

Called to *Serve*

Altar Servers

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your willingness to serve as an altar server. You are serving in an important way at Mass. Serving at Mass will involve learning some new words and some very specific things to remember. It's important to realize that you are serving not only the priest, but your family, the whole Church community, and you are serving God in helping with prayers and with the Eucharist.

This server's guide covers the main details of serving at Mass. This guide should help you grow more comfortable in your role on the altar. Please keep this so that you can review the instructions later.

FUNDAMENTAL POINTS

As an altar server, you are involved in some of the holiest and most sacred events in our Catholic worship. Mass is a combination of Word and Eucharist. We hear God's Word spoken to us through the scriptures and in the homily, then we respond to that Word with our prayers and in receiving the Body and Blood of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. The priest receives our sacrifice to God in the form of bread and wine and invoking the power of the Holy Spirit, these are transformed into His Body and Blood, to become nourishment for our souls. It is a great mystery, and it is the very center of our faith.

Through prayer and reflection, we all can appreciate the importance of what is actually happening at Mass. It is important to be sure that you, as an altar server, be attentive and sensitive to the presence of God during the Mass, and afterwards. God calls us to respond to his great love and mercy with a sense of reverence, wonder, and gratefulness. We must all help each other remember to show reverence to God at all times, but most especially when you're serving. Some ways you can do this is to:

- 1) Sit still, be calm; 2) Respond with the congregation at the appropriate times; 3) Do your best to enter into the spirit of the celebration—sing with God's family; 4) Keep your movements smooth, but not too fast or too slow.

POSTURE AND HAND MOVEMENTS

Believe it or not, what you do with your hands is very important! When you're standing or sitting and your hands are busy, or if you can't seem to sit or stand still, you will be a distraction for your friends and family in the pews, the other altar servers, and the priest.

Your hands should be folded during most parts of the Mass, unless you are holding a book and singing. Without pressing your hands together tightly, just keep them together, comfortably. Placing your hands in this way is a sign of prayer. Remember, as altar servers, you are leading others to pray!

Review of a few things that are NOT reverent (please avoid doing any of these!)

- No running anytime in Church, even when you're not serving.
- No chewing gum in church, even when you're not serving. Keep your hair looking neat, your hands clean, and wear appropriate shoes (girls, no flip flops!).
- No sitting in a slumped position. Always sit-up straight and stand straight. When seated, keep both feet on the floor.

ARRIVAL FOR SERVICE

When you are scheduled to serve, try to arrive at least 15 minutes before Mass. You'll need to sign-in, put on your robe, light candles and be in the sacristy before beginning the procession. Be sure your parents know that you need to get to church early.

SCHEDULE PROBLEMS

If you are unable to serve when you are scheduled, please contact another server to fill-in for you as soon as possible (don't wait until the night before!). Use the schedule for altar servers. Look at the other Saturdays and Sundays on the schedule and see who else serves at Masses for the same time you're scheduled for. Try to work out a "swap." That is, be willing to switch your serving time for theirs. Trading is a good way to work out schedule problems. Remember, as soon as you receive your schedule, write your dates on your family's calendar. Be sure your parents know your serving schedule.

THE ORDER OF THE MASS

1. ENTRANCE PROCESSION

For, training purposes, the servers will be called "Cross Server" or "Candle Server", depending upon whether they carry the cross or the candles in the Entrance Procession. The procession begins when the people begin to sing the entrance hymn. Walk up the aisle slowly, slower than you normally walk. Carry the candles high. Do not clink the bottom of the cross on the floor or steps, and do not tip it. Carry the cross very reverently. It is the symbol of our faith.

Wait for the priest and deacon. The priest and deacon will bow. As they bow, you simply remain standing—do not bow at the waist; instead, simply bow your head. The rule is: if you're carrying something long (like candles or cross), then you do not genuflect or bow at the waist.

All servers turn left in unison, and follow the first candle bearer to the sacristy. Tip the cross only enough to carry it through the doorway. Once in the sacristy, extinguish the candles and place them in their stand. The cross bearer puts the cross in its stand. Then go back to the sanctuary and stand with your hands folded.

2. SIGN OF THE CROSS -- Stand with hands folded

The priest begins with the sign of the cross (which you make too), greets everyone and introduces the Mass. The deacon or priest reads the Penitential Rite which ends "... Lord have Mercy." You answer with the same responses as the rest of the people.

The priest gives the absolution. "May almighty God have mercy on us..."

3. GLORY to GOD -- Stand and sing with hands folded.

4. OPENING PRAYER

As the Gloria ends with the words, "...in the glory of God the Father, Amen." the Cross Server (closest to the sacristy door) picks up the Roman Missal. Be ready to walk to the priest, and pay close attention to what he is saying.

