

Altar Server Manual

Policy & Instructions

Instructions for Cross-Bearer and Candle-Bearers serving at St.
Henry Church, Owasso, OK.

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Foreward

The chief duties of the Candle Bearers are to light the candles on the altar, to carry the candles in procession and during the singing of the Gospel, and to assist the Extraordinary Ministers at the Mass and other public services of the Church.

The Cross-Bearer carries the processional cross, a crucifix provided with a long staff or handle. The staff is held with both hands so that the figure is well above the head. The cross-bearer followed by the two candle-bearers walks at the head of the procession.

A candidate should have a strong desire to serve and not serve due to parental pressures. A reluctant or disinterested server is a distraction to the priest, parishioners and fellow servers.

Requirements

Who May Serve?

A server can be any person who has received first confession and Holy Communion.

Additional parish requirements for all altar servers are as follows:

1. Minimum Grade
 - a. Candle Bearers: 4th graders can attend training and practice; 5th graders on schedule will be designated as new for 6 months.
 - b. Cross-Bearer: Ideally 6th grade or higher.
2. Training sessions attended and/or prior experience at another Catholic church
 - a. 3 training sessions
 - b. Cross-Bearers should be more experienced altar servers.
3. Existing altar servers should attend regular practice sessions to 'brush-up' on current or new procedures.
4. Keep and refer to the training packet for future review. You will have to show proficiency before being placed in the schedule rotation. It is also available on the parish website.

Basic Knowledge of the Mass

A server candidate is required to know the principal prayers of the Mass: The Gloria, Our Father, Nicene Creed, Lamb of God, Lord, I am not worthy and Holy, Holy, Holy.

All candidates should know the basic flow of the mass in order to perform their tasks at the proper times. They should be taught the use of all the liturgical items they will be handling and the purpose of each item. Reference the definitions section.

1. All candidates must demonstrate their ability to make use of the "tools of the trade" such as matches, candle lighters, books and candles, processional cross, preparation of *credence table*, *chalice*, mass colors, etc. On the job training is very important. New servers should receive guidance from experienced servers for several masses.



2. All server candidates must be able to demonstrate their ability to genuflect, bow and make the sign of the cross.
3. They must understand genuflecting is reserved for and to the Real Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ whether exposed on the altar or reserved in the tabernacle. Genuflecting is a form of worship of our God and should only be done to Him alone. It would be a grave mistake to genuflect to any altar, cross, picture or crucifix.
4. Servers should be shown how to bow in respect to the altar as it is where Jesus offers his Body to the Father for the propitiation of our sins.

Proper Dress Code

1. Shirt/Blouse: It is recommended that you wear solid colors, no t-shirts.
2. Pants/Dresses/Skirts: It is recommended that you wear solid dark colored pants, dress or skirt.
3. Shoes: Nice dress shoes with dark soles should be worn. Avoid unpolished or tattered shoes.
 - a. No crocs, flip-flops, backless shoes or high heels.
 - b. Contact the parish office for assistance if financial hardship exists for obtaining appropriate clothing and/or shoes.
4. Hair: Hair should be pulled away from the face and not covering your eyes. For girls with longer hair, we recommend pulling back in a ponytail, headband or clip to minimize fire hazard near the candles.

General Duties for All Altar Servers

Preparation before Mass

1. Arrive at the Church early, usually 15 minutes before Mass.
2. Initial the schedule located in the *vestibule*. If you are filling in for someone, cross out the other person's name and write in your name.
3. Find the proper sized black *cassock* and white *surplice*. The bottom of the *cassock* should just barely touch the top of your shoes. Note: Unsnap the top buttons of cassock midway and step into it. Surplice sleeves should cover your elbows.

Etiquette during Mass

1. Be reverent at all times. Once dressed in cassock and surplice, keep hands folded at the sternum anytime you are not holding something.
2. When seated,
 - a. Sit up straight and *be still*.
 - b. Hands should be on your knees.
 - c. Legs should be closed.
 - d. Feet can be crossed at the ankle.
3. When standing and not holding anything,
 - a. Stand up straight and *be still*.
 - b. Praying hands should be at the sternum.
4. Move in unison

