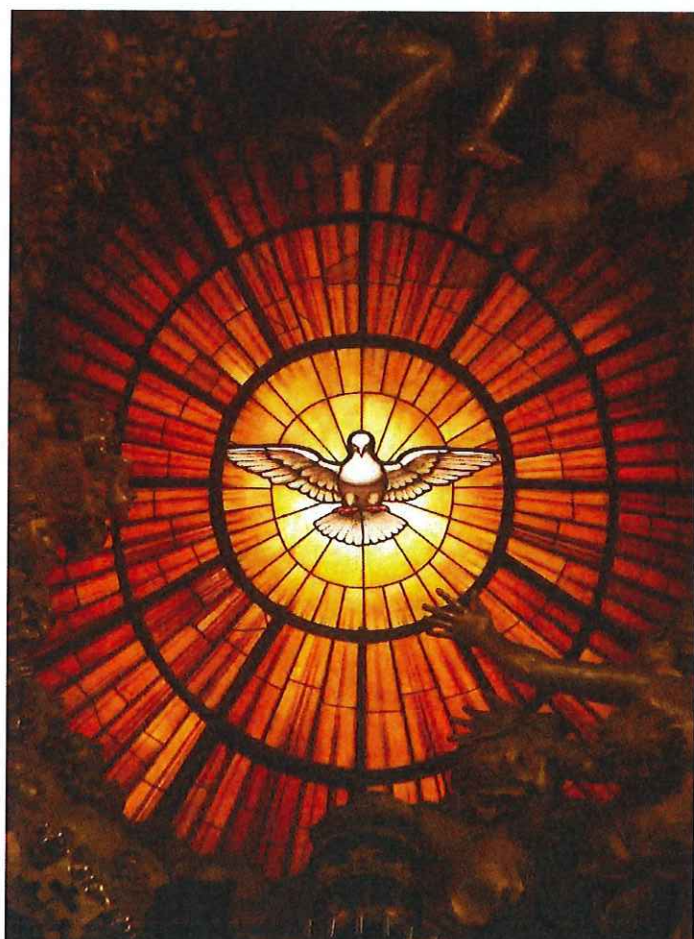

HOLY SPIRIT CATHOLIC CHURCH

ALTAR SERVERS HANDBOOK



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GENERAL INFORMATION

ABOUT ALTAR SERVERS

Dear Altar Servers, you are, in fact, already apostles of Jesus! When you take part in the Liturgy by carrying out your altar service, you offer a witness to all. Your absorption, the devotion that wells up from your heart and is expressed in gestures, in song, in the responses: if you do it correctly and not absent-mindedly, then in a certain way your witness is one that moves people.

The Eucharist is the source and summit of the bond of friendship with Jesus. You are very close to Jesus in the Eucharist, and this is the most important sign of his friendship for each one of us. Do not forget it.

-excerpt from Pope Benedict XVI, Address to Altar Servers, August 2, 2006

The Altar Server's Ministry is a unique one in the Catholic Church. Your participation as an Altar Server is special. When you serve the priests and deacons, you serve the people of God, and above all, you serve Christ.

Altar Servers must remember that everything that they do is for the Glory of God. They do it out of love for His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. St. Ignatius of Loyola called this attitude "AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM".

This means "All for the Honor and Glory of God". It is the motto of a heart of service.

As an Altar Server, you will do things that others will never do. You will learn things that others will never know. You will see the Mass in ways that others may never see it. You will do it all for the Honor and Glory of God.

REQUIREMENTS TO BECOME AN ALTAR SERVER

All servers must meet these requirements before they will be accepted to the Incarnation Altar Server Ministry:

QUALIFICATIONS

- Servers must actively practice the Catholic faith and should regularly receive Communion.
- **Servers should be currently participating in a program of Faith Formation**, either through the Parish Faith Formation Program, or through attendance at a Catholic school, or through structured home study. Servers not meeting this requirement should discuss their situation with the Altar Server Coordinator. Accommodations will gladly be made!

