

# Assistant Master of Ceremonies *Formation Handbook*



# GRACE, SIMPLICITY, ORDER

a discernment process for assistant masters of ceremonies

in the diocese of Maitland-Newcastle



# Contents

Foreword .....	4
Contact Details.....	5
Diocesan Master of Ceremonies .....	5
Diocesan Liturgy Coordinator .....	5
The Liturgy .....	6
The Master of Ceremonies .....	6
Primary tasks and responsibilities .....	7
Key relationships.....	8
Assistant Masters of Ceremonies .....	8
Gifts and skills .....	8
Primary tasks and responsibilities:.....	10
Expressions of Interest .....	10
Formation process .....	11
Description.....	11
1. Gatherings .....	11
2. Practicum .....	12
3. Discernment .....	12
4. Training.....	13
Content.....	14
Duration .....	14
Requirements.....	15
Resources.....	15
Formalising discernment .....	16
Certification .....	16
Appointment.....	16
Term .....	16
Commissioning .....	16
Accountability.....	16
Ongoing formation .....	16
Costs .....	17
Appendix 1: Discernment.....	18
Personal Discernment.....	18
Liturgical Reflection Guide .....	20
Discerning together .....	21
Formalising Discernment .....	22

## Foreword

The Second Vatican Council acknowledged the liturgy of the Church as “the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows” (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, n.10). Thus, the celebration of the liturgy of the Church should be characterised by due care, noble simplicity, and good order.

The role of the Master of Ceremonies, and by extension Assistant Masters of Ceremonies, is to foster and support the community of the Church to celebrate its liturgy with the full, conscious, and active participation that the Council called for as the overriding principle for the post-Conciliar reform of the Church’s liturgical life.

Embarking on the journey of discernment outlined in this Formation Handbook for Assistant Masters of Ceremonies is not just about deepening knowledge of the liturgy and the good principles that underpin its celebration, but fostering a spirit of service to the Church when it is at prayer and engaged in the worship of God. It is, in other words, not about the participants in the discernment process, but rather about God, about the Church, and about the Church’s worship of God.

I hope that the process of discernment deepens your love for the Church’s liturgical life, and helps to uncover the Spirit of God working in you for the life of the Church.

Rev Andrew Doohan

**Master of Ceremonies**

01 January 2020. Updated 18 February 2022



## Contact Details

### Diocesan Master of Ceremonies

Rev Andrew Doohan

E [andrew.doohan@mn.catholic.org.au](mailto:andrew.doohan@mn.catholic.org.au)

P 02 4992 1477 M 0412 405 671

### Diocesan Manager of Worship and Prayer

Louise Gannon rsj

E [louise.gannon@mn.catholic.org.au](mailto:louise.gannon@mn.catholic.org.au)

P 02 4979 1135 M 0407 966 658

Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle

[www.mn.catholic.org.au](http://www.mn.catholic.org.au)

841 Hunter St, Newcastle West 2302 | PO Box 756 Newcastle NSW 2300



## The Liturgy

The public celebration of the liturgy of the Church is the primary means by which the community of faith gives public worship to God in response to the Paschal Mystery. This is especially true when the Church gathers to celebrate the Eucharist, the ‘summit and source’ of the Christian life (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 10), the celebration of which should be marked by a noble simplicity.

This desire for noble simplicity is particularly significant when the Bishop presides over liturgical celebrations as the Bishop of the Diocese, especially in his Cathedral Church. These liturgies should serve as models and examples both to parishes and diocesan instrumentalities and to the public at large. To that end, these liturgical celebrations should be prepared and celebrated with great care and due regard for the liturgical tradition of the Church.

## The Master of Ceremonies

The ministry of the Master of Ceremonies is described in the liturgical books of the Roman Rite as follows:

*For a liturgical celebration, especially a celebration presided over by the bishop, to be distinguished by grace, simplicity, and order, a master of ceremonies is needed to prepare and direct the celebration in close cooperation with the bishop and others responsible for planning its several parts, and especially from a pastoral standpoint.*

*The master of ceremonies should be well-versed in the history and nature of the liturgy and in its laws and precepts. But equally he should be well-versed in pastoral science, so that he knows how to plan liturgical celebrations in a way that encourages fruitful participation by the people and enhances the beauty of the rites.*

*He should seek to ensure an observance of liturgical laws that is in accord with the true spirit of such laws and with those legitimate traditions of the particular Church that have pastoral value.*

(Ceremonial of Bishops, 34)

*It is desirable, at least in cathedrals and in larger churches, to have some competent minister or master of ceremonies, to see to the appropriate arrangement of sacred actions and to their being carried out by the sacred ministers and lay faithful with decorum, order and devotion.*

(General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 106)

## Primary tasks and responsibilities

In the diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, the Master of Ceremonies works in collaboration with the Manager of Worship and Prayer, the Diocesan Liturgy Council, the College of Assistant Masters of Ceremonies and others who are responsible for the preparation, celebration and review of most liturgies associated with the Bishop or his delegate. In this diocese all liturgical ministry is undertaken collaboratively with the aim of serving and fostering good liturgical practice within the diocese.

