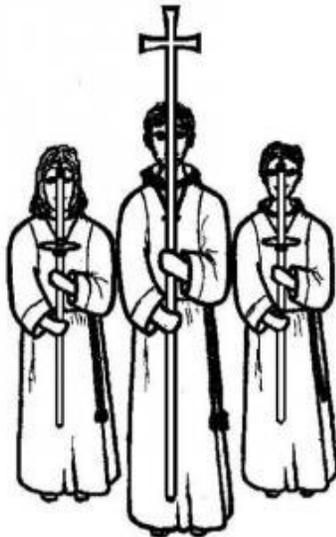


**Our Lady of the Valley
Catholic Church
Altar Server Procedures**



(10/07/2016)

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Introduction

This booklet is not a religious study course or a substitute for the Catechism of the Catholic Church. It is a booklet specifically for the training of altar servers.

This booklet is limited in scope to the server's duties during the Mass and is intended as general guidelines. Your pastor or the Mass priest celebrant may require different procedures.

Altar servers are chosen individuals, from among the parish, who display a desire to participate in a more intimate way during the Mass. It is an extreme privilege to serve and kneel so close to the altar as our loving Savior, Jesus Christ, becomes truly present: Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity in the Most Holy Eucharist.

The primary role of the altar server is to assist the priest and/or deacon in the celebration of the liturgy during Mass. This is done through specific actions and by setting an example for the assembly to follow by active participation in the liturgy by their actions; saying prayers; singing hymns; looking alert and reverently sitting, kneeling or standing at the appropriate times.

Thank you for volunteering to serve in this ministry! May God bless you abundantly as you serve in His Sanctuary and at His altar.

General Requirements

When serving at the altar, it is both wise and necessary for a server to perform all of his or her assigned duties with attention, dignity, and reverence. All actions of the server are based on signs and symbols whose meanings are rooted in the tradition of the Church; specified by events in the Old Testament; and/or are fully revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is imperative that all servers do their assigned tasks in the prescribed manner.

Three altar servers are preferred for each Mass (a cross bearer and two candle bearers). The cross bearer serves as the lead server and should be the most experienced server of the group.

Servers carry the incense and censer; the cross; the processional candles; hold the book for the priest celebrant when he is not at the altar; prepare the altar in the absence of the deacon; present the bread and wine to the priest/deacon during the Preparation of the Gifts or assist them when they receive the gifts from the people; wash the hands of the priest; and assist the priest celebrant and/or deacon, as necessary.

Specific Requirements

Who may serve?

A server can be any male or female; who has received First Holy Communion; and is registered as a parishioner of the parish.

Exceptions may be granted by the parish priest.

Why serve?

A server's primary desire should be to serve God and the parish community, and not one's parents or peers. A reluctant or disinterested server can be a distraction to the priest, parishioners, and fellow servers. A poor attitude can have a negative effect on the overall liturgical celebration.

Required Basic Knowledge of the Mass

A server candidate is required to know the principal prayers of the Mass: Penitential Rite (Confiteor); The Gloria; Our Father (Pater Noster); Nicene Creed; Holy, Holy, Holy (Sanctus) Lamb of God (Agnus Dei).

Duties of the Server

Servers are primarily present to assist the priest. Here is a short list of server duties:

1. The server's first duty is to prepare for the Mass. The server arrives at the Church no later than 15 minutes before Mass.
2. Servers should not handle any consecrated bread or wine unless specifically directed by the priest or deacon in an emergency or exceptional situation. If the server suspects any consecrated fragments or wine remain on the sacred vessels they must inform the priest, deacon, or sacristan immediately.
3. Servers must remain in or near the sanctuary during the entire Mass and are not to leave the sanctuary during Mass for any reason other than illness or the direction of the priest or deacon. Altar servers are on duty from the time they enter the sanctuary at the start of Mass until the priest exits at the end of the Mass. Thirst, itches, and the like are never an excuse for leaving the sanctuary before the final procession.
4. Servers have many specific duties. These duties include holding the Roman Missal for the priest; helping to set-up the altar; washing the priest's hands; and singing, praying standing, sitting and kneeling.
5. While in the standing position, hands should be held folded in the praying position.
6. While in the kneeling position, hands should be held folded as in the praying position also. You must kneel maintaining your upper body upright; not slouching or resting/sitting on your heels.