INTENTIONS

New servers must meet with the Altar Server Coordinator to answer this question, "*Why do you want to be an Altar Server?*"

Altar servers must serve because they feel a **personal calling** to service. If you feel parents or others are pressuring you to serve, but you don't want to serve, quietly let the coordinator know. The coordinator is here to assist you. They are happy to help you determine if this right time for you to begin altar service. If this isn't the right time, then you are welcome to start again when you are ready.

Servers also must be prepared to meet the commitment required of them. They should understand the principles of Devotion, Dedication, and Discipline found in the back section of this manual.

KNOWLEDGE

A new server must be very familiar with the Mass. They must understand why the Mass is important, and what happens during Mass.

Before they serve for the first time, a server will be required to demonstrate that they know the Order of the Mass, the prayers of the Mass, and the postures and responses during Mass. All of this will be taught during the new server training period.

Altar Servers must also demonstrate the ability to make use of the "tools of the trade" such as matches, candles, candle lighters, books and sacred vessels. All of this will be taught in training.

BEING AN ALTAR SERVER

TRAINING

Training will be scheduled regularly for all new altar servers. After a server has been trained to serve, they will be added to the regular altar server schedule. All servers continue to participate in ongoing training through:

- 1) training resources
- 2) regular practices

Altar servers will be trained to handle all of the tasks assigned to each specific duty. Servers will be required to memorize the prayer responses of the Mass, know the names of the vestments and vessels of the altar, and to learn the Order of the Mass.

PRACTICE

Practice will be held at regular intervals. Practices give every server the occasion to improve their current skills as well as the opportunity to learn new ones.

Some practices will be mandatory for all servers. Practices are mandatory when there is significant new information, or when there are liturgical changes. When a server misses a mandatory practice, they will be required to make up the practice before being scheduled again. Every effort will be made to give the server a choice of multiple sessions for mandatory practices.

Wherever possible, attempts will be made to offer practice at various times to allow for flexible schedules.

CONDUCT

GENERAL CONDUCT

Altar Servers should come to Mass prepared to meet the Lord at His Holy Communion. They should consider whether they ought to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation ahead of time, and, if needed, make appropriate arrangements.

Once an Altar Server puts on the alb, their conduct always must be and reverent. From the time they put on the Alb before Mass until the time they take it off after Mass, an Altar Server is "on duty".

Altar Servers must always show respect for the sanctity of the church and the sacred vessels. The care of the vessels and vestments is a primary responsibility of the Altar Server.

SCHEDULING

Two Altar Servers are scheduled at each Mass.

When you registered as an altar server, you specified the Masses you prefer to serve. You will be scheduled for the Masses you prefer, except in extraordinary circumstances, or if you request otherwise. If you are available to substitute at another Mass, please let the Coordinator know. If you would like to serve at an extraordinary Mass (for example, Easter Vigil or Christmas Midnight) please let the Coordinator know.

The schedule is typically prepared a month or more in advance. Schedules are available in several locations:

- sent by email to your parents when they are completed
- posted on the bulletin board, across from the restrooms in church
- listed in the Sunday bulletin the week before your scheduled date

Servers should work with their parents to ensure that they are serving at the Masses for which they are scheduled. However, emergencies sometimes happen. **Every server is required to make sure that their position is covered whenever they are scheduled. You must arrange your own substitutes.** If, after a valid effort, a server is not able to find a substitute, they should call the Coordinator to seek further assistance.

ATTENDANCE

Failing to show when you are scheduled places an unfair burden on the other servers, and disrespects the Altar Server Ministry. The following "no show policy" will be closely enforced.

NO SHOW POLICY

THE FIRST TIME A SERVER IS ABSENT FROM A SCHEDULED MASS, WITHOUT FINDING A SUBSTITUTE, THE SERVER WILL BE PLACED

ON "WARNING" STATUS FOR A PERIOD OF THREE MONTHS. THE COORDINATOR WILL CONTACT THE SERVER'S PARENTS TO ENSURE THAT THE SERIOUSNESS OF THEIR COMMITMENT IS WELL UNDERSTOOD. A SERVER WHO IS ABSENT FROM MASS AN ADDITIONAL

TIME DURING THE "WARNING" PERIOD WILL BE ASKED TO MEET PERSONALLY WITH THE COORDINATOR TO DISCUSS THEIR INTEREST IN THE MINISTRY. THEY WILL BE REMOVED FROM THE SCHEDULE UNTIL THIS MEETING OCCURS.