- a. Sit and stand in unison
 - b. Candle Bearers should walk shoulder to shoulder whenever possible
5. Types of bows:
- a. Head bow: when holding something like a candle or paten
 - b. Shoulder bow: deeper bow when not holding anything.
 - c. Profound bow: if performed by priest and server not carrying anything.
6. When assisting the priest and Extraordinary Ministers with the *Communion paten* during Holy Communion,
- a. The server must always hold the *Communion paten* level from the time it is picked up from its storage place until it is returned to the *sacristy*. It must never be tilted or turned so as to spill any fragments of the host which may have been caught by it. If the host falls on the *Communion paten*, wait for the Communion minister to give direction.
 - b. It is the responsibility of the server holding the *Communion paten* to protect the Body of Christ from falling on the floor. If the host falls on the floor, wait for the priest or Communion minister to provide direction.
 - c. Pay attention as the priest or deacon may ask you to do something in addition to your normal duties.
7. Participate in the mass by reciting the prayers, singing and doing the Sign of the Cross when appropriate.
8. You may discretely ask the priest or deacon questions during Mass if you forget what you are supposed to do.
9. Walk straight up and down the stairs, not diagonally.
10. Cough or sneeze into your shoulder. Cover your mouth if you must yawn. If you are not feeling well during Mass, it is okay to sit down or leave the altar.
11. **Key points: Flow, reverence and attention to detail.**

Duties after Mass

1. Unsnap the top buttons of cassock midway and step out of it. **Neatly** hang *cassock* and *surplice* separately on a hanger. Be sure to snap the top snap on the cassock to ensure it does not fall off the hanger. If any part of the *cassock* or *surplice* needs attention (mending, cleaning, etc.), neatly lay the garments on the *sacristy* table with a note indicating reason for attention. (Sticky notes are available in drawer.)
2. To extinguish candles, use candle snuffers located to the left of the *Roman Missal*. Do not blow out altar candles.

Schedules & Finding a Replacement

Schedules are available on the parish website (<http://www.sthenrywasso.org/>) under Liturgical Ministry. The schedule is also posted on the bulletin board by the water fountain in the vestibule. If you are unable to serve on the date you are assigned, you are responsible for finding a replacement. Reference the altar server contact list provided by Denise Haffner, Coordinator of Liturgy, to find a replacement.



Duties for Cross-Bearer

Preparation before Mass

1. Ensure the children's money basket is away from the altar to allow enough room for the candle bearers to light the candles.
2. Ensure the bells are in the proper place.
3. Ensure the cross holder next to the ambo is not loose. Properly tighten if necessary.
4. Retrieve the Cross from the cross holder located in the Narthex across from the bulletin boards.
5. Stand in the Narthex outside the church entrance until the priest is ready to enter.

Introductory Rites

1. When instructed by the priest, lead the procession to the sanctuary.
 - When carrying the cross, place hands several inches apart for balance.
 - In a standing position, the cross can rest on the end of your foot.
 - In a walking position, the cross should be above eyesight level (not blocking your face).
2. Step to the right and stop at the angled part of the sanctuary.
 - Continue to hold the cross above eyesight level.
3. After the priest genuflects, bow head and lead the way to the *ambo*.
4. Standing behind the cross holder (facing the center pews), place the cross on the holder. If the cross is straight up and down, it should go in easily.
5. Get the *Roman Missal* and return to your seat.
6. When the priest says "Let us pray", stand between the priest and *ambo* and rest the book against your sternum for stabilization.
7. Once the priest closes the book, place the *Roman Missal* back on the bookstand and be seated.

Preparation of Gifts

1. After the Prayers of the Faithful, be seated.
2. If a chalice veil is being used, the priest or deacon will hand you the chalice veil as he prepares the altar. Take it and place it on the shelf near the ambo where the server patens are. Then take *Roman Missal* to altar and place it at the top of the *corporal*.
3. Go with the priest and deacon to receive the gifts. Place the money basket on the floor in front of and toward the right of the altar, place intercession book on right corner of the altar and quickly return to receive the *wine cruet* if there is no deacon.
4. Cross left in front of the altar and wait at the side of the altar.
5. When the deacon gives you the large and small wine containers, take them to the tabletop by the tabernacle and proceed to your kneeling place at the bottom step near the bells.
6. Kneel after the "Holy, Holy, Holy".

Prayers at Altar and Communion

1. Ring the bells gently each time for 1 to 2 seconds.
 - a. When the priest's hands are over the gifts.
 - b. After the priest says, "This is my body given for you."



