

MINISTRY OF ACOLYTE

INFORMATION AND APPLICATION PROCESS

In 1972, Pope Paul VI revised several ministries and minor clerical orders.¹ One ministry that was preserved was the ministry of the instituted acolyte. While the term acolyte is at times used when referring to young men and women who assist at the altar (altar servers), the ministry of instituted acolyte is a permanent institution. Because the ministry has its roots in the formation of ordained clergy, the ministry is reserved to men.

The instituted acolyte is appointed to assist the deacon and serve the priest in the celebration of the liturgy. He is an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion serving only when sufficient ordinary ministers are not available.² Instituted acolytes, as necessary, may also assist with the formation of other ministers who assist at the altar. Because these ministers are dedicated to service at the altar, they should strive to learn all they can about public divine worship and strive to grasp its inner spiritual meaning. A primary responsibility is to assist with the purification of vessels used in the distribution of Holy Communion.

Bishop Sheridan has expressed his desire that men chosen for this ministry should be experienced sacristans and liturgical ministers. Men must be at least 25 years of age, fully initiated and living an exemplary Christian way of life, with no impediments to sacramental reception, (e.g., if married, one must be in valid union recognized by the Church).

Pastors determine the need for instituted acolytes in their parish.

¹ Pope Paul VI, *Ministeria Quaedam*, August 15, 1972.

² Code of Canon Law, canon 910.

INSTITUTED ACOLYTE APPLICATION FORM

Last Name,	First Name	Initial
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Street (Mailing) Address	City	Zip
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Phone	E-Mail
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Name of Parish	City
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Signature	Date
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For the applicant to complete:

- Baptism – An original certificate issued within the past six months with Confirmation and Marriage notations (Do not need First Communion or birth certificates).
- Confirmation – if no notations on Baptismal certificate, must submit an original certificate issued within the past six months.
- Marriage - If no notations on Baptismal certificate, need an original certificate issued within the past six months from a Catholic Church (Not a Marriage License).
- Not married (if not married, please check this box).
- Diocesan EMHC training completed.
- Safe-Environment Training completed in your parish.
- Completed handwritten and signed letter of petition by candidate on a single sheet of paper. (Please see the instructions and example given on pages 11-12.)

For your Pastor to complete:

- Letter of recommendation from your parish's pastor.
- Acolyte Training Plan – Liturgical Duties, Outline of Formation Program, Continuing education agreement (copy of which is submitted to the Office of Worship).
- Letter attesting the applicant has completed Safe-Environment Training, passed the CBI, and signed the Acknowledgement of the Sexual Misconduct Policy.
- A copy of all paperwork kept for parish records.
- Send completed package (Originals only – No copies) to the Bishop's Office. Please do not send partial paperwork.

Once all requirements have been fulfilled, the candidate has completed training, and the Bishop's Office has received all documents, a date for the institution of the Acolyte will be set.

HOW TO OBTAIN THE NECESSARY SACRAMENTAL RECORDS

A requirement for all those to be instituted as an acolyte is that they are fully initiated and living an exemplary Catholic way of life. This means, for example, valid marriage if married. A current sacramental record is required to assist in verifying this information. Typically this requires a request for your baptismal record with all notations. The notations indicate confirmation and marriage. When a person is confirmed or married, a notice sent to the baptismal parish. To this end, the Office of Worship must receive an official baptismal certificate issued within the last six months by the parish of baptism. We will not accept photocopies or faxed certificates. The parish seal must be present on the certificate. The certificate should contain all notations made in the sacramental record. This means that the certificate should contain a notation for confirmation and marriage. The Diocese will keep the certificate. At times, notifications were not sent to the baptismal parish. In this case, the candidate will need to contact the parish where confirmation and marriage were celebrated and request an official sacramental certificate for these sacraments.

What follows is information for resolving particular issues that are at times encountered when one seeks official certificates.