ARRIVAL

Altar Servers must arrive early to prepare for Mass. It is important to arrive before your designated serving time, a minimum of 15 minutes prior to Mass beginning.

Servers who are not scheduled for a particular Mass are asked to check to see that the assigned servers have arrived for Mass. This should be done at least 10 minutes before the Mass. If the scheduled server arrives late, please be forgiving to the assigned servers and let them serve in the position that they are assigned.

Attendance times:

15 minutes before Mass: All scheduled Altar Servers have arrived and are dressed in the sacristy.

10 minutes before Mass: Any server standing by can fill-in for any absent server

5 minutes before Mass: The server roles are locked in: no further changes are made. Servers arriving after this time are "absent", even if they show up later.

APPEARANCE AND DRESS

All servers are expected to wear "Sunday clothes" at the weekend Masses. Modesty should be preferred over fashion. Jeans, shorts, and t-shirts are not preferred. "Skorts" of appropriate length and style may be allowed.

Albs are made from lightweight material. What you wear under an alb will show through. For this reason, the server should be sure to avoid stripes and designs of any kind. These distract by showing through the alb. It is recommended that servers wear light, solid colors. White is strongly preferred for the shirt or blouse. Navy blue, tan, or black is preferred for the pants or skirt.

Shoes must be clean dress-style shoes. Black, brown, or white (for girls) dress shoes should be worn whenever possible. Athletic shoes, beach sandals, and flip-flops are not appropriate.

Dress code requirements that present undue hardship on a server or their family should be brought discreetly to the attention of the Altar Server Coordinator so that accommodations can be made. Please talk to the pastor or coordinator directly if there are any concerns.

Servers should refrain from excessive or flashy jewelry. Other than a cross or sacred medal worn under the alb, and modest earrings for girls, all other jewelry should be removed and left with a friend or parent. Watches may be worn if they are not a distraction to the server or others. Watch alarms and cell phones must be silenced. It is greatly preferred that cell phones not be carried while serving.

Young ladies wearing makeup should prefer modesty. Makeup should never be applied so that it is distracting or so that it is heavy enough to stain vestments.

ALBS

Albs are sorted in the vestry by size. Select an alb that fits comfortably, and is long enough to cover to your ankles. After Mass, return your alb to its original place (by size). Place it on the hangar, facing the correct direction.

POSTURES

If people are paying attention at Mass, they should not even notice you. If someone looks at you, they should see a server who is reverent and paying attention. It should remind them that they, too, should be paying attention to the Mass, and not to you.

In general, your posture should be confident, but calm. You should look reverent and prayerful, but comfortable. Move smoothly, but deliberately, not slowly.

Always look "where the action is". When someone is speaking or reading part of the Mass, you are listening to them. When the Eucharist is being consecrated, you are looking at it. When the choir is singing, you are singing with them.

Be sure to use the bathroom before Mass. If you have to use the restroom during mass for an emergency, please take off your alb.

If you are holding anything, you are excused from the hand motions at that time. For example, the server holding the book at the beginning of Mass does not raise their hands at "And with your spirit", if the book is in their hands.

STANDING

Whenever you are not holding anything, fold your hands with palms together, in the "prayer position". This can be done with your fingers together, or fingers interlocked. It is ok to be comfortable while you are serving!

If you are holding something, hold the item firmly with one or both hands, as needed. The free hand, if you have one, should cover your heart. Grasp items firmly and deliberately. When handing something to someone else, make sure they have a firm grip so as not to drop it.

PROCESSING

The procession is a sacred act. It is more than just a way for the priest to get to the altar. It is a very formal way of welcoming and glorifying Christ himself into our presence.

When you process, walk at a deliberate, but respectful pace. It should be just slower than you normally walk. If you are not the lead in the procession, keep pace with the lead.

When carrying something while processing, hold it reverently with both hands and slightly in front of you, not resting on your chest.

