



**POLICIES & PROCEDURES FOR LAY LEADERS  
OF SUNDAY CELEBRATION IN THE  
ABSENCE OF A PRIEST**  
Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

1. A lay leader must be officially designated by the pastor or pastoral administrator and appointed by the bishop of the diocese. The appointment is for a three-year period, renewable for another three years.
2. The lay leader must have participated in a diocesan training program. They should be well trained to lead the liturgical rites from the ritual book (*SCAP #38*). The Diocesan Office of Liturgy and Christian Initiation will provide continuing formation through retreats, workshops and private study.
3. The pastor or pastoral administrator in the presence of the community at a Sunday celebration of Eucharist will officially commission the lay leader.
4. The deacon, as a minister of the Word, is called in a special way to lead Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest. When a deacon is available, he leads the celebration (*SCAP #23*).
5. The pastor or pastoral administrator is to see to the suitable and continuous instruction of the lay leaders of prayer and to assist them in the preparation of a worthy celebration (*SCAP #29*).
6. The lay leader of prayer in the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings may be vested in an alb (common baptismal garment), religious habit, or lay clothing. Ultimately, the bishop prescribes the appropriate vesture (*SCAP #35*).
7. Lay leaders of prayer do not use the greeting before the Gospel (“The Lord be with you”) or any of the other greetings designated for the priest or deacon. Nor do they use the priestly or diaconal forms of blessing. The ritual provides the appropriate blessings for lay leaders and deacons (*SCAP #35*).
8. Neither a lay leader of prayer, nor a deacon, may use the presider’s chair, as it is a symbol that the community awaits the presence of a priest. A stole may be laid over the chair. The leadership of this prayer is best done from among the faithful. The altar is the table of sacrifice and of the paschal banquet; its only use in one of these celebrations is for the Rite of Communion (*SCAP #36*). The ambo is reserved for the Liturgy of the Word.
9. The lay leader of prayer is always to be assisted by other ministers who will proclaim the Scriptures, assist in the distribution of Holy Communion, sing the psalms and other songs, provide instrumental music, and prepare the place for celebration (*SCAP #37*).
10. The readings assigned in the Lectionary on a particular Sunday, solemnity, or feast are always to be used (*SCAP #39*).



**POLICIES & PROCEDURES FOR LAY LEADERS  
OF SUNDAY CELEBRATION IN THE  
ABSENCE OF A PRIEST**  
Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

11. The preaching of a homily is part of most liturgical rites and is, by its very definition, reserved to a priest or a deacon (*SCAP #31*). However, the bishop may delegate a layperson, who is properly trained to explain the word of God at Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest or a deacon, and at other specific occasions (refer to Policies and Procedures for Lay Preachers). The pastor or pastoral administrator may provide a text for the leader to read. (By virtue of being a lay leader of prayer in the Diocese, one is not delegated to give a personal reflection upon the Word of God).
12. The celebration begins without a procession. As the liturgical assembly and ministers gather at their place, instrumental music may be played (*SCAP #186*).
13. Churches without the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament: before the Liturgy of the Word begins, place the Blessed Sacrament on the credence table and place a lighted candle next to it.
14. When the communion rite begins, the candles by the altar are lighted, the deacon or lay leader of prayer goes to the place where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, genuflects, takes the ciborium containing the body of the Lord, and places it on the altar (*SCAP #204*), the deacon/lay leader of prayer returns to the designated chair to lead the Lord's Prayer (*SCAP #205*).
15. After the invitation, "This is the Lamb of God...", the deacon or lay leader of prayer reverently consumes the Body of Christ. Then the deacon or lay leader of prayer and other extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, if needed, take the ciborium with the Eucharist and go to the communicants (*SCAP #207*).
16. Following the distribution of Holy Communion, the deacon or lay leader of prayer or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion return any remaining sacred hosts to the tabernacle (*SCAP #209*). (If the Eucharist is not reserved, the remaining sacred hosts should be consumed).
17. Having returned to the designated chair following the distribution of Holy Communion, the deacon or lay leader of prayer, facing the same direction as the assembly, invites all to an Act of Thanksgiving (*SCAP #211*). Following the Act of Thanksgiving announcements may be made and the collection of monetary offerings is gathered (*SCAP #212*).
18. The deacon or lay leader of prayer then invites the assembly to pray for vocations to the priesthood. This is not a prayer, but an invitation to pray on their own (*SCAP #213*). Following the blessing, the sign of peace is exchanged (*SCAP #215*).



**POLICIES & PROCEDURES FOR LAY LEADERS  
OF SUNDAY CELEBRATION IN THE  
ABSENCE OF A PRIEST**

Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

19. When leading the official prayer of the church, the appropriate ritual books should be used. The official books for the *Liturgy of the Word* are the lectionary and/or the *Book of the Gospels*. The appropriate ritual for morning or evening Prayer (with Holy Communion) and/or

Celebration of the Liturgy of the Word (with Holy Communion) is *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* (2007 edition).

Revised June 13, 2007  
Rev. Jay Peterson, Diocesan Administrator  
Reviewed October 2001  
Promulgated this 26th day of December 1996  
Most Reverend Anthony M. Milone  
Bishop of Great Falls-Billings



**POLICIES & PROCEDURES FOR LAY LEADERS  
OF SUNDAY CELEBRATION IN THE  
ABSENCE OF A PRIEST**  
Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

**Comparison Chart**

**Eucharist**

**Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest**

**INTRODUCTORY RITES**

- 1) Entrance Song
- 2) Sign of the Cross and Greeting
- 3) Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling of Holy Water (or) Penitential Rite
- 4) Glory to God
- 5) Opening Prayer

**INTRODUCTORY RITES**

- Introduction  
Sign of Cross  
Greeting
- Opening Prayer

**THE LITURGY OF THE WORD**

- 1) First Reading
- 2) Responsorial Psalm
- 3) Second Reading
- 4) Gospel Acclamation
- 5) Third Reading/Gospel
- 6) Homily
- 7) Profession of Faith
- 8) Universal Prayer/General Intercessions

**LITURGY OF THE WORD**

- same  
same  
same  
same  
same  
(homily or reflection on readings)  
same  
same

**PRESENTATION & PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS**

- 1) Presentation Music
- 2) Procession and Presentation of the Gifts
- 3) Prayers during Preparation of the Gifts
- 4) Invitatory (*Pray, Brethren...*)
- 5) Prayer over the Gifts

**LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST**

- 1) Preface
- 2) Preface Acclamation (Holy, Holy)
- 3) Eucharistic Prayer
- 4) Memorial Acclamation
- 5) Continuation of Prayer and Doxology
- 6) Concluding Acclamation (Great Amen)

**COMMUNION RITE**

- 1) Lord's Prayer and Doxology
- 2) Prayer for Peace and Gesture of Peace
- 3) Breaking of Bread during the *Lamb of God*
- 4) *Lord, I am not worthy.*
- 5) Distribution of Communion
- 6) Communion Song or Antiphon
- 7) Thanksgiving Silence / Hymn of Praise
- 8) Prayer after Communion

**COMMUNION RITE**

- Lord's Prayer (no Dox.)
- Invitation to Communion  
Communion distribution
- Act of Thanksgiving

**CONCLUDING RITE**

- 1) Greeting
- 2) Solemn Blessing (or)  
Prayers over the people
- 3) Dismissal
- 4) Recessional

**CONCLUDING RITE**

- Brief announcements  
Collection of monetary offerings  
Invitation to pray for Vocations  
Blessing  
Sign of Peace