

## THE ORDER OF THE MASS WITHOUT A CONGREGATION

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Vatican II greatly extended the possibility for concelebration, so that priests who need not say Mass for the sake of the people, may always have the opportunity to concelebrate. But even after Vatican II "each priest shall always retain the right to celebrate Mass individually, though not at the same time in the same Church as a concelebrated Mass" (Const. on the Lit., art 57 § 2,2). Therefore we find in the new Missal an Ordo for Masses without a congregation.

Even if Mass is said without a congregation, the priest should always be assisted by a server who takes the place of the people in answering to the priest's greetings and who assists, as otherwise servers do in Masses with a congregation. Rome was always extremely reluctant to permit Masses without a server and also now only *a grave necessity* — to be judged by the priest himself who wants to say Mass — justifies the celebration of such Masses. What is a grave necessity? Certainly not the little inconvenience of serving a fellow priest during a retreat, where, in addition, each one has the chance to take part in concelebration.

In Masses without a server, all the greetings are to be omitted, because there is no one to answer. The priest is not to answer to himself, because "in liturgical celebrations, whether as a minister or as one of the faithful, each person should perform his role by doing solely and totally what the nature of things and liturgical norms require of him" (Const. on the Lit., art. 28). Therefore, the priest leaves out the greeting after he crossed himself at the beginning of the Mass. Equally to be omitted are the greeting before the Gospel (he begins with: "At

that time...") before the preface (he begins with: "It is truly right and just ..."), the "Orate fratres", the wish of peace "The Lord's peace be with you always", and the entire concluding rite of the Mass. With the prayer after Communion the Mass without a server comes to a close.

During the service of the Word the chalice has normally its place on the credence table, in the Mass with and without a congregation. In a Mass without a congregation it is also permissible to have the chalice on the altar at the beginning of the Mass. This is certainly advisable if Mass is said without a server. In all Masses without a congregation the Missal (resp. the books that will, in future take its place) will have its place on the left side of the altar from the beginning until the end.

### A general Rule

The Mass without a congregation follows in its rites as far as possible the rites, established by the guidelines for the Mass with a congregation. Only the exceptions will be noted below.

### Introductory Rites

After he vested for Mass the celebrant and the server make the customary reverence to the altar, normally a bow of the body. Then both cross themselves and the priest says: "In the name of the Father, etc.," to which the server answers "Amen." Then the priest turns to the server who stands throughout these rites, extends his hands and greets him, using one of the proposed formulas, to which the server answers in the usual way.

Still standing at the foot of the altar both make their confession together. The invitation ("My brothers, to fit ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries, let us in silence remember our sins") of the Order of the Mass with a congregation has been left out. Therefore, after the greeting, both priest and server insert a short period of silence and reflect on their faults, before they start with the confession. Only the first form of the act of penance is found in the Ordo Missae; no reference is made to another choice. Does this mean that in a Mass

without the people, the priest has always to use the shortened form of the Confiteor? Obviously not, for no prohibition is mentioned either. But since in the first form no alternating prayers are found, it is certainly the most simple and convenient form.

Only after the penitential act the priest ascends to the altar, kisses it and proceeds to the left side where the Missal is placed. There he remains until after the general intercession (Prayer of the Faithful). He reads first the Introit antiphon. Together with the server he says the Kyrie and, when it is prescribed, the Gloria. When the Gloria (resp. the Kyrie) is ended, he says, with his hands joined and still facing the Missal, "Let us pray." After a short while of silence, he extends his hands and says the collect, at the end of which the server responds, as usual with "Amen."

#### The Liturgy of the Word

If the priest wants to let the server read the first (and the second) lesson, he may sit down during the readings and the responsorial psalm, if a chair or seat is available. No reference is made in the rubrics to the acclamations after the readings, which are mentioned explicitly in the guidelines for the Mass with a congregation.

