

# The Altar Server's Handbook



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## Vocabulary for Servers

### **Alb:**

A long, white garment, which covers the entire body. The celebrant always wears an alb. In our parish, the servers also wear albs. This was the ancient garb of a Roman citizen.

### **Altar cloth:**

The long white cloth that covers the top of the altar and hangs over the ends. It is like a tablecloth on a dining room table.

### **Boat:**

A small container that holds the incense.

### **Chalice:**

The cup used by the celebrant when he consecrates the wine into the Blood of Christ.

### **Ciborium:**

A covered chalice or container used to hold the consecrated bread during Mass and in the tabernacle.

### **Cincture:**

A thick rope tied around the waist over the alb. The color worn is based on the church year.

### **Corporal:**

A square piece of white cloth which is spread over the altar cloth. It is put on the altar where the celebrant will say the Mass. The chalice is placed on it.

### **Credence table:**

A side table in the sanctuary where all the objects used for Mass are put before and after they are actually used.

**Cruets:**

Two (2) bottle-like containers (ours are small glass pitchers) which are used for the water and wine.

**Genuflect:**

To briefly touch the right knee to the floor. This is done whenever passing in front of the tabernacle, as a sign of respect for the Eucharist.

**Homily:**

An explanation of the readings used at the Mass. This is the talk, which comes after the Gospel and is given by the celebrant.

**Host:**

The round piece of bread made with yeast used in the Mass.

**Incense:**

A mixture of resins, bark, and other natural materials, which gives off a sweet-smelling smoke when burned. This smoke rises and represents our prayers rising to God.

**Intinction:**

Dipping the host into the wine. People receiving communion are not allowed to dip the host into the wine themselves. Only the priest is allowed to do this.

**Lectionary:**

The large book containing the Bible readings used at Mass. This is the book used by the reader for the first and second readings and by the celebrant for the Gospel.

**Purificator:**

A small white cloth used to clean the chalice after Communion.

**Sacramentary:**

The large book, which contains all the prayers, said by the celebrant during the Mass. It is the large book, which lies on the left hand side of the altar for the Eucharistic Prayer.

**Sacristy:**

The room where the celebrant prepares for the Mass. Most of the objects used for the Mass are kept in this room.

**Sanctuary:**

The area around the altar.

**Tabernacle:**

The place where the Eucharist is kept during the week. In our parish, we have a special chapel called the Blessed Sacrament Chapel where the tabernacle is found. As a sign of reverence, a server genuflects whenever passing in front of the tabernacle.

**Thurible:** The metal container that holds the hot charcoal for the incense. It can also be called the censer.

## **Before Mass**

A schedule is printed and given to every server.

Note carefully the assigned times.

Change with someone when unable to serve.

Arrive at church 10 – 15 minutes early,

put on an alb and the correct cincture,

check to make sure that all the items necessary

for Mass are set up, and

check with the celebrant for special instructions.

Help prepare for Mass--

put things in their proper places in the sanctuary.

water and wine cruets, bread in the ciborium

chalices, purificator, corporal

bowl and finger towel

Sacramentary and Lectionary

incense, thurible, incense boat (when needed)

holy water (when needed)

\*\* So that you can kneel down in front of the altar during the consecration, make sure that the altar is pushed back from the step about 1 ruler length (30 cm or 12 inch.). If things get piled up there during the Offertory, don't be afraid to move them so you can kneel.

Light the candles carefully.

Remember to bow (head bow) in front of the altar.

[Between Easter Sunday and Pentecost Sunday,  
also light the Paschal Candle]

When everything is in place, quietly find your place for the entrance procession.

## Outline of the Mass

A. INTRODUCTION: The priest, servers and people prepare for Mass.

1. Entrance Procession
2. Sign of the Cross and Greeting
3. Penitential Rite
4. Gloria (on most Sundays)
5. Opening Prayer

B. LITURGY OF THE WORD: God speaks through the words of the Bible.

1. First Reading: from the Old Testament
2. Psalm: one of the hymns in the Bible.
3. Second Reading: reading from the New Testament
4. Alleluia: a joyful song in preparation for the Gospel.
5. Third Reading: from the Gospels, the stories and teachings of Christ.
6. Homily: the readings are explained and applied to today.
7. Creed: profession of Faith
8. General Intercessions: prayers for the world's needs.

C. LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST: God becomes present in the Eucharist.

1. Preparation: Bread and wine are made ready.
2. Eucharistic Prayer: Bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ.
3. Our Father: Everyone recites the Lord's Prayer
4. Sign of Peace: The people greet each other in the Lord's name.
5. Lamb of God: An ancient prayer recited or sung while the Eucharistic bread is broken.
6. Communion: Members of the congregation receive the Eucharist.
7. Prayer after Communion: the celebrant prays in thanksgiving for the Eucharist.

D. CONCLUSION: The priest, servers and people finish Mass.

1. Parish Announcements
2. Final Blessing
3. Dismissal
4. Closing Procession

## **Beginning of Mass**

Entrance procession:

Servers lead, followed by  
the Lector (reader) and the celebrant.

Everyone in the procession lines up and makes  
a deep bow as a sign of reverence

Servers go to their seats.

Mass begins with the Sign of the Cross and the greeting.

**Throughout the Mass -  
respond to the prayers and  
sing along with the congregation.**

## **The Opening Prayer**

The priest saying Mass will read the Opening Prayer from directly in front of the chairs and from the regular missalette or from the Sacramentary on the altar. The celebrant says, “Let us pray”. The servers just stay standing at their chairs, listening to the prayer.

After the prayer is finished, the celebrant and servers take their seats for the Liturgy of the Word.



## **Liturgy of the Word**

God is present through the words of the Bible.

First Reading

Second Reading

Gospel

The readings are followed by the homily.

**The servers should listen attentively and  
make the responses with the people.**

The Profession of Faith follows the homily –

the Nicene Creed (the longer one)

or

the Apostles' Creed

The servers should learn these two prayers or follow along in the Mass booklets.

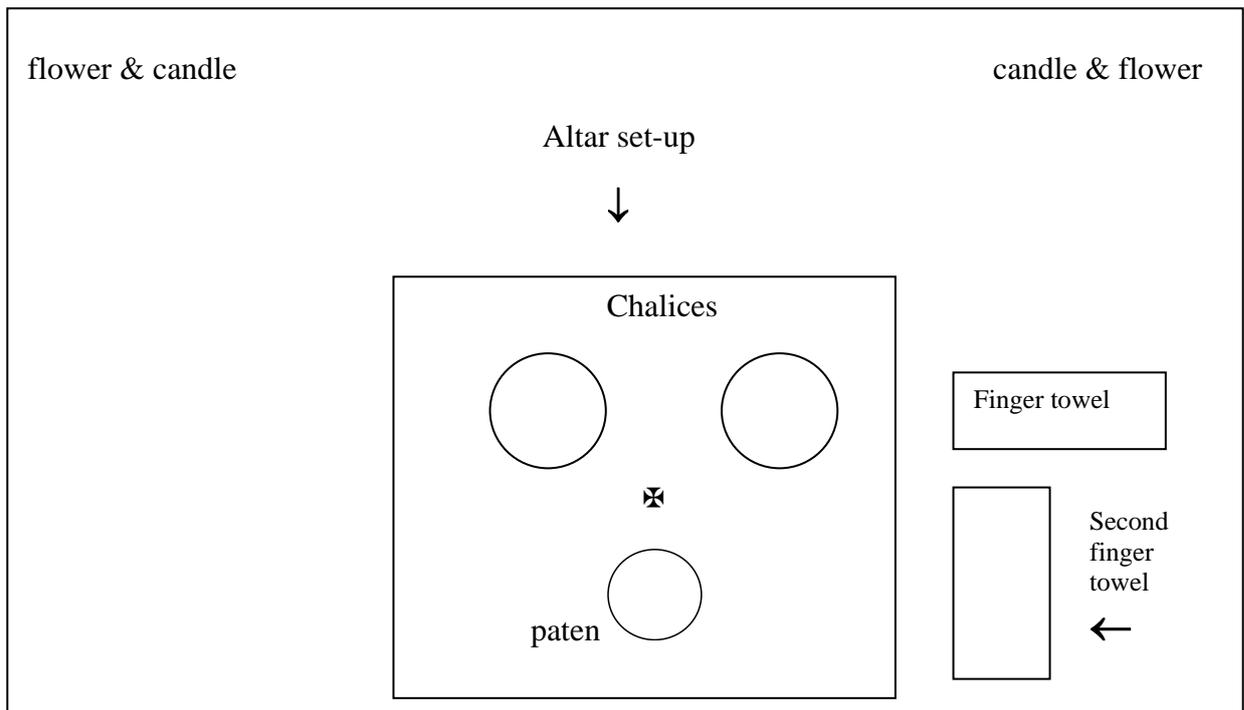
# Liturgy of the Eucharist

Begins with the Offertory.

