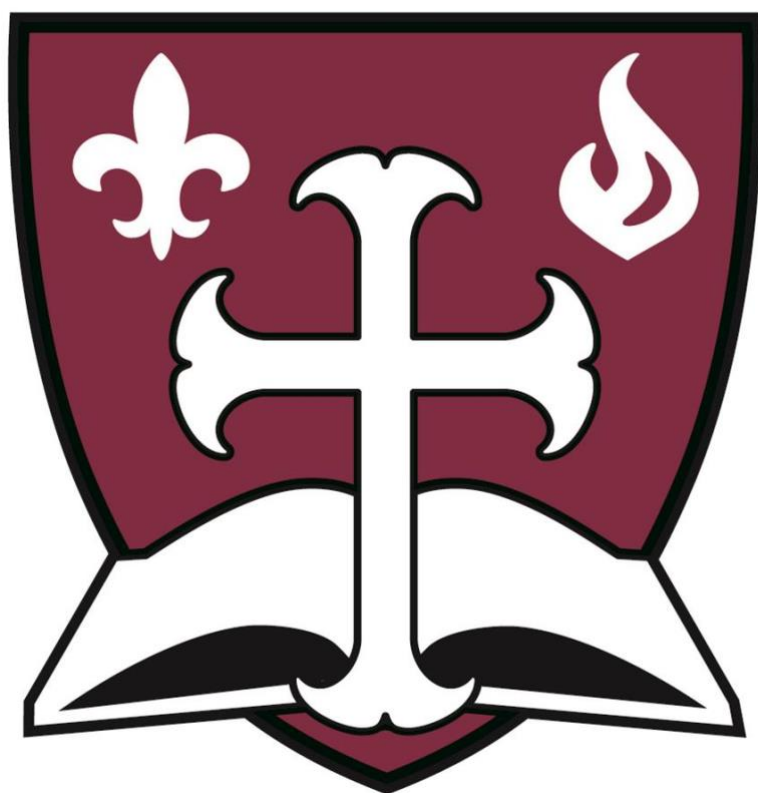


# **Handbook of Altar Servers**



**of St. Cletus Roman Catholic Church**

## **Welcome**

Welcome to the ministry of altar serving at St. Cletus! You are part of a group of young men and women who actively serve their church by assisting the celebrant in leading the congregation at Mass. It is our goal that while you are an altar server you will strengthen and deepen your Catholic faith.

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# **Saint Cletus, pope and martyr**

St. Cletus has given early Church historians some trouble because of his name. Two of the early lists of the popes, the *Liberian Catalogue* and the *Poem Against Marcion* list an Anacletus as well as a Cletus. Most ancient lists, however, give the papal succession as Peter, Linus, Cletus, Clement; and modern scholars agree that this is the correct listing. Anacletus is a variant of Cletus, and this seems to have caused the confusion.

St. Cletus was a Roman, and his father's name was Emilianus, but some sources say that he was born in Greece. He was among the first disciples of St. Peter in Rome and was ordained a priest by him. St. Cletus succeeded Linus as Bishop of Rome from some time in the reign of Vespasian, around 76 AD, to some time in the reign of Domitian, around 89 AD. During his reign, he divided Rome into 25 parishes and ordained an unknown number of priests to see to the needs of the faithful in Rome, showing his dedication to the mission of spreading the Gospel and expanding the Church. He was martyred under the Emperor Domitian and buried near St. Peter and St. Linus on the Vatican, and his relics are kept in the Vatican. St. Cletus' feast, and thus our Patronal Feast, is celebrated along with that of St. Marcellinus on April 26, and his name is mentioned in the Canon of the Mass along with the Apostles and other early popes.

# **Virtue of Humility**

Virtue is the habitual and firm disposition to do the good. Meaning that a virtuous person will find it easier to do good than to do evil. The virtue of courage makes it easier to face danger than to run from it, the virtue of charity makes it easier to love than to hurt others. Virtue is essential to living a good and holy life.

We gain a virtue either through grace, the gift of God, or through practicing that virtue, but we always need to use a virtue to keep and strengthen it. For example, we receive the virtue of faith by the grace of God, but we have to practice it through prayer and acts of piety.

