



# NewsLetter

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## **Status of the *Order of Celebrating Matrimony, Second Edition***

The Secretariat of Divine Worship has recently received a number of inquiries about the status of the revisions to the Marriage rite from publishers, diocesan offices of worship, and from liturgical scholars and catechists. The Latin Church Bishops of the USCCB approved the English translation of the *Order of Celebrating Matrimony, Second Edition* in November 2013. Subsequently, the provisional text was sent to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments for the *recognitio* which is required before any new liturgical text can be published and used in the dioceses of the United States.

It was the Secretariat's hope that the necessary confirmation from the Holy See would have arrived sometime in 2014. To date, the *recognitio* has not been received. Reasons for this are speculative, but the longer-than-expected time taken for review is due at least in part to the Congregation's desire to wait for the submission of texts from other English-speaking Conferences of Bishops in order to evaluate them at the same time. Regrettably, there is no way to determine exactly when the approval will arrive.

In early 2014, in anticipation of the revised text, the Secretariat of Divine Worship, in close collaboration with the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions (FDLC), began detailed planning of a series of regional workshops designed to familiarize liturgical leaders and instructors from across the country in the new features of the rite, with an eye toward a general renewal of the appreciation and appropriate celebration of the Sacrament. The provisional text is being carefully studied in preparation for these workshops. Once the official text has been approved and is ready for publication, the details of the contents of these regional workshops will be finalized, and dates and places for them will be determined and announced through the FDLC. While it was necessary to postpone some previously announced workshops for the first half of 2015 because of the uncertainties of the approval of the text, Rita A. Thiron, FDLC Executive Director, assured the FDLC membership that the significant work already put into these workshops will bear fruit, and that "these workshops will go on" as soon as an officially approved text is available.

In addition to the *Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, the Secretariat of Divine Worship is also awaiting confirmation of two other liturgical texts submitted to the Congregation in early 2014, namely a revised translation of the *Order of Confirmation*, as well as the *Misal Romano, Tercera Edición*, which will serve as the official Spanish-language *Roman Missal* for use in the United States. Moreover, at the November 2014 USCCB plenary meeting, the Bishops approved several additional revisions of liturgical texts, namely the *Order of the Dedication of a Church and an Altar, Exorcisms and Related Supplications*, as well as a supplement to the *Liturgy of the Hours* which

will provide texts for recent additions to the General Roman Calendar, and certain modifications to the Revised Grail Psalter. The Secretariat is in the process of preparing these additional four texts for submission to the Holy See in the near future for the necessary confirmation.

The Secretariat is committed to communicating new developments on the *Order of Celebrating Matrimony* and on all the texts mentioned above as information becomes available, through the *Newsletter* and with the assistance of the FDLC.

## **The Role of Lay Ministers in the Liturgical Life of the Church**

“Servers, lectors, commentators, and members of the choir also exercise a genuine liturgical function. They ought, therefore, to discharge their office with the sincere piety and decorum demanded by so exalted a ministry and rightly expected of them by God’s people. Consequently, they must all be deeply imbued with the spirit of the liturgy, each in his own measure, and they must be trained to perform their functions in a correct and orderly manner” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 29). While all members of the faithful truly participate in the liturgy in an important variety of ways, including participation in responses, acclamations, dialogues, and litanies, by attentive listening to the Liturgy of the Word and the presidential prayers, and by joining oneself to the gathered community through song, processions, and common posture and gesture, certain lay men and women fulfill necessary roles to ensure its orderly running. Past issues of the *Newsletter* have treated the role of the deacon in the Church’s liturgical life, as well as of the instituted ministers of lector and acolyte. The series concludes with a brief overview of the varied ways lay men and women participate in specific liturgical ministries.

### **Altar Servers and Readers**

In the absence of instituted acolytes and/or lectors, lay men and women may take on their functions as altar servers and readers. Altar servers assist the priest and deacon; they “carry the cross, the candles, the thurible, the bread, the wine, and the water,” and some may even be deputed as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal* [GIRM], no. 100). Likewise, lay readers who are “truly suited... and carefully prepared” proclaim the word of God to the gathered assembly (GIRM, no. 101). Readers are encouraged to continually meditate on Sacred Scripture, so that their faithful proclamation of the readings at Mass will in turn inspire the faithful to turn to God through his word.