- c. After the priest says, "Do this in remembrance of me."
2. Stand for the Lord's Prayer.
3. Offer the Sign of Peace to some nearby worshippers in the pews directly behind where you were kneeling (do not pass the aisles) and then return to the foot of the steps to receive *Communion* (Order - Cross Bearer, CB#1, then CB#2). The Extraordinary Ministers will stand near you. You do not kneel here; remain standing.
4. After you receive Communion, take the *Roman Missal* to its stand (or put on box) and obtain a *Communion paten* to help the Communion minister at the east side (same side as the Cry Room). Stand on the left side of the Communion minister during Communion. Be careful with the footing on the step when standing on the left side.
5. After Communion, take your *Communion paten* to the altar to be purified.
6. Wait near the altar, standing back out of the way as the priest and/or deacon collect the remaining vessels from the EMs.
7. Wait at the altar, stand between the Extraordinary Ministers and the altar, and assist the priest or deacon.
 - a. Pass items from the priest or deacon to Extraordinary Ministers. When passing the chalice with the chalice veil on it, hold the open side closest to your body and pass it to the EM from the side so the EM can also hold it with the open side closest to his/her body.
 - b. Perform any other duties directed by the priest or deacon.
8. Return to your seat passing between the ambo and seats, and be seated.

Concluding Rites

1. After dismissal, get the cross, lead the servers down the steps on the east side, walk to the center aisle, and wait facing the altar. Note: Cross-Bearer should be in center and between Candle Bearers (straight line).
2. After the priest and deacon bow, turn and lead procession up the aisle.

Duties after Mass

1. Return the Cross to the cross holder located in the Narthex across from the bulletin boards. Ensure the cross holder is not loose. Properly tighten if necessary.
2. Properly put away the patens if someone has not been assigned to this duty for your mass.

Duties for Candle-Bearer #1 (CB#1)

Preparation before Mass

1. Retrieve the processional candle located in the Narthex across from the bulletin boards. Remember to hold candles upright, not leaning.

Introductory Rites

1. Follow 2 steps behind to the right of the Cross-Bearer in the entrance procession.
2. Step to the right and stop at the angled part of the sanctuary.
3. After the priest genuflects, bow head and follow Cross Bearer to the *ambo*. Note: Candle Bearers should be side by side proceeding to ambo.
4. Walk in front of the *ambo* and place your candle on the candle stand west of the *ambo*.
5. Proceed to the chair closest to the tabernacle and remain standing.
6. After the Opening Prayer, all servers are seated at the same time.

Preparation of Gifts

1. When the congregation is seated after the Prayers of the Faithful, take the water cruet to the altar and place it in front of candle #1.
2. Proceed to your processional candle and wait there for CB#2.
3. After altar candles are lit and CB#2 is by his/her processional candle, pick up your processional candle by the *ambo*.
4. Proceed side by side with CB#2 towards the middle aisle and then walk up the middle aisle (close to pews and on same side you entered at the beginning) to the back row of the church and stand facing each other.
5. When priest takes his position in front of the sanctuary (gifts ready), turn and lead the gifts procession down the aisle.
6. Stop in the front of the sanctuary, stand next to the sanctuary step and face inward.
7. When Extraordinary Ministers are proceeding back to the altar, return candle to the *ambo* stand. Note: Candle Bearers should be side by side proceeding to ambo.
8. Go to the tabletop by the tabernacle and obtain the hand towel. Place hand towel over praying hands.
9. Go to the altar, take the water from the altar for the washing of the priest's hands, and stand closest to the altar (even with the altar).
10. When the priest holds his hands over the bowl, pour water over the priest's hands.
11. After the priest dries his hands, offer a slight bow and return the water and towel to the tabletop and go to the kneeling place.
12. Kneel after the "Holy, Holy, Holy".

Prayers at Altar and Communion

1. Stand for the Lord's Prayer.
2. Offer the Sign of Peace to some nearby worshippers in the pews directly behind where you were kneeling (do not pass the aisles) and then proceed to the foot of the steps. (Order - Cross Bearer, CB#1, then CB#2). The Extraordinary Ministers will stand near you. You do not kneel here; remain standing.



3. After you receive Communion, get your *Communion paten* to help the Eucharistic minister at the front of the altar (east). Stand on the opposite side of the hand being used by the Eucharistic minister.
4. After Communion, take the *Communion paten* to the to be purified and then to the *sacristy*, in the direction that passes by the cantor stand.
5. Wait in front of the doorway. When the congregation sits down, return to your seat passing between the ambo and seats. Be seated.

Concluding Rites

1. After the dismissal, obtain your processional candle.
2. Follow Cross-Bearer to the center aisle and wait (facing the altar).
3. After the priest and deacon bow, turn and proceed up the aisle.