For the Alleluja there exist conflicting rules in the Missal. In the general guidelines for Masses with and without a congregation, which describe the structural elements of the Mass, it is said that, if the Alleluja (or the versicles which take its place during Lent) is not sung, it may be simply omitted (art. 39). But the rubrics (not the *Ordo Missae* itself) for the Mass without a congregation refer to the Alleluja (and to the chant (!) that takes its place during Lent). It seems that the priest has the freedom either to say the Alleluja or to omit it.

Still staying at the left side, facing the Missal, the priest then bows and says the prayer "Almighty God, cleanse my heart, etc." With hands joined he adds then: "The Lord be with you," as in the Mass with a congregation and reads the gospel. When the gospel is finished, the celebrant kisses the book, saying in a low voice: "By the word of the gospel may our sins be blotted out." Then the server makes the acclamation: "Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ."

If it is to be said the celebrant says the Credo together with the server, and may also insert the general intercessions to which the server, answers. Not only the introduction and conclusion, but also the individual intentions are here the priest's part.

### The Liturgy of the Eucharist

If the chalice has been on the credence table during the first part of the Mass the server brings the corporal, the purificator and the cup to the altar, leaving the veil on the credence table. The priest may permit the server to arrange everything and only then he comes to the center of the altar. From the first Sunday in Advent 1969 on, the offertory antiphon is also to be dropped in Masses without a congregation, even if, for a period of transition we may have to use the old Roman Missal. The server offers the priest the paten with the altar bread in about the same way as the deacon does in high Mass. For the deposition of bread and wine (this is one of the official names for offertory) one observes the same rites as in the Mass with a congregation. For the preparation of the chalice the priest does not leave his place in the center of the altar. After the two prayer formulas which accompany the deposition of the bread and wine on the altar the server does not make the acclamation "Blessed be God for ever." Only for the washing of his hands does the priest go to the side of the altar, to the one that is most convenient for him. For the "Orate fratres" he turns to the server, extends and then joins his hands while he says the formula.

Observing the rites prescribed for the Mass with a congregation the priest says the prayer over the gifts (with the short conclusion) and the Eucharistic Prayer. Also the Lord's Prayer and its subsequent embolism are said in exactly the same manner as in the Mass with the people. With the new acclamation the server concludes the reformed embolism. The priest may (need not) give the sign of peace to the server, but omits the invitation "Let us show that we are at peace with one another." While he breaks the host the priest says together with the server the "Agnus Dei." Afterwards he places a small particle in the cup, saying in a low voice "May this mingling..."

With hands joined and standing upright he says silently one of the two preparation prayers for holy Communion. Then he genuflects, takes the host and, if the server is to receive holy Communion, turns to him. Holding the host a little over the paten, he says: "Behold, the Lamb of God ..." and then together with the server adds once only: "Lord, I am not worthy..." Facing the altar he says in a low voice: "May the body of Christ..." After he has received the precious blood and before he gives Communion to the server, he says the Communion antiphon.

If the server does not receive holy Communion, the celebrant, after the genuflection takes the host, and says, facing the altar, once only: "Lord, I am not worthy..." Then he receives in the usual way communion under both kinds. This is then followed by the Communion antiphon.

After his own or the server's communion the priest wipes the paten and rinses the chalice at the side of the altar. The prayers formerly prescribed for the purification have been abolished as well as those that accompanied the communion at the chalice (e.g. "Quid retribuam"). Cup, purificator and corporal are either transferred by the server to the credence table or left on the altar until the end of the Mass. A period of silence may be observed. Returning to the left side of the altar the priest stands, facing the book and says, with his hands joined: "Let us pray." Both pray for a while in silence, unless the silence has been observed already. Then the celebrant extends his hands and says the prayer after Communion (with the short conclusion). At the end the server responds "Amen."

### Concluding Rites

This form of the Mass is concluded in the same way as the Mass with a congregation: the priest turns to the server, greets him in the usual way, and blesses him. The "Ite, missa est" however, is omitted. As in the beginning the priest kisses the altar, makes the customary reverence with the server and leaves.