Baptismal Certificate

Among the attached forms is a request for a baptismal certificate which is requested from the parish where you were baptized. You will need to contact the parish to request the certificate. Often there is a minimal stipend requested. The parish can communicate this to you. Here are some pointers:

- If you do not know the name of the parish:
 - o Contact a parent or other relative who would have been present
 - o Look in old family Bibles
 - o Look through old records which may include an old baptismal certificate which would contain the name and address
 - o Go to your parish office and ask to look through the Kenedy Catholic Church Directory or go to the internet:
 - Look up the names of the parishes in your home town or the place you lived when young.
 - Contact the parishes and ask them if your name is in the record along with the name of your parents and an approximate date based upon your date of birth.
 - NOTE: Sacramental records are private and it is possible that the parish may not assist you in this manner. However, all you are doing at this point is trying to find the baptismal parish. By telling them this, they will likely tell you if the record exists.

- o If you know the parish where you received Confirmation or were married, check there asking the staff if there is any information about your baptism recorded on the record. Stress that you are trying to track your baptismal information.
- o If the parish no longer exists or if the records have been destroyed, contact the diocesan archives office for the place you were baptized.
- o Upon finding the record, complete the appropriate form.
- o All notations must be included on the certificate.

Profession of Faith

- If you were baptized in another Christian tradition, e.g., Methodist or Baptist, then you made a profession of faith in the Catholic Church at the time you completed your sacraments of initiation. Contact that parish and they will have your complete sacramental record.
 - o Locate the parish's contact information as described above concerning Baptism.
 - o Send them the appropriate form requesting a Profession of Faith certificate (or a baptismal certificate if they do not have a Profession of Faith certificate).
 - o All notations are to be included on the certificate.
 - o NOTE: Even though you may have been baptized at First United Methodist, when you made a Profession of Faith you should have provided the Catholic parish with your baptismal information. The certificate the parish issues will reflect that you were baptized at First United Methodist. This is proper.

No Confirmation Notation

- If after you find your baptismal parish of record, you find that they do not have a record of your Confirmation:
 - o Contact the parish where Confirmation was celebrated (locate the contact info as described above concerning baptismal certificates).
 - o Verify the record of Confirmation exists by giving your name and the approximate date of the Confirmation and the name of your sponsor(s).
 - o Request a new official copy of the certificate with the parish seal and provide that certificate to the Office of Worship.
 - o Ask the parish to make the official notification of Confirmation to the parish of Baptism as they do not have the notation in their records. (You will likely need to make this request in writing.) You will need to provide the contact information for the baptismal parish.

No Marriage Notation

- If after contacting the baptismal parish, you find that there has been no notation made concerning Marriage:
 - o Contact the parish where the Marriage was celebrated (locate the parish contact information as described above for baptismal certificates).
 - o Request a new official copy of the Marriage Record (certificate) to be sent to you. Send that Marriage Record to the Office of Worship.

- o Request that the parish send an official notification of Marriage to the baptismal parish. They will need:
 - The contact information for the baptismal parish;
 - Your name, your parent's and Godparent's names, and the date of baptism.

No Marriage Notation – Marriage Outside of the Catholic Church with a dispensation from canonical form granted.

- If after contacting the baptismal parish you find that there has been no notation made concerning Marriage and you were married outside of the Catholic Church:
 - o Contact the parish where you were a member at the time you were married (or where your marriage preparation took place):
 - Request a copy of the dispensation from canonical form that was granted and an official copy of the Marriage Certificate.
 - Request that they send an official notification to your parish of baptism supplying them the necessary information as described above.
 - o If the parish does not have the record, contact the diocese and request a copy of the dispensation from canonical form.
 - Bring a copy of your Marriage License and a copy of the dispensation from canonical form to the Office of Worship.
 - Request that the Diocese or Parish send an official notification of marriage to your baptismal parish.

Sacraments Outside of the United States

- What is described above is applicable for sacraments celebrated outside of the United States. Some additional points:
 - o The Kenedy Catholic Church Directory is a directory only of parishes in the United States.
 - o Use the internet to locate the parish by searching for “Roman Catholic Church” and the name of the city and country. Contact the parish and request the Baptismal Certificate with notations
 - o Use the internet to locate the diocese for the city where the sacrament(s) were celebrated. Contact them and seek their guidance on obtaining the needed baptism certificate with notations or other certificates.
 - o The parish or diocese can instruct about any fees that may be required.

