

ST PAUL ALTAR SERVER MANUAL - THINGS TO KNOW AND MASTER

(Significant Changes in Red)

Appearance

Altar Servers are an extension of the clergy and expected to act and dress appropriately.

Dress in good taste and neat. You should be dressed for God's House before you vest (get dressed in the Cassock and Surplice).

Males may wear long-sleeve or short sleeved shirts, preferably with collars.

Males may wear slacks with long, dark socks (no ankle socks).

Males should wear plain, long, dark socks with plain black, dark brown closed toe dress shoes or boots.

Females may wear dresses or tops with skirts, slacks, or leggings.

Females may also wear plain, dark or light-colored tights or knee socks, or no socks. They should not wear anything that is see through (sheer), strapless or "spaghetti Straps." Shoulders should be covered.

Females should wear plain black (preferred) or dark brown closed toe dress shoes (preferred); dress sandals, or boots with no heel or low heel that are quiet when walking.

If dress sandals are worn, they must cover most of the foot and have a heel strap.

Shoes should be dressy but plain and in good, clean condition.

Altar Servers should not draw attention to their feet. Instead, Servers should help the congregation focus on the holiness of Mass.

NEVER wear short shorts, football jerseys, jeans with holes in them, tank tops, sneakers, flip flops, “blingy” shoes, shoes with flashing LED lights, high heels, distracting shoes.

Candle Lighting

The first appearance you make as a vested Altar Server to the congregation is when you light the candles. For many it is a lost art to do it smoothly and reverently. All too often Altar Servers try to light (and extinguish) candles as fast as they can.

General Rule #6 - NEVER BLOW OUT THE CANDLES

Candle Lighters – At St Paul’s we have a Long and Short handled candle lighter in the sacristy. For lighting, a taper (small flexible candle) is inserted in one end. It is adjusted by a small lever on the tube. Make sure the taper is long enough to light all the candles before being used up. It is embarrassing to have half the candles lit and must go back in the sacristy for a taper replacement.

Tip - You should ask a more senior Altar Server or Deacon to show you where the tapers are kept and how to replace the taper if it is too short.

The taper should be lit in the sacristy and your left hand should protect it from blowing out as you walk to the first candle to be lit. If you get the first candle lit and the taper blows out, you can relight it from another lit candle.

Altar Candles – Every Church will be somewhat different on how they place Altar Candles. The following is for St Paul’s for “normal” weekday/weekend Masses. For Easter and Christmas, the number, type and placement of candles may be different.

One (1) or Two (2) Altar Servers - The following is written as if there is one (1) Altar Server lighting (extinguishing) the candles. The process looks much better if two (2) Altar Servers light the candle as a team. If done as a team, the two (2) Altar Servers should stay together (not get ahead of each other) in lighting the candles. One of the Altar Server lights the candles on the **Gospel (left) side** of the altar(s) and the other Altar Server lights the candles on the **Epistle (right) side** of the altar.

Precedence of Altars - At St Paul we have a back altar and a main altar. Since the Back Altar holds the Tabernacle, it is the Altar of Precedence BEFORE and AFTER Mass. Once the Mass has started (ProceSSIONal) until the Mass has ended (Recessional) the Main Altar (Altar of Sacrifice) is the Altar of Precedence. That is why before and after Mass we genuflect or bow to the Back Altar and during Mass we bow to the Main Altar.

Order to Light (Extinguish) Candles - There is a specific order in which the candles on the Altar(s) are lit.

