

Order of Baptism of Children within Mass

Although nos. 28-30 of the introduction to the OBC have always indicated how the Baptism of children may be celebrated within Mass – whether at the Easter Vigil, on Sundays, or weekdays – the directions have not always been clear or user-friendly, leading to a variety of practices in different places. Therefore, the new ritual edition for the U.S. will contain an appendix that will better enable priests to celebrate the Baptism of children during Mass in an orderly way. The appendix has two versions, one for the Baptism of several children within Mass and one for the Baptism of one child, and texts from the Order of Mass and Order of Baptism are combined together properly.

The basic outline of Baptism within Mass is: after the Entrance Chant and Sign of the Cross, the rite of receiving the children from the Order of Baptism replaces the Greeting and Penitential Act from the Order of Mass. Once the rite is completed and the procession moves to the altar, Mass resumes with the *Gloria* (when prescribed by the rubrics), Collect prayer, and Liturgy of the Word. After the readings and homily, the Creed (when prescribed) is omitted, and the Baptismal rite resumes with the Prayer of the Faithful, invocation of the saints, prayer of exorcism, anointing with the Oil of Catechumens, and procession to the place where the Baptism will take place. The Order of Baptism then unfolds through the end of the Explanatory Rites. Mass resumes with the preparation of the altar and presentation of the gifts through the Prayer after Communion, and may conclude with the Baptismal solemn blessing, followed by the usual dismissal.

Further details on the implementation and publication of the *Order of Baptism of Children, Second Edition* will be provided in a future *Newsletter*.

The Role of Deacons at Baptisms within Mass

In anticipation of the release of the new edition of the *Order of Baptism of Children* (OBC), the Secretariat of Divine Worship has been asked about the proper role of a deacon during the celebration of Baptism within Mass. The rite says little about the role of deacons in this situation, so it would seem that general liturgical principles provide an answer to this question. Perhaps most importantly, although there is no doubt concerning the validity of Baptisms performed by deacons at Mass (with the priest celebrant standing by as an observer), the traditional role of the deacon is to assist the priest at the liturgy, and not to preside over other sacraments when a priest is celebrating the Mass. As for the other aspects of the celebration, common sense must prevail and there will naturally be circumstances when a deacon may be called upon to take a more active role in the Baptism of children within Mass, for example, when the priest is elderly or if there is a large number of children.

At a Mass in which Baptism takes place, the deacon would, first and foremost, perform his usual roles at Mass: 1) carry the Book of the Gospels in the entrance procession and reverence the altar with the priest; 2) proclaim the Gospel; 3) retain the possibility of preaching the homily (in which case he follows the instructions given in the Order of Baptism, basing his homily on the sacred text but also considering the Baptism being celebrated); 4) read the intercessions in the Prayer of the Faithful, drawn from the Order of Baptism and supplemented with petitions for the needs of the Church and the world; and 5) take on his usual roles in the Liturgy of the Eucharist and Concluding Rites. (In the Universal Prayer at a Baptism within Mass, the deacon reads the petitions, but the priest celebrant leads the invocation of the saints, as indicated by the rubrics.)

Within the Order of Baptism itself, “[i]f there are very many children to be baptized, and there are several Priests or Deacons present, these may assist the celebrant in performing those rites that are indicated in the text” (OBC, no. 34). In such cases, deacons may join in the prebaptismal anointing with the Oil of Catechumens, baptizing some of the children, and anointing them with Chrism afterward. In more usual circumstances, when there are a small number of children to be baptized, deacons could assist the priest by helping to dry the holy water off the newly-baptized children and by placing the white garment on each child. They could also distribute the baptismal candles to the fathers or godfathers and/or lower the paschal candle to assist them in lighting the baptismal candles.

Given the wide variety of local situations, the Church relies on its ministers and lay collaborators to work together in a spirit of harmony to ensure that the celebrations of its rites are solemn, prayerful, efficient, and joyful.