

Altar Server Guidebook



St. Paul Catholic Church
Ellicott City, MD
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A Note to Parents

Thank you for your openness to letting your child serve. Please support and praise your son or daughter as he/she learns to serve the Mass.

We need you to help ensure that your child is dressed appropriately for serving, and arrives fifteen minutes prior to Mass time.

Servers should be a good example even when they are not serving. They should participate in the Mass and should know the appropriate responses.

Please help make sure that your son or daughter continues to participate regularly in the sacramental life of the Church, and in our religious education and formation programs.

Servers are welcome to check to see if an additional server is needed at Mass. This is a good reason to be dressed for altar serving even when they aren't on the schedule. If three servers were on the schedule, please wait until five minutes before Mass to don the Alb in case the scheduled altar server arrives.

Think about where you will sit during Mass. Your child may want you near the altar servers, or they may prefer that you sit where they cannot see you. Please try to ensure that you are not a source of distraction for them during Mass.

Lastly, please don't ever force your child to serve. Being an altar server isn't for everybody. If your child begins to lose interest in serving, please don't push him/her. It is more important for them to love the Mass and to continue in their faith formation than to serve.

Family scheduling can be a challenge. St. Paul parish utilizes the software application *Ministry Scheduler Pro*

(MSP) to schedule ministers for Sunday Masses. It is important that your child's profile is updated on a monthly basis with Mass time preferences and monthly conflicts. The program creates the schedules based on these inputs within each minister's profile. If your son or daughter is scheduled to serve and you have a change of schedule or an illness, please use the ministry scheduling system to request a substitute.

Thank you for your support!

Welcome!

Thank you for your willingness to become a part of a very special group of people: the altar servers of St. Paul parish.

Every Christian is called to minister by making Jesus present through his/her words and actions at home, in school, on the sports field – wherever we find ourselves. The places and relationships in which we live out our daily life are the field in which we minister.

But it is also the case that, from time to time, we are asked to help with some special ministry within His Church. You have been asked to take up such a special ministry, as an altar server.

There is nothing more important for a Christian than to be willing to serve, precisely because it is so difficult for one human being to willingly serve another. Any type of service (and serving at the altar is no exception) involves sacrifice and hard work. We learn to forget about ourselves and our needs and instead focus on caring for others.

The ministry of altar server, is not easy. It involves learning a lot of details. Please remember that you are not just serving the priest and deacon: you are serving the parish congregation, and most importantly you are serving God! Don't worry about any mistakes you may make. Be attentive in your training, read this manual carefully, and, if you have any questions, please feel free to ask anytime.

In Jesus, who humbled Himself to take the form of a servant,

Fr. Warren
Deacon Joe
Deacon George

Overview of the Altar Server Program

The Mass is the heart and soul of the Catholic's worship of God. Through the celebration of the Mass, and through Holy Communion in particular, we receive the strength we need to live a Christian life. We give thanks for all of the blessings that God has bestowed on us and our families. We hear the word of God proclaimed through the Old and New Testament readings. Our souls are nourished through receiving the true Body and Blood of our Savior Jesus Christ.

The Mass makes real and present the Last Supper, when Jesus instituted the Eucharist and told his disciples. "Do this on memory of me." The Mass is a memorial that helps the children of God remember all of the great deeds that God has done for them; most importantly the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Mass makes present the sacrifice of Jesus, and unites us to that sacrifice as we offer ourselves to God and God's service. The people of the Old Testament offered lambs and goats in sacrifice to God. Jesus offered His Father Himself, and His obedience to His Father's will -- a sacrifice He promised to continue until He comes again in glory. The Mass is a sacred banquet, the wedding-banquet of the Lamb, in which we receive the "the Bread of Life and the Chalice of Salvation."

St. Paul's altar servers must be familiar with all aspects of the Mass, and demonstrate their faith in Jesus Christ through their actions. As you prepare to become an altar service here, you will learn habits of reverence, and become familiar with the names of the sacred vessels, the various parts of the church, and with the order of the Mass. Through serving at Mass, we hope you will steadily become examples of Catholic living, regularly attending Mass and participating in parish life.

Before you Serve

Dress Code

SHIRTS:

Please wear a solid white shirt (polo shirt or dress shirt for male servers, blouse for female servers. If you do not own a white polo, dress shirt or blouse, a plain white undershirt is acceptable). Albs are somewhat transparent so if a white shirt is not available please select a light-colored shirt. Please avoid large prints, plaids or other designs which might distract people's attention. Please make sure that the shirt you wear covers your shoulders as a tank top or camisole would be visible through the alb.

PANTS/SKIRT:

Please wear solid colored dress pants. Black pants are preferable. Please use dress pants and avoid "cargo pockets" as they tend to look bulky under the alb. Corduroy or velveteen fabrics tend to stick to the alb, so it's best to avoid those if possible. For female servers, if you choose to wear a skirt, please make sure that it is calf-length.

