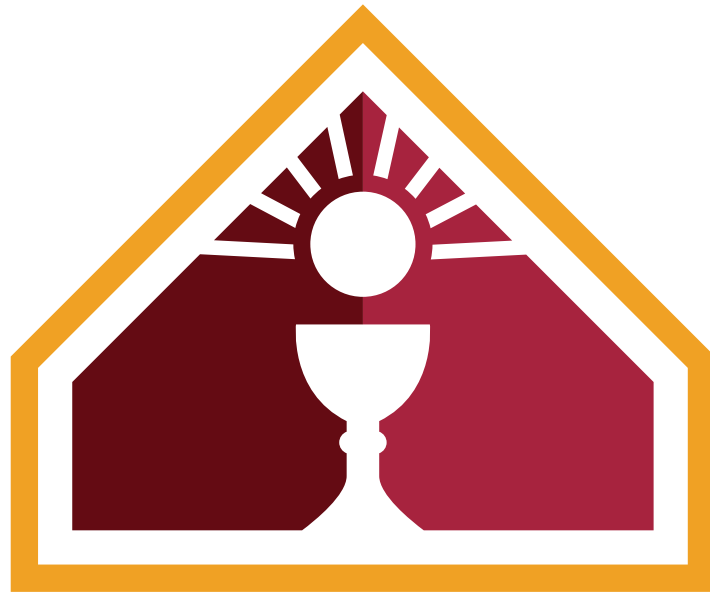


Altar Server Guidelines



**ST. JOHN
XXIII
CATHOLIC CHURCH**

“Dear Altar Servers, the celebration of the Mass saves us today! It saves the world today! It is the most important event in the life of the Christian and in the life of the Church, for it is the encounter where God gives Himself to us in love, again and again. Keep in mind the greatness and holiness of what is being celebrated. May your attitude, your silence, the dignity of your service, the liturgical beauty, the order and majesty of your gestures, lead the faithful into the sacred greatness of the Mystery.” -Pope Leo XIV

About Altar Servers:

The Altar Server's ministry is a unique one in the Catholic Church. Other than priests and deacons, no one else is allowed to so closely play a part in the preparation of the Eucharist. Altar servers see the Mass in a way many will never see it. When they serve the priests and deacons, they serve the people of God, and above all, they serve Christ. Everything altar servers do is for the glory of God.



Scheduling:

Three servers are scheduled at each Mass. Servers are scheduled through Ministry Scheduler Pro (MSP), which is where servers can set preferred Mass times, designate days they cannot serve, make and accept sub requests, and receive reminders for when they are scheduled. Any server is able to jump in the day of if there are not already three servers.

Profile of an Altar Server:

Sacraments:

Should have received at minimum Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist

Physical Maturity:

Requires physical maturity to carry out their responsibilities well. Servers need to be able to maintain proper decorum and liturgical posture, and be able to carry the cross and candles, and hold the Roman Missal (book).

Active and Full Participation: Altar Servers are first and foremost members of the assembly and are visible to the congregation as a model. Servers express this by singing, praying, and keeping silence along with the rest of the assembly. Altar servers also must be actively practicing the Catholic faith, attending Mass every weekend, and living life as a follower of Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Maturity: Requires spiritual maturity to understand their responsibilities and carry them out well and with appropriate reverence. Servers should understand the Eucharistic celebration and be prepared and committed to giving their time and talent to the parish.

Age:

Typically 4th grade and older

Knowledge:

Altar servers must demonstrate that they know the Order of the Mass, the Mass prayers, and the postures and responses during Mass, as well as the duties of a server.

Calling:

Feel God is calling them to share their gifts in this way.

Preparation

Disposition:

Servers should be properly disposed spiritually, mentally, and physically including being prepared to receive the Eucharist. Some examples include:

- Fasting one hour before reception of the Eucharist
- Being in a state of grace; receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation as needed
- Going to the restroom, washing hands, getting a drink
- Starting with prayer and asking Jesus to help them in their service to Him: there is a prayer hanging in the sacristy that we encourage servers to pray together before and after Mass

Attire/Appearance:

Servers should dress intentionally with dignified, modest, and suitable attire for the function of altar server. Overall, their clothes and appearance should not be a distraction to them or to others based on appearance or function. Servers should keep in mind

that what they wear under the alb often shows through the albs. Recommendations include:

