</sup> The Roman Missal, or the altar missal used for Mass. The last typical edition was issued in November 1962, though its printing was not completed until May 1963.

<sup>7</sup> The Ceremonial for Bishops, which is purely a rubrical book that explains how a bishop or other prelate pontificates at Mass and other various pontifical functions. The last edition was issued in 1886.

<sup>8</sup> This book provided the simple rite of observing the ceremonies of Candlemas, Ash Wednesday, and Holy Week. Its last edition was issued in 1950, and though still used as a reference, was practically superseded by the 1962 edition of the *Missale Romanum* for Candlemas and Ash Wednesday, and the *Ordo Hebdomadae Sanctae Instauratus* (or OHS for short) for Holy Week in 1955 (which was slightly revised and re-issued in 1957 and then finally in 1962).

<sup>9</sup> This book gives the ordering for the Forty Hours' Prayer (hence treatment of the condition *coram Sanctissimo*) that was once required to be observed in all parishes at least once a year. Considered by the SRC (4266<sup>9</sup>) to be an official liturgical book, it was first composed by St. Charles Borromeo and its last edition was printed in Volumes III and IV of the SRC. In 1949, J.B. O'Connell published an English translation of the Italian edition with a commentary. The new code of rubrics promulgated in 1960 (found in the *Rubricae Generales* section

cal books are not precise on certain details, the Sacred Congregation of Rites and rubricians supplement, either in the case of the former by clarification and decrees, or in the latter case, within their referential works.

Unfortunately, these principles have not been systematically explained in the liturgical books, nor adequately by some rubricians. Many persons therefore do not have a working knowledge of these essential principles, and thereby often cannot properly implement particular rubrics, as Cardinal Samuel Stritch of Chicago explains:

We are poor in our language in our want of a practical, comprehensive guide for the exquisite doing of the Sacred Liturgy in our ordinary circumstances and conditions. Besides, the few existing manuals omit the exposition of fundamental principles which have so much to do with the decorous doing of the Sacred Liturgy.<sup>10</sup>

### MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT RUBRICIANS

The word *rubric* comes from the Latin word *ruber* for the color *red*, referring to the practice of printing in liturgical books the instructional text in red. A *rubrician* is one who has made a special study of liturgical law and whose explanations, comments and opinions are often valuable in assisting with the implementation of officially defined rubrics, or with those rubrics that have not been distinctly clarified. Unfortunately, an assortment of misconceptions and complaints about rubricians and the nature of rubrics themselves are pronounced often. These include:

1. There are too many rubricians.

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of the missal) supersede some of the Instruction on points about the votive Masses said.

<sup>10</sup> Extract from his Foreword to L. O'Connell, p. vii.

## General Principles

2. They disagree with each other on how the ceremonies should be executed.
3. Their words are not authoritative, consequently their works are of little value beyond mere opinion.

There have been about a dozen authors<sup>11</sup> since the 19th century who have written major rubrical works which differ from each other because of:

- The year in which they were published (or republished) due to rubrical revisions or clarifications.<sup>12</sup>
- The language in which they were written<sup>13</sup> and the local customs for the geographical area they treated.<sup>14</sup>
- Their style of presentation, such as the amount of detail given,<sup>15</sup> how the material was organized and the clarity of the explanations.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Most rubricians list these same names in the bibliography section of their own works, but in addition to the three English-language authors cited on p. 1 in the Sources section of this booklet, others include Martinucci, Callewaert, Van der Stappen, De Carpo, Wapelhorst, Le Vasseur-Haegy-Stercky, De Herdt, *et al.*

<sup>12</sup> For example, a book printed before 1957 would not take into account the new fasting rules implemented by the *motu proprio, Sacram Communionem*, likewise a book printed before 1960 would not include the reformed code of rubrics promulgated by *Rubricarum instructum*.

<sup>13</sup> Many were written in Latin, while others were written in the vernacular, for instance, Fortescue was the first to compose a comprehensive work in English.

<sup>14</sup> *E.g.*, Fortescue treats of the local customs of Great Britain (while later additions included an appendix for the United States), Baldeschi of Rome, Van der Stappen of Belgium, and L. O'Connell those of the United States.

<sup>15</sup> For example, amongst the three main English authors, Fortescue assumes one already knows the general principles and consequently does not list them, J.B. O'Connell explains a few, even in some detail, while L. O'Connell lists them systematically (better in fact, than previous authors whose names carry great weight, such as Martinucci).

<sup>16</sup> For a detailed analysis, *cf.* in L. O'Connell the chapter, Critical Bibliography of Recommended Books, pp. xxiii – xxvi, and in the

Rubricians agree upon the general principles, though they may advocate expert opinions or disagree with their peers in matters where options are allowed. In fact, rubricians will often cite their peers to support their own conclusions.

J.B. O'Connell not only defines what a rubrician is, but more importantly how much authority he has:

While the name of certain rubricians carry great weight [Because it is recognized that they have really studied the rubrics thoroughly — they are not mere copyists or summarists — and their teaching is found to be strictly accurate.], the opinion of any writer is worth as much as the reasons on which it is based, and no more. Hence the more authoritative writers usually give the reasons (rubrics, decisions of S.R.C., customary law, general principles of ceremonial — embodied in the rubrics themselves [Many general laws of ceremonial are given in the first chapter of the *Ritus celebrandi* of the Missal and are found scattered throughout the *Caeremoniale Episcoporum*.] or deduced from particular laws — liturgical propriety, or accepted practice) for their views, especially on points about which there is a difference of opinion.<sup>17</sup>

### CONFORMING TO THE ROMAN BALANCE

The Roman Rite's liturgical mind is permeated with a profound balance of piety. This is clearly seen in the rules for the liturgical gestures and reverences, which are neither exaggerated nor dispassionate. To conform to this spirit all private acts of devotion<sup>18</sup> should be omitted by the various ministers during the ceremo-

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earlier editions of Fortescue, Note on the Books Quoted, pp. xxvii – xxxiii (1934 printing).

<sup>17</sup> J.B. O'Connell, p. 24. Those sentences in square brackets are actually footnotes, respectively, ff. 113 and 114.

<sup>18</sup> The author is of the opinion that the personal devotion of Roman Catholics should generally conform with *romanitas*, since the Church's liturgy exemplifies the best balance of piety.



## General Principles

nies, as these do not consist of the Church's official act of prayer — the sacred liturgy.

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# GENERAL NOTIONS

## INFERIOR MINISTERS

The inferior ministers, commonly referred to as *servers*, are those positions descending from the master of ceremonies to the torchbearers.<sup>19</sup> In a cathedral these positions are usually filled by clerics in major<sup>20</sup> or minor orders.<sup>21</sup> In a parish these offices typically fall to laymen, be they adults or adolescents.

In treating of the principles, rubricans largely do so from the view of the inferior ministers, since the duties and privileges of the various sacred ministers are outlined within the explanations of the rites themselves, such as Solemn Mass.

## GENERAL DEPARTMENT

The server needs to take care to bear a solemn, but natural deportment and execute his actions in a deliberate manner, while avoiding the appearance of being overly pious,<sup>22</sup> nonchalant, or militaristic (*e.g.*, walking

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<sup>19</sup> Other inferior ministers are the thurifer, acolytes (whether at Solemn, High or Low Mass), crossbearer (if used), boatbearer (if used), and other positions possibly held by laymen (*e.g.*, when assisting the bishop at pontifical functions with the mitre, pastoral staff, hand candle, book and train of the bishop's long episcopal cape, called the *cappa magna*).

<sup>20</sup> That is, subdeacons, deacons or priests (including canons and minor prelates such as monsignors), and in papal settings, even prelates, be they of the minor or major (bishop, archbishop, cardinal) rank.

<sup>21</sup> And in pontifical ceremonies they usually are, as it is assumed by rubricians that at a Solemn Pontifical Mass, the first master of ceremonies is at least a priest and the second at least a subdeacon, while that of crossbearer is fulfilled by a subdeacon vested in a tunicle.

<sup>22</sup> *Cf.* above on p. 9 in the section, Conforming to the Roman Balance. Servers who act overly pietistic (*i.e.*, those who exaggerate their bearing or actions to appear pious) are in fact just as much (if not

or moving in lock-step motion or cornering the foot at a square angle instead of naturally walking around it).

In conforming with the spiritual discipline<sup>23</sup> that is necessary for fulfilling the duties of the liturgical offices, the server should ensure that he is enacting each position of deportment correctly, carefully avoiding such things as craning the neck, leaning the head forward or cocking it to one side, slouching, fidgeting, or any other negative traits that may disedify or act as a distraction.<sup>24</sup> The server must also ensure to keep his eyes within the sanctuary's ambit, and not needlessly gaze at the congregation in the nave.

It should be remembered, that as the server is seen more in motion than the celebrant, who is essentially rooted to the altar, he must strive not to pose a distraction to either the celebrant or to the faithful. He must ensure to move gracefully at a moderate pace and without jerkiness or undue haste; in other words, make himself as unnoticeable as possible.

### UNIFORMITY OF ACTION

*“Nothing is more conducive to the smoothness of a ceremony”*<sup>25</sup> than uniformity of action. Thus the servers should strive to walk, make the various liturgical gestures, reverences and responses in unison with the other ministers.<sup>26</sup>

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more) a distraction as those who are casual. J.B. O’Connell on p. 183 uses the descriptions of *“reverence and modesty.”*

<sup>23</sup> Cf. in J.B. O’Connell the first paragraph in the chapter, *Liturgical Gestures*, p. 182, for an excellent description on this point.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. J.B. O’Connell, p. 183. Boys must especially be instructed on how to properly deport themselves in the sanctuary in regards to giving attention to details and to their personal demeanor, particularly to decorum, deportment and physical appearance (a modest hair style, good hygiene, proper attire and footwear, *e.g.*, black dress shoes).

<sup>25</sup> L. O’Connell, p. 29.

<sup>26</sup> In this, it is assumed that the other ministers are performing these various items at a moderate pace as dictated not only by unanimous

## WALKING

Walking is done at a moderate pace, keeping the body erect, but the eyes slightly downcast. Walking sideways or sidestepping is improper; instead a turn should be made in the proper direction, then a few short steps as necessary, and finally a return to the original direction. Walking backwards is also not proper, though taking a step back at certain times is acceptable. Obstacles should be passed to the right, if possible.

Ascending or descending steps should be done gracefully by stepping with the toes and not clumsily on the heels (particularly when descending). When ascending steps, one should start with his right foot first.<sup>27</sup>

Two ministers<sup>28</sup> walking together should walk shoulder to shoulder and not in single file. If both need to turn simultaneously while walking to a common point (*e.g.*, the credence), the inside minister<sup>29</sup> should swivel slightly towards the direction in which the pair will proceed, thereby allowing the outside one to keep up.<sup>30</sup>

When proceeding around the foot of the altar the proper method is to walk in a slight elliptical pattern keeping about a foot away.<sup>31</sup> This will prevent hitting the steps accidentally, but more importantly will avoid the “leaning into the step” look.

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consent of liturgical and spiritual authors, but also by the spirit of prayer.

<sup>27</sup> L. O’Connell, p. 30, *et al.*

<sup>28</sup> Or even three, *e.g.*, the crossbearer with the acolytes.

<sup>29</sup> That is, the one with the sharpest turning ratio.

<sup>30</sup> This action resembles the motion of a swinging door, the inside server acting as the hinge and the outside server as the furthest edge of the door.

<sup>31</sup> A good maxim to remember this is to “give a foot for the foot” (*i.e.*, keep a foot away from the edge of the first step).

## General Principles

When two servers are proceeding around the foot shoulder to shoulder, the inside server should walk at a pace that will allow the outside server to keep up with the movement.

### SITTING

The server should sit erect without leaning against objects behind him.<sup>32</sup> When seated, the surplice should be positioned in the lap without stretching it, so that the hem is slightly above the bend of the knee. The hem should be arranged neatly and the hands placed inside the hem, palm down, with fingers extended and held together upon each knee.

### PROCESSIONS

The following rules should be observed during a liturgical procession<sup>33</sup> of any kind (*e.g.*, the processional or recessional). It should proceed at a moderate pace,<sup>34</sup> and generally-speaking, without halting for others to perform an action (*e.g.*, to genuflect and then proceed to their places), which looks undignified. Hence, each pair or individual should be spaced about 8 feet<sup>35</sup> from those in front and either slow or quicken their pace to keep this distance consistent throughout the entire

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<sup>32</sup> In fact, the only seat that should have a back is a cathedra, or bishop's throne, though some liturgical authors concede a *low* back for the sedilia.

<sup>33</sup> It is presumed here that the course of these movements will be made through the nave of the church, either from the extreme rear (*e.g.*, the narthex) or at least from a suitable halfway point, which is a more befittingly method than merely processing in from a side door from the sacristy into the sanctuary.

<sup>34</sup> Oftentimes, the music for the liturgical procession can aide in setting the pace, where the count for a hymn is usually two steps for every inhalation.

<sup>35</sup> A good rule of thumb for processing through the nave is to remain four pews apart. In outdoor processions however, this distance will naturally be slightly more, up to even 12 feet apart.

procession. When this is done correctly, the procession will continue at a steady flow even as each pair or individual pauses to genuflect and then go to their places.

### COMMON FORMATION PATTERNS

In addition to the commonly used shoulder-to-shoulder (walking in pairs) formation, there are several other patterns employed:

- **Box formation:** this consists of four or more ministers arranged in a box; *e.g.*, two servers paired up front and two servers paired in the rear, with both pairs walking closely together<sup>36</sup> as a single group. This formation is seen for the Gospel action at High Masses (at Solemn Mass there are actually six ministers).
- ***Recta linea* formation:** meaning *in a straight line*, this a frequent formation used by the ministers (*e.g.*, when the sacred and inferior ministers are lined up at the foot) and it is also used when space limitations cannot accommodate a box formation (*e.g.*, during the Gospel action, all six ministers would align *recta linea* at the foot before going to the place where the Gospel will be chanted).
- **Triangular formation:** also referred to as a *delta* formation, this formation consists of one minister at the head of two or more other ministers following in close proximity as in the box formation. This formation is often temporarily used when space limitations prevent three ministers from walking abreast (*e.g.*, the crossbearer with the acolytes when proceeding through a narrow doorway or passage).

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<sup>36</sup> About two to three feet apart.

***PER BREVIOREM AND PER LONGIOREM***

*Per brevior*em is Latin for *by the short way*, and for inferior ministers this describes how an ascent or descent is made between the predella and the foot by the shortest route, usually diagonally down the front of the altar steps (*e.g.*, when switching the missal and the veil during Low Mass after the Ablutions). Normally servers will take this route *only when they are carrying something*, if necessity requires it, or if accompanying sacred ministers (*i.e.*, following the rule of *ratione accommodationis*).