When the Gloria is not sung, the server will get the book and walk to the priest as he gives the absolution, which ends with the words, "...and bring us to everlasting life. Amen."

Pick up the book right away, so that when the priest says, "Let us pray," the server is ready immediately to walk to the priest, making sure that the book is facing the right direction. The priest will offer the opening prayer, and close the book. The server puts the book back in its place, and everyone sits down.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading, Responsorial Psalm & Second Reading: Sit and listen attentively.

Gospel Acclamation: Stand and sing.

Gospel: Stand.

Homily: Sit attentively.

5. PROFESSION OF FAITH -- Stand and pray.

6. PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL -- Stand and respond to the prayers.

When the Prayer of the Faithful is finished, the priest or deacon will prepare the altar, as the ushers are taking the collection.

- a. The Cross Server takes the Roman Missal to the altar and hands it to the deacon or priest (or places it on the altar, if the priest or deacon is busy).
- b. The Candle Servers take the chalice (or the tray of chalices, if there are more than one) from the credence table and bring it to the altar. If the deacon or priest is not ready or not standing at the altar, place the chalice on the altar, to the right of the book. Also bring the corporal (white cloth), and the water cruet. The servers then may return to their seats (be seated) and wait for the priest to receive the gifts.

7. OFFERTORY

When the priest goes to receive the gifts, The Candle Servers join him.

The priest will then receive the wine and hand it to the server. Once you've received the wine, pass behind the priest and walk either to the credence table, where you will wait for the other server to get the water cruet, or take it to the left side (closest to the sacristy) of the altar if a deacon is serving at the Mass.

The server goes to the credence table, removes the top (if there is one) from the water cruet and takes the water cruet up to the altar. **Walk over together, right away. Don't wait for the deacon or priest to give you a nod.** There is nothing wrong with you standing ready, right beside the altar. Be sure to get close enough so that the priest or deacon doesn't have to reach. The server with the wine should stand to the right of the server with the water. The priest or deacon will take the wine and water and pour it. He will then hand the cruets back. Both servers should stay in position until both cruets have been handed back. The two servers bow, turn and return the cruets to the credence table.

Upon returning to the credence table, the server who has the water, picks up the washing bowl and the water cruet while the other Server sets down the wine cruet or decanter and takes the hand towel and opens it. Both go back to the altar, preferably with the water pourer to the right of the towel bearer. **Go right away; don't wait for the priest to turn—it's more important that you are there waiting for him.** Don't make him wait for you. The priest will put out his hands over the bowl and the server pours water over the priest's fingers, catching the dripping water in the bowl. The priest will whisper the prayer, "Lord, wash away my iniquities; cleanse me from my sin". The priest dries his hands and returns the towel to the server. Both servers bow, and return the items to the credence table.

8. PREFACE -- Stand.

9. HOLY, HOLY, HOLY -- Stand and sing.

When the Holy, Holy, Holy acclamation ends with "... blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest." The servers kneel when the congregation kneels.

10. CONSECRATION – Kneel, with hands folded.

Right after the priest takes the bread and says, "Take this.. this is My Body which will be given up for you." When the priest genuflects or bows, bow your head in reverence of Our Lord's presence.

Similarly, after the priest takes the chalice and says, "Take this all of you and drink... sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of Me." and genuflects or bows, bow your head in reverence.

10. MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION -- Stand and sing, with hands folded.

11. Doxology and Amen -- Stand and sing the Amen, with hands folded.

This is when the priest will sing or say "Through him, with him, in him..."

12. THE LORD'S PRAYER -- Stand and pray.

13. THE SIGN OF PEACE

Servers will extend the sign of peace to each other, the priest, deacon and other ministers. Look the person you're greeting in the eyes and wish them "peace be with you." After you've shared the sign of peace, the Candle Servers bring any extra items -- patens (gold plates) and chalices -- from the credence table to the altar.

14. LAMB OF GOD -- Stand and sing.

15. COMMUNION

After the priest receives the Consecrated Host and the Precious Blood from the chalice, he will begin to distribute to other ministers. The servers stand and should be ready to receive Communion. When the priest says, "The Body of Christ," you reply "Amen." You have the option of receiving the Precious Blood from the chalice. After receiving Communion, all servers will return to kneel and sing with the congregation.

16. AFTER COMMUNION

The Cross Server takes the Roman Missal from the altar and returns to their seat and rests the book on their lap in order to be ready for the final prayer. The Candle Servers

take the remaining items from the altar back to the credence table and then go to their seats.

17. CLOSING PRAYER – Stand.

When the priest says, “Let us pray”, the Server with the book walks over to the priest and holds it for the priest, making sure that it is facing in the right direction. The priest says the closing prayer and gives the final blessing.

