

LOW MASS WITH TWO ACOLYTES

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF THE ROMAN RITE

The general principles of the Roman Rite ceremonies are expounded in detail in the *General Principles of Ceremonies of the Roman Rite* published by Romanitas Press. To have a complete understanding of how and why the various actions of the servers should be performed, one should consult this book, as for the most part, the in-depth knowledge of those items are assumed within these Low Mass notes.

It is assumed that the one who serves Low Mass *solo* is a Senior Acolyte¹ and is therefore well acquainted with both positions of Ac1 and Ac2 at Low Mass.

AC1 VERSUS AC2

-Ac1 is usually on the right (Epistle side), and Ac2 is usually on the left (Gospel side).

-Ac1 is the senior server and Ac2 should follow his lead and pace in all of the responses and actions.

MAKING THE LATIN RESPONSES²

Responding must be done:

- clearly,
- at a *moderate* pace,
- and audibly (*i.e.*, loud enough to be heard by people).

When serving a Dialog Mass, the acolytes lead the pace and should be heard slightly above people.

GENERAL RULES CONCERNING THE ACTIONS MADE BY THE ACOLYTES

All actions should be done:

- with a sense of dignity.
- with diligence and deliberate purpose.
- but yet in a *natural* and *unaffected*³ manner.

It should be remembered that every action has a spiritual meaning, and is therefore a tiny prayer or offering in itself.

BOWS

There are only two types of bows used by the servers during Low Mass, the:

- **Simple bow:** this is made by bowing the head only; all bows when kneeling are simple unless otherwise prescribed.
- **Moderate bow:** this is made by bowing the head and shoulder together at about a sixty degree angle. A moderate bow is never made by bowing one's head all the way to the floor, as a profound bow is never made by one kneeling.⁴

GENUFLECTING

When you genuflect you must:

- Keep your head and body erect.
- Not bow your head.
- Not sign yourself with a cross when genuflecting (these actions symbolize two different things).
- Not touch your knees with your hands.
- Keep your hands folded in front of your breast while genuflecting.
- Never genuflect hastily, but always solemnly, with purpose and in unison with C or another acolyte.

¹ A rank in the Archconfraternity of St. Stephen; cf. the webpage: http://www.romanitaspress.com/archconfraternity_of_st_stephen.htm for details.

² "All the words should be spoken audibly, each syllable articulated, every sentence reverently pronounced," *The Altar Servers' Manual* [aka, the Guild], Archconfraternity of St. Stephen (1962, Society of St. Pius X reprint in 2002), p 8. "It is so easy to make mistakes without realizing it, and these mistakes tend to increase until in the course of time the answers will no longer be Latin at all but merely a succession of sounds somewhat resembling the language," *ibid.*, p 11. This is especially important, as the server is praying to God when making these responses and not just repeating some memorized sounds. Cf. the Mass Servers' Response Card published by Romanitas Press for details concerning the correct liturgical pronunciation of the responses at Mass; they are not given on this sheet so as to save space.

³ J.B. O'Connell gives an excellent description of this on p 182 in his book, *The Celebration of Mass: A Study of the Rubrics of the Roman Missal* (1964 —1962 missal; reprinted by Preserving Christian Publications, 2006) in Chapter II: Liturgical Gesture.

⁴ SRC 4179¹ and L. O'Connell in *The Book of Ceremonies* (Bruce, 1956), p 37. Whenever profound bows are prescribed for sacred ministers, it is when they are *standing*.

WALKING

-always walk erect, with dignity and at a *moderate* pace. When walking with another server, always do so shoulder to shoulder. Pay special attention when going around corners to give the server on the outside a chance to keep up.

TURNING

-when two servers are together they always turn towards each other; this is called an *inward* turn.⁵

-when alone on the predella, always turn in the direction of the tabernacle, so as not to turn your back on Our Lord (this follows the rule of proximity).

-whenever you have to turn to proceed from one place to another, always turn completely in that direction, and then proceed; do not side-step your way there.

-whenever you have to turn a corner or go around an object, do so in a natural, curving fashion, and not in a military precision turn.⁶

HOLDING THE CRUETS

In all cases, the acolytes should:

- hold the cruets at the same height (about the level of one's sternum, but not *against* it, otherwise the surplice could become stained),
- and in their right hand.

At the Offertory

When presenting cruets for C to take, hold the cruet in your right-hand palm by the bottom, with the handle *facing* straight towards C. Never kiss the lip of the cruet,⁷ rather kiss the side or its handle.

At the Lavabo and Ablutions

When pouring, the cruet should be held by its handle in the right hand. Be careful not to spill any water or wine onto the altar cloths or floor. Keep the lip of the cruet about three inches above the C's fingers and/or the chalice. Tilt the cruet slightly upwards at the end of each pouring to catch the last drop from dripping onto the altar cloth.⁸

HANDS

When you are not using your hands, keep them folded over your sternum like this:

- Hold your hands palm to palm with fingers held together and extended,
- keep the right thumb over the left thumb (in the shape of a cross⁹),
- and have your folded hands resting just in front of your chest, though not actually against your surplice,¹⁰ at about a twenty angle.

When you are not using one of your hands (usually the left one), always place that hand with its palm flat over your sternum.