The Knights of the Grotto have chosen humility as their particular virtue and promise to try to excel in this virtue. The virtue of humility helps us to acknowledge that all goodness is from God, causes us to turn to God in prayer, and helps us to avoid inordinate pride.

Humility is not the greatest virtue (that would be charity/love), but it is the first and foundation of all virtues. We can't have any virtue without humility. Humility helps us to see our weaknesses and failures and pray to God for help. Humility helps us to grow in other virtues by being honest with ourselves and going to God and others for help.

A Knight of the Grotto seeks to grow in virtue by praying for God to make us humble, putting others ahead of ourselves, and not making ourselves the center of attention, especially in our service at the altar.

## **General Guidelines**

- ❖ Arrive — 15 minutes before your scheduled Mass, then vest and pray vesting prayers.
- ❖ Attendance is required at all scheduled Masses. If a conflict occurs, you ought to first attempt to schedule a substitute.
- ❖ Dress appropriately for Mass. Although you will be wearing an alb to cover your clothes, proper dress results in a more reverent attitude.
  - Black or dark collared pants for boys.
  - Dress or Nice top and skirt/dress pants/capris for girls.
  - Black, white, or light-colored shirt.
  - Black dress shoes and solid-colored socks.
- ❖ Reverence is essential because altar servers are in a very visible position, so they need to set a good example for everyone else at Mass. A quiet, attentive, and prayerful manner is essential at all times during the Mass.
- ❖ Your conduct reflects not only on you and your group, but on the entire altar server ministry. Sound travels easily in the church, so while preparing and vesting for Mass, maintain a quiet atmosphere. During Mass, sit up straight, do not cross your legs, and do not play with your cincture (rope belt). Participate in the prayers and songs along with the congregation. Keep your hands folded, pointed up when standing or kneeling. Do not leave the altar during Mass.
- ❖ If you make a mistake, it's okay, most people don't know what you're supposed to be doing anyway. Stay calm, fix your mistake, and act as if everything is fine. Learn from the experience.

## **Procedures for Serving Mass**

### **BEFORE MASS**

1. Vest and say Altar Servers Prayer.
2. Light the altar and tabernacle candles, but only light the candelabra for Solemnities.
3. Retrieve the Processional Cross and Candles if there are 3 or more servers, Processional Cross alone if there are less than 3 servers.
4. 5 minutes before Mass is to begin the clergy and servers will go to the back of the Church and the celebrant leads the Prayer Before Mass.
5. Form procession in this order:
  - a. Candles with Cross in between
  - b. Other Altar Servers
  - c. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
  - d. Reader (with book if there's no Deacon)
  - e. Deacon with Book of Gospels
  - f. Priest
6. At the foot of the Sanctuary kneel or bow your head, take the cross and processional candles to their stands, and then go to your chairs.

## LITURGY OF THE WORD

1. When the priest says, "Let us pray," bring the Book of the Chair to the priest and hold it up for him.
2. When the deacon/priest goes to pick up the Book of Gospels from the altar, 2 servers go to the altar and pick up the Procession Candles and stand by the altar facing the congregation. When the book of Gospels is lowered and the priest/deacon turns towards the ambo, the front candle goes in front to the far side of the ambo and the back candle follows to the near side of the ambo. After, they place the candles back on their stands and return to their seats, remembering to bow to the altar as they pass it.
3. At the end of the Profession of Faith, the server by the Celebrant's Chair holds the binder for the Prayers of the Faithful.

## AT THE PREPARATION OF GIFTS

1. After the Family Prayer, 2 servers go with the celebrant to the foot of the sanctuary and bring the bread and wine back to the credence table. Meanwhile, one server brings the book and stand to the altar.
2. The servers bring the ciboria to the altar, handing them to the priest or deacon to place on the altar, and then bring the chalices, if there are any.
3. A server brings the water and wine cruets to the altar and waits as the deacon or priest prepares the chalice(s).
4. After the priest bows and prays silently (or after he incenses the altar) two servers bring the lavabo bowl and towel to the priest. They return the priest's bow before leaving.
5. All servers then go stand at the kneelers facing the altar and kneel after the *Holy, Holy, Holy* (Sanctus).

## LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

1. A server rings the bell once at the Epiclesis (when the priest extends both hands over the bread and wine), and three times each at the elevation of the bread and at the elevation of the cup. When the priest genuflects, the bell is rung one time as his knee hits the floor.
2. When the deacon or priest goes to the tabernacle, a server comes up and removes the book and stand from the altar, returns it to the table, then returns to their place.
3. As the priest and deacon purify the vessels, the servers take them from the clergy and return them to the Credence Table.
4. When the priest says, "Let us pray," the server holds up the Book of the Chair for the celebrant to read from.
5. As the final hymn is announced, the servers carrying the cross retrieve the cross and wait next to the book table and the servers carrying the candles go and stand next to the procession candles at the altar. When the singing starts they take the cross and candles and line up in the aisle.
6. When the priest genuflects they turn and process out.
7. Stop at the back of Church and turn to face the priest. The clergy and servers conclude Mass with a Latin prayer. The celebrant says, "*Prosit*," meaning, "May it be profitable." All respond, "*Pro Omnibus et Singulis*," meaning, "For all and each one."

## Picking up After Mass

1. Blow out the altar candles and tabernacle candles (except the red Sanctuary Lamp).
2. Hang up your vestments on the bar where you got it from.
3. Say the Prayer After Mass together.

## Masses with Incense

1. Preparation
  - a. Place 2 charcoals (broken into halves) into the thurible.
  - b. Refill the boat with incense, if necessary.
  - c. Light the charcoals 10 minutes before Mass. When they ignite, there is a small trail of sparks that travels on the charcoal.
2. Procession
  - a. When lining up before Mass, present the thurible to the celebrant and open it so he can add incense. He will bless the incense and then you can close the thurible.
  - b. Incense always leads the procession. Bow your head at the entrance to the Sanctuary, then go up and wait behind and to the left of the altar.
  - c. After the clergy reverence the altar, hand the thurible to the celebrant and step back.
  - d. Place the thurible on the stand, then go to your seat.
3. Gospel
  - a. Towards the end of the second reading, go get the thurible and boat.
  - b. When the second reading ends, go to the celebrant, open the thurible, and allow the celebrant to put in incense and bless it.
  - c. Stand and move behind the altar, following the deacon as he moves to the ambo.
  - d. The deacon or priest will introduce the Gospel then turn to you. Hand him the thurible so he can incense the Book of Gospels, then take it back from him.
  - e. While he reads the Gospel, stand back from the ambo and swing the thurible slowly but constantly.
  - f. After the Gospel is read, bring the thurible back to the stand and return to your seat.
4. Eucharistic Prayer
  - a. After setting the altar, retrieve the thurible and boat, present them to the celebrant, then stand back as he incenses the gifts and altar.
  - b. When the Preface begins (The Lord be with you...), the thurifer adds incense to the thurible and moves to the step in front of the altar, not going through the sanctuary but going outside through the side door. Kneel when the *Holy, Holy, Holy* is finished. Swing the thurible gently, back and forth, in front of you.
  - c. At the elevation of the Body and of the Blood, swing the thurible in three sets of two.
  - d. At the end of the *Doxology* (Through him, and with him, and in him...), stand up and go back around outside the side door, returning the thurible to the stand and then going to your place.

## **Prayers**

### **Vesting Prayers**

*Cassock* – O Lord, the portion of my inheritance and my chalice, You are He who will restore my inheritance.

*Alb/Surplice* – Purify me, O Lord, from all stain and cleanse my heart, that, washed in the blood of the Lamb, I may enjoy eternal delights.

*Cincture* – Gird me, O Lord, with the cincture of purify, and quench in my heart the fire of concupiscence, that the virtue of continence and chastity may remain within me.

### **Prayer Before Mass**

Almighty and merciful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Thou hast invited us to participate in this worship with Thy Beloved Son, our high priest and king, grant us the grace to fulfill our sacred duty with faith, reverence and love, so that we may please Thee, edify Thy people and deserve to obtain the fruits of this holy service, through Christ our Lord.