Within this context the Master of Ceremonies fulfils the following responsibilities:

- Directing liturgical celebrations of the Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle that are proper to the Office of Bishop, or of the Vicar-General of the Diocese or others who may be delegated to represent the Bishop from time to time;
- Directing other liturgical celebrations as requested by the Bishop from time to time;
- Assisting in the preparation of liturgies proper to the Office of the Bishop and other liturgies
- Being a resource to the Council and College on liturgical matters;
- Contributing to the promotion of the liturgical life of the diocese as a member of or consultant to the Diocesan Liturgy Council.
- Being responsible for the formation, life and ministry of the College of Assistant Masters of Ceremonies.

## Key relationships

The Master of Ceremonies will develop relationships with:

- The Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle;
- The Dean of the Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart;
- The Diocesan Manager of Worship and Prayer
- The College of Assistant Masters of Ceremonies
- The Sacristan, the Director of Music and other key staff of the Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart;
- The other members of the Office of the Bishop, particularly the Vicar-General and the Bishop's Executive Assistant;
- The executive and members of the Diocesan Liturgy Council;
- Other diocesan personnel in order to fulfil their responsibilities.

## Assistant Masters of Ceremonies

At the request of the Bishop of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle the College of Assistant Masters of Ceremonies was established to support and share in the ministry of the Master of Ceremonies.

This College is the context for the ministry of the Assistant Masters of Ceremonies. Ongoing formation and ministry are exercised collaboratively as part of the College.

## Gifts and skills

The ministry of Assistant Master of Ceremonies requires the following capacities and gifts:

- deep faith, expressed in love of neighbour and a passion for mission, love of scripture and liturgy
- to discern the initial and ongoing call to ministry within the context of community
- knowledge and understanding of the liturgy



- a sense of the grace and rhythm of the liturgy
- leadership expressed in
  - a presence and direction that is ultimately ‘unseen’
  - co-ordination and empowerment of other liturgical ministers
- appreciation of liturgical ministry as being at the service of communal worship
- an eye and mind for detail
- open and transparent communication
- willingness and openness to engage in initial and ongoing formation
- collaborative ministry that respects and relies on the diverse gifts present in the College and other liturgical ministers
- to reflect on the experience of ministry, identifying questions and insights that promote the growth of the ministry of the Assistant Master of Ceremonies and the liturgical life of the church



## Primary tasks and responsibilities:

The Assistant Masters of Ceremonies shall fulfil their responsibilities at the direction of the Master of Ceremonies by:

- Directing liturgical celebrations of the Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle that are proper to the Office of Bishop, or of the Vicar-General of the Diocese or others who may be delegated to represent the Bishop from time to time;
- Communicating and meeting with communities ahead of the liturgical celebration as appropriate and required;
- Being the conduit of communication between the presider and the community on the day of the liturgy;
- Making any last minute liturgical adjustments and decisions as may be required;
- being an active participant in the College of Assistant Masters of Ceremonies
- working with the Manager of Worship and Prayer and Diocesan Liturgy Council to nurture the growth of the liturgical life of the Church

## Expressions of Interest

Initially, to establish the College, and from time when there is a need for additional Assistant Masters of Ceremonies, the Master of Ceremonies with the Manager of Worship and Prayer will invite [Expressions of Interest](#) from the diocesan community.

This ministry is opened to males and females 18 years and older. It would be an advantage to have experience as a liturgical minister.

Expressions of interest are to be submitted to the Administrative Support Person for the Liturgy Office. (see p. 3 for contact details)

Those who express interest will be contacted by the Master of Ceremonies to arrange a personal conversation about this ministry. After these conversations, the Master of Ceremonies together with

the Manager of Worship and Prayer will discern those who will be invited into the formation process.

## Formation process

Once accepted, people are invited into a discernment process which involves prayer, formation and practicum and is facilitated by the Master of Ceremonies and the Manager of Worship and Prayer.

