

## **GUIDELINES FOR THE MINISTRIES OF LECTORS, EMEs, ALTAR SERVERS**

September 28, 1994

A Letter from Archbishop Adam Maida . . .

For the past year, the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council and the Council of Vicars have been discussing and reviewing Archdiocesan guidelines for various liturgical ministries. At this time, I am pleased to share with you these revised Archdiocesan Guidelines for the Ministry of Lector and EME, and for Altar Servers. The guidelines are effective immediately.

All three of these ministries are very important parts of our regular liturgical celebrations--whether on weekdays, Sundays or holy days. Because of their importance, it might be timely for your parish Worship Commission to review the educational processes by which your ministers are prepared. If you need special advice in this regard, I encourage you to call our Office of Worship within the Department of Parish Life at (313) 237-5932.

I trust that you will find the attached guidelines represent the fruit of a process of dialogue and that they respect the diversity of our Archdiocese. You will find that they provide you adequate guidance but, at the same time, sufficient flexibility for the exercise of your own pastoral judgment according to the circumstances of your parish or ministry setting.

Wherever I have gone in the Archdiocese in the last four and a half years, I have always been impressed by the depth of faith and enthusiastic participation of our Catholic people in the liturgy. Hopefully, these guidelines will further and deepen appreciation of their involvement in the liturgy.

### **Archdiocesan Guidelines for the Ministry of Lectors and Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist**

1. No one should be commissioned in the ministry of Lector or EME without being fully initiated into the Church and without first having participated in a process of thorough preparation in all aspects of the ministry. In order to ascertain and develop the specific requirements of the ministry and the necessary leadership qualities, this preparatory period would generally be from three to six months in length. At minimum, the following areas should be covered: (1) what is Church; (2) what is Liturgy; (3) understanding the role of Sacred Scripture in the Church; (4) the Liturgy of the Word; (5) the Liturgy of the Eucharist; (6) the Role of the Lector and EME; (7) practicum for the Lector and EME.
2. The minimum age for the commissioning of the ministry of Lector or EME shall be **high school age**. This age should be an assurance of sufficient maturity.

3. No one can be commissioned simultaneously as a Lector and EME. These ministries must be kept distinct and separate. **Moreover, no one should exercise both ministries at the same Eucharistic liturgy.**

4. After the commissioning of lay ministers has been celebrated, a formal certificate from the Office of Christian Worship, Department of Parish Life, should be issued to the individual and a register should be kept at the parish with the names of commissioned Lectors and EMEs.

### **Archdiocesan Guidelines for the Ministry of Altar Servers**

1. The Diocesan Bishop may permit the liturgical functions of the instituted acolyte to be carried out by altar servers that include men and women, boys and girls; these functions are listed in No. 68, par. 2 and nos. 142-147 of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. In this Archdiocese, effective immediately, women and girls may function as servers in the liturgy.

2. The term "altar boys" should be replaced by "servers." The term "server" should be used for those who carry out the functions of the instituted acolyte. As with most liturgical ministries, a proper distribution of male and female servers should be the norm, that is, an equal balance of male and female servers at each Mass is the ideal. Certainly, there should be no distinction made between functions carried out by men and boys as contrasted with those carried out by women and girls.

3. Servers should be mature enough to understand their responsibilities and to execute them well and with appropriate reverence. They should have already received First Eucharist and should normally receive the Eucharist when they are participating in the liturgy.

4. Servers should receive proper formation before they begin to function. Their formation should include instruction on the nature of Eucharistic celebration and the various objects used in the liturgy (their names and use), as well as instruction regarding their specific functions. Above all, they must all be deeply imbued with the spirit of the liturgy.

Formation of altar servers should be concerned with more than simply how to do things; it should be as concerned with intention and spiritual disposition as with where to put the cross and when to carry the wine to the altar. Formation of servers must emphasize the sacredness not just of vessels and books, but of the assembly itself. Reverence for the Church which they serve must include a sense of the radical equality of all ministries. All the baptized who gather to worship the Lord stand together as equals unworthy of the ministry which they fulfill, whether it be carrying the book or proclaiming the Gospel.

We must foster in altar servers a love of the liturgy and a deep desire to fully and actively participate in it. Many look to altar servers as an example of "what they're

supposed to do." Thus, like all other liturgical ministers, they sing, respond and engage heart and mind in the actions of the assembly.

5. Since the role of server is integral to the normal celebration of the Mass, at least one server should assist the priest. On Sundays and other more important occasions, two or more servers should be employed to carry out the various functions normally entrusted to these ministers.

6. Servers should normally be vested. This is within the tradition of the Church and prevents difficulties regarding appropriate dress for these ministers. All servers should wear the same liturgical vesture. The question of whether, how and who to vest in our Sunday assemblies is still a question in a state of flux. In those assemblies where ministers are vested one thing is clear: a simple white alb is the best choice for vesture, reflecting the baptismal roots of all ministry. Cassock and surplice, reminiscent of an imitation clerical state, are leftovers from a time when ministry was validated only by clerical association.

7. Servers carry the cross, the processional candles and hold the book for the priest celebrant when he is not at the altar; carry the incense and censer; present the bread, wine and water to the priest during the preparation of the gifts or assist him when he receives the gifts from the people; wash the hands of the priest; and assist the priest celebrant and deacon as necessary.

8. Servers respond to the prayers and dialogue of the priest along with the congregation. They also join in singing the hymns and other chants of the liturgy. The principle of full, active, conscious participation is essential for servers to understand and enact throughout the entire liturgy.

9. Servers should be seated in a place where they can easily assist the priest celebrant and deacon. The place next to the priest is normally reserved for the deacon.

10. Many parishes have families functioning as servers and have found the practice fruitful for enhancing the principle of full, active conscious participation. This may be a time for parishes to consider such a practice.

11. The Order for the Blessing of Altar Servers, Sacristans, Musicians and Ushers (*Book of Blessings*, nos. 1847-1870) may be used before servers first begin to function in this ministry).