

# St. Basil the Great Church

## A Guide for Altar Servers

November 2022



Please note that these guidelines may change temporarily from time to time to address COVID or other concerns.

## Welcome

Thank you for your willingness to be of service to the Church. God calls each of us to be of service and this special ministry of the Altar will draw you ever closer to His Sacred Heart.



The primary role of the altar server is to assist the priest and deacon in the celebration of the liturgy at Mass. This is done through specific actions and by setting an example to the congregation through your active participation in the liturgy.

The altar server's duties at Mass include participating in singing of hymns, responding in prayer along with the people and looking alert while maintaining the proper posture (sitting, standing or kneeling) at the appropriate times.

By assisting at the Altar, you help the priest concentrate on the Mass and lead people in worship of God. As you help the priest, you also help our parishioners to worship by your example and reverence. By serving as a minister of the Altar you do a service for God and His Church.

## Ministers of the Altar

Altar servers exercise their ministry within the assembly and enhance the quality of celebration for the whole assembly by taking part in processions and by ensuring that all requisites for the celebration are available at the appropriate moments.

All who exercise a liturgical ministry need proper preparation for their responsibilities. Through training and practice they develop the competence necessary to perform their particular ministry with which they have been entrusted.

The formation of liturgical ministers is both spiritual and technical. Although this formation varies in extent and depth depending upon the nature of the particular ministry, it will normally have liturgical, biblical, and technical components.

The number of altar servers assigned to any liturgy will depend upon the circumstances and the tasks to be performed. At large-scale celebrations (solemnities and Holy days), there will be a competent minister or master of ceremonies responsible for ensuring that the various tasks within the celebration are properly assigned and carried out by trained altar servers.

### Reverence for the Sacred

When serving in the presence of Our Lord it is both wise and necessary for a server to perform all assigned duties with attention, dignity and reverence. The sanctuary of Our Lord is a holy place, with access restricted to few people. Please recognize the privilege you have been given to serve Our Lord in this holy place by being respectful and attentive.

### Communication

Communication of meetings and schedules will be handled through e-mail. If you change your e-mail, please notify the parish office at once.

If you are unable to serve the Mass for which you have been scheduled, it is ***your responsibility*** to find a replacement. If you are unable to find a replacement it is still your responsibility to fulfill your obligation. We use the Ministry Scheduler Pro, which can be used on a web browser or in a smart phone app, downloadable from Apple or Google app stores.

## Punctuality - Arriving before Mass

The server is expected to be vested and ready to serve no **later than 10 minutes** before a scheduled liturgy unless specifically told otherwise. For larger celebrations such as Christmas and Easter servers should arrive at the server sacristy at least 30 minutes in advance.



## Dress Code

As a sign of reverence to God, it is appropriate to wear our “Sunday Best” when serving at Mass. This means **NO sneakers, running shoes, flip-flops, or other types of athletic footwear in the sanctuary.** Dress shoes, along with appropriate socks or stockings should be worn. Clothes worn under an alb should not have bold patterns, pictures or other designs that will show through the alb.

Attention should be given to appearance and cleanliness. Hair should be combed and hands and nails cleaned.

## Vesting for Mass

Servers vest in a white alb, wearing a cincture corresponding to the liturgical color for the Mass being celebrated. The color for each day is noted on a monthly calendar in the server sacristy. Please refer to that calendar to determine the appropriate color cincture to wear. Also, if possible, please select an alb that is long enough to reach to the **top of your shoes.**

After Mass the alb worn by the server should be neatly hung on a hanger and returned to the closet.

## General Guidelines for Serving at Mass

### Knowing the principal prayers of the Mass –

All servers are required to know and recite the principal prayers said before, during and after Mass. See the “Journeysongs” worship aid for the prayers that should be committed to memory and recited at the appropriate times.

### Knowing the liturgical items used at Mass-

All altar servers must demonstrate their ability to recognize and use the “tools of the trade” in serving at the altar. Included with this guide is a “**Glossary of Terms**” (see page 20) defining the people, places, liturgical items, sacred vessels and liturgical vestments used during the Mass. Servers are expected to know the proper names of these items, their use and where to find them in the sacristy.

### Posture during the liturgy -

**Bowing** – Bowing is a sign of reverence and respect for a sacred object or to the priest celebrating the liturgy. As a sign of this reverence the server should come to a complete stop before the object of reverence and make *a profound bow from the waist*.

One exception to this is when the server is carrying something as noted above. In those instances, after coming to a complete stop, the servers should bow their heads before proceeding with their duties.

