

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF PALO

Pastoral Action Secretariate (PAS)

Commission on Worship (cw)

**GUIDELINES FOR THE LAY LITURGICAL MINISTRY**

A. NATURE and COMPOSITION

B. FUNCTIONS

1. Lectors/Readers
2. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
3. Sacristans
4. Altar Servers
5. Choir, Cantors, Psalmists
6. Commentators
7. Collectors and Ushers
8. Other Persons who may be involved in the Liturgy

C. QUALIFICATIONS

D. DECORUM and DISCIPLINE

E. TENURE OF SERVICE

F. ON-GOING FORMATION

G. SANCTIONS

A. NATURE AND COMPOSITION

1. "Lay liturgical ministry" pertains to the service and assistance which certain non-ordained members of the Church render in the context of her public worship. By means of this new kind of collaboration the laity comes to actively participate in a more specific way in the life and mission of the Church. At the same time, the lay faithful thus render the necessary help to the fulfillment of the pastoral duties of the ordained ministry, especially the sacred ministry of priests. Indeed, "The hierarchy entrusts the laity with certain charges more closely connected with the duties of pastors: in the teaching of Christian doctrine, for example, in certain liturgical actions in the care of souls" (Vat II, *Apost. Act.*, 24).
2. The lay liturgical ministry is founded on the sacrament of baptism. It is not a substitute to the ordained ministry but a collaborative apostolate.

B. FUNCTIONS

An important principle in the exercise of any liturgical ministry comes from the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (no. 91): "in liturgical celebrations, every minister should carry out all and only those parts which pertain to his office by the nature of the rite and the norms of the liturgy". The actual functions of each of the following ministries are governed by several official documents of the Church, notably: CDWDS, Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (RS) (2004), The

Roman Missal (*Editio typica tertia* 2000) with its General Instruction (GIRM) and the General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours (GILH) and the General Instructions contained in the Roman Lectionary (IRM) Only the more relevant general norms are indicated below.

1. Lectors / Readers (PARAGBASA / MAGBASA)

- a) They are charged with proclaiming the scriptural readings before the Gospel at Mass (cf. GIRM 99, 101). The Book of Readings (Lectionary) is their main responsibility. They see to it that it is prepared, if possible on the ambo, before Mass begins. At more solemn Masses they may be asked to carry the Book of the Gospels (not the Lectionary) in the procession to the altar.
- b) In the absence of a Psalmist/Cantor, they may also proclaim the Responsorial Psalm as well as announce the intentions of the Prayer of the Faithful (Intercessions) in the absence of a deacon. In the absence of a Commentator, they may also read the introductions both for the Mass as well as for the readings.
- c) They may also read the Entrance and the Communion Antiphons indicated in the Roman Missal in cases when there is no hymn during the entrance or at communion time.
- d) In carrying their sacred function of proclaiming the Word, it is mandatory that they use the appropriate readings of the celebration from the liturgical books so approved for by the Commission on Worship and not from any manuscripts or cheaply reproduced materials like a missalette.
- e) Lectors in Barangay/Sitio/District chapels should see to it that they carry out their functions in like manner that these are done in the parish church. They should also be required to attend seminars and workshops in order to improve the performance of their duties.
- f) Excellent readers in English may not necessarily be good enough in the vernacular and vice versa. Enough attention therefore should be given to the making of schedule of the lectors especially in parish churches where these textual variations are presumed.
- g) On special occasions, like baccalaureate masses, weddings, funerals and the like, a special reader may temporarily be deputed (cf. GIRM 101, 107). But he or she must observe the prescribed norms of RCAP and must undergo a special briefing before the particular celebration.

2. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) (PARAGPAKOMULGA / MAGPAKOMUNYON)

- a) They are tasked with helping priests and deacons (who are ordinary ministers of Holy Communion) in distributing communion to the faithful. In the absence of a deacon they may also be asked to administer the chalice to communicants (cf. GIRM 98, 100).
- b) During holy communion, the faithful generally receive the hosts consecrated at that particular mass (cf. GIRM 85; RS 89). Additional consecrated hosts may be needed but these are normally taken by the priest or deacon from the tabernacle; the EMHC should receive holy communion from the priest or ordained minister and should wait for the priest to hand him the vessel (ciborium) containing the consecrated hosts to be distributed for holy communion. The guidelines concerning the recep-

tion of Holy Communion by the Laity must be observed: Communion is to be received only once, except in circumstances permitted by law (cf CIC 917).