SHOES and SOCKS:

Sturdy black dress shoes or flats are preferable. Please keep the shoes neat and in good repair. Make sure that laces are well-tied. (If you don't have a pair of black dress shoes, brown dress shoes are also acceptable). Please wear either black socks or socks that are the same color as your pants.

HAIR:

Hair styles should be neat and should not distract the congregation from paying attention to the Mass. If a hair style would not be appropriate at school, it probably isn't appropriate for an altar server.



Expert Server Tip: Keep long hair tied back!
Especially if you are a candle bearer!

HANDS:

Altar servers have the honor of handling the sacred vessels. Please be sure that your hands are clean, neat, and that fingernails are trimmed.



Expert Server Tip: If you play a sport and the coaches write on your hands, please be sure to remove the writing before you serve.

Rubbing alcohol will remove most permanent ink (sharpie) and oil will remove temporary tattoos.

SPIRIT:

Now that you're all dressed nicely, make sure that your heart is in it as well. Think about what you're about to do and remember that you are an example for others when you serve.



Expert Server Tip: If you're attending Mass but aren't scheduled to serve, consider wearing appropriate altar serving clothing to Mass anyway. People know that you are an

altar server even when you aren't serving. You are an example to others in our parish, so you should always be attentive and participate in the Mass. Plus, if you're wearing appropriate altar server clothing and a server isn't able to serve that day, then you will be able to step up and assist during the Mass.

Altar servers should arrive 15 minutes before Mass for weekend Masses (Saturday 5pm vigil Mass and Sunday morning Masses). For Christmas and Easter

Masses, altar servers should arrive 30 minutes before Mass.

When you Arrive:

Sign in!

The log sheet is located on the magnetic board in the lower sacristy. Make sure to initial next to your name. Since schedules are printed on Fridays, if a change was made to the schedule after Friday, the printed schedule will not reflect the change (it's okay to write in the change as needed).

Begin by Vesting: Put on an alb, cincture and cross necklace

Select an appropriately sized alb (white robe), cincture (rope belt), and cross necklace. Cincture should match the liturgical color of the day. Check the length of your alb in the mirror: it should come to your ankles after you tie the cincture.

Alb



Cross



Cincture



How to Tie a Cincture

1. Grab your cincture and double it. Then wrap it around your back.
2. Now, take the loop and flip it over on itself so that it looks like a capital letter “B”.
3. Now take the ends of the cincture and slip it through the openings on the “B”.

You did it! Now just cinch it up tight on your right side, and adjust your alb so that it sits comfortably.

Roles & Positions During Mass

Talk to the other altar servers and decide how you will split up the various responsibilities. Here are a few things to consider:

Crucifer (Cross bearer): carries the processional cross during the entrance procession, presentation of the gifts, and the recession at the end of Mass. Brings the missal to the priest for Collect and the Prayer after Communion (and the Solemn Blessing, if there is one). Rings the bells at the consecration.



Candle Bearers (if there are two more altar servers): carry the candles during the entrance procession and the gospel procession, bring the sacred vessels to the altar, help receive the gifts, assist in cleansing and removing the sacred vessels after Communion.

Things to Ask the Celebrant:

Are there any special requirements for this Mass?

Do you prefer to have an altar server hold the sacramentary (big red book) for them at the beginning and end of Mass? The Missal rests on a stand on the credence table. The missal (without the stand) is normally brought to the priest by an altar server for the Collect and Prayer after Communion, and is placed on the altar (on its stand) at the Presentation of the Gifts. However, some priests prefer to have the Missal and book stand remain on the altar during the entire Mass.



Expert Server Tip: Sometimes a visiting priest or bishop will prefer to do things differently than normal. If this is the case, be flexible and do things the way that they prefer.

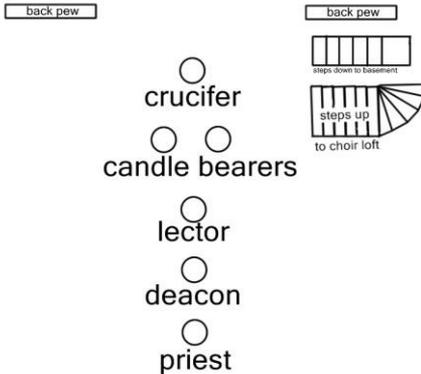
Preparation Prayer:

Before Mass, the celebrant, deacon, lector, EMHCs and altar servers gather in the lower sacristy for prayer before the Mass begins. This prayer is led by the celebrant. The group then proceeds through the basement to the back staircase so that they can be in the back of the church for the entrance procession. The candles are lite upstairs at the back of the church: a lighter is available on the offertory table.

