

**T**he Eucharist is the vital centre of all that the Church is and does.

At its heart is the real presence of the crucified, risen and glorified Lord, who continues his saving work among us. The Second Vatican Council reminded us: ‘the most holy Eucharist holds within itself the whole spiritual treasure of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Passover and our living bread’. (cf. *One Bread One Body* 3)

All who exercise a liturgical ministry need a proper preparation for their responsibilities. They are to have the competence to perform the particular ministry with which they have been entrusted. (cf. *Celebrating the Mass* 29)



This leaflet is one of a series of leaflets prepared for liturgical ministers to help them refresh their understanding of their role at Mass. The series draws on the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and *Celebrating the Mass*, a document of the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales.

It is one of the collection of resources produced by the Liturgy Office to assist the work of liturgical renewal in England and Wales.

## What the Church says about...

By the depth of the priest’s prayerfulness and the dignity and humility of his bearing, the people should be able to recognise the living presence of Christ, who spoke with authority but who came to serve, not to be served. The priest is to be conscious that he presides over the assembly in the name of Christ and of the ritual forms by which he gives proper expression to his leadership.

At his Ordination the priest promises to celebrate the mysteries of Christ faithfully and religiously as the Church has handed them down to us for the glory of God and the sanctification of Christ’s people, and to exercise the ministry of the word worthily and wisely, preaching the Gospel and explaining the Catholic faith. “Priests should go to the trouble of properly cultivating their liturgical knowledge and ability, so that through their liturgical ministry, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit will be praised in an ever more excellent manner by the Christian communities entrusted to them.”

*Celebrating the Mass* (CTM) 37

The pastoral effectiveness of a celebration will be truly heightened if the texts of the readings, the prayers, and the liturgical songs correspond as closely as possible to the needs, spiritual preparation, and capacity of participants. This will appropriately be achieved by use of the

broad options described in chapter VII.

In planning the celebration of Mass, then, the priest, should pay attention to the common spiritual good of the People of God, rather than his own inclinations. He should also remember that choices are to be made in consultation with those who perform some part in the celebration, including the faithful in regard to the parts that more directly belong to them. Since, indeed, a variety of options is provided for the different parts of the Mass, it is necessary for the deacon, the readers, the psalmist, the cantor, the commentator, and the choir to be completely sure before the celebration of those texts for which each is responsible is to be used and that nothing be improvised. Harmonious planning and carrying out of the rites will, to a great extent, help dispose the hearts and minds of the faithful to participate in the Eucharist.

*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*  
(GIRM) 352



*There would be every advantage in priests reading both the General Instruction and Celebrating the Mass. If you are pressed for time and have not already read either document you will probably find it more fruitful to begin by reading Celebrating the Mass.*

Let the Parish Priest strive so that the Most Holy Eucharist will be the centre of the parish congregation of the faithful; let him work to ensure that Christ's faithful are nourished through the devout celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist and the Sacrament of Penance; let him strive, furthermore, to ensure that the faithful are encouraged to offer prayers in their families as well, and to participate consciously and actively in the Sacred Liturgy. Although it is appropriate that he should be assisted in the effective preparation of the liturgical celebrations by various members of Christ's faithful, he nevertheless must not cede to them in any way those things that are proper to his own office.

All priests should go to the trouble of properly cultivating their liturgical knowledge and ability, so that through their liturgical ministry, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit will be praised in an ever more excellent manner by the Christian communities entrusted to them. Above all, let them be filled with that wonder and amazement that the Paschal Mystery, in being celebrated, instills in the hearts of the faithful.

cf. *Redemptionis Sacramentum* 32f

*Since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.*

II CORINTHIANS 4:1,5-7



**A** ccept from the people of God the gifts to be offered to him. Know what you are doing, and imitate the mystery you celebrate: model your life on the mystery of the Lord's cross.

ORDINATION OF A PRIEST

**Liturgy  
Office**  
ENGLAND  
& WALES

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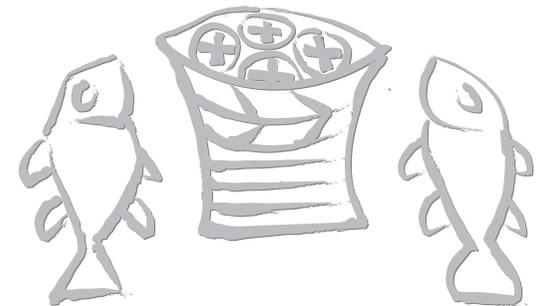
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## General Instruction of the Roman Missal & Celebrating the Mass

### A reading guide for Priests



*The priest leads the people in prayer, in listening and responding to God's word, and in offering the Sacrifice through Christ in the Spirit to the Father.* CTM 36