

Diocese of Saint Augustine General Norms for Lay Liturgical Ministers

1. *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* of the Second Vatican Council taught that the sacred liturgy is “an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. . . .[I]n the liturgy the whole public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is by the Head and his members.”¹ As such, the Church gathers to worship God in praise, thanksgiving, and supplication. Every liturgical ministry is in service to the assembly so that the Lord may be encountered.
2. The ministries which are covered by these general norms include lectors, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, ministers of hospitality/ushers, altar servers, and those in music ministries and choirs.
3. All members of the laity who serve as liturgical ministers are chosen for service within a specific parish. Service in other parishes or institutions of the diocese must be approved in consultation with the pastor of the parish in which the minister has been commissioned. Service in multiple parishes should be the exception rather than the norm.
4. As a rule, lay liturgical ministers are to exercise only one ministry at a specific liturgy.²
5. It is established custom in the United States for lay liturgical ministers who do not serve in the instituted ministries of Acolyte and Lector to be attired in a manner which reflects their primary membership in the liturgical assembly. With this in mind, the following are provided as minimum guidelines for lay liturgical ministers.

Men should wear a coat, dress slacks (or suit), dress shirt and tie, dress shoes and socks. Women are to be modestly attired in a dress (must fully cover the shoulders) skirt, or dress slacks with dress blouse or top (must fully cover the shoulders) and dress shoes.

[P.N. – Ethnic attire that is considered formal and appropriate for public occasions is acceptable for use in parishes where this may pose an issue.]

For all liturgical ministers – shorts, jeans, athletic footwear or sandals are never to be worn. Ministers are encouraged to dress so as not to draw attention to themselves and should always wear “Sunday best” when serving in the name of our Lord. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* states that lay ministers are to wear “appropriate and dignified clothing.”³

Altar servers – The custom is to have altar servers vested in some liturgical attire. The preferred vestment is the alb and, if necessary, a cincture. (Parishes using cassocks and surplices for altar servers are encouraged to replace these with albs.)

6. All liturgical ministers are to receive training that is appropriate for the specific ministry in which they will serve. Such training is to include theological, liturgical and pastoral formation. Ministers should not begin service without an adequate period of formation and training.

7. All liturgical ministers are to receive a blessing or commissioning according to the approved liturgical rite in the *Book of Blessings*. Pastors must submit the names and receive approval from the Bishop of the diocese before commissioning extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.
8. Service as a lay liturgical minister is not intended as a permanent ministry. Therefore, parishes are encouraged to adopt “terms of service” for liturgical ministers, particularly for lectors, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion and ministers of hospitality/ushers. The purpose of such terms provides the pastor/parish with the opportunity to evaluate ministers as well as their performance. It also allows ministers to move to other ministries or take a time of “rest” from constant, continual service. In the Diocese of Saint Augustine, the suggested term of service is 3 years. Pastors are permitted to establish a different term of service, e.g., 2 years or 5 years, as needed.
9. Ministers may be removed from their duties for failure to adequately and appropriately perform their service. All lay liturgical ministers should be periodically reviewed by the pastor.
10. All ministers who provide ministry to “at risk” persons, including the elderly, children or those with disabilities, must submit to a criminal background check. This requirement is understood to apply to those who are entrusted with the care or supervision of children, the elderly or the disabled. Those whose ministry will require service to children must also attend a *Protecting God’s Children* training workshop or its equivalent as established by the Diocese of Saint Augustine.

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¹ *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 7. (Hereafter cited as *CSL*)

² See *CSL*, no. 28. (“In liturgical celebrations each person, minister or member of the laity who has an office to perform, should carry out all and only those parts which pertain to their office by the nature of the rite and the norms of the liturgy.”)

³ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (3rd typical edition), no. 339.