Striking the breast

The breast is struck three times at both *Confiteors*, the *Agnus Dei*, and at the faithful's *Domine non sum dignus*, though the method for each event is slightly different.

- Place your left hand flat over your sternum.
- With the right hand, hold your fingers together and *extended*; extend your arm straight in front of your body.
- Keep your elbow close to your body while doing this.
- Strike your breast silently with the *flat palm* of your hand in this fashion:
 - **Confiteor** At each *mea culpa*
 - **Agnus Dei** At each *miserere nobis*
 - **Domine non sum dignus** For the duration of each whole phrase

⁵ When leaving the foot, one is not turning his back to the altar while turning inwards. Actually, by turning inward both servers are turning *towards* the altar, even though Acl almost makes a complete circle. This action also communicates visibly the unity of the acolytes and the act of the procession to the credence, etc.

⁶ E.g., at a 90° right angle.

⁷ Rubricians cite this for sanitary reasons.

⁸ I.e., the same action a waiter makes when pouring coffee.

⁹ *Missale Romanum; Rit. Cel. III*, 1: "...et pollice dextero super sinistrum posito in modum crucis..."; cf. J.B. O'Connell, p 186.

¹⁰ This is done out of imitation of C in regards to the chasuble. The hands are not rested against the fabric so as not to soil it nor wear it through by constant rubbing of the hands against the material.

Handling the cassock when standing and kneeling

When kneeling or rising from a kneeling position, lift up the side of your cassock slightly with your left hand. This will prevent you from tripping, or from kneeling on your cassock in an uncomfortable manner. This can also be used as a visual cue for Ac1 to Ac2, to signal when both should stand and kneel in unison. However do not lift your cassock while genuflecting. While kneeling, ensure that the cassock slightly covers the back of your shoes.

Handling of the bells

In all cases, excess rings should be avoided either when carrying the bells, when picking up or putting down the bells, or even when ringing them, as extra rings are distracting to C and the congregation. The secret to accomplishing this is to keep the bells level and slightly away from one's body, while paying close attention to what one is doing.

Ringling the bells

The bells should be rung in an up-down¹¹ fashion and not side-to-side.¹² The bells are rung as such:

- grasp firmly the handle of the bell,
- raise it almost to the level of your waist,
- then smoothly raise and immediately lower it in a inverse arc (not straight up and down), without going above the level of your shoulders, and returning it just slightly behind your waist with a small flick of the wrist, so as to sound two clear and distinct rings.¹³

It is not necessary to ring the bells hard or in a violent manner to accomplish this. Rather they should be rung in a graceful and almost lightsome manner.¹⁴ This wrist and shoulder motion often takes some practice.

After ringing the bells, do not put them down immediately, but allow the sound to die out a little first, and then put them down carefully and silently.

Carrying and holding the bells

When moving the bells, always pick them up by the handle by balancing them with your index finger *only*.

Both in carrying and in holding the bells, keep them at about the level of your waist and slightly in front of your body.

Bell cues

In these sheets, helpful cues have been provided to assist the server to realize when he should pick up the bells in anticipation to actually ringing them. Otherwise the server will have to rush in picking up the bells, which often cause excess rings, and which can contribute to the server not ringing the bells well. The cues are marked with:

 and are then followed with the cue.

Carrying the Communion plate

Whenever one is carrying the Communion plate he should:

- Hold the plate in his right hand by the handle.
- Hold the plate away from one's chest, especially taking care not to hit the plate against one's medal.
- Hold the plate side facing upwards (and not to the side, etc.).

During the distribution of Holy Communion, one must especially ensure to:

- Never tilt the plate as Sacred Particles may have fallen on it.
- Keep the plate under the chin of the communicant.
- Not allow chapel veils or other objects to brush the top of the plate.
- Not strike the plate against the ciborium.

¹¹ This is the method given in the Guild's handbook (General Directions; The Bell, pp 9-10), and this is actually the universal manner and more correct method of ringing the bells. This method is not only dignified and in keeping with the solemnity of the Mass, but it also imitates the way in which bells are rung in a tower, which the hand bells now replace.

¹² This method is quite undignified and often sounds similar to a telephone or alarm bell ring, which is quite inappropriate for the altar. Also, if the bells are constructed correctly according to the wishes of the SRC it is quite impossible to ring the bells in the side-to-side fashion. ("The correct kind is a simple hand bell, in silver or bronze, with one tongue." J.B. O'Connell, *The Bell*, p 160. "A single hand bell with one tongue conforms perfectly to the rubrics." L. O'Connell, *Altar Bells*, p 18. Fortescue's *The Ceremonies of the Roman Rite Described*, also confirms this on p 37. "...b) Instead of the type of bell described above (i.e., a single hand bell), the following may also be used, though less in conformity with the rubrics: a small single-tongue bell attached to the wall and rung by means of a cord; a cluster of small single-tongue bells to be rung by hand; a cluster of single-tongue bells attached to the wall and rung by means of a cord (S.L.: III, QU. 93 AD 1, 2; EPH. LIT.: LIV, P. 104), SRC rescript quoted in *Matters Liturgical* (1956 edition), *The Altar Bell*, §160, pp 268-269).

