

CROSSBEARER DURING HIGH MASS (*MISSA CANTATA*)

Though the position of Crossbearer (Cb) is probably the simplest position to serve, nevertheless, it is ranked higher than that of the Acolytes, as seen during a Pontifical Mass (said by a bishop¹) when it is exercised by a Subdeacon vested in alb, cincture and tunicle. The reason being because Cb has the privilege of carrying the figure of Our Lord.

Cb should be in the sacristy 15 minutes before Mass begins.

Within the first 5 minutes of his arrival in the sacristy, Cb needs to:

- be vested having said the vesting prayers,
- have a stool on the proper side of the sanctuary, against the wall² (it is assumed here that Cb sits on the Epistle-side),
- have the stand for the cross in its proper position (see ff. 2),
- have the processional cross ready in the sacristy,
- and ensure the Communion rail gate is *fully* opened.

General rules for Cb:

-when **carrying** the cross, Cb **never** bows or genuflects, as he is carrying the figure of Our Lord³.

-when **not carrying** the cross, Cb follows the same rules that governs the other servers (*i.e.*, genuflecting when crossing the center of the altar, etc.).

-Cb must be careful not to hit low hanging objects (lights, etc.) with the cross. To avoid this, hold the cross at a 45° angle when walking through areas that have either a low ceiling or objects that the cross will not clear in passing. Familiarizing oneself with the route of the *Procession*, will help to prevent hitting any possible low hanging obstacles.

-once there is enough clearance, Cb should hold the cross in this manner:

- the right hand is held above the left hand, with the left about 1 foot below the right hand; this enables one to hold the cross balanced, without tipping over.
- the cross should be held straight, with the figure of Our Lord facing the front.
- the cross should not be held too close to the body, but rather a little in front of it.
- the figure of Our Lord on the staff, should be about 2-3 feet above Cb's head when being carried.

-when with the Acs, Cb is between them. Whenever there is a lack of space for all three to walk shoulder to shoulder, the Acs always allow Cb to go in front of them, as Cb carries the cross, which is higher in rank than the candles.

-processing is always done solemnly, at a moderate pace, with a distance of at least 4 pews between each group of server(s).

The Procession:

-when C has finished vesting, the MC will signal, and the other servers (except Cb and Acs) bow towards the cross. The MC will say at the same time, "*Procedamus in pace,*" and Cb with the servers will reply: "*In nomine Christi, Amen.*"

-Cb follows the rules for carrying the cross during the *Procession*.

¹ While technically the privilege of having a Cb in a *Procession* and *Recessional* belongs to a Prelate, nevertheless it is allowed where it is custom, as it is in the United States (cf. J.B. O'Connell, *The Celebration of Mass*, 1962; pg. 462).

² J. B. O'Connell (pg. 462) directs the cross to be placed "*in a stand or against the wall near the credence.*" This implies that Cb should sit on the Epistle side of the sanctuary as well. However, depending on space limitations, it is permissible to have the Cb sit on the Gospel side and to have the cross with its stand positioned there too. If Cb sits on the Epistle side, he usually sits near, or to the left of Ac2. If Cb sits on the Gospel side, he sits near or to the right of Tb1 (nearest the altar). If your chapel does not have a stand, a portion of the sanctuary wall, preferably the far corner of the Epistle side and in a place where the cross will not be accidentally kicked, should be designated for the cross to be placed against.

³ J. B. O'Connell, pg. 462; 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 Subdeacon during the office of the *Gospel*, the Christ Child, etc.) does not make any form of reverence. There is one exception to this rule: during a Pontifical Mass, while the Metropolitan gives the *Last Blessing* from the throne, Cb kneels holding the cross in front of him. Cf. Stehle, *Manual of Episcopal Ceremonies*, 1961, pg. 114.

-when Cb reaches the Foot of the altar⁴ with Acs, he turns inward (to his right) in unison with Acs, meeting Ac1 on his left, while allowing Ac2 to meet him on his right while turning⁵, proceeds shoulder to shoulder with Acs to the credence, and places the cross in the stand (or against the wall), with the figure of Our Lord facing the congregation⁶.

The Mass:

-Cb responds, stands, sits, kneels, turns and bows towards the altar in unison with the other servers⁷.

During the Gospel:

-when the Missal has been switched to the Gospel side of the altar, Cb turns and faces the Missal for the reading of the *Gospel*. This is done out of reverence to the Word of God, Jesus Christ. After the reading of the *Gospel*, Cb turns to face across the sanctuary as usual.

