

# St. Philip Catholic Church

## Altar Server Guide

### Introduction

To be an altar server is a special honor and a great privilege in the Catholic Church. Altar servers today can trace their roots or genealogy to the order of Acolyte, a ministry that once was reserved only for those who were going to be ordained priests. One can look upon being an altar server as a special and unique ministry by which you, can help to spread the word and the love of Christ through your actions and words. It is not difficult to be an altar server, but there are some things that you must know and remember.

The diocesan bishop may permit the liturgical functions of the instituted acolyte to be carried out by altar servers, men and women, boys and girls. Altar servers are not ordained; they are commissioned by their parish priest. The determination that women and girls may function as servers in the liturgy should be made by the bishop on the diocesan level so that there might be a uniform diocesan policy.

The primary role of the altar server is to assist the priest in the celebration of the liturgy during Mass. This is done through specific actions and by setting an example to the congregation by active participation in the liturgy by their actions, singing of hymns, responses of the people, looking alert and sitting or standing at the appropriate times.

### General Requirements

Servers will be required to vest in alb and cincture as directed.

Clothes worn under an alb should be clean, and free of slogans, decals or any other designs which will show through the alb. Shoes should be appropriate and preferably not tennis shoes

**NOTE: If you cannot serve the Mass to which you are assigned, you should arrange for your own substitute.**

### Required Basic Knowledge of the Mass

A server candidate should know the principal prayers of the Mass: The Gloria, Our Father, Nicene Creed, Lamb of God, Lord, I am not worthy and Holy, Holy, Holy.

All candidates should be able to recite the basic flow of the mass. They should learn this so as to perform their tasks at the proper times. They should understand all the liturgical items they will be handling and the purpose of each item. See the end of this manual for definitions.

All candidates should demonstrate their ability to make use of the “*tools of the trade*” such as matches, candle lighters, books and candles, processional cross, preparation of credence table, chalice, mass colors, etc.

## **ALTAR SERVER'S DUTIES -- ORDINARY SUNDAY MASSES**

### **I. PREPARATION**

- A. Arrive for your scheduled Mass at least 15 minutes prior to the start of the Mass.
- B. Wear clean shoes..
- C. Select your alb. The alb should be long enough to come to the top of your shoes. Remember your alb is a sacred vestment and should be treated as such.
- D. select the cincture according to the "color" of the Mass (Green for Ordinary time...) When in doubt, check the Liturgical calendar and with the Priest

### **II. POSTURE AND REVERENCES**

- A. The role of the Altar Server is to assist the Priest and the whole community in the celebration of the Mass. Posture and attitude are very important.
- B. Hold your hands together unless you are carrying something or sitting. If you are carrying candles or the cross, you do NOT bow at the altar.
- C. Stand with your weight evenly placed on both feet. Do NOT lock" your knees!
- D. Sit straight. Don"t pick your nose. (just wanted to see if you were paying attention...)
- E. Pay attention to the Priest and the flow of the Mass.

### **III. THE MASS**

#### **PART 1**

5 minutes prior to Mass, after lighting the candles on the altar, meet the other ministers in Father's sacristy

- A. The Procession: the Cross leads with candle bearers side by side (if 2), then the Communion Ministers, the Lectioner, then Principal Celebrant
- B. As the procession reaches the altar, they line up in front with the Cross Bearer closest to the right and each candle bearer to one side of the front of the altar. After Father bows, the Cross Bearer places the Cross in its stand near the credence table. The candle bearers place their candles next to the altar and then proceed to stand in front of their seats.
- C. At the opening Prayer, (usually after the Gloria) when the Celebrant says "Let us pray", bring the Sacramentary book to him. Let him open it to the appropriate page and hand it back to you. Hold it steady at an angle (brace it against your head or chest to steady it) where he can easily read it.
- D. After the second reading, as the Celebrant rises to collect the Gospel book, if there are 2 or more servers that processed in with the candles, those servers will retrieve the candles and process off the altar in unison and then take position on both sides of the ambo until the Gospel is read and the Celebrant kisses the Gospel book. At that time process back to place the candles in the holders and then to you seat.

#### **PART 2**

At the Offertory (After the General Intercessions when everyone sits down.). (Split these duties if there are 2 of you)

1. Take Corporal cloth, chalice and purificator cloth from credence table to the altar. Open and place the Corporal cloth on the center of the altar with the red cross closest to you. Place the chalice on top right of the Corporal with its purificator
2. Retrieve the Sacramentary book and stand and place in the center, on the far end of the Corporal cloth.
2. Retrieve the ciborium and place with the chalice on the Corporal
4. Bring the water basin and hand towel to the far side of the altar. Leave room near the edge for the water and wine tray
5. When the Celebrant rises to receive the Gifts, join him and wait for him to hand the book and donations or the tray to the other (or he will carry if there is only one).