¹³ If triple rings are being made, this is due to lifting the bells too sharply.

¹⁴ The function of ringing the bells is not to make sheer noise, but rather to signal that an action (of grace) is taking place. Otherwise, one disrupts the spirit of prayer that ought to be permeating the Mass with the noise and chaos that is of the world.

When one is holding the plate, one does not perform any gestures with his hands.

PREPARATIONS PRIOR TO LOW MASS

If a sacristan is not available, then the servers will need to arrive at least twenty minutes before Mass is due to begin to perform this preparations. Otherwise, the servers should arrive in the sacristy no later than fifteen minutes before Mass is due to begin. The acolytes must ensure to say the designated prayers while vesting in their cassock and surplice, and to kiss their medal before putting it on.

The altar

Ac1 should ensure that following items on the altar are prepared correctly:

- the altar is uncovered and the cards are set up correctly.¹⁵
- the correct color antependium and conopaeum are on the altar and tabernacle.¹⁶
- the missal and its ribbons is set for the proper Mass. The missal is placed *closed* with the opening facing left, on its stand on the Epistle side of the altar, with the stand facing straight.
- (If Holy Communion will be distributed during the Mass) the tabernacle key is already in the tabernacle.¹⁷
- two altar candles are lighted.

The credence

Ac2 should ensure that the following items on the credence are prepared correctly:

- the water and wine cruets should be set up on a cruet tray¹⁸ in the center of the credence, close to the front edge. For two servers the wine should be on the *left* side and the water on the *right*. The cruet handles should face towards the back of the credence.
- the *Lavabo* bowl should be behind the cruet tray and the finger towel should be placed lengthwise over the bowl.¹⁹
- the bells²⁰ should be to the left-hand side of the cruets, so Ac1 may have easy access to them.
- the Communion plate (inside its cover²¹) should be positioned where it is convenient to reach it, usually to the right side of the cruets.
- any books or cards containing prayers should be placed under the plate.²²

LIGHTING AND EXTINGUISHING THE ALTAR CANDLES

At one time these actions were considered to be part of the Mass, and so to this day, the method of lighting and extinguishing the altar candles still remains quasi-ceremonial.

Lighting

The Epistle side candle is always lighted first, followed by the Gospel side candle.²³

When lighting the candles:

- Ac1 must pass the candlelighter around the altar, and *not* over the altar cloths, to avoid dripping wax or sparks onto the linens.²⁴

¹⁵ The side altar cards should be facing straight and not at an angle.

¹⁶ Church law and tradition prescribes both items and every rubrical author cites this rule found in the *Missale Romanum*, the *Caeremoniale Episcoporum*, the SRC and the ancient usage of the Church. Suffice to say, the antependium is the vesture for the altar, which mystically represents the body of Our Lord.

¹⁷ The practice of C carrying the tabernacle key on the burse is frowned upon by rubricists for these two reasons: They consider that nothing should actually be on the burse when C is carrying the chalice in, and because there is the danger that the key and its chain could damage the fabric on the burse.

¹⁸ It is better that the cruet tray not double as the *Lavabo* bowl, as it is there to prevent the credence linen from becoming stained or wet through perspiration.

¹⁹ This allows Ac1 to pick up the towel in a more efficient manner.

²⁰ It is not correct to have the bells perpetually positioned on the altar steps when not in use. The Roman method is, if the item is not being used, then it should be out of the way. This is confirmed by Fortescue on p 37, J.B. O'Connell, p 159 and L. O'Connell, p 17.

²¹ The Communion plate should be covered when not in use, just like the chalice and ciborium, as it is used for a sacred purpose and to avoid the plate from gathering dust.

²² Again these should not be placed on the altar steps for the same reason given for the bells.

²³ The Epistle side represents the Israelites, the Gospel side the Gentiles: Christ came first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles. In extinguishing the candles, the symbolism shows that when Our Lord returns, the Jews will finally convert and recognize Him as the Messiah.

²⁴ The method of passing the candlelighter over the tabernacle is not allowed for the same reason and also because it does not conform with the ceremonial principles.

- AcI must also descend *in plano*, genuflect in the center of the foot and then re-ascend to the predella before lighting the Gospel side candle (in both cases he may go *per brevior* as he is carrying the candlelighter). He may not genuflect on the predella, as this privilege is reserved to sacred ministers.²⁵
- when descending from the predella, AcI must take care to turn towards the tabernacle and not away from it.

Extinguishing

In extinguishing the candles, the same procedure is observed, only in reverse order, with the Gospel side candle being extinguished first, followed by the Epistle side candle.

GUILD BEFORE MASS PRAYERS

The acolytes must take care to say the prescribed Guild prayers before Mass following the instructions printed on the cards (there is an ordinary and a seasonal prayer card). It is recommended that they say these prayers ten minutes before Mass and before lighting the altar candles. The acolytes should say these prayers at the foot, kneeling on the first altar step.

SERVING LOW MASS

PROCESSING TO THE FOOT OF THE ALTAR

-after assisting C with his vestments, the acolytes bow to the sacristy cross with C [if C says at the same time "Procedamus in pace," (Let us proceed in peace) the acolytes respond with "In nomine Christi, Amen." ("In the name of Christ, Amen")].

