

Altar Servers

WELCOME!

We're so excited to have you as an altar server at Saint Patrick Church! Whether you are brand new or have been a server in the past, it's wonderful that you are interested in being part of this very special and important role.

WHY BE AN ALTAR SERVER

Our altar servers play such an important role in making each liturgy at Saint Patrick Church a beautiful and solemn occasion. Without servers, the priest and deacon are not able to fully use the space of the church or make use of some of the special rituals that are possible during Mass. All of our altar servers are given the chance to provide this help and are closely involved with making sure that the celebration of the Mass is prepared and runs smoothly. They are a vital part of the liturgical experience at our church, leading the whole church more deeply in prayer by their example of devotion and care.

WHAT IT TAKES TO BE AN ALTAR SERVER

First and foremost, being an altar server takes a desire to love and serve God. Being part of this ministry is a way to show that you're interested in our faith and that you care about trying to help the members of our Church experience Mass in a holy way. All of our altar servers need to have received their First Holy Communion. They must additionally be willing to serve at our weekend Masses and potentially on special occasions such as First Holy Communions, Confirmations, and major church celebrations like Christmas, Holy Week, and Easter.

MINISTRY GUIDELINES

In our attempt to create a holy and prayerful atmosphere in our liturgies at Saint Patrick Church, we ask that each altar server stick to the following guidelines in your personal ministry:

DRESS

All of our altar servers are asked to dress nicely when they are serving Mass. While we do not require our servers to be formally dressed to participate in the liturgies, we do ask that you wear clothing that is respectful and respectable. This will help everyone remember that Mass is an important event and that serving is a special opportunity.

BE AN EXAMPLE

One important job for our altar servers is to be a positive example for everyone else at Mass. Being in church is a moment of both solemnity and joy, and through their actions and attitude, our altar servers can demonstrate that for others.

Because of this, altar servers are expected to show respect for these moments by refraining from any misbehavior, avoiding extraneous talking, and paying attention to the liturgy. As this is a truly holy and solemn time, we ask that you be a reminder to others that there's something special happening.

It is also extremely important that we not forget to have and share a sense of joy. It is perfectly okay to smile and enjoy your chance to be an altar server. Our liturgies are a time when we can remember God's love for us, and that is something we should always celebrate joyfully as a whole community of faith.

TIMELINESS

Whenever you are serving as an altar server, please arrive at least 15 minutes before your liturgy begins. When you arrive, please come to the alb closet to get vested and then make your way to the Sacristy to get ready for Mass. Being on time will allow you to prepare yourself for the liturgy and receive any extra instructions needed for that particular Mass. Prior to the beginning of the liturgy, once all of the lectors, ministers, and altar servers have arrived and come to the Ushers Room, the priest can lead this group in a prayer together before everyone lines up for the Entrance Procession.

TEAMWORK

Especially on Sundays, our altar servers will generally be part of a larger group of servers, lectors, and ministers. Things will always go best and the most smoothly when the whole group works together. Please show respect to each other throughout the Mass and help each other in any ways that you can.

ASK QUESTIONS

If you have any questions about what your job is, what you're supposed to be doing, or if there's anything special about a specific day, please don't feel nervous being asking the deacon or priest for help. We want everyone to be on the same page and to be comfortable with the liturgy so that everything can go well.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT

VESTMENTS

Vestments are the special ceremonial garments that are worn during the liturgy by the priest, deacon, and altar servers. Some types of vestments that will be worn are:

- **ALB**: Long white robe worn by the priest, deacon, and altar servers
- **CHASUBLE**: Colored poncho-like vestment worn by the priest
- **CINCTURE**: Rope or cord worn around the waist to fasten the alb
- **DALMATIC**: Long, wide-sleeved tunic that can be worn by the deacon
- **STOLE**: Strip of cloth worn either by a deacon diagonally over his shoulder or by a priest around his neck and shoulders

OBJECTS

There are different objects that will be used during liturgies that are important for every altar server to know about. These include:

- **BELLS**: These are rung at certain times during the Eucharistic Prayer at the Mass to call attention to a special moment that is occurring
- **CANDLES**: These are lit as special decoration and ornamentation on the altar. All candles, and especially the large Paschal Candle, represent and remind us of the Light of Christ.