After Exhausting All Avenues

- If after attempting all of the above you are still unable to resolve your situation, contact the Office of Worship.

Your Situation Is Not Addressed Above

- Speak with your parish office.
- If that does not resolve this situation, contact the Office of Worship.

DUTIES OF INSTITUTED ACOLYTES AT MASS

“The acolyte is appointed in order to aid the deacon and to minister to the priest. It is his duty therefore to attend to the service of the altar and to assist the deacon and the priest in liturgical celebrations, especially in the celebration of Mass; he is also to distribute communion as a special minister when the ministers spoken of in the Codex Iuris Canonici can. 845³ are not available or are prevented by ill health, age, or another pastoral ministry from performing this function, or when the number of communicants is so great that the celebration of Mass would be unduly prolonged. In the same extraordinary circumstances an acolyte may be entrusted with publicly exposing the blessed sacrament for adoration by the faithful and afterward replacing it, but not with blessing the people. He may also, to the extent needed, take care of instructing other faithful who on a temporary basis are appointed to assist the priest or deacon in liturgical celebrations by carrying the missal, cross, candles, etc., or by performing other such duties. He will perform these functions more worthily if he participates in the holy eucharist with increasingly fervent devotion, receives nourishment from it, and deepens his knowledge about it.”

“As one set aside in a special way for the service of the altar, the acolyte should learn all matters concerning public divine worship and strive to grasp their inner spiritual meaning: in that way he will be able each day to offer himself entirely to God, be an example to all by his gravity and reverence in church, and have a sincere love for the Mystical Body of Christ, the people of God, especially for the weak and the sick.”

“In accordance with the ancient tradition of the Church, institution to the ministries of reader and acolyte is reserved to men.”⁴

187. The functions that the acolyte may carry out are of various kinds and several may occur at the same moment. Hence, it is desirable that these duties be suitably distributed among several acolytes. If, in fact, only one acolyte is present, he should perform the more important duties while the rest are to be distributed among several ministers.

The Introductory Rites

188. In the procession to the altar, the acolyte may carry the cross, walking between two ministers with lighted candles. Upon reaching the altar, however, the acolyte places the cross upright near the altar so that it may serve as the altar cross; otherwise, he puts it away in a dignified place. Then he takes his place in the sanctuary.

189. Through the entire celebration, it is for the acolyte to approach the Priest or the Deacon, whenever necessary, in order to present the book to them and to assist them in any other way

³ This refers to the 1917 Code. See Canon 910 of the 1983 Code.

⁴ Paul IV, Apostolic Letter, *Ministeria quaedam*, August 15, 1972, nos. 6-7; *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 64 (1972), p. 532.

required. Thus it is appropriate that, in so far as possible, the acolyte should occupy a place from which he can easily carry out his ministry either at the chair or at the altar.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

190. In the absence of a Deacon, after the Universal Prayer and while the Priest remains at the chair, the acolyte places the corporal, the purificator, the chalice, the pall, and the Missal on the altar. Then, if necessary, the acolyte assists the Priest in receiving the gifts of the people and, if appropriate, brings the bread and wine to the altar and hands them to the Priest. If incense is being used, the acolyte presents the thurible to the Priest and assists him while he incenses the offerings, the cross, and the altar. Then the acolyte incenses the Priest and the people.

With A Deacon

178. After the Universal Prayer, while the Priest remains at the chair, the Deacon prepares the altar, assisted by the acolyte, but it is the Deacon's place to take care of the sacred vessels himself. He also assists the Priest in receiving the people's gifts....

Without a Deacon

139. When the Universal Prayer is over, all sit.... An acolyte or other lay minister places the corporal, the purificator, the chalice, the pall, and the Missal upon the altar.

