

The Beautiful Privilege of Serving the People of God as an Altar Server in His Holy Catholic Church



**Thank You for your Generosity in Giving
of your Time and Talent**

Altar Serving Guidelines

Weeks before Mass

- Go to the Cathedral web-site and sign up.
 - Try to do it no later than the Friday morning before the Sunday you want to serve. On the home page under the Ministries tab select liturgical ministries, then select the date, choose your Mass and click the Altar Server box under the Mass you wish to serve, and fill in your name.
 - If something comes up and you cannot serve at the time you selected, you can take your name down, or you can communicate with other Altar Servers about swapping a time or getting a substitute by going to St. Mary's Parish App. and click on the "Groups" box and then the "Altar Servers" group to start or join a conversation.

Before Mass

- Arrive no later than 10 minutes prior to Mass (15 minutes is preferred).
- Check off your name on the schedule on the bulletin board in the Sacristy and check in with the priest/bishop so they know you are there and receive any special instructions for the Mass.
- Wash hands with soap and water.
- Vest in alb (be sure it does not drag, but also check that the bottom is not more than 3-4 inches above shoes).
- Determine who will be the Cross Bearer and Candle Bearers.
- The Cross Bearer will retrieve the Processional Cross while the Candle Bearers will light the Altar candles and light their own Processional Candle.
 - 1 server - Cross only
 - 2 servers - Cross, and one Processional Candle carried and the other one pre-lit and placed on the credence table
 - 3 servers – Cross and two Processional Candles
- Servers wait quietly in the sacristy for the prayer and then go to the back of the church.

Procession – Liturgy of the Word

- Cross Bearer leads the procession (if incense is used at the Mass the Thurifer with the thurible and incense boat leads) begin walking when the singing starts and hold the Cross high.
- Candle Bearers follow slightly behind and on either side of the Cross with the candles held at equal height (if there is only one candle, the server should follow directly behind the Cross Bearer (other servers not carrying anything process with hands folded).
- Arriving at the Altar, the Cross Bearer takes the Cross to its stand and then goes to the St. Joseph side bench (since the server is carrying something, do not genuflect or bow).

- Candle Bearers, likewise, do not genuflect or bow, but take their candles and place them on the Credence Table and then go to the Blessed Mother side bench (other servers not carrying anything genuflect and proceed to the Blessed Mother side bench).
- Cross Bearer listens for the invitation to the Collect: bring the *Roman Missal* to the Priest/Bishop when he says or chants “**Let us Pray.**” At the close of the prayer, return the Missal to the bench next to where you are sitting.
- **When serving with the Bishop all servers will be seated on the Blessed Mother side bench (the same side where the Bishop sits).**
- When the Deacon or Priest moves toward the Altar for the proclamation of the Gospel – as the Alleluia is being sung – the Candle Bearers retrieve their candles and meet him in front of the Altar one on each side and facing the same way as the Deacon or Priest (which initially will be facing the altar but then turning around to face the congregation).
- As the Deacon or Priest begins to move, the Candle Bearers process in front of him to the foot of the Ambo for the Proclamation of the Gospel (return candles to the Credence Table and return to your seats when the Gospel is finished).

Liturgy of the Eucharist

- Candle Bearers help the Deacon or Priest set the Altar:
 - Bring the *Roman Missal* and the Missal Stand (if being used) from the St. Joseph side bench and place it on the Altar.
 - Bring the large Chalice from the Credence Table to the Altar.
 - Bring all Ciboria or plates, that have hosts in them, from the Credence Table to the Altar.
 - Bring other items (small chalices, purificators, pyxes....) from the Credence Table to the Altar.
- Both Candle Bearers accompany the Priest/Deacon from the sanctuary to receive the gifts:
 - The Collection Basket is placed to the side of the Altar on St. Joseph side.
 - The wine is taken to the Credence Table and the lid removed.
 - The bread is taken directly to the Altar and handed to the priest.
- A Candle Bearer brings the water and wine to the Deacon or Priest (holding both cruets in hand with lids off and handles facing the Deacon or Priest).
 - Wait to take both the water and wine back to the Credence Table at the same time.
- Prepare to wash the Priest’s hands.
 - One server – water in one hand, bowl in the other and towel folded over arm.
 - Two servers – one holds the water and pours while the other holds the bowl and the towel.
 - Three servers – one holds the water and pours, one holds the bowl with both hands and the other brings the towel.
- All Servers will remain on the St. Joseph side throughout the Eucharistic Prayer.

