

Swiss Miss: women lectors, acolytes and "much to be invented"

At least three Catholic women in Switzerland have been formally conferred with ministries of lector and acolyte, giving them "a responsibility to serve the community"



Bishop Charles Morerod of Lausanne, Geneva and Fribourg - here during the preparation of the Easter Mass - instituted two women as lectors and acolytes on Saturday, February 5. (Photo by LAURENT GILLIERON/EPA VIA MAXPPP)

By [Xavier Le Normand](#) | [Switzerland](#)

It was taken for granted that Emmanuelle Bessi, a consecrated virgin in the Swiss Catholic Diocese of Sion, would formally receive one of the new instituted ministries that Pope Francis opened up last year to women in the Church.

The vicar general of her diocese conferred on her the ministry of lector during a ceremony on December 18.

"When the pope opened up the ministries, I thought it would confirm what I've been doing for years," said Bessi, who's been reading at Mass since she was a child.

In addition to her, at least two other women in Switzerland have been entrusted with instituted ministries.

Bishop Charles Morerod OP of Lausanne, Geneva and Fribourg, instituted two women as lectors and acolytes on February 5.

A particular feature is that both are married to men who are preparing to become permanent deacons.

Taking time to discern

Although the offer was made to them in the context of their husband's formation, these two lectors and acolytes insist that, although their new ministries are linked to these future deacons, they are not limited to them.

"It's a personal journey. I took some time to discern before accepting," said Sandrine Minniti, one of two.

"It's a journey that accompanies my husband's upcoming diaconate, but it's something else. I thought long and hard, in prayer, about each of these two ministries," added the second woman, Virginie Udriot.

Other wives of permanent deacons have not followed suit, even though it was also proposed to them.

But for the three who did, the instituted ministries do not limit them to just reading at Mass or/and distributing communion.

"Technically, it doesn't necessarily change much. But spiritually, it's a fundamental change in my relationship with God," Bessi acknowledged.

"It is above all a service, but it is also a long-term commitment to live by the word of God and to live by the Eucharist," said Minniti.

Not a consolation prize

"It's a special recognition and a special sending," added Virginie Udriot's husband.

"The ministry of the lector, for example, does not consist of systematically reading at Mass, but rather of being concerned that the word of God be alive, even outside of Mass," he said.

"It's still an uncharted field and there is much to be invented," he added.

His wife Virginie said that whatever happens it must be "a responsibility at the service of the community".

The two wives of the future deacons do not see the instituted ministries as a consolation prize, considering that the female diaconate does not exist in the Catholic Church.

"These are two important ministries, the diaconate is another," Virginie Udriot said.

"There is no better place, we must get away from the logic of comparison," agreed her husband, Fabien.