6. The book goes on the outward corner of the Altar, the donations go back by the cross. The wine and water tray goes to the Celebrant's right hand side on the Altar which is where you will stand.

7. Remove any stoppers from the cruets and turn the handles toward the celebrant. He will pick up and return them to the tray.

8. if there is one server, pick up the water basin in your left hand and place the towel over your left wrist. Pick up the water cruet with your right and prepare to sprinkle water over the Celebrant's fingers when he presents them over the basin in your left hand. He will then use the towel off of your arm to dry his fingers and then return it to you or to the tray. Take the tray and the basin with cruets and towel back to the credence table and return to your seat. Prepare for the consecration portion of Mass.

### **PART 3**

#### the Eucharistic Prayer

1. kneel if there is a kneeler, otherwise stand near the bells

2. Pay close attention! As the Celebrant repeats Jesus' words: "TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT IT: THIS IS MY BODY WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU." He will raise the Body and you will ring the bells 3 times.

3. Then he will say: "TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND DRINK FROM IT, THIS IS THE CUP OF MY BLOOD, THE BLOOD OF THE NEW AND EVERLASTING COVENANT. IT WILL BE SHED FOR YOU AND FOR ALL SO THAT SINS MAY BE FORGIVEN. DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME. He will raise the Chalice containing the Blood and you will ring the bells 3 times.

As these words are said, the bread changes into the Body and the wine into the Blood of Christ. That's why we ring the bells and quietly pray, "My Lord, and my God." After this, you should bow your head, as the priest genuflects.

4. at the end of the Eucharistic prayer, stand after the Amen.

### **PART 4**

#### Communion

1. if there is an extra ciborium on the credence table take it to the Celebrant at the altar during the Kiss of Peace

2. After the Celebrant receives the Body and Blood, rise from kneeling and process to the rear of the altar to receive the Body. When all of the Eucharistic ministers go down off the altar to offer communion, retrieve the Sacramentary book and stand and the offertory book from the altar and return them to the Credence table. Then kneel.

3. When all congregants have received Communion and the Celebrant has returned to the altar and folded the Corporal cloth and stacked the ciboriums, retrieve those items and the chalice to the credence table

4. Sit if the Celebrant does and rise when he does and take the Sacramentary book to him for the closing prayer when he says "Let us Pray". When he is done return the book to the credence table and prepare to process out.

5. When the closing hymn begins, the Cross bearer should get the Cross, candle bearers should get the candles, and all servers should go to their places in front of the altar. The Cross bearer should stand behind the Celebrant and urn and face the Altar. When the Celebrant, lector and communion ministers bow, turn and process at a normal walking pace to the back of the church.

### **IV. AFTER MASS**

1. When the recessional song is complete and most of the congregants have left, Extinguish the candles.

2. B. Hang up your alb (neatly) and your cincture in the server's sacristy. Straighten anything that is unkempt or fallen others that may have fallen to the floor of the closet.

NOTE: If you cannot serve the Mass to which you are assigned, you should arrange for your own substitute.

**What Certain Things Are Called:**

*Alb* The white gown that you will wear just as the priest and deacons does.

*Ambo or Lectern* Where the lector stands to read the Scripture readings and the priest or deacon proclaims the Gospel.

*Aspergillum* The liturgical instrument used to sprinkle people and objects with holy water.

*Boat* A small liturgical vessel containing the incense that will be used with the thurible.

*Chalice* A cup that Father will use to consecrate the wine into the Blood of Christ.

*Ciborium* A cup, which looks similar to a chalice, but is used to store consecrated hosts in the Tabernacle. A Ciborium has a lid where as a chalice does not.

*Cincture* A belt made out of cloth worn around your waist; it acts like a belt.

*Corporal* A small cloth that sits on top of the altar where Father places the chalice, paten, and flagon. Its purpose is to catch any small crumbs of the Blessed Sacrament that may fall onto the altar.

*Credence Table* The table that has the chalices, Communion bowls or patens, finger bowl, water cruet and finger towel.

*Cruet* The little pitcher that hold either water or wine for use during the Mass.

*Finger Towel* A towel that Father will use to dry his hands.

*Lectionary* A large red book that contains the Scripture readings

*Offertory Table* The table behind the last pew by where the gifts are placed.

*Paten* A small dish or bowl that holds the bread that will be used during Mass.

*Purificators* The small towels that are used to clean the chalices during the distribution of the Precious Blood at communion

*Sacramentary* The large red book from which Father prays during Mass.

*Sacristy* The portion of the Church building where the priests, deacons, servers, and lectors meet to vest and prepare themselves for Mass.

*Sanctuary* The area of the Church that contains the altar and the ambo.

*Thurible* A metal vessel for the ceremonial burning of incense. The thurible is also known as a censer.

**THANK YOU FOR ANSWERING GOD'S CALL TO SERVE AT MASS**