Bowing should be done at the following times:

- When approaching the altar in procession while carrying the processional cross, candles or missal
- When approaching the altar with the offertory gifts received from members of the congregation (see more guidance below)
- When crossing in front of the altar
- After presenting the wine and water to the priest and after washing his hands during the preparation of the gifts;

**NOTE:** Servers bow to the altar because it is the holy table of Christ’s saving sacrifice as the Lamb of God. Servers bow to the priest because he offers the Body and Blood of our savior to the Father and, therefore, should be shown this honor and respect. Servers should NEVER bow to a deacon.

**Standing** – When standing at the side of the altar the server should stand straight, with hands folded, facing the action of the Mass (that is, facing the priest, the altar or the ambo as appropriate.) Hands should be folded with palms facing each other and held at mid-chest, right thumb over left thumb.

**Sitting** – while sitting, your hands should rest on your lap, palms down.

## **Order of Mass for Sunday**

### **Introductory Rites**

Sign of the Cross  
Greeting  
Penitential Rite  
Gloria  
Collect

### **Liturgy of the Word**

First Reading  
Responsorial Psalm  
Second Reading  
Gospel  
Homily  
Creed  
Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)

### **Liturgy of the Eucharist**

Preparation of the Gifts  
Eucharistic Prayer  
The Lord's Prayer  
Sign of Peace  
Lamb of God  
Holy Communion  
Prayer after Communion  
Blessing

### **Recessional**

## Serving Sunday Mass

These instructions are written for three servers. One will act as cross and book bearer, and the other two as candle bearers and acolytes (table). If there are four servers, the duties of cross bearer and book bearer can be separated. As soon as you arrive, please put on your alb and cincture and sign in on the sheet in the vesting room. Decide among yourselves who will be the cross/book person and who will be the candle bearers. It is recommended that a larger and stronger server be the cross/book bearer.

At Father's instruction, proceed out of the sacristy to the back of the center.

The ushers will light the candles on the table in the back of the church. The candle bearers take the lit candles and stand side-by-side behind the cross bearer and be ready to process in.

### The Entrance Procession

The cross bearer and candles will begin to process from the back of the church. Cross will lead, unless there is incense, followed closely by the two candles, then the deacon, if present, then the priest.

When you reach the front of the altar, the cross and one candle stand in a line to the left of center, and the other candle to the right of center. When the priest reaches the front and bows, you bow your heads then proceed up to the altar. The cross bearer walks to the right of the altar and places the cross carefully and quietly in the stand. The candle bearers take the candles to their place behind the reredos. All servers then go to their seats. The book bearer will sit on father's left, near the book stand. The two candle bearers will sit on father's left. Any additional servers sit to father's far left on the lower level.

### The Liturgy of the Word

The book bearer should bring the Missal up to Father immediately after putting the cross in its stand and going to his or her chair. When holding the Missal please hold it directly in front of the priest grasping it from the bottom to keep the pages flat. The top of the Missal should be leaning against the chest, and the book bearer should turn and face the priest, so he can read without turning too much. If a deacon is present, he will open the Missal to the proper page, if not, the priest will open it. After the Opening Prayers are prayed by the priest, close the Missal, keeping **the ribbon out** to the side, and return it to its place on the bookstand. Return to your seat and sit for the readings.

The Altar Servers then follow along with the readings from their chair until after the

homily. After the homily, father will return to his chair. He may sit down for a short time. When he stands up, the book bearer brings the Missal to Father for the Universal Prayer. After the deacon or lector leads the petitions, father will say a prayer from the missal and then sit down.

## **The Liturgy of the Eucharist**

### **Collection of the gifts**

At this time, the cross bearer goes to the cross, removes it from the stand, and proceeds down the left aisle, around the back of church, and waits for the ushers to put the offerings in the basket and the gifts to be brought to the altar by members of the congregation. When the usher indicates it is time, the cross bearer leads the procession of the gifts to the altar. Without stopping, the cross-bearer proceeds to the right of the altar, replaces the cross in the stand, with the corpus facing toward the congregation, and returns to his/her seat. The cross bearer does not go to the altar to help prepare it.

### **Preparation of the Altar**

At the same time the cross bearer leaves the altar, the Altar is prepared by the deacon, if present, and the acolytes. If a deacon is present, the steps are:

- The servers bring the chalice and the Missal to the deacon, who sets the altar. If there are additional chalices, the servers bring those to the deacon who sets them on the altar.
- The servers return to their chairs until time for the presentation of the gifts.

