

In a previous work, we looked at the role of the instituted acolyte. We saw that they show that entire Church offers worship to God. We also saw how Pope Francis opened the ministry of acolyte to all the baptized- male or female. But that leaves an important question- who should consider becoming an instituted acolyte? What sort of qualities should they have? While this article is not meant to be exhaustive, we ought to lay out a rough sketch of who might be called to this ministry.

Let's start with some general requirements and then get more specific. The first requirement for any kind of ministry or public service in the Catholic Church is that a person be a fully initiated Catholic. Practically, this means that the person, male or female, be baptized, confirmed, and have received their first Holy Communion. The second general requirement is that the person be in good standing with the Catholic Church. Being in good standing means that someone has no canonical impediments. For most people, this would mean their marriage is right with the Church and that they regularly attend Mass on Sundays and holy days and go to the sacrament of Reconciliation at least once per year. The third general requirement would be a letter of support from the local pastor. This letter would serve as a witness to the candidate's eligibility, and it would show that the pastor is willing to allow the exercise of the ministry.

With these requirements out of the way, we can now ask ourselves "Who should consider becoming an instituted acolyte?". In his *motu proprio* letter *Ministeria Quaedam*, Paul VI lays out some qualities that an acolyte should have:

"The acolyte should learn all matters concerning public divine worship and strive to grasp their spiritual meaning: in that way [they] will be able each day to offer [themselves] entirely to God, be an example to all by [their] gravity and reverence in church, and have a sincere love for the mystical Body of Christ, the people of God, especially the weak and the sick." *Ministeria Quaedam*

Pope Paul VI said that the first quality of an instituted acolyte is that they "learn all matters concerning public divine worship and strive to grasp their spiritual meaning". From this, we can see that a candidate should be familiar with all the parts of the Mass. They ought to know how to serve at the altar, and be familiar with how things change on important feast days or special times during the year. It would be good for such a person to be able to act as a master of ceremonies in their parish, when such a function is needed. If they do not know these things, at least having a love for them and a willingness to learn would be sufficient at the start. Even those who know a great deal about the Liturgy will still need training to understand the spiritual "why" of worship and not just the rules around it.

The second quality from *Ministeria Quaedam* is that the acolyte "will be able each day to offer [themselves] entirely to God, be an example to all by [their] gravity and reverence in church". From this we can see that a candidate must have a healthy spiritual life. They must make worship an act of prayer and not a mere performance. This spiritual life needs to spill over into a good example in church. A candidate for this ministry should be an example by how they serve at the altar. By taking the Mass seriously and serving well, their example will help the whole community, priest and people, pray better.

Finally, Paul VI said that the acolyte should "have a sincere love for the mystical Body of Christ, the people of God, especially the weak and the sick." From this, we can see that the acolyte must have an active love for the Church. We can see this on several levels. First, they ought to have a deep love for being Catholic. This should also show itself in an active love for their parish and local community. Paul VI said that this love should focus on the weak and the sick. A candidate for acolyte should have a love for visiting the homebound and bringing Holy Communion to those in the hospital and the nursing home. They should be involved in parish outreach activities.

If you see these qualities in yourself or someone you know, please consider this instituted ministry. We are currently putting together a formation program to make sure that all qualified candidates receive the appropriate intellectual and spiritual training. More information about this program will be released in the coming year.

“[the instituted acolyte] 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 of it”