

BOATBEARER DURING HIGH MASS

While the position of boatbearer (Bb) is not mentioned in the liturgical books, it is allowed by such rubrical authors as Fortescue and Merati.¹ A server is often scheduled for this position, not only to acquaint him with serving High Mass,² but also to add solemnity to the sacred ceremonies. The object that Bb holds, the boat, is so called, because the older forms were often shaped in the image of a boat, hence its Latin rubrical term of *navicula*.

Bb should arrive in the sacristy 15 minutes before Mass and complete these tasks within the first five minutes

- be vested having said the vesting prayers.
- (if used) have a stool on the Epistle side of the sanctuary, to the left of Th's,³ for the sermon.
- looks on the liturgical calendar and determines what class of incense should be used, fills the boat three-fourths full (not all the way to the top; room must be provided for the spoon and for C to scoop out incense) and puts the spoon into the boat *on top of the incense* (not buried in it) with the handle partially sticking out under the lid (or in the notch) at about a twenty degree angle.
- if necessary, Bb assists with any of Th's duties. Bb should not stand near the charcoal preparation area while he has his surplice on.

General Rules

- Bb holds the boat throughout Mass, except during Communion.
- Bb always carries the boat in his right hand and holds it at sternum level, slightly in front of him⁴ in this manner:
 - the stem is held between the index and middle fingers, which enables one to hold the bowl partially in the palm, and the thumb is placed on the lid.
 - Bb's left hand is held flat, with fingers extended and held together against his breast.
- when Bb does not carry the boat, he folds his hands as usual.
- when Bb is carrying the boat, he does not make the sign of the cross, nor strike his breast, but he does bow.
- Bb is usually to the left of Th.
- when Bb is with Th, he genuflects, kneels, sits, turns and bows in unison with Th.
- when walking with Th, Bb does so shoulder to shoulder.
- If incense is imposed for the processional or recessional, when C is ready (whether in the sacristy or sanctuary), Bb steps up to C with Th, presents the boat (with lid closed) to the MC and then steps back slightly while incense is imposed. When the MC closes the lid, and holds out the boat, Bb steps forward, receives the boat and then goes with Th to their position either for the processional or recessional.

In the sacristy just before the procession

When Bb has completed his duties, he proceeds with the boat to the sacristy and takes position to the left of Th (cf. below options below for the *Asperges*; if Th flanks C with MC, then Bb may line up near Cb and acolytes).

Processional position options

- a. if Th is carrying the aspersory for the *Asperges*, either:⁵
 - I. **Th is flanking C with MC:** Bb will process directly behind Cb and acolytes at a distance of four pews and upon arrival at the foot, will gf and then go to his normal position.

¹ Cf. p 101 and ff 3 (Gavanti-Merati, Pars II, tit. ii, § 21 [ed. cit., vol. I, p. 107]) in *The Ceremonies of the Roman Rite Described* by Fr. Adrian Fortescue (1962 edition—reprinted by St. Austin Press, 1996).

² In Latin called a *missa cantata*, or “sung Mass.”

³ The *Cæremoniale Episcoporum* presumes that Th will be situated either between the acolytes in front of the credence, or near the credence. Usually the former position is impractical in parish sanctuary layouts, so Th ends up situated according to the latter mode. If due to space limitations, Th cannot place a stool out for himself (which usually he would only need for the sermon), then neither does Bb. Often during the sermon, Th and Bb place their stools inside the sacristy (or its doorway). After the sermon they may permanently remove their stools and put them back in storage since they will not be needed again.

⁴ The boat should not be held against the surplice to prevent soiling or unnecessary wearing.

⁵ Either option is legitimate, being simply a matter of preference.

2. **Th is heading procession formation:** Bb will process with Th (on his left) and upon reaching the foot and g'ing with Th, goes around Th and proceeds to his normal position.
- b. **if Th is carrying the thurible,** Bb processes in on Th's left and upon reaching the foot, g'fs with him, then turns inwards with Th and proceeds shoulder to shoulder with him to his normal position, turning inwards with Th upon arriving there to be on Th's left side.

Processional

- when the MC signals, Bb turns towards the processional cross⁶ and bows while the MC says, "*Procedamus in pace*," then with C and all of the servers, he replies: "*In nomine Christi, Amen.*"⁷
- Bb turns inwards with Th, switches *behind* Th to Th's left side and processes out of the sacristy, walking shoulder to shoulder with Th.
- upon arrival in the sanctuary, Bb genuflects in unison with Th

If there is an Asperges

- on the MC's signal (when C kneels), Bb kneels.
- on the MC's signal (when MC and Th stand), Bb stands. When C sprinkles Bb, he makes a simple bow towards C and then signs himself with the cross.
- Bb turns towards the altar and makes a simple bow for the *Gloria Patri*, and for "*Oremus.*"

During Mass

- during the Preparatory Prayers, Bb remains standing with Th; he does not sign nor strike himself during this time.

