

Altar Server Manual



**Mary, Mother of the Redeemer Church
North Wales, Pennsylvania**

The purpose of this manual is to assist the Altar Servers of Mary, Mother of the Redeemer Church in their responsibilities at Mass.

This Altar Server Manual will give the Altar Server a reference to all procedures they learned when they were trained.

This manual also provides pictures and descriptions of all the vessels, vestments and church furnishings the Altar Servers will see in the church.

Introduction

For many centuries, young people like you have been an integral part of the Mass. It is not an easy job. As an altar server, you will sometimes have to get up early in the morning.

Your duties as an altar server will involve carrying the books used at Mass, ringing bells and praying the prayers.

Your most important role is that of a prayer leader. Many people think of prayer as a one-way conversation with God, but it is actually a two-way conversation — one that requires active listening on the part of those offering prayers if they are to receive the answers they seek. As an altar server, you will help them listen. Nothing you will do should be a distraction to those who are trying so hard to hear. You will help the Sacrifice of the Mass flow smoothly so that the congregation can concentrate on all of the wonderful sounds surrounding them: the music, the priest's prayers, their own prayers and the words of Sacred Scripture that are read aloud. With your help, their time of worship will be more meaningful and more deeply felt.

Responding is another essential element of prayer. At Mass, the congregation responds through prayer and song-giving praise and thanks to God for all the great things He has done. Unless the task you are performing at the moment makes it impossible, you will be responding along with everyone else, praying and singing whenever it is appropriate. When people see you participating so actively in the Mass, they will feel more comfortable about joining in themselves.

As you can see, you have an important leadership role in the celebration of the Sacrifice the Mass.

The Mass – A Brief History

The Catholic Church places a serious obligation on all of its members to participate in the Mass each Sunday, as well as on every holy day — because it is a celebration for all that we consider to be the heart and soul of our religion. We come together to worship our Lord, Jesus Christ — and to reenact the Last Supper, where Jesus said, “Do **this** in memory of me.” By faithfully repeating the **this** that Christ commanded the bread and wine used in the Mass become the body and blood of Jesus.

Sacrifice to God is an essential element of the Mass. The concept of sacrifice is also at the very heart of our religion. It is mentioned in the Bible time and again: Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam, offered sacrifices to God ... Abraham (referred to in the Liturgy as “*our father in faith*”) was prepared to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, to God ... and Jesus offered himself to his Father in sacrifice, promising us all that if we “eat this bread and drink this cup,” he would continue his great sacrifice until he comes again.

The Mass also serves as a memorial, helping us to keep the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ fresh in our minds and hearts. Through the readings, we are reminded of the many other great deeds God has done for His people.

The sacred meal we share during the Sacrifice of the Mass (“the bread of life and cup of eternal salvation”) is called the Eucharist (from the Greek word *Eucharistia*, which means “thanksgiving”). Each time we participate in the Holy Mass, we are expressing again our thankfulness for all that God has given us.

The way in which the Mass is celebrated has developed over almost over two thousand years. The early Christians called it “the Breaking of the Bread.” Despite its development, two elements have always been the same: listening to God’s words in Sacred Scripture and partaking of the consecrated Eucharistic Meal. Today we refer to these elements as the **Liturgy of the Word** and the **Liturgy of the Eucharist**. The following is the basic outline of the Mass, which you should learn well.

The Order of Mass – A Brief Overview

Introductory Rites

— **Procession.** This takes place from the back of the church down the center aisle. Those in procession: cross-bearer, other servers, lector, concelebrants, deacon, priest.

— **Greeting.** Given by the Celebrant. (Blessing and Sprinkling with Holy Water. This is typically done at Christmas and Easter.)

— **Penitential Rite.** This can be done in various ways. We will learn the necessary prayers and responses later on in the Manual.

— **Kyrie** (Lord, have mercy). Said or sung.

— **Gloria.** This hymn is said or sung on all Sundays outside of Lent and Advent and on great feasts. You need to memorize this hymn.

— **The Collect or Opening prayer.**

Liturgy of the Word

— **First Reading.** Read by lector, usually from the Old Testament.

— **Responsorial Psalm.** Usually led by the cantor (song leader) but may be recited. It is never omitted.

— **Second Reading.** Read by the lector. On weekdays there is no second reading.

— **Gospel Acclamation.** The cantor sings it first and the congregation repeats. It may be omitted when not sung.

— **Gospel.** Taken from one of the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), it is read by a priest or deacon, never by a lay person. You must learn the responses to all the readings.