### **Psalmist**

Within the music ministry of a parish, a psalmist is the “cantor of the psalm” that occurs after the First Reading. He or she must carefully meditate on the Psalms and be able to sing them “with clarity, conviction, and sensitivity to the text, the musical setting, and those who are listening.” When necessary, the psalmist may also sing the Gospel acclamation and verse (*Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship* [STL], nos. 34-35; see GIRM, no. 102).

In current practice, it is usually the cantor who also assumes the duties of the psalmist. Nonetheless, it may be useful for parish choirs to have one of its members devote himself or herself to contemplating the literary, theological, and musical aspects of the Psalms, in order to truly bring out the beauty of those texts to the gathered faithful at Mass. The psalmist may also be useful at other liturgical celebrations, including the Liturgy of the Hours or other rites.

### **Choir, Pastoral Musicians, and Cantor**

“Among the faithful, the *schola cantorum* or choir exercises its own liturgical function, its place being to take care that the parts proper to it, in keeping with the different genres of chant, are properly carried out and to foster the active participation of the faithful by means of the singing” (GIRM, no. 103). The USCCB’s guidelines on liturgical music provide additional clarity on the choir’s supporting role:

The choir must not minimize the musical participation of the faithful. The congregation commonly sings unison melodies, which are more suitable for generally unrehearsed community singing. This is the primary song of the Liturgy. Choirs and ensembles, on the other hand, comprise persons drawn from the community who possess the requisite musical skills and a commitment to the established schedule of rehearsals and Liturgies. Thus, they are able to enrich

the celebration by adding musical elements beyond the capabilities of the congregation alone. (STL, no. 28)

Liturgical documents during and after the Second Vatican Council affirm the primacy of the gathered faithful in their singing the liturgy. Choirs support the people and give added beauty to liturgical celebrations. When choral pieces are sung, the faithful “unite themselves interiorly to what the ministers or choir sing, so that by listening to them they may raise their minds to God” (*Musicam Sacram*, no. 15). The organist and other instrumentalists likewise assist the choir and the faithful through their respective instruments, “without dominating or overpowering them” (STL, no. 41).

A key member of the choir is the cantor. He or she supports the singing done by the faithful, but does not overpower their collective voice, nor that of the choir. In the absence of a choir, the cantor directs the singing of the various hymns and chants, while allowing the people to sing their proper parts as well. He or she may also serve as the psalmist when none is available, as noted above (see GIRM, no. 104; STL, nos. 37-40). The cantor may exercise his or her ministry from a conveniently located stand, but the ambo should only be used by the cantor if leading the singing of the Responsorial Psalm (see GIRM, no. 61; STL, nos. 36 and 40).

### **Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion**

In circumstances where a “truly large number of communicants” is anticipated, and where there are not enough priests or deacons on hand to assist adequately in the distribution of Holy Communion, the priest may call upon instituted acolytes or even other members of the faithful to be deputed for this service (GIRM, no. 162). Under normal circumstances, these extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are selected, trained, and commissioned in accordance with policies of individual dioceses and parishes. In cases of genuine need, however, a priest may even designate such an extraordinary minister for a single occasion. (Appendix III of the *Roman Missal, Third Edition* provides a brief blessing to be used in these circumstances.)

The need for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion tends to be more pronounced in communities where Communion is shared under both species with the faithful. The 2002 document *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America* adds some helpful language on this ministry: “Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should receive sufficient spiritual, theological, and practical preparation to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence” (no. 28). Finally, “[i]n all matters such Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should follow the guidance of the Diocesan Bishop” (*ibid.*).

### **Sacristan**

The sacristan is a lay person who “diligently arranges the liturgical books, the vestments, and other things that are necessary for the celebration of Mass” (GIRM, no. 105a). Working from the sacristy, he or she should be well-trained in the complexities of the liturgical actions, as well as those of special Masses or those of greater solemnity, so as to make appropriate provisions.

Some parishes organize the sacristans and their assistants into “altar societies.” These groups are dedicated to the maintenance of the vestments, altar linens, and sacred vessels; they also occasionally help the parish in making or purchasing replacements.