Order of the Mass

Introductory Rites

Entrance Procession with three or more servers:



Crucifer

The entrance procession is led by the crucifer (a.k.a. cross bearer). Hold the staff of the processional cross parallel to your torso, making sure that the crucifix is turned away from you so that it will be visible to everyone. Stand tall, hold the cross firmly, and slowly process up the center aisle when the words to the entrance song begin. Once you arrive at the front, move to the left of the altar and wait for everyone who isn't carrying anything to genuflect. Then take the cross and put it into its stand next to the St. Joseph altar. Make sure the crucifix faces the congregation. Go stand in front of your chair and sing with the congregation until the conclusion of the entrance hymn.



Expert Server Tip: Hold the cross slightly away from and parallel to your body so that it is straight up and down. Hold the cross as high as you comfortably can. Be careful when going up and down the steps to the nursery area as the ceiling is low and it is easy to accidentally hit it! It's easiest to manage the steps if you lower the cross so that the bottom of the staff is almost at the floor level. Be careful in doorways as well!

Candle Bearers



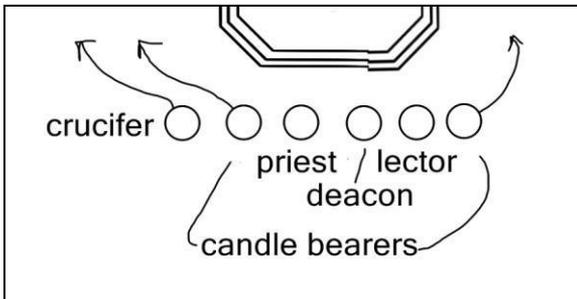
The two candle bearers follow the crucifer, walking next to each other and holding the candles at the same height.

Please wait until you are in the back of the church to light the candles. This will prevent wax from getting dripped on the carpeted stairs.

One hand should be placed above the center half of the candleholder, and the other should be below the center half. Hold the candle slightly away from your body and don't move too quickly! It looks best when the candle bearers have their arms positioned like mirror images of each other.



When you reach the front, the candle bearer on the left moves to the left and stands next to the crucifer while waiting for the lector, deacon and priest to reach the front and genuflect. The candle bearer on the right moves off to the right to make space for the lector, deacon and priest. The candle bearers do not genuflect but should incline their heads briefly -- but be sure not to lean into the flame!



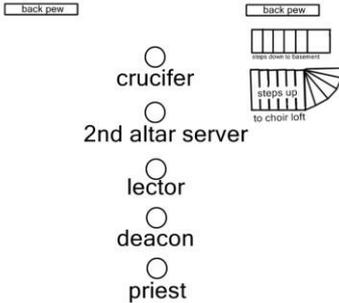
Pause at these positions while everyone who is not carrying something genuflects. Then proceed in directions of arrows to the altar server area.



After the celebrant genuflects, the candle bearer on the right goes around the altar and through the passageway. The candle bearer on the left goes around the altar on the left side. Both candle bearers blow out their candles and place them on the mat behind the celebrant's chair. They then go to their seats on the St. Joseph side of the sanctuary, where they remain standing throughout the entrance hymn.

Expert Server Tip: Sudden movements make the candles blow out, so be sure to move slowly! It's also easy to accidentally blow out the candles if the flame is right in front of your nose or mouth. Try to make sure to keep it far enough from you that you won't accidentally blow it out. Be careful with dripping wax – even after you blow out a candle, it still has hot liquid wax! Try not to let it drip onto your hands or the floor.

Modifications to Entrance Procession with two servers:

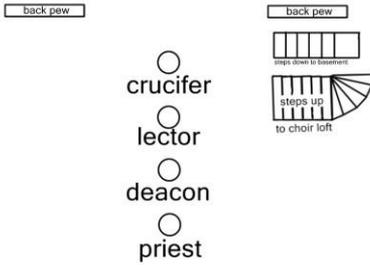


Prior to the entrance procession, the unlit candles should be placed on the mat behind the celebrant's chair so that they can be used later during the gospel procession.

If there are only two servers, one acts as the cross bearer (crucifer) and the other walks behind the crucifer with hands held in a prayerful position (palms flat against each other with hands up at chest height). The altar server who is not carrying anything genuflects at the same time as the celebrant.



Modifications to Entrance Procession with one server:



If there is only one server, that server is the crucifer during the entrance procession. Candles are not used in the gospel procession.

The Sanctuary



Sign of the Cross

Greeting

Penitential Rite In Advent and Lent, the crucifer picks up the open missal during the “Lord have mercy”, and waits in place. The crucifer carries the missal across

the sanctuary to the priest as the priest prays, “May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life”.

Gloria Except during Advent and Lent, the crucifer picks up the open missal during the “Glory to God in the highest”. The crucifer carries the missal across the sanctuary to the priest as the final refrain is sung.

