

ACOLYTES DURING HIGH MASS (*MISSA CANTATA*)

Those who serve any of these two positions take the place of those who have received the last of the minor orders, that of acolyte. The acolytes at High Mass fulfill many duties, and participate very much in the rich symbolism of the Mass through the enactment of their duties. The acolytes are considered as *inferior ministers*, and so follow those principles that apply to them. For the most part, the positions of the 1st and 2nd acolytes (Ac1 & Ac2) are the same as exercised by Ac1 & Ac2 during Low Mass with some differences. The acolytes are also the direct assistants of the MC, and should assist him coordinating the other various servers' tasks before and after Mass.

The Acolytes must be in the sacristy at least 15 minutes before Mass begins

The acolytes must complete these tasks within the first 5 minutes:

- they should be vested, having said the vesting prayers posted.
- they should attend to the preparations in the sanctuary and at the credence as described on the *Before Mass Preparations* sheet.

General Rules:

- those chosen to serve the position of acolyte at High Mass, should be relatively of the same height.
- Ac1 is usually on the right, and Ac2 is usually on the left.
- Ac1 removes and replaces the missal at the incensations of the altar.
- Ac2 receives the boat at the incensations of the altar (if there is a boatbearer [Bb], he will do this duty instead).
- acolytes turn and make a simple bow towards the altar when required (i.e. when C says or sings something **aloud** that requires a bow); however when sitting (for a word sung by C or the choir), this is done by bowing moderately straight ahead.
- the processional candles are held at the same height by holding the foot of the Candle with the inside hand, and the underside of the node with the outside hand¹, holding the Candle so that the cup is at eye level. The candles should not be held against one's body, but rather slightly away from it. It is important that the candles are held straight and at equal height while walking, turning and switching hands. Practice will enable one to accomplish this with ease. If one of the acolytes happens to be of a shorter stature than the other, they should agree to a height to hold them at that both can do with ease.
- when walking together they do so shoulder to shoulder.
- whenever the acolytes are with the crossbearer (Cb) carrying the cross (i.e. during the *Processional* and *Recessional*), the acolytes do not bow nor genuflect.² If there is not enough room to accommodate both acolytes and Cb, the acolytes should always allow Cb to proceed first, as he is carrying the cross. However, if there is not a Cb, the acolytes will genuflect as usual.
- if the acolytes leave or enter the sanctuary (i.e. to go to the sacristy), they always perform a single knee genuflection at (or within) the doorway³, even after the *Consecration*⁴.

In the sacristy:

When the sanctuary and credence tasks are completed, the acolytes report to the sacristy and then go with the MC to say the *Before Mass Prayers*. After the Guild prayers have been said, these duties are then completed by the acolytes:

- Ac1 correctly lights the High Mass candles on the altar.⁵
- Ac2 lights the processional candles in the sacristy.
- Ac1 & Ac2 then line up in *Processional* formation, on either side of Cb. Ac1 is on the right of Cb and Ac2 is on his left.

¹ A good way to remember this is, "Don't elbow your partner."

² This is a general principle of ceremonies: anyone carrying or accompanying one who is actually carrying Our Lord, or an image of Our Lord (i.e., the cross, the Gospel opened, the Christ Child, etc.) does not make any form or reverence. Cf. L. O'Connell, *The Handbook of Ceremonies*, 1958; pg. 229, ff. 46, J. B. O'Connell, *The Celebration of Mass*, 1962; pg. 462, Fortescue, 1962; pg. 104.

³ In some Sanctuaries, it may be necessary for the acolyte to depart via the Communion Rail Gate. If this is the case, they proceed to the foot, genuflect, turn right and then proceed out. The same is repeated upon returning into the sanctuary.

⁴ SRC 4135, 3., cf. L. O'Connell, pg. 38, ff. 18,d. The Blessed Sacrament is not considered exposed to the *inferior ministers* who are *in plano*.

⁵ The Epistle-side is always lighted first, and extinguished last. The candle nearest the tabernacle is always lighted first, and extinguished last. An easy way to remember this is: The light of Christ radiates *from the tabernacle*. Ac1 must be very careful not to drip wax or worse, a burning particle of taper onto the altar cloths. To do this, Ac1 should always pass the candlelighter *around* the altar and *over* the gradine; *never* over the altar cloths.

