

# SERVING LOW MASS

Goeb, Cuthbert  
Manner of serving at  
Low Mass  
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IMPRIMI POTEST

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*Abbas S. Joannis Bapt.*

IMPRIMATUR

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*Episcopus S. Clodoaldi*

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Deacidified

I will go in to the  
altar of God:  
to God who gives joy  
to my youth.

Ps. 42:4



# Manner of Serving at Low Mass

## *General Directions for Servers*

It is a great privilege to serve Mass and servers should show their appreciation by their conduct, their reverence, and their devotion.

Altar-boys "should avoid too much precision or affectation, or such bearing as befits soldiers on parade rather than churchmen. They must certainly do all gravely and regularly; but if they behave with too punctilious a uniformity the sacred functions look theatrical" (Martinucci). Fortescue adds: "Perhaps the danger is in the other direction."

### REVERENCES

A bow of the head or body, a genuflection, and a kneeling posture are natural attitudes of fear, respect, submission, or humility.

## Bows

1. *Bows of the head* are simple and profound.
  - a) Simple bows of the head consist of a slight inclination of the head, i.e., moving the head about two or three inches forward.
  - b) Profound bows of the head consist of a bow of the head with a slight inclination of the shoulders.
  
2. *Bows of the body* are medium or profound.
  - a) A medium bow of the body is a forward inclination of the upper body to an angle of about 45 degrees.
  - b) A profound bow of the body is a forward inclination of the upper body so that the hands can touch the knees.

## GENUFLECTIONS

*To make a genuflection properly*, the server should bend the right knee to the floor alongside the heel of the left foot, without inclining



the head or the upper part of the body; and rise again without delay, but naturally and without too great haste. The server always genuflects on the floor and never on the first step.

At the beginning and end of Mass, and when passing before the altar, the server genuflects on one knee, whether the Blessed Sacrament be reserved in the tabernacle or not.

In genuflecting with both knees (*double genuflection*), the right knee is bent first and then the left; then a medium bow of the body is made, while kneeling on the floor. A genuflection of this kind is made only when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed, and then only when the server approaches the altar, or leaves the altar to return to the sacristy, but not when passing the altar during the Mass.

#### FOLDING OF HANDS

When the server is performing no special task, the hands should be joined before the breast. To fold the hands properly, the hands are extended and joined palm to palm, the

fingers pointing upward, the thumb of the right hand crossed over the thumb of the left hand. Whenever one hand of the server is occupied, he holds the other hand extended upon his breast.

### SIGN OF THE CROSS

1. *The sign of the cross* is made by resting the left hand extended a little below the breast with the palm of the hand touching the body, and raising the right hand to the forehead, and touching it with the extremity of the fingers, saying: *In nomine Patris*; then touching the breast with the same hand, saying: *Et Filii*; touching the left and the right shoulders, *Et Spiritus Sancti*; and then joining the hands, saying: *Amen*.

2. *The triple sign of the cross* is a small cross made on the forehead, on the lips, and on the breast, with the flesh of the thumb (not with the thumb-nail). The four fingers should be extended and should touch each other when these crosses are made. The position of the left hand is as above.

## THE SURPLICE

*The proper way to put on a surplice is:* Hold the surplice on top with the left hand and with the right hand open it from below. Then hold it open with both hands and slip it over the head. Put the right arm into the right sleeve, and the left arm into the left sleeve, and adjust it so that it hangs properly about the body.

*In taking off the surplice,* withdraw the left arm first. Then pass the left part of the surplice over the head and then withdraw the right arm, taking hold of it on top, and hang it in its place.

## LIGHTING AND EXTINGUISHING CANDLES

*The server lights the candles* on the Epistle side of the altar first, beginning with the one nearest the Cross or Tabernacle; then he lights the candles on the Gospel side, commencing likewise with the one nearest the Cross.

*In extinguishing the candles* the opposite order is followed. Those on the Gospel side

are extinguished first, commencing with the one farthest from the Cross; then those on the Epistle side, commencing likewise with the one farthest from the Cross.

