



Vicar General

16 May 2024

Dear Fathers,

I am writing to clarify a few matters to do with the Ministry of Acolyte within the archdiocese. There have been many enquiries directed to the Centre for Liturgy primarily asking when the next intake for acolyte formation will take place. This is understandable given that records indicate that it has been 5 years since the last conferral of this ministry in the archdiocese. During this period, we also had the COVID pandemic. The current cohort of acolytes are aging, there are some who are retiring and all are men.

It is important to give some context to this delay notwithstanding the pandemic. In January 2021, Pope Francis in his Apostolic Letter *Spiritus Domini* adjusted canon law to allow women to be formally instituted as acolytes, expressing clearly that both the Ministry of Lector and Acolyte are lay ministries flowing from the Sacrament of Baptism.

It is also important to keep in mind that within Australia very few dioceses have instituted the Ministry of Acolyte unlike our archdiocese which has a long-standing history. As a result, the Apostolic Letter released by Pope Francis has meant that many dioceses are looking at this ministry for the first time. Most dioceses in Australia have focused on Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to distribute communion both in the celebration of the Mass and to those who are housebound.

As a result of the Pope's Apostolic Letter the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) in 2022 drafted Norms and Guidelines for the ministries of Lector and Acolyte. These guidelines were sent to Rome for approval. These guidelines are very prescriptive about the role of the bishop, the ministry itself, including discernment, application, the formation required and the Rite of Institution. These guidelines are to be the norms across all dioceses in Australia.

The Centre for Liturgy will now take some time to get a good picture of the Ministry of Acolyte across the archdiocese and I ask that you cooperate with this when asked about the ministry in your parish community. The Centre for Liturgy will proceed to make sure that what takes place in our archdiocese in the future is faithful to the Apostolic Letter of Pope Francis and to the norms and guidelines issued by the ACBC.

Given this, there will be no intake and formation of acolytes in 2024. Following this review recommendations will be made as to the best way forward for this important ministry in our archdiocese. It is envisaged that changes will be required. I ask for your patience and cooperation while this review takes place. Once this has taken place then decisions will be made as to the next intake and formation of acolytes, both male and female, in the Archdiocese of Perth.

Yours sincerely,

Vey Rev Vincent Glynn VG
VICAR GENERAL