The Processional:

-when C has finished vesting, the MC will signal, and all of the other servers (the acolytes and Cb do not) will turn to bow to the cross.⁶ At the same time the MC will say, "*Procedamus in pace,*" to which C and all of the servers reply, "*In Nomine Christi, Amen.*"

-the acolytes and Cb turn inwards (Ac2, Cb turn to the right and Ac1 to the left), Ac1 & Ac2 then switch sides behind

C and process shoulder to shoulder behind Th at a distance of about 4 pews (about 10 feet).⁷

The Processional continued:

-upon reaching the foot⁸, the acolytes and Cb turn inwards (Ac2 and Cb to their right, and Ac2 to his left),⁹ Ac1 meeting Cb at Ac1's right, and Ac2 meeting Cb at Ac2's left, and then proceed shoulder to shoulder to the credence¹⁰. There they place their candles on the opposite back corners of the credence, then turn inwards and proceed to stand in front of their stools¹¹ with Ac1 on the right and Ac2 on the left. This is the acolytes normal position.

-as soon as the MC arrives at the foot, Ac1 should go to his right side and momentarily await the arrival of C. When C arrives, MC takes the biretta, gives it to Ac1, who then takes it immediately to the sedilla, placing the biretta on the sedilla so that the middle fin is *facing the front edge* of the sedilla and so (if possible) that it is not on the vestments. Ac1 then returns to his position.

During the Asperges:

-the acolytes kneel at the MC's signal (when C kneels).

-the acolytes stand at the MC's signal (after C signs himself¹²).

-when the acolytes are sprinkled by C, they make a simple bow to him and sign themselves with the cross.

-the acolytes turn towards the altar and make a simple bow during the *Gloria Patri*.

-the acolytes turn towards the altar and make a simple bow at *Oremus*.

After the Asperges prayer:

-while the MC and C proceed to the sedilla (to remove the cope and put on the maniple and chasuble), Ac1 goes to the sedilla, and receives the cope in his outstretched arms (in the receiving position) from the MC.

-Ac1 then takes the cope to the sacristy, genuflecting at the doorway before departing.

-When Ac1 returns, he genuflects again at the doorway and returns to his position.

General actions during Mass:

-the acolytes respond, stand, kneel, sit, turn and bow in unison with the other servers. It is important for the acolytes to remember to perform these actions as a team, and not as individuals.

At the First Incensation of the altar before the Introit:

During the First Incensation, if there is a Bb:

-Bb will take the place of Ac2 for this step. Ac2 will remain at his stool during this time

-after the MC and Th have ascended to the predella, the acolytes proceed to the foot on the Epistle-side of the altar, directly in front of the foot (they are facing across the sanctuary).

-when the MC holds out the boat, both acolytes immediately ascend the steps to the predella; Ac1 picks up the missal and Ac2 takes the boat from the MC, then both turn inwards and descend together to the floor.¹³

⁶ If there is not a Cb, all, including the acolytes, will bow to the sacristy cross instead.

⁷ It is very important that enough room separates Th and the acolyte with Cb, so that they do not have to stop behind Th while he is genuflecting. A procession should move continuously and smoothly.

⁸ The Acs and Cb should stop just in front of the 1st altar step (the foot).

⁹ This sheet assumes that Cb is sitting on the Epistle-side of the sanctuary (cf. J. B. O'Connell, 1962; pg. 462). However, if due to space limitations, Cb must sit on the Gospel-side then the Acs upon arriving at the foot, immediately turn inwards (while Cb waits in the center), meet shoulder to shoulder behind Cb, and then proceed to the credence.

¹⁰ This inward turning action should resemble the opening of a door; it must be executed smoothly and with precision, though with some practice it is quite easy to do. Coordination is the key to performing this action well.

¹¹ The more correct position for the acolytes to stand at is directly in front of the credence. However, it is more often the case, due to space limitations, that the acolytes stand in front of their stools, which are usually placed against the Epistle sanctuary wall, near to or on either side of the credence.

¹² L. O'Connell, pg. 229.

-Ac1 remains at the foot of the Epistle-side of the altar, while Ac2 returns the boat to the credence, and then resumes his normal position in front of his stool.

-after C has incensed the Epistle-side of the altar, Ac1 ascends to the predella, puts the missal carefully back on the corner, facing straight, turns by his right, and then returns to his stool.

Whenever C sits at the sedilla (during the *Gloria*, the chanted *Gradual*, *Alleluia*, etc., the *Credo*:

-whenever C goes to the sedilla to sit, Ac1¹⁴ proceeds to the rear of the sedilla and assists the MC with the chasuble. The chasuble should be draped over the sedilla in such a manner that will not cause damage by folding the appliqué¹⁵.