7. When sitting, the hands should be held folded and resting on the lap. Please do not slouch, play with your alb, whisper comments amongst the other altar server(s), or otherwise cause the assembly to take special notice of you (e.g., you should not do anything which draws attention to you).
8. Altar servers should make every attempt to attend every Mass they are scheduled for. When a server cannot be present (due to sickness, etc.), that server *must* arrange for a replacement in advance of the scheduled Mass. If you are unable to do so, please contact the Altar Server scheduler, as soon as possible, before the scheduled Mass and inform them.

Proper Dress

The server will dress in appropriate clothes and footwear for the Mass.

Servers are required to vest in a white alb and cincture or in a cassock and surplice, unless otherwise directed by the priest.

Since albs are the normal liturgical attire, remember that what you wear underneath may show through the garment's fabric. Therefore, the server should be sure to avoid bold stripes and designs of any kind that may show through their alb or cassock. White or solid colored shirts or blouses should be worn. Likewise pants, dresses, and skirts should also be of some solid color. No jeans or shorts of any kind.

Closed toed dress shoes, or sandals with an ankle strap are permitted. (No crocs, or flip-flops). Appropriate socks or stockings should be worn as well. The Sanctuary or at the altar of our Lord is not an appropriate place for soiled sneakers, running shoes, or any other sports footwear.

When to Genuflect and When to Bow

When should a server genuflect? Whenever entering or leaving the sanctuary, genuflecting to the tabernacle is required; bowing is not an option to genuflecting, unless you are carrying or holding an object in your hand or there is a physical ailment or handicap which prevents genuflecting.

All Catholics should be aware of whenever Jesus is present on the altar after the Consecration, during Eucharistic Adoration or is reserved in the tabernacle. Everyone (servers included) should show the appropriate sign of reverence whenever crossing in front of the tabernacle or entering and leaving the Church.

Bowing of the head is done for: (1) A priest after presenting the wine and water and after washing his hands at the altar, (2) The altar (unless Jesus is present on it). We bow to the altar because it is the table of the Christ's Sacrifice. We bow to the priest because he offers the Body and Blood of Our Savior, acts in the Person of Jesus, and therefore should be shown respect.

Bowing at the waist (a profound bow) is done when we profess our belief in the Incarnation—i.e. during the profession of the Nicene Creed.

When Jesus is present (reserved) in the tabernacle, He is just as present there, as when He is present on the altar or in the monstrance. Servers are encouraged to make frequent visits to Him in adoration while in the tabernacle and spend some time with Him in private prayer. This is especially helpful before Mass. The red, church sanctuary candle when lit alongside the tabernacle, indicates when Jesus is present (reserved) in the tabernacle. When it is not lit, the tabernacle is empty (e.g., as on Good Friday and Holy Saturday).

How to Genuflect

When the tabernacle doors are closed and Jesus is not present on the altar after the consecration or exposed for Eucharistic Adoration, genuflect facing the tabernacle; OR

If Jesus is present on the altar (e.g., during the Mass after consecration or during Eucharistic Adoration genuflect facing the altar.

- Genuflect on the right knee, so the right knee touches the floor.
- Pause for a few moments with the right knee on the floor and bow your head to Jesus.
- Rise from the floor, still facing the tabernacle or altar.
- Turn and continue in the direction you were going.

Preparation for Mass

Check-in with the Sacristan, coordinator, and/or priest and let them know that you are present for the Mass as a server. Please arrive 15 minutes ahead of the scheduled Mass time. At least 10 minutes prior to the scheduled Mass time a server should:

1. Insure the processional candles and cross are already in the altar server's vesting room in preparation of the entrance procession.
 2. Select an appropriate sized alb and cincture. The server's alb should fit loosely, but not be so long as to drag on the floor or too short so it is above the lower shin. The servers' cincture is to be tied on the right side of the waist; the left side denotes those who are ordained clergy.
 3. Light all appropriate candles (e.g., the altar candles).
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1. The procession normally includes a minimum of 2 candle bearers. If there are an insufficient number of servers (e.g., 3 or 4) available, the procession will continue *without* any candles.

Beginning of Mass

1. The cross bearer and servers meet the priest and deacon at the center doors of the Church. The cross bearer holds the cross high with the Corpus (Christ's Body) facing the assembly. Cross bearer begins the procession when the priest says to start (normally when the choir begins to sing the opening hymn). All servers proceed up the center aisle, walking slowly and reverently.

Entrance Procession

2. The processional cross will lead the procession (unless the censer is to be processed into the church). In that case, the censer will lead, followed by the cross and candle bearers.

