**Altar Server Guidelines**

It is a great privilege to serve at the Altar during Mass, which is the “source and summit” of all we do as Catholics. The role of the Altar Server is to assist the priest and deacon in their ministry on behalf of the entire parish. In essence, the Altar Server takes on a public role in helping to lead the congregation in prayer, reverence and dignity. Just as any other ministry during Mass, Altar Servers are asked to be mature and reverent in all that they do, take their responsibilities seriously and be conscience and active in prayer as they take one this central role in the liturgy. Below will be guidelines to help acquaint the Altar Sever and their parents on their role, responsibilities and requirements.

**Dress Code**

Each Server is asked to dress in their “Sunday clothes.” This means that our time at Mass is set apart in a special way for God and that the server’s role requires a dress that is appropriate for their ministry in the sanctuary.

**- Girls/ Young Ladies** are asked to wear either a dress, skirt or slacks, dress shoes and a blouse. They are also asked to pull their hair back when possible, since their ministry is around altar candles and open flames. ***Sports uniforms, jeans, flip flops, t-shirts, shorts, miniskirts and any other dress that is not appropriate for the sanctuary is asked not to be worn.***  The Altar Server Coordinator or Priest Celebrant will give the final approval of what is appropriate dress when an Altar Server arrives for Mass.

- **Boys/ Young Men** are asked to wear dress pants with belt, dress socks, dress shoes and a polo or dress shirt. Hair should be cut appropriately for serving at the Altar. ***Sports uniforms, jeans, flip flops, t-shirts, shorts or any other dress that is not appropriate for the sanctuary is asked not to be worn.*** The Altar Server Coordinator or Priest Celebrant will give the final approval of what is appropriate dress when an Altar Server arrives for Mass.

- If an Altar Server arrives for Mass **not** dressed appropriately for ministry in the sanctuary, they will be asked to sit in the congregation for Mass and will not be able to serve.

- **ALL** Altar Servers are asked to dress for Mass as if they were going to serve Mass in case a volunteer is needed.

- In dressing appropriately for Mass, the Altar Server gives witness to the entire congregation on the importance of Mass and the reverence due to God present in our liturgical celebration, especially in the Eucharist.

**Attendance Policy and Assignments**

When commissioned, the Altar Server becomes a minister for the entire parish and not one particular Mass. Altar Servers are scheduled on a rotating basis throughout the Mass schedule (Saturday 4:00 p.m. and Sunday at 8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m.) so that, an undue burden is not placed on any one group or individual for any particular Mass. Altar Servers are responsible for serving the Mass they are assigned and if unable to serve a particular assignment, they are responsible for getting a substitute by contacting fellow Altar Servers on their roster. Failure to do so will count as an unexcused absence. Parents are asked to provide the ministry of making sure that their children are able to get to Mass on Saturday and Sunday for the Masses they are scheduled.

An Altar Server is allowed no more than six unexcused absences in a given parish year and no more than three within a three month period.

Altar Servers are asked to be robed and ready for the celebration of the Eucharist at least 15 minutes before the start of Mass. If a server is not present in the sacristy within 5 minutes before Mass, a volunteer Altar Server will be recruited from the congregation and serve in their place.