### THE MISSAL

The Missal should be on the Epistle side of the altar on the missal-stand or cushion, the latter being placed parallel with the altar-table. The opening edge of the book should face the tabernacle. The server may not open the book; this is done by the celebrant himself.

### VESTING THE PRIEST

The server prepares the *alb*, while the priest puts on the amice, and then puts it on him by holding up first the right sleeve of the alb; then, the left. The *cincture* is held for the priest with tassels at the server's right. The alb is adjusted so that it hangs evenly. The *maniple* is presented to the priest to be kissed. Next the server hands him the *stole* and finally assists the priest in putting on the *chasuble*.

## PLACE IN THE SANCTUARY

The place of the server is on the side opposite to the book (except during the last Gospel, whenever the book is *not carried* around a third time).

The server always kneels on the lowest step of the platform, except before the preliminary prayers, and before receiving Holy Communion.

### FOR TWO SERVERS

Before and after performing any action, both servers go to the middle, genuflect, and go to their respective places; the one at the Epistle side of the altar; the other, at the Gospel side.

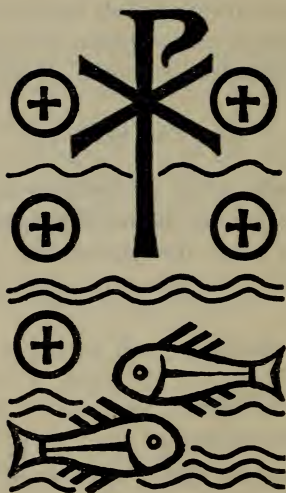
### ABBREVIATIONS AND SIGNS

*P.* means Priest.

*S.* means Server.

✠ means the sign of the cross should be made, either single or triple.

\* means omitted in Masses said with black vestments; also omitted in Masses said in violet vestments from Passion Sunday to Maundy Thursday.



# Serving at Low Mass

The server bows with the priest to the crucifix in the sacristy; he precedes the priest to the altar, stops at the Epistle side of the altar, and when the priest genuflects or bows, he genuflects. Having arranged the cruets on the credence table, he returns to the altar steps at the Gospel side.

In the case of two servers, arriving at the altar, the first server on the left (or right) steps back until the priest has passed him. The second server continues until he is slightly beyond the middle of the altar. They genuflect with the priest and the first server (now on the right of the priest) receives the biretta and places it on the chair.

## AT THE PRELIMINARY PRAYERS

The priest, having descended from the altar, genuflects, and the server kneels at the priest's left—on the floor.

With two serving, the first kneels at the priest's right, the second at his left. Both answer the prayers in unison.

*Priest.* In nomine Patris ✠ et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.

While the priest is saying the words "In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti," the server makes the sign of the cross with the priest. He then folds his hands and answers the prayers.

*Priest.* Introibo ad altare Dei.

*Server.* Ad Déum qui laetificat juventútem méam.

\* *P.* Judica me, Deus, et discerne causam meam de gente non sancta: ab homine iniquo et doloso erue me.

\* *S.* Quía tu es, Déus, fortitúdo méa: quáre me repulísti, et quáre trístis incédo dum affligit me inimícus?

\* *P.* Emitte lucem tuam et veritatem tuam; ipsa me deduxerunt et adduxerunt in montem sanctum tuum et in tabernacula tua.

\* *S.* Et introibo ad altáre Déi; ad Déum qui laetificat juventútem méam.

\* *P.* Confitebor tibi in cithara, Deus, Deus meus: quare tristis es anima mea et quare conturbas me?



\* *S. Spéra in Déo, quóniam ádhuc confitébor illi; salutáre vúltus méi, et Déus méus.*

While the priest is saying "Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto," the server should make a profound bow of the head.