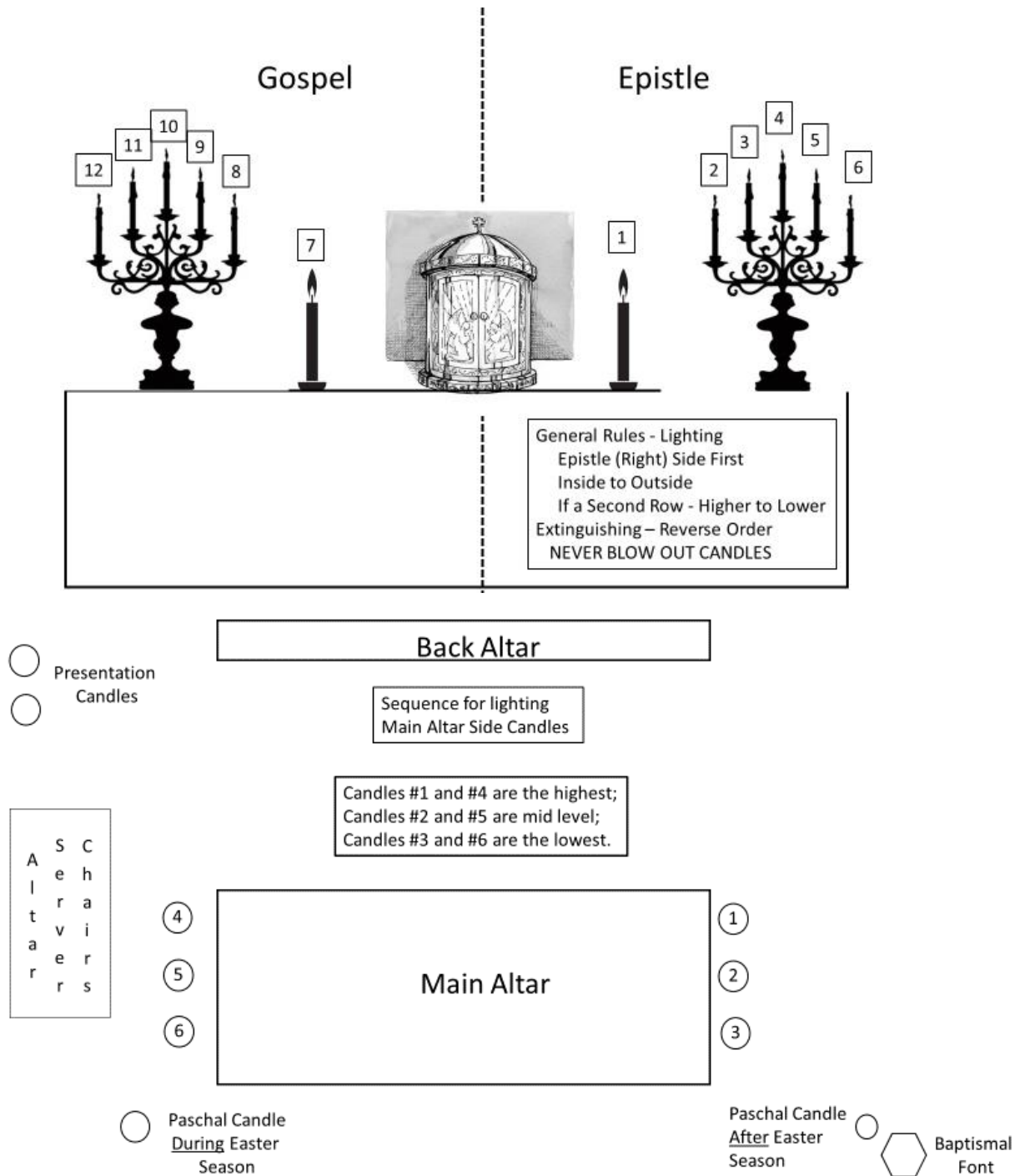
Back Altar - At St Paul's usually there are just two (2) candles lit on the Back Altar that flank the Tabernacle. As you face the Tabernacle the candles on the right side (the Epistle Side) are lit first. If there is more than one candle on each side of the Tabernacle/Back Altar the rule is simple – **Inside to Outside**. If the candles are on a multileveled candelabra, then they are lit inside to outside. If there are more than two rows of candles, generally the back row will be higher so the Highest candles – **Inside to Outside** - are lit first, then the lower candles are lit **Inside to Outside**. Once all the candles are lit on the Epistle (right) side, bow and light the candles on the Gospel (Left) side using the same rules **Inside to Outside**, etc.