Opening Prayers

3. Upon arriving at the foot of the sanctuary, all servers immediately proceed to their right, up the stairs, past the altar to the rear of the sanctuary, and place the cross and candles in their respective holders. Servers then proceed to their chairs. The cross bearer takes the chair closest to the credence table. Remain standing while the Priest and the Deacon take their places at their chairs.

4. All servers remain standing during the greeting, the Penitential Rite and the Gloria (if it's said). At the signal from the priest or his words "Let us Pray", the cross bearer takes the Roman Missal and proceeds to stand in front of the priest's chair with the Roman Missal. The cross bearer holds the Roman Missal open at the priest's eye level (the priest may adjust the Roman Missal to the correct level).

After the priest has finished the Opening Prayer, the cross bearer returns to and places the Roman Missal on the credence table. The other servers remain standing until the cross bearer has returned to his/her chair. All sit down at the same time.

Liturgy of the Word

5. All servers remain seated during the first reading, the responsorial psalm and the second reading. As the choir begins to sing the Alleluia, all servers (along with the assembly) stand and the candle bearers get their candles and proceed to the edge of the altar. The servers stand together at the side of the altar and wait for either the priest or the deacon to come behind the servers with the Book of the Gospels. As the priest or deacon approaches, the servers move toward the ambo.

6. The priest or the deacon will pick up the Book of the Gospels from the altar and will begin to walk with the servers. As the priest or deacon approach, the servers lead the procession to the ambo. The server on the right side will proceed to the far side of the ambo, while the server on the left will stay on the near side of the ambo. Both servers hold their lighted candles so that the top of the flame is about even with the server across from them.
7. At the conclusion of the Gospel, the servers will turn towards the altar, walk behind the altar, and return the candles to their holders or table. The servers then proceed to their chairs. The cross bearer remains standing until the other servers have returned to their seats. All servers sit down at the same time and remain seated for the homily.

(If there is a baptism, renewal of marriage vows, or another special ceremony after the homily, the servers remain seated unless the priest asks the entire assembly to stand; at which time the servers will stand until the priest directs the assembly to be seated.)

Profession of Faith/Intercessory Prayers/Petitions

As the priest stands to begin the Profession of the Faith/Creed (or after a baptism, in which case the Profession of Faith has already been said), all servers stand at their chairs.

Preparation of the Altar

8. After the priest has concluded the Intercessory Prayers and the ushers have begun the collection, all servers now begin to prepare the altar for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Servers will bring the following items from the credence table and hand them to the priest or deacon. If the priest or deacon wish the servers to set the altar, the following items from the credence table will be placed on the altar:

- The priest's chalice, purificator, paten, pall and corporal; these are placed in the center of altar towards the bottom of the corporal; if there is no main chalice on the credence table, one of the regular Communion cups may be used instead.
- The ancillary cups; placed near the far right rear corner of the altar – the priest or the deacon will place the communion cups where they want them for the consecration.
- All of the purificators (the white folded cloths); placed near the right side of the corporal, but not on the corporal.
- All of the communion bowls (ciboria) containing hosts to be consecrated; placed in the center of the altar on the back side of the corporal around the main chalice.
- The Roman Missal (and the wooden book holder, if used); placed to the left of the chalice.

Presentation of the Gifts/Offertory

9. After the altar has been prepared, the servers return to their chairs and remain standing. As the priest and the deacon stand and move towards the center aisle to receive the offertory gifts, all servers stand and follow the priest and the deacon to the center aisle.
10. When the servers receive the gifts of bread and wine from the priest or deacon, they should go immediately to place them on the altar and then proceed to the credence table on the far left rear side of the Sanctuary.
11. One of the servers will pick up the wine and water cruets and take them to the priest or deacon. After the priest or deacon pours the wine and water into the chalice, he will give the cruets back to the servers. The server will then take the cruets and return them to the credence table.
12. Upon returning to the credence table, the server will then pick up the finger towel in preparation for the washing of the priest's hands. The second server will pick up the water pitcher and glass bowl, and both will wait at the credence table until the priest bows to the altar.
13. The two servers at the credence table with the water pitcher, the glass bowl, and the finger towel will then proceed behind the altar and wait for the priest to turn to wash his hands. Both servers bow to the priest. The server with the water pitcher and the glass bowl pours water over the priest's hands. The other server gives the finger towel to the priest. After the priest has dried his fingers, he will give the towel back to the server. Both servers bow to the priest and then return the pitcher, glass bowl, and towel to the credence table.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

14. All servers remain standing at their chairs singing or with hands folded in prayer until the assembly kneels. All servers then kneel, with hands folded, as the assembly kneels.
15. As the priest places his hands over the bread and wine, the cross bearer **briefly** rings the Sanctus bells once. As the priest later raises the Consecrated Host (the Body of Christ), the cross bearer will ring the Sanctus bells three times. As the priest raises the chalice holding the Precious Blood, the cross bearer will again ring the Sanctus bells three times. All servers remain kneeling until the assembly stands after the Great Amen.

