

# DEDICATION OF A CHURCH AND AN ALTAR

## Introductions

### CONTENTS

	<b>Decree</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>Chapter One</i>	<b>Laying of a Foundation Stone or Commencement of Work on the Building of a Church</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Chapter Two</i>	<b>Dedication of a Church</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Chapter Three</i>	<b>Dedication of a Church Already in General Use for Sacred Celebrations</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>Chapter Four</i>	<b>Dedication of an Altar</b>	<b>15</b>
<i>Chapter Five</i>	<b>Blessing of a Church</b>	<b>23</b>
<i>Chapter Six</i>	<b>Blessing of an Altar</b>	<b>25</b>
<i>Chapter Seven</i>	<b>Blessing of a Chalice and Paten</b>	<b>27</b>

# SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE SACRAMENTS AND DIVINE WORSHIP

Prot. no. CD 300/77

## DECREE

The rite for the dedication of a church and an altar is rightly considered among the most solemn liturgical services. A church is the place where the Christian community is gathered to hear the word of God, to offer intercession and praise to him, and above all to celebrate the holy mysteries, and it is the place where the holy sacrament of the eucharist is kept. Thus it stands as a special kind of image of the Church itself, which is God's temple built from living stones. And the altar of a church, around which the holy people of God gather to take part in the Lord's sacrifice and to be refreshed at the heavenly meal, stands as a sign of Christ himself, who is the priest, the victim, and the altar of his own sacrifice.

These rites, found in the second book of the Roman Pontifical, were revised and simplified in 1961. Nevertheless it was judged necessary to revise the rites again and to adapt them to contemporary conditions in view of the purpose and the norms of the liturgical reform that Vatican II set in motion and fostered.

Pope Paul VI by his authority has approved the new *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris* prepared by the Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship. He has ordered it to be published and prescribed that it replace the rites now in the second book of the Roman Pontifical.

This Congregation, by mandate of the Pope, therefore publishes this *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris*. In the Latin text it will be in effect as soon as it appears; in the vernacular, it will take effect, after the translations have been confirmed and approved by the Apostolic See, on the day determined by the conferences of bishops.

Anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

From the office of the Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, May 29, 1977, Pentecost.

- + James R. Cardinal Knox  
Prefect
- + Antonio Innocenti  
Titular Archbishop of Eclano  
Secretary

# CHAPTER ONE

## RITE OF LAYING THE FOUNDATION STONE OR BEGINNING WORK ON THE BUILDING OF A CHURCH

### Introduction

1. When the building of a new church begins, it is desirable to celebrate a rite to ask God's blessing for the success of the work and to remind the people that the structure built of stone will be a visible sign of the living Church, God's building that is formed of the people themselves.<sup>1</sup>

In accordance with liturgical tradition, this rite consists of the blessing of the site of the new church and the blessing and laying of the foundation stone. When there is to be no foundation stone because of the particular architecture of the building, the rite of the blessing of the site of the new church should still be celebrated in order to dedicate the beginning of the work of God.

2. The rite for the laying of a foundation stone or for beginning a new church may be celebrated on any day except during the Easter triduum. But the preference should be for a day when the people can be present in large numbers.
3. The bishop of the diocese is rightly the one to celebrate the rite. If he cannot do so himself, he shall entrust the function to another bishop or a priest, especially to one who is his associate and assistant in the pastoral care of the diocese or of the community for which the new church is to be built.
4. Notice of the date and hour of the celebration should be given to the people in good time. The pastor or others concerned should instruct them in the meaning of the rite and the reverence to be shown toward the church that is to be built for them.

It is also desirable that the people be asked to give their generous and willing support in the building of the church.

5. Insofar as possible, the area for the erection of the church should be marked out clearly. It should be possible to walk about without difficulty.
6. In the place where the altar will be located, a wooden cross of suitable height is fixed in the ground.
7. For the celebration of the rite the following should be prepared:
  - The Roman Pontifical and Lectionary;
  - chair for the bishop;
  - depending on the circumstances, the foundation stone, which by tradition is a rectangular cornerstone, together with cement and the tools for setting the stone in the foundation;
  - container of holy water with sprinkler;
  - censer, incense boat and spoon;
  - processional cross and torches for the servers.

---

<sup>1</sup> See 1 Cor 3:9; LG, 6.

Sound equipment should be set up so that the assembly can clearly hear the readings, prayers, and instructions.

8. For the celebration of the rite the vestments are white or of some festive color. The following should be prepared:
  - for the bishop: alb, stole, cope, miter, and pastoral staff;
  - for the priest, when one presides over the celebration: alb, stole, and cope;
  - for the deacons: albs, stoles, and if opportune, dalmatics;
  - for other ministers: albs or other lawfully approved dress.

---

## OUTLINE OF THE RITE

### APPROACH TO THE CONSTRUCTION SITE

#### A. First Form: Procession

Greeting  
Brief Introduction  
Prayer  
Procession

#### B. Second Form: Station at the Construction Site of the New Church

Acclamation or Song  
Greeting  
Brief Instruction  
Prayer

### READING OF THE WORD OF GOD

Reading(s)  
[Responsorial Psalm]  
Homily  
Placing of the Document(s) in the Foundation Stone

### BLESSING OF THE SITE OF THE NEW CHURCH

Prayer of Blessing  
Laying of the Foundation Stone

### CONCLUDING RITE

General Intercessions  
Lord's Prayer  
Concluding Prayer  
Blessing and Dismissal

# CHAPTER TWO

## DEDICATION OF A CHURCH

### Introduction

#### *I. Nature and Dignity of Churches*

1. Through his death and resurrection, Christ became the true and perfect temple<sup>1</sup> of the New Covenant and gathered together a people to be his own.

This holy people, made one as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one, is the Church<sup>2</sup> that is, the temple of God built of living stones, where the Father is worshiped in spirit and in truth.<sup>3</sup>

Rightly, then, from early times ‘church’ has also been the name given to the building in which the Christian community gathers to hear the word of God, to pray together, to receive the sacraments, and to celebrate the eucharist.

2. Because the church is a visible building, it stands as a special sign of the pilgrim Church on earth and reflects the Church dwelling in heaven.

When a church is erected as a building destined solely and permanently for assembling the people of God and for carrying out sacred functions, it is fitting that it be dedicated to God with a solemn rite, in accordance with the ancient custom of the Church.