**Key Terms**

* Sacristy - where everything is prepared for mass, and where you get vested to serve
* Cassock - long black vestment that is worn
* Surplice - white vestment worn over the cassock
* Taper - long wick and metal holder used for lighting candles
* Crucifix - the crucifix that is carried in the procession, by the Crucifer
* Thurible - the metal boat that is carried on a chain, used during the liturgy while filled with incense. The server who brings the thurible is called the Thurifer.
* Acolytes - altar servers who carry the candles (Candle-Bearers), assist in preparing the altar, and other parts of the mass
* Book Bearer - the server who is crucifer is also the book bearer. They hold the missal and binder for the celebrant during mass
* Roman Missal (Missal) - the large red-cover book which has the sacred prayers and words of the mass in it
* Binder - the colored binder which has the intercessions and any blessings for after mass inside
* Liturgy of the Word - The scripture readings and Gospel reading said at mass, followed by the homily and intercessions
* Liturgy of the Eucharist - The centerpoint of mass, when Jesus becomes present in the bread and wine, and when we as Catholics receive Jesus under one or both of the forms
* Credence Table(s) - table in the sanctuary on which objects needed for mass are placed
* Chalice(s) - the celebrant’s chalice (large one) and smaller chalices for ministers to use for the precious blood
* Purificator - the white linens placed on top of the chalices
* Cruet(s) - small glass containers used for water and wine
* Corporal - Linen cloth on which the bread and wine are placed on the altar
* Paten - the circular plate used for carrying hosts
* Ciborium (ciboria, plural) - vessel in which the hosts are put
* Hosts - another name for the altar bread that becomes the body of Christ.
* Unconsecrated - the altar bread and wine, before it is consecrated during mass
* Consecrated - describes the bread and wine which has become the body and blood of Jesus - it is to be respected with great reverence
* Kneelers - Red pillows which the servers kneel on during the liturgy of the eucharist
* Bells - the bells that are used during the consecration
* Tabernacle - locked receptacle where the Blessed Sacrament (the consecrated hosts) are placed

**Responsibilities for a weekend mass with 2 servers**

**KEY:**

Red - Server 1

Blue - Server 2

Black - General Instructions/Both

* Servers lead procession, each carrying candles side-by-side
* Clergy genuflect and approach the Altar. Servers approach altar behind Clergy.
  + When the clergy reverence the altar, place candles on stands.
* During Gloria, Server 1 opens Roman Missal to opening prayer. Right before the end of the Gloria, bring missal to Father for collect (“Let us Pray”).
* Server 1 returns to their seat with the Missal.
* After the Homily and Creed, Server 1 brings binder, open to prayers of the faithful at the words **“I look forward to the resurrection of the dead.”**
* Server 1 returns binder to their seat.
* Preparing of the Altar - Immediately after the prayers, Server 1 takes the Missal and Both Servers assist in preparing the altar. **If no Deacon, servers do these parts themselves.**
* Server 1 gives Missal to Deacon and takes clear gospel book stand to right side (empty) credence table.
* Server 2 gives Deacon the Celebrant chalice to put on the altar.
* Both give Deacon the other chalices which are pre-filled with wine to place on the Altar.
* Return to seats and wait for offering of the gifts. When Father and Deacon(s) get up from their seats, servers also get up
  + Server 1 stands on the left side of Father and Deacon to receive gifts.
  + Server 2 stands on the right side of Father and Deacon.
* Once all of the offertory gifts are received, both servers take offertory to the altar.
* Server with Paten or ciborium places on the altar. Server with cruet of wine goes to left side credence table.
* One server holds cruet of wine and stands on the right. One server holds cruet of water and stands on the left.
  + Both approach the altar. Deacon (or Father) pours wine first, then water into the Celebrant’s Chalice.
* After both are done, **Bow towards clergy** and place cruets on table with stoppers.
* Both prepare for the washing of hands.
  + Server 1 holds bowl and pitcher. - Server 2 unfolds and holds towel.
* Father washes hands. After he dries off, both **bow towards Father**. Then place bowl, towel, and pitcher back on credence table.
* Servers return to their seats, bowing in front of the altar.
* During the Sanctus (“Holy, Holy, Holy”), both **take Kneelers from under seats and place in front of chairs to kneel.** Server 1 prepares the bells, from under book table.
* Server 1 rings bells during elevation of body and blood. After the blood, place bells back under book table.
* Servers will stay at their seats kneeling when Father receives communion.
  + When Deacon(s) and EMs receive communion, place kneelers back under seats and line up on left side to receive communion.
* After distribution of communion, clergy re-enter the sanctuary. Both **bow to altar and enter sanctuary**.
* Server 1 gives Deacon (or Priest) cruet of water to purify vessels. After receiving cruet back, place on credence table.
* After purification, Server 2 receives chalice and paten. Server 1 receives the Missal.
  + Server 2 puts chalice on credence table. As both return to seats, Server 1 takes Missal and opens to the Prayer after communion.
* When Father stands up for closing prayer, Server 1 takes Missal to Father. After prayer, server returns to seat.
* During closing hymn - when Father goes to the Altar, Servers go to Altar.
  + When Father kneels and kisses the Altar, Servers take candles from stands. Servers lead Father to bottom steps of the Altar.
  + Father genuflects, and Servers with candles bow and lead recession down the left aisle.