*Per longior*em is Latin for *by the long way*, and for inferior ministers this describes how an approach or departure is made by going around the foot to one of the sides of the altar instead of *per brevior*em. Generally, servers take this route when *not carrying an object* (*e.g.*, during Low Mass after the Ablutions while going to the sides of the altar to pick up the missal and the veil before switching them to opposite sides).

To obtain a clearer idea of what is being explained above, please consult the diagrams contained in this booklet which demonstrate these routes and how they are commonly enacted by inferior ministers.

# RULES OF PRECEDENCE

Adhering to Roman logic, “*in all ceremonies strict precedence is observed.*”<sup>37</sup>

The term *superior* usually refers to the celebrant, though this can also imply any of the other sacred or inferior ministers depending on the circumstances.

## WALKING WITH A SUPERIOR

- *When the celebrant is vested,*<sup>38</sup> the place of dignity is *at the end*, thus inferiors walk *in front of* and *to the left*<sup>39</sup> of superiors.
- *When the celebrant is not vested,*<sup>40</sup> the place of dignity is reversed (placing the precedence at the front), thus the celebrant leads.

## CROSSING TO THE OTHER SIDE OF A SUPERIOR

If a minister needs to cross to the other side of a superior, when possible he should cross behind and not in front of the superior.

## GIVING WAY TO A SUPERIOR

In certain instances, a minister will be required to give way to a superior by taking a step back to allow him to pass.

## WHERE CONFLICT OF SPACE OCCURS

If two or more ministers (*e.g.*, the acolytes with the crossbearer) come to a point where because of space

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<sup>37</sup> L. O’Connell, p. 29.

<sup>38</sup> That is, chasuble, cope or alb with stole.

<sup>39</sup> Depending on the circumstances.

<sup>40</sup> Usually wearing simply a cassock and surplice.



limitations only one or two may proceed through, the highest ranking minister always goes first (*e.g.*, the crossbearer at High Mass, then the acolytes). Once the choke point has been cleared, the group should immediately reform to its original formation, all the while continuing to walk forward.<sup>41</sup>

### **KNEELING AND STANDING WITH A SUPERIOR**

Inferior ministers stand or kneel *slightly behind*<sup>42</sup> the celebrant. Inferior ministers also usually kneel one level below that of the celebrant, except when all are kneeling on the floor.

### **PRECEDENCE OF SITTING**

When sitting, the lower ranks sit after the higher ranks, but when rising this is reversed, with the lower rising first.

Within the sanctuary, the Gospel side has precedence, hence the senior clergy sit on this side when in choir. This side is the first to receive the incensations and the Pax). This is also why the bishop's throne and the Paschal Candle<sup>43</sup> are situated on the Gospel side.

### **PROXIMITY**

The rule of *proximity* is a practical outcome of precedence, and determines what to turn or make reverence towards, either a personage or an object.

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<sup>41</sup> To make this motion of break and reform work effectively, the senior ranked minister must slightly lessen his pace to allow the lower ranked minister to catch up.

<sup>42</sup> That is, at a distance of about a foot, but not more, or this will appear exaggerated. A good method of reckoning is to align the tips of one's folded hands with the center of the superior's torso.

<sup>43</sup> During the Easter Vigil ceremonies, it is positioned in the middle of the choir, but moved to the Gospel side of the sanctuary for the Mass. It remains in this position from Eastertide inclusive to the Ascension after which the Paschal Candle (and its stand) is removed from the sanctuary and not used again until the next Easter Vigil.

## TURNING

Turning falls under the rules of proximity.

### WHEN TURNING BY ONESELF

Turns are always made in the direction of the nearest object (*e.g.*, the altar) or personage that holds the greater dignity (*e.g.*, the celebrant versus the deacon). In cases of conflict, the turn is made to the right.

### INWARD TURN

When with another person, a turn is made towards him; this is called an *inward turn*. As with walking, if on the inside when making an inward turn enough time must be allowed for the person on the outside to keep shoulder to shoulder during the entire movement.<sup>44</sup>

### DURING THE READING OF THE GOSPEL

During the Gospel readings,<sup>45</sup> all should turn and face the book of the Gospels<sup>46</sup> out of respect for the Word of God and extraneous actions should be omitted.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> A good way to effect a graceful and simultaneous turn between two (or more) ministers, is for the inside minister to turn a little slower than the outside (and center) minister.

<sup>45</sup> The Gospel during the Liturgy of the Catechumens and the Last Gospel (*i.e.*, the Prologue of St. John).

<sup>46</sup> Often a missal is used in place of an Evangelarium.

<sup>47</sup> An exception to this rule is during High or Solemn Mass, when the various inferior ministers queue up for the recessional formation, which is symbolic of the historic fact that the celebrant once recited the text of the Last Gospel silently to himself while recessing to the sacristy.

**TURNING CORAM SANCTISSIMO**

When this condition exists<sup>48</sup> the inferior ministers must take care not to turn their backs completely to the Blessed Sacrament when descending from the predella. These occasions occur:

- After ministering the cruets at the Offertory.
- After ministering the *Lavabo*.
- After the Consecration action while descending to the center of the foot to genuflect.
- After ministering the Ablutions.

In these instances, the ministers turn slightly toward each other (*i.e.*, still partially facing the Blessed Sacrament) and descend from the predella in nearly side-step fashion so that they may face each other. Upon arriving *in plano*, the ministers genuflect, turn inwards completely as usual and continue with their duties.

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<sup>48</sup> See p. 58 in the section of *Coram Sanctissimo* for when this condition exists.

# LITURGICAL GESTURES

## HANDS: GENERAL NOTIONS

The general form of the hands is to hold the fingers closely together and extended.

Whenever a gesture is performed, both hands retain their general form though with some modification as will be described below in detail.

When one hand is in use (usually the right hand), the unoccupied hand is placed with fingers touching, flat against the sternum.<sup>49</sup>



When carrying an object in one hand, the unoccupied hand retains its general form placed against the sternum and all liturgical gestures are omitted.<sup>50</sup>

When sitting, the hands should be placed inside the hem of the surplice, palms down, with fingers extended and held together, upon each knee.

### HANDS FOLDED

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<sup>49</sup> As shown in the images, the hand should be centered horizontally on the chest, and not placed askance over the heart as often done in making a pledge.

<sup>50</sup> Some instances of the application of this principle would be if carrying a thurible, candle, bells or processional cross, do not make the sign of the cross during a blessing, the *Sanctus*, etc., or when carrying the Communion plate, do not strike the breast during the triple *Domine non sum dignus*.

## General Principles

An inferior minister may not wear gloves<sup>51</sup> nor a jeweled ring<sup>52</sup> during the ceremonies, as these are pontifical privileges.

### FOLDED HANDS

When the hands are not employed, the fingers should be held touching, palm to palm with the right thumb over the left thumb,<sup>53</sup> pointing upwards at about a twenty degree angle,<sup>54</sup> and just in front of one's sternum (not actually touching the chest).<sup>55</sup>

### MAKING THE LARGE SIGN OF THE CROSS

The sign is made keeping the right hand's fingers together, touch the forehead, then the sternum (just above the left hand), then the top of the left shoul-

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. J.B. O'Connell, p 408. The liturgical gloves worn by a bishop at certain times during the ceremonies when he pontificates are called *chirothecae* in Latin. The servers are not allowed to wear gloves for the sake of protecting the polish of other liturgical metal ware used (e.g., the acolyte's candles or the processional cross), or even when handling the bishop's mitre and pastoral staff. In this latter case, the *vimpa* should be used by the inferior ministers for this purpose. In regards to touching the sacred vessels, *per accidens* (e.g., with either the explicit or implicit appropriate clerical permission) the servers (like a lay sacristan) may touch these (including the chalice and the paten) if absolutely necessary (e.g., to clear the altar mensa), hence gloves are not strictly necessary to handle these objects.

<sup>52</sup> The jeweled ring worn by a bishop is called an *annulus*. When filling the role of inferior ministers, laymen should remove any jeweled rings (or other extraneous rings) they may customarily wear, though a plain, wedding band is permissible.

<sup>53</sup> *Rit. Serv.*, III, 1 states specifically "*in modum crucis*" ("*in the mode of the cross*"). Cf. also L. O'Connell, p. 31, *et al.*

<sup>54</sup> L. O'Connell actually gives this angle on p. 31, one that folded hands naturally assume. Some rubricians describe making the folded hands level with the elbows to obtain the correct angle.

<sup>55</sup> This final direction is given specifically for the sacred ministers so that their hands do not rub against the vestments causing damage over time (Cf. J.B. O'Connell, p. 186). The same is true of the surplice, plus the fact that holding the hands buried in one's chest does not look dignified.

der, then slightly twisting the wrist and touching the top of the right shoulder. This sign should always be made deliberately and reverently without exaggeration or haste.

The inferior ministers sign themselves with the large cross in unison with the celebrant:

- Whenever “*In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti*” is said, either as an invocation (e.g., during the Preparatory Prayers) or as a blessing (e.g., during the Last Blessing).
- Whenever “*Adjutorium nostrum in nomine Domini*” is said (e.g., during the Preparatory Prayers).
- Whenever “*Indulgentiam, absolutionem et remissionem peccatorum nostrorum*” is said (e.g., during the Preparatory Prayers and if the second *Confiteor* is said before the distribution of Communion).
- At the conclusion of the *Gloria* (when saying “*Cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris. Amen*”) and the *Credo* (for “*Et vitam venturae saeculi. Amen*”).
- During the *Sanctus* at *Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini*.
- During any blessing given to the minister made by the celebrant with his hand over one’s person.<sup>56</sup>
- At the invocation, “*Deus in adjutorium meum intende*” (commonly used in the Divine Office).

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<sup>56</sup> It should be noted though that *only those who are the recipients of the blessing* (or who it is intended for) should sign themselves; e.g., during *Indulgentiam* after the “second” *Confiteor*, only those who will be communicating (since it is a minor absolution specifically for the communicants), or during the exchange or making of vows, only those who are committing this oblation (e.g., the spouses or religious).

## General Principles

- During the intonation of these canticles used during the Divine Office:
  1. *Magnificat* (Vespers, and often used for various solemn occasions)
  2. *Benedictus* (Lauds)
  3. *Nunc dimittis* (Compline)

### **MAKING THE SMALL SIGN OF THE CROSS (THE GOSPEL CROSS)**

With the right thumb pointing upwards, and extended right hand pointing left, the sign is made with the fleshy side of the thumb in the form of a small cross on the forehead, then the lips, and finally the sternum (just above the left hand). Each small cross should be an equilateral (or Greek) cross and made with reverence and care. The hand should not be made into a fist when making this action.

During Mass, the inferior ministers employ this form of the cross during the title of both the Gospel and Last Gospel (e.g., “*Sequentia Sancti Evangelii secundum...*”).<sup>57</sup>

During the Divine Office at Matins, the sign is made on just the *lips* at Matins during the invocations “*Aperi, Domine*” and “*Domine, labia mea aperies*”.<sup>58</sup>

### **STRIKING THE BREAST**

This penitential action is done with the right hand *extended*, not made into a fist. The breast is struck on the sternum (just above the left hand held flat) noise-

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<sup>57</sup> However, if the Gospel is read in the vernacular before the sermon, the servers should not sign themselves at this time since this is not part of the liturgical action.

<sup>58</sup> None of the other canonical hours that employ the small cross utilize inferior ministers during the ceremonies said in choir.

lessly with the tips of the fingers and the flat open palm. An inferior minister strikes his breast:

- During the recitation of the *Confiteor* for the faithful at “*mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*” (thrice).<sup>59</sup>
- During the *Agnus Dei* at *miserere nobis* (said twice) and “*dona nobis pacem*” (said once).
- During the *Domine non sum dignus* of the faithful for the duration of each clause (thrice).
- During the Leonine Prayers<sup>60</sup> for the response “*miserere nobis*” or “*have mercy on us*”<sup>61</sup> (once).

A server should not strike his breast:

- During the celebrant’s *Confiteor*.<sup>62</sup>
- At the audible clause “*Nobis quoque peccatoribus*” within the Canon.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> In many places it is still customary to recite the *Confiteor* (the so-called “second”) just before the distribution of Communion. When the deacon chants it during Solemn Masses at the same time (replacing the server), the various ministers also strike themselves as usual.

<sup>60</sup> Often called the “Prayers after Low Mass”, they are named after Pope Leo XIII, who ordered these prayers to be devoted for the freedom of the Church in Germany during the *Kulturkampf*, though they actually have their origin earlier with Pope Pius IX. In 1859, Pius IX instituted the basis of them for the liberty of the Church when the papacy’s temporal sovereignty was threatened and continued to be prescribed even after the illegitimate seizure of the Papal States. Under Pius XI, these prayers were devoted to the conversion of Russia after the Communist Revolution, and have remained so until the present.

<sup>61</sup> But only if the celebrant does so. This is not prescribed by the rubrics, but is allowed by custom.

<sup>62</sup> For he is saying “*through my fault,*” etc.

<sup>63</sup> The reason for this momentary break of silence during Canon is to alert the deacon (and the master of ceremonies standing *in plano*) during Solemn Mass that he will shortly need to move to the Epistle side of the predella to remove the pall. The missal rubrics within the Canon prescribe a medium tone of voice (“*elata aliquantulum voce*”), *i.e.*, loud enough so that only those immediately near can hear, when saying this clause, hence it is not meant to be heard by everyone in the sanctuary. Cf. SRC 3535<sup>3</sup>.



## General Principles

- During the Consecration action.<sup>64</sup>
- During the *Agnus Dei* of a Requiem Mass.<sup>65</sup>
- The celebrant's *Domine non sum dignus*.<sup>66</sup>
- “*O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary*” or “*O Clemens...*”<sup>67</sup> during the recitation of the *Salve Regina* for the Leonine Prayers.

### TORCHES

Torches are always held in the outside hand.<sup>68</sup> The other hand should be held over the breast, while the torch should be held slightly away from the body (not directly in front), nor too close to the side which will give the appearance of the server “hugging” the torch.<sup>69</sup> Holding the torch in this manner not only looks dignified, but helps to hold the torch steady.

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<sup>64</sup> For the first cause that this is not prescribed anywhere nor even recommended, and for the second, the attitude at this moment of the Mass is that of adoration, not contrition.

<sup>65</sup> As the clauses “*miserere nobis*” (“*have mercy on us*”), etc. are replaced with “*dona eis requiem*” (“*grant them rest*”) which gives no cause for making an act of contrition.

<sup>66</sup> Obviously because the celebrant is saying “*I am not worthy*” and not “*We...*”

<sup>67</sup> Once again, this is not prescribed anywhere nor does the celebrant perform such a gesture, hence the primary reason why this should be omitted. But *a fortiori*, because these words are merely descriptions of Our Lady's *attributes*, and not signs of contrition; not any more so than the declaration of these other aforementioned attributes: “*our life, our sweetness, and our hope.*”

<sup>68</sup> That is, in relation to the center of the pair (so away from the other torchbearer), the altar or processional canopy (in the hand furthest from it), the sanctuary wall (*e.g.*, if standing or kneeling in the chancel against an outside wall, in the hand closest to the wall) or the Communion rail (for the two torchbearers who flank the rail during the distribution, in the hand closest to their respective ends of the rail).