140. It is desirable that the participation of the faithful be expressed by an offering, whether of the bread and wine for the celebration of the Eucharist or of other gifts to relieve the needs of the Church and of the poor. The offerings of the faithful are received by the Priest, assisted by the acolyte or other minister. The bread and wine for the Eucharist are carried to the Celebrant, who places them on the altar, while other gifts are put in another suitable place.

141. The Priest accepts the paten with the bread at the altar, holds it slightly raised above the altar with both hands and says quietly, *Benedictus es, Domine (Blessed are you, Lord God)*. Then he places the paten with the bread on the corporal.

142. After this, as the minister presents the cruets, the priest stands at the side of the altar and pours wine and a little water into the chalice, saying quietly, *Per huius aquae (By the mystery of this water)*. He returns to the middle of the altar, and with both hands raises the chalice a little, and says quietly, *Benedictus es, Domine (Blessed are you, Lord God)*. Then he places the chalice on the corporal and, if appropriate, covers it with a pall. If, however, there is no Offertory Chant and the organ is not played, in the presentation of the bread and wine the Priest may say the formulas of blessing aloud, and the people acclaim, *Blessed be God for ever*.

143. After placing the chalice on the altar, the Priest bows profoundly and says quietly, *In spiritu humilitatis (With humble spirit)*.

144. If incense is being used, the Priest then puts some in the thurible, blesses it without saying anything, and incenses the offerings, the cross, and the altar. While standing at the side of the altar, a minister incenses the Priest and then the people.

145. After the prayer *In spiritu humilitatis (With humble spirit)* or after the incensation, the Priest washes his hands standing at the side of the altar and, as the minister pours the water, says quietly, *Lava me, Domine (Wash me, O Lord)*.

191. A duly instituted acolyte, as an extraordinary minister, may, if necessary, assist the Priest in distributing Communion to the people.⁵ If Communion is given under both kinds, in the absence of a Deacon, the acolyte administers the chalice to the communicants or holds the chalice if Communion is given by intinction.

192. Likewise, when the distribution of Communion is completed, a duly instituted acolyte helps the Priest or Deacon to purify and arrange the sacred vessels. In the absence of a Deacon, a duly instituted acolyte carries the sacred vessels to the credence table and there purifies them, wipes them, and arranges them as usual.

193. After the celebration of Mass, the acolyte and other ministers return together with the Deacon and the Priest in procession to the sacristy, in the same manner and in the same order in which they entered.

336. The sacred garment common to all ordained and instituted ministers of any rank is the alb, to be tied at the waist with a cincture unless it is made so as to fit even without such. Before the alb is put on, should this not completely cover the ordinary clothing at the neck, an amice should be used.⁶

⁵ Paul IV, Apostolic Letter, *Ministeria quaedam*, August 15, 1972, no. 6; *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 64 (1972), p. 532.

⁶ Excerpted from the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*.

FORMATION OF ACOLYTES

Quality of character

Candidates must live an exemplary Christian life, willing to give faithful service to God and the Christian faithful. In the Diocese of Colorado Springs, the minimum age for an instituted acolyte (excluding seminarians) is 25.

Acolytes, once instituted, should be willing to serve the community on a regular basis on weekends, Holy Days, and possibly at weddings and funerals. The nature of this ministry lends itself to assisting with the training of EMHCs and Altar Servers, and assisting with sacristy duties. Acolytes are to complete continuing education each year according to a mutual agreement with their pastors, and should also consider making an annual retreat.

Candidates must be instructed that if they divorce and remarry outside the Church, or cohabit with someone, they must cease functioning in this ministry. If never married, they must marry in the Church, or they likewise will be excluded from this ministry.

Candidates must understand that some of their duties will be shared with other ministers. They must always act with charity and humility. They must encourage and guide the service of youth as altar servers and encourage them and others to consider a vocation as a vowed religious, a deacon, or a priest.