— **Homily.** By priest or deacon, expounding the Scriptures, and applying them to everyday life.

— **Creed.** The Creed is said on Sundays and certain feasts. All Join in this declaration of belief. You must also know this prayer, and pray it at Mass. This should be memorized.

— **General Intercessions/Prayers of the Faithful.** You lead the people in response to each petition. The response is “Lord, hear our prayer.”

Liturgy of the Eucharist

— **Preparation of the Gifts.** This is also called the **offertory**. The altar servers prepare the altar by bringing over the vessels and placing them at the proper spot.

— **Eucharistic Prayer.** There are various Eucharistic prayers, but the responses you need to know are pretty much the same for each. Here are the parts of the Eucharistic Prayer you should know: the preface; the Holy, Holy; the institution (also called the consecration); the memorial acclamation; the Great Amen.

— **Communion Rite.** This part begins with the Our Father and ends with the Prayer after Communion. There are several prayers you should know here.

Concluding Rite

— **Prayer after Communion**

— **Brief announcements may be made here.**

— **Greeting and Blessing.** There are varied forms for this to which you respond.

- **Dismissal.** The priest sends the congregation out to serve God and His people. The ministers leave in the recessional, departing from the sanctuary in the order in which they entered.

Since servers are important ministers of the celebration of the Mass, you should be very familiar with the order of the Mass. You have to know well the duties you will do so that they are second nature to you. This leaves you free to concentrate on your involvement in prayer.

The Mass

Arrive at Church at least 15 minutes before the Mass begins. Have your positions (Cross/Book Bearer, Acolyte 1 and Acolyte 2) figured out with the other servers at least five minutes before Mass begins. Be considerate and non-argumentative with each other. Mentally and Spiritually prepare yourself for your duties.

Pray the Altar Server Prayer after you get vested in your alb and cincture before you sit on the bench. When the Priest or Deacon calls your attention to begin with or without a prayer, immediately line up at the door in the order below:

	Cross Bearer/Book bearer	
Acolyte 1		Acolyte 2

Begin the procession when the singing starts or when signaled by the priest. When you reach the **foot of the altar** (bow/genuflect) and proceed to your places: The Cross Bearer bows and goes to the right of the sanctuary and puts the cross in its place. The two acolytes genuflect, go to the left side of the sanctuary and stand in front of their seats (the second row of chairs behind the Ambo).

The Book Bearer goes and immediately stands in front of the priest with the book ready to be opened by the priest. The other Altar Servers will stand at their seats for the:

- Sign of the Cross
- Greeting
- Penitential Rite
- (Gloria)
- Opening Prayer

After the opening prayer all the servers are seated for the Liturgy of the Word.

Liturgy of the Word

- 1st Reading: ends with “The Word of the Lord.” All respond “**Thanks be to God**”
- Responsorial Psalm: **be sure to sing the response** (the hymnal is at your place).
- 2nd Reading: ends with “The Word of the Lord.” All respond “**Thanks be to God**”

- Alleluia (Gospel Verse) When the priest or deacon stands for the Alleluia (or verse before the Gospel), you should also **immediately** stand.
- Gospel
- Homily
- After Homily when the priest stands, the Book Bearer brings the binder to the priest for the **Creed/Profession of Faith** and **General Intercessions**

Follow the same pattern as you do when you are part of the congregation:

- Sit** for the readings,
- Stand** for the gospel,
- Sit** for the homily,
- Stand** for the Profession of Faith (Creed) and the Prayers of the Faithful (General Intercessions)

NOTE: It is important for you to know when to sit and stand. The congregation will often follow the Altar Servers and Lectors lead.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

- Preparation of the Gifts
- Preface
- Holy, Holy
- Eucharistic Prayer
- Our Father
- Communion

Presentation of the Gifts:

1. As soon as the General Intercessions are finished, the servers DO NOT sit down. They Immediately take ALL the sacred vessels and stands ready to give them to the deacon or priest when he is ready to receive them. The Book Bearer brings the Missal and stand to the left of the altar and places it on the left side. Immediately he/she then goes to retrieve the Cross for the procession of the gifts.
2. Then the Acolytes and the Cross Bearer meet and go down the center isle by the first pew and bow (as at the end of Mass). Then they proceed to the gift table and wait for those who will bring up the gifts.
3. After the priest arrives the foot of the altar the servers can begin to lead the procession of the gifts.