3. The very nature of a church demands that it be suited to sacred celebrations, dignified, evincing a noble beauty, not mere costly display, and it should stand as a sign and symbol of heavenly realities. ‘The general plan of the sacred edifice should be such that in some way it conveys the image of the gathered assembly. It should also allow the participants to take the place most appropriate to them and assist all to carry out their individual functions properly.’ Moreover, in what concerns the sanctuary, the altar, the chair, the lectern, and the place for the reservation of the blessed sacrament, the norms of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal are to be followed.<sup>4</sup>

Also, the norms must be observed that concern things and places destined for the celebration of other sacraments, especially baptism and penance.<sup>5</sup>

#### *II. Titular of a Church and the Relics of the Saints to be Placed in it*

4. Every church to be dedicated must have a titular. This may be: the Blessed Trinity; our Lord Jesus Christ invoked according to a mystery of his life or a title already accepted in the liturgy; the Holy Spirit; the Blessed Virgin Mary, likewise invoked according to some appellation already accepted in the liturgy; one of the angels; or, finally, a saint inscribed in the Roman Martyrology or in a duly approved Appendix. A blessed may not be the titular without an indult of the Apostolic See. A church should have one titular only, unless it is a question of saints who are listed together in the Calendar.

---

1 See Jn 2:21.

2 See Cyprian, *De oratione dominica* 23: PL 4, 553; LG, no. 4: AAS 57 (1965) 7; ConstDecrDel 96.

3 See Jn 4:23.

4 See GIRM, nos. 253, 257, 258, 259–267, 271, 272, 276–277. See also Roman Ritual *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass*, nos. 6 and 9–11.

5 See *Rite of Baptism for Children*, no. 25; *Rite of Penance*, no. 12.

5. The tradition in the Roman liturgy of placing relics of martyrs or other saints beneath the altar should be preserved, if possible.<sup>6</sup> But the following should be noted:
  - a) Such relics should be of a size sufficient for them to be recognized as parts of human bodies. Hence excessively small relics of one or more saints must not be placed beneath the altar.
  - b) The greatest care must be taken to determine whether the relics in question are authentic. It is better for an altar to be dedicated without relics than to have relics of doubtful authenticity placed beneath it.
  - c) A reliquary must not be placed upon the altar or set into the table of the altar; it must be placed beneath the table of the altar, as the design of the altar permits.

### *III. Celebration of the Dedication*

#### *Minister of the Rite*

6. Since the bishop has been entrusted with the care of the particular Church, it is his responsibility to dedicate to God new churches built in his diocese.

If he cannot himself preside at the rite, he shall entrust this function to another bishop, especially to one who is his associate and assistant in the pastoral care of the community for which the church has been built or, in altogether special circumstances, to a priest, to whom he shall give a special mandate.

#### *Choice of Day*

7. A day should be chosen for the dedication of the new church when the people can be present in large numbers, especially a Sunday. Since the theme of the dedication pervades this entire rite, the dedication of a new church may not take place on days on which it is altogether improper to disregard the mystery then being commemorated: the Easter triduum, Christmas, Epiphany, Ascension, Pentecost, Ash Wednesday, the weekdays of Holy Week, and All Souls.

#### *Mass of the Dedication*

8. The celebration of the eucharist is inseparably bound up with the rite of the dedication of a church; when a church is dedicated therefore the liturgical texts of the day are omitted and texts proper to the rite are used for both the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the eucharist.
9. It is fitting that the bishop celebrate the Mass with the priests who take part with him in the rite of dedication and those who have been given charge over the parish or the community for which the church has been built.

#### *Office of the Dedication*

10. The day on which a church is dedicated is kept as a solemnity in that church.

The office of the dedication of a church is celebrated, beginning with Evening Prayer I. When the rite of depositing relics takes place, it is highly recommended to keep a vigil at the relics of the martyr or saint that are to be placed beneath the altar; the best way of doing this is to have the office of readings, taken from the respective common or proper. This vigil should be properly adapted to encourage the people's participation, but the requirements of the law are respected.<sup>7</sup>

---

6 See GIRM, no. 266.

7 See GILH. nos. 70-73.

### **A. Entrance into the Church**

11. The rite of the dedication begins with the entrance into the church; this may take place in one of the three following ways; the one best suited to the circumstances of time and place is to be used.

- Procession to the church to be dedicated: all assemble in a nearby church or other suitable place, from which the bishop, the ministers, and the congregation proceed to the church to be dedicated, praying and singing.
- Solemn entrance: if the procession cannot take place or seems inopportune, the community gathers at the entrance of the church.
- Simple entrance: the congregation assembles in the church itself; the bishop, the concelebrants, and the ministers enter from the sacristy in the usual way.

Two rituals are most significant in the entrance into a new church:

- a) the handing over of the church: representatives of those who have been involved in the building of the church hand it over to the bishop.
- b) The sprinkling of the church: the bishop blesses water and with it sprinkles the people, who are the spiritual temple, then the walls of the church, and finally, the altar.

### **B. Liturgy of the Word**

12. Three readings are used in the liturgy of the word. The texts are chosen from those in the Lectionary (nos. 704 and 706) for the rite of the dedication of a church.

The first reading is always, even during the Easter season, the passage of Nehemiah that tells of the people of Jerusalem gathered in the presence of the scribe Ezra to hear the proclamation of the law of God (Neh 8:1-4a, 5-6, 8-10).

13. After the readings the bishop gives the homily, in which he explains the biblical readings and the meaning of the dedication of a church.

The profession of faith is always said. The general intercessions are omitted, since the Litany of the Saints is sung in their place.

### **C. Prayer of Dedication and the Anointing of the Church and the Altar**

#### ***Depositing of the Relics of the Saints***

14. If it is to take place, the relics of a martyr are deposited after the singing of the Litany of the Saints, to signify that the sacrifice of the members has its source in the sacrifice of the Head.<sup>8</sup> When relics of a martyr are not available, relics of another saint may be deposited in the altar.

#### ***Prayer of Dedication***

15. The celebration of the eucharist is the most important and the one necessary rite for the dedication of a church.

---

8 See RM, Common of Martyrs 8, prayer over the gifts. Ambrose, *Epistula*, 22:13: PL 16, 1023: 'Let the triumphant victims rest in the place where Christ is victim: he, however, who suffered for all, upon the altar; they, who have been redeemed by his sufferings, beneath the altar.' See Ps. Maximus of Turin, *Sermo* 78: PL 57, 689-690. Rv 6:9 'I saw underneath the altar the souls of all people who had been killed on account of the word of God, for witnessing to it.'

Nevertheless, in accordance with the tradition of the Church in both East and West, a special prayer of dedication is also said. This prayer is a sign of the intention to dedicate the church to the Lord for all times and a petition for his blessing.