Opening Prayer

The book bearer stands in front of the priest, holding the book at the height of the priest’s chest. Be careful to keep your fingers out of the text so that the celebrant can read the words. It helps to keep your feet planted slightly apart so that you do not sway while holding the book. When the celebrant is done reading, he will move to a different page in the missal. When he has done so, bow to him, take the missal to the credence table, place it back on its stand, and then sit for the first and second readings.

Liturgy of the Word:

1st Reading (At end of the reading you will hear, “The word of the Lord”, we respond with “Thanks be to God”)

Responsorial Psalm (usually sung, please sing along)

2nd Reading

During the second reading, the sacristan will re-light the candles in preparation for the Gospel procession. **(At end of the reading you will hear the words, “The word of the Lord”, we respond with “Thanks be to God”).**

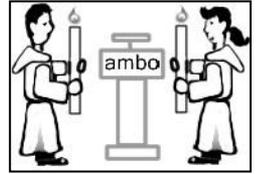


At the conclusion of the second reading:

The Candle bearers go round behind the altar, take their candles and go stand side by side at the bottom of the steps on the St. Mary side, ready to lead the Gospel procession.

Alleluia (everyone Stands)

The priest or deacon comes down the steps and the candle bearers begin slowly processing towards the ambo as the Alleluia is sung. You want to reach the ambo when the alleluia is ending. The cantor will step back so that the candlebearers can take their places. When the candlebearers reach the ambo, one steps up to the left and the other steps up to the right of the ambo.



The candle bearers should hold still, maintaining the candles at equal heights. If a candle blows out during the procession, proceed as though it were still lit. (TIP: If you keep your movements slow and deliberate, the candles are less likely to blow out.)

Gospel Reading (remain standing)

The Lord be with you

Respond: *And with your spirit.*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to...

Respond: *Glory to you, O Lord.* (and then, if you are not a candle bearer, make the sign of the three small crosses.)

After the gospel reading:

The candle bearers go down the steps, and then behind the altar. Carefully blow the candles out and put them back on the mat: remember that even after the candles are out, there is still hot liquid wax that might spill if the candle is tilted as it is moved. Once the candles are on the mat, the candle bearers return to the St. Mary side, but sit on the long pew at floor level.

Homily

The altar servers should sit reverently during the homily with their hands resting on their thighs or in their laps.



Expert Server Tip: Focus on the homily – it should tie into the readings and give you something to think about.

Profession of Faith

As the congregation stands, the candle bearers return to their seats in the sanctuary. There they recite the Creed. At the key words *“He came down from heaven”*, bow from your waist, and remain bowed during the words *“And by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.”* We do this bow as a sign of reverence for the Incarnation of our Lord.

Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)

After the Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful):

Crucifer: The crucifer reverently carries the processional cross down the side aisle to the back of the church while the ushers collect the offertory.

Candle Bearers: One candle bearer takes the missal on its stand, and places it to the left of the center of the altar. The other candle bearer takes the chalice, and places it to the right of the center of the altar. The candles bearers then bring the purificators and each of the other vessels – ciboriums and cups – to the St. Mary side of the altar – to the priest’s right as he faces the people.

Take your time and move carefully. These are sacred vessels which will be used to hold the Body and Blood of Christ. **Carry one item at a time, keep one hand on the top and the other on the bottom (not necessarily**

underneath – whichever lower position feels most secure).



Liturgy of the Eucharist

**Presentation and Preparation of the Gifts
(Offertory)**

The crucifer waits at the back of the church until the priest and the other altar servers come to the front of the altar to receive the gifts. The servers should stand on either side of the priest (and deacon) as the gifts are brought up.

The crucifer will then lead the gift bearers forward. Once the crucifer reaches the front, he/she may stop briefly and make a small bow of the head only to the celebrant, and then move off to the St. Joseph side to put the cross back onto the stand.

The celebrant will hand the altar servers the following gifts:

The blue *Book of Prayers*: This is placed at the edge of the altar to the left of the missal.

Bread: The server holding the paten or ciborium with the unconsecrated host(s) stands at the edge of the carpet on the St. Mary side, and hands the paten to the priest. The server then goes to the credence table.

Wine: The wine cruet is brought to the credence table, where the tops of both the water and wine cruets are removed and placed on the table. Carrying the wine and water cruets with their handles turned away from themselves, the two servers go stand at the edge of the carpet on the St. Mary side of the altar, where they present the wine and water to the priest or deacon.



Expert Server Tip: make sure the tops of the cruets are placed on the credence table in such a way that they won't be able to roll off!

Once the priest or deacon, having poured the wine into the cups and has added a small amount of water, has returned both the wine and water cruets to the servers, they bow to him, and bring the cruets back to the credence table.

