Sacred Heart of Jesus Altar Server Manual



Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church
Cullman, Alabama

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Forward

This manual was taken, in part, from a manual originally written, edited and published for the instruction of the Altar servers over a decade ago. Since its first publication to the internet, it has been used by many parishes worldwide for their own training programs. Consequently, updates were undertaken several times as different parishes suggested additions and changes.

While this manual is not a theological study course or a substitute for the Catechism of the Catholic Church, but rather it is a manual for the training of Altar servers, there is included some theological information found fruitful in aiding trainees with the reasons why they are expected to perform in special liturgical ways.

Altar servers perform most of the functions of the former minor order of ordained clerics known as acolytes from the Greek word akolouthos (attendant). Church writings from the second and third centuries discuss the role of acolytes, giving the office great importance and honor in the history of the Church. Although institution into the ministry of acolyte is reserved to lay men, the diocesan bishop may permit the liturgical functions of the instituted acolyte to be carried out by Altar servers, men and women, boys and girls. Altar servers are not ordained, they are commissioned by their parish priest. The determination that women and girls may function as servers in the liturgy should be made by the bishop on the diocesan level so that there might be a uniform diocesan policy.

The primary role of the Altar server is to assist the priest in the celebration of the liturgy during Mass. This is done through specific actions and by setting an example to the congregation by active participation in the liturgy by their actions, singing of hymns, responses of the people, looking alert and sitting or standing at the appropriate times

Servers carry the cross, the processional candle(s), hold the book for the priest celebrant when he is not at the Altar, carry the incense and censer, present the bread, wine, and water to the priest or deacon during the preparation of the gifts or assist him when he receives the gifts from the people, wash the hands of the priest, assist the priest celebrant and deacon as necessary.

Altar servers are chosen from among the faithful who display a desire to participate in an intimate way during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It is an extreme privilege to kneel so close to the Altar as our loving Savior, Jesus Christ, becomes truly present, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity upon the Altar.

A server is uniquely joined in the Heavenly Supper of the Lamb of God and serves in the company of myriads of angles eternally singing "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"

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SPIRITUALITY OF AN ALTAR SERVER

S – Sacrificial
E – Enthusiastic
R – Repated Act
V – Virtuous
I – Inspiring
C – Cheerful
E – Excellent

GENERAL RULES AND REQUIREMENTS

- Attend Altar Sever Training Classes
- Altar Servers should not leave the Sanctuary after the start of Mass for any reason except bathroom emergencies, illness, or when directed to do so by the priest.
- Always go from the server's sacristy to the priest sacristy by going behind the main Altar. Be sure to bow at the tabernacle even when you are behind the main Altar.
- Serve at every Mass that you scheduled for, or make arrangements to have someone cover the Mass
- Arrive at least 20 minutes before the Mass starts to get dressed and make sure that the Altar is prepared
- Make sure the candles are lit, bread, wine, water, towels, bowl, prayer book, and any other sacramentals are in their proper place
- Perform the duties assigned during the Mass in the prescribed orderlymanner
- Maintain a prayerful posture during all times in the Sanctuary (if you are not doing something your hands should be folded in your lap)
- After the Mass, return to the Sanctuary, Sacristy, and preparation areas to ensure that everything is set up for the next Mass
- Be quiet and respectful when on the Altar, **you are role models**
- Be attentive and respond immediately when the priest asks for help
- Your duties as a server do not end at the end of Mass! Make sure that your cassock and surplice are returned the way you found them.
- PAY ATTENTION

When Serving in the presence of Our Savior and surrounded by His Heavenly Host, it is both wise and necessary for a server to perform all assigned duties with attention, dignity and reverence. Just as Jesus "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant . . ." servers should set aside their own preferences and attend to every action of the Divine Liturgy as a team, all rehearsing the Divine Celebration in the same manner and style as directed by the parish priest and performed by their companion servers.

The server, participating as instructed, will enter into a fuller participation in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass while assisting the priests and deacons as the mysteries of the Upper Room and Calvary are represented to God's people. All actions of the server are woven from signs and symbols whose meaning is rooted in the works of creation and in human culture, specified by events in the Old Testament and fully revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is imperative that all servers do their assigned tasks in the prescribed form and manner.

The Sanctuary is a holy place, and access to it is restricted to a very few men. Do not abuse the privilege you have been given to enter the Sanctuary for service by being disrespectful or entering the holy place unnecessarily

- Servers will be required to vest in a cassock with surplice
- Servers carry the cross, the processional candle(s), hold the book for the priest celebrant when he is not at the Altar, carry the incense and censer, wash the hands of the priest, hold the Communion paten and assist the priest celebrant

Who May Serve

A server can be any person who at least 8 years of age and has received first confession and Holy Communion. Each bishop and each parish may have additional requirements but basically there are no other universal restriction gender.

Required Basic Knowledge of the Mass

A server candidate is required to know the principal prayers of the Mass: The Gloria, Our Father, Nicene Creed, Lamb of God, Lord, I am not worthy and Holy, Holy, Holy. If they cannot take the time to memorize these basic prayers, they may be demonstrating a lack of sufficient interest in being a good server. Not knowing these prayers usually results in a server who just stands there looking out of touch and in ignorance of our most sacred act of worship.