This formation process is called '**Grace, Simplicity, Order: A discernment process for Assistant Masters of Ceremonies in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle**'.

Formation and discernment unfolds within the context of community, specifically the community of those discerning a call to this ministry and the formation facilitators.

## Description

The formation process has four main components:

### **1. Preparation: Serving at the Cathedral**

Prior to formation gatherings participants will have experience serving Sunday Mass at the Cathedral working with the current Assistant Masters of Ceremonies to consolidate their skills. The duration of this period of preparation will be determined by the experience of each participant and may continue once the gatherings has begun.

### **2. Gatherings**

Over a period of two years, participants gather 6 times a year for two and a half hours. These gatherings include:

- Prayer and discernment
- Reflection on ministry and reading
- Formation
- Organisation

### 3. Practicum

When deemed ready by the facilitators, participants will be partnered with an Assistant Master of Ceremonies (AMC).

In the first step of the Practicum participants will accompany and observe their partner ministering as Master of Ceremonies supporting the Bishop, Vicar General or delegate. They will then reflect together on the ministry experience.

In the second step of the Practicum, when deemed appropriate, the formation participants will be invited to serve as Master of Ceremonies and their AMC partner will observe. Each ministry experience will be followed by a process of reflection.

The range of liturgies on the diocesan liturgy calendar will provide diverse experience.

It is recommended participants engage in a minimum of 20 hours practicum with an understanding that each liturgy is approximately 3 hours of ministry.

Participants are invited to reflect on their experience of serving as Master of Ceremonies within the Liturgical Reflection Guide in Appendix 1:

### 4. Discernment

Christian discipleship is essentially lived in the Spirit

*Jesus said to the disciples,  
“If you love me and obey the command I give you,*



*I will ask the One who sent me to give you another Advocate to be with you always – the Spirit of Truth...who abides with you and will be in you. (Jn.14:15-17).*

Discernment is therefore a way of life; a way of listening and responding to God; a way of attuning our lives to the Spirit of God; a way of engaging with the big and small choices and decisions that shape our life.

Ministry is essentially relational. It is exercised within a community, in response to an identified need and by those who have the required gifts and skills. The call to ministry is discerned personally, and within the context of the faith community.

Discerning a call to ministry involves information, prayer, formation, experience, openness, willingness, courage and love.

Discernment is embedded in the 'Grace, Simplicity, Order' formation process through:

1. Expressing interest
2. Engaging in the formation process
3. Ministry experience
4. Personal prayer and discernment
5. Communal prayer and discernment
6. Formalising the discerned response

See Appendix 1 for resources to assist with personal and communal discernment and reflection on liturgical ministry.

Journaling also assists with discernment and formation. Participants may like to keep a journal of their reflections, questions, insights and ponderings from week to week.

## **5. Training**

As the Church's duty of care to those who minister in its name, participants must comply with legislative requirements and

training, particularly concerning *Integrity in the Service of the Church*.

Currently, to meet compliancy standards, participants will be required to:

- Engage in Safeguarding Training run by the Office of Safeguarding
- Hold a current Working With Children Check (WWCC)

Participants will be advised of diocesan schedules for formation and training.

These requirements are under constant review in the light of ongoing legislative changes.

Once undertaken initially one's 'currency' in each area must be maintained.

## Content

Initial formation is focused on 'the Bishop presiding at Mass'. This will involve an introduction and exploration of the following:

- The nature of liturgy via reflection on the key liturgical principles
- The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*
- The Roman Missal with particular emphasis on its structure and the Order of Mass
- The *Ceremonial of Bishops*
- Relevant issues and questions that arise through the formation process.

## Duration

Initial formation and discernment will run for a minimum of two years.

## Requirements

Participants are required to:

- Do their best to attend all gatherings and complete 20 hours of practicum per calendar year. 80% attendance and practicum participation is a diocesan requirement for certification for ministry.
- Engage in the discernment process.
- Fulfil training expectations
- Hold a current driver licence

## Resources

The primary reference material for Masters of Ceremonies includes:

The Roman Missal

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal [GIRM]

The Ceremonial of Bishops

Those participating in the formation process will be provided with a copy of the GIRM and *The Ceremonial of Bishops*. A study edition of the *Roman Missal* will be loaned to participants for the duration of their formation and ministry.

Suggested reading material includes:

O'Loughlin, F. *The Gathering of the People of God: renew the Liturgy – Renew the Church*. 2020, Coventry Press, Bayswater, Victoria

Turner, P. *Let us Pray: A Guide to the rubrics of Sunday Mass*. 2012, Pueblo Publishing Co, New York



Turner, P. *Ars Celebrandi: Celebrating and Concelebrating Mass*. 2021, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota

Ryan, G.T. *The Sacristy Manual*. Second edition, 2011. Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago.