- Khaki pants, dress pants, knee length or longer skirts or dresses
- Collared shirts, button up shirts, dressy shirts
- Dress shoes and dress socks; prefer no flip flops, slides, crocks, snow boots, and heels
- Neatly groomed hair
- Simple makeup or jewelry if it is worn



Arrival:

Servers should arrive disposed to serve at least ten minutes before Mass and do the following:

- **Check-in:** Check in at the Liturgical Ministry bulletin board in the gathering space near the sacristy. Place a check mark by their name or add their name if it is not listed. If they are willing to serve and are not scheduled, they can check the board when they come to Mass and add their name if there are not three servers.
- **Vesting:** Altar Servers will wear albs tied at the waist with a white cincture. The alb is a sign of the baptismal garment and by wearing it, altar servers are a special representation of all the Baptized; they are a symbol of Christianity. The alb should be properly fitted, coming down to the ankle. From the moment the alb is put on until it is taken off, the server is "on" and should act accordingly. During Mass cinctures should not be played with. Albs and cinctures should be returned in an organized manner; by size, cincture untied and hung neatly.
- **Determine Roles:** Decide who will do each role: cross bearer, candle bearer, book bearer, and bell ringer. If there are not three servers, roles need to be adjusted. If only two servers, no one is a cross bearer, both are candle bearers. If one server, the altar server is the cross bearer and there are no candles.



Posture of an Altar Server:

The posture of an altar server should be one of near invisibility, so that if someone is paying attention to the Mass they don't notice the server or if they do they see someone who is reverent, attentive, and prayerful. Intentional posture adds solemnity just by seeing the server. It is also not a performance, it is prayer, so it should have a natural component. Posture guidelines include:

- Servers should always be looking "where the action is".
- If a server is holding anything, they should not bow, genuflect, or do hand motions.
- When standing, a server should be in a position of prayer with their hands folded or together anytime they are not holding something. Their weight should be evenly distributed in their legs and should refrain from big swaying or movements that are not part of the Mass.
- When sitting, a server should keep their feet and legs still and hands on their thighs, in their lap, holding their songbook, or in a position of prayer.
- When kneeling, a server should keep their hands in a prayerful position, keep their body upright, and kneel on the stairs.
- When walking, servers should walk with deliberation at a respectful pace. The speed should be slower than normal, but not disruptively slow.
- If carrying something, it should be held intentionally.
- Servers should be attentive to not get in the way of the presiders or other other liturgical ministers.

Special Circumstances:

Father will give guidance to altar servers for special Masses including Baptisms, Confirmation, Mass where incense is used, funerals, special blessings during Mass, etc.



Order of the Mass

Introductory Rites:

Entrance Procession:

- Cross bearer gets the cross from the stand in the narthex. Candle bearers get candles and light them.
- All wait in back with the priest.
- Order: Cross bearer, candles (side by side), (deacon), priest
- The cross bearer always carries the cross with dignity. The corpus (body of Jesus) should be facing forward. The cross bearer sets the pace and should be a bit slower than a normal walk.
- The candles should be carried in front of the server, not to the side. They should try to match the heights of the candles between the two candle bearers, even if the servers themselves are different heights. The candle bearers follow about three steps behind the cross bearer.
- Once at the front, the cross bearer goes to the far right of the steps. The candle bearers split, one far left, the one who goes right should be right next to the cross bearer. Leave room for the priest and deacon to come in between. Wait for each person to line up. The deacon, priest, and anyone not holding anything will genuflect. Since servers are holding candles or cross, they do not bow nor genuflect. After Father approaches the altar, the servers put the cross and candle stands in the holder, then go to their seats and remain standing with the congregation. Altar servers should be seated according to their roles. The bell ringer should sit to the right (closest to the windows) and the book holder should sit farthest to the left.

Collect:

- When the priest says, "Let us pray" (or right before), the book holder will retrieve the Roman Missal (book).
- Hold the Roman Missal where the priest places it. Hold it with your hands on the edge of the bottom corners and rest the book against your chest for balance.
- When finished, return the Roman Missal to the pew and return to your seat. Servers then sit down together with the congregation.



Liturgy of the Word

First Reading, Responsorial Psalm, Second Reading:

- Servers should sit and respond with the congregation.
- At the end of the second reading, when the reader says, “The Word of the Lord” and all respond, “Thanks be to God” the candle bearers should then rise and retrieve the candles.