Main Altar – the Main Altar at St Paul is flanked by six (6) standing candles, three (3) on each side. The three standing candles are different heights (taller) and are placed tallest to the back, shortest to the front. After all the **Back Altar** candles are lit, the Epistle (Right) standing candles are lit. Since the highest candle stand is closest to the Back Altar and Tabernacle, it is lit first. The remaining two candles are lit next. Moving to the front of the Main Altar, bowing, light the Gospel (Left) side candles – **Back to Front**.

Extinguishing Candles – Candles are extinguished in the **REVERSE ORDER** as you lit them – Gospel (left) side first – OUTSIDE to INSIDE. (See Diagram Below).

The Paschal (Easter) Candle is the first candle lit at the Easter Vigil Mass. The fire to light the Paschal Candle is kindled from a metal bowl, called a brazier (bray'-zhur). Once the Paschal Candle is lit, all other candles at the Easter Vigil Mass are lit. During the fifty (50) days of the Easter Season the Paschal Candle and stand are on the left (Gospel) side of the altar. The Paschal Candle is lit at

every Mass including Pentecost Sunday. After Pentecost, the Paschal Candle and stand are moved to the Epistle (right) side of the sanctuary near the Baptismal Font. The Paschal Candle is lit for every Baptism and it can be lit for funerals and other occasions.



Presentation Candles - Note the Presentation Candles are mounted on a single axis gimbal - which is a pivoted support that allows the rotation of the candle about a single axis. They are lit after all the Altar Candles (and Paschal Candle) are lit. When carrying - do not try to hold the candle steady. **Then candle when carried will (and should) gently swing.**

Hands – See General Rule #4 Below – Simply, when not in use carrying something, your hands should be folded.

General Rule #4 – When not actively engaged in carrying something your hands should be together (as in praying). **“Your Hands Belong to God during the Mass.”**

Put Palm against palm.

Put Left thumb over right knuckle.

Put right thumb over left hand to form an “X”.

Keep elbows near body.

Make sure hands are held in front of chest with fingers pointing up at a 45-degree angle.

Hands should be folded in this manner whenever you are not actively engaged in carrying something, i.e. standing, walking, genuflecting and kneeling. Page 3

Sign of the Cross – Not a speed drill and should be done with deliberate precision.

Never done on the move – pause/stop

Begin with Folded Hands

Left hand on your chest as you say, “In the name of the Father” (your right hand touches your forehead with the fingers of your right hand).

“...and of the Son” (with your right hand touch your chest just above your left hand);

“...and of the Holy...” (touch your fingers of your right hand to your left shoulder)

“...Spirit.” (touch your right shoulder with the fingers of your right hand);

“Amen.” (return your hands to the folded position).

“Small” Sign of the Cross – Again, to be done with deliberate precision.

At the Gospel – Right hand closed as a fist with the thumb on top

Trace the Sign of the Cross on your forehead, lips and chest as we say, “Glory to you O Lord,” in answer to the Celebrant/Deacon saying, “A reading from the Holy Gospel....)

Genuflection –

When – If there is a Tabernacle with the Blessed Sacrament (Tabernacle Candle Lit) in the Sanctuary (like our Church) you Genuflect **before** and **after** Mass AND whenever passing in front of the Tabernacle IF YOU ARE NOT CARRYING ANYTHING. See Rule #1

General Rule #1 – Altar Servers - Do NOT attempt to Genuflect if you are carrying something. The Cross Bearers and Candle Bearers do NOT Genuflect but bow.

On Good Friday (when the Tabernacle is open, empty and the Tabernacle Candle is NOT lit)) the exposed Crucifix is given the same reverence as the Tabernacle with the Blessed Sacrament.

How -

Facing the Tabernacle – stop, stand (pause). Never from a walk.