If there is a third server, that server should be getting the bowl and the towel for the lavabo while the other servers are helping with the water and wine.

The Lavabo (washing of the priest's hands)

The altar servers are gathered at the credence table.

One server takes the water cruet, and the other the bowl and towel. They go together and stand at the edge of the carpet on the St. Mary side of the altar.

When the priest is ready, he will turn to you. The server with the should position it under the priest's hands. The server with the water cruet will then carefully pour a small amount of water over the priest's hands. The server with the bowl then turns slightly so as to extend the forearm which has the towel across it toward the priest. The priest takes the towel, dries his hands, and returns the towel to the server's forearm. When he is done, the servers bow to him in unison and then return bowl, cruet and towel to the credence table.

Modifications if you are the only server: Unfold the wash towel and place it over your less used arm. Hold the water cruet with your dominant hand, hold the water cruet. Pick up the washing bowl and hold it in the hand of your towel arm. Go to the edge of the carpet on the St. Mary side of the altar and wait for the priest to turn to you. Then hold the bowl under the priest's hands and pour a small amount of water over his hands. Turn slightly so that the priest may take the towel; when he has placed the towel back on your arm bow to him and return to the credence table. Neatly arrange the cruets, towel, and bowl on the table.

Invitation to Prayer

Response is: *"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."*

Prayer over the Offerings

Response is: *"Amen."*

Eucharistic Prayer

The Lord be with you.

Response: *“And with your spirit.”* Lift up your hearts.

“We lift them up to the Lord.”

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

“It is right and just.”

Preface (this prayer varies)

Holy, 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.”

The altar servers then slide the bells and cushion over, and kneel during the Eucharistic prayer.

Expert server tip: Slide the mat with the bells on it so that it is in front of your dominant hand. Ring the bells nice and loudly! ☺

Eucharistic Prayer

There are various prayers that the celebrant can choose to use. During this prayer, we all kneel as the priest asks the Holy Spirit to transform the bread and wine so that they will become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ/

The bell ringer will ring the bells firmly three times while the body of Christ is raised, then he/she will hold the bells still and put them down gently and slowly. The prayer continues. The blood of Christ is then raised and again the bell ringer will ring the bells three times firmly, and then hold them still. When they stop ringing, put them down very gently and slowly.

During the rest of the Eucharistic prayer, we pray for the whole church. At the end, the priest says, “Through

Him, and with Him, and in Him, O God Almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, forever and ever.”

We respond, “*Amen*”.

The Communion Rite

Our Father

“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.”

“Deliver us Lord, we pray, from every evil, graciously grant us peace in our days, that by the help of your mercy, we may always be free from sin and safe from all distress, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.”

“For the Kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever.”

The sign of peace

Altar servers may exchange the sign of peace with each other and with those seated close to them. The priest will normally exchange the peace with them, as well: remember, the priest is always the one who gives the peace to others. After the sign of peace, the altar servers wait reverently for communion.

Lamb of God (or Agnus Dei)

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.

While these words are said the priest will break the host over the paten, and place a small piece in the chalice.

Invitation to Communion

Holding up the consecrated host, the Priest says, "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb."

Response: "*Lord, I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.*"

Each communicant should bow reverently before receiving the Body and/or the Blood of Christ, and to respond "Amen" when the priest or other minister says "The Body/Blood of Christ".

Once the altar servers have received the Blessed Sacrament, they remove the missal and its stand and blue Book of Prayers from the altar. The missal and its stand are placed on the credence table; the blue book of prayers to the sacristan. The altar servers return to their seats and may either sit or kneel as Holy Communion is distributed, praying silently and reflecting on having received our Lord in the Holy Eucharist.

At the end of Communion, the priest/deacon will place the remaining consecrated hosts in the tabernacle. He will then purify the celebrant's paten and chalice. The altar servers should bring the water cruet to him for purification. The priest/deacon will then hand the remaining sacred vessels to the altar servers who will put them back on the credence table

Prayer after Communion

The book bearer takes the missal from the stand, and sits. When the priest stands go across to the chair and hold the book for the Prayer after Communion. The server should be standing in front of the priest when the latter says, "Let us pray". After the prayer, the book bearer puts the missal back on the credence table and stands at his or her seat for the blessing.

However, if there is a solemn blessing, the priest may ask you to stay at the chair.

Announcements

The priest will ask the congregation to be seated for the announcements.