-before entering the sanctuary, AcI dips his right hand in the holy water font and passes it to Ac2's right hand, who then passes it on to C's right hand and then all sign themselves. Then AcI gently rings the sacristy bell twice.

-AcI & Ac2 process in front of C at a moderate pace, walking shoulder to shoulder, with AcI on the right and Ac2 on the left.

AT THE FOOT OF THE ALTAR

-when AcI & Ac2 reach the foot, they pair off, leaving room in the middle for C.²⁶

-if C is wearing a biretta, AcI takes it from him by the fin on the right hand side, kissing his hand first and then the biretta.

-C and acolytes then genuflect together,²⁷ and while C ascends to the predella, they assist him with his alb. They remain standing while C unfolds the corporal and opens the missal.

-during this time AcI takes the biretta to the sedilia, and returns to the foot without genuflecting. When C is finished, he will then descend back to the center of the foot.

PREPARATORY PRAYERS AT THE FOOT OF THE ALTAR (Judica me; Psalm 42)

-while C genuflects, the acolytes kneel *in plano*.

-the acolytes then make the sign of the cross in unison with C.

-they make the proper responses with C.

-when C says the *Gloria Patri*, the acolytes make a simple bow.

-when they say the *Misereatur*, they make a moderate bow²⁸ at an angle towards C.

-retaining the moderate bow, the acolytes face the altar while reciting the *Confiteor*, turning towards C at *et tibi, Pater* and *et te, Pater*; and striking their breasts at each *mea culpa*.

-the acolytes make a simple bow during these three responses: "*Et plebs tua laetabitur... Et salutare tuum... Et clamor meus...*"

-when C says *Dominus vobiscum*, the acolytes raise their heads, but remain kneeling and assist C with his alb while he ascends the steps to the altar.

²⁵ The same is true for AcI when he is preparing the altar for Mass; cf. *The General Principles of Ceremonies of the Roman Rite* for further details on the matter.

²⁶ If room allows, the acolytes and C should process to the foot in an ellipsis around the altar steps with C approaching the foot behind the acolytes and then coming up between them in front of the foot. However, if there is a lack of room in your sanctuary to accommodate this motion, depending on which side of the sanctuary the acolytes process in, one of the acolytes backs up to let C through to the center. If your sanctuary has two doorways on either side, the acolytes should enter from the Gospel side, and exit from the Epistle side (L. O'Connell, p 30).

²⁷ If serving at an altar without the Blessed Sacrament, C only bows, but the servers always genuflect.

²⁸ Again, this bow is not performed by bowing one's body and head to the floor, but only by bending the head and shoulders at a 60° angle.

-the acolytes then stand and without genuflecting, turn immediately and go to their normal positions, which is kneeling: Ac1 on the Epistle side of the first altar step, and Ac2 on the Gospel side of the first altar step.²⁹

INTROIT TO THE EPISTLE

-the acolytes sign themselves in unison with C at the Introit. They make the appropriate simple bows³⁰ during the Introit, *Gloria* and Collect.

-they make the proper response(s) to the Collect, bowing if the name of the saint(s) of the day is mentioned during the Collect and also if the Holy Name is mentioned either during the Collect or at its conclusion.

-they make the proper response to the Epistle.

On Ember Days

On Ember days, there are often several *Lessons* interspersed with Collects. The acolytes make the usual responses to the Lesson: “*Deo gratias*,” and to the Collects: “*Amen*.” One exception is the Lesson, *Benedictus est, Domine*, for Ember Saturday of Advent, as there is no response to its conclusion.

AT THE END OF THE EPISTLE TO THE END OF THE GOSPEL

-once Ac1 & Ac2 have responded with “*Deo gratias*,” they should immediately stand.

On Ember Days

If it is an Ember day, the acolytes remain kneeling until the last Lesson or Epistle has been said. The last Lesson is always preceded by “*Dominus vobiscum*.” After this, the Ac2 may perform his duty as usual.

-Ac1 remains where he is standing, while Ac2 goes to the center, genuflects and then proceeds to the Epistle side of the altar steps going *behind* Ac1.³¹ Ac2 then waits *in plano* in front of the first step, standing in line with C, with his back to the congregation.

-once C has moved away from the missal, Ac2 immediately turns to his left, ascends the Epistle side steps and firmly takes hold of the missal stand by the sides [not by the front]. He then turns by his left, and descends *per brevior* to the center of the foot *in plano*, turns by his right to face the altar, genuflects, ascends *per brevior* to the Gospel side of the predella and puts the missal down carefully on the Gospel corner of the altar, at about a forty-five degree angle.

-after setting the missal on the altar, Ac2 steps down to the second altar step, standing within the edges of the altar. Ac1 turns at an angle and faces C at the missal. Both acolytes sign themselves in unison with C.

-if the Holy Name is said at the beginning of the Gospel reading, Ac2 bows straight ahead (if the Holy Name does not appear within the first few seconds, he does not bow at all), and then turning by his right descends *in plano*, returns *per longior* to his normal position, and remains standing facing C straight during the reading.