## Formalising discernment

This takes place in conversation with the Master of Ceremonies. See Appendix 1.

## Certification

Those who discern a call to this ministry and complete the formation will be provided with a Certificate of Attainment and transcript outlining their participation in the formation process.

## Appointment

### Term

The Bishop will appoint Assistant Masters of Ceremonies to the College for three years from the date of appointment.

### Commissioning

Assistant Masters of Ceremonies will be commissioned by the Bishop during a Sunday Mass in the Cathedral.

### Accountability

Assistant Masters of Ceremonies are accountable to the Master of Ceremonies.

Their responsibilities are outlined in the [Position Description](#)

### Ongoing formation

Those appointed as Assistant Masters of Ceremonies are required to participate in ongoing formation.



The formal aspect of ongoing formation will take place in quarterly gatherings of the College of Assistant Masters of Ceremonies. The focus of these gathering will be the rites of the Church and relevant documents, particularly those requiring the ministry of a Master of Ceremonies.

Additional ongoing formation is determined by the needs of the College. The following recommendations may assist:

- Engaging in the many opportunities that exist both within and beyond the diocese such as guest speakers.
- Participation in liturgical formation opportunities organised by the Diocesan Liturgy Council. Such participation not only benefits the individual. Assistant Masters of Ceremonies bring a valuable perspective for all liturgical formation.

Some form of Annual retreat experience is highly recommended.

## Costs

Assistant Masters of Ceremonies receive no remuneration for their ministry.

Initial and ongoing formation is provided by the diocese. Required texts are also provided.



Once appointed, vesture will be provided by the diocese.

Out of pocket expenses such as travel will be reimbursed by the diocese.

# Appendix 1: Discernment

## Personal Discernment

### **Discerning my call to be an Assistant Master of Ceremonies**

*In discerning your call it may be helpful to engage in regular personal reflection on and prayer about:*

The place of liturgy in your life:

Your love of the liturgy ...

How do you nurture it ...

How does the liturgy nourish and sustain you ...

Your experience of encountering the presence of God in the liturgy ...

Your experience of the liturgy rehearsing you for life ...

Your appreciation and understandings:

An Assistant Master of Ceremonies ...

appreciates the nature of liturgy ...

understands and promotes the full, conscious and active participation of the people ...

directs the liturgy so as to enhance its grace, simplicity, order and beauty ...

Your gifts and skills ...

An Assistant Master of Ceremonies ...

has a presence and ability to direct in a way that is essentially 'unseen' ...

has a collaborative style that fosters communal ministry within the College and the liturgy ...

serves the liturgy through their service of the Bishop or Vicar General ...

Other insights and questions that emerge from your prayer and reflection ...



## Liturgical Reflection Guide

In participating in any liturgy, your primary task is to be fully present and attentive to the liturgy, specifically to what is **happening**.

After participating in the liturgy, sit quietly and reflect on your experience. Record the essence of your reflections. These are to assist your engagement in group conversations that are part of your apprenticeship.

The following questions are offered as a guide to assist you to focus your reflection. You do not have to use all of them, only those that are most helpful to you.

*All liturgy has a purpose or intention – a job to do. What was the purpose of this particular liturgy?*

*How did the ministry of the Master of Ceremonies help the liturgy to achieve that purpose?*

*How would you describe the presence of the MC during the liturgy?*

*What did you see the MC do during the liturgy?*

*How did the MC serve and support the Bishop as presider?*

*Imagine yourself in the MCs role in this liturgy. How might you have exercised this ministry?*

*The role of the MC is pivotal in large and complex liturgies such as this. What feelings might be associated with this ministry? How might these feelings impact on you?*

*What insights have you gained from this experience?*

*What questions does this experience lead you to ask?*

*What has this liturgy helped you come to know about the ministry of the Master of Ceremonies?*

*What do you need to help you to continue to discern your call and prepare for the ministry of Assistant Master of Ceremonies?*



## Discerning together

First letter of St Paul to the Corinthians (12: 4-11)

*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.*

What have you come to know and understand about the ministry of the Master of Ceremonies?

What questions are you pondering?

What gifts and skills are developing nicely in you?

What gifts and skills would you like to focus more on?

Do you feel called to this ministry?

How are you feeling about this call?

Are you ready to respond to this call?

## Formalising Discernment

In conversation with the Master of Ceremonies