\* *P. Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.*

\* *S. Sicut érat in princípío et nunc et sémpér, et in saécula saeculórum. Amen.*

\* *P. Introibo ad altare Dei.*

\* *S. Ad Déum qui laetíficat juventútem méam.*

The server makes the sign of the cross with the priest when the latter says:

*P. Adjutorium nostrum ✝ in nomine Domini.*

*S. Qui fécit coelum et térram.*

#### AT THE CONFITEOR

*P. Confiteor Deo, etc.*

*S. Misereátur tui omnípotens Déus; et*

dimíssis peccátiis tuis, perdúcat te ad vítam aetérnam.

*P.* Amen.

The server does not bow his head while the priest is saying the Confiteor, nor should the server strike his breast when the priest is saying “*mea culpa.*” He kneels erect until the priest has finished, then turning towards him and bowing slightly, he says “*Misereatur tui omnipotens Deus; et dimissis peccatis tuis, perducatur te ad vitam aeternam*”; then with a profound bow of the body towards the altar he says:

*S.* Confíteor Déo omnipoténti, beátae Maríae sémpér Vírgini, beáto Michaéli Archángelo, beáto Joánni Baptístae, sánctis Apóstolis Pétro et Páulo, ómnibus sánctis et tibi, páter (*here the server turns his head and shoulders toward the priest for a moment*), quía peccávi nímis cogitatióne, vérbo et ópere (*here the server strikes his breast three times*), méa cúlpa, méa cúlpa, méa máxima cúlpa. Ideo précor beátam Maríam sémpér Vírginem, beátum Michaélem Archángelum, beátum Joánnem Baptístam, sánctos Apóstolos Pétrum et Páulum, ómnes sánctos, et te, páter (*here the server turns toward the priest*), oráre pro me ad Dóminum Déum nóstrum.

*P.* Miscreatur vestri omnipotens Deus et dimissis peccatis vestris perducatur vos ad vitam aeternam.

*S. Amen.* (*The server kneels erect.*)

The priest makes the sign of the cross while saying the following words and the server makes it with him.

*P.* Indulgentiam ✠ absolutionem et remissionem peccatorum nostrorum tribuat nobis omnipotens et misericors Dominus.

*S. Amen.*

The server makes a medium bow of the body during the following versicles and responses.

*P.* Deus, tu conversus vivificabis nos.

*S. Et plebs tua laetabitur in te.*

*P.* Ostende nobis, Domine, misericordiam tuam.

*S. Et salutare tuum da nobis.*

*P.* Domine, exaudi orationem meam.

*S. Et clamor meus ad te veniat.*

*P.* Dominus vobiscum.

*S. Et cum spiritu tuo.*

The server genuflects in the middle and goes to the Gospel side of the altar. He kneels on the lowest step.

With two servers, both genuflect together in the middle. The first goes to the Epistle side; the second to the Gospel side. Both kneel on the lowest step.

#### AT THE KYRIE

*P.* Kyrie, eleison.

*S.* **Kyrie, eléison.**

*P.* Kyrie, eleison.

*S.* **Chríste, eléison.**

*P.* Christe, eleison.

*S.* **Chríste, eléison.**

*P.* Kyrie, eleison.

*S.* **Kyrie, eléison.**

*P.* Kyrie, eleison.

#### BEFORE THE COLLECT(S)

*P.* Dominus vobiscum.

*S.* **Et cum spírítu túo.**

## AFTER THE COLLECT(S)

*P.* Per omnia saecula saeculorum.

*S.* Amen.

## AT THE EPISTLE

At the end of the Epistle (when the celebrant raises his left hand slightly), the server responds:

*S.* **Déo grátias.**

He then crosses to the Epistle side, genuflecting when passing the cross, goes for the Missal by the **LONG** way, going round the end of the altar steps. Ascending to the second step, or remaining on the floor if there is but one step, he waits during the Gradual, Tract or Sequence—genuflecting during the Sequence whenever the priest does. When the celebrant goes to the middle, the server takes the Missal across to the Gospel side by the **SHORT** way, descending the altar steps diagonally, and after genuflecting in the center, ascends by the **SHORT** way, and places the book diagonally on the altar, so that its pages face half way towards the tabernacle. He stands by the book, on the top step, or on the floor. The priest comes to read the Gospel. The server answers the versicles at the beginning, and makes the sign of the cross with the thumb on his forehead, lips and breast with the priest. Then he goes to the Epistle side and stands at that corner facing the priest, while the Gospel is read. If the priest genuflects during the Gospel, the server does so too.