-when C has finished the reading, the acolytes do not wait for him to kiss the missal first, but say “*Laus tibi, Christe*” immediately.³²

-the acolytes immediately kneel after responding to the Gospel (unless a sermon follows).

CREDO (if said)

-during the *Credo* they make a simple bow at the proper words (but they make a moderate bow when C genuflects at “*Et incarnatus est... Et homo factus est*”).

If there is a sermon

-both acolytes come together at the center of the foot, genuflect, turn inwards and then proceed shoulder to shoulder to their seats.³³ The acolytes do not bow to each other or anything else before sitting [When sitting take care to sit straight, with your surplice draped neatly over your lap; do not *stretch* your surplice; the bottom hem of it should just barely touch your knees. Place your hands flat down in front of your knees, with the tips of your fingers inside the hem].

²⁹ Usually the acolytes kneel in line with the edges of the altar, however if you have a rather wide placemat covering your altar steps, they may kneel there as well. When there is only one altar step (*i.e.*, the predella), the acolytes kneel *in plano* (*i.e.*, on the floor), as they are always one level below C. The use of small cushions for the altar servers is not appropriate, as only a bishop has the express right to the use of a cushion in the sanctuary. It also does not assist in toughening the younger servers.

³⁰ These bows should be made straight ahead towards the altar, rather than at an angle.

³¹ This is a principle of precedence: a server of higher rank does not back up for one of lower rank.

³² The rubrics direct C to say a prayer while kissing the missal, that is listed after the servers' response.

³³ The acolytes should not sit on the sedilia, as this is a privilege reserved for the sacred ministers. The servers should rather sit in separate stools away from the sedilia.

-when the sermon is finished, both stand and coming together in front of their seats, both acolytes then proceed shoulder to shoulder to the center of foot, genuflect, return to their normal positions and then kneel.

OFFERTORY

-they make the proper response and then a simple bow at “*Oremus*” just before the Offertory antiphon; if the name of the saint(s) of the day is mentioned, they make a bow for this also.

-as soon as C has removed the chalice veil from the chalice, the acolytes immediately rise, come together in the center, genuflect, turn in towards each other, meeting shoulder to shoulder, and then proceed to the credence (Ac1 will momentarily be on the left, while Ac2 is on the right. When both make an inward turn to present the cruets, they will then be in the correct position again.).

-the acolytes remove the stoppers [if possible, the stoppers should be placed on the tray to prevent the staining of the credence linen]. Ac1 takes the wine cruet and Ac2 takes the water cruet. The acolytes turn inwards, and proceed to stand in front of the Epistle side steps, *within the edges* of the altar, and ascend immediately to the second altar step.

-when C is in front of the acolytes, they in unison make a simple bow to him, both raise and kiss their cruets by the side, then Ac1 presents his cruet first, folding his hands, receives his cruet back, then Ac2 presents his cruet, C blesses the water, and upon Ac2 receiving his cruet back, both raise their cruets to their lips and kiss them simultaneously, both then lower their cruets and bow to C, and then turning inwards, return to the credence.

THE LAVABO

-Ac1 takes the finger towel and holds it taut between his thumbs and index fingers of both hands, fully opened, with the longer sides of the towel on the top and bottom. If there is a cross on the finger towel, Ac1 should hold it so that the cross is on the left-hand bottom corner.

-meanwhile, Ac2 retains the water cruet in his right hand, and picks up the dish in his left hand, holding it in his palm.

-both then turn inwards and proceed again to stand just in front of the Epistle side steps, but this time standing *outside the edge* of the altar. They then immediately ascend to the second altar step.

-when C comes to the acolytes, both make a simple bow to C in unison, then Ac2 carefully pours water over C’s fingers, making sure not to spill any water on the floor and stops when C motions. Then Ac1 presents the finger towel to C [if C does not take it, but just wipes his hands on it, Ac1 should not let go of the towel], and folds his hands.

-when C gives the towel back, Ac1 should take it with *his thumbs and index fingers*, not by laying it over his folded hands.³⁴

-the acolytes then bow to C, turn inwards and descend to the credence. There they put their items down, put the stoppers back on the cruets [the stoppers should be placed on rather loosely, so they can be removed easily at the ablutions], and Ac1 picks up the bells. Both turn inwards and proceed to the foot shoulder to shoulder.


-when they arrive at the foot, both genuflect, turn outwards to return to their normal positions, and kneel. Ac1 puts the bells in front of him on the second altar step.

THE SUSCIPAT

-after C has said, “*Orate, fratres,*” and has turned around to face the altar, *without bowing*,³⁵ the acolytes respond with the *Suscipiat*.

-they make a simple bow during the Preface, when C says, “*Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro.*”


SANCTUS, HANC IGITUR AND DURING CANON

 Ac1 should pick up the bells when C says “*angeli*” during the Preface to prepare for the *Sanctus*.

-at the *Sanctus*, the bells are rung by Ac1 **three** times (in all cases each time is a double ring; hence three double rings).

During the Canon

During the Canon, the acolytes do not make any of the bows or signs of the cross in unison with C, because he is saying these prayers in an inaudible voice.³⁶

 when Ac1 sees C bow towards the missal (for the name of the Blessed Virgin Mary) and then to the tabernacle (for the Holy Name), Ac1 should pick up the bells, as the *Hanc igitur* will be approaching quickly.