- c) The “extraordinary” nature of their ministry does not allow the EMHC to help in distributing communion when a sufficient number of “Ordinary Ministers” are present. (cf. RS 157).
- d) This ministry is generally but not exclusively exercised during Mass. Thus, EMHC may be tasked with distributing Holy Communion to sick parishioners or to the faithful who come for the Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest.
- e) They may also be commissioned, when necessary, to preside over the Sunday Liturgy in the Absence of a Priest.
- f) If no Lector is available, the Mass readings may be assigned to the EMHC. They can likewise assume the functions of the Mass Servers if these are unavailable.

### 3. Sacristan (SAKRISTAN)

- a) A good sacristan is a great asset to any parish and thus fulfilling a true liturgical function; he or she works with the parish priest in making sure that all the requisites for the celebration of the Mass and other sacraments are in order (cf. GIRM 319-351).. Care for the order, adornment and decor of a church should be such as to make the church a visible sign of love and reverence toward God.
- b) The sacristan, always under the general direction of the clergy, undertakes the overall preparation of liturgical celebrations. He or she arranges the books needed for the celebration, marking all of the divisions, lays out the vestments and anything else needed for the celebration, such as cruets, chalices, ciboria, linens, oils, processional crosses, candles and torches (cf. GIRM 105, a). The sacristan should ensure the observance of silence in the sacristy.
- c) The sacristan takes care of the ringing of bells that announces the celebrations; he or she facilitates in the opening and closing of church doors and makes sure that the church is properly prepared for a particular celebration.
- d) The sacristan makes sure that the vestments, linens, church furnishings, liturgical vessels and decorative objects are kept in good condition and, if necessary, sent for laundry, gilding or repair as the case may be. It is his or her duty to ensure that those assisting in the sacristy handle the vestments, linens, vessels and other implements used for the liturgy with respect and reverence.

### 4. Altar Servers (ALTAR BOYS / PARAGSERBE / MAGSERBI)

- a) Altar servers assist the priest and the deacon during the celebration of the Mass and at other liturgies (cf. GIRM 100). When serving at Mass, they should participate in the eucharistic celebration. Depending on the kind of preparations they have to make in the various parts of the Mass, they should be attentively present from the entrance procession to the recessional.
- b) During the more solemn celebrations of the parish they may be assigned various tasks, such as carrying the usual liturgical instruments at processions and assist with the incensations.
- c) Among the most active of ministers, as befitting their age, they place themselves at the disposition of the parish priest not only in order to serve the parish but also in

order to grow “in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and with people” (Lk 2:52).

#### 5. Choir, Cantors, Psalmists (MGA PARAKANTA / MANGANTA)

- a) Music is essential to the liturgy, and music ministers are important especially during Sundays and the more solemn celebrations of the parish. In general, their role is one of leading and instructing: they lead the singing and they instruct the faithful on what and how to sing during liturgical celebrations.
- b) To promote the active participation of the worshipping community, the *schola cantorum* or Choir, Cantors, and Psalmists should ensure that they carry out their respective liturgical parts in the appropriate manner while also enabling the rest of the congregation to do theirs (cf. GIRM 102-104). This precludes the possibility of one person or group monopolizing the singing and chanting.
- c) With the “gift of music” that they have received, they help enhance the parish liturgy by training the community to make music together, to respond in chant and song, and to concretely manifest the adage that “he who sings well prays twice”. However, they should also be aware that the principle of “progressive solemnity” applies in all liturgical celebrations (cf. GILH 273).
- d) It is especially preferable that Psalmists be singers of exceptional quality (tenor or soprano), capable of moving and inspiring the congregation.
- e) The parish music ministry need to practice regularly and immerse themselves more deeply into the musical tradition of the Church and become promoters of the beauty and rich diversity of her liturgical music. Their training should help them achieve a certain musical proficiency, and their formation, christian maturity.
- f) Choirs who sing regularly at parish masses should be duly accredited by the Committee on Music under the Parish Commission on Worship. From time to time, these choirs will have to be evaluated as to their adherence to the liturgical norms and parish directives.