WALKING

Walk. Never, run. You are the model of reverence, calm and grace. Walk deliberately to your station. Watch for others in your way and plan ahead to step around them. Never get in the way of the presiders, nor of any minister holding the Blessed Sacrament. Hands are folded prayerfully or firmly grasping whatever you may be carrying.

SITTING

While sitting, sit up straight, not slouching. Feet should be directly in front of you. Legs should never be crossed. Keep your legs and feet still. Hands are folded prayerfully or are resting comfortably in your lap.

Respond to prayers and sing songs deliberately, and fully participate in the Mass.

BOWING

Never bow when carrying the cross or candle.

There are two types of bows.

The bow of the head: Lower your chin to your chest and hold it there briefly. There are several times in the Mass when this is done. Also, anytime a priest bows to you, return the bow with a brief head bow.

The profound bow (full bow): Bend at the waste and bow forward (like a Japanese greeting). This is used during the Profession of Faith and a few other times.

GENUFLECTING

Never genuflect when carrying anything.

With your back straight and your hands folded prayerfully, lower yourself onto your right knee, and hold that position briefly. You will almost always make the sign of the cross when genuflecting.

NOTE: We only genuflect to the real presence of Christ. Since the tabernacle is not in the main church, but is in the Eucharistic Chapel, there are very few times when you will be genuflecting during Mass.

Genuflecting to the tabernacle, whenever Jesus is reserved in the tabernacle, is required. Everyone, servers included, should genuflect in front of the tabernacle in the Chapel of Reservation. Our Lord's presence in the tabernacle is usually signified by the red sanctuary light. When it is not lit, the tabernacle is empty, as on Good Friday and Holy Saturday.

ALTAR SERVER DUTIES

BEFORE MASS

Arrive 15 minutes before Mass. Dress in your alb, and help the other servers prepare.

At 10 minutes before Mass, one server should go light the candles on the altar. While they are in the sanctuary, they should make a quick check to see if everything is prepared at the altar. If anything looks out of place, they notify the sacristan.

Once the priest is fully ready and announcements are completed, line up for the processional.

ROLES AT MASS:

The Cross Bearer: The cross bearer carries the cross in procession and hold the book for the priest. In this guide, they are referred to as "CROSS". The Cross bearer is responsible for unfolding and folding the corporal (altar cloth).

The Book Bearer: The book bears walks in directly behind the cross bearer for the opening procession. They are also responsible for the book for the entire mass.

SERVING WITH FEWER SERVERS:

At 5 minutes before Mass or once the announcements begin, if not all of the servers have arrived, proceed with the number of servers available and vested.

THE ORDER OF THE MASS

ENTRANCE PROCESSION LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING, RESPONSORIAL PSALM, SECOND READING

SIT and Respond

ALLELUIA AND GOSPEL

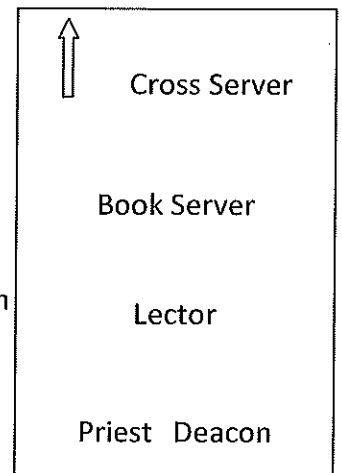
For the point at which we say "Glory to you, O Lord", the people make a sign of the cross on their forehead, their lips, and their hearts.

HOMILY

SIT and Listen

PROFESSION OF FAITH

STAND with hands folded



Make a PROFOUND BOW at the words *"by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man."*

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

RESPOND to the lector or deacon reading the petitions.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

PREPARATION OF THE ALTAR

When the prayer of the faithful is finished, the altar is prepared

CROSS: take the corporal from the credence's table. Walk to and stand at the base of the altar and bow with the BOOK.

BOOK: take the book from the small table next to the priest. Walk to and stand at the base of the altar and BOW with the book.

After the altar is prepared, both together, and depart from the altar to your RIGHT, and return to your seats. Remain standing.

PREFACE

STAND with hands folded through the Sanctus (*Holy, Holy, Holy...*)

EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

Sing and Respond as appropriate.

