

General Subdeacon/Deacon Instructions Serving Inside the Altar

Tunics:

1. They should only have crosses on them.
2. No pictures are allowed.
3. It should always be clean and ironed.
4. It should be kept in good condition.

Stole (Padrashal):

1. It should always be clean.
2. Archdeacons and full deacons wear it on their left shoulder.
3. Readers & sub-deacons should wear the Padrashal crosswise but with different colors?
4. Singers do not wear the Padrashal.

Blessing of the Tunics:

1. The tunic blessing time should be before Matins.
2. If some deacons come late, the tunic may be blessed after Matins and before the "Agpya" prayers.
3. A third time to bless will be after the "Agpya" prayers.
4. A fourth time may be at the "Absolution of the Servants" prayer.
5. The final time to bless the tunic will be after the prayer of "Absolution of the Servants", but only if the deacons were present in church for the "Absolution" prayers.
6. Deacons should not cross themselves during the blessing.
7. After crossing the tunic, the deacon should say, "absolve me I have sinned," then kiss the cross and the hand of the priest.
8. The deacon does not need to worship after crossing the tunic.
9. Deacons should recite psalms 29 & 92 while putting on their tunic.

Censer:

1. Prepare the charcoal and censer about 5 minutes before starting the service to give the coal a chance to get hot.
2. Be sure to have well-lit charcoal before offering the censer to the priest.
3. Hold the censer with a firm yet comfortable grip to avoid accidents.
4. It is best to hold the top of the censer with the right hand and the bottom with the left hand using a thick mat.
5. When the deacon brings the censer to the priest: he should bring the right hand (with the bottom of the censer) to the level of the incense box. Then lower the right hand away from the charcoal to the level of the incense box.
6. Empty the censer after each service so that it is ready for use in the next liturgy.
7. On bringing the censer to the priest:

Vespers/Matins:

- Bring the censer after the Thanksgiving prayer.
- Bring the censer before the litany of the sick or the departed.

- During the litany of the departed: the deacon brings out incense to the priest when he says, "...even if any negligence or heedlessness has overtaken them as men since they were clothed in flesh".
- Bring the censer before the litany of the Gospel.
- Bring the censer after the Gospel for the litanies if they are said audibly. The deacon should bring out the incense box before the litany of the assemblies.

St. Basil Liturgy (different in St. Cyril's liturgy)

- Bring the censer after the absolution of the ministers.
- Bring the censer after the reading of the Catholic epistle.
- Bring the censer before the litany of the Gospel.
- Bring the censer at the prayer of "was incarnate."
- Bring the censer after the congregation says, "Amen. Amen. Amen". Hold the top part of the censer with the right hand, the lower part with the left hand through a thick mat, and then lower the right hand away from the priest. The priest will wash his hands over the censer three times. The deacon will take back the censer its place.
- Bring the censer after the commemoration of the saints.

Candles:

1. Candles should not be aflame while kneeling because the light should be held up high. Turn out the candles before kneeling.
2. We use candles as a sign (not to sign with). Deacons should not point with the candles to the paten or the chalice while the priest is praying over them.
3. Do not extinguish the candles by blowing them out (especially after receiving Holy Communion).
4. We light candles during the choosing of the lamb until the priest pours water in the cup.
 - Only deacons who carry the wine & water flasks light candles.
 - Only the deacon with the wine crosses his hands.
5. We light candles during the Gospel reading (2 candles, one on each side of the Gospel).
6. Light candles at the beginning of the Sanctification Prayers until the deacon responds, "Worship God in fear and trembling." Put out the candles before bowing down.
7. Light candles at the beginning of the Fraction Prayer until the end of the fraction. Candles should not be lit before the fraction because we are kneeling immediately before.
8. We light candles when the priest prays, "the Holies for the holy," until the beginning of the Confession Prayer, "Amen, Amen, Amen. I believe".
9. During the Confession, we extinguish all candles, and all deacons kneel except for the deacon who prays the Confession Prayer.
10. The deacon who is praying the Confession:
 - Lights a candle.
 - Stands across the Altar facing the priest.
 - Holds the cross in his right hand, the candle in his left hand (shape of a triangle), and a corporal (lefafa) with both hands (between the cross and the corporal).
11. After the deacon prays the Confession Prayer, a second deacon lights a candle to guard the Holy Blood.

12. If the priest goes outside the Altar to give communion to someone unable to enter the Altar, a deacon who carries a candle must escort the priest. At the same time, the holy Body is guarded by the deacon who said the Confession.

Deacons serving in the Altar:

1. Deacons who serve in the altar should be ordained in this diocese. If anyone is ordained in another diocese, they must obtain permission from the Metropolitan to serve.
2. In order to give everyone a chance, deacons should alternate the responses. Each deacon will know when his turn is coming, and there will be no need to speak or use hand motions to coordinate.
3. Do not use emphatic hand gestures to get the attention of other deacons inside the Altar.
4. Do not talk inside the Altar.
5. Do not sing the congregation responses from inside the Altar unless you are the only deacon in the church (in the case of mid-week liturgies with a limited number of deacons).
6. Do not lean on or touch the Altar during the liturgy.
7. Only say the altar responses.
8. Should focus on the Holy Sacrifice, the entire liturgy.
9. The Altar is the East. Those serving in the Altar should face the Altar at all times and not look at the congregation.
10. The closest deacon to the censer (on the right) should bring the censer.
11. During the incense circuits, the deacon carries only the cross (not the Gospel) while saying (inaudibly) responses for the three litanies in order:
 - Response for the litany of the Peace.
 - Response for the litany of the Fathers.
 - Response for the litany of the Assembly.
 - The deacon continues the circuit in silence as there are no other responses to be said.

Deacon Praying the Confession:

1. Should take communion immediately after the priests.
2. Stand at the main entrance of the Altar when the priest is ready to distribute communion to the rest of the deacons.
3. Stand facing the Altar while the priest is distributing the Holy Communion.
4. After the deacons receive communion, the deacon walks backward in front of the priest while facing the Holy Body" at all times.
5. The deacon is the guardian of the Holy Body and should always be next to the Holy Body.
6. Suppose the priest will administer Holy Communion to someone outside the sanctuary. In that case, the deacon who said the Confession remains guarding the "Holy Body at the altar.
7. The deacon should not say, "Amen," in response to the priest's announcement, "The Body of Emmanuel our God," on behalf of those receiving the Holy Communion.
8. Make sure to wait on the towels and folding of the corporals until the dismissal of the angle.

Royal Doors:

1. Generally, the deacons should not enter the sanctuary using the royal door.
2. However, there are three times in the liturgy in which the deacon may use the Royal Doors:
 - After the litany of the Gospel to go inside and prepare for the circuit with the priest.
 - The deacons who are carrying the flask of wine & water at the time of offering the lamb.
 - After the offering of the lamb, the deacons may use the Royal Doors to enter.
3. Enter with the right leg, and exit with the left.
 - Counterclockwise motion.
 - Exit church with the back (still facing the Altar).
4. The deacons should enter through the side doors to receive the Holy Communion.

General Instructions:

1. Chanting the distribution hymns outside should not cause those deacons to delay receiving the Holy Communion.
2. No one should cross himself while receiving the Body or Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.
3. Do not receive communion in the middle of organizing other things. We approach with fear and reverence.
4. It is preferable to gather all those who will receive the holy communion outside, in the first row of the church pews. It will ensure a smooth process of administering the Holy Communion with complete respect.
5. All deacons must use the Diocesan Liturgy Book. (Arabic, English, and Coptic).