We adore Thee and bless Thee because by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world. Amen.

### **Prayer After Mass**

We give thanks, Heavenly Father, for the honor bestowed upon us by assisting at this holy service. Accept, we beseech Thee, our most humble ministry and forgive us whatever failings we have committed before Thy Divine Majesty. Enlighten and strengthen us, Lord, so that we may always render Thee praiseworthy homage through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, world without end. Amen.

## **Sacred Vessels and Liturgical Items**

**Ablution Cup** – Placed next to the Tabernacle of Reserve, is used to purify the fingers after handling the Holy Eucharist.

**Ambo** – The place from which the Scriptures are proclaimed and the homily is delivered. It might also be called a Lectern or a Pulpit.

**Ambry** – a cabinet hung on or built into the wall which keeps the vessels that contain the church's yearly supply of the Holy Oils (Oil of the Sick, Oil of Catechumens, Sacred Chrism).

**Altar of Sacrifice** – The Sacred Table set aside for the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Holy Mass.

**Aspergillum** – a small bucket often made from precious or semi-precious metal, and a sprinkler. Both are used in the sprinkling of holy water during the liturgy or blessings.

**Boat** – The metal container which holds the grains of incense for the Thurible.

**Book of the Gospels** – the large book containing the Gospel proclaimed during Holy Mass. Sometimes carried in the entrance procession and is used during Gospel Processions.

**Burse** – a flat, hard, square pouch in which the corporal is kept.

**Candle Followers** – Made of brass, sit on top of the candles. These allow the candle to burn evenly, efficiently, and without spillage.

**Celebrant's Chair (Sedilia)** – This is the place where the priest celebrant sits during the Liturgy. It expresses his office of presiding over the assembly and of leading the prayer of those present.

**Chalice** – This is the sacred cup used to hold the sacramental wine that becomes the True Presence of Jesus Christ after the Words of Consecration said by the priest.

**Chalice Veil** – The colored square of cloth which covers the chalice and paten. It should match the vestments of the day.

**Ciborium** – The sacred cup-like vessel with a covering lid used to hold the smaller hosts for the people to receive.

**Corporal** – The square cotton cloth on which is placed the chalice, paten and ciboria for the Consecration.

**Credence Table** – The table that holds the chalice and the other items before and after the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

**Cruets** – These are miniature pitchers used to hold the water and wine which are used to prepare the chalice for the Holy Mass.

**Funeral Pall** – Used to drape the casket at a funeral. It is a reminder of the deceased's Baptism.

**Holy Water Font** – A metal container for accessing Holy Water.

**Humeral Veil** – A scarf-like garment about eight feet long, draped over the shoulders of the priest or deacon at Benediction.

**Lavabo** – A bowl for the priest to wash his hands after the Preparation of the Gifts.

**Lavabo Towel** – the rectangular linen or towel used to dry the priest's fingers.

**Lectionary** – The book which contains the collection of Sacred Scripture proclaimed at Holy Mass throughout the year.

**Lighter and Extinguisher** – Contains a wax taper for lighting candles and a bell-shaped cone to extinguish a candle without spilling wax.

**Lunette or Luna** – Made of two pieces of glass, the Sacred Host is placed between the two and inserted into the Monstrance so the Sacred Host may be seen by all the faithful for Adoration.

**Monstrance** – The sacred vessel used to show the Sacred Host to the faithful for prayer and adoration. It is also used to carry the Holy Eucharist in procession, such as on the Feast of Corpus Christi.

**Pall** – The square, hard linen used to cover the chalice. Also lays on top of the paten for dressing the chalice.

**Paschal Candle and Stand** – Also known as the Easter Candle, it is placed in the Baptistry and lit for Baptisms and funerals.

**Paten** – This is the sacred, plate-like vessel used to hold the host that becomes the Eucharist. These may also be larger to contain the consecrated Hosts distributed at Holy Communion.

**Prie-Dieu** – The prayer kneeler used by those not sitting in pews.

**ProceSSIONAL Crucifix** – The Crucifix carried on the long pole at all processions.

**Purificator** – The square cotton or linen cloth, folded oblong and draped over the chalice underneath the paten, which is used to wipe the chalice after it is used.