#### ***Rites of Anointing, Incensing, Covering, and Lighting the Altar***

16. The rites of anointing, incensing, covering, and lighting the altar express in visible signs several aspects of the invisible work that the Lord accomplishes through the Church in its celebration of the divine mysteries, especially the eucharist.
- a) *Anointing* of the altar and the walls of the church:
    - The anointing with chrism makes the altar a symbol of Christ, who, before all others, is and is called ‘The Anointed One’<sup>9</sup>; for the Father anointed him with the Holy Spirit and constituted him the High Priest so that on the altar of his body he might offer the sacrifice of his life for the salvation of all.
    - The anointing of the church signifies that it is given over entirely and perpetually to Christian worship. In keeping with liturgical tradition, there are twelve anointings, or, where it is more convenient, four, as a symbol that the church is an image of the holy city of Jerusalem.
  - b) *Incense* is burned on the altar to signify that Christ’s sacrifice, there perpetuated in mystery, ascends to God as an odor of sweetness and also to signify that the people’s prayers rise up pleasing and acceptable, reaching the throne of God.<sup>9</sup>

The incensation of the nave of the church indicates that the dedication makes it a house of prayer, but the people of God are incensed first, because they are the living temple in which each fanciful member is a spiritual altar.<sup>10</sup>
  - c) The *covering of the altar* indicates that the Christian altar is the altar of the eucharistic sacrifice and the table of the Lord; around it priests and people, by one and the same rite but with a difference of function, celebrate the memorial of Christ’s death and resurrection and partake of his supper. For this reason the altar is prepared as the table of the sacrificial banquet and adorned as for a feast. Thus the dressing of the altar clearly signifies that it is the Lord’s table at which all God’s people joyously meet to be refreshed with divine food, namely, the body and blood of Christ sacrificed.
  - d) The *lighting of the altar*, which is followed by the lighting of the church, reminds us that Christ is ‘a light to enlighten the nations’;<sup>11</sup> his brightness shines out in the Church and through it in the whole human family.

#### **D. Celebration of the Eucharist**

17. After the altar had been prepared, the bishop celebrates the eucharist, the principal and the most ancient part of the whole rite,<sup>12</sup> because the celebration of the eucharist is in the closest harmony with the rite of the dedication of a church:

For the celebration of the eucharistic sacrifice achieves the end for which the church was built and the altar erected and expresses this end by particularly clear signs.

Furthermore, the eucharist, which sanctifies the hearts of those who receive it, in a sense consecrates the altar and the place of celebration, as the ancient Fathers of the Church

---

9 See Rev 8:3-4.

10 See Rom 12:1.

11 Lk 2:32.

12 See Pope Vigilius, *Epistula ad Profuturum episcopum* 4: PL 84, 832.

often assert: ‘This altar should be an object of awe: by nature it is stone, but it is made holy when it receives the body of Christ.’<sup>13</sup>

Finally, the bond closely connecting the dedication of a church with the celebration of the eucharist is likewise evident from the fact that the Mass for the dedication has its own preface, which is a central part of the rite itself.

#### *IV. Adaptation of the Rite*

##### *Adaptations within the Competence of the Conferences of Bishops*

18. The conferences of bishops may adapt this rite, as required, to the character of each region, but in such a way that nothing of its dignity and solemnity is lost.

However, the following are to be respected:

- a) The celebration of Mass with the proper preface and prayer for a dedication must never be omitted.
- b) Rites that have a special meaning and force from liturgical tradition (see no. 16) must be retained, unless weighty reasons stand in the way, but the wording may be suitably adapted if necessary.

With regard to adaptations, the competent ecclesiastical authority is to consult the Holy See and introduce adaptations with its consent.<sup>14</sup>

##### *Adaptations within the Competence of the Ministers*

19. It is for the bishop and for those in charge of the celebration of the rite:

- to decide the manner of entrance into the church (see no. 11);
- to determine the manner of handing over the new church to the bishop (no. 11);
- to decide whether to have the depositing of relics of the saints. The decisive consideration is the spiritual good of the community; the prescriptions in no. 5 must be followed.

It is for the rector of the church to be dedicated, helped by those who assist him in the pastoral work, to decide and prepare everything concerning the readings, singing, and other pastoral aids to foster the fruitful participation of the people and to ensure a dignified celebration.

#### *V. Pastoral Preparation*

20. In order that the people may take part fully in the rite of dedication, the rector of the church to be dedicated and others experienced in the pastoral ministry are to instruct them on the import of the celebration and its spiritual, ecclesial, and evangelizing power.

Accordingly, the people are to be instructed about the various parts of the church and their use, the rite of dedication, and the chief liturgical symbols employed in it. Thus led by suitable pastoral resources to a full understanding of the meaning of the dedication of a church through its rites and prayers, they will take an active, intelligent, and devout part in the sacred service.

#### *VI. Requisites for the Dedication of a Church*

21. For the celebration of the rite the following should be prepared:

---

<sup>13</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilia 20 in 2 Cor 3*: PG 61, 540.

<sup>14</sup> See SC, art. 40.

- a) *In the place of assembly:*
- The Roman Pontifical;
  - processional cross;
  - if relics of the saints are to be carried in procession, the items in no. 24a.
- b) *In the sacristy or in the sanctuary or in the body of the church to be dedicated, as each situation requires:*
- The Roman Missal;
  - The Lectionary;
  - container of water to be blessed and sprinkler;
  - container with the chrism;
  - towels for wiping the table of the altar;
  - if needed, a waxed linen cloth or waterproof covering of the same size as the altar;
  - basin and jug of water, towels, and all that is needed for washing the bishop's hands and those of the priests after they have anointed the walls of the church;
  - linen gremial;
  - brazier for burning incense or aromatic spices; or grains of incense and small candles to burn on the altar;
  - censer, incense boat and spoon;
  - chalice, corporal, purificators, and hand towel;
  - bread, wine, and water for the celebration of Mass;
  - altar cross, unless there is already a cross in the sanctuary or the cross that is carried in the entrance procession is to be placed near the altar;
  - altar cloth, candles, and candlesticks;
  - flowers, if opportune.
22. It is praiseworthy to keep the ancient custom of hanging on the walls of the church crosses made of stone, brass, or other suitable material or of having the crosses carved on the walls. Thus twelve or four crosses should be provided, depending on the number of anointings (see no. 16), and fixed here and there at a suitable height on the walls of the church. Beneath each cross a small bracket should be fitted and in it a small candlestick is placed, with a candle to be lighted.
23. For the Mass of the dedication the vestments are white or of some festive color. The following should be prepared:
- for the bishop: alb, stole, chasuble, mitre, pastoral staff, and pallium, if the bishop has the right to wear one;
  - for the concelebrating priests: the vestments for concelebrating Mass;
  - for the deacons: albs, stoles, and dalmatics;
  - for other ministers: albs or other lawfully approved dress.
24. If relics of the saints are to be placed beneath the altar, the following should be prepared:
- a) *In the place of assembly:*
- reliquary containing the relics, placed between flowers and lights. When the simple entrance is used, the reliquary may be placed in a suitable part of the sanctuary before the rite begins;

- for the deacons who will carry the relics to be deposited: albs, red stoles, if the relics are those of a martyr, or white in other cases, and, if available, dalmatics. If the relics are carried by priests, then in place of dalmatics chasubles should be prepared.