4. When the servers reach the priest (and deacon) the Cross Bearer bows and returns the cross to its place (like at the beginning of Mass). Then the Cross Bearer takes his/her place at the step by the bells.
5. The priest then receives the gifts and passes them on to the deacon and acolytes. Then all turn and face the altar to bow together. The Acolytes with gifts will approach the altar around the left side. If there is a deacon he will take the gifts from the acolytes once you reach the altar, if not the priest will. Then the priest will start the prayers. Meanwhile the Acolyte 2 goes to the credence table (the small table by the railing).
6. Acolyte 1 stands ready with the cruet of wine, Acolyte 2 picks up the cruet of water from the table. Both hold the cruet at its base with their left hand, and the handle facing out, and place their other hand over their heart. In this manner they wait at the edge of the altar.
7. After the bread is offered the priest or deacon will prepare the chalice. (make sure you are close enough for them to reach the cruets without over extending themselves) When he has used both cruets bow and return to the credence table.
8. Then Acolyte 1 then places the wine cruet down and unfolds the towel holding it at the seam lengthwise. Acolyte 2 picks up the bowl while still holding the cruet of water. When the acolytes return to the edge of the altar in the same manner as before. Then Acolyte 2 pours the water for the priest so he can wash his hands. Then Acolyte 1, holds the towel at the seam for the priest to take. Then Acolyte one folds his/her hands thumb up and waits for the towel to be returned. After the priest drapes the towel both over the hands of Acolyte 1, both acolytes bow to him and return the objects to the Credence Table. Then they take their place on the bottom step to prepare for the Preface and Eucharistic Prayer.

Preface:

Preface ends with the "Holy, Holy...." Then all the servers will kneel with the congregation. The Cross Bearer will kneel next to the Bells.

The two acolytes kneel on the opposite side of the altar.

Eucharistic Prayer:

- The bells are rung 2 Times:
 1. When the priest raises the host,
 2. When the priest raises the chalice,

NOTE: When ringing the Bells, only ring for three (3) seconds, hold until sounds rings out, then place them (do not slam them) down on the step.

Following the great AMEN, the servers should all stand and with hands folded join in the Our Father.

Then at the invitation of the priest/deacon, “Let us offer each other the sign of peace.” They should approach and offer peace to the priest and deacon, and then the acolytes to one another. (Remember you are not to cross behind the altar.)

Rite of Communion:

1. After the priest has received from the chalice the altar servers are to stand and receive Holy Communion with the Extraordinary Ministers.

2. After each Altar Server has received Communion and the other ministers have left the sanctuary the Acolytes return to kneelers in front of their seats and kneel. Meanwhile the book bearer retrieves the book and stand from the altar, and brings them back to the table. Afterward he/she also kneels.

3. After the distribution of Communion is complete, the servers should all stand when they see the priest(s) and deacon approach the tabernacle.

When the priests and deacon genuflect to the Tabernacle before closing it, all in the sanctuary genuflect.

Prayer After Communion:

1. The Book Bearer should be ready to retrieve the Missal when the priest stands for the prayer after communion.
2. All other servers immediately stand when the priest stands.
3. After the Closing Prayer and Blessing the Missal is placed on the table.
4. Then the Cross Bearer retrieves the Cross from its place and after the blessing proceeds to the first pew. Meanwhile both Acolytes move to join the Cross Bearer.
5. When the priest bows or genuflects, ALL Altar Servers genuflect (Or bow if they are carrying something).
6. Remember to Process out—DO NOT race up the aisle.
7. After the *Prosit* at the center of the narthex, return to the Sacristy to place the Cross in its proper place.
8. Make sure after taking your alb off you **HANG** it on a hanger neatly (button the top button) to prevent it from falling onto the floor.
10. After Mass stop in chapel and say one Hail Mary as a *Prayer of Thanksgiving After Mass*.

Proper Hygiene

- 1.Appropriate attire and hygiene reflect our respect for Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.
- 2.Proper hygiene includes clean hands and groomed hair (nothing should be written on your hands or arms).
- 3.Girls with long hair must wear it in a ponytail. Make-up and nail polish are to be avoided.
- 4.Boys' hair must be groomed and cut in a style that does not go beyond the collar of the server's alb.

Dress Code

1. Because of the sacredness of the Holy- Sacrifice of the Mass and the other liturgies at Mary Mother of the Redeemer Church and the Altar Server's role in them, an appropriate dress code must be followed.
2. Presentable dress includes:
 - a. A clean collared shirts for boys (always tucked in!); presentable, modest top for girls.
 - b. Dark dress pants or school uniform pants for the boys; dress pants, skirt (of a length at least covering the knees!) or school uniform for the girls.
 - c. Dress Shoes for boys (socks required!); dress shoes for girls.