If a deacon is not present, the table servers do the steps as follows:

- Bring the chalice from the credence table and place it in the center-right of the altar.
- Take the main Corporal and lay it in the center of the altar. Unfold it to the left, then the right, then to the top, then to the bottom. You should see 9 squares, and a small red cross should be in the center or center-bottom square. The bottom crease going from left to right should make a small valley. Position the unfolded corporal about one inch from the edge of the altar, and center it with the center crease of the altar cloth.
- Take the side corporal and place it on the left center of the altar. Unfold it in the same way and position it about 1 inch from the front of the altar and about 4 inches from the left side of the altar.

- Remove the chalice veil and lay it on the right side of the altar. Fold the veil in half from top to bottom, then in half again from right to left.
- Remove the pall and set it on top of the folded chalice veil
- Take the paten containing the main host and set it to the right of the main corporal.
- Place the priest's chalice to the right of the main corporal. If there are two additional chalices, place them above the upper right part of the main corporal
- Place the pillow holding the book just off the upper left corner of the main corporal and set the book on top of it. The bottom of the book should just be touching the corporal.
- After setting the altar, if the priest is still in his chair, return to your chairs. If the priest has already started to the front of the altar, see next section.

### **The Presentation of the Gifts**

The altar servers go with the priest and deacon to accept the Gifts. The priest accepts the gifts from the congregants, hands them to the deacon, who hands them to the servers. The servers should immediately bring the gifts to the Altar.

- The server with the ciboria takes them to the altar and gives them to the deacon, if present, or else sets them on the corporal on the left side of the altar, removes the lids, and places them above the ciboria, towards the congregation. The server with the wine cruet is to stand next to the Altar. The other acolyte immediately brings the water cruet from the credence table to the Altar. The table servers with the wine and water should stand shoulder to shoulder, with the server holding the wine right next to the corner of the altar. The proper posture for the offering of gifts is to hold the vessel in your left hand with the handle facing the priest and place your right hand over your heart. The deacon, if present, or the priest, will take the wine first, then the water, and pour some into the chalice. Both servers remain until the water is returned.
- After the water and wine are returned to the servers, the servers return together to the credence table and set down the wine cruet. One acolyte then brings the water cruet and lavabo bowl and the other brings the finger towel, completely unfolded and held up at the corners, to Father. After he washes his hands, father will return to finger towel to the server, and all vessels and the towel are returned to the credence table. Set the used towel on the credence table directly, do not attempt to set it on top of the lavabo bowl.

- All servers should then move to the front of the altar and remain standing to recite the responses of the people in the opening of the Eucharistic prayer and the Acclamation (Holy, Holy, Holy). The table servers take the positions in the front of the altar, and the book bearer and cross bearer take the side positions.

### **The Eucharistic Prayer**

One of the table servers will ring the bells at the appropriate time. Bells should be rung with a short ring (not a continuous ringing) as follows:

- (1st) when Father puts his hands over the chalice and host – the epiclesis (1 ring); (2nd) when Father elevates the host (3 short rings); and (3rd) when Father elevates the chalice (3 short rings).

**Sign of Peace** – When the deacon or priest instructs the congregation to offer a sign of peace, come up to the altar near the priest and deacon, offer a sign of peace to them and to the other servers, then return to your positions in the front of the altar for the Lamb of God prayer.

### **Distribution of Holy Communion**

Altar servers will assist with the distribution of Holy Communion by holding a communion paten under the hands of the faithful who receive communion. When holding the paten, hold it flat and level, moving it slightly away from the communicant after reception of Communion. The hand not holding the paten should be held across your chest.

At the conclusion of the distribution of the Eucharist, hand the paten to the Priest, Deacon or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, follow them to the Altar and wait for the paten to be returned to you. Replace the paten on the credence table. The book bearer/cross bearer returns to their chair.

One of the acolytes (table servers) brings the water from the credence table to the priest for the purification of the chalice. When the priest returns the water, the server returns it to the credence table. Both table servers remain by the altar, and when the sacred vessels are purified, the table servers return the ciboria, Missal, and chalice, purificators and folded corporals to the credence table. After everything has been removed, both table servers return to their seats.

### **Closing prayer**

After a brief period of silence the priest will say: ***“Let us pray.”*** At this time the book bearer should proceed directly in front of the priest and hold the book for the priest as he prays the closing prayer.

At the conclusion of the prayer, the book bearer replaces the book on the stand, and retrieves the cross.

The other servers go behind the reredos, get the candles, and take them to the front of the altar. The cross and one candle stand to the right of the priest in a line facing the altar, and the other candle to the left of the priest. When the priest bows, bow your head, turn to the right, and proceed to the entrance to the sanctuary. The cross goes first, followed by the two candles walking side by side.