18. DISMISSAL AND RECESSION

When the priest or deacon says, “The Mass is ended, go in peace to love and serve the Lord”, all servers return to the sacristy in order to get the cross.

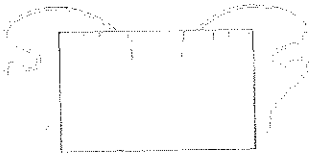
When the priest/deacon leave their chairs to venerate (kiss) the altar, all servers go to stand and face the altar, just as you did at the beginning of Mass. Bow your heads and then go to stand in the aisle near the front pew. Turn when the priest and deacon do (Candle Servers turning towards one another) and process slowly to the back of church.

After Mass, reverently extinguish the candles.

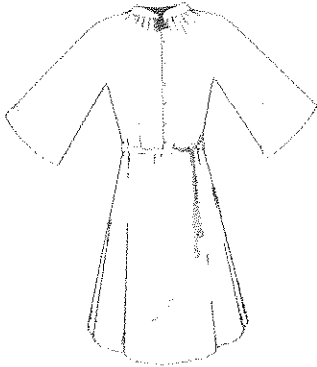
Hang your robe **neatly** in the servers’ closet – be sure that it is not on the floor. If there are other items on the floor, please check to see that they’re picked up and hung in their place. It is important that you help to keep all parts of our church clean.

APPENDIX: A GUIDE TO THE ITEMS USED IN THE MASS

VESTMENTS



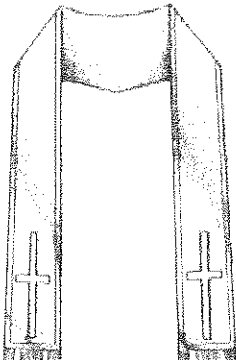
• *Amice*: This is a rectangular piece of cloth with two long ribbons attached to the top corners. The priest puts it over his shoulders, tucking it in around his neck to hide his collar. It is tied around his waist.



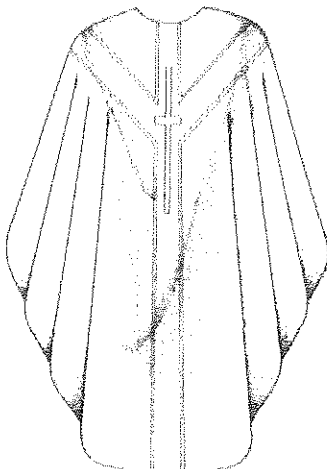
• *Alb*: This long, white, dress-like vestment can be worn by all liturgical ministers. An altar server can assist the priest or deacon/ seminarian by making sure that it hangs properly in the back.



• *Cincture*: This long cord is used for fastening some albs at the waist. It holds loose fitting albs in place and is used to adjust the proper length. The cincture is usually white.

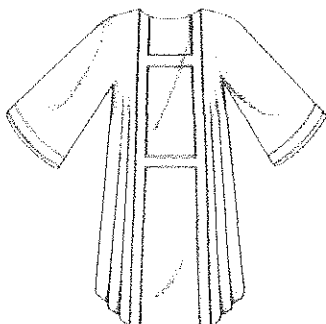


• *Stole*: A stole is a long cloth "scarf," often ornately decorated, of the same color and style of the chasuble. A priest wears it around the neck, letting it hang down in the front. A deacon wears it over his left shoulder and fastened at his right side, like a sash. Neither do seminarians nor other lay-ministers wear stoles.

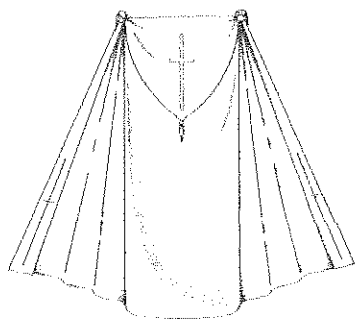


• *Chasuble*: The chasuble is the sleeveless outer vestment, slipped over the head, hanging down from the shoulders and covering the stole (sometimes) and alb. It is the proper Mass vestment of the priest and its color varies according to the feast or liturgical season.

GUIDE TO THE ITEMS USED IN THE MASS (continued)



• *Dalmatic*: The dalmatic is a loose-fitting robe with open sides and wide sleeves worn by the deacon. The color varies according to the liturgical feast or season of the liturgical year.



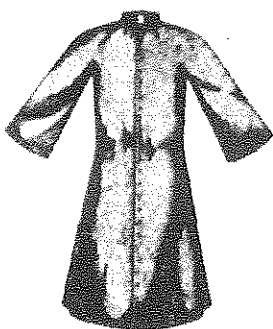
• *Cope*: A cape-like vestment that is put on over the shoulders and hangs to the ankles, it is open at the front and clasped at the neck. The priest wears this at Benediction and in certain processions. Copes can be of any liturgical color.