1. All candidates must demonstrate their ability to make use of the "*tools of the trade*" such as matches, candle lighters, books and candles, processional cross, preparation of credence table, chalice, Mass colors, etc. On the job training is very important. New servers typically are scheduled to serve with an experienced server for several Masses.

2. All server candidates must be able to demonstrate their ability to genuflect, bow and make the sign of the cross.
3. *They must understand genuflecting is reserved for and to the Real Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ whether exposed on the Altar or reserved in the tabernacle.*
    - Genuflecting is a form of worship of our God and should only be done to Him alone. It would be a grave mistake to genuflect to any Altar, cross, picture or crucifix. Catholics do not worship (latria) anyone but the ONE TRIUNE GOD, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Praise be God forever.

4. Servers should be shown how to bow in respect to the Altar as it is where Jesus offers his Body to the Father for the propitiation of our sins.

Sometimes servers are very young and must be shown the proper way to genuflect, bow, kneel, stand, hold and care for the Communion paten and sit during Mass. They should be required to demonstrate sufficient form and dexterity in these motions before being commissioned as servers.

SCHEDULING

The server coordinator, Ms. Mary Hovater, will get your contact information, and Mass preference. Typically, she will email the group of servers a schedule for the year and allow parents to choose Masses that are best for them, or to let her know ones that will not work for the family. If you are unable to serve your scheduled Mass for whatever reason, you will contact Ms. Hovater and she will find you a replacement.

If you miss 3 Masses without contacting the server coordinator you will not be allowed to server until you have retaken the server training and recommitted to Serving. You may be asked to sign in when you come to serve so that this can be tracked more easily.

TYPE OF SERVERS AND THEIR DUTIES

Beginner Server:

Servers at Sacred Heart enter the ministry as a beginner server and will be scheduled with more advanced servers until they are moved into the category of general server. This is usually after a couple of months of serving.

General Server:

General servers are ones that have been serving for more than 2 months and are on the regular schedule. These are usually students of grade school to middle school age.

Senior servers:

Senior servers are the most advanced servers are usually high school age students. They are leaders and will be expected to lead the younger servers they serve with ensure they pay attention, follow instructions, are dressed correctly, robes put up correctly, etc., and is responsible for giving out the serving assignments for the servers such as who will ring the bells, carry the cross, etc.

General Duties of the server

Servers are not wall decorations; they are primarily there to assist the priest and to discern their vocation if they have one. Here is a short list of server duties.

1. The server's first duty is to prepare for the Mass. The server should arrive at the Church early, 20 minutes before Mass, to perform the appropriate setup for their parish.

2. Server will dress appropriately and handle the cassocks and surplices respectfully.
   - Most do not know, but Cassocks and Surplices are very expensive. So not only do we need to take care of them out of respect for our Lord, we should do it out of respect for the cost to replace them. The trim is one of a kind from the Ukraine and cannot be manufactured again. It took many many hours of hand stitching to apply the trims, and countless hours are spent cleaning and taking special care for them.

3. The Server must pay close attention to what is happening in case there are special instruction or needed of the Priest or Deacon during the Mass.

4. The Server must also stay after Mass to return the Church to its non-service condition.

5. Servers should not handle any consecrated bread or wine unless specifically directed by the priest or deacon in an emergency situation.
   - If the server suspects any consecrated fragments or wine remain on the paten or one of the sacred vessels, they must inform the priest or deacon immediately.

6. Servers must remain in the Sanctuary during the entire Mass and are not to leave the Sanctuary during Mass for any reason other than Illness or the direction of the priest or deacon.
   - Altar servers are on duty from the time they enter the Sanctuary at the start of Mass until the priest exits at the end of Mass. Thirst, itches, and the like are not a bodily necessities and therefore are never an excuse for leaving the Sanctuary before the final procession.

7. Your hands in prayer and holding items:
   - In the standing position hands should be held in the praying position as seen in most Christian artworks. **Never hold hands in any position which would be more appropriate walking through a store or other casual event**.

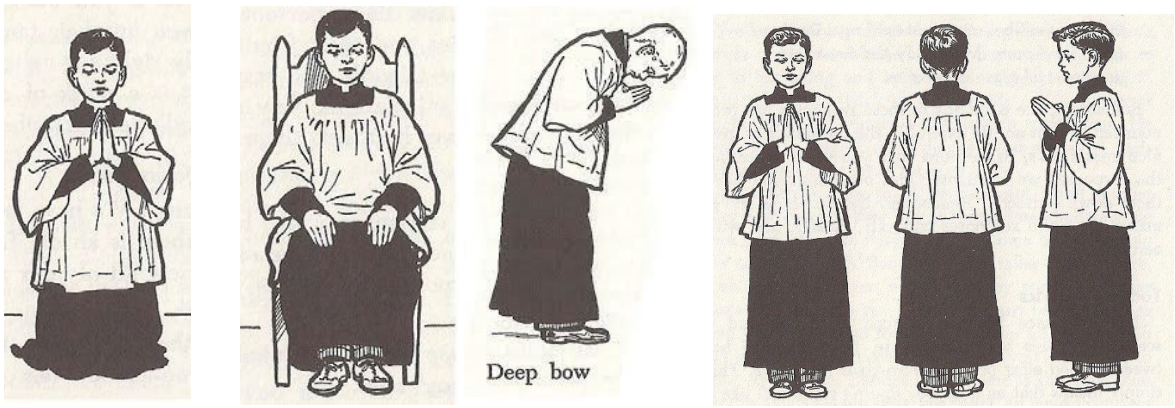
   Note:
   - if you are holding liturgical items do not genuflect or let go of the item to make the sign of the cross, etc.
   - Note: while it is a common practice by some of our parishioners to bow at the Holy Name of our Lord, holding hands out during "we lift up our hearts", or other such movements, **when you are serving this is not done.**