At the first incensation of the altar

- after the Preparatory Prayers are completed, Bb accompanies Th to the Epistle side of the foot. Just before arriving there, Bb steps slightly behind Th (who meets the MC shoulder to shoulder at the foot), and then presents the boat to the MC with the lid closed.
- when the MC and Th have ascended to the predella, Bb moves to the MC's former position, while AcI goes to the right of Bb, Th's former position: Bb and AcI are standing shoulder to shoulder, just in front of the foot.
- when C has finished imposing incense, the MC closes the lid and holds the boat out towards Bb. Bb and AcI then ascend to the predella *together*,⁸ Bb takes the boat from the MC, turns right, meets AcI with the missal, both descend *together* to the floor and then Bb returns to his normal position.
- during the *Gloria*, the Epistle, Gradual, Alleluia, etc., Bb remains standing with Th.

At the Gospel

- when C is almost ready to impose incense, Bb accompanies Th to the foot again as above, gives the boat to the MC, and moves to the MC's former position (AcI is at the credence this time, retrieving his candle).
- when the MC holds out the boat, Bb ascends to the predella, takes the boat, turns right and returns to his normal position.
- when C moves to the missal, Bb turns towards the missal for the reading of the Gospel. After the Gospel is finished being read, Bb faces across the sanctuary as usual.

At the Offertory incensation of the altar

- Bb repeats the same steps as at the first incensation, but this time AcI will go to Gospel side of the foot to remove the missal. Bb and AcI will be facing each other across the sanctuary.
- when the MC holds out the boat, Bb and AcI ascend *at the same* to the predella from opposite sides, Bb will take the boat from the MC, waits until AcI is ready with the missal, then Bb and AcI will turn outwards (Bb turns right), descend *at the same time* and then Bb will return to his position.
- after C is incensed, Th will incense Bb, who makes a simple bow to Th before and after being incensed.

⁶ Or the sacristy cross if there is not a Cb.

⁷ Pronounced as: een noh-meh-nee chree-steh, ah-mehn.

⁸ They should ascend to actually stand on the predella and not just on the second altar step unless there is a lack of space on the predella.

At the Hanc igitur

-when the bell has been rung for the *Hanc igitur*, Bb opens the boat and imposes one spoonful of incense into the thurible, which Th holds open [the incense should be spread among the charcoals, and not just dumped on one charcoal; this enables the incense to burn better].

-then still holding the boat, Bb kneels at the MC's signal for the Consecration. Bb makes a moderate bow for each genuflection C makes during the Consecration; Bb must make sure that his thumb is holding down the lid; also Bb should not tilt the boat while bowing!

For Communion

-after C says the triple *Domine non sum dignus*, Bb places the boat on the credence, in a place where it will not be tipped over accidentally.

-when Th has picked up the Communion plate, Bb accompanies Th on his left side to the front of the foot for Communion. There he genuflects, kneels, stands, genuflects, ascends with, kneels, strikes and signs himself in unison with the other servers and on the MC's signal.

-after receiving Communion, on Th's signal, Bb rises, turns *left*, descends to the foot, genuflects on Th's signal, returns single file with Th to his position and then kneels on Th's signal.

-when the tabernacle door is closed, and *after* the acolytes have *left* the credence with their cruets, Bb retrieves the boat from the credence.

The Last Gospel to the recessional

-Bb does not sign himself with the triple cross for the Last Gospel. Once the Last Gospel has been started, Bb accompanies Th to their staging position for the recessional:

- if incense was imposed for the processional, Th and Bb remain at their position until the acolytes have left the credence with their candles, then Th and Bb go to the Epistle side of the sanctuary, near the foot. When C descends from the predella, Bb gives the boat to MC and receives it back as usual [go to step below].
- Th and Bb immediately go to the center of the foot, shoulder to shoulder, gf, turn inwards, Bb switches behind Th to his left, and then both proceed to the head of the servers' formation for the recessional; usually directly in front of the Communion rail gate [inside the sanctuary].

-Th and Bb gf for "*Et Verbum caro factum est.*"

-On MC's signal, Th and Bb gf, turn inwards, Bb switches sides behind Th and then both recess out shoulder to shoulder.

Blessing in the sacristy and after Mass duties

- upon arrival in the sacristy, Th and Bb take the same position as they had before the processional. Both bow to the processional cross and then kneel for the blessing, but do not sign themselves.
- Bb removes his surplice immediately before performing his after Mass duties,⁹ which consist of putting away the remaining incense, as well as the boat and spoon (cleaning and polishing both as necessary), and assisting Th as necessary to clean up the other thurible items (the charcoal lighting area, etc.).

⁹ It is recommended that in churches where a chapter of the Archconfraternity of St. Stephen has been established, the prescribed prayers of the Guild should be recited by all of the servers as a group at the foot of the altar ten minutes before the start of Mass, and immediately after the blessing in the sacristy (after the recessional musical piece has been completed).