

SACRED CONGREGATION OF RITES  
INSTRUCTION  
ON THE SIMPLIFICATION OF PONTIFICAL RITES AND INSIGNIA

Esteem for the pontifical rites and care over them are matters of centuries-old standing. These rites provide a symbol of the honor by which the bishop's dignity is to be acknowledged in the Church and they place clearly before the faithful the mystery of the Church itself.

The *Caeremoniale Episcoporum*, a collection of the norms required for pontifical celebrations made by papal authority, is evidence of the Church's continuing attentiveness regarding rites to be celebrated by a bishop.

The *Caeremoniale* preserves venerable traditions belonging to the ancient celebrations in which priests, deacons, and ministers perform their ministry when a bishop presides and the congregation of the faithful is present. In many places, however, it contains matters that are obsolete and not in keeping with our own times.

Reform of the liturgy was meant to bring the rites once again to a noble simplicity and to authenticity as signs. Once begun many bishops insistently requested that pontifical celebrations and insignia also be simplified.

Not everything in the *Caeremoniale Episcoporum* can be revised before completion of the definitive reform of the *Ordo Missae*, the divine office, and the liturgical year. But careful reflection on the matter led to the conclusion that it is now timely to establish certain measures that, while preserving the dignity of pontifical rites, will also mark them with simplicity. Therefore the following matters are ordered to be changed or introduced at once.

I. PRIESTS AND MINISTERS IN A CELEBRATION WITH THE BISHOP

A. PRIESTS AND MINISTERS IN A CONCELEBRATED MASS

1. The preeminent manifestation of the Church is most clearly expressed in the eucharist at which the bishop presides, surrounded by his college of priests and ministers, with the people taking an active part. To show this more clearly it is especially fitting, now that concelebration has been restored, for priests to be present with the bishop at a solemn celebration and concelebrate with him, in accord with an ancient tradition in the Church.

So that priests who hold some higher rank may have more opportunity to concelebrate with the bishop:

- a. One of the concelebrants may perform the function of assistant priest.
- b. When no deacons are present, two of the concelebrants may replace assistant deacons.<sup>1</sup>

B. ASSISTANT PRIEST AND DEACONS

2. It belongs to the assistant priest to stand by the bishop's side as he reads. When the bishop is not at the altar, however, a server holds the book in front of him.

3. As a rule, priests of higher rank assist the bishop at the chair. It is permissible, however, for a deacon to do so and to perform the ministries of the assistant deacons; if necessary, the deacon and subdeacon of the Mass may fulfill these functions.

C. DEACONS AND SUBDEACONS

4. At a celebration with a bishop presiding, the reality of orders and ministries should stand out clearly. Therefore, deacons and subdeacons, if any are present, should not be excluded from serving as the deacon at the altar and the subdeacon for Mass.
5. Several deacons, clad in their proper vestments, may exercise their ministry, each taking a part of this ministry.
6. When a bishop celebrates a Mass without singing, it is fitting that he be assisted by at least one deacon, vested in amice, alb, cincture, and stole; the deacon reads the gospel and assists at the altar. <sup>2</sup>
7. If all the deacons and subdeacons called for by the rubrics are not available on Holy Thursday at the Chrism Mass, fewer suffice. If none at all are available, some of the concelebrating priests are to carry the oils.

#### D. CANONS PRESENT IN CHOIR

8. At a pontifical Mass of a bishop the canons are always to wear a canon's choral vesture.

#### E. LESSER MINISTERS

9. Ministers who assist the bishop at the throne are not to wear a cope.

### II. CHAIR OR THRONE OF THE BISHOP

10. The honored and traditional name for the chair of the bishop is the *cathedra*.
11. From now on there is to be no *baldacchino* over the bishop's *cathedra*; but the valuable works of art from the past are to be preserved with utmost care. Further, existing *baldacchini* are not to be removed without consultation with the commissions on liturgy and art.
12. Depending on the design of each church the *cathedra* should have enough steps leading up to it for the bishop to be clearly visible to the faithful and truly to appear as the one presiding over the whole community of the faithful.
13. In all cases there is to be only a single *cathedra* and the bishop who sits on it is the one who is celebrating or presiding pontifically at the celebration. A chair is also to be provided in a convenient place for any other bishop or prelate who may be present, but it is not to be set up as a *cathedra*.

### III. SIMPLIFICATION OF SOME OF THE PONTIFICAL VESTURE AND INSIGNIA

14. A bishop who wears an alb as required by the rubrics need not wear the rochet under the alb.
15. Use of the following is left to the bishop's choice:
  - a. buskins and sandals;
  - b. gloves, which may be white on all occasions if he prefers;
  - c. the morse worn over the cope.
16. The following are to be dropped:
  - a. the episcopal tunic previously worn under the dalmatic;
  - b. the silk *gremial*; another *gremial* is retained, if it serves a purpose, e.g., for the performance of

- anointings;
- c. the *bugia* presented to the bishop for readings, unless it is needed;
  - d. the cushion for kneeling during the rites.

