

## **Spiritus Domini**

A Response from Deacon Dan Laurita, JCL

What did the Pope do? This is a question that a few have already asked about his recent *motu proprio Spiritus Domini*. What he did was to change the word that begins canon 230 of the Code of Canon Law. Until Sunday it read “Lay men” can be instituted as Lectors and Acolytes. Now it reads “Lay people” can be instituted as Lectors and Acolytes. Things to keep in mind: Institution is NOT ordination; it is the recognition that one is given a responsibility with its concurrent obligations on a permanent basis. This recognition is celebrated by a public rite.

Before, in the two-millennial history of the church, the liturgical role of Lector and Acolyte as well as Porter, Sub diaconate, exorcist, cantors, and others was considered “minor orders.” These were generally permanent positions. For the most, after the Council of Trent, (16<sup>th</sup> century) these “minor orders” were to be received only by those men preparing for priestly ordination.

The Church has allowed lay men to be instituted on a permanent basis as lectors and acolytes since the Second Vatican Council and the promulgation of the Code in 1983 which abrogated the law that preceded it. It must be noted that very few lay men, in very few dioceses were, in fact, “instituted.”

As we have all seen, both men and women, have been fulfilling these roles in the celebration of the Liturgy, albeit on a non-permanent basis. They do so with permission of the Bishops and Pastors. Thank you if you are among our faithful Lectors and Acolytes.

What this “change” does is institutionalize that which is already practiced but offer the opportunity to do so on a permanent basis to both men and women. While to ask to be instituted is a right of the faithful it does not bind the Church until proper formation and discernment has been received and the candidate is deemed worthy. The law both in its old and new formulation requires this.

The implication of this specific change is the responsibility of the Episcopal Conference of Bishops, so we must wait until our own U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops promulgates the law pertaining to this matter.