Duties after Mass

1. Snuff the candles on the altar. Do not blow candles out as the wax will go all over.

Duties for Candle Bearer #2 (CB#2)

Preparation before Mass

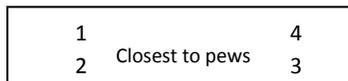
1. Check the length of the candle lighter wick. If the wick is too short, then replace the wick.
 - a. Candle lighter is located near the last chair on the side of the ambo.
 - b. Replacement wicks are in the metal locker located in the *sacristy* closet. If you need assistance in replacing the wick, ask the Deacon or a senior server for assistance.
2. Retrieve the processional candle located in the Narthex across from the bulletin boards.

Introductory Rites

1. Follow 2 steps behind to the left of the Cross-Bearer in the entrance procession.
2. Step to the right and stop at the angled part of the sanctuary.
3. After the priest genuflects, bow head and, follow Cross-Bearer and CB#1 to the *ambo*. Note: Candle Bearers should be side by side proceeding to ambo.
4. Place your candle on the candle stand east of the *ambo*.
5. Walk in front of the *ambo* and proceed to the chair next to the deacon's chair and remain standing.
6. After the Opening Prayer, all servers are seated at the same time.

Preparation of Gifts

1. When the congregation is seated after the Prayers of the Faithful, obtain the candle lighter.
2. Beginning with candle #1 and going in numerical order, light the candles on the altar (Note: we are no longer using glass cylinders around candles so you are lighting candles solo.)
 - a. To light the 4 candles, please reference this diagram for order.



3. After altar candles are lit, get your processional candle by the *ambo*.
4. Proceed side by side with CB#1 towards the middle aisle and then walk up the middle aisle (close to pews and on same side you entered at the beginning) to the back row of the church and stand facing each other.
5. When priest takes his position in front of the sanctuary (gifts ready), turn and lead the gifts procession down the aisle.
6. Stop in the front of the sanctuary, stand next to the sanctuary step and face inward.
7. When Extraordinary Ministers are proceeding back to the altar, return candle to the *ambo* stand. Note: Candle Bearers should be side by side proceeding to ambo.
8. Go to the tabletop by the tabernacle and obtain the glass bowl.
9. Go to the altar and stand to the left of CB#1.
10. Hold the glass bowl for the washing of the priest's hands.

11. After the priest dries his hands, offer a slight bow and return the glass bowl to the tabletop and go to the kneeling place.
12. Kneel after the “Holy, Holy, Holy”.

Prayers at Altar and Communion

1. Stand for the Lord’s Prayer.
2. Offer the Sign of Peace to some nearby worshippers in the pews directly behind where you were kneeling (do not pass the aisles) and then proceed to the foot of the steps (Order - Cross Bearer, CB#1, then CB#2). The Extraordinary Ministers will stand near you. You do not kneel here; remain standing.
3. After you receive Communion, get your *Communion paten* to help the Eucharistic minister at the front of the altar (west). Stand on the opposite side of the hand being used by the Eucharistic minister.
4. After Communion, take the *Communion paten* to the altar for the priest to purify and then to the *sacristy*, in the direction that passes by the cantor stand.
5. Wait in front of the doorway. When the congregation sits down, return to your seat passing between the ambo and seats. Be seated.

Concluding Rites

1. After the dismissal, obtain your processional candle.
2. Follow Cross-Bearer to the center aisle and wait (facing the altar).
3. After the priest and deacon bow, turn and proceed up the aisle.

Duties after Mass

1. Snuff the candles on the altar.

What to Do When There Is Only 1 Altar Server

If there is only 1 server, then that server would perform the Cross Bearer role plus Candle Bearer roles except for the following:

1. Before Mass: Retrieve the processional candles located in the Narthex across from the bulletin boards and place the candles in the candle stands next to the *ambo*. Light the processional candles as well as the candles at the altar.
2. Preparation of the Gifts: Instead of being seated after the Prayers of the Faithful, take the water cruet to the altar and place it on the west side of the altar.
3. After Mass: Snuff the candles on the altar. Snuff the processional candles and return them to original location.

What to Do When There Are Only 2 Altar Servers

If there are only 2 servers, then one server would perform the Cross Bearer role and the other would function as Candle Bearer #1 except for the following:

1. Before Mass: Retrieve the processional candles located in the Narthex across from the bulletin boards and place one LIT candle in the candle stands next to the *ambo*. Light the processional candle you will carry in the procession (As an alternative if there isn't enough time to get one candle to the ambo, you can carry both candles in the procession.). For both the entrance and recessional procession you will line up single file with the CB in front of CB#1.
2. Preparation of the Gifts: Instead of being seated after the Prayers of the Faithful, take the water cruet to the altar and place it in front of candle #1 on the altar then light the four candles on the altar in order.
3. After Mass: Snuff the candles on the altar. Snuff the processional candles and return them to original location.