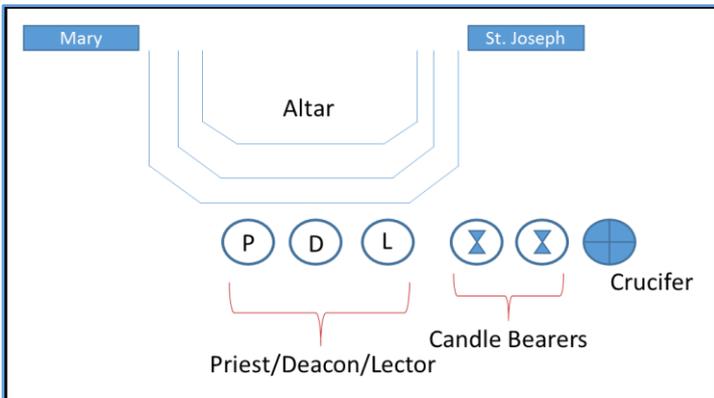
The Concluding Rites

The priest may use a simple blessing, or a solemn blessing. If a solemn blessing is used, everyone responds to the salutation with *“and with your spirit”*. Three prayers and the actual blessing follow; each of them ends with everyone responding *“Amen”*.

Dismissal: The priest or deacon then pronounces a dismissal (for instance, “Go in peace”) and all respond, *“Thanks be to God”*.

The crucifer takes the cross from its stand and proceeds to the side of the altar closest to the narthex. He or she stands several feet back from the altar steps and faces the altar. The candle bearers proceed to left side of the crucifer (without the candles), leaving enough space for the other ministers.

The celebrant (and deacon) will come and stand directly in front of the altar. Here is the line up for the closing procession:



When the priest genuflects, everyone who is not carrying something genuflects with him. All then turn to the right, and process into the Narthex. All the ministers of the Mass stand facing the crucifix while the priest leads a prayer of thanksgiving, and thanks them for their ministry.

The priest and deacon go outside to greet the congregation as they leave. The altar servers and lector return the processional cross, candles and book of the Gospels to the lower sacristy. **The altar servers remove their cross necklaces, cinctures, and albs, and put them back neatly where they belong. Please ensure that the snap on the collar of your alb is securely fastened, to keep the alb from falling off the hangar.**



Expert Server Tip: Be sure to put the albs on the correct hanger so that the next set of altar servers can find them easily! If you see an alb on the floor, please pick it up and put it on a hanger! Thanks!

THANKS FOR DOING A GREAT JOB!!!

Questions & Answers

Why do we genuflect to the Tabernacle whenever we enter or leave the church?

The Tabernacle holds the Blessed Eucharist. Whenever we enter or leave the church, we genuflect (and some make the sign of the cross while doing so) out of reverence for Jesus present in the Eucharist. Between entering and leaving, we bow whenever we cross in front of the Tabernacle.

If the Tabernacle is empty, we bow to the altar, as the throne of God.

An altar server who has something in his/her hands doesn't genuflect (safety first!), but may reverence with an inclination of the head .

Why do we stand for the Gospel and why do we trace three small signs of the cross on our forehead, lips and heart before Gospel is read?

The reading of the Holy Gospel is the most important part of the liturgy of the Word, the climax of Scripture readings at any celebration of the Eucharist. For in the words of the Gospel, we hear the words and deeds of Jesus.

We remain standing as the Gospel is read out of respect for Christ.

As the Gospel is being introduced, the congregation and priest may use their thumbs to make the sign of the cross on their foreheads, lips and hearts. We do this as an outward reflection of our desire to understand the

Gospel with our minds, proclaim it with our lips, and believe it in our hearts.

After the gospel has been read, the priest/deacon kisses the Book of the Gospels as a sign of reverence that this is the good news of Jesus Christ.

Why do some people bow their head every time the name, “Jesus” is spoken?

In the instructions which accompany the Mass, the Church teaches that all should bow their heads at the name of Jesus as a sign of respect and reverence for the name of our salvation.

Why do altar servers bow to the Tabernacle whenever crossing the sanctuary during communion?

Whenever the Blessed Sacrament is present in the Tabernacle, we bow toward it as we cross in front of it as a sign of reverence toward Christ’s presence. If the Sacrament is not present, we bow to the altar, as the throne of God.

Why don’t altar servers genuflect during the procession like the priest does?

Altar servers who are carrying something do not genuflect. Instead, they may a small bow of their head – and that, only if it is comfortable for them and they can do so without having trouble with doing their job.

Altar servers who are not carrying anything, should genuflect in unison with priest and other ministers.

Why do altar servers bow to the celebrant during Mass?

In the celebration of the Mass, Jesus is present and acts through His priest. We therefore bow to the priest out of our reverence for Jesus' priesthood, present and active in His priest.

Glossary

ABLUTIONS OR PURIFICATION

The cleansing of the chalice and paten after the administration of Holy Communion. Also the cleansing of the hands of the priest at any time during the service.

ACOLYTE

One of the two commissioned lay ministries in the Church, usually conferred in the US only on those who are preparing for ordination. In practice, altar servers perform most of the functions a commissioned acolyte performs.