- If you are holding an item such as a paten, thurible, bells, etc in one hand you will place your other hand over your heart.



- In the kneeling position, hands should be held as in the standing position. You must kneel upright, not slouching or sitting on your heels.

- When sitting the hands should be held on the lap or at the sides. Never slouch.



Note: Holding hands in the prayer position was a medieval sign of submission to a manner lord and it's very appropriate to signify submission to our Divine Lord.

8. When assisting the priest with the Communion paten during Holy Communion the server must always hold the paten level from the time it is picked up from its storage place until it is returned to the priest or deacon after all have received.

    - It must never be tilted or turned so as to spill any fragments of the Body of Jesus which may have been caught by it.

    - It is the responsibility of the server holding the paten to protect the Body of Jesus from falling on the floor (see section on Communion for what to do if this happens). This should be practiced until there is no hesitation even when people receive in the hand.

9. **Every Altar server must attend every Mass for which they are scheduled.** When a server cannot be present, that server must arrange for a replacement by contacting the server coordinator.

   - **Servers may be asked to "sign in" in the Priest Sacristy when they serve.**

   - If you miss 3 Masses at which you have agreed to serve without letting the server coordinate know so they can get a substitute, then you will not be allowed to serve again until you go through server training again.

Remember, you are seen by all the parishioners and how you conduct yourself is important to their understanding of the eternal Lamb's Supper and His Sacrificial Act being represented for us in time.

PROPER DRESS

- Clothing: **<u>you should look your Sunday best!</u>** And your knees, shoulders and everything in between MUST be covered, just as if you were sitting in the pew for Mass with your family
  a. Pants/slacks are fine
  b. Calf-length skirts or dresses are fine for the girls
  c. NO shorts!
  d. Shirts and blouses must have sleeves

- Footwear: should look neat and presentable
  a. Suggest dark shoes and socks (or hose for the girls)
  b. NO FLIP FLOPS!!
  c. Prefer flat shoes, but heels are to be no higher than 1 inch

- Jewelry: must be taken off and placed in your pocket or given to your parents before Mass begins…or leave it at home.
  a. No dangling earrings, only small studs
  b. No bracelets (including rubber or string ones)
  c. Necklaces should be covered by server robe
  d. Watches are okay as long as they do not distract you or others

- Hair/makeup: look neat when you serve
  a. Hair should be neat and clean and out of the eyes
  b. Hair color and makeup, if any, MUST be minimal and present a natural appearance
  c. NO lipstick!! (it gets on the surplices and is very hard to get out!)
  d. Long hair should be pulled back in a bun or ponytail

PREPARATION FOR MASS

Arrival and getting ready

1. Please arrive at least 20 minutes prior to the start of Mass

   - If you are late and Mass has not started:
     - Check to see if anyone has gone up to replace you.
       - If so take seat with your family and try to be on time the next time.
       - If not, then quickly get dressed and ready.
   - If late and Mass has started:
     - If no one has replaced you, go ahead and quickly dress and be on the Altar ASAP
     - If someone has replaced you, stay in your seat with your family and try to be on time next time.

   - **REMINDER:** if you are going to be absent from you assigned time, please let the Server Coordinator know ahead of time to enable a replacement to be found. *Missing several assigned Masses without notice will lead to suspension from serving until you go through server training classes once again.*

   - **NOTE: if you see that a server has not shown up**
     - By 5-10 minutes prior to Mass and you see servers are a no-show, go ask Father or the Deacon if you are needed and if so, go quickly get ready.
     - If Mass has begun and servers are missing, go dress and walk around the back of the Altar and meet the Priest and Deacon at their seats.

2. Put on clean, unwrinkled cassock and surplice—Treat these with care and check that all buttons (especially the top one and bottom ones that show) are working and that the robe is not too short or too long. It should touch the top of your shoes.

   - Make sure to look to see what color your surplice trim needs to be for that Mass (this is found on the calendar in the closet or by looking at the Altar to see what color it on it)-when in doubt ask the Deacon or Priest.
   - Put robes back up in the closet with respect, in the correct size section and on separate hangers (do not hang both the cassock and the surplice on the same hanger).
   - If you find a robe that is dirty, ripped, buttons missing/broken, etc. contact your server organizer so she can wash/mend it. Please do not try to fix it on your own.
   - REMEMBER: not only God will know if you mistreat the robes…so will the server organizer! She will be checking!
   - Do not remove any robes without checking with the Server Coordinator first. She keeps a close check on the inventory.