#### 6. Commentators

- a) The commentator is tasked with assisting the worshipping congregation especially during the more solemn eucharistic celebrations of the parish. Their particular ministry is exercised in a podium or a location other than the lectern used for the scriptural readings.
- b) Part of the commentators’ duties include the brief introduction of the Mass or of its parts or elements (e.g. brief introduction to the readings), giving necessary instructions to the faithful for a more dignified celebration of the liturgy, providing brief explanations during particular occasions (cf. GIRM 105, b). They may also be tasked with making the announcements at the end of the Mass, after the Post-communion Prayer.
- c) Their duties do not include leading the singing or using the microphone to recite the parts of the Mass which properly belong to the people.

## 7. Collectors and Ushers

- a) It is the duty of Collectors to take up the monetary offerings of the faithful (cf. GIRM 105, c) and bring them up during the offertory procession, or during an opportune time before communion, e.g. during the Our Father. They may also be tasked to take up a second collection after communion. In the Sunday Liturgy in the Absence of a Priest, such a collection is taken up after communion.
- b) Ushers are particularly called for in important celebrations which involve a large numbers of people. They are “ministers of hospitality,” welcoming people as they enter the church and helping them to their appropriate place in the assembly (cf GIRM 105, d).

## 8. Other persons who may be involved in the liturgy

- a) Pastors should see to it that church decorators and those in charge of the liturgical environment should undergo a basic orientation on their liturgical tasks. They may form a parish committee who will ensure the implementation of this directive.
- b) b. Pastors should also work with wedding coordinators and photographers so that they should have a proper understanding of the liturgy or the particular liturgical celebration they are involved in.

## C. QUALIFICATIONS

1. Only a Roman Catholic can be admitted to the lay liturgical ministry in the Church. In addition, one is required to submit an application letter to the parish priest and comply with the general requirements of the particular ministries indicated below, as well as the specific requirements which may be asked by the parish.
2. The admission of applicants as well as the specifics of their respective duties and responsibilities, training and formation, is under the care of the parish priest and the parish Commission on Worship of which he is the head. The parish commission may form committees which will oversee the different aspects of the lay ministry, such as admission, training, planning, evaluation, and discipline.
3. Lay liturgical ministers should be adequately trained and be able to work together as a coordinated body. Each ministry necessitates a theoretical-practical training program. Each batch of applicants is thus required to undergo the Basic Orientation Seminar for Lay Liturgical Ministers designed by the Archdiocesan Commission on Worship and set up at the parish or the vicariate level. Lay ministers who have already been commissioned are required to participate in the on-going formation program of the parish or the vicariate before they can be re-commissioned for another year of service.
4. Since service in the Church necessarily includes an on-going spiritual - moral formation program, the same applicants are likewise required to spend a day or two in prayer and recollection before they can be commissioned, and to participate as well in the regular days of prayer and recollection.

5. The various Lay liturgical ministries differ in some of their requirements. The discipline of the Archdiocese of Palo requires that Lectors/Readers be at least 15 years old. And only men who have reached 21 years of age can become Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. Presiders at Sunday Service in the absence of a priest should at least be 26 years old and have finished secondary education. Altar servers should have at least received First Holy Communion. The age requirements for the other ministries is decided on the parish level. The acceptance of candidates who are over 65 years old is left to the judgment of the parish priest (and the Parish Commission on Worship).