The relics may also be carried by other ministers, vested in albs or other lawfully approved dress.

b) *In the sanctuary:*

- a small table on which the reliquary is placed during the first part of the dedication rite.

c) *In the sacristy:*

- a sealant or cement to close the cover of the aperture. In addition, a stonemason should be on hand to close the depository of the relics at the proper time.

25. The record of the dedication of the church should be drawn up in duplicate, signed by the bishop, the rector of the church, and representatives of the local community; one copy is to be kept in the diocesan archives, the other in the archives of the church. Where the depositing of relics takes place, a third copy of the record should be made, to be placed at the proper time in the reliquary.

In this record mention should be made of the day, month, and year of the church's dedication, the name of the bishop who celebrated the rite, also the titular of the church and, where applicable, the names of the martyrs or saints whose relics have been deposited beneath the altar.

Moreover, in a suitable place in the church, an inscription should be placed stating the day, month, and year when the dedication took place, the titular of the church, and the name of the bishop who celebrated the rite.

## *VII. Anniversary of the Dedication*

### *A. Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral Church*

26. In order that the importance and dignity of the local Church may stand out with greater clarity, the anniversary of the dedication of its cathedral is to be celebrated, with the rank of a solemnity in the cathedral itself, with the rank of a feast in the other churches of the diocese, on the date on which the dedication of the church recurs.<sup>15</sup> If this date is always impeded, the celebration is assigned to the nearest date open. It is desirable that in the cathedral church on the anniversary the bishop concelebrate the eucharist with the chapter of canons or the priests' senate and with the participation of as many of the people as possible.

### *B. Anniversary of the Dedication of a Particular Church*

27. The anniversary of a church's dedication is celebrated with the rank of a solemnity.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> See GNLYC, Table of Liturgical Days, I, 4b and II, 8b.

<sup>16</sup> See GNLYC, Table of Liturgical Days, I, 4b.

# OUTLINE OF THE RITE

## INTRODUCTORY RITES

### A. First Form: Procession

Greeting  
Brief Address  
Procession  
Handing Over the Building  
Entrance into the Church

### B. Second Form: Solemn Entrance

Greeting  
Brief Address  
Handing Over the Building  
Entrance into the Church

### C. Third Form: Simple Entrance

Entrance Procession  
Greeting  
Handing Over the Building  
Blessing and Sprinkling of Water  
Hymn: Gloria  
Opening Prayer

## LITURGY OF THE WORD

Presentation of the Lectionary  
First Reading  
Responsorial Psalm  
Second Reading  
Gospel Acclamation  
Gospel  
Homily  
Profession of Faith

## PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND THE ANOINTINGS

Invitation to Prayer  
Litany of the Saints  
Concluding Prayer  
[Depositing of the Relics]  
Prayer of Dedication  
Anointing of the Altar and the Walls of the Church  
Incensation of the Altar and the Church  
Lighting of the Altar and the Church

## LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Preparation of the Altar and the Gifts  
Prayer over the Gifts  
Eucharistic Prayer

---

Communion  
[Inauguration of the Blessed Sacrament Chapel]  
Prayer after Communion  
Procession to the Chapel  
Incensation of the Eucharist]  
Prayer after Communion

## CONCLUDING RITE

Blessing and Dismissal

# CHAPTER THREE

## DEDICATION OF A CHURCH IN WHICH MASS IS ALREADY BEING CELEBRATED REGULARLY

### Introduction

1. In order to bring out fully the symbolism and the significance of the rite, the opening of a new church and its dedication should take place at one and the same time. For this reason, as was said before, care should be taken that, as far as possible, Mass is not celebrated in a new church before it is dedicated {see chapter two, nos. 8,15,17).

Nevertheless in the case of the dedication of a church where the sacred mysteries are already being celebrated regularly, the rite set out in this chapter must be used.

Moreover, a clear distinction exists in regard to these churches. In the case of those just built the reason for a dedication is obvious. In the case of those standing for some time the following requirements must be met for them to be dedicated:

- that the altar has not already been dedicated, since it is rightly forbidden both by custom and by liturgical law to dedicate a church without dedicating the altar, for the dedication of the altar is the principal part of the whole rite;
  - that there be something new or notably altered about the edifice, relative either to its structure (for example, a total restoration) or its status in law (for example, the church's being ranked as a parish church).
2. All the directions given in the Introduction to chapter two apply to this rite, unless they are clearly extraneous to the situation which this rite envisages or other directions are given.

This rite differs chiefly from that described in chapter two on these points:

- a) The rite of opening the doors of the church (see chapter two, no. 34 or no. 41) is omitted, since the church is already open to the community; consequently, the entrance rite takes the form of the simple entrance (see chapter two, nos. 43-47). However, in the case of dedicating a church closed for a long time and now being opened again for sacred celebrations, the rite of opening the doors may be carried out, since in this case it retains its point and significance.
- b) The rite of handing over the church to the bishop (see chapter two, no. 33 or no. 40 or no. 47), depending on the situation, is either to be followed, omitted, or adapted in a way relevant to the condition of the church being dedicated (for example, it will be right to retain it in dedicating a church built recently; to omit it in dedicating an older church where nothing has been changed in the structure; to adapt it in dedicating an older church completely restored).
- c) The rite of sprinkling the church walls with holy water (see chapter two, nos. 48-50), purificatory by its very nature, is omitted.
- d) All the rites belonging to the first proclamation of the word of God in a church (see chapter two, no. 53) are omitted; thus the liturgy of the word takes place in the usual way. A different, pertinent reading is chosen in place of Neh 8:1-4a and its responsorial psalm, Ps 19b:8-9,10,15 (see chapter two, no. 54a).