Cheat Sheet

Legend: Bold (**Cross Bearer**), Italic (*Candle Bearers*), Regular (All)

Entrance Procession

- Entrance
- Put **cross** and *candles* on stands
- To your chairs
- **Opening prayer**
- Be seated

Preparation of Gifts

- *Water to altar*
- *Light altar candles*
- **Take Roman Missal to altar**
- *Take ambo candles to back*
- *Lead offertory processions*
- **Receive gifts; take wine to front of candle #1; wait**
- **Take large and small wine cruets to tabletop**
- *Get towel and bowl, go to altar*
- *Wash hands; return things to tabletop*
- All go to kneeling spot

Communion

- Stand for Lord's Prayer
- Sign of peace
- Come to altar; receive communion
- Get Communion patens, go to places
- Return patens to sacristy
- Come back to sanctuary right away; go to seat
- **Prayer after Communion**

Exit

- Get **cross** and candles
- Go to spots in front of altar; wait
- Lead exit procession

Definitions

Ablution cup: covered dish of water on the side of the tabernacle used by the priest, deacon or extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist to wash their fingers after distributing Communion.

Alb: White robe worn over clothes, for adult servers, priests and deacons.

Ambo: The platform, lectern or pulpit from which the reading and homily are given.



Burse: A square container for holding the corporal. It is selected for the liturgical color of the day. Used Corporals should always be placed in the proper container for sacred cloths after mass.

Cassock: A long tunic like garment which reaches from the neck to the heels which is worn by some servers and clergy.

Chalice: A cup of precious metal that holds the wine which becomes the Blood of Jesus after the consecration. All chalices should be placed in their places after Mass. If the Chalices were left unpurified by the priest or deacon for some reason they should be left out on the presentation table for purification by the priest or deacon. Never put an unpurified chalice away.

Chalice veil: A cloth covering used to hide the chalice and paten up to the offertory and after Communion. It is selected by the liturgical color for the service.

Ciborium: A large cup or container of precious metal with a cover of the same material which will hold the Body of Jesus after the consecration for distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful.

Communion Paten: A small saucer shaped plate of precious metal with a handle used by the altar server to protect the Body of Jesus from falling to the ground if a minister or communicant accidentally drops a fragment of the Host.

Corporal: A white linen cloth, usually with a cross in the center, used to protect any particles of the Precious Body and Blood of Jesus from falling to the altar cloth. It is always folded and unfolded as to protect any particles from being lost. The corporal is like the body winding sheet used to hold the crucified body of Our Lord in the tomb.

Credence Table: The table in the sanctuary where the cruets, chalices and ciborium are kept before and after the Consecration.

Cruet: A small vessel used for containing the wine and water required for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Two are always employed.

IHS: the first three letters of Jesus' Name in Greek and often used to decorate the altar and other church facades.

Lectionary: The book of reading used for the liturgy of the word. It usually contains all the biblical reading used for the three year Sunday cycle of reading and the two year daily Mass readings.

Luna or Lunette: The glass-sided, removable receptacle at the center of the monstrance that actually holds the host.

Monstrance: This is a large, ornate vessel used to hold the host.

Paschal Candle: The large ornate (decorated) candle used at funerals, baptisms, and the Easter season until Pentecost. Each year at the Easter Vigil Mass, this candle is specially blessed by the priest.

Pall: A square piece of cardboard or plastic which is covered by linen and used to cover the chalice.

Peplum: A cloth covering used to hide the chalice and paten up to the offertory and after Communion. It is selected by the liturgical color for the service.

Purificator: A linen cloth used by the priest or deacon to dry the chalice after washing and purifying it. Used Purificators must always be placed in the proper container for sacred cloths.

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

Sacristy: a room in the church where sacred vessels and vestments are kept and where the clergy meet and vest for the various ecclesiastical functions.

Sepulcrum: The cavity on the altar in which the relic(s) of the patron saints of that church or chapel are encased.

Stock: The metal containers used to hold the oil of the catechumen, the oil of chrism and the oil for anointing the sick.

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

Surplice: A loose-fitting, wide- sleeved, vestment worn over a cassock by clergy and altar servers in some parishes.

Thaborstand: The ornate stand used to support the Monstrance during exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

Thurible: The container for burning incense.

Thurifer: The altar server responsible for the thurible.

Diagram