Altar Prep

After dressing in a cassock and the proper color surplice, Altar servers will report to priest, deacon or senior server for their assignments during Mass. As a minimum, this will include:

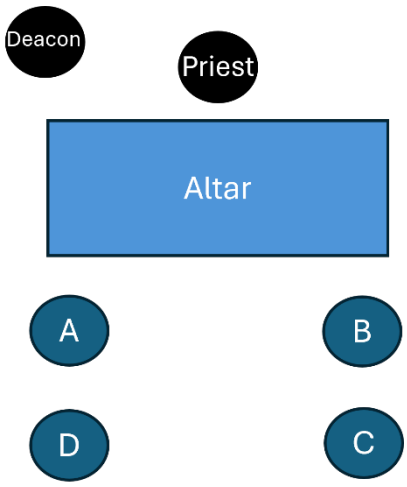
- Ensuring the candles on the Mass Altar (and the High Altar on Sundays) are lit.
- Ensuring the "Angle lights" are turned on to the proper setting.
- Securing the Processional Cross from its stand and bringing it into the Sacristy.
- Securing gloves for those Servers who will carry candles during the Liturgy

The Senior server will give out assignments of who will ring the bells, carry the cross, etc.

Duties During Mass

The Procession

- The cross-bearers will lead the procession into and from the Sanctuary. WALK VERY SLOWLY when you process in.
- All servers will wait for the Deacon and Priest to all to stop in front of the Altar and all will genuflect together- **unless you are carrying a candle or the cross, in which case you will bow with your head** (see how to bow section for more info). All servers will then proceed to their assigned locations.



Server should be at the front of the Altar as shown in this diagram, whether standing or kneeling.

Servers in **positions A and B** will be carrying the candle in during the procession. And the server in **position C** carry the processional cross.

Server in the server in **position A** in the diagram will be the one to ring the bells during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. **Position C** is the Cross Barer. The server in **position** D is the Thurifer for the procession when incense is used. However, **position C** is the position where incensing is done during the Liturgy of the Eucharist because it allows for the thurible to be swung without hitting the Altar.

If there is no podium in front of the Priest's seat:

During the *Glory to God in the Highest* (*Lord have mercy . . .* during lent), the appointed server may be required to pick up the small Sacramentary and wait for the priest to say, *Let us pray*.

When the priest says, *Let us pray*, server closest to the book will proceed directly in front of the priest and open the book to the pre-marked position. Hold the book open so the priest can read the prayer. Keep the pages flat, your fingers out of the text and do not move about while the priest is reading. When the priest is finished, close the sacramentary and return it to its place.

The Gospel

When the lecture completes the second reading and starts down from the Ambo, the 2 servers designated to carry the candles will put on their gloves, get up, pick up the candles on the table, and go stand facing the Altar and wait for the Priest or Deacon to stand between them.

When the Priest or Deacon picks up the book and turn, the serves will turn as well. Then they will walk down to in front of the Ambo and stand there while the Priest or Deacon reads the Gospel. When that is complete, the servers will walk back up to the Altar and wait for the Priest or Deacon, then put the candles back on the side table.

If the Priest or Deacon is read the Gospel AND doing the homily, he will not join the servers at the Altar. In this case the servers would just go straight to put the candles back in their place.

At the Offertory, remove the tops from the wine and water cruets and hand the Deacon or Priest the wine or water as he directs. Stand until the Deacon or Priest is finished. If it is the Priest who you hand to or pour the water and wine, bow to the Priest and then return to the credence table and recap the wine cruet and place it on the credence table.

Remember: Do not to bow to the Deacon.

We bow* to the Priest because he acts in the person of Christ during the consecration of the Mass.
*see the appendix for how to bow

At the offering

Servers will need to pay attention during this time. The Deacon may have the servers assisting him as he prepares for Altar, and while the collection is being taken up by the Ushers. When the ushers start their last pass around to the other side of the pews, that is the server's cue to go to the back of the church so they can process with the offering back up to the Altar for the Priest and Deacon to receive.

Once the offering has been brought up, the server will assist the Deacon by bringing him cruets or other items as he needs to prepare for the next part of the Liturgy for the Priest.

Always bring the purificators first so that the Deacon or Priest can prepare the Altar for the other items (Chalise, etc).

When all this is complete the servers will be ready to assist the Priest with the washing of his hands.

With a several servers present:

- When the Priest signals, the servers should move to the Priest, with one server holding the bowl and water pours the water over the Priest's fingers, collecting the water in the bowl until the Priest indicates enough.
- When the Priest signals, the servers should move to the Priest, with one server holding the bowl and water pours the water over the Priest's fingers, collecting the water in the bowl until the Priest indicates enough.
- The other server should be holding the towel, UNFOLDED, so the Priest can grab it easily.
- When the server receives the towel back, both servers should bow to the Priest and return to the credence table.
- Neatly arrange the cruets, towel, and bowl on the table.

When there is only ONE server present:

- Unfold the wash towel and place it over your less used arm.
- With your strongest arm hold the water cruet
- Pick up the washing bowl and hold it with your towel arm.
- Approach the Altar again and pour the water over the Priest's hands, collecting the water in the bowl.
- Let the Priest take the towel and when he has placed the towel back on your arm, bow to him and return to the credence table.
- Neatly arrange the cruets, towel, and bowl on the table as needed

As soon as the washing of the hands is complete and the bowl and towel are returned to the table, all servers should go to stand in front of and facing the Altar, then will kneel after the Holy, Holy, Holy.