During Holy Communion

16. During the distribution of Holy Communion to the assembly, the servers return to their chairs and kneel or sit with hands reverently folded while remaining attentive and ready to assist the priest, deacon or Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion as needed.

After Distribution of Holy Communion

17. Clear the altar of all items: The priest's purified chalice, paten, pall purificators, corporals and any other items (along with the Roman Missal and stand) are taken to the credence table or to their proper place of reservation.
18. After clearing the altar, all servers genuflect as the priest or the deacon places the large ciborium in the tabernacle. All servers will then remain standing at their chairs until the priest has been seated, at which time all servers sit down.

Concluding Rite/Final Blessing

19. After a period of silence, the priest will stand at his chair for the Closing Prayer. At a signal from the priest or the words "Let us pray", the servers rise and the book bearer will pick up the Roman Missal and proceed to in front of the priest's chair. The server will remain holding the Roman Missal as the priest recites the Closing Prayer. When the priest is finished with the Roman Missal, the book bearer returns to their seat.

If there are announcements, all servers remain standing at their chairs.

Recessional/Dismissal

20. After the announcements, the priest will give the Final Blessing and the deacon will announce the dismissal.
21. As the closing hymn begins, the cross bearer and the candle bearers will go to retrieve the cross and the candles from their holders or table. The cross bearer then leads the candle bearers from the rear of the altar. The Corpus on the cross is facing the assembly. All servers walk together past the side of the altar, down the steps, and proceed out of the Sanctuary to the center aisle. Candle bearers turn inward toward each other and then turn-around to face the altar. The cross bearer is located directly behind the candle bearers and likewise turns-around to face the altar. After the priest and deacon genuflect/bow, the cross bearer and the candle bearers then turn-around to face the rear of the church (the candle bearers turn inward toward each other). The Cross Bearer raises the cross high and begins the recessional procession walking slowly to the rear of the church.

After Mass Duties

- ✓ After ALL Masses, extinguish the candles on the altar.
- ✓ After the Masses, assist in clearing the Sanctuary; return the three (3) red books – the Book of the Gospels, the Lectionary and the Roman Missal, along with the priest's and deacons three-ring binders to the Sacristy. Clear the credence table and take the water pitcher, the glass tray, and the finger towel to the Sacristy.
- ✓ Hang up your alb and cincture *neatly* and *respectfully*.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

From the beginning of the Mass to the end, please always keep your eyes (as much as possible) on the priest; you may be called on to go and get something or assist the priest or deacon in some way.



Definitions

Ablution cup: Covered dish of water on the side of the tabernacle used by the priest, deacon or Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to wash their fingers after distributing Communion.

Alb: A white cloth gown worn by altar servers, acolytes, deacons or priests when performing official functions at the altar.

Ambo: The platform, lectern or pulpit from which the scriptural first and second readings, gospel, and homily are given.

Boat: A metal container (with a small spoon) which is used to store unused incense.

Cassock: A black or red, linen gown worn by altar servers, acolytes, deacons, and priests when performing official functions at the altar during Mass, funeral services, etc.

Chalice: A cup made of precious metal that holds the wine, which becomes the Blood of Christ during the consecration.

Ciborium: A large cup or container made of precious metal which will hold the Body of Christ after the consecration for distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful. This is commonly stored in the tabernacle to enable the priest and/or other ministers to later visit and distribute communion to the sick, hospitalized, homebound, etc.

Corporal: A white, linen cloth, usually with a cross in the center, used to protect any particles of the Precious Body and Blood of Christ from falling to the altar cloth. It is always folded and unfolded as to protect any particles from falling onto the floor or carpeting.

Credence Table: The table in the sanctuary (directly behind the altar) where the water cruet, chalice(s), corporal, purificators, and ciborium are kept before the Preparation of the Gifts.

Crucifix: A cross containing a figure of Jesus Christ nailed to it.