17. In keeping with ancient tradition, the bishop is to retain the dalmatic when he celebrates solemnly. In addition he is to wear it in a recited Mass at the consecration of a bishop, the conferral of orders, the blessing of an abbot or an abbess, the blessing and consecration of virgins, the consecration of a church and an altar. But for a reasonable cause he may omit wearing the dalmatic under the chasuble.

18. In each liturgical service a bishop is to use only one mitre, simple or ornate depending on the character of the celebration.

19. Any bishop who, with the consent of the local bishop, celebrates solemnly may use the crozier.

20. Only a single cross is to be carried in a procession, to increase the dignity of the cross and its veneration. If an archbishop is present, the cross will be the archiepiscopal cross, to be carried at the head of the procession, with an image of Christ crucified facing forward. The recommended practice is to stand the processional cross near the altar so that it serves as the altar cross. If this is not done, the processional cross is put away.

#### IV. THINGS TO BE CHANGED OR ELIMINATED IN EPISCOPAL RITES

##### A. PUTTING ON AND TAKING OFF VESTMENTS

21. In any liturgical ceremony a bishop vests and unvests in a side chapel or, if there is none, in the sacristy, at the *cathedra*, or, if more convenient, in front of the altar. Vestments and insignia, however, are not to be laid on the altar.

22. When a bishop presides in a side chapel at an hour of the office suited to the time of day, he wears the chasuble right from the start of the office.

##### B. THE BOOK OF THE GOSPELS

23. The Book of the Gospels, preferably distinct from the book of the other readings, is carried by the subdeacon at the beginning of Mass. After the bishop celebrant has kissed the altar and the Book of the Gospels, this is left on the altar at the middle. After saying the prayer, *Almighty God, cleanse my heart*, the deacon takes the Book of the Gospels before asking the bishop's blessing for the singing of the Gospel.

##### C. LITURGY OF THE WORD IN A MASS AT WHICH A BISHOP PRESIDES WITHOUT CELEBRATING

24. When, in keeping with no. 13, a bishop presides at a Mass without celebrating, he may do all those things in the liturgy of the word that ususally belong to the celebrant.

##### D. THINGS TO BE ELIMINATED

25. The bishop is no longer greeted by a genuflection but by a bow. In carrying out their service the ministers stand rather than kneel before him, unless kneeling is more practical.

26. The washing of the bishop's hands within a liturgical rite is carried out by acolytes or clerics, not by members of the bishop's household.

27. All prescriptions in the *Caeremoniale Episcoporum* on forming a circle of assistants in front of the bishop or on certain parts recited in alternation are abolished.
28. Also to be abolished is the previous tasting of the bread, wine, and water prescribed in the *Caeremoniale*.
29. If a bishop presides at a canonical hour before Mass, he omits those preparatory prayers for Mass that the *Caeremoniale* prescribes during the chanting of the psalms.
30. In a Mass at which a bishop presides without celebrating, the celebrant, not the bishop, blesses the water to be poured into the chalice at the offertory.
31. The bishop may omit use of the mitre and crozier as he goes from one place to another when there is only a short space between them.
32. A bishop does not use the mitre, unless he already has it on, for the washing of the hands and the receiving of incensation.

#### E. BLESSING BY A BISHOP

33. The blessing after the homily mentioned in the *Caeremoniale* is abolished.
34. When, in keeping with the provisions of law, a bishop bestows it, the papal blessing with its formularies replaces the usual blessing at the end of Mass.
35. The cross is not to be brought to an archbishop when he gives the blessing.
36. A bishop is to take the crozier before he begins the blessing formulary, so that this is not interrupted. Thus in this instance the raising and extension of the hands prescribed in the *Ritus servandus* no. 87, are omitted.

An archbishop is to put the mitre on before the blessing.

37. After the blessing, the bishop, with mitre and crozier, reverences the altar, as he is leaving. If he has the right to wear the *pallium*, he does not take it off at the altar but in the sacristy.

#### V. PRELATES OF LESS THAN EPISCOPAL RANK; OTHER CLERICS; OTHER LITURGICAL RITES

38. All the points in this Instruction on simplifying pontifical vesture, insignia, and rites and on matters to be eliminated or modified apply in due measure to prelates or clerics of less than episcopal rank who by law or by privilege are entitled to certain pontifical insignia.
39. The suppressions and changes that have been decreed here apply also to all liturgical services celebrated by other clerics.

The Supreme Pontiff, Pope Paul VI, on 10 June 1968 approved this Instruction drawn up by the Sacred Congregation of Rites and the Commission for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, confirmed it by his authority, and ordered its publication, setting 8 September 1968, the Feast of the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as its effective date.

At Rome, 21 June 1968.

Benno Cardinal Gut  
Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites  
President of the Commission for the Implementation  
of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy

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<sup>1</sup> cf. *Ritus servandus in concelebratione Missae* 18 and 19.

<sup>2</sup> cf. *Ritus servandus in celebratione Missae* (1965) 44.

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