# OUTLINE OF THE RITE

## INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance into the Church  
Entrance Procession  
Greeting  
Handing Over the Building  
Blessing and Sprinkling of Water  
Hymn: Gloria  
Opening Prayer

## LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading  
Responsorial Psalm  
Second Reading  
Gospel Acclamation  
Gospel  
Homily  
Profession of Faith

## PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND THE ANOINTINGS

Invitation to Prayer  
Litany of the Saints  
Concluding Prayer  
[Depositing of the Relics]  
Prayer of Dedication  
Anointing of the Altar and the Walls of the Church  
Incensation of the Altar and the Church  
Lighting of the Altar and the Church

## LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Preparation of the Altar and the Gifts  
Prayer over the Gifts  
Eucharistic Prayer

---

Communion  
[Inauguration of the Blessed Sacrament Chapel  
Prayer after Communion  
Procession to the Chapel  
Incensation of the Eucharist]  
Prayer after Communion

## CONCLUDING RITE

Blessing and Dismissal

# CHAPTER FOUR

## RITE OF DEDICATION OF AN ALTAR

### Introduction

#### *I. Nature and Dignity of the Altar*

1. From meditating on God's word, the ancient Fathers of the Church did not hesitate to assert that Christ was the victim, priest, and altar of his own sacrifice.<sup>1</sup> For in the Letter to the Hebrews Christ is presented as the High Priest who is also the living altar of the heavenly temple;<sup>2</sup> and in the Book of Revelation our Redeemer appears as the Lamb who has been sacrificed<sup>3</sup> and whose offering is taken by the holy angel to the altar in heaven.<sup>4</sup>

#### *The Christian Is Also a Spiritual Altar*

2. Since Christ, Head and Teacher, is the true altar, his members and disciples are also spiritual altars on which the sacrifice of a holy life is offered to God. The Fathers seem to have this in mind. St. Ignatius of Antioch asks the Romans quite plainly: 'Grant me only this favour: let my blood be spilled in sacrifice to God, while there is still an altar ready.'<sup>5</sup> St. Polycarp exhorts widows to lead a life of holiness, for 'they are God's altar.'<sup>6</sup> Among others, St. Gregory the Great echoes these words when he says: 'What is God's altar if not the souls of those who lead good lives?... Rightly, then, the heart of the just is said to be the altar of God.'<sup>7</sup>

In another image frequently used by the writers of the Church, Christians who give themselves to prayer, offer petitions to God, and present sacrifices of supplication, are the living stones out of which the Lord Jesus builds the Church's altar.<sup>8</sup>

#### *The Altar, Table of the Sacrifice and the Paschal Meal*

3. By instituting in the form of a sacrificial meal the memorial of the sacrifice he was about to offer the Father on the altar of the cross, Christ made holy the table where the community would come to celebrate their Passover. Therefore the altar is the table for a sacrifice and for a banquet. At this table the priest, representing Christ the Lord, accomplishes what the Lord himself did and what he handed on to his disciples to do in his memory. The Apostle clearly intimates this: 'The blessing cup that we bless is a communion with the blood of Christ and the bread that we break is a communion with the body of Christ. The fact that there is only one loaf means that though there are many of us, we form a single Body because we all have a share in this one loaf.'<sup>9</sup>

---

1 See Epiphanius, *Panarium* 2, 1, *Haeresis* 55: PG 41, 979. Cyril of Alexandria, *De adoratione in spiritu et veritate* 9: PG 68, 647

2 See Heb 4:14; 13:10.

3 See Rev 5:6.

4 See RM, Order of Mass, no. 96.

5 Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Romanos* 2:2: Funk PA 1:255.

6 Polycarp, *Ad Philippenses* 4:3: Funk PA 1:301.

7 Gregory the Great, *Homiliarum in Ezechielem* 10, 19: PL 76, 1069.

8 See Origen, *In librum Iesu Nave*, Homilia 9, 1: SC 71, 244 and 246

9 See 1 Cor 10:16-17.

### *The Altar, Sign of Christ*

4. The Church's children have the power to celebrate the memorial of Christ and take their place at the Lord's table anywhere that circumstances might require. But it is in keeping with the eucharistic mystery that the Christian people erect a permanent altar for the celebration of the Lord's Supper and they have done so from the earliest times.

The Christian altar is by its very nature properly the table of sacrifice and of the paschal banquet. It is:

- a unique altar on which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated in mystery throughout the ages until Christ comes;
- a table at which the Church's children gather to give thanks to God and receive the body and blood of Christ.

In every church, then, the altar 'is the centre of the thanksgiving that the eucharist accomplishes'<sup>10</sup> and around which the Church's other rites are, in a certain manner, arrayed.<sup>11</sup>

At the altar the memorial of the Lord is celebrated and his body and blood given to the people. Therefore the Church's writers have seen in the altar a sign of Christ himself. This is the basis for the saying: 'The altar is Christ.'

### *The Altar as Honouring Martyrs*

5. All the dignity of the altar rests on its being the Lord's table. Thus the martyr's body does not bring honour to the altar; rather the altar does honour to the martyr's tomb. For it is altogether proper to erect altars over the burial place of martyrs and other saints or to deposit their relics beneath altars as a mark of respect and as a symbol of the truth that the sacrifice of the members has its source in the sacrifice of the Head.<sup>12</sup> Thus 'the triumphant victims come to their rest in the place where Christ is victim: he, however, who suffered for an is on the altar; they who have been redeemed by his sufferings are beneath the altar.'<sup>13</sup> This arrangement would seem to recall in a certain manner the spiritual vision of the Apostle John in the Book of Revelation: 'I saw underneath the altar the souls of all the people who have been killed on account of the word of God, for witnessing to it.'<sup>14</sup> His meaning is that although all the saints are rightly called Christ's witnesses, the witness of blood has a special significance that only the relics of the martyrs beneath the altar express in its entirety.

## *II. Erecting an Altar*

6. It is desirable that in every church there be a fixed altar and that in other places set apart for sacred celebrations there be either a fixed or a movable altar.

A fixed altar is one so constructed that it is attached to the floor so that it cannot be moved; a movable altar can be transferred from place to place.<sup>15</sup>

7. In new churches it is better to erect only one altar so that in the one assembly of the people of God the single altar signifies the one Saviour Jesus Christ and the one eucharist of the Church.