Cruet: A small, glass container normally used to store water and/or wine.

Luna: A thin, circular receptacle, having a glass face that holds a Consecrated Host used for Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction. It slides into the monstrance on a little track or slide.

Lectiary: The book of biblical readings used for the Liturgy of the Word during the Mass, Communion Services, etc. It usually contains all the biblical readings used for the three year Sunday cycle of reading and the two year daily Mass readings.

Monstrance: This is a large, ornate vessel used to hold and display the Blessed Sacrament for Eucharistic Adoration, Benediction and solemn Eucharistic processions.

Paten: A small saucer-shaped plate of precious metal that holds the Host. Used by the priest and/or Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to distribute the Body of Christ during Communion.

Purificator: A white, linen cloth used by the priest, deacon, or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion during communion and to dry the chalice after purifying or cleansing it. Used purificators must always be placed in the proper container or drawer specifically designed for the cleaning of sacred cloths.

Pyx: A case, usually the size of a pocket watch, in which consecrated hosts are carried to those who are sick, homebound, hospitalized or are otherwise physically unable to come to church for Communion during a scheduled Mass.

Roman Missal: The book containing the prayers said by the priest during the Mass.

Sacrarium: A sink with its drain going directly into the ground; usually fitted with a cover and lock which is used for the disposal of the following: The sacred linen wash and rinse water; used holy water; used baptismal water; blessed ashes, etc.

Sanctuary: The most sacred part of the church in which the altar is located. At the St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church, the sanctuary is elevated and is situated in front of the pews.

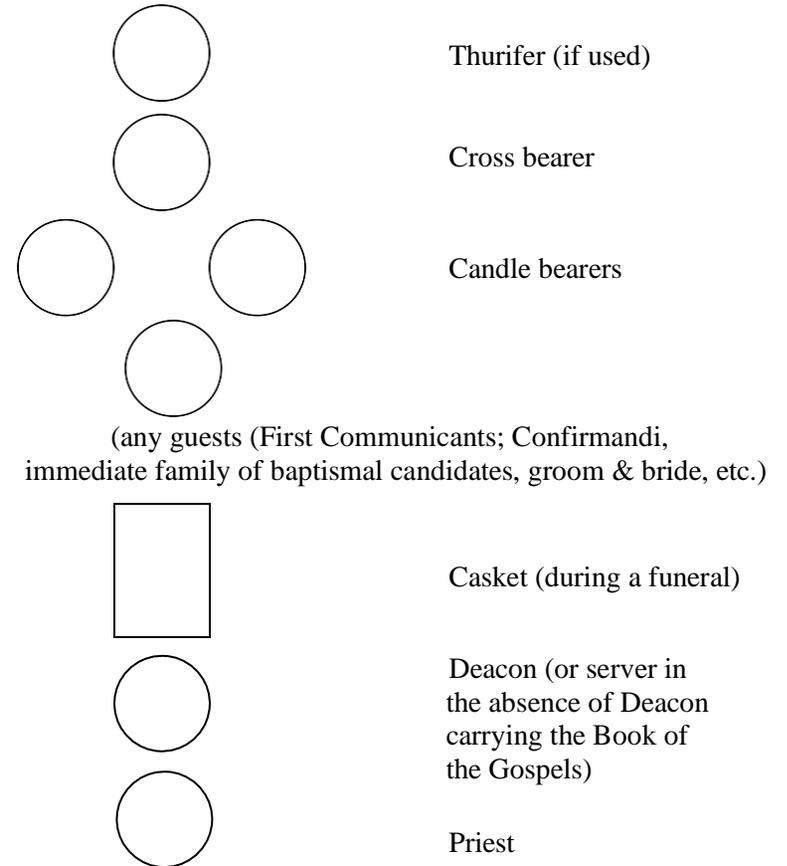
Stoup: The small holy water fountains or bowels at the entrances of the church.

Surplice: A wide-sleeved, white, linen worn over a cassock by clergy and altar servers.

Thurible (also known as censer): Is a circular-shaped, metal device used for incensing. A burning charcoal is placed inside it, upon which the priest or deacon places incense to make it burn and smoke before blessing the altar, gifts, a casket, etc.

ATTACHMENT #1

**ENTRANCE AND RECESSIONAL
ORDER OF PROCESSION**



The normal order of procession will be the thurifer, cross bearer, other servers (candle bearers), the Deacon (or Reader) with the Book of Gospels, followed by the Presiding Priest.