**The servers get very busy!**

When the ushers begin to collect the money,  
then the altar servers set the table.

Preparation of the altar:



## Offertory Procession

Ushers bring the gifts to the altar.

Altar servers stand in front of the altar with celebrant between them.

Celebrant gives

money → server on his left

wine cruet → server on his right

Priest takes ciborium with bread

If, for some reason, the priest puts the cruet with the wine on the altar, one server should pick it up again and hold it in the proper place until the priest needs it to mix with the wine. *Do not let things stand on the altar.*

**Since we have so many different priests saying Mass at All Saints, I was told that it was perfectly all right for the servers to tell or indicate to the priest which server gets what item, etc. This is the only way to make sure that all goes well. The priests will appreciate your help.**

Money → the floor in front of the high altar

This server goes to get the water cruet and joins the other server at the right end of the altar.

Wine → stand at end of altar --  
near celebrant's right hand

## **Preparation of the Wine**

**Hold the cruets so that the little handle is facing the priest!**

**The priest will take each cruet as he needs it.  
Hold the cruets whenever possible.  
Do not put the cruets on the altar.**



**Stay together!**

## **Washing of Hands**

**takes place right after celebrant mixes the water and wine.**

Return the cruets to the side table and bring the metal pitcher with water in it, the metal dish, and the hand towel back with you.

Stand at the side of the altar and pour a little water over the priest's finger tips and let him dry his hands with the towel.

Return these items to the side table and then come back and stand in front of the altar so that you face the priest. You join the rest of the congregation and you stand or kneel just as they do.

# **Communion Rite**

## **The Our Father**

## **The kiss of peace (the handshake)**

!!! For the kiss of peace, the servers shake hands with the priest, family members, friends, or whoever they wish to, and then return to their chairs on the altar. !!!

## **The “Lamb of God”**

**Servers should make every effort to receive Communion when they are serving.**

**This means that you fast for 1 hour before receiving Communion.**

**During Communion - sit quietly in your places.**

After Communion, the celebrant will clean the vessels used for Communion.

**Servers should get the small cruet of water from the side table again and go stand at the side of the altar. The priest will wash out the chalices and any other vessels used for Communion. He will put them on the side of the altar and the servers should remove all these to the side table.**

**Also remove anything else which the priest gives you. This may include the Sacramentary and the Corporal.**

Take your seat again.

## **After Communion**

The Priest begins with

“Let us pray.”

and everyone stands for the final prayer.

## **Conclusion**

The Mass ends with

- a) parish announcements
- b) the final blessing
- c) dismissal

**ΑΩ ΑΩ ΑΩ ΑΩ**

The altar servers, the celebrant, and the reader leave the altar area and stand at the foot of the altar.

Everyone lines up for the recessional  
same as when you came in,

When the priest bows, the altar servers bow with him and then turn and lead the procession out of the church.

In German parishes, it is customary for the priest to stay at the altar for the entire final song and the organist plays a different song while the priest leaves.

However, in our parish, the priest traditionally leaves during the final song. So, watch the music and if it looks like the priest may want to stick around too long, give him a signal that you should leave.

## **At the back of church - -**

Ask the celebrant if he needs anything else.

If not, then the servers can leave  
to return to the sacristy.

Help put things away after Mass:

cruets, dish, empty ciborium  
chalice, purificator, corporal  
Sacramentary and Lectionary  
incense and holy water  
chairs, books

The altar area must be cleared of  
everything we use so that the next  
group can come in for their service.

Snuff out the candles --

be careful of the hot wax!

Change out of your vestments.

Be sure to hang everything neatly  
where it belongs.



The Mass never ends!  
It must be lived!