---

10 GIRM, no. 259.

11 See Pius XII, Encycl. *Mediator Dei*: AAS 39 (1947) 529.

12 See RM. Common of Martyrs 8, prayer over the gifts.

13 Ambrose, *Epistula* 22, 13: PL 16, 1023. See Ps. Maximus of Turin, *Sermo* 78: PL 57, 689-690.

14 Rev 6:9.

15 See GIRM, nos. 265, 261.

But an altar may also be erected in a chapel (somewhat separated, if possible, from the body of the church) where the tabernacle for the reservation of the blessed sacrament is situated. On weekdays when there is a small gathering of people Mass may be celebrated at this altar.

The merely decorative erection of several altars in a church must be entirely avoided.

8. The altar should be freestanding so that the priest can easily walk around it and celebrate Mass facing the people. 'It should be so placed as to be a focal point on which the attention of the whole congregation centres naturally.'<sup>16</sup>
9. In accordance with received custom in the Church and the biblical symbolism connected with an altar, the table of a fixed altar should be of stone, indeed of natural stone. But, at the discretion of the conference of bishops, any becoming, solid, and finely wrought material may be used in erecting an altar.

The pedestal or base of the table may be of any sort of material, provided it is becoming and solid.<sup>17</sup>

10. The altar is of its very nature dedicated to the one God, for the eucharistic sacrifice is offered to the one God. This is the sense in which the Church's practice of dedicating altars to God in honour of the saints must be understood. St. Augustine expresses it well: 'It is not to any of the martyrs, but to the God of the martyrs, though in memory of the martyrs, that we raise our altars.'<sup>18</sup>

This should be made clear to the people. In new churches statues and pictures of saints may not be placed above the altar.

Likewise, when relics of saints are exposed for veneration, they should not be placed on the table of the altar.

11. It is fitting to continue the tradition in the Roman liturgy of placing relics of martyrs or other saints beneath the altar.<sup>19</sup> But the following should be noted.
  - a) Such relics should be of a size sufficient for them to be recognizable as parts of human bodies. Hence excessively small relics of one or more saints must not be placed beneath an altar.
  - b) The greatest care must be taken to determine whether the relics in question are authentic.  
It is better for an altar to be dedicated without relics than to have relics of doubtful authenticity placed beneath it.
  - c) A reliquary must not be placed on the altar or set into the table of the altar, but placed beneath the table of the altar, as the design of the altar permits.

When the rite of depositing relics takes place, it is highly recommended to keep a vigil at the relics of the martyr or saint, in accordance with the provisions of chapter two, no. 10.

---

16 GIRM, no. 262.

17 See GIRM, no. 263/

18 Augustine, *Contra Faustum* 20, 21: PL 42, 384.

19 See GIRM, no. 266.

### *III. Celebration of the Dedication*

#### *Minister of the Rite*

12. Since the bishop has been entrusted with the care of the particular Church, it is his responsibility to dedicate to God new altars built in his diocese.

If he cannot himself preside at the rite, he shall entrust the function to another bishop, especially to one who is his associate and assistant in the pastoral care of the community for which the new altar has been erected or, in altogether special circumstances, to a priest, to whom he shall give a special mandate.

#### *Choice of Day*

13. Since an altar becomes sacred principally by the celebration of the eucharist, in fidelity to this truth the celebration of Mass on a new altar before it has been dedicated is to be carefully avoided, so that the Mass of dedication may also be the first eucharist celebrated on the altar.
14. A day should be chosen for the dedication of a new altar when the people can be present in large numbers, especially a Sunday, unless pastoral considerations suggest otherwise. However, the rite of the dedication of an altar may not be celebrated during the Easter triduum, on Ash Wednesday, the weekdays of Holy Week, and All Souls.

#### *Mass of the Dedication*

15. The celebration of the eucharist is inseparably bound up with the rite of the dedication of an altar. The Mass is the Mass for the dedication of an altar. On Christmas, Epiphany, Ascension, Pentecost, and on the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and the Easter season, the Mass is the Mass of the day, with the exception of the prayer over the gifts and the preface, which are closely interwoven with the rite itself.
16. It is fitting that the bishop concelebrate the Mass with the priests present, especially with those who have been given charge over the parish or the community for which the altar has been erected.

#### *Parts of the Rite*

##### **A. Introductory Rites**

17. The introductory rites of the Mass of the dedication of an altar take place in the usual way except that in place of the penitential rite the bishop blesses water and with it sprinkles the people and the new altar.

##### **B. Liturgy of the Word**

18. It is commendable to have three readings in the liturgy of the word, chosen, according to the rubrical norm, either from the liturgy of the day (see no. 15) or from those in the Lectionary for the rite of the dedication of an altar (nos. 704 and 706).
19. After the readings, the bishop gives the homily, in which he explains the biblical readings and the meaning of the dedication of an altar.

After the homily, the profession of faith is said. The general intercessions are omitted, since the Litany of the Saints is sung in their place.

### **C. Prayer of Dedication and the Anointing of the Altar Depositing of the Relics of the Saints**

20. If it is to take place, the relics of martyrs or other saints are placed beneath the altar after the Litany of the Saints. The rite is meant to signify that all who have been baptized in the death of Christ, especially those who have shed their blood for the Lord, share in Christ's passion (see no. 5).

#### ***Prayer of Dedication***

21. The celebration of the eucharist is the most important and the one necessary rite for the dedication of an altar. Nevertheless, in accordance with the universal tradition of the Church in both East and West, a special prayer of dedication is also said. This prayer is a sign of the intention to dedicate the altar to the Lord for all times and a petition for his blessing.

#### ***Rites of Anointing, Incensing, Covering, and Lighting the Altar***

22. The rites of anointing, incensing, covering, and lighting the altar express in visible signs several aspects of the invisible work that the Lord accomplishes through the Church in its celebration of the divine mysteries, especially the eucharist.
- a) *Anointing of the altar*: The anointing with chrism makes the altar a symbol of Christ, who, before all others, is and is called 'The Anointed One'; for the Father anointed him with the Holy Spirit and constituted him the High Priest so that on the altar of his body he might offer the sacrifice of his life for the salvation of all.
  - b) *Incense* is burned on the altar to signify that Christ's sacrifice, there perpetuated in mystery, ascends to God as an odour of sweetness, and also to signify that the people's prayers rise up pleasing and acceptable, reaching the throne of God.<sup>20</sup>
  - c) *The covering of the altar* indicates that the Christian altar is the altar of the eucharistic sacrifice and the table of the Lord; around it priests and people, by one and the same rite but with a difference of function, celebrate the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection and partake of his supper. For this reason the altar is prepared as the table of the sacrificial banquet and adorned as for a feast. Thus the dressing of the altar clearly signifies that it is the Lord's table at which all God's people joyously meet to be refreshed with divine food, namely, the body and blood of Christ sacrificed.
  - d) *The lighting of the altar* teaches us that Christ is 'a light to enlighten the nations';<sup>21</sup> his brightness shines out in the Church and through it in the whole human family.

