

**RECOVERING THE FULL
CELEBRATION OF THE LITURGY
LITURGICAL MINISTERS**

Liturgical ministers ought to discharge their office therefore with the sincere devotion and decorum demanded by so exalted a ministry and rightly expected of them by God's people. Consequently they must all be deeply imbued with the spirit of the liturgy.

—Sacrosanctum Concilium, 29

Liturgical celebrations require the functioning of a variety of ministries in order to project a rich, full expression of the very nature of the Church—a microcosm of the Body of Christ. At Mass in particular, a priest presides, often with the assistance of a deacon. Acolytes serve; readers proclaim the word of God to the assembly; extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion assist with the distribution of the Body and Blood of Christ.

Ushers and greeters welcome the people of God as they assemble and assist with the gifts and the collection. Cantors and instrumentalists support the singing of the assembly while choirs add beauty to the liturgy with trained voices.

The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* tells us that, “servers, readers...and members of the choir also exercise a genuine liturgical function.” In other words, these ministries are a necessary part of the liturgy, not just “add ons” to help the priest. The plurality of ministries in the liturgy should reflect the lived reality of the Church: all are needed to serve and celebrate.

During the pandemic, many liturgical ministries of the church were minimized or eliminated. A minimalist liturgy makes for a service that is meager and wanting—a weak image of the Church! Altar servers were replaced by book stands; lay readers were replaced by clergy; musical elements were reduced as if unimportant.

Now that post-pandemic life is emerging, a moment of grace lies before us calling parishes to revitalize their worship; to invite back ministers who stepped down during the pandemic and to install additional ones where needed. Now is the time to restore the parts of the Mass and the function of ministers required for a rich, full celebration of the liturgy.

With properly prepared ministers assisting at worship, the faithful are better able to encounter Christ in the Assembly, the Word and the Eucharist. The Church cannot afford to minimize its experience of prayer when so many need the presence of Christ in their lives. With the full use of clerical and lay ministries, worship will come alive again.