At the back of the church, the candle bearers blow out the candles and set them on the table behind the last pew. The servers should process reverently to the sacristy.

Once in the sacristy, remove your alb and hang it up neatly with a hanger and return the cincture to the hook.

## **Glossary of Liturgical Terms**

### **Parts of the Church**

**Altar-** The table in the sanctuary upon which the bread and wine are prepared and transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. The principal parts of the Altar include:

- Mensa – the flat, top part of the Altar, usually constructed of natural stone and,
- Predella – the base or platform upon which the altar stands; usually decorated with symbols of religious significance or other reliefs.

**Ambo / Pulpit-** The lectern at which the Scripture readings are proclaimed by a lector, deacon, or priest. The place of the ambo is sacred and is reserved only for proclaiming the word of God.

**Ambry-** A cabinet which holds the holy oils used for Baptism, Confirmation, and the Sacrament of the Sick, etc.; usually located near the baptismal font.

**Baptismal Font-** The large marble stand with a basin containing water which is blessed for use during the Rite of Baptism. The Baptismal Font is located in the area of church where Baptism takes place.

**Lectern-** a stand in or near the sanctuary that is used by the lector or guest commentator to make announcements or to provide the congregation with other information or liturgical direction. The Cantor also may lead the congregation in song from the lectern.

**Narthex / Vestibule-** The enclosed area between the main entrance and the nave of the church. At St. Basil's this also serves as the church lobby.

**Nave-** the principal area of a church, extending from the main entrance or narthex to the sanctuary, containing rows of pews for use by the congregation.

**Sanctuary-** The area of church which contains the altar, ambo, and Priest / celebrant's chair. The sanctuary is a sacred place because of the presence of the altar, around which the whole worshipping community is gathered.

**Stations of the Cross / (Way of the Cross)** – the depiction of Our Lord's passion and death in fourteen tableaux located on the perimeter walls of the nave of the church. The stations most commonly are prayed during Lent and especially on Good Friday.

## People and Ministers

**Altar Server / Acolyte** – a person who assists the priest, deacon or other minister at Mass or in another liturgical service.

**Cross Bearer / Crucifer** – The person who carries the crucifix in a liturgical procession. The person is generally an Acolyte but may be a lay person.

**Deacon-** An ordained member of the clergy with a specific service ministry focused on proclaiming the Gospel, assisting the priest / celebrant at the Altar, and performing works of charity.

**Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion-** A person who has been appointed and trained to assist with the distribution of the Body and Blood of Christ at Mass. Extraordinary Ministers also assist in taking the Body of Christ to the sick or home-bound of our parish.

**Greeter** – a person whose ministry is to welcome people to our church and assist with any questions they may have about our parish.

**Lector / Reader-** A person who has been appointed and trained to read the Sacred Scriptures during the Mass.

**Priest / Celebrant-** a man ordained to the sacred and pastoral office of the clergy which is of next order below that of bishop. The priest celebrant consecrates ordinary bread and wine, transforming them into the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

**Sacristan-** The person whose ministry is the care of the sacristy, sanctuary, vestments, sacred vessels, books, etc.

**Thurifer** - The person who carries the thurible and incense boat.

**Usher** – a person who assists the congregation at Mass by escorting them to their seats and also assists with taking up the collection.

## Liturgical Objects

**Ablution cup** - covered dish of water on the side of the tabernacle (or on the credence table) used by the priest, deacon or Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist to wash their fingers after distributing Communion.

**Aspergillum** – A liturgical object which is used to sprinkle people or objects with holy water. It commonly takes the form of a wand with a perforated ball at the end of a short handle.

**Book of Gospels**- The book which contains the Gospel readings. It is usually carried in procession and placed on the altar at the beginning of Mass.

**Book Stand** – The metal or wooden stand placed on the altar at the offertory on which is placed the Missal.

**Burse** - A square container for holding the corporal. Additionally, a burse may be a small leather pouch used to carry a pyx containing the Holy Eucharist when the Eucharist is brought to the sick or home-bound.

**Corporal**- The large, square or rectangular white cloth which is placed on the altar underneath the chalice and paten. Used Corporals should always be placed in the proper container for sacred cloths after Mass.

**Credence Table**- the table on which is placed the cruets, chalice, lavabo bowl, Communion Cups, Missal, Communion Patens and other objects before and after their use at the Altar.