### **D. Celebration of the Eucharist**

23. After the altar has been prepared, the bishop celebrates the eucharist, the principal and the most ancient part of the whole rite,<sup>22</sup> because the celebration of the eucharist is in the closest harmony with the rite of the dedication of an altar:

- For the celebration of the eucharistic sacrifice achieves the end for which the altar was erected and expresses this end by particularly clear signs.

---

20 See Rev 8:3-4: An angel 'who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. A large quantity of incense was given to him to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar that stood in front of the throne; and so from the angel's hand the smoke of the incense went up in the presence of God and with it the prayers of the saints.'

21 Lk 2:32.

22 See Pope Vigilius, *Epistula ad Profuturum Episcopum* 4: PL 84, 832.

- Furthermore, the eucharist, which sanctifies the hearts of those who receive it, in a sense consecrates the altar, as the ancient Fathers of the Church often assert: ‘This altar should be an object of awe: by nature it is stone, but it is made holy when it receives the body of Christ.’<sup>23</sup>
- Finally, the bond closely connecting the dedication of an altar with the celebration of the eucharist is likewise evident from the fact that the Mass for the dedication has its own preface, which is a central part of the rite itself.

#### *IV. Adaptation of the Rite*

##### *Adaptations within the Competence of the Conferences of Bishops*

24. The conferences of bishops may adapt this rite, as required, to the character of each region, but in such a way that nothing of its dignity and solemnity is lost.

However, the following are to be respected:

- a) The celebration of Mass with the proper preface and prayer for a dedication must never be omitted.
- b) Rites that have a special meaning and force from liturgical tradition (see no. 22) must be retained, unless weighty reasons stand in the way, but the wording may be suitably adapted if necessary.

With regard to adaptations, the competent ecclesiastical authority is to consult the Holy See and introduce adaptations with its consent.<sup>24</sup>

##### *Adaptations within the Competence of the Ministers*

25. It is for the bishop and for those in charge of the celebration of the rite to decide whether to have the depositing of relics of the saints; in so doing, they are to follow what is laid down in no. 11 and they are to take as the decisive consideration the spiritual good of the community and a proper sense of liturgy.

It is for the rector of the church in which the altar is to be dedicated, helped by those who assist him in the pastoral work, to decide and prepare everything concerning the readings, singing, and other pastoral aids to foster the fruitful participation of the people and to ensure a dignified celebration.

#### *V. Pastoral Preparation*

26. The people are to be informed in good time about the dedication of a new altar and they are to be properly prepared to take an active part in the rite. Accordingly, they should be taught what each rite means and how it is carried out. For the purpose of giving this instruction, use may be made of what has been said earlier about the nature and dignity of an altar and the meaning and import of the rites. In this way the people will be imbued with the rightful love that is owed to the altar.

#### *VI. Requisites for the Dedication of an Altar*

27. For the celebration of the rite the following should be prepared:

- The Roman Missal;
- The Lectionary;
- The Roman Pontifical;

---

<sup>23</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilia 20 in 2 Cor 3*: PG 61, 540.

<sup>24</sup> See SC. art. 40.

- the cross and the Book of the Gospels to be carried in the procession;
  - container of water to be blessed and sprinkler;
  - container with the holy chrism;
  - towels for wiping the table of the altar;
  - if needed, a waxen linen cloth or waterproof covering of the same size as the altar;
  - basin and jug of water, towels, and all that is needed for washing the bishop's hands;
  - linen gremial;
  - brazier for burning incense or aromatic spices; or grains of incense and small candles to burn on the altar;
  - censer, incense boat and spoon;
  - chalice, corporal, purificators, and hand towel;
  - bread, wine, and water for the celebration of Mass;
  - altar cross, unless there is already a cross in the sanctuary, or the cross that is carried in the entrance procession is to be placed near the altar;
  - altar cloth, candles, and candlesticks;
  - flowers, if opportune.
28. For the Mass of the dedication the vestments are white or of some festive colour. The following should be prepared:
- for the bishop: alb, stole, chasuble, mitre, pastoral staff, and pallium, if the bishop has the right to wear one;
  - for the concelebrating priests: the vestments for concelebrating Mass;
  - for the deacons: albs, stoles, and dalmatics;
  - for other ministers: albs or other lawfully approved dress.
29. If relics of the saints are to be placed beneath the altar, the following should be prepared:
- a) *In the place from which the procession begins:*
- a reliquary containing the relics, placed between flowers and lights. But as circumstances dictate, the reliquary may be placed in a suitable part of the sanctuary before the rite begins;
  - for the deacons who will carry the relics to be deposited: albs, red stoles, if the relics are those of a martyr, or white in other cases, and, if available, dalmatics. If the relics are carried by priests, then, in place of dalmatics, chasubles should be prepared. Relics may also be carried by other ministers, vested in albs or other lawfully approved dress.
- b) *In the sanctuary:*
- a small table on which the reliquary is placed during the first part of the dedication rite.
- c) *In the sacristy:*
- a sealant or cement to close the cover of the aperture. In addition, a stonemason should be on hand to close the depository of the relics at the proper time.
30. It is fitting to observe the custom of enclosing in the reliquary a parchment on which is recorded the day, month, and year of the dedication of the altar, the name of the bishop

who celebrated the rite, the titular of the church, and the names of the martyrs or saints whose relics are deposited beneath the altar.

A record of the dedication of the church is to be drawn up in duplicate and signed by the bishop, the rector of the church, and representatives of the local community; one copy is to be kept in the diocesan archives, the other in the archives of the church.

---

## OUTLINE OF THE RITE

### INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance into the Church  
Entrance Procession  
Greeting  
Blessing and Sprinkling of Water  
Hymn: Gloria  
Opening Prayer

### LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading  
Responsorial Psalm  
Second Reading  
Gospel Acclamation  
Gospel  
Homily  
Profession of Faith

### PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND THE ANOINTINGS

Invitation to Prayer  
Litany of the Saints  
Concluding Prayer  
[Depositing of the Relics]  
Prayer of Dedication  
Anointing of the Altar  
Incensation of the Altar  
Lighting of the Altar

### LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Preparation of the Altar and the Gifts  
Prayer over the Gifts  
Eucharistic Prayer

---

Communion  
Prayer after Communion

### CONCLUDING RITE

Blessing and Dismissal

# CHAPTER FIVE

## RITE OF BLESSING A CHURCH

### Introduction

1. Since sacred edifices, that is, churches, are permanently set aside for the celebration of the divine mysteries, it is right for them to receive a dedication to God. This is done according to the rite in chapters two and three for dedicating a church, a rite impressive for its striking ceremonies and symbols.