- **CHALICE**: Metal cup that is used to hold the wine that will be consecrated and consumed during the Mass
- **CIBORIUM**: Metal container (sometimes with a lid) that is used to hold consecrated hosts during the Mass and to store them in the tabernacle
- **CORPORAL**: Large, square white cloth which is placed on the altar underneath the chalice, paten, and ciboria
- **CRUETS**: Glass containers used to hold the water and wine
- **HOLY WATER**: Blessed water, which is usually held in a special holy water bucket or a holy water font, that has been prayed over and is used to bless people by sprinkling or by blessing oneself with it
- **INCENSE**: Grains of resin (sometimes mixed with spices) that are burned to produce smoke and a fragrant odor
- **LAVABO (& TOWEL)**: Glass bowl used to wash (and then dry with the towel) the priest's hands after the preparation of the altar
- **LECTIONARY**: Book that the priest, deacon, and lectors use for the reading of Sacred Scripture
- **PALL**: Ornate, square covering used to protect the contents of the chalice
- **PATEN**: Plate used to hold hosts which will become consecrated into the body and blood of Christ
- **PROCESSIONAL CROSS**: Large crucifix that leads the procession in and out of the Mass
- **PURIFICATOR**: Long, narrow piece of folded cloth used by the priest during the Mass
- **ROMAN MISSAL**: Book of prayers and instructions for the Mass
- **TABERNACLE**: Special box (often made of gold) that is used to store and protect the Blessed Sacrament (the consecrated hosts) after the Mass
- **THURIBLE**: Metal container on a chain within which incense is burned for use at special moments of prayer and blessing during the Mass

LOCATIONS

There are different locations within the church that are important for every altar server to know about. These include:

- **ALTAR**: Central table in the Sanctuary used for the sacrifice of the Mass at which the bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ
- **AMBO (or PULPIT)**: Stand where the readings and homily take place

- **BAPTISMAL FONT (or HOLY WATER FONT):** Large font by the entrance into the main area of the church filled with holy water for blessings and where baptisms take place
- **CANTOR STAND:** Stand where the cantor sings during the Mass
- **CREDESCENCE TABLE:** Table where many items for the Mass are kept until needed at the altar (including chalice, ciboria, water, etc.)
- **GATHERING SPACE:** Main entrance area where people enter the church and can gather or socialize before and after Mass
- **GIFT TABLE:** Table in the back of the church where the wine and a ciborium are kept to be brought up as gifts during the Offertory
- **SACRISTY:** Room to the side of the Sanctuary where many liturgical items for the Mass are stored or prepared
- **SANCTUARY:** Area of the church up the steps where the altar and ambo are located and where the priest, deacon, altar servers, and others are seated
- **USHERS ROOM:** Room in the back of the church where the priest, deacon, and altar servers put on their vestments and where the ministers gather prior to the liturgy

COLORS

Different colors are used or worn for different celebrations or different seasons of the Church year. These include:

- **GREEN:** Used during Ordinary time
- **WHITE (or sometimes GOLD):** Used on for Easter, Christmas, special feasts days of saints and other liturgical celebrations, and for special liturgies like weddings or funerals
- **RED:** Used on Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Pentecost, and feast days of martyrs
- **VIOLET (or PURPLE):** Used during Advent and Lent
- **ROSE (or PINK):** Used on Gaudete Sunday during Advent and Laetare Sunday during Lent
- **BLUE:** Used in decorations and sometimes in symbols and coloring on vestments to represent the Blessed Virgin Mary

WHAT TO DO FOR THE WEEKEND MASS

BEFORE MASS

- ◆ Arrive at least 15 minutes before Mass starts.
- ◆ Vest in an alb that fits.
 - ◇ Your alb should go down to about six (6) inches about the floor.
 - ◇ A cincture is then tied around your waist to keep the alb in place.
 - ◇ Since you've made the effort to dress nicely for Mass, it makes sense that the liturgical robe and cincture you wear should look good too.
- ◆ Make sure the candles are lit.
 - ◇ This includes candles in the sanctuary and any to be carried in procession.
- ◆ Be available to help priests, deacons, or other ministers if needed.
- ◆ Be prepared to participate in the group prayer 5 to 10 minutes prior to the beginning of the Mass.

DURING MASS

ENTRANCE PROCESSION

- ◆ The entrance procession is normally led by the crossbearer.
- ◆ When possible, there may also be two candlebearers, standing side by side, following only a couple feet behind the cross.
 - ◇ When there are not enough servers or if candles are not needed, one server carries the cross, and the others walk behind him or her with folded hands.
- ◆ At the foot of the sanctuary (right before going up the steps), the crossbearer will stand to the right and the other servers will stand to the left, leaving a space in the center for the priest and deacon. If there are many altar servers, they can stand on both sides to make the numbers more even.
- ◆ When the priest and deacon genuflect, the servers bow their heads. They go up the stairs into the sanctuary and then make their way to stand in front of their seats.
 - ◇ On the way, the cross is placed in its holder, being sure that Jesus is placed facing out toward the people.
 - ◇ Any processional candles are placed in their proper location.
 - ◇ The altar servers are seated in the seats on the Sacristy side of the sanctuary.