**Pyx** – A small sacred vessel used to bring Holy Communion to the Sick or otherwise transport the Sacred Host.

**Roman Missal** – The large book placed on the Missal Stand from which the priest prays Holy Mass.

**Sacrarium** – sink or basin with a pipe running from it into the earth intended for the disposal of water which has been used for sacred purposes (e.g. water from ablution cup). It should have a cover.

**Tabernacle** – A locking vessel used to house the Blessed Sacrament. Our Lord is reserved here for the sick, for Holy Communion at Mass whenever necessary, and for personal prayer and devotion of the faithful.

**Thurible** – The metal vessel suspended from a chain made for burning incense.

### **Mass Vestments**

**Alb** – White robe worn by priest and deacon during Holy Mass.

**Amice** – A rectangular white cloth draped around the neck and tied to the waist. It is worn under the alb.

**Cassock** – The long, black robe with buttons worn by priests and altar servers.

**Chasuble** – The outer vestment worn by priests for Holy Mass, matching and covering the stole. The colors change with the liturgical seasons of the year.

**Cincture** – A white or colored cord worn at the waist. It functions like a belt and is worn with an alb.

**Cope** – Resembling a cape, this vestment is worn by the priest or deacon during Eucharistic Benediction and other liturgies outside of Mass.

**Dalmatic** – Similar to the chasuble worn by a priest, the dalmatic is worn by the deacon for Holy Mass. It should match the chasuble worn by the priest.

**Stole** – A long narrow strip of cloth in the different liturgical colors worn around the neck by deacons, priests, and bishops.

**Surplice** – The white cotton or linen item worn over the cassock. It should be loose fitting and fall past the waistline. It is worn by priests or altar servers.

### **Liturgical Colors**

**Green** - Used during "Ordinary Time." Color of perseverance, virtue, and instruction.

**Red** - Used on Passion (Palm) Sunday, Good Friday, Pentecost Sunday, and on the Memorials and Feast Days of Martyrs including the Apostles and Evangelists. Color of martyrdom and sacrifice.

**Rose** - Used on the 3rd Sunday of Advent (*Gaudete Sunday*) and the 4th Sunday of Lent (*Laetare Sunday*). Color of anticipation.

**Violet** - Used during Advent and Lent. Color of royalty and penance.

**White** - Used during the Christmas and Easter seasons. Also used on the celebrations of Mary, the Angels, Saints who were not martyrs, All Saints, the Birth of John the Baptist, the Chair of Peter, the Conversion of Paul, and St. John the Evangelist. Color of purity and rejoicing.

**Black** - Used for Funeral (Requiem) Masses to remind us of the need to pray for the deceased and the Souls in Purgatory. Color of death and mourning.

### **Posture**

**Walking** – Walk with your back straight and with your head held high.

**Bowing** – When you bow at Mass, it should be a smooth, forward inclining of your head and shoulders. When you bow to the altar, bow deeply at the waist and bring yourself slowly to your full height. When you bow to the priest, bow your head slowly and gracefully. Don't walk and bow at the same time: stop before bowing.

**Genuflecting** – When you genuflect, keep your hands in front of your chest while you go down on your right knee. Keep your body upright. Be sure that your alb isn't going to trip you on the way down or up.

**Kneeling** – When you kneel, your body should be upright and your hands folded in front of your chest.

**Standing** – Always stand up straight with both feet firmly on the floor, about six to eight inches apart. This will give you balance and comfort at the same time. Don't lean against furniture or against the wall.

**Sitting** – When sitting, sit tall and don't slouch. Place your hands on your lap or flat on your thighs in a relaxed manner.

**Hands** – Unless you are sitting down or carrying something (like a candle or crucifix), your hands should be folded in front of your chest. If you are carrying something in one hand, hold the other hand flat on your chest. Don't crack your knuckles or bite/pick your fingernails.

**Eyes** – Practice 'Custody of the Eyes'. This means that you are to look forward with your eyes slightly down. In this posture you are able to be less distracted and more attentive to the dialogue of the Mass.