<sup>69</sup> A good example of what a torchbearer should resemble is a soldier carrying a halberd (*e.g.*, a member of the Papal Swiss Guards), only in the case of the torch, it is held vertically straight, and not at a slight angle. Nonetheless, this does not give him cause to act militaristic.

## BOOKS

When placed on the altar or credence, they are placed with their opening facing the altar center. When being carried, they are held by the minister with the opening facing *left*.

However, if a minister is about to present the book to a superior minister (from which he will read),<sup>70</sup> the opening should face *right* so the receiving minister will not have to readjust the book's opening upon receipt.

Books can be carried in two ways:

- With both hands under the bottom edge, with the top edge of the book resting against the chest.
- With the right hand on upper right corner, and the left hand under the bottom edge.<sup>71</sup>

When a minister is reading from a book, depending on the situation, it is either held open:

- Against the chest.
- Against the forehead.

Though in both cases, the *opened* book is always held with both hands under the bottom edge of the book (*i.e.*, the cover boards), but so that the pages can still be turned.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> *E.g.*, the master of ceremonies to the subdeacon and deacon at Solemn Mass. In fact, it is assumed that when the master of ceremonies picks up the book at the credence, he immediately arranges it with the opening facing *right*.

<sup>71</sup> This method is often a practical one, especially if the book is heavy, or if for some reason the master of ceremonies (who is holding the book) needs to give a signal with his hand.

<sup>72</sup> If in drafty conditions (*e.g.*, outside or in front of a fan), it may be necessary for the minister holding the opened book to keep the pages (or ribbon) in place with tips of his fingers, loosening these when the pages need to be turned.

### COMMUNION PLATE

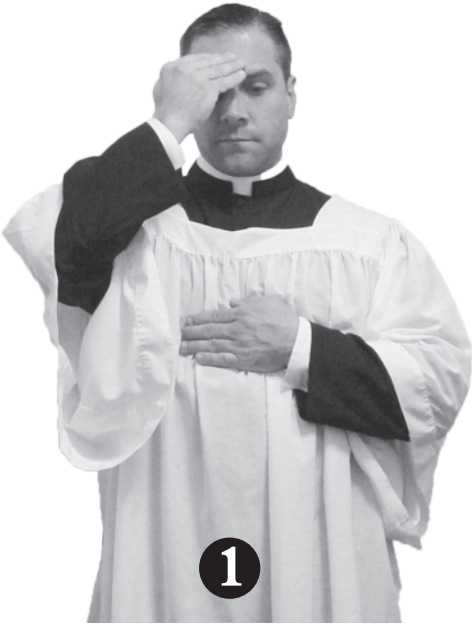
Though not strictly a sacred vessel,<sup>73</sup> because of the function this vessel fulfills, the protection of the Blessed Sacrament against accidental desecration, it should be handled with dignity. The server should always carry this object in his right hand, held horizontally parallel to, but not touching his body with the top of the plate facing upwards (*i.e.*, as he would during the distribution of Holy Communion); not under his arm or against his body (*e.g.*, flat over his chest).



### HOLDING THE COMMUNION PLATE

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<sup>73</sup> Unlike the ciborium, it is not even required to be blessed.



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**MAKING THE SIGN OF THE CROSS**



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**MAKING THE SMALL CROSS**



ROMANITAS PRESS



**STRIKING THE BREAST**



**POSITION OF HANDS  
WHEN SITTING**

## ROMANITAS PRESS



**HOLDING AN OBJECT**

# REVERENCES

There are three types of reverences used in the Roman Rite: bows, genuflections and kisses.<sup>74</sup>

## BOWS

*“Bows should not be made unless they are required by the rubrics.”*<sup>75</sup>

## WHEN KNEELING

Inferior ministers normally bow straight ahead<sup>76</sup> with exception to these circumstances when kneeling next to the celebrant at the foot:

- During the entire recitation of the celebrant’s *Misereatur*<sup>77</sup> a turn is made towards the celebrant.
- During the faithful’s *Confiteor*, a turn is made momentarily towards the celebrant at the words, “*et tibi, pater*” and “*et te, pater.*” However, this is not done at the “second” *Confiteor*.

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<sup>74</sup> Technically there is a fourth: prostration. This type of reverence however, which consists of lying flat, or prostrate, on the floor, occurs in very specific circumstances (*e.g.*, the first reverence made for the Solemn Afternoon Liturgy on Good Friday and ordinations to the various holy orders). This form of reverence is also greatly used in monastic rites, especially when taking vows.

<sup>75</sup> L. O’Connell, p. 43.

<sup>76</sup> Some rubricians direct the servers when kneeling to turn and bow in conjunction with the celebrant (when he is at the altar) while others do not. As it is often difficult for two servers kneeling at Low Mass to match their angles as well as that of the priest (let alone the timing of the action), which could be a distraction to the faithful, it is found to be more practical that they simply bow straight ahead when kneeling (*e.g.*, for the *Gloria Patri* during the Introit), except when *specifically* prescribed to turn and bow (*e.g.*, during the *Confiteor*).

<sup>77</sup> That is, immediately after the celebrant’s *Confiteor*.



## General Principles

At Solemn Mass, the above circumstances are observed by any inferior ministers<sup>78</sup> kneeling next to the deacon and subdeacon at the foot, but *in conjunction with them*, and with the addition of another circumstance:

- During the celebrant's *Confiteor* a turn and bow are made momentarily towards him as he turns briefly first to the deacon and then to the subdeacon when he says "*et vobis, fratres*" and "*et vos, fratres.*"<sup>79</sup>

### WHEN STANDING

One should pivot on his feet so as to face the altar, then make the appropriate bow, and then pivot back to face the former direction. This should be done smoothly and in unison with any other ministers. In anticipation of making the bow, one should turn towards the altar, at least a second or two before the word or action arrives, so that the bow can be made on cue. If for some reason a bow is accidentally missed, it is better to omit it entirely than to bow out of order, hastily, or not in conjunction with the other ministers.

There are three types of bows:<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> For example, the master of ceremonies, which is usually the only position that would follow this direction.

<sup>79</sup> That is, the first master of ceremonies (on the deacon's right) will turn and bow in sync with the deacon, while if there is also a second master of ceremonies (on the subdeacon's left), he will turn and bow in sync with the subdeacon.

<sup>80</sup> In treating of the number of types of bows that exist, the author has chosen that advocated by Fortescue, J.B. O'Connell (and referenced by L. O'Connell) and the Guild of St. Stephen. Classically, rubricians would define five types of bows (though others, like Wapelhorst, only four), three of the head (to distinguish the acts of *latria*, *hyperdulia* and *dulia*) and two of the body, even though there was not support for this system within the ceremonial rubrics. *A fortiori*, as remarked by J.B. O'Connell, it was nearly impossible to distinguish and impractical

1. **Simple**
2. **Moderate**
3. **Profound**

Bows are made for the following five reasons:

1. Whenever something is said aloud that requires a reverence (but only to the degree of a bow).
2. When kneeling, for a word or phrase said aloud that requires a genuflection for those standing.
3. When ministering to a sacred minister (*e.g.*, presenting the cruets).
4. When an act of reverence is required towards a personage<sup>81</sup> (*e.g.*, before and after incensing them<sup>82</sup>) or an object (*e.g.*, to an altar).
5. For an action of the celebrant that requires an objective reverence (*e.g.*, the four genuflections during the Consecration action and during the celebrant's Communion of both Sacred Species).



**SIMPLE BOW**



**MODERATE BOW**



**PROFOUND BOW**

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to enact the three types of head bows. Hence, the system advocated herein is in better keeping with the Roman spirit of simplicity and practicality.

<sup>81</sup> A genuflection is substituted for prelates assisting in choir under various conditions.

<sup>82</sup> This will of course include Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Sacred Species, a relic of the Passion, or a major relic of a saint.

Bows are not made:

- By laymen to each other when processing into or recessing out of the sanctuary before going to their places.<sup>83</sup>
- By an inferior minister when he is kneeling next to a kneeling sacred minister, not even for the *Gloria Patri* or the Holy Name.<sup>84</sup>
- To someone who is kneeling.<sup>85</sup>
- To persons *coram Sanctissimo*.<sup>86</sup>
- To persons from the veneration of the cross on Good Friday until the Vigil Service on Holy Saturday.

Furthermore, a bow is not prescribed for:

- The master of ceremonies and the thurifer upon approaching the celebrant for the imposition of incense.<sup>87</sup>
- Inferior ministers towards anyone or anything before sitting down.
- Any of the inferior ministers to the altar cross upon approaching or leaving the altar.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Because they are not clerics. An example of when this would be done by clerics is when processing in pairs, either as torchbearers or to assist in choir.

<sup>84</sup> This is following the rule of *ratione accommodationis* which will be elaborated in detail later.

<sup>85</sup> L. O’Connell, p. 43.

<sup>86</sup> Except where these are intrinsic to the rite itself, such as the bows made when incensing the celebrant.

<sup>87</sup> *Rit. Cel.*, IV, 4 however does prescribe the deacon (and thereby by application the master of ceremonies at a High Mass) to bow slightly while saying “*Benedicite, Pater reverende.*” At a Pontifical Mass, these two servers kneel during the imposition of incense when celebrated by the local ordinary or greater prelate.

<sup>88</sup> For example, when switching the missal to the Gospel side, the acolyte is not required by any rubric to make a bow to the cross, either before or after picking up the missal, before descending *in plano, per breviorum*. Not even the deacon and subdeacon are required to make

Finally, it should be noted that the bows once made *honoris causa* to the clergy assisting in choir (*i.e.*, when passing by them, during the processional and recessional, and at other various times) are now generally omitted.<sup>89</sup>

### THE SIMPLE BOW

This is made by bowing the head only. The majority of the bows made by the inferior ministers are of the simple type. A simple bow is required for these words or phrases said aloud:<sup>90</sup>

- The Holy Name of Jesus (but not when the title, “*Christ*” is mentioned by itself).
- During the *Gloria Patri*<sup>91</sup> (up to “*sicut erat*”).
- During the *Gloria*<sup>92</sup> at these words: “*in excelsis Deo*” (at *Deo* only), “*adoramus te*,” “*gratias agimus tibi*,” “*Jesu Christe*,” “*suscipe deprecationem nostram*,” “*Jesu Christe*.”
- Every time the celebrant invokes “*Oremus*.”
- For the name of Mary (the Mother of God) and the name of the saint of the day. If however the

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such bows in the course of Solemn Mass, except when in conjunction with the celebrant (conforming to the rule of *ratione accommodationis*). The celebrant on the other hand is specifically required by the rubrics to make a head bow before leaving the *center* of the altar, but not from the side (*e.g.*, leaving the missal on the Epistle side to go *per brevior*em to the sedilia; many rubricans, *e.g.*, Fortescue, J.B. O’Connell and L.Connell, confirm that no bow should be made by the celebrant at this point).

<sup>89</sup> The omission of these bows (for merely polite reasons) actually conforms more closely to Roman ceremonial simplicity, and certainly makes certain motions made by the various ministers more practical.

<sup>90</sup> Whether by a sacred or inferior minister, or the choir.

<sup>91</sup> This solemn invocation of all three Persons of the Holy Trinity is called a *doxology*, in this case, the *minor doxology*.

<sup>92</sup> Liturgical authors call this the *major doxology* and in the liturgical books it is often referred to as the Angelic Hymn.

name of another Mary occurs,<sup>93</sup> or another saint of the same name, a bow is not made. Likewise, do not bow if the name of the saint is mentioned in the title<sup>94</sup> of the Epistle or Gospel on their feast day.<sup>95</sup>

- During the *Credo* at these words: “*in unum Deum*” (at *Deum* only), “*Jesum Christum*” (if kneeling, a moderate bow is made while the celebrant genuflects while saying “*Et incarnatus est... Et homo factus est*”), and “*simul adoratur.*”
- During the Preface at: “*gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro*” (at *Deo* only).
- During the entire recitation of the *Agnus Dei*.
- At the name of the reigning sovereign pontiff.
- For the name of the local ordinary on the anniversary of his election and consecration.<sup>96</sup>
- During the season of Lent for the *Oratio super populum*: a simple bow is made when the celebrant says *Oremus*, then again when he says “*Humiliate capita vestra Deo*”<sup>97</sup> and holding the position until the prayer is concluded by the celebrant: “*Per Dominum...*”.

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<sup>93</sup> The Gospel reading for the Feast of the Sacred Heart is a good example, wherein two Marys are named, Salome and Cleophas, while the Blessed Virgin Mary is simply referred to as the “mother.”

<sup>94</sup> When the book’s title and its author are announced (*e.g.*, for an epistle: “*Lectio Epistolae...*” a lesson: “*Lectio libri...*” or a gospel: “*Sequentia Sancti Evangelii secundum...*”).

<sup>95</sup> A perfect example of this scenario is on a feast of one of the New Testament writers (*e.g.*, during the introduction of the Gospel on the feast of St. Luke: “*Sequentia Sancti Evangelii secundum Lucam*”). A bow is made if their name is mentioned within the Epistle or Gospel, but not during the title.

<sup>96</sup> Consult an *ordo* for this local information.

<sup>97</sup> Do not make a bow for the Holy Name as your head is already lowered.

### WHEN MINISTERING TO A SACRED MINISTER

A simple bow is the *first* and the *last* thing done when ministering to a sacred minister, that is, the bows encompass the action. One is considered to be servicing a sacred minister at these times:

- When presenting either the *Epistolarium* or the *Evangeliarium*<sup>98</sup>
- When presenting the cruets at the Offertory<sup>99</sup>
- For any kind of *Lavabo*<sup>100</sup>
- When presenting the pax brede to someone in choir<sup>101</sup>
- During the Ablutions

It should also be noted that when servicing a sacred minister the bows are made *directly in front of him* and not *in plano* before ascending to the altar to perform any duties.

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### WHEN AN ACT OF REVERENCE IS REQUIRED TOWARDS ANOTHER PERSON

In addition to those instances of servicing a minister already mentioned, a bow is also made to persons:

- If he is of equal or higher rank, that is the bow by the senior is reciprocated by the junior.

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<sup>98</sup> Usually these two books (also respectively called a Lectionary, or book of readings, and an Evangelary, or book of the Gospels) are combined into a single book called the Epistles and Gospels, the last typical edition of which was published for the Roman Rite in 1959. Often however, an altar missal is substituted when this book is not available.

<sup>99</sup> In this specific case, bow to the minister, kiss the cruets before presenting them and upon receiving them, and then bow again before departing.

<sup>100</sup> Even if only done for practical reasons; *e.g.*, after distributing ashes on Ash Wednesday.