<u>Bell Ringing</u>

The server in the "A" position will ring the bells at the designated times during the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The bell should be rung at the specific times during the Mass. Typical times for ringing the bell are:

- One time when the Priest holds his hands over the gifts and calls on the Holy Spirit to come upon the gifts.
- Three times at the elevation of the Consecrated Host.
    - Each ring should be a 1 second ring followed by a 1 second pause
    - If there is incense* you will need to ring as long as the server is incensing, so you will have to watch slightly over your shoulder. When the server stops incensing, you stop ringing for a short pause, then repeat x2.
      *please see Appendix for section on how to incense
- Three times at the elevation of the Consecrated Wine: same as the procedures for the Elevation of the Host.



Because the elevation of the Body and Blood of Jesus are solemn times, (the bread and wine we offered just before has now become the real BODY and BLOOD of our God, Jesus Christ), we should ring the bells reverently.

At these times it is proper to look at the elevated Jesus and say to yourself "*My Lord and my God.*" following the example of Thomas the Apostle when he met the Resurrected Jesus.

The Great Amen, Lamb of God, and Holy Communion

Servers will stand after the Great Amen in the same spot of which there were just kneeling. They will exchange a Sign of Peace with the Priest and Deacon and other servers by bowing to the Priest first then to each other.

After the Lamb of God is sung, all will kneel. Once the Priest consumes the Eucharist, the servers will stand and proceed to the get their patens and get ready to receive communion and then assist the Priest and Deacon with Communion of the Parish.



Remember to keep the paten flat during your time assisting with Communion. This will ensure that any tiny particles of the Eucharist don't fall on the floor to be stepped on. This is very important! It is your job to protect our Lord from accidental disrespect.

IMPORTANT!

What to do it a Host is dropped:

If a Host is dropped there is a purificator and holy water on the railing behind where Communion is distributed. Immediately retrieve these so the area can be properly purified. The Host will be consumed by the person disturbing Communion.

After Communion place your paten on the Altar to be cleaned. Once that is done get it and put it away. Servers will also assist the Deacon or Priest in removing all objects from the Altar after the purification and prior to the Closing Prayer.

Closing Prayers and Exit Procession

All sit until the Priest says: "Let us pray." If a server is assigned to hold the prayer book, the server will proceed directly in front of the priest and open the prayer book to the proper page, hold the book for the Priest as with the opening prayer. When the Priest finishes, close the sacramentary and return it to its stand.

Servers will process out in the order in which they processed in, however, the pace will not be as slow as when processing in, but a regular walking pace.

When the Priest and Deacon genuflect, all servers should genuflect* also **(unless they are holding candles or the Cross).** All servers then turn and proceed quickly to their procession positions. All processions are always in order of: Cross bearer first, then candle bearers, other servers, Deacons, Priests, and last the/a Bishop, if he is the main celebrant.

*please see Appendix for section on how to genuflect

Duties After Mass

Extinguish the candles by using the proper tool - the snuffer on the end of the wick lighter. Do not smash the wicks or blow them out.

Empty the water in the finger washing bowl that is on the credence table in the sink in the Sacristy, then return the bowl to the credence table. If the water pitcher needs more water, then fill it up and return it to the credence table.

N.B. *Only a Priest of Deacon may purify the vessels – Chalice and Paten – used during the Mass. Altar servers should never attempt to clean these vessels. If a server finds a vessel that has not been cleansed, then notify the Deacon or Priest.*

Cassock and Surplice:

Remove your liturgical clothing and hang it neatly in its proper place.

- Remember! The Cassock and Surplice you wear are as important as any other robes worn for Mass. It is part of the ministry of your service and must be respected.
- Please be sure to hang these items up in the appropriate section and correctly on the hangers. There is nothing so important that you need to rush so much as to just throw your Cassock and Surplice in the bottom of the closet.

APPENDIX

TIPS AND TRICKS

There are a few items that weren't covered in this document yet that others have found to be good tips to pass along.

- Don't cover your feet when you kneel!
    - Sometimes serves will cover their feet with their cassock when they kneel because they, or someone, thinks it looks nicer. However, this is a huge mistake. Covering your feet can cause you to pop the snaps open when you stand, or worse make you trip when you try to stand. Don't do it.
- Wearing gloves
    - Our beautiful brass items, mostly those candle sticks, have a delicate coating of lacquer on them to help reduce tarnish. Your hands have oils on them that break down this coating.
    - Touch after touch with bare hands, even if one touch at a time, wear the coating until it is gone.
    - Once it is gone oxygen can get to the bare brass and tarnish it more rapidly so that it will have to be polished weekly or will need to be recoated which can be very expensive.
    - You may see someone touching the brass without a glove or clothe between a brass item and their hand, this doesn't mean it is ok for anyone to do this. The person has probably forgotten to get gloves, like a Deacon trying to hurry to fill the oil in the candles before Mass. You can assist by bringing them gloves and ask if there is anything else you can do to help. Always be willing to help.
    - Exception to the rule: The only time you DO NOT wear gloves when touching brass is when it is handling the Patens at Communion. The reason for this is that tiny particles from the Eucharist could get trapped in the glove fabric, and not realizing that fact, the gloves get throw in a drawer and handled in a way that is not respectful to our Lord. Gloves are NEVER worn at Communion.
- Lighting the candles before Mass
    - Some of the candles are very high up and are hard to reach and know if they are lit.
    - Push the wick out a little extra on the lighter and bend it downward. This will allow you to get down into the high candles and reach the wicks inside.
    - Always be sure you do not pull the wick into the lighter to extinguish it. The wax around the wick will cool and cause the wick to get stuck inside the lighter.