Contents for catechesis

Documents which must be covered in the initial training:

GIRM, paragraphs 98, 187-193

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20030317_ordinamento-messale_en.html

Redemptionis Sacramentum, paragraphs 36-42, 43-47, (maybe 80-107), 117-128 (especially 119, 122)

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20040423_redemptionis-sacramentum_en.html

Code of Canon Law, canons 230, 897-898, 907, 910-944

http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_INDEX.HTM

Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy, 141, 160-165

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20020513_vers-direttorio_en.html

Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass, 5-8, the entire Introduction may be useful, 1-25

Some additional, useful documents for ongoing formation:

Mysterium Fidei

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_03091965_mysterium_en.html

Eucharisticum Mysterium

<http://www.adoremus.org/eucharisticummysterium.html>

Dominicae Cena

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/special_features/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_20030417_ecclesia_eucharistia_en.html

Ecclesia de Eucharistia

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/special_features/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_20030417_ecclesia_eucharistia_en.html

Sacramentum Caritatis

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis_en.html

Of historical interest:

Ministeria Quaedam

<http://www.ewtn.com/library/papaldoc/p6minors.htm>

Elements of ministry

Purification of Vessels

This must take place on/over an opened corporal. Larger particles can be picked up and consumed. Vessels should be purified with water, which is consumed.

The vessels are then wiped with a purificator. Great care must be taken that NO particles fall to the ground or remain on the vessel. One's own fingers should also be purified.

Altar Serving

See *Ceremonies of the Modern Roman Rite* by Peter J. Elliott (published by Ignatius Press, second revised edition 2005)

Appropriate vesture – the liturgical vesture proper to the acolyte is the alb (amice, if necessary) and cincture.

Placement – acolytes sit in the sanctuary (chancel/altar area) near or with the altar servers, but not in the place of the deacon.

PETITION FOR THE INSTITUTION OF AN ACOLYTE

The applicant must write a letter petitioning to be instituted as an acolyte. The letter needs to be written in ink by your own hand (not typed) and follow the pattern of the example letter given, but in your own words. It is to be addressed to the bishop of the diocese. Make an attempt to write everything on one side of the paper. If it is necessary to go beyond that, turn the page over and write on the back to complete the letter.

“A written request of the candidate with which he asks to be admitted to the rite in question. It is necessary that this request be composed by the candidate personally and written out in his own hand and may not be copied formulary, or worse, a photocopied text (cf.can. 1034,1).”⁷

The letter should contain the following elements:

1. Noting that it is a formal petition for admission to: the ministry of Acolyte in accordance with Canon 230.
2. A declaration that you wish to dedicate your life to the service of the Church.
3. A declaration of freedom from coercion and that you are making this request of your own free will.
4. A statement that you realize that admission to Acolyte does not carry with it any of the duties, rights, or privileges of clerics.
5. You promise to care for and foster your own vocation.
6. Your understanding that you have the right to the necessary spiritual assistance to develop your vocation.
7. A statement of fidelity to the teaching and discipline of the Church.
8. Signature and Date.

⁷ Congregation for Divine Worship and Sacraments, *Circular Letter to the Most Reverend Diocesan Bishops and other Ordinaries with Canonical Faculties to Admit to Sacred Orders Concerning Scrutinies regarding the Suitability of Candidate for Orders*, Prot.589/97, Nov. 10, 1997.

EXAMPLE LETTER

John D. Doe
1234 N. Main St.
Colorado Springs, CO 80903

October 1, 2013

The Most Rev. Michael J. Sheridan
Diocese of Colorado Springs
Catholic Pastoral Center
228 N. Cascade Ave.
Colorado Springs, CO 80903

Your Excellency:

Desiring to dedicate my life to the service of the Church, I wish to formally petition to be instituted for the ministry of Acolyte in accordance with Canon 230. I attest that I am free from any coercion and exercise my own free will in choosing to make this petition. I understand that as an Acolyte, I will have no right to support or remuneration from the Church or of the duties, rights, or privileges of clerical order.

I promise to seek ongoing formation in the faith, to dedicate myself to the cultivation of the spiritual life, and to uphold faithfully the teaching and discipline of the Church.

Sincerely in Christ,

John D. Doe