³⁴ Folded hands represent inactivity.

³⁵ All modern rubricians agree upon this.

³⁶ J.B. O’Connell, p 354, ff 11.

-at the *Hanc igitur* (when C extends his hands together flat over chalice and host) the bells are rung **once**. Immediately afterwards, when AcI has allowed the sound to die out, and has put the bells down, AcI picks up the bells again by his index finger, both acolytes rise and without genuflecting ascend to the predella *per brevior*. There they kneel on either side of C slightly behind him and about a foot away from his side.

AT CONSECRATION AND ELEVATIONS

 AcI should pick up the bells when C wipes his fingers on corporal.

-when C bows over the host to consecrate, do not bow, but stay erect.³⁷ When C genuflects,³⁸ the acolytes make a moderate bow in unison, while AcI rings the bell **once** [ring the bell when his knee touches the predella].

-when C elevates the Sacred Host, the acolytes hold up chasuble *slightly like an arc* by the outside, bottom edges (do not let the underside of chasuble show when raising it; this action symbolizes the grace flowing from the Blessed Sacrament). At the same time AcI rings the bells **once**³⁹ as soon as C elevates the Sacred Host *above his forehead*.

-the acolytes lower the chasuble in unison with C as he lowers the Sacred Host. When the Sacred Host has been replaced on the paten, they release the chasuble.

-when C genuflects again, both acolytes make a moderate bow, and AcI rings the bells **once** again. [AcI does not put the bells down, but holds them at waist level during this time.]

-when C bows over the chalice, the acolytes remain erect again. When C genuflects, the acolytes make a moderate bow, while AcI rings the bells **once**.

-when C elevates the chalice containing the Precious Blood, the acolytes hold up the chasuble as before, while AcI rings the bells **once**. They again lower the chasuble in unison as C lowers the chalice, and release the chasuble when the chalice is replaced on the altar.

-when C genuflects, the acolytes make a moderate bow again, while AcI rings the bells **once**.


-AcI allows the sound to die out first, puts the bells down, picks them back up by his index finger, and then both acolytes stand, and *facing each other* (so as not to turn their backs on the Blessed Sacrament exposed now to those on the predella), they descend *per brevior* to the foot, genuflect (because the Blessed Sacrament was exposed to them while on the predella), turn outwards to return to their positions and then kneel.⁴⁰

The acolytes *do not* strike their breasts at the “*Nobis quoque peccatoribus*”.⁴¹

AGNUS DEI

-during the *Agnus Dei*, both acolytes make a simple bow and strike their breasts with their right hand **three** times at each “*miserere nobis*.” The acolytes resume folding their hands after “*dona nobis pacem*.”

AT C'S DOMINE NON SUM DIGNUS

 AcI should pick up the bells as C genuflects before this action: This is the *next* genuflection after the *Agnus Dei*.

-AcI rings the bells **once** each time *after* C says “*Domine, non sum dignus*” (**three** times total).⁴²

AT C'S COMMUNION

-while C bows and receives the Sacred Host, the acolytes make a simple bow [this is the very reason for the Mass, and hence it is one of the most important and sacred moments of the Mass: The consummation of the Sacrifice, Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself].

TURNING OF THE COMMUNION CLOTH⁴³

³⁷ This bow is not made by C out of reverence, but rather out of practicality, so that he may speak the words of consecration as close as possible to the oblation. This is especially important, when there are extra hosts near the corporal that C does *not* intend to consecrate for some reason or another.

³⁸ The method given here of making a bow at each genuflection during the Consecration, is the method found in L. O'Connell, p 161, and in the Guild's handbook, p 21.

³⁹ According to the SRC there should be only three rings *total* for Consecration action. This can be distributed in two ways: all three rings at the Elevations, or a single ring for each genuflection and Elevation. It is the usual the method in the United States (and also the more universal method) to ring the bells as described above.

⁴⁰ L. O'Connell, p 168; they genuflect after leaving the predella, because the Blessed Sacrament is now exposed on the altar; this is the rule for *inferior ministers*.

⁴¹ This is actually a carry-over from Solemn Mass, and is used to signal the deacon to switch to the Epistle side of the predella to remove the pall for the *Per ipsum*.

⁴² The acolytes do not strike their breasts, as this prayer is just for C, not for the faithful.

⁴³ The Communion cloth is still prescribed by law in *addition* to the plate (which was introduced in 1929); cf. *Matters Liturgical*, The Communion-Cloth, §143, pp 234-235 on the matter of legislation.

-as soon as C has consumed the Sacred Host (*i.e.*, when he stands erect), the AcI immediately picks up the bells, then both acolytes rise, and *without genuflecting* AcI returns the bells to the credence, while at the same time retrieving the Communion plate.

-meanwhile Ac2 moves to the center of the foot and waits for AcI.

-AcI then proceeds to the center of the foot, where both acolytes genuflect,⁴⁴ turn inwards and proceed to their respective outside corners of the rail (farthest from the gate):

- AcI on the Epistle side,
- and Ac2 on the Gospel side.

-they then turn the cloth over the rail, working their way to the center, and then proceed back to the foot, genuflect and then kneel on the first altar step.