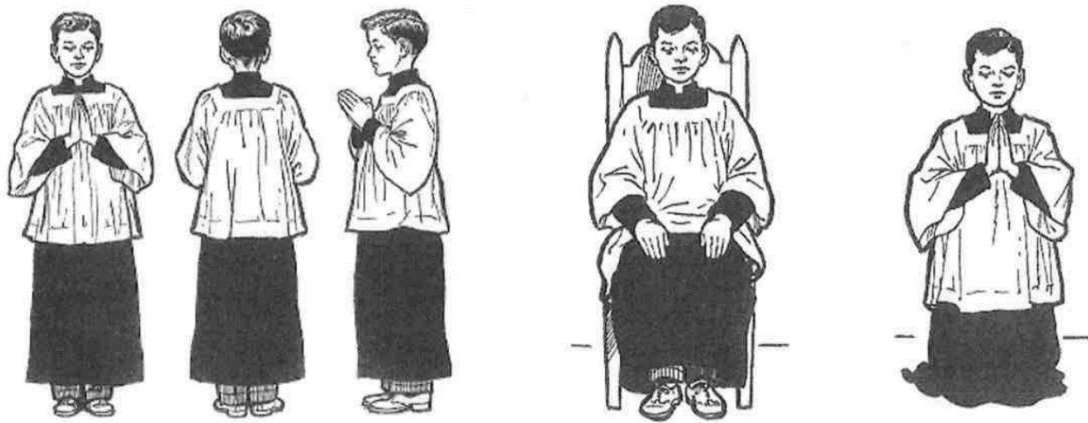
- At Communion time, the priest will bring the servers Holy Communion and an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion with serve you the Sacred Blood.
- After receiving Holy Communion:
 - Cross Bearer takes the Roman Missal and the stand (if being used) back to the St. Joseph side bench and kneels there.
 - Candle bearers bring the water from the Credence Table and place it on the corner of the Altar and then return to kneel in front of the Blessed Mother side bench (if a Deacon is present leave the water on the Credence Table because that is where the deacon purifies the vessels.)
- All servers kneel reverently until the priest returns from distributing Communion.

After Communion

- Candle Bearer(s) help the Deacon or Priest to clear the vessels from the Altar.
 - Take the vessels to the Credence Table as soon as the Deacon or Priest hands them to you (or when he places them at the corner of the Altar).
- Cross Bearer listens for the invitation to the Collect: bring the *Roman Missal* to the Priest/Bishop when he says/chants “**Let us Pray.**” At the close of the prayer return the Missal next to you on the bench.
- When the Priest begins the final blessing (“**The Lord be with you...May Almighty God bless you....**”) the Cross bearer retrieves the Cross and stands near the Tabernacle.
- When the Priest moves to kiss the Altar, the Cross Bearer leaves the sanctuary and stands on the St. Andrew Tile, in the center aisle facing the Altar.
- The Candle Bearers follow immediately behind the Cross Bearer and go to stand, side-by-side, on the St. Paul Tile in the center aisle facing the Altar.
- As the Priest genuflects, all servers turn toward the door and then process to the back of the church.

After Mass

- Cross Bearer places the Cross back in its stand.
- Candle Bearers extinguish all candles **with the snuffer from the sacristy.**
- All servers if needed can help the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion clear the vessels from the credence table and bring them back to the Sacristy.
- Check with the Priest to see if any other help is needed.
- Hang up albs – neatly – in the closet.




Dress Code

- Shoes must be closed-toe – no sandals or flip flops.
- Shirts should be of muted color, free of any large advertisements or inappropriate wording/images (the albs do not fully obscure the shirts underneath).
- Males should come in long pants – no shorts.
- Hair should be tidy and not prone to drawing attention from the Mass.

General Principles

- Serving at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is a supreme honor and privilege – not a right.
- Those who serve should be clean and presentable both exteriorly (dress and hygiene) and interiorly (no unconfessed Mortal Sins).
- Altar servers are to set the example for the entire congregation, remember that the people can see you and your actions, so you will want to be mindful of maintaining reverent postures.
 - For this reason, please participate fully in the Mass: by singing and responding with the appropriate hand and body gestures.
- Reverence is an essential attribute in any altar server – piety in gestures, grace in movement, zeal in prayer. The job of all who serve at the Mass is to give glory and honor and praise to God, and helping the congregation do the same, never trying to draw attention to ourselves.
- Servers should never cross between the Altar and the Tabernacle but must always walk around the carpeted area either in front of the Altar or back behind the Tabernacle.
- When carrying the large chalice, always use two hands: one on top and one on the stem
- Whenever crossing in front of the Altar – while not carrying anything – servers bow their heads in reverence to the Altar where the Holy Sacrifice takes place.

What are the items used at Mass?

Practical guide of the objects used at the altar  CatholicLink

Chalice



A large cup used to hold the wine which becomes the Blood of Christ.

Purificator



A white cloth that the priest uses to cleanse the chalice.

Ciborium



It is used to hold the Hosts which will be used for communion.

Corporal



A linen cloth on which the vessels (with bread and wine) are placed.

Pall



It is a stiff, square, white cover that is placed over the chalice.

Host and paten



The host is placed in the paten (a saucer-like disk).

Lavabo and manuterge



They are used by the priest to wash his hands during Mass.

Cruets



Small vessels that hold the water and wine.

Roman Missal



It contains the prayers, chants and instructions for the Mass.

Candles and crucifix



It reminds us of the sacrifice of Christ, Light of the World.

Updated 6/26/2023