When two serve, after "Deo gratias," both rise together and, going to the middle, genuflect. The first steps back and allows the second to pass in front of him. The second goes to the Epistle side of the altar and ascends to the second step. The first server waits in the middle, genuflects with the second server when he brings the book, and then goes to the Epistle side and stands in his usual place. After the second server has made the sign of the cross, he bows and stands at the Gospel side.

### AT THE GOSPEL

*P.* Dominus vobiscum.

*S.* Et cum spíritu tuo.

*P.* Sequentia sancti Evangelii, ✠ etc.

*S.* Glória tibi, Dómine.

At the end of the Gospel the server answers:

*S.* Laus tibi, Chríste.

### AT THE CREDO

The server kneels, making a profound bow of the head when the priest genuflects.

### AT THE OFFERTORY

*P.* Dominus vobiscum.

## S. *Et cum spiritu tuo.*

Here the server rises and goes directly to the credence table, takes the cruets with wine and water and brings them to the altar. When the celebrant approaches, the server bows to him and with his right hand presents the cruet with wine to him, after first kissing it, and then takes the water cruet in his right hand; he receives the wine cruet back with his left hand, kissing it, and presents to the priest the cruet with water, kissing it both before giving it and after receiving it; he bows to the priest and takes the cruets back to the credence table.

In a Requiem Mass the cruets are not kissed, nor when ministering wine and water at the ablutions; neither are the cruets kissed in a Mass before the Blessed Sacrament exposed.

The server next brings the plate and the towel (unfolded over the left arm) to the altar, where he pours water on the priest's fingers at the proper time, bowing to him before and after. When the priest has washed his fingers, the server returns and kneels at his place on the Epistle side without first going to the center of the altar.

Note for two servers: They rise and go to the middle and genuflect. The second steps to the right of the first and they proceed to the credence table. The first takes the wine cruet and later the towel; the second ministers the water and later pours water on the priest's fingers. They proceed to the front of the altar, genuflect in the middle, go to their respective places, and kneel on the lowest step.

*P. Orate, fratres, etc.*

*S. Suscípiat Dóminus sacrificium de máni-  
bus túis ad láudem et glóriam nóminis súi, ad  
utilitátem quóque nóstram, totiúsque ecclé-  
siae súae sánctae.*

When the priest says "Orate Fratres," the server, kneeling erect, answers "Suscipiat," after the priest has turned to the altar. He answers the versicles before the Preface, bowing his head at "Deo nostro."

#### AT THE PREFACE

*P. Per omnia saecula saeculorum.*

*S. Amen.*

*P. Dominus vobiscum.*

*S. Et cum spírítu túo.*

*P. Sursum corda.*

*S. Habémus ad Dóminum.*

*P. Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro.*

*S. Dígnum et jústum est.*

#### AT THE SANCTUS

The server bows, and rings the bell each time the priest pronounces the word "Sanctus." He sets the bell



down and makes the sign of the cross at the words "Benedictus qui venit."

### AT THE ELEVATION

When the priest extends his hands over the chalice the server rings the bell again; then proceeds to the center of the altar, where, kneeling on the top step, whilst the priest elevates the Host and Chalice, he rings the bell with his right hand; and with the thumb and forefinger of his left hand he holds the priest's chasuble, not during the genuflections, but during the actual elevation of the Host and the Chalice. After the elevation of the Chalice and the priest's genuflection following, the server returns to his place on the Epistle side and kneels. The server does not descend backwards, but having turned around, left to right, descends the steps, turns around right to left, genuflects and again kneels in his place. A general rule for servers is the following: Never walk or step backward down the steps, and never turn the back unnecessarily to the Blessed Sacrament.