-while C consumes the Precious Blood, the acolytes make a simple bow.

-when C has placed the chalice back onto the altar, both acolytes make a moderate bow and recite the *Confiteor* together, but only Ac2 strikes his breast, because AcI is holding the plate. They remain bowed until C says the *Misereatur*, then they raise themselves erect. Ac2 alone signs himself at the *Indulgentiam*, both immediately stand, genuflect,⁴⁵ ascend to the predella, and kneel.

AT THE FAITHFUL'S DOMINE NON SUM DIGNUS AND COMMUNION

-when C turns to face the people holding the Blessed Sacrament, the acolytes should look at the Sacred Host.⁴⁶

-during the faithful's *Domine non sum dignus*, Ac2 strikes his breast in the same manner as for the *Agnus Dei*, but this time, he keeps the tips of his fingers on his breast for each *whole phrase*.⁴⁷

-when receiving Communion, the acolytes hold the plate for themselves under their chins.

-after Ac2 has received Communion, he stands, takes a step back, allows C to go between him and AcI (still kneeling) and accompanies C to the Communion rail.

-meanwhile, AcI *remains kneeling on the predella*, until both C and Ac2 have *fully* descended the steps. Then AcI stands, turns slightly by his left, and without turning his back to the Blessed Sacrament on the altar,⁴⁸ he descends to the center of the foot *in plano*, genuflects, returns to his normal position, and then kneels.

-Ac2 remains on C's right-hand side during the distribution of Holy Communion.

-when C is finished distributing Holy Communion, Ac2 carefully gives the communion plate to him, and then accompanies him to the foot, where he assists C with his alb while he ascends any steps.

-then Ac2 returns to his normal position on the Gospel side and without genuflecting,⁴⁹ kneels in his normal position.

ABLUTIONS

-when C closes the tabernacle door, both acolytes rise, come to the center, genuflect, turn inwards and then proceed to the credence shoulder to shoulder.

-at the credence, both remove their stoppers, and AcI takes the wine cruet and Ac2 takes the water cruet. They turn inwards, proceed to stand in front of the Epistle side steps, standing *outside the edge* of the altar and immediately ascend to the second altar step.

-when C tilts chalice towards the acolytes, AcI goes to C's right-hand side on the predella, while Ac2 remains on the second step.

-there AcI first bows to C, and then pours some wine into the chalice, being careful not to touch the chalice with the cruet. When C signals, AcI stops pouring, bows to C, turns right, retrieves the communion plate and returns to the second altar step on the right-hand side of Ac2.

-both acolytes then turn *right* towards the altar, then move to stand *inside the edges* of the altar, where AcI puts the plate with the handle facing AcI just in front of the Epistle side altar card, leaving sufficient room for the chalice on the front portion of the altar.

-when C approaches the acolytes, both bow to him, AcI *slowly* pours the remainder of the wine (or until C signals him to stop) over C's fingers (AcI must be careful not to spill any wine onto the altar cloths), then Ac2 pours the remainder

⁴⁴ L. O'Connell, p 161, ff 45: "This genuflection is required because you are going out of sight of the altar (*cf. p. 39, n.2.*)"

⁴⁵ This genuflection is required because the Blessed Sacrament is exposed on the mensa; *cf. L. O'Connell, p 162.*

⁴⁶ At this point C is saying, "Ecce, Agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi": "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him Who takes away the sins of the world!"

⁴⁷ The bells should not be rung for the faithful's *Domine non sum dignus*. There is no reason for this. The reason for ringing the bells for C's, is to notify the people that he will receiving Holy Communion and Consummation of the Sacrifice is at hand, therefore pray for him. It is also to remind them to prepare themselves for Communion.

⁴⁸ This is accomplished by almost side-stepping while descending.

⁴⁹ There is no need for Ac2 to genuflect in unison with C because: a) Ac2 was accompanying the Blessed Sacrament, so he not considered to be returning within view of the altar, and b) Ac2 does not have to cross the center to return to his position.

of the water in the same manner. Both then bow to C, then Ac1 picks up the plate,⁵⁰ both turn inwards and descend to the credence.

-the acolytes put the stoppers back on the cruets, cover the plate, turn inwards and then immediately proceed shoulder to shoulder to the center of the foot.

CHANGING OF THE MISSAL AND CHALICE VEIL

-upon reaching the center, the acolytes immediately genuflect, and pair off to their respective sides (Ac1 to the Epistle side, Ac2 to the Gospel side) and proceed *per longiorem* around the foot to ascend the side altar steps to the predella.

-there Ac2 picks up the missal, and Ac1 picks up chalice veil (by the top corners with the emblem facing the congregation), they turn inwards towards the tabernacle, descend *per breviorum* to the center of the foot, genuflect (Ac1 turns chalice veil around at the same time so that the emblem faces the congregation), Ac1 allows Ac2 with the missal to proceed first⁵¹ while both re-ascend the steps *per breviorum* to the opposite sides of the predella (Ac1 to the Gospel side, Ac2 to the Epistle side).