ALB



The alb is a long, white, dress-like vestment that can be used by all liturgical ministers. It is used by altar servers in place of a cassock and surplice. Alb is short for tunica alba, which means "white tunic". It is fastened around the waist with a cincture.

ALTAR

The Holy Table, the Communion Table.



ALTAR BELLS

The bells which are rung by the altar servers during the consecration.



ALTAR BREAD

The hosts or bread used at Holy Communion.

AMBO

The ambo is the raised reading stand where the Scriptures are read and the homily is normally given. It is sometimes incorrectly called a "lectern" or "pulpit". The term "ambo" is Greek for "both": during the centuries when only two readings, the Epistle and the Gospel, were read at Mass, both were read from the ambo.



ASPERGIL (Aspergillum)

The aspergil is an implement used to sprinkle holy water. It may be a type of brush, or it may be a ball on a handle with holes in it. Early aspergilla were made from the hyssop plant. The bucket into which the aspergillum is dipped is called the aspensorium.



BOAT (Incense Boat)

The incense boat is a covered metal bowl with a hinged lid used to hold the incense to put in the thurible. It usually has a matching spoon.



BOOK OF GOSPELS

The Book of Gospels contains only the gospel readings taken from the Lectionary for Mass. It is carried in procession. The Book of Gospels is often more decorated than the simpler lectionary.



BOOK OF PRAYERS

In our parish, this book is used for writing down prayer intentions. It is kept in the narthex so that people may write in it. It is placed on the altar prior to the liturgy of the Eucharist. After communion, an altar server takes it to the sacristan.



CANDLES

There are two main kinds of candles used in most Masses: The processional candles are carried in the procession, and used to call attention to the Ambo when the Gospel is being read. The altar candles are placed at the corners of the altar.

The Paschal candle is lit for the first at the Easter Vigil and is used throughout the Easter season, at baptisms, and at funerals. The Advent candles are lit at the beginning of Mass to mark the four Sundays of the Advent season.

Processional candle



Easter Candle



CASSOCK

A long outer garment sometimes worn by clergy, choir members and altar servers. It is usually black or red. At our parish, the thurifer often wears a cassock.



CHALICE

A Chalice is a special cup lined with gold which contains the wine which Jesus transforms into His Blood at the Eucharist.



CHASUBLE

The chasuble is the proper Mass vestment of the priest. It is sleeveless, and slips over the head, hangs down from the shoulders and covers the alb and stole. Its color varies according to the liturgical season/feast being celebrated.



CIBORIUM (plural: Ciboria)

A ciborium is a bowl, sometimes on a pedestal, lined with gold and used to hold the bread which is transformed into the Body of Christ at the Eucharist. Some have lids and some are open.

Ciborium (pedestal style) with lid on and with lid off



CINCTURE

The cincture is a long cord used to fastening the loose-fitting alb at the waist, so as to adjust it to its proper length.



CREDENCE TABLE

The credence table is a smaller table near the altar where the sacred vessels are kept during Mass when they are not being used at the altar.



CROZIER (Pastoral Staff)

The staff of a bishop, patriarch, or abbot.



CRUCIFER

The one who carries the processional cross.



CRUET

A cruet is a small pitcher with a stopper used to hold the water and/or wine which will be poured into the chalice and cups for consecration at Mass.



FINGER TOWEL

A finger towel is a plain white linen towel which the priest uses to dry his fingers after the ceremonial washing (lavabo). It looks like the purificator, but is smaller.

LAVABO BOWL

The lavabo bowl is the small bowl that catches the water poured over the priest's hands at the ceremonial washing towards the end of the Presentation of the Gifts. The name comes from an ancient prayer in Latin which begins, "Lavabo -- "I will wash".



LECTIONARY

The Lectionary is the book of Scriptures from which the first and second readings (and sometimes the responsorial Psalm) are read.

LUNETTE

The lunette is a small, circular windowed frame that holds the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance.

MENSA

The top of the altar.

MONSTRANCE

The monstrance is a large, ornate, often gold-plated vessel used to hold the Blessed Sacrament before the faithful at Adoration or Benediction.



NARTHEX

A narthex is an enclosed room between the outside doors and the nave of the church. St. Pauls' narthex is on the west side, on the same level as the nave..

NAVE

The nave is the main area of the church where the people of God sit at Mass. The term "nave" comes from the same word as "navy" and symbolizes the Church as the ark of our salvation, as in Noah's ark.

PRESIDER'S CHAIR (THE CHAIR)

A special chair in the sanctuary, reserved for the bishop or priest who presides at Mass or some other liturgical celebration.

PALL

A pall is a covering. The pall used at Mass is a square stiff linen cloth (often reinforced with a cardboard or plastic insert) used to cover the chalice. A different sort of pall – a very large white or gold sheet - covers the coffin during a funeral Mass.