Oratories, chapels, or other sacred edifices set aside only temporarily for divine worship because of special conditions, more properly receive a blessing, according to the rite described below.

2. As to the structure of the liturgy, the choice of a titular, and the pastoral preparation of the people, what is said in the Introduction to chapter two, nos. 4-5, 7, 20, is to be followed, with the necessary modifications.

A church or an oratory is blessed by the bishop of the diocese or by a priest delegated by him.

3. A church or an oratory may be blessed on any day, apart from the Easter triduum. As far as possible a day should be chosen when the people can be present in large numbers, especially a Sunday, unless pastoral considerations suggest otherwise.

4. On days mentioned in the Table of Liturgical Days, nos. 1-4, the Mass is the Mass of the day; but on other days the Mass is either the Mass of the day or the Mass of the titular of the church or oratory.

5. For the rite of the blessing of a church or an oratory all things needed for the celebration of Mass are prepared. But even though it may have already been blessed or dedicated, the altar should be left bare until the beginning of the liturgy of the eucharist. In a suitable place in the sanctuary the following also should be prepared:

- container of water to be blessed and sprinkler;
- censer, incense boat and spoon;
- The Roman Pontifical;
- altar cross, unless there is already a cross in the sanctuary, or the cross that is carried in the entrance procession is to be placed near the altar;
- altar cloth, candles, candlesticks, and flowers, if opportune.

6. When at the same time as the church is blessed the altar is to be consecrated, all those things should be prepared that are listed in chapter four, no. 27 and no. 29, if relics of the saints are to be deposited beneath the altar.

7. For the Mass of the blessing of a church the vestments are white or some festive color. The following should be prepared:

- for the bishop: alb, stole, chasuble, mitre, pastoral staff;
- for a priest: the vestments for celebrating Mass;
- for the concelebrating priests: the vestments for concelebrating Mass;
- for the deacons: albs, stoles, and dalmatics;

– for other ministers: albs or other lawfully approved dress.

---

## OUTLINE OF THE RITE

### INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance into the Church  
Greeting  
Blessing and Sprinkling of Water  
Hymn: Gloria  
Opening Prayer

### LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading  
Responsorial Psalm  
Second Reading  
Gospel Acclamation  
Gospel  
Homily  
[Profession of Faith)

### BLESSING OF THE ALTAR

Prayer of Blessing  
Incensation of the Altar and People

### LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Preparation of the Altar  
Presentation of the Gifts  
Eucharistic Prayer

---

Communion  
[Inauguration of the Blessed Sacrament Chapel]  
Prayer after Communion

### CONCLUDING RITE

Blessing and Dismissal

# CHAPTER SIX

## RITE OF BLESSING AN ALTAR

### Introduction

1. 'A fixed altar is one so constructed that it is attached to the floor so that it cannot be moved; a movable altar can be transferred from place to place.'<sup>25</sup>

A fixed altar is to be dedicated according to the rite described in chapter four. A movable altar also deserves religious respect because it is a table set aside solely and permanently for the eucharistic banquet. Consequently, before a movable altar is put to use, if it is not dedicated, it should at least be blessed with the following rite.<sup>26</sup>

2. A movable altar may be constructed of any solid material that the traditions and culture of different regions determine to be suitable for liturgical use.<sup>27</sup>
3. To erect a movable altar what is laid down in the Introduction to chapter four, nos. 6-10, is to be followed, with the necessary modifications. However, it is not permissible to place the relics of saints in the base of a movable altar.
4. It is appropriate that a movable altar be blessed by the bishop of the diocese or by the priest who is rector of the church.
5. A movable altar may be blessed on any day, except Good Friday and Holy Saturday. As far as possible, a day should be chosen when the people can be present in large numbers, especially a Sunday, unless pastoral considerations suggest otherwise.
6. In the rite of blessing a movable altar the Mass is the Mass of the day.
7. The altar should be left bare until the beginning of the liturgy of the eucharist. Hence a cross (if need be), and altar cloth, candles, and everything else necessary to prepare the altar should be on hand at a convenient place in the sanctuary.

---

25 GIRM, no. 261.

26 See GIRM, no. 265.

27 See GIRM, no. 264.

# OUTLINE OF THE RITE

## INTRODUCTORY RITES

### LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading  
Responsorial Psalm  
[Second Reading]  
Gospel Acclamation  
Gospel  
Homily  
[Profession of Faith]  
General Intercessions

### BLESSING OF THE ALTAR

Invitation to Prayer  
Prayer of Blessing  
Sprinkling and Incensation of the Altar

### LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Preparation of the Altar  
Presentation of the Gifts  
Eucharistic Prayer

---

Communion  
Prayer after Communion

### CONCLUDING RITE

Blessing and Dismissal

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## RITE OF BLESSING A CHALICE AND PATEN

### Introduction

1. The chalice and paten for offering, consecrating, and receiving the bread and wine<sup>1</sup> have as their sole and permanent purpose the celebration of the eucharist and are therefore ‘sacred vessels.’
2. The intention to devote these vessels entirely to the celebration of the eucharist is expressed in the presence of the community through a special blessing, which is preferably to be imparted within Mass.
3. Any priest may bless a chalice and paten, provided they have been made in conformity with the norms given in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal nos. 290-295.
4. If only a chalice or only a paten is to be blessed, the text should be modified accordingly.

---

<sup>1</sup> See GIRM. no. 289.

# OUTLINE OF THE RITE

## INTRODUCTORY RITES

### LITURGY OF THE WORD

Readings  
Homily  
General Intercessions

### BLESSING OF THE CHALICE AND PATEN

Placing of the Chalice and Paten on the Altar  
Prayer of Blessing

### LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Preparation of the Altar  
Presentation of the Gifts  
Eucharistic Prayer

---

Communion  
Prayer after Communion

### CONCLUDING RITE

Blessing and Dismissal

---

# OUTLINE OF THE RITE (OUTSIDE MASS)

## INTRODUCTORY RITES

Greeting  
Brief Address

### LITURGY OF THE WORD

Reading(s)  
Homily

### BLESSING OF THE CHALICE AND PATEN

Placing of the Chalice and Paten on the Altar  
Prayer of Blessing  
General Intercessions  
Lord's Prayer  
Concluding Prayer

### CONCLUDING RITE

Blessing and Dismissal

---