

The roles of **Lectors** and **Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (Eucharistic Ministers)** in the Holy Mass, particularly in the Roman Rite, are defined by several Church documents, Canon Law, and the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC). Below are the key requirements and guidelines for these two ministries:

1. Lectors (Readers)

A **Lector** proclaims the readings (except the Gospel) during the Mass. In some cases, they may also announce the intentions for the Prayers of the Faithful.

Requirements:

Canon Law:

- **Canon 230 §1:** "Lay men who possess the age and qualifications determined by decree of the conference of bishops can be admitted on a stable basis through the prescribed liturgical rite to the ministries of lector and acolyte."
- **Canon 230 §2:** "Lay persons can also perform the function of lector in a liturgical action by temporary designation. All lay persons can exercise this function, even if they are not instituted into the ministry of Lector."

General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM):

- **GIRM 101:** A Lector is to proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture during the Mass, with the exception of the Gospel. If no deacon is present, the Lector may also read the intentions of the Prayers of the Faithful.
- **GIRM 109:** Lectors must be suitably prepared, so they can proclaim the readings clearly, with understanding, and reverence.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC):

- **CCC 103:** In proclaiming the Word of God, Lectors participate in the teaching ministry of Christ. The proclamation of the Scriptures during the Mass is one way in which the living Word of God is transmitted.

Qualifications and Expectations:

- **Spiritual Preparation:** Lectors must be *people of prayer and faith* who can help others hear God's Word clearly and effectively.
- **Knowledge of Scripture:** They should be familiar with the readings they proclaim and understand their significance within the context of the liturgical celebration.
- **Public Speaking Skills:** It is essential that Lectors can read clearly and audibly to the congregation.
- **Training:** They should undergo training in both the theological understanding of their role and the technical aspects of liturgical reading (e.g., pronunciation, pacing, tone).

2. Eucharistic Ministers (Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion)

Eucharistic Ministers assist with the distribution of Holy Communion when there are not enough ordinary ministers (bishops, priests, deacons) available. Their role is considered "extraordinary," meaning it is intended for situations of necessity.

Requirements:

Canon Law:

- **Canon 910 §2:** "The extraordinary minister of Holy Communion is an acolyte or another member of the Christian faithful designated in accord with Canon 230 §3."
- **Canon 230 §3:** Where the needs of the Church require it and ministers are lacking, lay persons, even though they are not lectors or acolytes, can supply certain of their duties, namely to exercise the ministry of the word, preside over liturgical prayers, confer baptism, and distribute Holy Communion, according to the provisions of the law.

Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (*On certain matters to be observed or to be avoided regarding the Most Holy Eucharist*), issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments in 2004:

- **Redemptionis Sacramentum 154:** Extraordinary Ministers may only distribute Communion when there is a genuine necessity (e.g., when the number of faithful is so great that Mass would be unduly prolonged).
- **Redemptionis Sacramentum 156:** Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should be "*mature in faith, exemplary in Christian life, faith, and morals, and endowed with a deep devotion to the Holy Eucharist.*"

Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC):

- **CCC 1373:** In the Eucharist, Christ is present in a unique and most profound way. Ministers of the Eucharist, ordinary and extraordinary, are entrusted with the sacred task of distributing this presence.
- **CCC 1411:** Only validly ordained bishops and priests can preside at the Eucharist and consecrate the bread and wine, but under extraordinary circumstances, lay people can assist in the distribution.

Qualifications and Expectations:

- **Spiritual Life:** Eucharistic Ministers must be practicing Catholics in good standing, with a strong devotion to the Eucharist.
- **Training:** They must be trained both in the *theological understanding of the Eucharist* and the *practical aspects of distributing Communion with reverence*.
- **Commissioning:** The diocesan bishop, or a delegated priest, must commission Eucharistic Ministers. This often takes place within a liturgical ceremony.

- **Reverence and Dignity:** Eucharistic Ministers must handle the consecrated elements with deep respect and ensure that Communion is distributed properly (e.g., no sacrilegious actions, safeguarding the Eucharist).

Restrictions:

- **Limited Role:** They may only function as Extraordinary Ministers during the Mass when the ordinary ministers (bishops, priests, or deacons) are insufficient for the large number of communicants.
- **Reserved Functions:** Extraordinary Ministers do not have the authority to consecrate the Eucharist or deliver the homily during the Mass.