Gospel Acclamation (“Alleluia” or “Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ, King of Endless Glory”) and Gospel:

- Candle bearers each go to one side of the altar with the candles leaving room for the priest or deacon to come in between them with the Book of the Gospels.
- The candle bearer nearest the ambo leads the way followed by the priest or deacon with the Book of the Gospels, then the other candle bearer follows.
- The first candle bearer goes to the side of the ambo nearest the altar. The second candle bearer stands nearest the choir.
- Both candle bearers should place the candle on the floor, still holding it with two hands. The servers eyes should be attentive to the Gospel proclaimer (priest or deacon)
- At the end of the Gospel Reading, the Gospel proclaimer will say, “The Gospel of the Lord” and the servers and congregation respond, “Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ”. Returning the way they came, the candle bearers return the candles to the stands, return to their seats, and sit down.

Homily:

- Servers sit and listen attentively to the homily.

Profession of Faith

- Servers stand and pray the Creed with the congregation.
- With the congregation, servers make a profound bow at the words, “and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man.”

Universal Prayer/Prayers of the Faithful/General Intercession (Petitions):

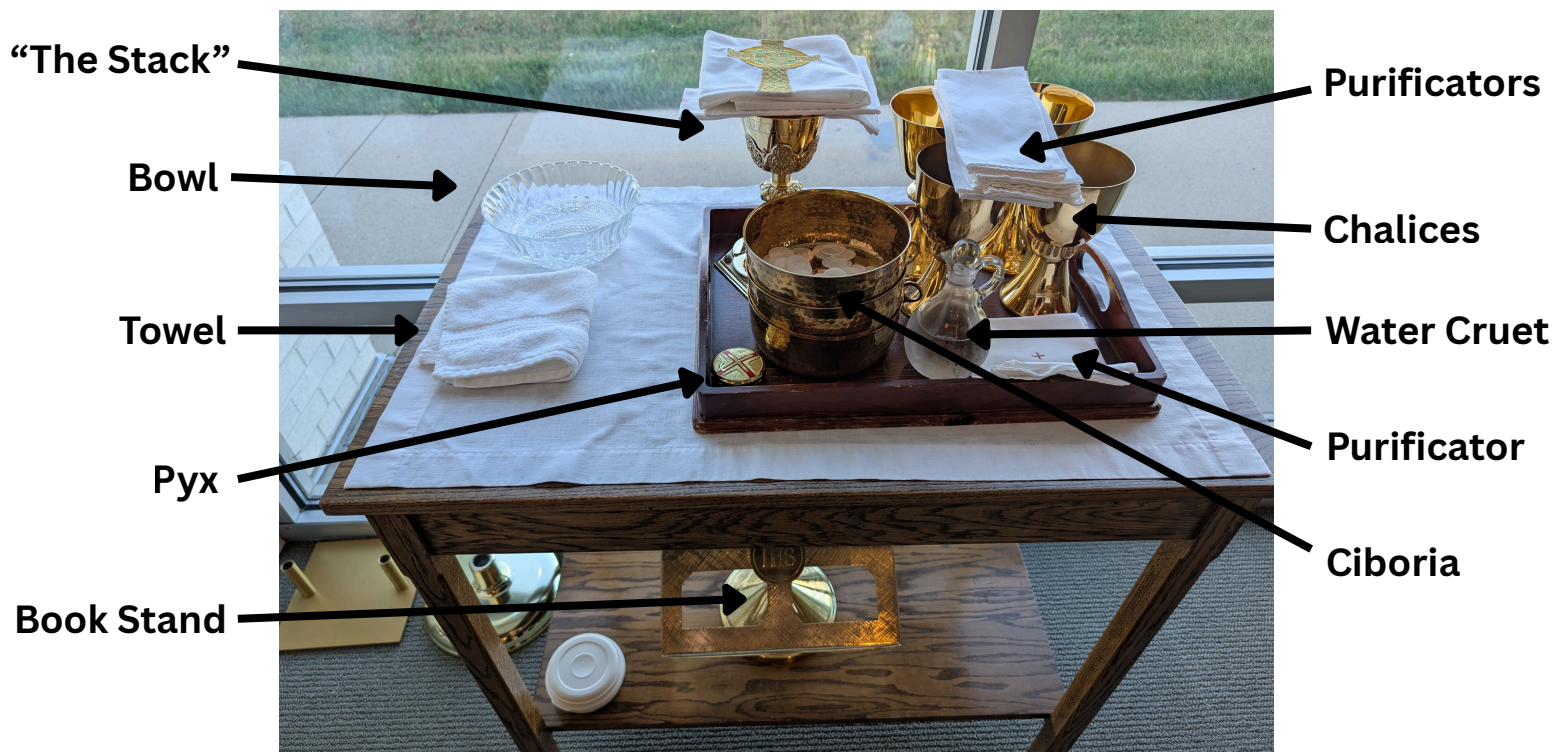
- Stand, pray, and respond with the congregation
- When the prayers of the faithful are finished and after Father says a prayer, that is the servers’ cue to start preparing the altar.