-after Ac1 has finished assisting with the chasuble, he returns to his stool and then all of the servers sit in unison.¹⁶

-just before C rises (when the MC receives the biretta from C), Ac1 and Ac2 rise with the other servers in unison.

At the *Gospel*:

-when the MC and Th ascend to the altar to have incensed imposed (Ac1 & Ac2 remain at their stools) and C has *begun* to impose incense into the thurible, both acolytes proceed to the credence shoulder to shoulder, pick up their candles, taking care to hold them at the same height, turn inwards and then proceed to their stools, and face across the sanctuary.

-Th will then descend from the predella, placing the boat on the credence (unless there is a Bb), and then Th will lead the acolytes (who are behind Th, shoulder to shoulder) to the center of the foot.

-upon reaching the foot, the acolytes stand shoulder to shoulder behind Th and MC (who has the missal) in a box formation¹⁷ like this:

Th MC
Ac2 Ac1

-on Th's signal, all genuflect in unison, MC ascends with missal to predella, then the acolytes swing like a door, and follow behind Th shoulder to shoulder to the Gospel-side of the altar and stand at the foot in the same box formation again.

-during the *Gospel*, the acolytes neither genuflect nor bow during any of the passage, as they are carrying the candles. The acolytes do not sign themselves with the cross during the *pericope*, nor do they bow with the MC or Th when they incense the celebrant.

-after C has been incensed, Th leads the acolytes back to the center of the foot in the same manner, then all genuflect at MC's signal, and then the acolytes swing like a door and walking shoulder to shoulder, follow behind Th back to the credence, where they place their candles on the corner again, and then return to their positions.

If there is a Sermon:

-when at the center of the foot, the acolytes should not be shoulder to shoulder to allow C to pass between them while going to the pulpit. After C has passed, then the acolytes close up the space between them).

During the *Credo*:

-the acolytes genuflect in unison with C when he is at the altar while saying the *Credo*. They also kneel when the MC signals a kneel for the people (during the sung part)¹⁸ and make a moderate bow at the words, "*Et homo factus est.*"

Offertory (presenting of cruets):

¹³ It is important that both acolytes ascend and descend at the same time, and not rather Ac1 ascending first to retrieve the missal, and then Ac2 to receive the boat. This coordination of action is very conducive to the smoothness and visible dignity of the ceremony.

¹⁴ If space allows behind the sedilla, Ac2 should accompany Ac1 and assist with the Chasuble, rather than the MC performing this task from the side.

¹⁵ It is for this reason and because the privilege of a seat with a back belongs to a Prelate, that the SRC has ruled that high backed chairs should not be used as a sedilla, but rather a bench or stool without a back, or at least a *low* back.

¹⁶ The servers do not bow to the altar, to C nor to other servers before sitting; they simply sit. Servers are not sacred ministers, they are *inferior ministers*, and even the sacred ministers do not bow to the altar, nor to C before sitting, but rather to each other, but *inferior ministers* do not.

¹⁷ Due to the lack of space between the foot and Communion Rail, it may be necessary in some Sanctuaries to have the MC, Th and acolytes form a line formation in this fashion; from left to right: Ac2 Th MC Ac1; in this case Ac2 waits for Ac1 to meet him shoulder to shoulder before proceeding.

¹⁸ The acolytes are in the sanctuary, so they first follow what is taking place in the sanctuary. Once C has completed saying the *Credo* at the altar, then they follow what is still being sung by the choir.

-as soon as C removes the chalice veil, the acolytes proceed to the credence shoulder to shoulder and prepare their cruets (they should switch sides while actually proceeding, so that upon arrival at the credence they are on the correct sides: Ac1 on the left, and Ac2 on the right; when they turn to present the cruets they will be on the correct sides again).

-Ac1 takes the wine cruet and Ac2 takes the water cruet.

-the acolytes turn inwards, and proceed to the Epistle-side of the altar, at the foot, inside the edges of the altar. Ac1 is on the right, and Ac2 is on the left.

-when C makes the sign of the cross with the paten and Host over the altar, the acolytes immediately ascend¹⁹ to the 2nd altar step.

-when C comes towards the acolytes, both make a simple bow to him in unison and then kiss their cruets at the same time. They present their cruets as they would at Low Mass.

-**after** Ac2 has received the water cruet back, both acolytes *kiss their cruets first*, then they make a simple bow in unison to C. They turn inwards, descend the altar steps, and proceed to the credence shoulder to shoulder.