After the priest says, *"Take this... this is My Body which will be given up for you."* When the priest genuflects or bows, make a HEAD BOW in reverence of Our Lord's presence.

Similarly, after the priest says, *"Take this all of you and drink... sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of Me."* and genuflects or bows, make a HEAD BOW in reverence of Our Lord's presence.

COMMUNION RITE

Doxology, and Great Amen. Remain standing.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

STAND with hands joined in prayer

THE SIGN OF PEACE

ALL servers will extend the sign of peace to each other, and then move to the altar to offer the sign of peace to the priest. BOOK will get the book from the altar. Return to your seat.

LAMB OF GOD

STAND with hands folded, at your seat.

COMMUNION

The priest will offer communion to the Eucharistic Ministers, who will then offer communion to the community. You have the option of receiving the Blessed Sacrament in both species (Body and Blood). Receive from the minister closest to your chairs.

As an altar server, you should arrive at Mass fully ready to greet and receive the Lord. If circumstances do not allow you to receive communion, simply cross your arms over your chest as the minister approaches you. You must restore yourself to the proper state to receive communion before you serve at the next Mass. In most cases, this means receiving the Sacrament of Confession.

After receiving Communion, ALL servers remain STANDING in front of their chairs.

DURING COMMUNION

When the priest sits down, take your seat.

CONCLUDING RITE

CLOSING PRAYER

When the priest says, "Let us pray", the BOOK STANDS with the Book of Prayers (brown) and holds it for the priest, stepping directly in front of the priest.

The priest says the closing prayer and gives the final blessing (May almighty God bless you...)

DISMISSAL AND RECESSION

As soon as the priest begins to walk towards the altar, CROSS picks up the cross and stands at the front of the circle rug. BOOK stands directly in front of the CROSS and faces the altar.

The priest will reverence the altar, then walk in front of the altar. When the priest bows, you head bow with the priest.

ALL turn with the priest and process out following the pattern used on the way in.

Process out slowly to the main entrance. When you get to the back of church, wait for the closing hymn to conclude. Then, CROSS returns the processional cross to the holder, and BOOK goes to get the snuffer to put out the candles. Keep on your alb when putting out candles.

AFTER MASS

When moving through the Church, walk in a steady, but reverent manner. NEVER RUN THROUGH THE CHURCH!

All servers return their albs to the proper place. Please zip the albs onto the hangars.

Ensure that the vestry is neat, all candles are extinguished, and everything is in its place before you leave.

No servers leave until everything is done.

THE ALTAR SERVER COMMITMENT

Service at the altar is a serious responsibility. Altar Servers must demonstrate commitment at all times:

DEVOTION: A COMMITMENT TO WHAT WE BELIEVE.

- A love of God and the Catholic Faith
- A strong desire to do God's work and serve his people
- A willingness to conduct yourself in a manner that is pleasing to the Lord

Even if they are not serving, anytime an Altar Server is in the church their actions should be an example to the rest of the people at Mass.

Devoted Altar Servers know that their service is important to the whole faith community. Through their service at the Altar, others are able to grow in their love of the Lord.

DEDICATION: A COMMITMENT TO HOW WE ACT.

- The commitment to fully meet the requirements of the service for which you have been chosen
- The commitment to fulfill your duties when you are scheduled
- The commitment to help the entire altar server team to do well

Dedication to service comes from our love and Devotion to the Lord.

Dedicated Altar Servers know that others are counting on them. They help less skilled servers when needed, and they never say "That's not my job."

DISCIPLINE: A COMMITMENT TO HOW WE SERVE.

- The self-control that allows Altar Servers to carry out their duties with precision
- The determination to do what needs to be done, the right way every time
- The desire to be prepared, to arrive early to help prepare for Mass, and to ensure that the rest of the Altar Server Team is prepared
- The initiative to pay attention and think about what they will do next
- The ambition to improve each time they serve. Asking at the end of each Mass, "What could I have done better?"
- The motivation to listen to coaching with an open mind and a willing heart

Dedication to proper service pushes us to be more Disciplined.

Thank you!

Thank you for sharing your time and talent to participate in the altar server ministry. If you have any questions, please contact the coordinator for any questions. You can write down their information below, or use the space for any other notes.