During C's Communion and Communion of the Faithful:

-Cb turns towards the altar and makes a simple bow when C consumes the Sacred Host.

-when C removes the pall from the chalice, Cb proceeds to the center of the Foot, taking his position between the Acolytes. Cb genuflects and kneels in unison with servers on MC's signal.

-Cb makes a simple bow when C consumes the Precious Blood in the chalice.

-then with the other servers, Cb immediately makes a moderate bow with servers and recites the 2nd *Confiteor*. Cb signs himself with the cross as usual at the *Indulgentiam*.

-Cb stands, genuflects, ascends to the predella and kneels in unison with the other servers at the MC's signals.

-Cb strikes his breast at each *Domine non sub dignus*.

-after all servers have received Holy Communion, Th will signal all to stand, Cb turns right, descends to the floor and genuflects on Th's signal⁸.

-then Cb returns with Th and Acs to his normal position in single file. Cb kneels on Th's signal.

At the Last Gospel:

-when C announces the *Last Gospel*, Cb signs himself, retrieves the cross from the stand, and takes position just in front of the credence facing the congregation. Cb should ensure that the figure of Our Lord is facing the front.

-when the Acs have picked up their candles from the credence, they turn inwards, switch sides behind Cb and then meet him shoulder to shoulder in front of the credence.

-after Th (and Bb) has left the Foot and taken position, Cb and Acs proceed to the center of the Foot, then turn inwards (Cb to his right), and then proceed to stand between Th and the Foot (about 4 pews distance from Th and leaving enough room in front for Tbs, MC and C: about 15 feet)⁹.

The Recessional:

-when MC signals a genuflection, Cb and Acs wait for other servers (Th, Bb, Tbs, MC and C) to genuflect, then Cb and Acs turn inwards (Cb turns right), and process out shoulder to shoulder.

Servers' blessing in the sacristy:

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

-Cb remains standing while C blesses the servers and does not make the sign of the cross, nor bows.

-Cb says the Guild's prayers with servers and then follows the *After Mass Duties Sheet* as prescribed.

Communion Rail Gate Option:

It may be conducive to have Cb open and close the gate at these times in place of Th:

⁴ Cb and the Acs should stop just in front of the 1st altar step (the Foot).

⁵ 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.

⁶ If Cb is sitting on the Gospel side, upon reaching the Foot with the Acs, he allows Ac2 to go *behind* him first, then Cb turns left and proceeds to his position on the Gospel side.

⁷ It may be useful to have Cb open and close the Gate during the various times of the Mass for admittance of Tbs, rather than have Th do this with a Thurible in his hand. Cf. Communion Rail Gate options on page 2.

⁸ If Cb is sitting on the Gospel side, he turns left, which is the direction in which he will proceed to his position after genuflecting. He will also allow Ac2 to pass first, then return and kneel in his normal position in unison with the servers across the sanctuary on the Epistle side.

⁹ If Cb is sitting on the Gospel side, after the Cb signs himself at the *Last Gospel*, he then retrieves the cross, and stands in front of his stool, facing across the sanctuary. When Th has left the Foot, Cb proceeds to the center of the Foot at the same time with the Acs (who are approaching from the Epistle side) and meets them in the center, just in front of the 1st altar step. Then Cb and Acs turn inwards (Cb to his right) and proceed to the point that is between Th and the Foot as described above.

During the Asperges:

-when C says, "*Oremus*," for the *Asperges* prayer, Cb proceeds to the center of the Foot and stands directly behind C. When MC signals, Cb genuflects in unison with C, MC and Th, then turns right, proceeds to gate, closes it (it is not necessary to lock it at this time), returns to the Foot, genuflects and then returns to his position.

-If there is no *Asperges*, Cb may do this after the *Preparatory Prayers*.

If there are Tbs:

-after Th has incensed Cb, Cb meets Th at center of Foot, genuflects in unison with him, then turns right, proceeds to the gate, opens gate fully, then takes position slightly in front of the gate (inside sanctuary) on the left side, standing inside the Tbs. After Th incenses congregation, Cb will meet Th on his left, genuflect on Th's signal, and then return to his position.

-after *Communion*, when the tabernacle has been closed (MC's signal), Cb stands, and meets Th at the Foot, genuflects on Th's signal and then goes to open the gate fully. He then meets Th on his left, genuflects on his signal, and returns to his position.