PATEN

The silver or gold plate which holds the priest's host and the people's wafers, which are transformed into the Body of Christ at Mass.. The paten sits on top of the chalice.



PURIFICATORS

Purificators are linen towels which are used to wipe the edge of a chalice or communion Cup after each communicant has received the Blood of Christ. A purificator is also used by the priest or deacon to cleanse the sacred vessels after Holy Communion. Purificators usually have a red cross embroidered on them.



PYX

A pyx is a small metal box in which the Body of Christ is placed so that it can be taken to the sick, or homebound, or others who cannot come to Mass.



PROCESSIONAL CROSS

A cross affixed to the end of a staff which is carried at the head of a procession.



MISSAL (ROMAN MISSAL)

The missal contains all the prayers and instructions for the celebration of Mass according to the Roman (Latin) Rite.



SACRISTY

The sacristy is the room where the vestments and sacramentals are kept. St. Paul's has two sacristies. The basement sacristy, which has our altar servers' vestments and is used mostly on weekends, and the "working sacristy" (or upper sacristy) behind the altar, which is used to prepare for all Masses.

SANCTUARY

The sanctuary area is the open space immediately around the altar. Our Sanctuary is a raised platform with steps. It is in this space that you find the presider's chair, altar, ambo, cross, and candles.

SANCTUARY LIGHT

The candle next to the Tabernacle, set inside a red globe, which indicates that the Blessed Sacrament is reserved there. When the Blessed Sacrament is not in the tabernacle, the candle is not lit.



SHELL

A shell, or a metal vessel shaped like a shell, which is used to pour water from the baptismal font over the head of a person who is being baptized.

STOLE

A stole is a long cloth scarf, often ornately decorated, of the same color and style as the chasuble. It is the distinctive mark of the ordained ministry. A priest or bishop wears it hanging straight down from the neck. A deacon wears it over his right shoulder and fastened at his left side like a sash. There is a smaller stole, white on one side and purple on the other, which many priests use during pastoral ministrations, such as the anointing of the sick and the the sacrament of reconciliation.



TABERNACLE

The Tabernacle is a gold-lined box that holds the consecrated Eucharist. It is locked to ensure the safety and proper handling of the Eucharist.



THURIBLE (CENSER)

The Thurible is a metal container on a chain in which incense is burned. It is also referred to as a censer. The person who swings the thurible is referred to as the thurifer. This photo shows our thurible and the incense boat on the stand.



VESTMENTS

“Vestments” describes the special clothing used by different ministers at Mass and other liturgical celebrations. These vestments help us to know who is doing what during the Mass. In the earliest days of the Church, the priest and other ministers wore what everybody else wore. As years passed and people’s dress changed, the Church’s ministers continued to use the traditional garments, so that special garments identified the various ministers at Mass.

Liturgical Colors

White or gold, symbolizing rejoicing and purity is worn during the liturgical seasons of Christmas and Easter. White vestments are also used for feasts of our Lord (except those pertaining to His Passion), the Blessed Virgin Mary, the angels, and the saints (except those who are martyrs). They are worn on the Solemnity of St. Joseph, and the Feasts of All Saints, St. John the Baptist, St. John the Evangelist, the Chair of St. Peter, and the Conversion of St. Paul. White may also be used for Masses of Christian Burial and Masses for the Dead and signifies Christ's victory over death.

Red symbolizes blood. It is worn on Palm Sunday, Good Friday, any other commemoration of the Lord's Passion, the votive Mass of the Precious Blood, the days marking the martyrdom of the apostles (except St. John) and the feasts of other martyrs.

Red also signifies the Holy Spirit and the fire of God's love, and so is worn on Pentecost -- the day when the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles and tongues of fire rested on their heads -- when the Sacrament of Confirmation is administered; and at the votive Masses of the Holy Spirit.

Green symbolizes hope and life, just as the green on trees in early Spring are signs of new life. Green is used during Ordinary Time, which focuses on our growth in faith (trusting Jesus) and discipleship (following Jesus)..

Purple symbolizes preparation by way of penance and sacrifice. Blue-purple is used throughout Advent; red-purple is used throughout Lent. At the midpoint of both of these seasons — Gaudete Sunday (the third Sunday of Advent) and Laetare Sunday (the fourth Sunday of Lent — rose vestments are worn as a sign of joy that we are half-way through the preparation and we are looking forward to Christmas or Easter. Purple vestments can also be used for Masses of Christian Burial or Masses for the Dead.

Occasionally, you might see black vestments worn for Masses of Christian Burial or other Masses for the Dead. When it is worn, black symbolizes mourning. Black is sometimes also worn on the Feast of All Souls. The colors of the vestments awaken us to the changing liturgical seasons. They are another visible way to make present the sacred mysteries we celebrate.



**Thank You
May God
Continue to
Bless You for
Your Service**