Hands folded in prayer, looking at the Tabernacle, bring your right leg back about a half of a step, then bend your right knee to the floor even with the heel of your left foot, body erect

Pause briefly, then rise to the original standing position feet together.

Proceed to the next action.

Bows

A lesser form of reverence than genuflection is the bow. There are two (2) kinds of bows, **a Simple Bow** (bow of the head) and a **Profound Bow** (a bow of the body – from the waist)

The Simple Bow - This bow is a slow, deliberate and reverent nod with the hands folded. It is made when the Father Son, and Holy Spirit are named

together, and at the name of Jesus, Mary, or the Saint in whose honor the Mass is celebrated

Simple bows are also made whenever the Altar Server approaches or leaves the Celebrant.

General Rule #3 – Anytime you hand or receive a Sacred Item from the Celebrant you bow. Pg. 2

The Profound Bow – The Profound Bow is made from the waist with hands folded. The shoulders and head are bent forward at about a 30-degree angle. It is made slowly, deliberately and reverently. A Profound Bow is made before the Altar, whenever the Blessed Sacrament is NOT present. At St Paul's, since we have an exposed Tabernacle behind our Altar, we do a Profound Bow. If not holding/carrying anything (Processional Cross or Processional Candles) we Genuflect during the entrance (**Processional**) and exit (**Recessional**) Processions.

A Profound Bow is made during the Mass whenever passing in front of the Altar, even if the Tabernacle is visible (like St Paul's). This is because the Altar (Altar of Sacrifice) becomes the priority during the Mass itself.

General Rule #2 – BEFORE and AFTER MASS - Anytime you cross in FRONT of the TABERNACLE WITHOUT anything in your hands, or in a Procession, you stop, face the Tabernacle, bow and continue with the action.

DURING MASS - Anytime you cross in FRONT or BEHIND the ALTAR WITHOUT anything in your hands, or in a Procession, you stop, face the Altar, bow and continue with the action.

In the **Profession of faith (Creed)** at the words, ***“and by the Holy Spirit was Incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man.”***

At the elevation of the consecration (**Epiclesis**) if you are unable to kneel.

Walking – Should be done with grace and smoothness. The pace, set by the Cross Bearer, (Thurifer, if incense is used), should be deliberate. If not carrying the Cross or Candle, your hands should be folded. Placing one foot directly in front of the other will prevent “swaying” when in a procession. When walking in pairs

(Candle Bearers) try to act in unison (doing the same thing at the same time). Wearing the correct length Cassock (at the top of the shoes – NOT dragging on the floor or above the ankles) will prevent stumbling or tripping.

Tip – When walking up the stairs (onto the Sanctuary) lift your advancing foot a little bit higher and set it firmly on the step (not the edge of the step).

Tip – When kneeling, as slowly and unobtrusively as you can, pull the Cassock up over you heel so it does not catch when you stand.

Carrying the Cross –

Processional - Unless the Thurifer leads the procession, the Cross Bearer sets the pace slowly, deliberately and reverently. To prevent stumbling with the Cross – the bottom of the staff should be just below the knee. The right hand should be about level with your throat and the left hand is about a foot below your right hand. Make a quick check that the Corpus (figure of Christ) is always facing forward.

Presentation of the Gifts – Pace is slow, deliberate and reverent.

Recession – As you approach the rear of the Nave (where the congregation is seated) be especially careful with the Cross when exiting the Nave and entering the Narthex (lobby) as the door frame is much lower than the Cross. To smoothly exit, about the end of the last pew slowly lower the Cross to about a 45- degree angle and **LOOK** that it will clear the door frame.

Once in the Narthex (lobby), continue to be careful as the ceiling is just low enough to put the Cross on the floor and vertical without it hitting the ceiling.

Tip - When out of its stand – NEVER lean the Cross against a wall. It will slip and possibly break the Corpus (to the embarrassment of all).