Offertory Incensation:

During the Offertory Incensation, if there is a Bb:

-when the acolytes return to the credence, Ac2 will immediately pick up the *Lavabo* items as he would as a single server at Low Mass.

-Bb will receive the boat from MC, ascending and descending in unison with Ac1.

-Ac1 proceeds immediately to the center of the foot, genuflects, proceeds around the altar steps to stand at the foot on the Gospel-side of the altar and awaits the sign to remove the missal from the Gospel-side of the altar.

-Ac2 proceeds to stand at the foot on the Epistle-side of the altar (facing Ac1 across the sanctuary).

-when the MC holds the boat out towards Ac2, **both acolytes ascend to the predella at the same time**, Ac1 picks up the missal and Ac2 takes the boat, then both turn outwards (Ac1 left, Ac2 right) and then **both acolytes descend from the predella to the floor at the same time**.

-when Ac1 reaches the floor, he turns by his right and remains there in front of the foot, until C has finished incensing the Gospel-side of the altar. Then Ac1 ascends back to predella and places the missal back on the altar. Ac1 must take care to put the missal next to the unfolded corporal (but not on it) at about a 45° angle. Then Ac1 turns left, descends to the floor, proceeds to the center of the foot, genuflects, meets Ac2 on his right side at the Epistle-side near the foot, and takes the finger towel from him, holding it as at Low Mass.

-when Ac2 reaches the floor, he immediately goes to the credence, puts the boat there, picks up all of the *Lavabo* items as he would as a single server at Low Mass and then proceeds to the Epistle-side of the altar, near the foot (outside the edges of the altar), but not directly in front of it (there must be enough room for the MC and Th to incense C there; the acolytes are behind the MC and Th [box formation] while they incense C). The acolytes do not bow with MC and Th when they incense C.

The Lavabo to the incensation of the acolytes:

-when the MC and Th have finished incensing C and have left, both acolytes ascend to the 2nd altar step, standing *outside* the edge of the altar. Both acolytes make a simple bow to C, perform the *Lavabo* as usual, then bow to C, turn inwards and descend to the credence shoulder to shoulder.

-after replacing the stoppers on the cruets, both acolytes turn inwards and proceed to their stools.

-the acolytes then turn towards Th, make a simple bow back to him, are incensed, and then return Th's bow.

The ringing of the bells:

-Ac1 rings the bells in the same manner and number of times as at Low Mass. There is a minor difference though: Ac1 should keep the bells on the credence, and pick them up only when he needs to ring them (he should go to the credence at the cues listed on the Low Mass sheet). This will prevent accidental rings from occurring. After Ac1 has completed ringing the bells for each part, he should return to his stool.

-the acolytes remain standing during the entire *Canon*,²⁰ except during the *Consecration*.

At the Hanc Igitur:

-if there is a Bb, he will impose the incense instead of Ac2. Ac2 will simply remain at his stool during this time.

¹⁹ A bow is not made before ascending to the predella. The bow to C is made directly in front of him while standing on the 2nd altar step.

²⁰ This is the rubrics for ministers in the sanctuary, but not for clergy in choir or for the people in the pews. They remain standing only during and until the completion of the *Sanctus*, *Pater Noster* until the *Agnus Dei* inclusive.

- after Ac1 rings the bells at the *Hanc Igitur*, Ac2 retrieves the boat from the credence, puts one spoonful of incense into the thurible (this should be done at the stools, away from the credence).
- then Ac2 returns the boat to the credence and returns to his stool.
- Ac1 remains at the credence to ring the bells for the *Consecration*.

During the *Consecration*:

- at the MC's signal (when C wipes his thumbs and forefingers on the corporal at the *Qui Pridie*), all of the servers kneel in their positions.
- each time C genuflects before and after each *Elevation*, the acolytes make a moderate bow, while Ac1 rings the bells as usual.
- during each *Elevation*, the acolytes simply gaze upon the Blessed Sacrament with folded hands; they do not make any gestures.
- after the *Consecration*, when the MC signals, all stand, Ac1 returns the bells to the credence and then returns to his stool.

At the *Pater Noster*:

- the acolytes turn and bow towards the altar at *Oremus*.

C's *Communion*:

- when C consumes the Sacred Host, the acolytes turn towards the altar and make a moderate bow.

Option for Communion Rail cloth:

- after C has received the Sacred Host, he will straighten to an erect position: this is the signal for the acolytes to proceed together shoulder to shoulder to the center of the foot. There they genuflect, turn inwards and go to their respective sides of the Communion Rail; Ac1 to the Epistle-side and Ac2 to the Gospel-side. There the acolyte turn over the Communion Rail cloth, working towards the center.
- once in the center of the Communion Rail, both acolytes proceed immediately to the foot, and line up with the other servers, standing on either side of Cb.