**For a weekend mass with 3 servers**

**KEY:**

Crucifer/Book Bearer

Acolytes/Candle Bearers

General Instructions

* Servers lead procession
  + Crucifer carries cross and is in front of processin
  + Acolytes carrying candles side by side
* Clergy genuflect and approach the Altar.
  + Acolytes approach altar behind Clergy.
  + Crucifer places cross on stand next to handicap ramp and goes to seat.
  + When the clergy reverence the altar, place candles on stands. Then go to seats.
* During Gloria, Book Bearer opens Roman Missal to opening prayer. Right before the end of the Gloria, bring missal to Father for collect (“Let us Pray”).
* Book Bearer returns to their seat with the Missal.
* After the Homily and Creed, Book Bearer brings binder, open to prayers of the faithful, at the words **“I look forward to the resurrection of the dead.”**
* Book Bearer returns binder to their seat.
* Preparing of the Altar - Immediately after the prayers, Acolytes take the Missal and Both assist in preparing the altar. **If no Deacon, servers do these parts themselves.**
* Acolyte 1 gives Missal to Deacon and takes clear gospel book stand to right side (empty) credence table.
* Acolyte 2 gives Deacon the Celebrant chalice to put on the altar.
* Both give Deacon the other chalices which are pre-filled with wine to place on the Altar.
* Return to seats and wait for offering of the gifts. When Father and Deacon(s) get up from their seats, **all servers also get up**
  + Book Bearer stands on the left side of Father and Deacon to receive gifts.
  + Acolytes standd on the right side of Father and Deacon.
* Once all of the offertory gifts are received, servers take offertory to the altar.
* Servers with Paten or ciborium places on the altar. Server with cruet of wine goes to left side credence table.
  + **After placing offertory, Book Bearer immediately returns to their seat.**
* One acolyte holds cruet of wine and stands on the right. One acolyte holds cruet of water and stands on the left.
  + Both approach the altar. Deacon (or Father) pours wine first, then water into the Celebrant’s Chalice.
* After both are done, **Bow towards clergy** and place cruets on table with stoppers.
* Both prepare for the washing of hands.
  + Acolyte 1 holds bowl and pitcher. - Acolyte 2 unfolds and holds towel.
* Father washes hands. After he dries off, both **bow towards Father**. Then place bowl, towel, and pitcher back on credence table.
* Servers return to their seats, bowing in front of the altar.
* During the Sanctus (“Holy, Holy, Holy”), all **take Kneelers from under seats and place in front of chairs to kneel.** Book bearer prepares the bells, from under book table.
* Book bearer rings bells during elevation of body and blood. After the blood, place bells back under book table.
* *Our Father, Sign of Peace* - **All servers will stay at their seats for the sign of peace**
* Servers will stay at their seats kneeling when Father receives communion.
  + When Deacon(s) and EMs receive communion, place kneelers back under seats and line up on left side to receive communion.
  + After receiving communion, Book bearer takes missal from altar, and returns to seat.
* After distribution of communion, clergy re-enter the sanctuary. Acolytes **bow to altar and enter sanctuary**.
* Acolyte 1 gives Deacon (or Priest) cruet of water to purify vessels. After receiving cruet back, place on credence table.
* After purification, Acolyte 2 receives chalice and paten. Acolyte 1 receives the Missal.
  + Server 2 puts chalice on credence table. Both return to seats, bowing to the altar.
* When Father stands up for closing prayer, Book bearer takes Missal to Father. After prayer, server returns to seat.
* During closing hymn - when Father walks to the Altar, Acolytes go to Altar. Book Bearer retrieves and moves to bottom of gray sanctuary line.
  + When Father kneels and kisses the Altar, Acolytes take candles from stands. Acolytes go to each side of crucifer at bottom of the altar.
  + Father genuflects, all servers bow and Crucifer leads recession down left aisle, with acolytes behind, side by side with candles