OPENING PRAYER

- ◆ The priest will begin with the Introductory Rites, welcoming the people to Mass. This leads into the Kyrie (“Lord have mercy...”) and then the singing of the Gloria. At the conclusion of the Gloria, the altar server who will be the book holder brings up the Roman Missal when the priest says, “Let us pray.”
- ◆ The book holder should stand in front of the priest with the Roman Missal held facing the priest and two hands on the bottom.
- ◆ The book holder can bring up the Roman Missal in two ways:
 - ◇ Open to the proper page
 - ◇ Closed with the ribbons facing the priest so he can find the proper page

LITURGY OF THE WORD

- ◆ After attentively listening to the readings, all stand for the Gospel Acclamation (“Alleluia”), and if candles were carried in the procession, the candlebearers retrieve their candles, and walk together to stand on either side of the ambo.
- ◆ After the Gospel, the candlebearers (if candles are used) return the candles to their proper place and sit to listen to the homily.
- ◆ After the homily, the book holder will come over and hold the binder for the priest for the Creed and General Intercessions (“Lord hear our prayer...”).

OFFERTORY

- ◆ As the rest of the congregation is seated, the servers will assist the priest or deacon with preparing the altar, walking over the altar to the Credence Table to bring up the needed items.
 - ◇ This includes the chalice (with the purificator, paten, and pall on top), and the ciboria needed for the Mass.
- ◆ After the altar has been prepared, two altar servers go with the priest and deacon to the front of the sanctuary to receive the Offertory gifts (the wine and hosts) and the Offertory basket. Once all the gifts have been received and the priest has turned back toward the altar, the servers can head to their next tasks.
 - ◇ The altar server that takes the ciborium of hosts can either place it on the side of the altar or hand it to the priest or deacon. The cover is to be removed, and this server should bring the cover back to the Credence Table.

- ◇ The servers will assist the priest or deacon in preparing the chalice, having ready the cruets for the water and wine. The stoppers should be removed. The wine is given and used first, followed by the water.
- ◆ When the priest is ready to have his hands washed, two servers will come forward from the Credence Table to do this. One server will hold the cruet of water and the finger bowl, and the other will hold the towel. (Please note: If there are not enough servers, this can be done by one altar server by having the towel draped over that server's arm).
- ◆ Once these tasks are done, the altar servers should ensure the cruets, stoppers, and ciborium covers are removed from the altar and can return to their seats.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

- ◆ When the rest of the congregation kneels, the altar servers also kneel in front of their seats.
- ◆ At the elevation of the host and the elevation of the chalice during the consecration, a server will ring the bells.
 - ◇ This is done by ringing for a short time, taking a break, ringing a second time, taking a second break, and then ringing for a third time.
- ◆ For Holy Communion, the priest will approach the altar servers after he and the deacon have received. They should stand in their places at their chairs to receive.
- ◆ After receiving Holy Communion, the servers can be seated until the priest and deacon have finished distributing Holy Communion.
- ◆ Once the distribution of Holy Communion is completed and the priest and deacon return to the sanctuary, the altar servers should come up to the altar to assist them.
 - ◇ One server should go to the Credence Table to bring up the water so that the priest can purify the chalice.
 - ◇ Additional servers can help bring the purified chalice, the water cruet, and any extra ciboria back to the Credence Table.
- ◆ Once these tasks are completed, the altar servers should return to their seats.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

- ◆ After Communion, the book holder brings over the Roman Missal as the priest stands and says, "Let us pray."

RECESSIONAL (THE “EXIT PROCESSION”)

- ◆ When the recessional music begins, the altar servers retrieve the cross (and candles, if being used) and go down the steps to their places on the ground level.
 - ◇ They should be in the center, a couple pews down the aisle so that there will be room for the priest and deacon to stand.
- ◆ The priest and deacon will reverence (kiss) the altar and then come down to the foot of the sanctuary. When the priest and deacon genuflect, the servers bow their heads. Then the altar servers begin the exit procession led by the cross bearer to the back of the church and then to the proper exit.

AFTER MASS

- ◆ The cross bearer proceeds through the Sacristy into the sanctuary to place the Processional Cross into its stand.
- ◆ Then, once the recessional is finished and the last verse of the closing hymn is completed, all the altar servers should return to the sanctuary. They can be of assistance by:
 - ◇ Extinguishing the candles
 - ◇ Bringing items from the Credence Table into the Sacristy and carefully placing them on the counter
- ◆ Finally, as long as no ministers need any assistance, the servers can remove their albs, hang them up neatly, and depart.