Both Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers play crucial roles in the life of the Church and its liturgy, but they must fulfill these roles with proper formation, respect for Church teaching, and a deep sense of reverence for the sacred tasks they undertake. Their ministries serve to enrich the celebration of the Eucharist, ensuring that the Word of God is proclaimed and that Christ’s body is

What Does the Catholic Church Mean by an “Active” or “Practicing Catholic”?

In the context of Church ministries, including the roles of Lector and Eucharistic Minister, being an **active or practicing Catholic** refers to a person who faithfully lives out the teachings of the Church in their daily life. This is more than simply identifying as Catholic; it involves regular participation in the sacramental and moral life of the Church, as well as adherence to its doctrine. Here are key aspects:

1. Regular Attendance at Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation

- According to the **Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 2181)**, the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on Sundays and holy days of obligation. This is a basic requirement of being a practicing Catholic. Missing Mass on these days without a serious reason (e.g., illness) is considered a grave sin.
- Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers, as visible representatives of the Church during the liturgy, must lead by example in this area. Regular Mass attendance shows a commitment to the Eucharist, the source and summit of Christian life (**CCC 1324**).

2. Reception of the Sacraments

- **The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession):** Practicing Catholics are expected to receive the Sacrament of Confession regularly, especially when in a state of mortal sin, before receiving Communion. The Church teaches that Catholics should confess their sins at least once a year (**CCC 1457**).
- **The Sacrament of the Eucharist:** Practicing Catholics should receive Communion frequently, but only after proper preparation. They must be in a state of grace, meaning free from mortal sin, to receive the Eucharist worthily (**CCC 1385**). Eucharistic Ministers, in

particular, are required to be in a state of grace when handling the Body and Blood of Christ.

3. Adherence to the Moral Teachings of the Church

- An active Catholic not only believes in the doctrines of the Church but also strives to live according to its moral teachings. This includes living a life of virtue, following the Ten Commandments, and accepting the Church's teachings on issues such as marriage, family, sexuality, and social justice.
- For example, living in accordance with the Church's teaching on marriage (as per **Canon 1055** and **CCC 1643**), such as being in a valid sacramental marriage if married, is an important expectation. Being in an irregular marital situation (e.g., living together outside of marriage or in a civilly remarried situation without an annulment) would generally preclude someone from serving as a Lector or Eucharistic Minister until the situation is rectified.

4. Participation in Parish Life and Service

- Being a practicing Catholic means active involvement in the life of the parish community beyond attending Mass. This could include engaging in parish ministries, catechesis, charitable works, and other forms of service. The Church encourages all Catholics to be a part of the communal life of the parish, which is an essential expression of the faith (**CCC 2179**).
- Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers are expected to exemplify this engagement, serving as models of active participation and stewardship.

5. Faithful to Church Doctrine and Authority

- A practicing Catholic accepts and upholds the teachings of the Magisterium (the Church's teaching authority). This includes assent to doctrines such as the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and the moral teachings on life issues, marriage, and sexuality. Public dissent from these teachings, particularly in a persistent or scandalous manner, would call into question one's status as a practicing Catholic.
- Those who serve in liturgical ministries, such as Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers, should not only hold to these beliefs privately but should also reflect them in their public life, avoiding any scandal that might undermine their witness.

6. Observing Fasting and Abstinence

- A practicing Catholic observes the penitential practices required by the Church, such as fasting on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday and abstaining from meat on Fridays during Lent (**CCC 2043**). These practices demonstrate obedience to the Church and a spirit of penance, which is integral to the Christian life.

The Importance of Being a Practicing Catholic for Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers

In summary, being an active or practicing Catholic is foundational for serving in any ministry within the Church. Both Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers are expected to:

- **Live a Sacramental Life:** Regularly participate in the Eucharist and Confession.
- **Model Catholic Morality:** Strive to live a life consistent with Catholic moral teachings.
- **Demonstrate Parish Involvement:** Be engaged in the community life of the Church.
- **Submit to Church Authority:** Accept the teachings of the Church and avoid public dissent.

In essence, a practicing Catholic not only believes in the faith but strives to live it out authentically and consistently. This active participation in the life of the Church allows one to serve as a visible example to others, particularly in ministries like Lector and Eucharistic Minister, where the individual has a prominent role during the liturgy.

Additional Church Documents:

1. **Sacrosanctum Concilium (Vatican II):** Emphasizes the role of the laity in the liturgy, particularly through full, conscious, and active participation.
2. ***Immensae Caritatis* (1973):** Granted the use of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion in cases of necessity.