**Cruets**- The glass containers which hold wine and water. At Sunday liturgies a large glass pitcher or decanter is used for the wine.

**Communion Paten**- a small plate used by altar servers, usually attached to a short handle, to be placed under the chin or hands of those receiving Holy Communion in order to catch the host should it accidentally fall when it is being offered to those taking communion.

**Holy Water Fonts** – small bowls generally located at the entrances to the church which contain holy water used for blessing oneself.

**Incense** – An aromatic substance producing a sweet odor when burned, used in adoration of God. Incensation is an expression of reverence and prayer as signified in the Sacred Scriptures.

**Incense Boat**- The small brass bowl that holds the incense.

**Lavabo Bowl and Finger Towel**- The dish or bowl in which the priest washes his hands during Mass and the small cloth towel used to dry his hands.

**Lectionary**- The book which contains the Sacred Scripture readings for daily and Sunday Mass.

**Lunette / Luna** - 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.

**Missal or Roman Missal** - The book that contains the various prayers of the Mass.

**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 priest's chalice during Mass.

**Paschal Candle**- The tall candle which is blessed during the Easter Vigil and is used during the Easter season, baptisms, and funerals.

**Presider's Chair (Celebrant's Chair)** - The chair on which the priest sits.

**Purificator** - A linen cloth used by the priest or deacon to dry the chalice after washing and purifying it. A used Purificator must always be placed in the proper container for holding sacred cloths.

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

**ProceSSIONAL Cross / Crucifix**- The cross / crucifix carried in processions.

**Sanctuary Lamp**- A candle or other lamp that is burning in the sanctuary to signify the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle.

**Stock** - The metal containers used to hold the oil of the catechumens, the oil of sacred chrism and the oil of the infirm for anointing the sick.

**Tabernacle** -The large gold container in the center of the church (behind the Altar) which holds the Real Presence of God in the consecrated hosts. A candle / Sanctuary Lamp is left burning at all times by the tabernacle or in the sanctuary to signify the presence of God in the tabernacle.

**Thurible / Censer**- The metal container hung by a chain that holds charcoal and is used to burn incense.

## Sacred Vessels

**Chalice**- The cup-like vessel, used by the priest, which contains the wine which is transformed into the blood of Christ. Chalices should be made of precious metal materials such as gold or silver.

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

**Ciborium**- The bowl which holds the communion hosts and is stored (when containing consecrated hosts) in the tabernacle. The ciborium can be made of metal, wood, ceramic, or other materials. *Ciboria* is the plural form of ciborium.

**Communion Chalices**- Smaller chalices used for the distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful.

**Paten** - A small saucer-shaped plate made 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.

## Liturgical Vestments

**Alb** – A long white garment worn by altar servers, the Priest and the Deacon. The alb is a flowing white robe covering the entire body. Alb is the Latin word for “white” and is used as a symbol of our sinfulness being changed into the light of Jesus.

**Amice** – an oblong or rectangular vestment, usually made of white linen, worn around the neck and shoulders under the alb. The purpose of the amice is to cover the non-liturgical clothing worn by the minister so that only liturgical vestments are visible. An amice is said to be the helmet of salvation, protecting its wearer from the assaults of the devil.

**Cassock** - A long black or red garment which reaches from the neck to the heels which is worn by various members of the clergy.

**Cope** – A long mantle or garment usually made of silk that is worn over the alb in certain liturgical celebrations (such as benediction).

**Cincture**- A cord used to secure the Alb around the waist. It symbolizes the cord that bound Jesus to the pillar while He was scourged and is useful in reminding us to be strong spiritually in the battle against evil.

**Chasuble**- A sleeveless outer vestment worn by the celebrant at Mass. The color of the chasuble will vary depending on the liturgical season or liturgy being celebrated.

**Dalmatic** – a vestment worn over the alb by the deacon. A deacon’s dalmatic is distinguishable from the priest’s chasuble as it has sleeves. The color of the vestment will vary depending on the liturgical season or liturgy being celebrated.

**Humeral Veil** – a long scarf-like garment worn over the shoulders by the priest or deacon during certain liturgical celebrations, such as benediction. The humeral veil covers the priest or deacon’s hands when the monstrance containing the Holy Eucharist is elevated during benediction. This signifies that the benediction blessing is coming directly from God and not the minister.

**Stole** – a vestment consisting of a narrow strip of noble material worn over the shoulders of the priest or, by deacons, over the left shoulder only. A stole is generally arranged to hang down in front to the knees or below of the person wearing it.

**Surplice** - A wide sleeved, white linen garment worn by clergy over a cassock.