<sup>101</sup> Or even outside of the sanctuary, *e.g.*, to a high-ranking civil dignitary.

## General Principles

- By the thurifer before he incenses an individual or a group; in this case he bows *first* before rendering the appropriate incensation and bows again when completed.

### THE MODERATE BOW

This is made by bowing the head and shoulders at about a sixty degree angle. The moderate bow is employed by the inferior ministers only for these occasions:

- *Ex actu functionis*, to an altar where the Blessed Sacrament is not reserved.
- During each *Misereatur* and *Confiteor* said by the servers.
- When kneeling, for words said aloud by the celebrant that require a genuflection for those standing (*e.g.*, during the *Credo* at “*Et incarnatus est... Et homo factus est,*” for “*Flectamus genua*” on some Ember days and Lenten ferials).
- For the four genuflections of the Consecration action.<sup>102</sup>
- During Benediction when kneeling under the condition of *coram Sanctissimo*:
  1. Before rising to impose incense into the thurible.
  2. Before and after incensing the Blessed Sacrament.
  3. During the hymn *Tantum ergo* at the words, “*veneremur cernui.*”

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<sup>102</sup> L. O’Connell, pp. 160-161, 168, the St. Stephen’s Guild, p. 21, J.B. O’Connell, p. 359-360, and Pio Martinucci on p. 139, n. 18 in Liber I, Chapter XI in his *Manuale Sacrarum Caeremoniarum* (Cecchini, 1879). The torchbearers however make only a simple bow, as the torches they are holding make it impractical for them to execute a moderate bow.

### THE PROFOUND BOW

This is made by bowing the head and shoulders at a nearly a ninety degree angle.<sup>103</sup>

The inferior ministers only employ the profound bow:

- Before and after incensing the celebrant.<sup>104</sup>
- In conjunction with the celebrant (or deacon) before and after incensing the book of the Gospels.

**Do not make a profound bow while kneeling**, as the moderate bow is the *lowest* bow made when kneeling because it “*is equivalent to a profound... bow while standing.*”<sup>105</sup>

### GENUFLECTIONS

#### ROMANITAS PRESS GENERAL NOTIONS

The act of genuflecting is strictly Roman, originating in the court of Imperial Rome as a mark of respect to the Emperor, who was both kingly, and in pagan times, often considered a deity. The Roman Christians eventually adopted this practice of Caesar’s court for acknowledging their adoration of the True God and their Eucharistic King.<sup>106</sup> It is a solemn act of adora-

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<sup>103</sup> Rubricians as a whole instruct the person to bow low enough until their fingertips can touch their knees. Those treating of monastic circumstances (which are more austere), include crossing the arms causing the person to bow even lower. The first instance however is always used in secular occasions.

<sup>104</sup> Though some authors mentioned making a simple bow (or as per the structure of the five types of bows, a profound head bow), others stipulate a profound (body) bow; the latter is more commonly employed, hence embodied by this booklet.

<sup>105</sup> L. O’Connell, p. 37, ff 17, citing SRC 4179<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>106</sup> It also continued to be used by Catholics as an act of reverence to emperors and kings who represent the temporal power of Christ, as



tion and hence should be made with attention and deliberation. Also, as with bowing, a genuflection should not be made unless the principles or a specific rubric calls for it.<sup>107</sup> In the Roman Rite,<sup>108</sup> genuflections are made to the following objects:

- To the Blessed Sacrament.
- To a relic<sup>109</sup> of the Passion exposed.<sup>110</sup>
- To an altar (only *in actu functionis*).<sup>111</sup>
- To the cross during the veneration on Good Friday.<sup>112</sup>

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well as to bishops, who have the fullness of the priesthood and of course the pope, who is the Vicar of Christ.

<sup>107</sup> In fact, *a fortiori*, not only is a genuflection a higher degree of veneration than a bow (hence, it should be given greater consideration and employed with care), but it has the potential of being a greater distraction if used excessively and not according to the Roman spirit.

<sup>108</sup> Showing the influence of Rome, all of the liturgical rites of the Latin Church employ the genuflection, though sometimes in different ways.

<sup>109</sup> That is, an authenticated first class relic that had *immediate* contact with Our Savior during His Passion, such as a portion (even a sliver) of the True Cross, or one of the Holy Nails or Thorns. An object that has been merely touched to one of these relics of the Passion does not constitute a first class relic of the Passion.

<sup>110</sup> J.F. Van Der Stappen on p. 4 in volume II of his *Caeremoniale* (Dessain, 1935) states specifically “*loco principali sunt expositae*,” that is, if *they are exposed in the principal place*. Otherwise, if simply reserved, a bow is made to them.

<sup>111</sup> Though it is more common place for rubricians and even the rubrics themselves to refer this genuflection to the altar cross, in actuality, it is the altar that is being revered, as after the Blessed Sacrament, a consecrated altar (or altar stone) is the most sacred thing in a church. In connection with the altar cross however, SRC 3792<sup>11</sup> prescribes that a genuflection is made to it “*only in actu functionis*,” J.B. O’Connell, p. 355.

<sup>112</sup> The historical origin of this reverence (in fact of this particular ceremony) is derived from the solemn veneration of the True Cross in Jerusalem.

Hence genuflections are made for seven reasons:<sup>113</sup>

1. When entering or leaving the sanctuary.<sup>114</sup>
2. When crossing the center of the altar.<sup>115</sup>
3. When coming to or leaving from the center of the altar for an outside point.<sup>116</sup>
4. When approaching or leaving the view of the altar (NB: this is not the same thing as just mentioned in item 3).
5. When standing, for a word or phrase said aloud that requires a genuflection.<sup>117</sup>
6. When the special rules for *coram Sanctissimo* apply.
7. On Good Friday, to the cross from its veneration, inclusive to the Vigil of Holy Saturday, as this entire period of time is treated as *in actu functionis*.

There are two types of genuflections:

1. The usual (single-knee) genuflection.
2. The double-knee genuflection.

### THE SINGLE-KNEE GENUFLECTION

The majority of genuflections are made with just one knee. This is made by keeping the hands folded,

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<sup>113</sup> It should be noted that there are *other* reasons for the inferior ministers to genuflect during pontifical ceremonies or in the presence of a bishop or greater prelate, but as mentioned in the author's preface, these will not be outlined here.

<sup>114</sup> This is of course assuming either a) the condition of *in actu functionis*, b) the Blessed Sacrament is reserved or exposed, or even c) a relic of the Passion is exposed.

<sup>115</sup> But not when passing by the side or behind the tabernacle.

<sup>116</sup> That is, the credence, the sedilia, or to the side of the altar *in plano*.

<sup>117</sup> For example during the Last Gospel at "*Et Verbum caro factum est*," for "*Flectamus genua*," and at a specific times, during some of the propers (e.g., the Major Alleluia for the Feast of Pentecost).

and while keeping the body erect, bend the right knee so that it touches the floor briefly near the left foot, then arising again immediately. This action should be made at a moderate pace as a single, graceful motion. When making a genuflection ensure not to:

- Bow your head.
- Make the sign of the cross.<sup>118</sup>
- Touch your knees with your folded hands (or rest your hands on your knees).
- Slouch your body.
- Turn while still rising.

**THE DOUBLE-KNEE  
GENUFLECTION**

A double-knee genuflection is used only during the condition of *coram Sanctissimo*; when depends on another set of circumstances.<sup>119</sup> A double-knee genuflection is made by dropping to the right knee, then to the left, making a moderate bow, and standing again with the right foot first, then the left. As with kneeling in performing this action the left hand should be used to pick up the cas-



**SINGLE-KNEE  
GENUFLECTION**



**DOUBLE-KNEE  
GENUFLECTION**

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<sup>118</sup> As each action means something different.

<sup>119</sup> That is, either *ex actu functionis* or *in actu functionis*.

sock slightly to gracefully facilitate gracefully kneeling in an vertically straight motion.

### PREDELLA PROTOCOL

Whereas the sacred ministers have the privilege of genuflecting on the altar steps, inferior ministers do not have this privilege within or outside of the ceremonies, except in cases of the principle *ratione accommodationis*. When this occurs, one may not rest his hands on the altar, as only the celebrant has this privilege.<sup>120</sup>

### DIRECTION OF GENUFLECTING

A genuflection to an object (*e.g.*, the Blessed Sacrament, altar, or book of Gospels) should be made directly ahead facing the object. To facilitate this, it will be necessary on occasion to turn and face the object in question and then make the genuflection.

There are other occasions when a genuflection is made facing generally straight ahead (*i.e.*, the direction one is already facing) and not towards a particular object. This usually occurs during High or Solemn Mass for those ministers who are facing across the sanctuary or towards the altar when genuflecting for a word or phrase during a prayer or text that requires a genuflection,<sup>121</sup> but not towards a specific object.

When passing the center of the altar, always take care to stop, turn towards the altar (or Blessed Sacrament), genuflect towards it, then turn and continue; never genuflect hastily at an angle when performing this type of movement.

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<sup>120</sup> L. O'Connell, p. 43 (citing in ff 40, Callewaert, p. 26).

<sup>121</sup> *E.g.*, during the *Credo* for the phrase "*Et incarnatus est...*" or during a proper such as the Major Alleluia of Pentecost. As mentioned earlier, an exception to this is during the Gospel, when the rubrics are specific of what to genuflect towards during the Gospel: the book for the deacon and the altar for everyone else.

### **KNEELING IN PLACE INSTEAD OF GENUFLECTING**

If the place where the minister will genuflect is different than where he will kneel,<sup>122</sup> he must genuflect first and then kneel. However, if the place where the minister will kneel is the same as where he will genuflect<sup>123</sup> (be it a single or double-knee), the minister omits the genuflection and just kneels (without any type of bow).<sup>124</sup>

### **COMBINING GENUFLECTIONS**

In the spirit of Roman practicality, where a situation might warrant several genuflections for different reasons, these may be combined into a single genuflection; some examples of when this usually occurs are:

- When forming a procession, some ministers when crossing the center of the altar will postpone and combine their genuflection until the entire formation is prepared to make a reverence.
- When *coram Sanctissimo*, the acolyte who is switching an item combines the genuflection he must make *in plano* upon descending with the genuflection he needs to make to cross the center of the altar.

### **SPECIAL RULES OF GENUFLECTING**

#### ***CORAM SANCTISSIMO***

When the Blessed Sacrament is exposed, the rules

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<sup>122</sup> *E.g.*, on the first (or bottom) altar step; an inferior minister is never allowed to genuflect on an altar step, which is a privilege for sacred ministers. L. O'Connell, p. 43 (citing in ff 39, Callewaert, p. 34).

<sup>123</sup> *E.g.*, *in plano*.

<sup>124</sup> This is seen at every Low Mass after the celebrant prepares the chalice on the altar and then returns to the foot; while he genuflects (because historically, he would not have dared to approach the altar until he made his preparation at the foot as seen at High or Solemn Mass), the acolyte immediately kneels.

for genuflecting differ according to these sub-conditions:

***Ex actu functionis:*** under this condition “every approach is an *accessus*,”<sup>125</sup> hence a double-knee genuflection is made when:

- Coming to or leaving the view of the altar.
- Crossing the center of the altar.
- Passing the altar “*at the side*.”<sup>126</sup>
- Before ascending to the predella and upon descending from the predella.

***In actu functionis:*** during this condition, for cause of practicality in carrying out the various ceremonial actions the usual single-knee genuflection is made when:

- Crossing the center of the altar.
- Coming to or leaving the center to go to an outside point.
- *In plano* before ascending to the predella and *in plano* upon descending from the predella.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> L. O’Connell, p. 38. An *accessus* (a Latin term that literally means *access*) is whenever one accesses or in this sense meant here, approaches the view of the altar.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38. This would be pertinent in the scenario where the altar was some distance from the rear sanctuary wall, such as the classic freestanding columned canopy (civory) arrangement over a freestanding altar as seen in many of the major Roman basilicas.

<sup>127</sup> L. O’Connell, on p. 38 in ff 18 gives this rule specifically as a general principle for the inferior ministers (citing SRC 4135<sup>3</sup> and Callewaert, p. 28; he also addresses this matter in his principles section for inferior ministers on p. 34: “*Ministri Inferiores semper in plano genuflectunt...*” and goes on to cite *Collationes Brugenses*, xiv, 560, *Questions Liturgiques*, III, 303. Cf. *infra* n. 77 s. Then again on p. 35 in ff 64, he gives this rule specifically in regards to the acolyte who retrieves the humeral veil from the subdeacon during Solemn Mass), again specifically on p. 40 and once more on p. 170 for serving Low Mass *coram Sanctissimo*. J.B. O’Connell also specifically gives this direction on p. 364 (citing SRC 3975<sup>1</sup> in ff 66) for the acolyte in his section of serving Low Mass

Hence during the ceremonies, the double-knee genuflection is only made when:

- Coming to or leaving the view of the altar.

### SOLITA OSCULA

The term *solita oscula* means *with the usual kisses* and refers to those ceremonial kisses that are given out of respect to the celebrant's anointed hands which are a source of blessing. They are given only to the celebrant and never to any of the other sacred ministers even if these positions are exercised by priests.

*Solita oscula* are given in this order:<sup>128</sup>

- **When giving:** the *object* first, then the celebrant's *hand*.
- **When receiving:** the celebrant's *hand* first, then the *object*.

The items that receive *solita oscula* are the:

- Biretta: on one of the flat sides.
- Cruets:<sup>129</sup> on the side of the cruet (but not on the lip<sup>130</sup> nor the handle).
- Aspergillum: on the handle.
- Incense spoon: towards the end of the handle.
- Thurible: on the disk where the chains are attached.

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*coram Sanctissimo* for the ministering of the cruets at the Offertory and the Ablutions.

<sup>128</sup> This order is given throughout the *C.E.*, specifically at I, xviii, n. 16, and is prescribed by SRC 3139.

<sup>129</sup> But only when presenting them at the Offertory and then to the cruets only, and not the celebrant's hand. This is a relic of an old direction (now defunct) that the inferior ministers were to kiss the item but not the celebrant's hand when enacting the *solita oscula* in order to show the hierarchy of the liturgical offices (Callewaert, p. 37). Nonetheless, *Rit. Serv.*, VII, 4 and SRC 4193<sup>2</sup> have retained the original practice for presenting the cruets during the Offertory.

<sup>130</sup> This is cited by rubricians for sanitary reasons.

Also, there is an exception to the usual mode of making the *solita oscula* when receiving these sacramentals:

- a **blessed candle** (during the distribution of candles on Candlemas.<sup>131</sup>
- a **blessed palm** on Palm Sunday.

In both cases, the sacramental is kissed first, then the celebrant's hand. This is because they take precedence over the celebrant.<sup>132</sup>

All *solita oscula* are omitted by the inferior ministers.<sup>133</sup>

- During Requiem Masses and funerals.<sup>134</sup>
- For ceremonies *coram Sanctissimo*.<sup>135</sup>
- In the presence of a greater prelate.<sup>136</sup>
- During the ceremonies of Good Friday.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> *I.e.*, Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary on February 2.