INCENSING

The thurifer typically bears the thurible and boat; the smoke of the incense represents the prayers of the faithful rising towards God.

The thurible leads a procession (except during Eucharistic processions), since immediately behind the thurifer is the Crucifix. During Eucharistic processions, the

thurifer goes in front of the monstrance with the Eucharist, which is the True Presence of Christ.

Hold the thurible in your left hand when it isn't filled with incense, and your right hand after the Priest puts in incense. This is so that it will be easier to open the thurible when needed.) When walking, let the thurible swing freely, and place the unoccupied hand over your breast. Bow before and after you incense anyone.

Then take the chains beneath the disk with your left hand, and hold your left hand against your breast. Grasp the chains near the cover between the index finger and middle finger of your right hand. Holding the thurible at the height of your chest, raise it in front of your face and swing it outward toward the person being incensed.

The outward movement called the "throw", or ictus. For a "double swing", there are two "throws", or two outward motions. For a "single swing", there is one "throw", or one outward motion.

The number of swings of the thurible to be used when incensing persons or objects is specified in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal:

- Three double swings: the Most Blessed Sacrament, a relic of the Holy Cross and images of the Lord exposed for public veneration, the offerings for the sacrifice of the Mass, the altar cross, the Book of the Gospels, the Paschal Candle, the priest, and the people. Two double swings (and only at the beginning of the celebration, after the incensing of the altar): relics and images of the Saints exposed for public veneration.
- A series of single swings: the altar.
- The priest may incense the offerings for Mass by tracing a cross over them with the thurible instead of using three swings of the thurible.

Before and after an incensation, a profound bow is made to the person or object that is incensed.





You can find more information at https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/swings-of-the-thurible-4892

So, when do I swing it or carry it or hand it to Father?

- The Thurifer leads the entrance procession.
  - When walking swing it gently from left to right.
- If Father plans to incense the Altar before Mass, you will hand it to him (always bow to him first) and when he is done he will hand it back to you so you can hang it on the stand.
- You may also bring it up for the Gospel reading.
  - You will carry it up the Ambo and stand on the platform, hand it to Father or the Deacon, who will hand it back to you to hold during the Gospel.
  - When you are standing there swing it gently from left to right.
- When it is time for "Holy Holy" that is your cue to go get the thurible again before you kneel down.
  - When Father raises the Eucharist and the bells are rung three time, you need to swing the thurible toward the Eucharist three times.
  - The same is applied to when he holds up the Chalise.
  - While you are just kneeling, remember to swing it gently left to right.
  - When Father genuflects just before we sing the Mystery of Faith, as he rises from the genuflect you stand and put the Thurible back on the stand, or in some cases you will be asked to set it outside the Sacristy door to cool.

GENUFLECTION AND BOWING

When should a server genuflect? *Whenever entering or leaving a Catholic Church (usually when entering a pew) or* **crosses in front of the tabernacle**. Genuflecting to the Tabernacle should be the norm for all servers as they move across the Sacristy.

Genuflecting to the tabernacle is required; bowing is not an option to genuflecting unless the server is carrying a liturgical item such as the cross, candles, etc. In all Catholic churches, once the consecration of the bread and wine take place and the actual substance of the bread and wine (that which makes bread and wine what it is) is transposed with the actual substantial and real presence of Jesus the God-Man Jesus, the bread and wine is no longer bread and wine, but the Body and Blood of Christ; yet, it remains in appearance as simply bread and wine. While His presence is truly present within the Sacred Scriptures and whenever two or more are gathered in His Name, that presence is subordinate to the actual and real presence in the consecrated Eucharist and we owe our worship to Him.

Catholics never genuflect to the bible or to a group of people meeting in the Name of Jesus. Yet, we do genuflect to the Person Jesus present in the Eucharist.

All Catholics should be aware of whenever He is present on the Altar after the Consecration, during Eucharistic Adoration or is reserved in the tabernacle everyone, servers included, should genuflect whenever crossing in front of the tabernacle, or entering and leaving the Church (usually as they enter a pew). Consult with your training leader for more information.

Bowing of the head is done for a Priest after presenting the wine and water, and after washing his hands, the Altar or in some circumstances a crucifix, never to the Deacon. We bow to the Altar because it is the table of the Christ's Saving Sacrifice as The Lamb of God.

We bow to the Priest because he offers the Body and Blood of Our Savior to the Father in the Person of Jesus and therefore should shown honor.