Liturgy of the Eucharist

Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar:

- Bring the items to the altar from the credence table and hand to the deacon or priest in this order:
 - Book stand
 - Roman Missal (book)
 - Ciboria (bowls of bread)
 - Cruet of water with the lid removed (leave the lid on the tray)
 - Chalices two at a time
 - The “stack” which includes the corporal paten, and presider’s chalice
 - Any pyxes on the tray (even empty)
- Candle bearers get candles and proceed to the back of the church.
- Candle bearers lead the way for the gifts and report to place the candles in the holder right away without stopping in front of the altar.
- Cross bearer stands next to the priest or deacon to receive the gifts and place on the altar.
- When their job is complete, each server reports to the bottom of the steps by the altar, prepared to assist the priest. Remain standing even though congregation is sitting.
- When the priest or deacon has finished pouring out the wine and water he gives them to the servers. Return the cruet of wine to the credence table.
- Keep the cruet of wine for the lavabo (washing of hands), other servers bring towel and bowl. If only one server, they put the towel on their arm and carry both the bowl and cruet of water. If two servers, one holds towel and cruet of water while the other holds the bowl. Stand and wait up by the priest for this, do not wait until he is ready to wash to get the materials.
- Return items to credence table and stand at the bottom of the steps.



Liturgy of the Eucharist Continued

Eucharistic Prayer:

- **Preface:** Stand with hands in a posture of prayer through the Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy). Kneel after the Sanctus. Keep prayerful hands. The bell ringer should be by the bells.
- **Epiclesis:** In the epiclesis, the priest asks the Father to send the Holy Spirit on the gifts of bread and wine so that, through the power of the Spirit, they may become the Body and Blood of Christ. Ring the bells when the priest's hands are held up over the gifts and he is asking the Spirit to come down saying: "Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall".
- **Consecration:** When the priest holds up the Body of Christ over his head and pauses, the bell ringer rings the bell three times with a brief pause between each ring. When the priest holds up the Blood of Christ over his head and pauses, the bell ringer rings the bell three times with a brief pause between each ring. The rest of the Eucharistic Prayer continues and altar servers continue to kneel until the completion of the Great Doxology (Great Amen).

Communion Rite:

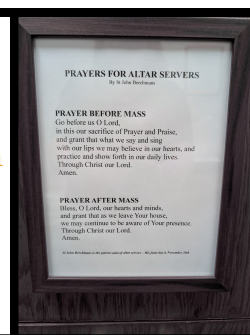
- **Our Father:** Altar servers should stand with prayer hands (not holding one another's hands nor lifting hands in the air).
- **Sign of Peace:** Exchange a sign of peace with the priest and one another using a handshake.
- **Lamb of God:** Sing and stand at bottom of steps with prayer hands.
- **Communion:** Receive the Eucharist then step back to seat and sit down while the communion lines pass in front of you. Participate in singing and prayer during this special time after just receiving Jesus in the Eucharist. Once the priest or deacon returns to the altar, the servers should help return things to the credence table. Stand ready to receive the vessels after they are purified.

Concluding Rites

- **Greeting and Blessing (Closing Prayer):** When the priest says, "Let us pray", the book holder will retrieve the Roman Missal (book) and hold it for the priest.
- **Dismissal and Recession:** Once the priest or deacon gives the dismissal, the servers should retrieve the cross and candles and report to the front of the altar. When the priest is in line and genuflects, the altar servers turn and process slowly out of the church.

After Mass:

- Servers return candles and cross to stands in back.
- Blow out the candles. (Do not tip candles. Rather, drop them low and blow into globe).
- Recite "Prayer After Serving" found in the sacristy.
- Take off alb and cincture and return neatly.



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