

ALTAR SERVER GUIDELINES

MARIANNE COPE ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH

Responsibilities of an Altar Server

- Attend Mass each Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation when physically possible.
- Cultivate a personal prayer life within the Church. The acts of faith, hope and charity enjoined by the first commandment are accomplished in prayer. Lifting up the mind toward God is an expression of our adoration of God: prayer of praise and thanksgiving, intercession and petition. Prayer is an indispensable condition of being able to obey God's commandments.
- Altar Servers are not to leave the sanctuary after the start of Mass for any reason except emergencies, illness, or when told to do so by the priest or deacon.
- Attend all prayer and scheduling meetings as announced.
- Serve at every Mass you are scheduled for. When you fail to serve at a Mass without sufficient cause, you are denying the whole parish of one member of the team. Call the office to arrange a substitute when you know in advance of a scheduling conflict.
- Arrive at Mass at least 15 minutes before the start time to prepare for the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist.
- Perform the duties assigned during the Mass in the prescribed orderly manner.
- Maintain a prayerful posture during all times in the Sanctuary.

Required Basic Knowledge of the Mass

A server is required to know the principal prayers of the Mass. It is vital that you are praying the parts of the Mass as a prayer leader.

All servers must know the basic flow of the Mass. This is important in order to perform your tasks at the proper time. You will be given instruction as to the use of all the liturgical items you will be handling and the purpose of each item.

Some Helpful Terms to Know

- **Sacristy/Vestry:** The room where the priest, deacon, and liturgical ministers prepare before Mass.
- **Sanctuary:** The area around the altar, the presider's chair and the crucifix where most of the Mass happens.
- **Presider's Chair:** The place where the priest president at Mass sits.
- **Credence Table:** The small table near the altar server where the items are kept that will be used during Mass.
- **Alb:** The white garment worn by the priest under his vestments.
- **Stole:** The garment worn over the shoulders of the priest on top of the alb.
- **Chasuble:** The large garment worn by the priest over the alb and stole
- **Sacramentary/Roman Missal:** The book used by the priest for prayers during Mass
- **Lectionary:** The book used by the Lectors for the readings
- **Prayer of the Faithful Book:** This is usually a binder and holds the intercessions to be read by the Lector of the Deacon
- **Chalice:** the main cup used for the wine by the priest during Mass
- **Paten:** Small plate used with the Chalice that holds the priest's host
- **Ciborium (more than one – Ciboria):** The larger container holding hosts for distribution during Mass
- **Water/Wine Cruets:** Glass or pewter containers with water and wine for Mass

- **Hosts:** The bread used during Mass
- **Purificators:** White cloths used to wipe the chalice and communion cup during Mass.

Guidelines

Altar Servers perform an important ministry to our Church. The functions you perform at the celebration of the Mass are in service not only to your community, but also to God. By accepting this position, you are accepting a serious responsibility. By doing your best in every aspect of the service, you will be richly rewarded.

Please review the following guidelines which you will need to follow

- Arrive at Church at least 15 minutes before Mass starts.

Reverence: The church is God's home. Always show reverence in all your actions.

- Walk slowly to and from the altar
- Participate in all the prayers.
- Stand up straight and hold the palms of your hands together in front of you – fixing your eyes on the presider or the altar.
- When you are sitting – sit up straight, keep your feet on the floor, fold your hands in your lap and fix your eyes on the presider or the altar (please do not play with the cincture!).
- Remember – you are visible to the whole parish community, including other young people. You are a role model for them.

Dress:

- Wear cloths that are comfortable. Avoid shirts with big pictures or words on them as they can be seen through the albs.
- Wear shoes that are clean and neat (no “holey” sneakers or scruffy sandals). Flip flops or flashy shoes are also not appropriate.
- The white robes are called albs – and they should be hung up after each Mass – on the hanger – in the closet. These should be clean and as wrinkle free as possible. Find one that fits – it should cover your ankles.
- Cinctures are worn at your waist – be sure you have the proper color for the liturgical season. If you have trouble tying the cincture – ask another server or ask the Pastoral Administrator, Priest or Deacon.

Commitment:

- Come to the sacristy/vestry 15 minutes before Mass. Check in.
- If you are unable to serve the Mass for which you are scheduled, find a sub. This done through the on-line scheduling program. Approximately 5 days before you are scheduled to serve, you will receive an e-mail reminder. In that e-mail are instructions as to what to do if you need a sub. If the need is last minute, simply go to your on-line profile and click on the button to request a sub. Kathy Steiner, the parish administrative assistant will receive your sub request and attempt to find a replacement for you.
- When you arrive at Mass and are not scheduled to serve, be observant as to whether or not there are sufficient servers. Volunteering to help when we are short on servers is extremely helpful.

Before Mass Begins:

- Check to be sure that you have a worship aid at your seat and either have a hymnal at your chair or you are carrying the hymnal to assist in singing during the entrance procession.
- Check with sacristan and/or Pastoral Administrator or Pastoral Associate to be sure that candles are lit and everything is set for mass.

Roles During Mass:

Procession

- One Altar Server carries the cross and leads the way.
- Other Altar Servers carry the hymnal and other items as suitable for that particular liturgy. For example, the server may be asked to hold the items needed for blessings or incensing
- Upon reaching the step, move to the right or to the left as appropriate for your worship site. Once the priest approaches the altar, reverence the altar with him with a bow of your head. Note: The altar server carrying the cross does not bow.
- If you are carrying the cross, place the cross in its holder and return to your appointed position in the sanctuary. Other servers place their appropriate item in its place and return to their position in the sanctuary.

Roman Missal

- Bring the Roman Missal to the Priest immediately after the processional song is done.
- Bring the Roman Missal to the Priest as the Gloria ends or in the case of Advent and Lent after the Penitential Rite. Your cue is "Let us pray."

Altar Preparation

- The altar is prepared as soon as we sit following the general intercessions. Your cue is the ushers' taking up the collection.
- At Guardian Angels...bring the tray containing the cups with wine to the altar and place it on the right hand side of the altar. At St. Joseph's bring the two cups for wine and also the chalice to the altar and place on the corporal.
- At all sites, you will need to accompany the priest and deacon in accepting the gifts. Once the priest or deacon hands you the sacred vessels, please place them on the altar
- At all sites, once the deacon, or priest if no deacon, finishes preparing the gifts, you will need to bring back the cruets that contained the wine and water. These will be returned to the credence table.
- Once the priest elevates the chalice after the preparation, bring the bowl and towel to the altar for the washing of the hands. Then return the bowl and towel to the credence table.

Eucharistic Prayer

- The altar servers kneel for the Eucharistic Prayer

Distribution of Communion

- At Guardian Angels and St. Joseph's only...you will need to remove the sacred vessels from the altar. At Guardian Angels this is done as soon as the priest leaves the sanctuary to distribute communion. At St. Joseph's this is done once the deacon or priest returns the empty ciborium.
- At all sites you will need to take the Roman Missal from the altar and place it on or under the credence table. You will need to be alert for this. Sometimes the priest will close the book and hand it to the altar server.

Prayer After Communion

- Again your cue will be “Let us pray.” Be prepared so that once the priest sits down you have the book ready to bring to him for this prayer.

Recession

- When the priest begins to move, the server who carries the cross should get it and proceed to the steps in the front of the altar. The other servers follow and line up for the altar. There may be other times when other vessels or books might need to be processed out. You will receive instructions for these occasions at the beginning of mass.
- After processing out, return the cross and any books to their proper locations. Hang up your albs – be sure they don’t fall on the floor.
- Extinguish candles. This will assist the sacristans.