NOTE: The following are **NEVER** to be worn while serving Mass:
-Sneakers, open-toed sandals, flip-flops, shoes with a high heel or large/high soles (tripping hazard).

-Shorts, jeans, t-shirts, net shirts, sleeveless shirts, personal jewelry (except a watch), dangling earrings (except small earrings for girls)

3. Repeated violations of the dress code will result in suspension of server for one month, or dismissal. The way we dress for Mass shows our level of respect for God and service we provide, so please take it seriously.

Reverences in the Sanctuary

1. During Mass: The first reverence (entrance procession) and the final reverence (recessional) are always to the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle, by genuflecting on the right knee. If the server is carrying something significant (e.g. cross, candles or thurible), then he/she bows.

All other reverences during the Mass are to the Altar of Sacrifice, by a bow of the head.

a. When bringing or removing anything from the Altar (chalice, ciboria, purificators, Missal) an Altar Server approaches the Altar, stops and bows to the Altar, then places or removes a given item, takes a step back, bows and then returns to his/her place.

b. When approaching the priest/deacon (with Missal, cruets, lavabo dish) a server bows to the priest after assisting him.

c. When a server had nothing in his/her hands, their hands are folded at chest level at times (with fingers pointed toward heaven).

d. When seated, the Altar Server's feet are flat on the floor with their hands placed flat on both of their knees.

2. Outside of Mass: Whenever in the sanctuary, setting up for Mass or cleaning up after Mass all reverences are to the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle by genuflecting on the right knee, unless you are carrying something significant, then the reverence is a bow of the head.

a. If you are carrying something, hold it carefully. Cruets are carried with one hand; cross, candles, ciboria and books are carried with both hands. Chalices are to always be handled with both hands one hand around the node and the other on top of the Pall to secure the paten.

3. After Mass response:

-Priest: "Prosit"

-Servers: "Omnibus et singulis" (Translated: "May the Mass be profitable"—"For all and everyone.")

Prayers to Know

Over the years, you have become familiar with most of the prayers included in the Mass. Now, as an altar server, you will be saying those prayers each time you assist with the Mass. Although there is no need for you speak loudly when saying the prayers, you should recite them clearly, in a conversational tone.

Some of the longer prayers that are said during the Mass are printed below. Please take time to learn them so that you will be fully prepared to assist at Mass.

Penitential Rite

After the priest introduces the rite, one of three forms may be used, with the last form having a number of variations. When form "A" is used, you will need to know the Confiteor (below). In all forms, you will need to respond, "Lord, have mercy" and "Christ, have mercy"— whenever the priest, deacon or cantor sings or says these words.

Confiteor

I confess to almighty God
And to you, my brothers and sisters,
That I have greatly sinned,
In my thoughts and in my words,
In what I have done and in what I have failed to do,
(And, striking their breast, they say:)
Through my fault, through my fault,
Through my most grievous fault;
(Then they continue:)
Therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin,
All the Angels and Saints,
And you, my brothers and sisters,
To pray for me to the Lord our God.

The "Gloria" is sung or said on Sundays outside of Advent and Lent and on Solemnities and feast. The servers should sing or say the "Gloria."

Gloria

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.
We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father,
Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
Have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
Receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
You alone are the Lord,
You alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

**On Sundays and solemnities the Creed (Profession of Faith) is
recited or sung.**

Credo

I believe in one God,
The Father almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth,
Of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
The Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,

true God from true God
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father,
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
He came down from heaven,

(all bow)

*and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.*

(all continue)

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
He suffered death and was buried,
And rose again on the third day
In accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.
I believe in the Holy Spirit , the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
And I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
And the life of the world to come. Amen.

**Toward the end of the preparation of the gifts (offertory), the
priest returns to the center of the Altar and says:**

(Priest)

Pray, my brother and sisters, that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

(Servers and Congregation respond)

**May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands
for the praise and glory of His name,
for our good, and the good of all His holy Church.**

After the preface, we sing or say together:

Holy, Holy

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of hosts,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

After the consecration, the priest sings or says:

The mystery of faith:

There are three forms of the response:

A - We proclaim your death O, Lord, and profess you Resurrection until you come again.

B – When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim your death, Lord Jesus, until you come in glory.

C - Save us, Savior of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.

The Lord's Prayer

(priest, servers and people)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

(Priest)

Deliver us, Lord, from every evil...

(All)

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever.

After the sign of peace we sing the Lamb of God.

Lamb of God

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:
grant us peace.