<sup>132</sup> L. O'Connell on p. 41, ff 25, reasonably gives this order "*if the object is blessed*" as a principle, since the two regular instances when it is enacted are for the aforementioned feasts, for which *C.E.*, II, xvi, n. 9 and many rubricans specifically prescribe, while other rubricans imply it.

<sup>133</sup> Regarding the four circumstances when the *solita oscula* are omitted, this is briefly stated in *C.E.*, I, xviii, n. 16, and concurred by all rubricans.

<sup>134</sup> Because the kisses represent joy while the funeral services symbolize mourning for the deceased.

<sup>135</sup> The exception to this rule are those kisses that are intrinsic to the ceremonies of the Mass, *e.g.*, of the deacon kissing the paten or chalice when presenting them to the celebrant during the Offertory. However, no such intrinsic kisses are made by the inferior ministers.

<sup>136</sup> That is, if a bishop is assisting in choir as a mark of hierarchical respect. Again, as mentioned in the footnote above, the intrinsic kisses are retained.

<sup>137</sup> Obviously because these rites are plunged into the depth of sorrow for Our Lord's Passion. Historically also, because the Mass of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts (superseded by the Solemn Afternoon Liturgy in 1955) was actually a funeral Mass for Our Lord.





# CONDITIONS THAT AFFECT REVERENCES

The previously given general rules for the various types of reverences are applied according to the following circumstances, which can cause modifications:

- *Ex actu functionis.*
- *In actu functionis.*
- Leaving the view of the altar.
- When carrying or accompanying an image of Christ.
- *Ratione accommodationis.*
- Who to follow in making reverences: the minister or the choir?
- *Coram Sanctissimo.*
- During the Sacred Triduum.

As the basic foundation, one of these two conditions will *always* exist in a sanctuary:

- *Ex actu functionis.*
- *In actu functionis.*

These conditions will in turn alter the *type* of reverence made to the altar, or the Blessed Sacrament, either reserved or exposed (*coram Sanctissimo*).

***Ex actu functionis*** means *outside the act of a function*, and this occurs in the absence of a ceremonial service. Hence the rules for this condition are normally observed when making sanctuary preparations and lighting and extinguishing candles.

- **To an altar:**<sup>138</sup> a moderate bow is made in place of genuflecting.<sup>139</sup>
- **To the Blessed Sacrament reserved:**<sup>140</sup> a genuflection is required under the usual rules.
- **To the Blessed Sacrament exposed:** a double-knee genuflection is made where one would normally make a single-knee genuflection.<sup>141</sup>

*In actu functionis* means *in the act of the function* and describes the condition when a liturgical act is occurring, namely:

- The Mass.
- The public recitation of the Divine Office (*e.g.*, in choir as a group).
- Any other type of official service (*e.g.*, Benediction<sup>142</sup>).
- All of Good Friday after the unveiling of the cross inclusive to the ceremonies of the Easter Vigil.<sup>143</sup>

Under this condition, the following rules are observed:

- **To an altar:**<sup>144</sup> except for the celebrant (who

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<sup>138</sup> That is, where the Blessed Sacrament is neither reserved nor exposed, such as a side chapel.

<sup>139</sup> For example, when crossing the center, leaving the view, and going to the Communion rail.

<sup>140</sup> Meaning in the tabernacle.

<sup>141</sup> L. O'Connell gives as the reason on p. 38: "...outside of a liturgical service every approach is an accessus."

<sup>142</sup> Which technically is only *para-liturgical* since it is dealing with the Blessed Sacrament.

<sup>143</sup> , *I.e.*, the entire period of over twenty-four hours is specially treated as *in actu functionis*. This is applicable to all churches where the cross on the high altar has been unveiled for veneration, and *only to this cross*.

<sup>144</sup> In the *Pontificale Romanum* for the ordination of a subdeacon, a reference is made to the consecrated altar which in a profound, symbolical manner is Christ. While rubricians tend to speak of the

only bows), the sacred and inferior ministers genuflect per the usual rules.

- **To the Blessed Sacrament reserved:** a genuflection is required under the usual rules.
- **To the Blessed Sacrament exposed:** all ministers observe the special rules of genuflecting for *coram Sanctissimo*.

### LEAVING THE VIEW OF THE ALTAR

When leaving the view of the altar, a reverence is required before departing from and upon returning to the altar. The following items are *not* considered to be outside the view of the altar, the:

- Credence
- Sedilia
- Chancel<sup>145</sup>
- Sanctuary space (*in plano*) on either side of the altar

These items are considered to be outside the view of the altar, the:

- Communion rail<sup>146</sup>

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reverence being made to the altar cross, it is more correct to speak of the reverence being given to the altar for the two-fold reason that after the Blessed Sacrament, a consecrated altar (or altar stone) is the most sacred object in a church, while historically it was the altar that was revered, since in ancient times an altar cross was not always present and previous to the 6th century was devoid of a corpus. Of course for many centuries liturgical law has mandated an altar crucifix to signify the oneness of the sacrificial act committed on the altar with that of Our Savior on Calvary.

<sup>145</sup> It should be noted that L. O'Connell on p. 39 further specifies that going to the chancel to give the Pax or incense the choir or congregation does not consist of leaving the view of the altar, though as will be seen below, going to the Communion rail to switch the cloth, etc. does.

<sup>146</sup> L. O'Connell gives this rule specifically on p. 161 in his section on serving Low Mass, referring in turn to his general principles chapter on p. 39.

## General Principles

- Sacristy
- Nave
- Or any other point in the church that is generally removed from the direct view of the altar or is at a great distance from it<sup>147</sup>

Therefore:<sup>148</sup>

- When the Communion cloth (if present) needs to be turned, a genuflection is made at the foot before departing and upon returning.
- During the reading of the Epistle at a Solemn Mass, a genuflection is made by the subdeacon and master of ceremonies before departing and upon returning, even though they are not crossing the sanctuary.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> The application of this rule is *relative* to the dimensions of the church, as clearly what is a great distance in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome or Westminster Cathedral in London, is not equal to the typical parish church and even smaller cathedrals. So for example, in a chapel where the Communion rail is merely a few feet away from the foot, practically speaking this is not outside the view of the altar. However, in a church that possesses a chancel of some length this would constitute outside the view. The sacristy however is always considered to be outside the altar's view, while the nave always a "great distance" from the altar since it is outside the sanctuary's ambit. And an exception to this principle would be in cases of small sanctuaries, where it may be necessary to treat part of the nave (*e.g.*, directly in front of the Communion rail), as being within the ambit for the practical carrying out of the ceremonies (*e.g.*, for the chanting of the Gospel during Solemn Mass due to a lack of space to accommodate the formation of ministers within the sanctuary itself).

<sup>148</sup> Obviously, the following cases are *in actu functionis*.

<sup>149</sup> The rubrics assumed that the subdeacon will chant the Epistle *at a distance from the altar* and not near it, and perhaps even facing the congregation, to whom he actually chanting the lesson. Nonetheless, even if the subdeacon performs the Epistle near the foot (a common enough case in small churches) or in the chancel, the genuflections are still required by the rubrics, for at least the initial historic reason: in major churches, the subdeacon would actually chant the Epistle from an ambo on the Epistle side of the sanctuary at some distance from

- During Benediction, whenever a minister leaves the center of the foot to go to the credence, to the sedilia, or to one of the sides of the altar a moderate bow is not made before departing or upon returning.

**WHEN CARRYING OR ACCOMPANYING  
AN IMAGE OF CHRIST<sup>150</sup>**

When one is carrying or accompanying a *principal* image of Christ or Christ Himself, one does not make any kind of reverence. This rule encompasses these objects, affects these persons and in these circumstances, the:

- Blessed Sacrament: the celebrant and the accompanying minister assisting<sup>151</sup> whenever the former is carrying the Blessed Sacrament (*e.g.*, during the distribution of Communion or when in the monstrance).
- Processional cross: the crossbearer<sup>152</sup> and the accompanying acolytes.<sup>153</sup>
- *Evangeliarium*:<sup>154</sup> the subdeacon, — but only

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the altar and facing the people, a practice that was continued in those churches which still possessed their dual ambones.

<sup>150</sup> This is not specifically listed as a general principle by any rubrician, but practically it is one by the fact that when this type of action is taking place a reverence is omitted, as consistently cited by the various authors in ff 152 below.

<sup>151</sup> Holding the Communion plate for example.

<sup>152</sup> L. O'Connell, p. 43, Fortescue, p. 41, citing in ff 1: *Memoriale Rituum* I, ii, §III, 5; OHS for Holy Saturday, n. 11, J.B. O'Connell, p. 462-463 and 464. An exception to this rule is when the minister bearing the archiepiscopal (or metropolitan) cross kneels for the Last Blessing during a Solemn Pontifical Mass. Historically, this form of the processional cross was once devoid of a corpus, but presently rubricians explain that this exception is made so the crossbearer is not hindering the view of the bishop.

<sup>153</sup> L. O'Connell, p. 43, Fortescue, p. 41 and J.B. O'Connell, p. 464.

<sup>154</sup> This rule applies even when another type of book is being employed for the chanting of the Gospel such as a missal.

during the office of the Gospel, *i.e.*, from the announcement of the *pericope*<sup>155</sup> by the deacon until the celebrant kisses the book at its conclusion<sup>156</sup> — and the flanking acolytes<sup>157</sup> during the office of the Gospel.

- Last Gospel card: the subdeacon (at Solemn Mass) or the master of ceremonies (at High Mass).
- Infant Child for the crèche: celebrant; where customary to have him process in bearing the Christ Child before the Christmas Vigil Mass and lay the image in the nativity scene.<sup>158</sup>
- Veneration of the cross on Good Friday: the celebrant<sup>159</sup> and the acolytes accompanying with candles.

***RATIONE ACCOMMODATIONIS***<sup>160</sup>

Meaning “*by reason of accommodation*,” this is a principle of exception to the usual rules of when to make a

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<sup>155</sup> That is, the announcement of where the *excerpt* (hence the Greek word) was derived which consists of the particular book’s title and its author; *e.g.*, “*Sequentia sancti Evangelii secundum...*”

<sup>156</sup> That is, when the book is actually open. This is the most striking example of the execution of this principle. For the subdeacon is specifically prescribed by the rubrics (even if Mass is being celebrated *coram Sanctissimo*) to walk with the open Gospel book directly across the center of the altar without making any sort of reverence, then ascending to the altar to allow the celebrant to kiss the pericope (marked by the cross). After this action, the subdeacon then closes the book, bows simply to the celebrant and returns to the Epistle side of the foot (to await transferring the book to a minister), again without making any sort of a reverence (even deferred) to the Blessed Sacrament or the altar.

<sup>157</sup> L. O’Connell, p. 231, Fortescue, p. 105, J.B. O’Connell, p. 480.

<sup>158</sup> This is by application of the principle.

<sup>159</sup> This will naturally include those acolytes carrying the cross during the veneration of it by the faithful, etc.

<sup>160</sup> L. O’Connell refers to this principle in a footnote on p. 40 and cites those rubricians who wrote in Latin.

reverence for the sake of unity of action. For the inferior minister, this will affect him at certain times when he is next to a sacred minister.

#### HOW THIS RULE AFFECTS THE *BOWING* FOR INFERIOR MINISTERS

The rules regulating bowing for inferior ministers differ slightly from that of sacred ministers, namely that the sacred ministers do not normally bow when they are kneeling, whereas inferior ministers do. The reason for this is that kneeling is often a *position of deportment for the inferior ministers*, but is a *position of reverence for the sacred ministers*. Hence when inferior ministers are kneeling next to a kneeling sacred minister they do not bow unless the sacred ministers are explicitly required by the rubrics to bow. There are four such instances when this required, once during Mass and thrice during Benediction:

- **Mass:** during the *Credo* for “*Et incarnatus est... Et homo factus est*”<sup>161</sup>
- **Benediction:**
  1. Before standing to impose incense<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Though normally the sacred ministers while seated at the sedilia simply remove their birettas and then bow, on the feasts of the Annunciation and the three Masses of Christmas Day, they are required to remove their birettas, kneel and make a simple bow for this clause (L. O’Connell, p. 43, J.B. O’Connell, p. 486 who cites the following in ff 82: *Rub. Gen.*, n. 518, b; *C.E.* II, viii, 53; SRC 2915<sup>6</sup> and 2960<sup>2</sup>). By application, if after reciting the *Credo* at the altar the sacred ministers descend to the foot and kneel with the faithful (which is allowed by custom and often done to ensure the faithful are not confused and sit instead of remaining standing when the sacred ministers sit at the sedilia), then they must follow the same rule as for the aforementioned feasts and bow during the clause (SRC 2915<sup>6</sup>, also cited by J.B. O’Connell on p. 486).

<sup>162</sup> Here a moderate bow.



2. Before and after incensing the Blessed Sacrament<sup>163</sup>
3. During the hymn *Tantum ergo* at the words, *veneremur cernui*

**HOW THIS RULE AFFECTS *GENUFLECTING*  
FOR INFERIOR MINISTERS**

As for bowing, the rules for genuflecting differ somewhat for the inferior ministers from that of the sacred ministers. Per predella protocol, the inferior ministers do not normally genuflect on the predella as this is a privilege of sacred ministers. It happens occasionally though that an inferior minister will be accompanying a sacred minister on the predella, and hence will need to genuflect with him. One example of this is when the master of ceremonies and thurifer are assisting the celebrant incensing the altar at a High Mass; they genuflect on the predella with the celebrant.

***CORAM SANCTISSIMO***

Literally translated as “*in the presence of the Most Holy*”, this Latin term refers to the condition when the Sacred Species are on these occasions considered exposed:<sup>164</sup>

1. When It is in a monstrance
2. When It is in a pyx
3. When It is in a ciborium<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Here a simple bow, L. O’Connell, p. 43.

<sup>164</sup> L. O’Connell, p. 38, ff 18.

<sup>165</sup> This seems to treat only of instances such as the rite of Communion outside of Mass, minor exposition, and the other special occasions presented during the Sacred Triduum when the Blessed Sacrament is translated from the altar to the altar of repose, and back for Communion, etc. For as will be cited in n. 7, rubricians seem to implicitly treat the newly-consecrated ciborium as they do the newly-consecrated chalice, *i.e.*, while it is on the mensa from the Consecration action until the

4. On Holy Thursday and Good Friday at the altar of repose<sup>166</sup>
5. When Holy Communion is distributed (when the tabernacle is open, etc.)
6. At the Elevations during the Consecration action<sup>167</sup>
7. When It is on the mensa from the Consecration until the celebrant's Communion,<sup>168</sup> but *not* to the inferior ministers *in plano*<sup>169</sup> except when they ascend to or descend from the predella. However, *It is exposed to those who are on the predella*

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celebrant's Communion, the Hosts contained in the ciborium are not considered to be exposed to those *in plano* and *a fortiori* those outside of the sanctuary. In fact, no rubrician (even those such as L. O'Connell who are quite detailed on such matters) speaks of a special reverence (*e.g.*, double-knee genuflection if leaving the view of the altar) to be made by the servers when a consecrated chalice or ciborium is on the altar. If it were otherwise, one would expect mention to be made of this in regards to the case where the thurifer leaves the sanctuary via the Communion rail and down the center aisle to return the thurible to the sacristy after the Consecration. None however can be found, and in fact the exact opposite (a single-knee genuflection) is advocated by rubricians.