#### D. DECORUM AND DISCIPLINE

1. Lay liturgical ministers are to use distinctive and officially approved (by the Bishops' Conference) apparel during liturgical celebrations. Liturgical garb is both functional and symbolic; it helps to distinguish the various ministries as well as lend certain dignity to the ministry and to the celebration itself. However, those who are not exercising their function on a particular celebration should not wear it.
2. Lectors, Commentators, and Altar Servers put on vestments over formal and decent attire. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, on the other hand, are asked to wear white long sleeved shirt or *barong* and black pants. Collectors should wear a proper uniform preferably white. EMHC are to wear black leather shoes; female ministers have the option of wearing sandals of the same material and color. Except for the Altar Servers, collectors and choir members, all ministers are to wear the scapular of the proper color and design as determined by Church law and tradition, and local directives.
3. Liturgical ministries are best performed with personal attention and devotion. The exercise of one's ministry should be characterized with great reverence and respect for the solemn divine activity in which the minister participates. One helpful way is to set aside the time immediately before and after the celebration for personal preparation and thanksgiving.
4. In order to maintain the solemnity of any celebration, lay ministers should refrain from conduct which may distract the worshipping congregation. These include restless and constant movement, conversing with seatmates, unnecessary motions, leaving and entering the sanctuary without sufficient reason. A dignified and ministerial composure is called for both by their office as well as by the celebration on hand; this includes the proper exercise of the necessary movements and gestures at Mass, such as bowing before the altar and genuflecting before the Most Blessed Sacrament, whether exposed or reserved in the tabernacle (cf. GIRM 274).
5. To ensure fidelity and obedience to the sacred tradition of the Church, every lay minister should assume a properly ecclesiastical attitude. This is shown, for example, by one's humble submission to the parish priest or his delegate(s) in matters related to the ministry. The same attitude is also demonstrated in the ministers' obedience to all official teachings of the Church.

## E. TENURE OF SERVICE

1. Those who have successfully been admitted to the ministries serve their respective parishes and enjoy the good name of the ministry for a duration of one year, that is, from their formal installation or commissioning.
2. Ministers are commissioned to serve a particular parish; they should receive formation and get the evaluation from the parish in which they serve. No minister can serve another parish without his or her being commissioned in that other parish even on a temporary basis only.
3. Those who wish to continue in their particular ministry may however renew their pledge of service upon their meritorious evaluation and with the recommendation of the proper committee and/or the parish priest.

## F. ON-GOING FORMATION

1. The liturgical ministry is a privileged way by which a christian grows in the Faith and attains spiritual and moral maturity.
2. Every minister is obliged to participate actively in the annual on-going formation program for Lay Liturgical Ministers which are called for by the parish priest or his delegate in coordination with the Commission on Worship of the parish to which they belong. These are held in the parish, the vicariate, and the archdiocesan levels.
3. On a regular basis, lay ministers should also seek to attend recollections and retreats, the organization of which belongs to the initiative of the parish priest or his delegate(s). These serve as occasions, among other things, for ministers to approach the Sacrament of Penance.

## G. SANCTIONS

1. Every lay liturgical minister who violates, deliberately or otherwise, any of the above norms incurs the burden of a penalty. This calls for a suspension from the ministry, either temporary or permanent, until after the next date of commissioning.
2. To avoid possible abuses of the ministry, those who opt to run for any elected political position in the community are automatically suspended upon filing of candidacy; but the parish priest may advise them to temporarily quit the ministry upon their decision to run for public office. They may be allowed to resume their ministry only after the entire electoral process is deemed through.

**(Sgd) REV. FR. RAYMUND N. MAZO, SThD**  
Chair, Committee on Sacred Music

**(Sgd) REV. FR. ELMO P. MANCHING, MAT**  
Coordinator, Lay Ministry Formation  
Western District, Archdiocese of Palo

**(Sgd) REV. FR. ALVIN B. NICOLASORA, SThL**  
Coordinator, Committee on Liturgical Environment

**(Sgd) REV. FR. REX C. RAMIREZ, SLL**  
Coordinator, Lay Ministry Formation  
Archdiocese of Palo

**(Sgd) REV. FR. GILBERT G. URBINA, SThD, SLL**  
Chair, Worship Commission  
Archdiocese of Palo

**(Sgd) MOST REV. JOHN F. DU, DD**  
Archbishop of Palo