When He is reserved in the tabernacle He is just as present as when He is present in Heaven, on the Altar or in the monstrance. Servers should make frequent visits to Him in the tabernacle and spend some time with Him. This is especially helpful when done before Mass.

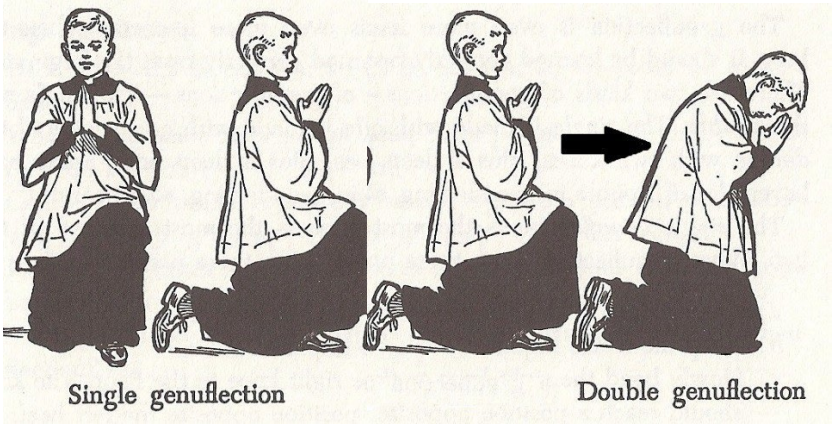
The church Sanctuary light, hanging by the tabernacle, is always lit when Jesus is present in the tabernacle. When it is not lit, the tabernacle is empty as on Good Friday and Holy Saturday. Usually it is lighted at all other times since Jesus is reserved there.

Servers should remember that there is an exception to genuflecting. Whenever they are carrying things like crosses, sacred vessels, books, candles or other object you should not genuflect, but you should bow if possible

How to Genuflect

There are two prescribed methods of genuflection.

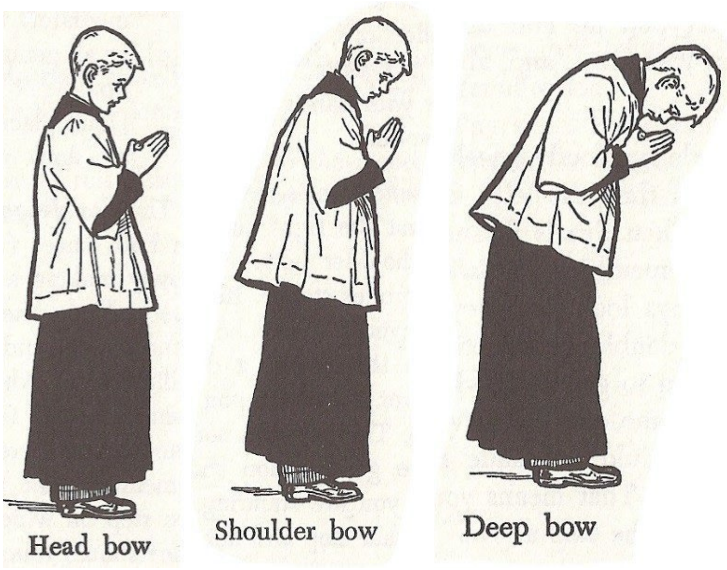
1. When the tabernacle is closed and Jesus is not present on the Altar after the consecration or exposed for Eucharistic Adoration, genuflect in this manner:
    - Stop, then turn and face the tabernacle.
    - Genuflect on the right knee so the right knee touches the floor.
    - Pause with the right knee on the floor and bow your head to Jesus.
    - Rise from the floor, still facing the tabernacle.
    - Turn and continue in the direction you were heading.



2. When the Body of Jesus is present on the Altar or Jesus is exposed in the monstrance during Eucharistic Adoration and a server (or anyone is entering or leaving the church) double genuflect in this manner:
    - Stop and face Jesus.
    - Double genuflect by placing both knees on the floor, the right knee first.
    - Pause with knees on the floor and bow your head to Jesus.
    - Rise from the floor, still facing the tabernacle.
    - Turn and continue in the direction you were heading.

NOTE: An exception to this requirement is when you are carrying any liturgical object or book. There your job requires you to carry that in a dignified manner and not endanger yourself or the object by losing your balance. Bow if you carry objects. To do this you simply lower your head down slightly and back up slowly.

This is different than you when you bow to the Priest. In this case you bow from your shoulders. Both the head and shoulders are bent slightly and not too deeply, and back up slowly.



ALTAR SERVER PRAYERS

At a minimum, the first two should be recited when you serve; however, any of these prayers may be used.

Prayer Before Mass

Oh Jesus, my King and Lord, by the grace of the heavenly Father and the power of the Holy Spirit, guide me in all righteousness as I serve You today at the Altar so I may be always worthy of Your presence. If I happen to make an error, may it be a lesson so my service will be perfect tomorrow. Jesus, I love you with all my heart. Amen.

Prayer After Mass

Lord Jesus, thank you for the opportunity to serve You during the Holy Mass. In Your Sacred Presence, my heart is filled with joy and peace. May Your Spirit always guide me so I may grow in Your love by the grace of the Heavenly Father. Amen.