<sup>166</sup> This is a special case given to the reserved (unexposed) Blessed Sacrament. In the pre-1955 Holy Week rites, a urn-shaped vessel called a *capsula* (or *repository*) was used. A type of portable tabernacle, the *capsula* was large enough to contain the chalice holding the single consecrated Host covered with a paten for the former Mass of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts on Good Friday. Because the faithful can now receive Communion on Good Friday, a tabernacle is now used during the Reposition to hold the ciborium containing the Hosts remaining from the evening Mass of Holy Thursday.

<sup>167</sup> But not during the Minor Elevation during the *Per ipsum*.

<sup>168</sup> It will be considered exposed to all however during the Distribution of Communion once the tabernacle is opened or a newly-consecrated ciborium is picked up by the distributor.

<sup>169</sup> L. O'Connell on p. 38, ff 18, underscores his adamancy on this point in regards to inferior ministers by putting the clause "*— not to the inferior ministers*" in italics and goes on to cite SRC 4135<sup>3</sup> and Callewaert, p. 28. *A fortiori* by cause of proximity, this is also applicable to those outside of the sanctuary, hence only a single-knee genuflection is required by those in the nave, etc. during this period.

## WHO TO FOLLOW IN MAKING REVERENCES

### THE MINISTER OR THE CHOIR?

It will often occur during a ceremony that a minister is saying something simultaneously as the choir is singing a word or phrase that requires a reverence, which leads to the question, who is to be followed? The rule is:

- **If a minister<sup>170</sup> is reciting a prayer *aloud*** that is meant to be heard by those in the sanctuary,<sup>171</sup> then *follow what the minister is saying* and perform those reverences in unison with the minister as required.
- **If a minister is reciting a prayer *silently*,**<sup>172</sup> then *follow what the choir is singing* and perform those reverences in unison with the singers as required.<sup>173</sup>

This rule encompasses those parts of the ordinary (the official chants of the Mass, *i.e.*, the *Kyriale*), but not hymns or motets that are sung to fill time (*e.g.*, during the Offertory action after the choir sings the proper antiphon until the celebrant is ready to intone the Preface). Hence if the Holy Name, *etc.* is sung dur-

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<sup>170</sup> This rule will most often apply to the celebrant, but it can also include another sacred or even an inferior minister.

<sup>171</sup> For example, the *Gloria* when he is at the altar. However, not when he says “*Nobis quoque peccatoribus*” for the reasons stated previously.

<sup>172</sup> That is, in the secret tone, and not meant to be heard by anyone. This circumstance is exclusive to the celebrant.

<sup>173</sup> An exception to this rule would be either the deacon or an inferior minister (*e.g.*, the master of ceremonies) who is assisting the celebrant at the missal while the celebrant prays silently (*e.g.*, during the Canon), or even the case of the subdeacon during the Canon when he is at the foot holding the veiled paten.

ing these non-essential pieces, they are ignored by the ministers in the sanctuary even if no minister is saying anything aloud.

An example of the implementation of this rule is during the *Gloria*. While the celebrant is saying the *Gloria* in a moderate voice (meant to be heard by those in the sanctuary) the ministers in the sanctuary make the various bows in unison with him, ignoring what the choir is singing. When he has completed the *Gloria* however, the ministers in the sanctuary now follow the choir (who is still singing the *Gloria*) and make the appropriate reverences according to what they are singing.

#### **DURING THE SACRED TRIDUUM**

A progression of reverences occurs during the three holiest days of the liturgical year, which is described in the table on the following page. The conditions are given and the type of reverence that should be given according to the progress of the rites of each day, with the appropriate rubrical term for the particular circumstance cited in square brackets.

<b>PROGRESSION OF REVERENCES FOR INFERIOR MINISTERS DURING SACRED TRIDUUM</b>		
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Holy Thursday</b></p> <p><b>SSMM has been transferred from high altar's tabernacle to repository<sup>1</sup></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate bow to altar before Mass [ex <i>actu functionis</i>].</li> <li>• Genuflection during Mass, except by celebrant, who bows [in <i>actu functionis</i>].</li> </ul> <p><b>After Consecration action</b></p> <p>Genuflection as usual during Mass [in <i>actu functionis</i> and in <i>coram Sanctissimo</i> for those on predella].</p> <p><b>Translation of SSMM to altar of repose</b></p> <p>Double-knee genuflection at altar of repose [coram Sanctissimo, ex <i>actu functionis</i> inclusive here only to Good Friday].</p> <p><b>Stripping of altar [without SSMM reserved or exposed at high altar<sup>2</sup>]</b></p> <p>Genuflection as usual to altar [in <i>actu functionis</i>] except for celebrant, who bows.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Good Friday</b></p> <p><b>Cross on high altar has been removed</b></p> <p>Moderate bow to high altar [ex <i>actu functionis</i> and in <i>actu functionis</i> by all ministers].</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Veneration of cross</b></p> <p>Genuflection to cross [from this point inclusive to Holy Saturday, entire period is treated as in <i>actu functionis</i>].</p> <p><b>Translation of SSMM from repository for distribution of Communion</b></p> <p>Genuflection [coram Sanctissimo, in <i>actu functionis</i><sup>3</sup>].</p> <p><b>After liturgical action, temporary reservation of SSMM at high altar<sup>2</sup></b></p> <p>Genuflection as usual.</p> <p><b>SSMM returned to repository, but unveiled cross remains on high altar</b></p> <p>Genuflection [in <i>actu functionis</i> inclusive to Holy Saturday as noted above].</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Holy Saturday</b></p> <p><b>Before vigil ceremonies, high altar is adorned but SSMM is not reserved</b></p> <p>Genuflection [continuing in <i>actu functionis</i> from Good Friday].</p> <p><b>During vigil ceremonies</b></p> <p>Genuflection, except by celebrant who bows<sup>4</sup> [in <i>actu functionis</i> as usual].</p> <p><b>After Consecration action</b></p> <p>Genuflection as usual during Mass [in <i>actu functionis</i> and <i>coram Sanctissimo</i> for those on predella].</p> <p><b>After Communion when SSMM is again reserved in high altar's tabernacle.</b></p> <p>Genuflection [in <i>actu functionis</i> with SSMM reserved as usual].</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>After Mass</b></p> <p>Genuflection as usual [ex <i>actu functionis</i> with the SSMM reserved].</p>
<p><b>Table footnotes</b></p> <p><sup>1</sup> It is preferable to situate the altar of repose out of view from the high altar either in another enclosed space or building, but not at a visible side altar.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> This condition exists at the altar of repose (where a double-knee genuflection is required particularly) and follows the translation of the SSMM to the high altar and vice versa.</p> <p><sup>3</sup> If any Hosts remain after Communion.</p> <p><sup>4</sup> Fortescue, p. 302.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">SSMM (<i>Sanctissimum</i>) = Bl. Sacrament.</p>		

# LIGHTING AND EXTINGUISHING OF ALTAR CANDLES

These acts used to be an integral part of the ceremonies of Mass, hence, the rules of precedence described below which are still prescribed.<sup>174</sup>

## IN GENERAL

When lighting candles, the server must ensure not to drip wax (or a burning particle) on the altar cloths, conopaeum or his own vesture. He must also take care not to break off the ends of the wicks with the lighted taper. Lastly, he should take care not to extinguish the taper on the predella, as a spark might land on the altar cloths.

Similarly, when extinguishing the candles, the server must be careful to avoid passing the snuffer over the altar cloths or conopaeum (as this can drip burnt residue or unsolidified wax) or crushing the wicks.

In both cases of lighting and extinguishing the candles, the server should remember:

1. to hold the candlelighter (and snuffer) away from his body,
2. always make the appropriate reverence *in plano*<sup>175</sup> when crossing sides (and not on the predella),
3. and to turn inwards towards the tabernacle (or altar cross) when ascending and descending.

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<sup>174</sup> SRC 4198<sup>9</sup>, L. O'Connell, p. 52 and J.B. O'Connell, p. 355.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. the Predella Protocol section on p. 45.

## General Principles

The candles of the Epistle side are always lit first, starting from the one closest to the center (or tabernacle) and so on outwards, while the candles of the Gospel side are always lit last (again starting from the one closest to the center).

In extinguishing, the process is reversed, with the Gospel side candles extinguished first, starting with the candle furthest from the center and so on inwards, and then the Epistle side (again furthest from the center and so on inwards).

If there are several ranks of candles to light (*e.g.*, Benediction), those highest are lighted first and those lowest are extinguished last.<sup>176</sup>

Regarding the Paschal candle, it may be lit<sup>177</sup> at all Masses,<sup>178</sup> except Requiem (and funeral services), those said in violet (*e.g.*, on Rogation Days) and on the Vigil of Pentecost.<sup>179</sup> It may also be lit at Vespers (except for those days in violet), but not at Benediction<sup>180</sup> (though it is allowed during Masses said *coram Sanctissimo*<sup>181</sup>). It is employed from the Easter Vigil inclusive to the Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord, when it is extinguished after the Gospel during the principal Mass<sup>182</sup> and after the ceremonies is removed from the sanctuary.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> L. O'Connell, p. 52. This is also practical, as this method ensures that the candlelighter will not be accidentally caught in a flame.

<sup>177</sup> Rubricians are silent on when it is lighted and extinguished in connection with the altar candles.

<sup>178</sup> This is generally the custom in the United States and its lawfulness is explained by L. O'Connell on p. 14. This is also confirmed by Fortescue on p. 319, citing the *Ritus Simplex* edition of the OHS (IV, II, ix, 15).

<sup>179</sup> It is prohibited to light the Paschal candle at these times. See, L. O'Connell, p. 52, Fortescue, p. 319

<sup>180</sup> SRC 3479<sup>3</sup>, L. O'Connell, p. 14 and Fortescue, p. 319.

<sup>181</sup> SRC 4383<sup>2</sup>. This also includes Vespers said *coram Sanctissimo* (see Fortescue, p. 319).

<sup>182</sup> Which is normally a High or Solemn Mass.

<sup>183</sup> SRC 235<sup>11</sup>, L. Connell, p. 13.

## Lighting and Extinguishing of Altar Candles

Non-liturgical (cultus) candles<sup>184</sup> should always be lighted last and extinguished first, as they are merely accessories.

### PARTICULAR METHOD OF LIGHTING AND EXTINGUISHING THE ALTAR CANDLES

1. Enter the sanctuary and make the proper reverence *in plano*.
2. Ascend *per brevior*em to the Epistle side of the predella and pass the candlelighter around the altar mensa and over the candles and begin lighting the candle nearest the altar's center,<sup>185</sup> then next closest and so on.
3. When finished lighting the candles on the Epistle side, pass the candlelighter back around the altar as before, turn *inwards* (*i.e.*, towards the tabernacle) and descend *per brevior*em to the center of the foot.
4. Make the appropriate reverence *in plano*, then re-ascend *per brevior*em to the Gospel side of the predella and pass the candlelighter around the altar again, light the candle closest to the tabernacle and so forth as before.

If the altar is accessible from the rear, the candles may also be lighted from here, though no reverence is necessary when crossing *behind* the tabernacle or altar cross.

In extinguishing the candles, simply reverse steps 1-4, starting on the Gospel side and with the furthest candle from the altar's center.

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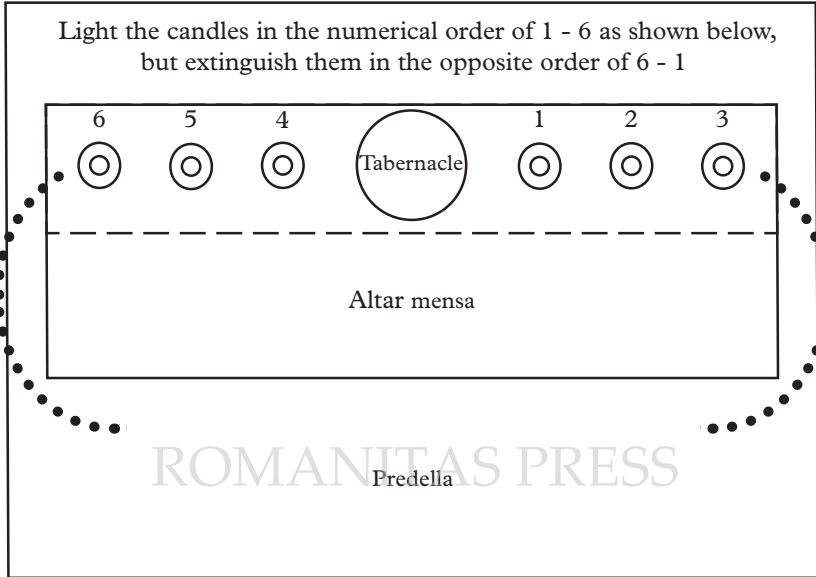
<sup>184</sup> *E.g.*, the advent candle wreath, which technically has no place in a sanctuary since it is a secular custom and not a liturgical one.

<sup>185</sup> An easy way to remember this is, the light of Christ radiates *from the tabernacle* or the altar cross.



## General Principles

Always pass the candlelighter around the side of the altar



Always pass the candlelighter around the side of the altar

Always make the reverence *in plano* when switching sides.  
Always extinguish the candlelighter *in plano*.

# APPENDIX

## PRIVILEGES OF SACRED MINISTERS

There are certain privileges that the sacred ministers (*i.e.*, the celebrant, deacon, subdeacon) have due to the dignity of their office, but which the inferior ministers do not generally share. These privileges allow the sacred ministers to:

- Genuflect on the predella *in actu functionis*.<sup>186</sup>
- Genuflect on the first altar step *in actu functionis* (with the exceptions noted below).
- Genuflect on the appropriate altar step when changing from one side of the predella to the other (outside of the condition *coram Sanctissimo*).