• *Humeral Veil*: This is a long, narrow, shawl-like vestment used at Benediction and in processions when the blessed sacrament is carried.



• *Server's Alb*: This is a vestment used by servers in place of a cassock (at St. Ursula, we use cassock and surplice, see below). It is similar to the priest's alb, but sometimes has a cowl (hood). A cincture is often tied around the waist.



• *Cassock*: A long outer garment worn by clerics and servers. Usually black, but on special feasts, it can be red or white. (At St. Ursula, ours are black.) The length should reach to the tops of one's shoes.



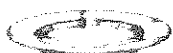
• *Surplice*: This is a wide sleeved garment, worn over the cassock.

GUIDE TO THE ITEMS USED IN THE MASS (continued)

ALTAR VESSELS



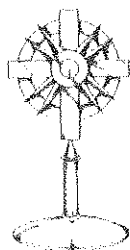
- *Chalice*: The large cup used at Mass to hold the wine that becomes the blood of Christ. Some can be very ornate.



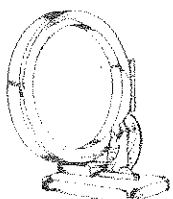
- *Paten*: This is a saucer-like dish that usually matches the chalice with which it is used. It holds the bread that becomes the body of Christ.



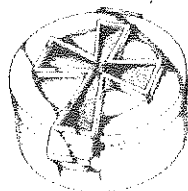
- *Ciborium*: This is a cup- or bowl-like vessel with a lid. It contains hosts that will be used for communion. It is also used to reserve the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle.



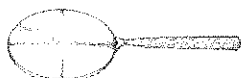
- *Monstrance*: This is a large, ornate vessel used to hold the Blessed Sacrament for Adoration, Benediction and solemn Eucharistic processions.



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



- *Pyx*: A case, about the size of a pocket watch, in which Communion is carried to those who are sick or unable to come to church.

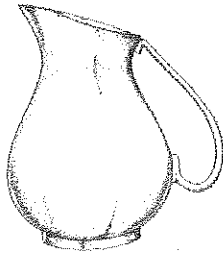


- *Communion Paten*: Not much in use anymore, this is a plate with a handle that a server uses to catch communion crumbs. The server stands to the right of the Communion minister and holds the plate under the chin of the one receiving Communion on the tongue.



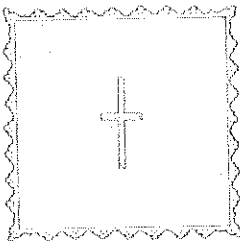
- *Large Paten or Bread Plate*: Used in some churches, this is used in place of a ciborium during the presentation of the gifts. The bread to be consecrated is placed on this large paten.

GUIDE TO THE ITEMS USED IN THE MASS (continued)

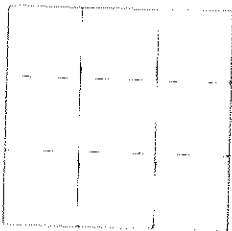


• *Flagon or Decanter*: This is a bottle or carafe-like vessel used to hold the wine that will be consecrated at Mass for the communion of the people. It is filled before Mass, taken to the rear of the church and is brought forward at the procession of the gifts. At daily Mass, smaller bottles, called *Cruets*, are used.

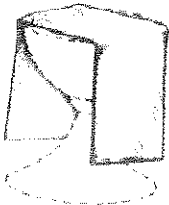
MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS



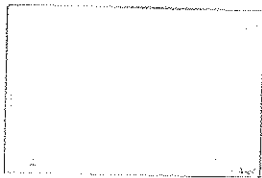
• *Pall*: This is a stiff square white cover that is placed over the paten when it is on the chalice and over the chalice during Mass to protect its contents.



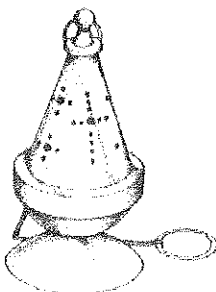
• *Corporal*: A white linen cloth usually starched, on which are placed the vessels containing the bread and wine during Mass. It is also used at Adoration and Benediction.



• *Purificator*: This is a triple folded white cloth used to cleanse the chalice and the celebrant's fingers after the last ablution (washing). In setting up the chalice, the purificator is placed over the top of the chalice (see diagram) beneath the paten.



• *Finger Towel*: A folded rectangular cloth resembling a purificator, but much narrower, it is used by the priest to dry his fingers after they have been washed during the preparation of the gifts. It is kept with the water cruet and finger bowl.



• *Thurible or Censer*: The metal container extended from a chain in which charcoal and incense are burned for liturgical ceremonies. It has a lid that can be raised. It is used at solemn Masses and a Benediction.