### **Commentator**

Although not in common use in most communities of the United States, another liturgical role that exists is the commentator. He or she “provides the faithful briefly with explanations and exhortations so as to direct their attention to the celebration and ensure that they are better disposed for understanding it. The commentator’s remarks should be thoroughly prepared and notable for their restraint. In performing this function the commentator stands in a suitable place within sight of the faithful, but not at the ambo” (GIRM, no. 105b). In many parishes, the reader carries out the functions of the commentator, particularly with making necessary announcements before the final blessing and dismissal.

Strong liturgical catechesis over the past number of years has allowed the faithful to understand and appreciate the various parts of the ritual actions. In addition, well-prepared booklets of the Mass have become an appropriate substitute for the commentator. Nonetheless, there may be rare occasions when a commentator may be called for, such as the dedication of a church, or an ordination rite that occurs at a church or chapel other than the cathedral.

### **Ushers, Greeters, and Collections Staff**

“A liturgical function is also exercised by... [t]hose who take up the collections in the church; [t]hose who, in some regions, welcome the faithful at the church doors, seat them appropriately, and marshal them in processions” (GIRM, no. 105c-d). As the priest and other ministers prepare for Mass in the sacristy, lay persons have a valuable role to play in welcoming their brothers and sisters to the church and ensuring that all have a place to sit. These apostolates are related to hospitality, an important aspect of the New Evangelization.

### **Master of Ceremonies**

Finally, in cathedrals and some larger churches, “[i]t is desirable... to have some competent minister or master of ceremonies, to see to the appropriate arrangement of sacred actions and to their being carried out by the sacred ministers and lay faithful with decorum, order, and devotion” (GIRM, no. 106). Indeed, in any church where the solemnity of the occasion warrants it (for example, during the Sacred Paschal Triduum), a well-trained master of ceremonies can bring the benefits of expertise and preparation to any liturgy, especially one which may be more complex. The master of ceremonies should not perform the functions designated to other ministers, nor should he or she become a distracting presence in the liturgical action. An effective master of ceremonies will see to the correct and orderly flow of the liturgy by assisting the other ministers in the execution of their designated liturgical functions.

## **The Process of Designating a National Shrine in the United States**

Since 2007, the Committee on Divine Worship has exercised oversight over the designation of National Shrines in the United States. The *Norms for the Designation of National Shrines*, approved by the then-NCCB in 1992 (and available at [www.USCCB.org/about/divine-worship/policies/norms-for-national-shrines.cfm](http://www.USCCB.org/about/divine-worship/policies/norms-for-national-shrines.cfm)), provides the regulations and procedures that prospective applicant shrines follow in requesting National Shrine status. A brief overview of the process and timeline may be helpful to prospective applicants. As always, the Secretariat of Divine Worship is available to answer additional questions and assist shrine applicants through the process.

### **Shrine Applicant**

The application process for a shrine seeking National Shrine designation may be led either by the diocese or by the shrine itself; in any event, the diocesan bishop must consent to beginning an application for any shrine in his territory and should be involved throughout the process. An application form from the Secretariat of Divine Worship is requested and received for the shrine applicant to complete, and the requisite documentation is assembled, following the *Norms for the Designation of National Shrines*. A *votum* of the bishops of the relevant ecclesiastical province is also conducted by the shrine to gauge their support. The completed application is submitted to the Secretariat.

### **Committee on Divine Worship**

1. *Initial Review* – The staff of the Secretariat for Divine Worship undertakes a first review of the shrine’s application and prepares its recommendation to the Committee.
2. *First Meeting* – At the first meeting after the shrine’s application is submitted (June or November), the Committee reviews its contents, along with the Secretariat’s recommendation, and decides whether to reject the application or continue to the next stage.
3. *Site Visit* – If the Committee responds affirmatively to the application, one of its members makes a site visit to the shrine applicant to determine its fidelity to the *Norms* and its worthiness to become a National Shrine.
4. *Final Meeting* – The Committee members receive the site visit report from the Bishop who visited the shrine (June or November after the site visit), and makes a decision whether to reject the application or recommend the shrine to the Administrative Committee for final approval.

### **Administrative Committee**

If recommended by the Committee on Divine Worship, the shrine’s application is presented to the USCCB Administrative Committee at its first available meeting (March or September). After a discussion period, the Committee makes its final vote. In the case of approval, a formal decree is drawn up and mailed to the new National Shrine. The entire process, if ultimately successful, lasts approximately one to two years.