

GUIDELINES FOR ALTAR SERVERS

Santa Sophia Parish

**“I will go to the Altar of God,
to the God who gives joy to my youth” Psalm 43:4**

Dear Altar Server:

Thank you for saying ‘yes’ to the call of the Lord in your life by serving our parish as an altar server. You have a very special job to do in assisting the priest at the altar during Mass and other special celebrations. What you have been called to be is very important for us in the parish because it shows all of us the very special love you have for God and His Son in the Holy Eucharist.

Your role, through your actions and conduct, is to bring the assembly to a fuller understanding of the liturgy and a greater love for God. You have a place of honor at Mass, because you assist the priest in many ways. Your behavior and accomplishments are signs of your faith and your love for God and God’s people.

It is a great honor to kneel so close to the altar as our loving Savior, Jesus Christ, becomes truly present, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. In the presence of our Lord it is both wise and necessary for you to perform all assigned duties with attention, dignity, and reverence.

This altar server training/guideline manual has been designed to help you better understand your role and duties as an altar server at Santa Sophia Parish. Please be assured that the priests, Rosemary and people of this parish community will assist you and pray for you that you may faithfully carry out your duties assigned to you with dignity and dedication.

Thank you for agreeing to assist our parish in the ministry of Acolytes. May God bless you and be with you always.

Responsibility

- Know your schedule, double check your schedule prior to the weekend.
- If you are scheduled for a Mass and unable to serve, it is *your* responsibility to get a substitute.
- If you are attending a Mass you are not scheduled to serve, please check in with the Sacristan to see if there is a need for altar servers at that Mass.

Appearance

- Make sure hair is brushed or combed.
- Hands and fingernails clean.
- Appropriate dress clothes — business casual or Sunday best.
- Shoes are visible at the bottom of the alb. Dress shoes would be the first choice — all black with no visible designs.

Preparing for Mass

- Arrive 15 minutes before Mass starts
- Get neatly dressed in albs and rope belt before preparing the altar
- Prepare the Credence & Gifts Tables
- Make sure the Roman Missal and binder for priest is in place
- Light the candles 5 minutes before Mass begins
- Be prepared for any adjustments the priest/ sacristan may have.

Altar Server Behavior

- Travel/ movement to and from the altar is to be done with reverence. Genuflect toward the tabernacle when entering and leaving the Sanctuary.
- Hands should be held in the “prayer hands” position, over your heart, while standing with empty hands.
- Do not run in between and all movements should be done calmly, naturally, and respectfully.
- During Mass avoid talking or making unnecessary movement—swinging of feet, playing with hair, playing with the rope belt are few examples. This type of movement would be considered distracting or "silent noise".
- Put your cellphone on silent mode. Do not check/ use any electronics such as cellphone, iPod, etc. during Mass. Would be best to leave these with parents while serving.
- If you need to yawn, cover your mouth.
- Your duty is to serve the priest at the altar during Mass, please pay close attention to him. There are times he will need assistance during the Mass and you need to be prepared to help him.
- If at any time you do not feel well when on the altar, please feel free to sit down or even leave the altar for fresh air until you feel you can return. There are other altars to help the priest. Leave if it is necessary.

BEING AN ALTAR SERVER

Altar servers are very much a part of the tradition of our church. We read about them in transcripts dating from 251 AD. In the early church these boys lived in the church building and dedicated their whole lives to the Church. Today, altar boys and girls spend far less time in the church building, but their dedication is not absent from their service.

They have two very important functions in the Church today. First, they help the priest in preparing the gifts to be offered and with the books, censer and candles during the liturgical rites. In order to do this, the altar servers must be disciplined and knowledgeable as to the order of the liturgical rites.

Secondly, the altar servers make orderly procession in the church. The Liturgy is not a stagnant service. We are constantly moving to meet the Word of God, to offer to God our gifts, to accept the Body and Blood of Christ, and to venerate the Cross of Christ. The altar servers do most of this "moving" on behalf of the whole Church.

Service in the capacity of altar servers is an experience that will give the boys and girls knowledge of their faith and spiritual enrichment. Many priestly vocations have been nourished through boys' service at the altar. Girls have experienced a deeper call to give their lives to the Church in a religious vocation through altar serving. Boys and girls will witness the Liturgy and participate in a very special way. Certainly it is an experience that these children will never forget.

ORDER OF THE MASS

(DUTIES OF THE ALTAR SERVERS DURING MASS ARE IN RED)

I. Introductory Rites (*Standing*)

- * **Entrance Procession (Carry the cross, candles, and incense)**
- * Greeting
- * Penitential Rite
- * Kyrie (Lord, Have Mercy)
- * Gloria (Glory to God) not recited during Advent or Lent

II. Liturgy of the Word (*Sitting unless otherwise noted*)

- * First Reading
- * Psalm Response
- * Second Reading
- * **Gospel Acclamation (Alleluia Standing) procession with candles and incense**
- * Gospel (*Standing*)
- * Homily
- * Creed (*Standing*)
- * General Intercessions/ Prayers of the Faithful (*Standing*)

III. Liturgy of the Eucharist

- * **Offertory - Preparation of the Gifts (Prepare the altar - place the Roman Missal, and sacred vessels on the altar)**
- * **Go down the sanctuary step with the priest to receive the gifts for offering**
- * **Incense for offertory**
- * Prayer over the gifts and Eucharistic Prayer (*kneeling*)
- * **One quick bell ring at the “epiclesis” when the priest extends his hands over the gifts.**
- * Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy)
- * **One quick bell ring when the priest elevates the Body of Christ and AGAIN when he elevates the Precious Blood of Christ in the chalice.**
- * Our Father (*Standing*)
- * **Sign of Peace**
- * Elevation (*Behold the Lamb of God...*) (*Kneeling*)
- * Communion (**During communion, spend a couple of moments in silent prayer**)
- * ***After communion, the priest comes back to the altar and purifies the sacred vessels, this is the time you need to help clear the altar. Everything is returned to the credence table. The priest or deacon will help you.***
- * Prayer after Communion when the priest says: **let us pray (stand)**

IV. Concluding Rite (*Standing*)

- * Final Blessing
- * Dismissal – *Go forth, the Mass is ended.*
- * **After the Blessing, retrieve the cross and candles, and go down to the center aisle. Wait for the priest to kiss the altar and to come down. With the priest, make the sign of reverence toward the tabernacle (bow the head if holding something, genuflect if not) and then process out.**