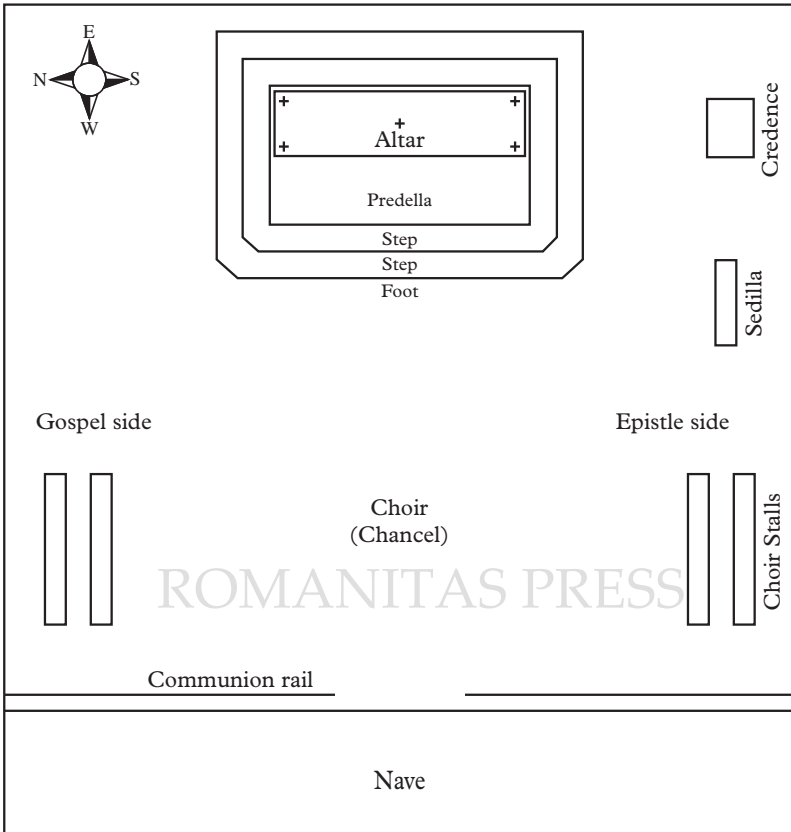
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<sup>186</sup> *Ex actu functionis* however, even the major clergy should not genuflect on the predella, as they are not longer exercising an office of a sacred minister. This principle is testified by the fact that the master of ceremonies is an inferior minister, and as mentioned previously, it is assumed that this office is exercised by a priest or subdeacon during pontifical functions. Hence, if genuflecting on the predella is not allowed to a major cleric exercising a liturgical office (*in actu functionis*), *a fortiori* this rule is applicable *ex actu functionis* when they are merely performing sacristy work. Obviously the situation is altered when dealing with the Blessed Sacrament *ex actu functionis*.

# General Principles

## DIAGRAM OF A TYPICAL SANCTUARY



### GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF CEREMONIES DIAGRAM SYMBOLS

**Blessed Sacrament**  
(exposed on altar):

✦

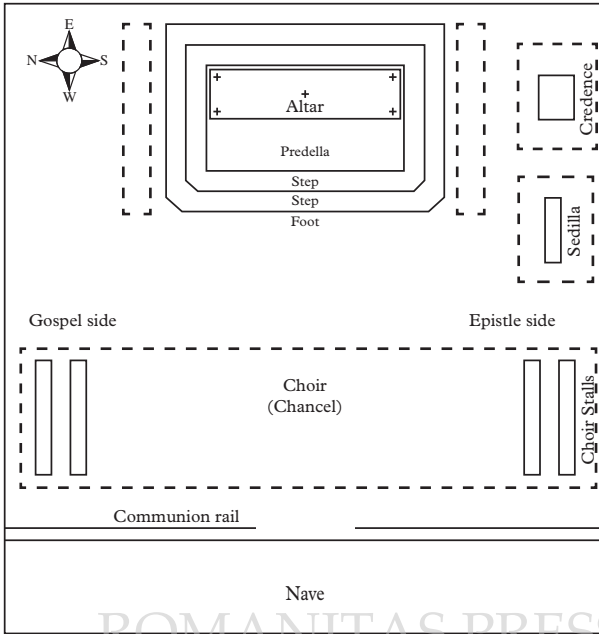
**Ministers:**

- master of ceremonies      Mc
- thurifer:                      Th
- crossbearer:                Cb
- acolyte                        Ac

**Genuflections:**

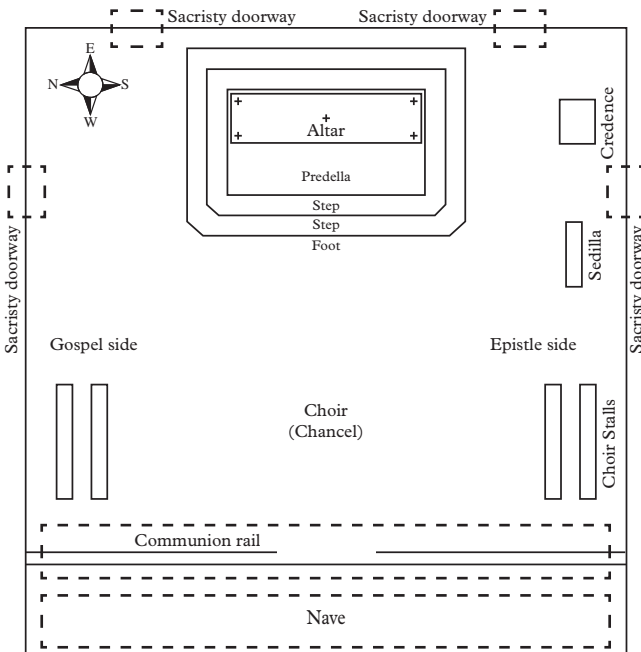
- single-knee genuflection:    gf
- double-knee genuflection:   2gf

## Appendix



### OUTSIDE POINTS IN THE SANCTUARY

Highlighted in this diagram are those areas considered to be merely an outside point, and do not usually require a reverence (an exception is *coram Sanctissimo, ex actu functionis*).



### OUTSIDE THE VIEW OF THE ALTAR

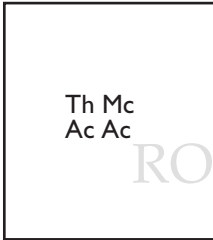
Highlighted in this diagram are those areas that are considered to be outside the view of the altar, and which under certain circumstances (e.g., *coram Sanctissimo*) require a reverence.

## General Principles

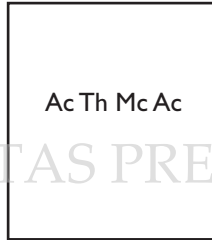
<b>REVERENCES MADE TO THE ALTAR BY INFERIOR MINISTERS DEPENDING ON CONDITIONS</b>		
<b>Condition on altar</b>	<b>Ex actu functionis</b>	<b>In actu functionis</b>
<b>Altar (only)</b>	Moderate bow	Genuflection
<b>Bl. Sacrament reserved</b>	Genuflection	Genuflection
<b>Bl. Sacrament exposed</b>	Double-knee genuflection	Genuflections per the rules for <i>coram Sanctissimo</i>
<b>Passion relic exposed<sup>1</sup></b>	Genuflection	Genuflection

<sup>1</sup> That is, when in the principal place and where the Blessed Sacrament is neither reserved or exposed.

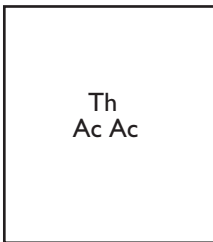
### COMMON FORMATION PATTERNS



**Box formation**

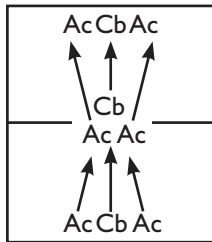


***Recta linea* formation**



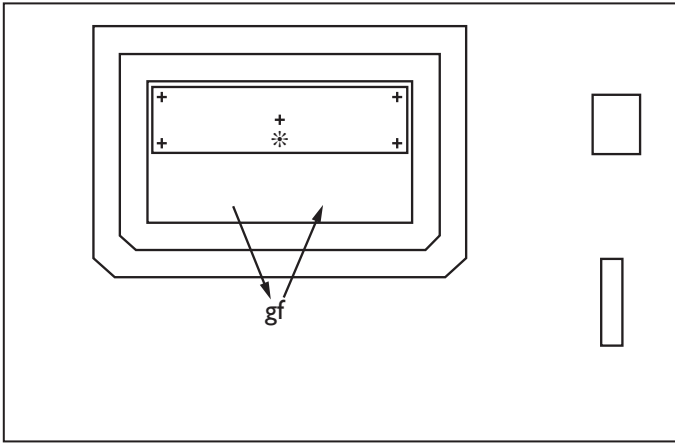
**Triangular formation**

Shown here are two acolytes being led by a thurifer.



Demonstrated here is a *recta linea* formation of a crossbearer with two acolytes who encounter a constricted space, and while still moving forward, form a triangular pattern, then upon passing the narrow point, reform *recta linea*.

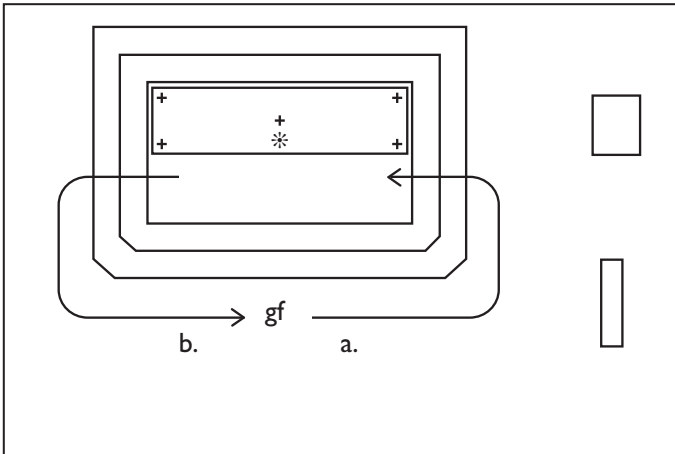
## Appendix



### **Per brevior**

This diagram demonstrates how a server would ascend or descend to the predella *per brevior* usually when carrying an object, either to switch sides of the altar, or to return to the credence from the Gospel side.

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### **Per longior**

This diagram shows how a server would approach the predella *per longior*, either a) to ascend, or b) to descend. In both cases, these routes can be reversed.

**PRACTICAL EXAMPLES OF ENACTING THE RULES OF *CORAM SANCTISSIMO, IN ACTU FUNCTIONIS* FOR INFERIOR MINISTERS**

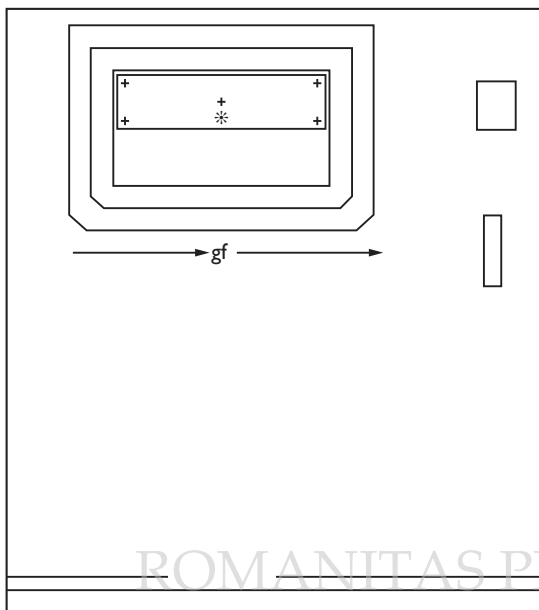


Fig. 1. When crossing the center of the altar or going to an outside point: make a single-knee genuflection as usual.

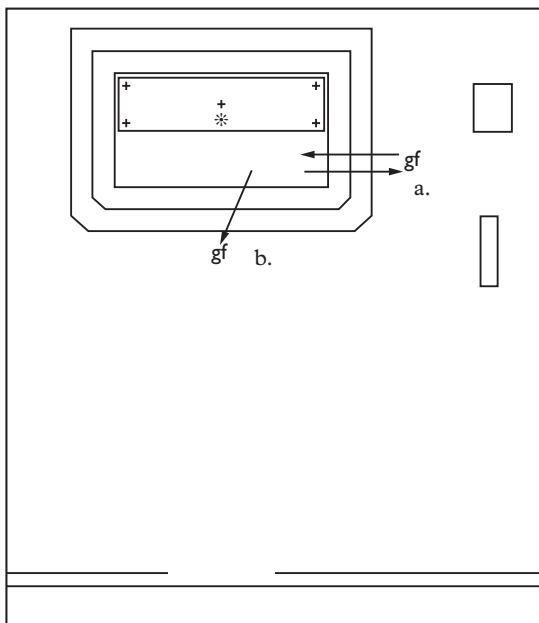


Fig. 2. **Predella protocol:** genuflect *in plano* before ascending and after descending from the predella. Examples of enacting this rule are: a) when performing the Ablutions, and b) when during Low Mass the server descends from the predella after the Consecration action. Do not genuflect on the predella except in cases of *ratione accommodationis*.

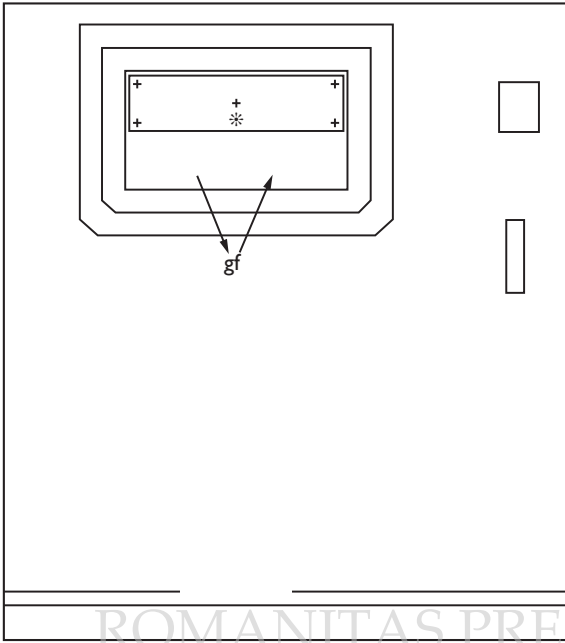


Fig. 3.  
**Combining genuflections:** if a genuflection needs to be made for leaving or accessing the predella, as well as for crossing the center, these genuflections are simply combined into one.

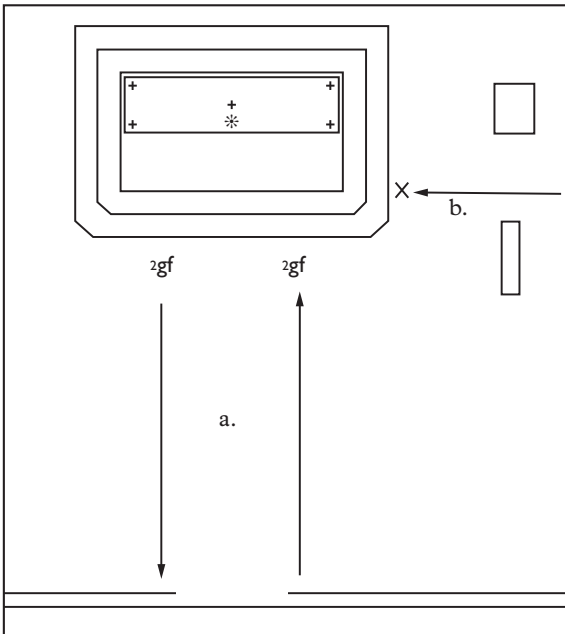


Fig. 4.  
**Approaching or leaving the view of the altar:** make a double-knee genuflection in either case as shown in figure a. In figure b, if where you would genuflect is the same where you would kneel (in this case *in plano*), then simply kneel in that place.





# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

To aid the reader, a few terms used within this booklet have been briefly explained. The following works are suggested for further reading on the proper construction of a church, altar and various other appointments in the sanctuary.

*The Liturgical Altar*; Geoffrey Webb (Newman Press, 1949 — Romanitas Press, 2010)

*Churches, Their Plan and Furnishings*; Peter Anson (Bruce, 1948)

*Church Buildings and Furnishings*; J.B. O'Connell (University of Notre Dame Press, 1955)

## ROMANITAS PRESS SANCTUARY-RELATED

**ALTAR** — There are two types: *fixed* and *moveable*. A *fixed* altar is constructed of stone and can be solemnly consecrated by anointing it and enclosing relics within a sepulcher (or under the mensa). A *moveable* altar is merely a form that holds an altar stone (placed in the mensa, but not permanently), which is the actual altar. After the Blessed Sacrament, the altar is the most sacred object in a church, for as the *Pontificale Romanum* states during the ordination of a subdeacon, the altar *is Christ* in a very symbolic manner.

**ALTAR CLOTHS** — the rubrics prescribed three cloths made of linen, of which at least one must cover the altar's mensa and sides to the floor (*i.e.*, barely touching the predella).

**ALTAR CROSS** — liturgical law prescribes a cross with a corpus (either suffering or in glory, but *always* marked with the sacred wounds) that may be placed either directly on the altar (the preferred method, as this signifies the union of the cross with the altar of sacrifice), attached to the posterior of the altar by means of a bracket, or suspended above the altar (either from the canopy or the reredos). It should be the principal object either on the altar itself, or within the celebrant's line of sight.

**AMBO** — a fixed lectern in the shape of the present-day pulpit (which is actually derived from the ancient ambo), raised on a platform or atop a rood screen. A common arrangement was to have a pair of ambos, one occupying a place on the Epistle side and the other on the Gospel. These also usually faced the nave, because their purpose was to enable the faithful to clearly hear the chanting of the Epistle and Gospel. Many examples of ambos still exist in various churches in Italy, particularly St. Clement's Basilica in Rome, the cathedral of Milan (where the Ambrosian Rite is observed), and St. Mark's Basilica in Venice.

**CHALICE** — a goblet-shaped cup used for holding the Precious Blood, consisting of a foot (or base), a node (a decorative knob that practically allows the celebrant to properly hold the chalice with his joined fingers) and cup, which its interior must be gilded. Consecrated as a sacred vessel, liturgical law does not allow for its handling by laymen unless delegated to do so (and in its *purified state only*), either in performing sacristy work or during the ceremonies if chalice or ciborium must be removed from the altar (*e.g.*, in preparation for a ceremony that takes place after the Mass).

CHANCEL (choir, *presbyterium*) — the portion of the sanctuary that contains the stalls where the clergy in choir are arranged when assisting at the ceremonies. This is also the proper location for a liturgical schola (*i.e.*, men and boys vested in cassock and surplice). Most parish churches in the United States do not possess a chancel, though in England, this is common in even the smallest of chapels, if only large enough to accommodate a kneeler.

CHOIR (*schola*) — the body of clergy or laymen who fulfill the liturgical office of singing the propers and leading the faithful in the ordinary of the Mass.

CIBORIUM — This refers to the covered sacred vessel used for holding the consecrated Hosts. When consecrated Hosts are in the covered ciborium it must be veiled (but not during distribution of Holy Communion and even minor exposition) and may not be handled by inferior ministers. When containing unconsecrated hosts or having just been *purified* however, it may be handled by inferior ministers with their bare hands (*i.e.*, they are not required to carry it by the veil or with gloved hands), albeit not without good cause (*Matters Liturgical* by Wuest, Mullaney and Barry [Pustet, 1956], p. 102). The term *ciborium*, architecturally refers to a columned altar canopy (often mistakenly called a *baldachino*, which actually refers to a cloth canopy).

CREDENCE (*abacus*) — the table or alcove used for holding the various items that are not placed on the altar when not they are not being used (*e.g.*, the cruets, altar bell, Communion plate). Considered an extension of the altar, it should be covered with linen.

COMMUNION CLOTH — the linen cloth that is still prescribed in conjunction with the Communion

plate to cover the top of the Communion rail during the distribution of Holy Communion (*C.E.* II, C. XXIX, n. 3, M.R., *Rit. Serv.*, X, 6 [pre-1960 edition], *Rituale Romanum*, V, C. II AD 1; Instruction of the Congregation of the Sacraments; March 26, 1929 ad III, n. 5; and *Matters Liturgical*, pp. 234-235). It takes the place of the corporal (always used in connection with the Sacred Species) and is an extension of the altar cloth, because the rail itself is considered to be an extension of the table of the altar from which the communicants derive the Bread of Angels. The faithful should not place their hands under the cloth (*cf. Matters Liturgical*, p. 234), as this is not only contrary to the ancient law regarding the Communion cloth, but would cause it to become soiled.

COMMUNION RAIL (altar rail) — derived from the ancient fixture of the rood screen, it now generally comprises of a low rail at the farthest perimeter of the sanctuary, thereby separating its ambit from the nave. The rail has a opening in the center (often equipped with a gate) which is large enough for at least two ministers to walk through abreast.

COMMUNION PLATE — a gilded plate equipped with a handle. It is held under the chins of the communicants by a server during Low and High Mass (during Solemn and Pontifical Mass, the plate is replaced by the actual paten held by the deacon). Its use was prescribed in conjunction with the Communion cloth during the distribution of Holy Communion in 1929 (*Matters Liturgical*, pp. 170-171 and 234-235).

CONOPAEUM [cohn-noh-peh-oom] — the proper form of the *tabernacle veil* which envelopes the entire tab-

ernacle (which is assumed to be freestanding). This Greek word refers to the *mosquito netting* used in the ancient Near East to envelope a bed. It is the tabernacle veil that first and foremost testifies to the fact that the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, since a sanctuary lamp can be used for a variety of purposes (*e.g.*, a major altar or relics).

**CORPORAL** — the square piece of linen always used in connection with the Sacred Species and a relic of the Passion. Its original form was that of a short altar cloth (which was actually used to cover the chalice assembly at the altar), but over time it was reduced in size, enough to accommodate the paten and chalice. When not in use during the ceremonies it is specially folded four times and stored in a burse. A layman is prohibited from unfolding the corporal *in actu functionis* (one must be at least a tonsured cleric to perform this action, *cf.* J.B. O’Connell, pp. 565 and 567), though *ex actu functionis* it may be necessary in the course of sacristy work (*e.g.*, setting up the chalice on the altar before a High Mass).

**EPISTLE SIDE** — from the corpus on the cross (which normally faces the nave), the *left side* of the sanctuary, or the side from where the Epistle is read.

**FALDSTOOL** (*faldistorium*) — a folding chair used in pontifical functions on certain occasions in place of the throne.

**GOSPEL SIDE** — from the corpus on the cross (which normally faces the nave), the *right side* of the sanctuary, or the side from where the Gospel is read. In a properly orientated church, this side faces north.

**LOW MASS** (*missa privatis*) — this form is used for “private Masses” said by a celebrant and a server,

though for public Masses, a second server may be employed. A pontifical form of this rite also exists which can include two to four chaplains. Another parochial form is the Dialogue Mass (*missa recita*) wherein the faithful make the various responses with the server and even with the celebrant depending on the circumstances.

**HIGH MASS** — in the 1960 missal rubrics, the term *missa cantata* is used solely to refer to this form of sung Mass that includes the use of incense. This hybrid form can have many adaptations, the best of which is an abbreviation of Solemn Mass without the deacon and subdeacon. Other sung adaptations that have one or two servers and include the ordinary or propers or just the use of hymns, but omit the use of incense, is now simply called a sung Low Mass.

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**SOLEMN MASS** — this is the normal liturgical form, which in addition to the celebrant, there is a deacon and subdeacon. It is actually an abbreviated form of the Pontifical Mass.

**PONTIFICAL MASS** — this is the highest form of the liturgical rite of Mass. Celebrated by a bishop, various other ministers are added to the ministers of Solemn Mass (*e.g.*, an assistant priest, two assistant deacons and four special ministers to the bishop called *cappellani*, who bear the mitre, pastoral staff, book and hand candle). Two variations of Pontifical Mass exist: a) at the throne, and b) at the faldstool (this omitting some ministers) which are used depending on various circumstances. The Papal Mass is an ancient form and even further elaboration of the Pontifical Mass.

**HOLY WEEK** (*Hebdomada Sancta*) — the period from Palm Sunday (*Dominica II Passionis*) inclusive to the Easter Vigil ceremonies.

**HUMERAL VEIL** — a long, rectangular-shaped vestment that is worn over the shoulders (hence its name) of the subdeacon during Solemn Mass to veil the chalice (when he carries it from the credence to the altar) and the paten (which he holds from the Offertory until the *Libera me*). It is also used at Solemn Mass to veil the chalice assembly on the credence before the Offertory. During Benediction and Eucharistic Processions, the celebrant uses it when holding the monstrance. This is done to hide the celebrant's hands and signify it is Christ Who is giving the blessing, not the priest.

**MENSA** — the table, or flat portion of the altar on which the sacrifice takes place.

**MONSTRANCE** (*ostensorium*) — a sacred vessel used to expose or show (hence the name of the object) the Blessed Sacrament. It consists of a foot, a node (for ease of carrying) and a gilded compartment with a glass face wherein the Blessed Sacrament (contained in a gilded metal and glass watchcase type vessel called a *luna*; though the older form resembled an open, half crescent or moon, hence the name) is placed, and usually surrounded by a sunburst to show the majesty of Christ.

**PERICOPE** — a Greek term that means *a cutting out*, this refers to the selection from sacred scripture used for the Epistle and Gospel.

**PATEN** — a saucer-shaped plate with a slight depression to allow it to sit firmly on the chalice's lip when being carried. This sacred vessel is specially conse-



crated (along with the chalice), and liturgical law requires it to be gilded at least on its top side and prohibits laymen from touching it unless given permission to do so (*e.g.*, as a sacristan).

PREDELLA (*suspendaneum*) — the top altar step, or platform, on which the celebrant stands when at the altar. The British usually refer to this as the *footpace*.

PYX — the small, watchcase-type vessel used for sick calls. Though technically, a pyx is any vessel used to reserve the Blessed Sacrament and is the term most often used within the liturgical books in reference to a ciborium.

SACRED TRIDUUM — the three holiest days of the year that fall during Holy Week, respectively, Holy Thursday (sometimes called Maundy Thursday after the *Mandatum* ceremony, or washing of feet, that takes place on that day), Good Friday and Holy Saturday (or the Easter Vigil).

SEDILIA (*scamnum*) — the bench or stool situated on the Epistle side of the sanctuary that the celebrant and sacred ministers sit upon. This should not have a back (though some rubricians will concede at the very most a *low* back) since this represents the teaching authority of a bishop, and to prevent damage to the vestments. The inferior ministers are prohibited from sitting at the sedilia, but may sit on a separate bench or stool appointed for them (and in some rare cases, even on the altar steps).

TABERNACLE — the fixed, lockable vessel used to reserve the Blessed Sacrament in a secured location. It is made of metal, though sometimes clad in stone, its door should be gilded (and its respective key) as well as its interior (or at least lined in silk), and a

corporal must line the bottom of the interior. On Holy Thursday, a portable (temporary) tabernacle is often used at the altar of repose, or even a decorative metal safe, both of which are often called the *repositor*. In a church, chapel or oratory, the tabernacle should be situated on the high altar, but in a cathedral (per the *C.E.*), the Blessed Sacrament should not be reserved on the high altar, but in a tabernacle on an altar in a specially-appointed chapel.

**THRONE** (*cathedra*) — the high-backed chair for a bishop. It should have a canopy and may be placed on a dais, so long as the top step is not higher or equal to the altar's predella.

**VIMPA** (plural *vimpae*) — A scarf-like veil used by the ministers who bear the bishop's mitre and pastoral staff during pontifical functions. Often an humeral veil is used as a vimpa, or the vimpa has been made like a humeral veil.

### **RUBRICALLY-RELATED**

*Accessus* [ah-chehs-soos] — a reference to accessing the altar, or whenever one approaches the altar from a point outside its view.

*A fortiori* [ah-fohr-tsee-ohr-ee] — *even more so*, used to add emphasis or force to the statement.

*In actu functionis* [een ahk-too foonk-tsee-oh-nees] — *in the act of the function*.

*Coram Sanctissimo* [koh-rahm sahnk-tees-see-moh] — translated as *in the presence of the Most Holy*, this phrase refers to the condition of when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed.

## General Principles

*In plano* [een plah-noh] — *on the floor* of the sanctuary.

*Ratione accommodationis* [rah-tsee-oh-neh ah-kohm-moh-dah-tsee-oh-nees] — *by reason of accommodation.*

*Ex actu functionis* [Ehks ahk-too foonk-tsee-oh-nees] — *outside the act of a function.*

*Per brevior* [pehr breh-vee-ohr-ehm] — *meaning by the short way.*

*Per longior* [pehr loh-gee-ohr-ehm] — *meaning by the long way.*

*Recta linea* [rehk-tah leen-eh-ah] — *meaning in a straight line.*

*Solita oscula* [soh-lee-tah ohs-koo-lah] — *with the customary kisses.*

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# LEARN THE LITURGICAL RULES OF THE ROAD!

This manual systematical outlines the general principles of the Roman Rite as they apply to altar servers (inferior ministers). It is also an instructive guide for any Catholic who wishes to better understand the ceremonial actions.

The general principles are the foundation for all rubrics of the Roman Rite which regulate the types of reverences and gestures, the reasons why they are made, and how under certain conditions. Even more profoundly, it is through these principles that the unique character of *Romanitas* is impressed upon its namesake liturgical rite.

Upon systematically learning these principles, the reader will have the distinct advantage of never being at a loss during a ceremony (or practice in preparation) of when to bow or genuflect and of what kind. This is particularly valuable, as most rubrical manuals presume the reader is already acquainted with these basic, but often subtle rules.

Experience in teaching ceremonies has shown that the easiest approach to a new ceremony is through its principles. Mastering the principles of a ceremony is not only the easiest way to learn one ceremony, but it also makes the mastery of that ceremony the preparation for learning others. (Very Rev. Lawrence O'Connell, *The Book of Ceremonies*).