Note for two servers: After the first server rings the bell, both servers rise, go to the middle and genuflect. Both servers then kneel on the top step, and both hold the end of the chasuble during the actual elevations; the first server with his left hand; and the second, with his right hand. On descending, the two servers turn towards each other and step down.

### AT THE PATER NOSTER

*P.* Per omnia saecula saeculorum.

*S. Amen.*

*P. Et ne nos inducas in tentationem.*

*S. Sed libera nos a málo.*

#### AT THE BREAKING OF THE HOST

*P. Per omnia saecula saeculorum.*

*S. Amen.*

*P. Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum.*

*S. Et cum spíritu túo.*

When the priest recites the *Agnus Dei*, the server strikes his breast at the words: "*Miserere nobis*" and "*dona nobis pacem*"; but not at "*Dona eis requiem*" in Masses for the Dead.

#### AT THE COMMUNION

The server rings the bell each time the priest pronounces the words: "*Domine, non sum dignus.*"

As soon as the priest has received the Sacred Host and removed the pall from the chalice, the server goes directly to the Epistle side of the altar to minister to the priest, first wine, then wine and water. On approaching the altar with the cruets, he makes a genu-

flection. If there are communicants, the server first arranges the communion-cloth and returns to his place at the side of the altar and says the Confiteor (see page 14). If the server receives Communion, he goes to the credence table for the communion-paten (which he holds while receiving) and then recites the Confiteor kneeling at the side of the altar. The server receives Communion before the people.

No bow is made before, but immediately after pouring wine into the chalice. A bow is also made to the celebrant both before and after pouring wine and water into the chalice over the priest's fingers.

The server next removes the book to the Epistle side of the altar, observing the same procedure as at the Collect. He then removes the communion-cloth, and returns to the Gospel side.

## FOR TWO SERVERS

Both servers arise as the priest lifts the pall from the chalice, genuflect and go to the sides of the altar; the first, to the Epistle side; the second, to the Gospel side. The first ministers wine and water and the second carries over the Missal after the ablutions. If there are communicants, both go to arrange the communion-cloth and then separate to their respective sides for the distribution of Communion and for the ablutions. The second carries the Missal to the Epistle side and descends to the floor next to the first server. Together they proceed to the middle, genuflect and go to remove the communion-cloth. They return to their respective places and kneel.

## AFTER COMMUNION

*P.* Dominus vobiscum.

*S.* Et cum spírítu túo.

*P.* Per omnia saecula saeculorum.

*S.* Amen.

*P.* Ite, missa est. *Or,* Benedicamus Domino.

*S.* Déo grátias.

Note: In Masses for the Dead, the priest says: "Requiescant in Pace." The server answers, "Amen."

*P.* Pater, et Filius, ✠ et Spiritus Sanctus.

The server makes the sign of the cross and answers:

*S.* Amen.

(The server stands.)

*P.* Dominus vobiscum.

*S.* Et cum spírítu túo.

## AT THE LAST GOSPEL

*P.* Initium sancti Evangelii, ✠ etc. *Or,* Sequentia, etc.

The server makes the triple sign of the cross and says:

**S. Glória tibi, Dómine.**

At the end of the Gospel he says:

**S. Déo grátias.**

If the book must be carried around a third time, the server, after "Deo gratias" before the blessing, brings the book to the Gospel side. He may arrange so that his genuflection in passing the middle with the book coincides with the priest's blessing. In that case he will kneel at the middle on both knees. Or he may bring the book to its place, then kneel for the blessing at the Gospel side. He answers the responses at the beginning of the last Gospel, and goes over to the Epistle side and stands there, turning towards the priest. When the priest has finished the Gospel, the server kneels with him, and, if necessary, hands him the card or book for the prayers after Mass.

After the prayers, the priest takes the chalice, descends, the server genuflects with him, and after handing the biretta to the priest, conducts him to the sacristy and bows with him to the crucifix. He then bows to the priest, helps him unvest, extinguishes the candles, and unvests.

Every good server will then say at least one Hail Mary before leaving the church.









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