Carrying the Candles

As will be noted, a single Candle Bearer is NOT used in the Procession/Recession or at the Reading of the Gospel. **Two or None!** As above, when walking together try to keep your motions in unison, your candles at a right angle to the floor so that wax does not drip on the carpet. (Plus, it just looks better).

Holding the Roman Missal (or if asked) the Prayers of Intention binder –

With a Deacon - present yourself to him with the **Roman Missal** on your chest. He will open the book and select the correct reading.

If the Celebrant is still engaged just stand off the side of the Deacon with the **Roman Missal** open and facing the congregation. At “Let us Pray” slowly move in front of the Celebrant and make sure the **Roman Missal** is high enough for him to see to read.

For older (taller) Altar Servers you might stand slightly to the side with the **Roman Missal** still in front of the Celebrant, so you do not block his view but he can see the reading.

Sitting – Sit erect (no slouching) with your hands flat against the top of your legs with the tips of your fingers close to your knees.

Standing – Do NOT slouch, stand erect with hands properly folded. Heels should be separated. For extended standing do NOT LOCK your knees.

Cruets/Flagons – At St Paul we have a **Water Cruet** and both a **Wine Cruet** and **Wine Flagon**. For a Daily Mass you will most likely have just two **Cruets** (one for Water and one for Wine). For Sunday Mass you will have the smaller **Water Cruet** and the larger **Wine Flagon**.

If you have just the two small cruets - you MAY carry them both, one in one hand and one in the other, to and from the Altar.

If you have the small **Water Cruet** and the larger **Wine Flagon** - **NEVER** carry both at the same time. Carry only one item at a time.

With either, you ALWAYS remove the stopper before handing it to the Celebrant/Deacon. If possible, you should do so at the **Credence Table** and leave the stopper on the **Credence Table**.

With a **Cruet** with a handle, you NEVER carry it by the handle. You ALWAYS present the **Cruet** to Celebrant/Deacon handle first. Simple rule:

General Rule #5 – “The Handle is not Yours!”

For the **Wine Flagon** (which usually does NOT have a handle) hold it by the bottom in the palm of your right hand and while you are walking, steady it by holding it around the neck (narrow part) with your left hand. When handing it to the Celebrant/Deacon, release your left hand, so the Celebrant/Deacon can grab it by the neck.

Sacristy “Tour” - Altar Servers are often asked by a visiting Celebrant prior to Mass or sometimes during Mass to retrieve an item from the Sacristy. It is therefore important that Altar Servers know the correct nomenclature (name) of the Sacred Objects (see Tri-Fold – Sacred Objects) but also have knowledge of where such items are stored in the Sacristy. The following is a partial list of items that Altar Servers should be familiar with their location in the Sacristy:

Batteries for Sound System the Celebrant/Deacon use – Top Right-Hand Drawer

Tabernacle Key - Top Left-Hand Drawer.

Sacred Vessels + Water Glasses – Tall Cabinet

Sacred Linen – Just to left under sink

Cruets, Wine, and Unconsecrated Hosts – tall cabinet which holds a small refrigerator

Matches - Top Left-Hand Drawer on back wall

Candle Lighters/Extinguishers, Tapers, Charcoal and Incense for Thurifer
Tall Cabinet on left-hand back wall

Tabernacle Candles – Tall Cabinet to left of door.

Feeling Faint or Unwell – If at any time you feel faint (strange) go into the sacristy and sit down until you feel better.

Canon Law . **Canon 919 §1 "Whoever is to receive the blessed Eucharist is to abstain for at least one hour before holy communion from all food and drink, with the sole exception of water and medicine."**

Tip – A few crackers or some fruit and a glass of water at home before serving usually allays feeling faint.

If you are otherwise sick (cold/flu) especially, if you are coughing or sneezing or have an extremely runny nose – you should excuse yourself from serving and find a replacement.

Once the Mass has started, unless directed to do so by the Deacon/Celebrant or you feel faint/sick, you should NOT leave the Sanctuary for any reasons.