Altar Server's Prayer of Thanksgiving After Mass

O Lord, Jesus Christ, Eternal High Priest, I thank you for the privilege of having served at the holy Altar of Your sacrifice.
Now, as I put aside the garments of that service, I ask that I may at all times think of You, and always act accordingly, as a privileged Altar server.
May I ever seek You and find You;
may I always follow You;
may your priestly spirit be my guide,
and your service of love be my example.
May your Holy Name always be on my lips, and to Your praise and glory may every work of mine be done.
Ever ready in Your service,
may I always know and do Your Holy Will in all things.
May I remain pure and blameless
and be found worthy to be Your servant,
and by Your grace may I persevere to the end.
Amen.

Prayer of an Altar Server

O God, You have graciously called me to serve You upon Your Altar. Grant me the graces that I need to serve You faithfully and wholeheartedly. Grant too that while serving You, may I follow the example of St. Tarcisius, who died protecting the Eucharist, and walk the same path that led him to Heaven.
St. Tarcisius, pray for me and for all servers.

Altar Server's Prayer

Open my mouth, O Lord, to bless your Holy Name.
Cleanse my heart from all evil and distracting thoughts.
Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will that I may serve more worthily at your holy Altar.
O Mary, Mother of Christ the High Priest, obtain for me the most important grace of knowing my vocation in life.
Grant me a true spirit of faith and humble obedience so that I may ever behold the priest as a representative of God and willing follow him in the Way, the Truth, and the Life of Christ.

Amen.

A Server's Prayer

Loving Father, creator of the universe,
you call your people to worship,
to be with you and with one another at Mass.
I thank you for having called me
to assist others in their prayer to you.
May I be worthy of the trust placed in me and
through my example and service bring others closer to you.
I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ,
who is Lord for ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer to St. John Berchmans, Patron of Altar Boys

Dear St. John, you died at a very young age, but in that short time you learned to live an exemplary life as a member of the Society of Jesus.

Directed by your Guardian Angel, whom you confidently invoked, you learned to be a most humble server at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Help Altar boys imitate you in their service at Eucharistic celebrations as well as in their conduct with others. Amen.

DEFINITIONS

Ablution cup - covered dish of water on the side of the tabernacle used by the Priest, Deacon or Extra-ordinary ministers of the Eucharist to wash their fingers after distributing Communion.

Ambo - The platform, lectern or pulpit from which the reading and homily are given.

Burse - A square container for holding the corporal. It is selected for the liturgical color of the day. Used Corporals should always be placed in the proper container for sacred cloths after Mass.

Cassock - A long tunic like garment which reaches from the neck to the heels which is worn by some servers and clergy.

Chalice - A cup of precious metal that holds the wine which becomes the Blood of Jesus after the consecration.

Chalice veil - A cloth covering used to hide the chalice and paten up to the offertory and after Communion. It is selected by the liturgical color for the service.

Ciborium - A large cup or container of precious metal with a cover of the same material which will hold the Body of Jesus after the consecration for distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful.

Communion Paten - A small saucer shaped plate of precious metal with a handle, usually wooden, used by the Altar server to protect the Body of Jesus from falling to the ground if a minister or communicant accidently drop a fragment of the Host.

Corporal - A white linen cloth, usually with a cross in the center, used to protect any particles of the Precious Body and Blood of Jesus from falling to the Altar cloth. It is always folded and unfolded as to protect any particles from being lost. The corporal is like the body winding sheet used to hold the crucified body or Our Lord in the tomb.

Credence Table - The table in the Sanctuary where the cruets, chalices and ciborium are kept before and after the Consecration.

IHS - the first three letters of Jesus's Name in Greek and often used to decorate the Altar and other church facades.

Lunette - A thin, circular receptacle, having a glass face that holds the Consecrated Host used for Adoration and Benediction. It slides into the monstrance on a little track.

Lectionary - The book of reading used for the liturgy of the word. It usually contains all the biblical reading used for the three year Sunday cycle of reading and the two year daily Mass readings.

Monstrance - This is a large, ornate vessel used to hold the Blessed Sacrament for Adoration, Benediction and solemn Eucharistic processions.

Pall - A square piece of cardboard or plastic which is covered by linen and used to cover the chalice.

Paten - A small saucer shaped plate of precious metal that holds the Host. No layperson should ever touch the paten and servers should be very careful when they have to handle it their official duties. (See Communion Paten.)

Peplum - A cloth covering used to hide the chalice and paten up to the offertory and after Communion. It is selected by the liturgical color for the service.

Purificator - A linen cloth used by the Priest or Deacon to dry the chalice after washing and purifying it. Used Purificators must always be placed in the proper container for sacred cloths.

Pyx - A case, about the size of a pocket watch, in which Communion is carried to those who are sick or unable to come to church.

Sacramentary - The book containing the prayers said by the Priest during the Mass.

Sepulcrum - The cavity on the Altar in which the relic(s) of the patron saints of that church or chapel are incased.

Stoup - The holy water fountains or bowels at the entrances of the church.

Surplice - A wide sleeved, linen worn over a cassock by clergy and Altar servers in some parishes.

Tabor Stand - The ornate stand used to support the Monstrance during exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. It is named after Mount Tabor, where the Transfiguration of Jesus occurred.