-Ac2 puts the missal on the Epistle corner of the altar (facing straight), and Ac1 puts the chalice veil *flat* (not folded) on the altar next to C.⁵²

-both acolytes immediately turn outwards (Ac1 turns to his left, Ac2 turns to his right; this is turning towards the tabernacle), and both descend the side steps, proceed to the center of the foot *per longiorem*, genuflect, turn inwards and then proceed to their respective corners of the Communion rail.

TURNING THE COMMUNION RAIL CLOTH

-they turn over the cloths from the top of the rail, meeting at the center as before, proceed to the foot, where they genuflect, switch sides (Ac2 moving back for Ac1) and immediately go to their normal positions and kneel.⁵³

COMMUNION, POST COMMUNION AND ITE, MISSA EST:

-the acolytes make the proper responses and bows during the Communion, Post Communion and the *Ite, missa est*.

THE LAST BLESSING AND LAST GOSPEL

-at the Last Blessing, the acolytes sign themselves and say "Amen" at the end of the blessing.

-as soon as the acolytes have responded "Amen," they stand. Ac1 turns at an angle towards C standing in front of the Last Gospel altar card, while Ac2 remains facing straight.

-both acolytes make the proper responses and sign themselves in unison with C as he says, "*Initium sancti Evangelii secundum Joannem.*"

-the acolytes genuflect in unison with C at the words "*et Verbum caro factum est,*" make the proper response at the end and then come together at the center of the foot, but leaving enough room between them for C.⁵⁴

LEONINE PRAYERS AFTER MASS AND EXIT FROM THE SANCTUARY

-C then descends from the predella to the foot, and the acolytes kneel in unison with him. The acolytes should kneel *in plano* and slightly behind C.⁵⁵

-the acolytes lead the proper responses made by them.⁵⁶

-both assist C with his alb as he ascends the steps to the predella.

-when the prayers are finished both acolytes immediately stand, and Ac1 goes to the sedilia for the biretta (if C wore one), picking it up by the right-hand side fin.

⁵⁰ The plate should not be held by Ac1 beforehand, as it could be accidentally bumped against the chalice while pouring or his medal could scrap against the top of the plate during this action.

⁵¹ Because the missal is of higher dignity than the veil.

⁵² Due to the depth of the altar, it may be necessary to have the veil partially hang over the front edge of the altar.

⁵³ If C says "*Dominus vobiscum*" during this time, the acolytes can simply respond from their present location. It is not necessary for them to rush to their kneeling positions so that they can make this response while kneeling.

⁵⁴ If a card is necessary for the Leonine Prayers, it should be retrieved by Ac1 now and not during the Last Gospel. The abuse of retrieving a card or changing the communion cloth and etc. during the Last Gospel is irreverent towards what the Gospel represents: the Word of God. Full attention and reverence should be given during this period of time.

⁵⁵ If C kneels on the second altar Step or the edge of the predella, the acolytes may kneel on the first altar step. At Low Mass, the acolytes are always one level below and slightly behind C, as this follows the rule of precedence.

⁵⁶ During these prayers, the acolytes do not strike their breasts during the *Salve Regina* at "*O, clemens, O, pia...*" (there is no reason for this whatsoever), nor for the triple response of "*Miserere nobis*" (unless C does so. The striking of the breast is not prescribed for the ejaculation, "*Cor Jesu sacratissimum.*" However, this is allowed by local custom). Neither do the acolytes bow at customary words of "*Oremus,*" etc., as C does not bow while kneeling (the are two exceptions to this rule for sacred ministers and they are during the sung *Credo* at a sung Mass, and during Benediction for "*veneremur cernui*").

- the acolytes then genuflect together with C, then Ac1 presents the biretta's middle fin to C, kissing the biretta first, and C's hand last.
- then both acolytes turn inwards meet each other shoulder to shoulder in front of C and proceed to exit the sanctuary in the proper direction. They then proceed to the sacristy.
- upon arrival in the sacristy, both acolytes allow C to approach the vesting table, as Ac1 goes to the right and Ac2 to the left of C.
- all make a simple bow to the sacristy cross. Then both acolytes kneel in front of him and sign themselves while receiving his blessing.

AFTER MASS PRAYERS

Immediately after receiving C's blessing, the acolytes should go to the foot and kneeling on the first altar step say the Guild after Mass prayers.

AFTER MASS DUTIES

After the acolytes have said their Guild prayers, they need to perform the duties described below:

AC1:

- Extinguishes the candles as described previously.
- Removes the missal and altar cards.⁵⁷
- Returns the tabernacle key to the sacristy.
- Covers the altar neatly with the vesperale cloth.

AC2:

- Cleans the cruets,⁵⁸ tray, and bowl, drying them spot free and putting them properly away.
- Ensures that the *Lavabo* towel is clean enough to be used for another Mass; otherwise he replaces it.

The acolytes then may divest, hanging their cassocks and surplices carefully and in order.

⁵⁷ The altar cards should not remain on the altar, as the altar is not a glorified storage table; the altar is the most sacred object in the world, excepting the Blessed Sacrament. The Roman method is to remove all of the items on the altar (except the cross and candles), including the altar linens. However, the altar linens are generally not removed after Mass in the dioceses outside of Rome.

⁵⁸ The cruet holding the blessed water should be washed out in the sacrarium. Left over wine may be returned to the wine bottle.