Prayer of Thanksgiving After Mass

O Lord Jesus Christ, let Your passion be my strength to sustain, guard, and protect me. Let Your wounds be my food and drink to nourish, fill, and invigorate me. Let the shedding of Your Blood cleanse me of all my sins. Let Your death obtain eternal life for me and Your cross lead me to everlasting glory. Let these constitute for me refreshment and joy, health and uprightness of heart.

Amen.

Sacred Vestments



Alb — full-length white garment worn by the priest, deacon and servers at Mass. The term alb is derived from the Latin term “*albus*” which means “white.” The Alb is a symbol of purity.



Cincture (Sink-chuhr)- a long cord tied at the waist to gather and bind the long flowing alb. The cincture symbolizes chastity.



Stole — a long, narrow band of material several inches wide which is worn around the neck by the priest at Mass. The stole, which

is the same color as the chasuble, symbolizes the authority of the Christ.



Chasuble (Chaz-us-buhl) — sleeveless, outer liturgical garment which is worn over all the other vestments. This tent-like garment covers almost the entire body with only an opening for the priest's head. The Chasuble symbolizes Christ's yoke. Liturgical law governs the color of the Chasuble.

(See Liturgical Colors.)



Amice — Rectangular piece of cloth with two long ribbons attached to the top corners. This optional garment is placed over the shoulders and the neck of the priest to cover his clerical clothing. The amice symbolizes the “helmet of salvation.”



Cassock — long, black robe-like outer garment worn by the priest.



Surplice — short, wide-sleeved, white garment worn by the priest over the cassock.



Cope — Long, cape-like garment worn over the shoulders by the priest for benediction and other solemn occasions.



Humeral Veil — Short, shawl-like garment worn by the priest at benediction and in procession when the Blessed Sacrament is carried.



Funeral Pall — large, white cloth which is spread over the casket at a funeral. It recalls the white garment given to the deceased at his/her baptism.

Sacred Vessels



Chalice — the large cup used by the priest at Mass which holds the Precious Blood



Paten — the main plate used by the priest at Mass which holds the Sacred Hosts.



Bowl Paten — the extra bowl-like vessels which holds the Sacred Hosts for the other priests and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.



Ciborium (pl. Ciboria)—the sacred vessel(s) which hold the consecrated host and are used for distributing the consecrated hosts at Communion and for reserving the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle.



Pyx — small container used to bring Holy Communion to the sick.



Corporal — a white linen cloth placed in the center of the altar on which the bread and wine are consecrated. The chalice and paten containing the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ are placed on the corporal.



Purificator — triple-folded, rectangular white cloth used to purify the chalice. In setting up the chalice.



Pall — the stiff, square white cover is placed over the chalice. The pall is used sometimes to protect the contents of the chalice.



Cruets — small, covered, bottle- like containers which hold water and wine used at Mass.



Lavabo Dish — dish used by the priest to purify his hands during the Mass at the Preparation of the Gifts. (The term “lavabo” is derived from the Latin term “lavare” which means “to wash.”)



Finger Towel — small cloth used by the priest to dry his hands during the Preparation of the Gifts.

Liturgical Colors



White Vestments symbolize: Light, innocence, purity, joy, triumph, glory

White Vestments are worn during: Season of Christmas, Season of Easter Feasts of the Lord, other than of His passion, Feasts of Mary, the angels and saints who were not martyrs, All Saints (November 1), Feasts of the Apostles, Nuptial Masses, Masses for the dead (Requiem Masses)

Note: White is the color of Popes' non- liturgical dress. White can be replaced by Silver.



Red Vestments symbolize:
the Passion, blood, fire, God's Love,
martyrdom

Red Vestments are worn during: Feasts of the Lord's passion, Blood, and Cross, Feasts of the martyrs, Palm Sunday Pentecost, Good Friday

Note: Red is the color of Cardinals' non- liturgical dress.



Green Vestments Symbolize:
the Holy Ghost, life eternal, hope

Green Vestments are worn during: Time After Epiphany (Ordinary Time) Time After Pentecost (Ordinary Time)



Violet Vestments symbolize: Penance, humility, melancholy

Violet Vestments are worn during: Season of Advent, Season of Lent

Note: Violet, literally “amaranth red,” is the color of Bishops’, Archbishops’, and Patriarchs’ non-liturgical dress



Rose Vestments symbolize: joy

Rose Vestments are worn during: Gaudete Sunday (Third Sunday of Advent) Laetare Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent)



Gold Vestments symbolize: joy

Gold Vestments are worn during: Gold can replace white, red, or green (but not violet)

Altar Server Prayer

*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.