C's *Communion continued to 2nd Confiteor*:

- when C removes the pall from the chalice, both acolytes proceed shoulder to shoulder to the foot, allowing room for Cb to stand between them (the line formation looks like this: MC Ac2 Cb Ac1 Th).
- all genuflect and then kneel on the MC's signal.
- while C consumes the Precious Blood, all make a simple bow, then at MC's lead, all recite the *2nd Confiteor*. The acolytes strike their breasts during the *Confiteor* and make the sign of the cross at the *Indulgentiam* as usual.
- all stand and genuflect at the MC's signals, and then ascend to the predella and then kneel on the MC's signal again.
- the acolytes strike their breasts for each *Domine non sub dignus* as usual.
- after having received Holy Communion, the acolytes remain on the predella until Th signals the servers to rise, then they descend (Ac2 turns by his right, Cb by his left, and Ac1 by his left) to the foot, genuflect on Th's signal, and return in single file to their stools and kneel.

After the *Distribution of Holy Communion*:

- when the MC signals all to stand (when the tabernacle door is closed), the acolytes immediately proceed to the credence and retrieve their respective cruets.
- the acolytes then turn inwards, and proceed shoulder to shoulder to the foot on the Epistle-side of the altar, standing *outside* the edge of the altar.
- when C tilts the chalice towards the acolytes, both ascend, Ac1 goes to the predella, but Ac2 goes only to the 2nd altar step.
- Ac1 makes a simple bow to C first, then pours wine into the chalice, stopping upon C's signal. Then Ac1 makes a simple bow to C, turns right, takes the Communion Plate with him, placing it in front of the *Lavabo* altar Card, goes to the 2nd altar step and stands *inside* the edges of the altar. At the same time, Ac2 turns, and closes the gap between the acolytes, so he is standing *inside* the edges with Ac1.
- when C arrives at the Epistle edge of the altar, both acolytes make a simple bow and then perform the *Ablutions* as usual, then they make another simple bow, Ac1 picks up the Plate, both turn inwards and return to the credence.

Changing the missal and veil:

-immediately after placing the stoppers on their cruets at the credence, both acolytes turn inwards, proceed shoulder to shoulder to the center of the foot, genuflect and then switch the missal and veil as at Low Mass. Ac2 should ensure that the emblem on the veil is facing the people when switching it.

-after switching the missal and veil, both acolytes return to the center of the foot *per longiorem*, genuflect, turn inwards and proceed shoulder to shoulder back to their stools.

Option for Communion Rail cloth:

-immediately after switching the missal and veil, both acolytes return to the center of the foot, *per longiorem*, genuflect and repeat the same steps as previously mentioned.

-once at the center of the Rail, both acolytes proceed to the foot, genuflect, turn inwards and return to their stools.

The Last Gospel:

-after all the servers have signed themselves with the triple cross for the *Last Gospel*, the acolytes proceed shoulder to shoulder to the credence, retrieve their candles, turn inwards, switch sides behind Cb (who is standing in front of the credence) and go to each side of Cb.

-when Th (and Bb) have genuflected and left the foot, the acolytes and Cb proceed shoulder to shoulder to the foot.²¹

-without bowing or genuflecting, acolytes and Cb turn inwards (Cb, Ac2 to the right and Ac1 to the left) and proceed to stand between Th and the foot (leaving enough room for Tbs, MC and C: about 15 feet).

-at the words, "*Et Verbum caro factum est,*" the acolytes and Cb do nothing.

The Recessional:

-when the MC signals a genuflection, the acolytes and Cb do nothing, but *after* Th, Tbs, MC and C have genuflected, they turn inwards (as mentioned just above), and then recess out of the sanctuary, at about a distance of 4 pews away from Th.

Blessing of servers in sacristy:

-upon arriving in the sacristy, the acolytes and Cb take the same positions as they had before the *Processional*.

-while servers bow to cross and C, the acolytes and Cb do nothing.

-during the blessing, the acolytes and Cb remain standing and do not bow, nor kneel.

-acolytes say *After Mass Prayers* with servers and then follow *After Mass Duties Sheet* as prescribed.

²¹ If Cb is sitting on the Gospel-side, the acolytes after picking up their candles will go to stand in front of their stools. When Th has left the foot, the acolytes will approach the foot and meet Cb there, who will take position between the acolytes. They then turn and take position as described.