

Incarnation Catholic Church

ALTAR SERVER GUIDE



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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. Other than priests and deacons, no one else is allowed to so closely play a part in the preparation of the Eucharist. 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.

Sometimes, we don't feel like doing our best. Sometimes, we just want to sleep another 5 minutes later; or we want wear our pajamas under our albs; or we want to not have to carry the candles today; or maybe we even want to just call in sick and let someone else serve.

When we feel that way, we should ask ourselves, "Would I do it if Jesus Himself asked me?"

Would I substitute for a sick server if Jesus Himself asked me?

Would I let the new server take my favorite part if Jesus Himself asked me?

Would I wear my best Sunday clothes if Jesus Himself asked me?

Would I put aside my daily worries and worldly concerns and instead come serve at Mass if Jesus Himself asked me?

He did ask.

And you answered.

Now you have been chosen to be a special minister of the Mass.

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.

Thank you for saying yes to Him, and welcome to Altar Service.

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' families must be registered members of Incarnation Parish.
- Servers must actively practice the Catholic faith and should regularly receive Communion.
- Servers must have completed fourth grade.
- **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 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.

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. Once servers have completed the initial training, they will be able to begin serving as an Apprentice. After a server has qualified to serve, they will be added to the regular altar server schedule. All servers continue to participate in ongoing training through:

- 1) the server advancement process
- 2) training resources
- 3) 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.

Most practices will be optional, which means that a server should make a personal decision if they need to attend or not. However, all servers will be required to attend a minimum number of optional practices each year. Currently, servers are required to attend a practice at least once every three months. Servers who fall below this requirement may be excluded from the schedule until they attend practice.

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

ADVANCEMENT

As servers grow in their knowledge, their skill, and their maturity, they will be recognized through advancement in the Altar Server Program.

Advancement through the levels of the program is not automatic, nor is it guaranteed. Altar Servers will have to prove themselves ready for promotion by demonstrating their Devotion, Dedication, and Discipline.

Information on how to advance between each level is listed in the section, "Advancement Manuals" on page 21.

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 and cincture, their conduct always must be professional 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

Three Altar Servers are scheduled at each Mass. Up to two Apprentices may also be scheduled.

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, three months at a time. Schedules are available in several locations:

- sent by email to you when they are completed
- posted in the vestry
- listed in the Sunday bulletin the week before your scheduled date
- available online on the internet at the Incarnation Church website: www.icctampa.org; "Schedules"

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 SIX 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. There are several duties that a server must perform before Mass. Often, there is some additional instructions regarding that day's liturgy that the priest and deacon may need to give to the servers.

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. The head server can change the assignments as needed.

Attendance times:

15 minutes before Mass:	All scheduled Altar Servers have arrived in the Vestry
10 minutes before Mass:	Any server standing by can fill-in for any absent server
5 minutes before Mass:	The head server "locks-in" the roles: no further changes are made. Servers arriving after this time are "absent", even if they show up later.

All servers are responsible for signing in when they serve. This should be your first duty before Mass. Locate the Altar Server Book in the Vestry. Read any "Notes to Servers" in the Altar Server's book. Sign in under today's Mass. If you are substituting, then please indicate for whom you are substituting. If you are serving as an apprentice, then sign your name in and indicate that you are an apprentice. The head server will note any "no shows" in the sign-in book.

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 and open-toed shoes are not allowed.

Shoes should have a conservative heel, and good traction. Our sanctuary floor has steps finished in polished marble. Servers may occasionally encounter water spills. Worn soles and high heels present a real hazard for tripping and slipping.

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.

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. Albs have been stained in the past by makeup. Makeup should never be applied so that it is distracting or so that it is heavy enough to stain vestments.

Short hair is strongly preferred for boys. Long hair for boys or girls must be very neatly presented so as not to fall into or on any sacramental. Neutral colors are preferred for hair accessories.

ALBS

Albs are sorted in the vestry by size. Select an alb that fits comfortably, and is long enough to cover to your ankles. Fasten the alb at the waist with a cincture matching the liturgical color of the week. Tie the cincture in a "girth-hitch" knot snug enough to hold the alb in place. See the appendix "How to tie a rope cincture" on page 28.

After Mass, return your alb to its original place (by size). Zip it on the hangar, facing the correct direction. Unknot your cincture and hang it on the proper hook.

POSTURES

The posture of the Altar Server should be one of near invisibility. 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.

Make no distracting motions or noises. Do not wave, smile, or wink at people. Friends and family will be very proud of you. They may smile or even wave at you. Impress them further by attending to your duties at Mass without acknowledging them. You will have time to visit with them after Mass.

Coughs and sneezes should be covered with a handkerchief or facial tissue. Make a habit of bringing them with you in case they are needed. Suppress the urge to yawn.

Do not leave your place during Mass for any reason. Bodily needs should be attended to before and after Mass. Servers are not allowed in the sacristy during mass, unless they have been sent to retrieve something by the priest.

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

When standing, stand up straight. Balance your weight evenly on both feet, but do not lock your knees.

Whenever you are not holding anything, fold your hands with palms together, in the "prayer position". Point your fingertips upward. They should be held comfortably at about the middle of your chest.

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.

PROCESSION

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.

KNEELING

While kneeling, keep your torso up straight, not slouching or resting on your feet. If kneeling behind a chair or pew, do not lean over it. Feet should be directly behind you. Keep your legs and feet still. Hands are folded prayerfully.

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 at Incarnation, 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. Sign in and read any notes for the day. 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. During this time, another server lights the processional candles.

At 5 minutes before Mass, the lector begins the announcements. The priest may come out and pray with you. If not, the head server should lead the other servers in prayer. A sample prayer can be found in the appendix titled "Altar Server Prayers" on page 29.

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 Candle Bearer: The candle bearers carry the candles in procession and assist at the Eucharistic blessing. In this guide, they are referred to as "CANDLE"

Apprentices are covered separately; refer to their section on page 23 for details.

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.

If there are only two servers, before Mass begins, they should place the processional candles in the sanctuary in their normal location. One server acts as the CROSS as normal. The CANDLE server processes behind the CROSS, with hands folded, and also proceeds as usual.

If there is only one server before Mass begins, the server should place the processional candles in the sanctuary in their normal location. The one server acts as the CROSS as normal, but also performs the duties of the CANDLES. However the server does not bring the candles forward to the ambo during the Gospel.

THE ORDER OF THE MASS

ENTRANCE PROCESSION

The order you enter Mass is shown in Figure 1- Order of Procession. The procession begins when the people begin to sing the entrance hymn. Walk up the aisle slowly, slower than you normally walk, but not at a snail's pace. Always move to the right of the baptismal font.

When arriving at the sanctuary, do not stop. CROSS and CANDLES go to the left side of the sanctuary and up the steps. CROSS places the processional cross in the stand and walks to the seat to the left of the Priest. CROSS should pick up the book and keep it at hand. CANDLES place the candles on either side of the cross and walk to their seats in front of the organ. All SERVERS stand.

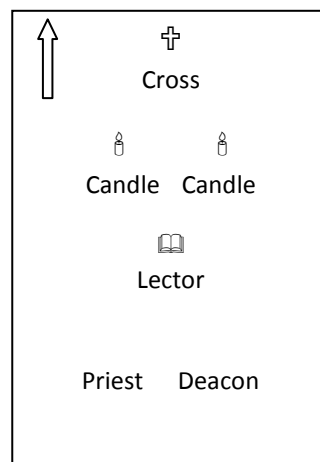


FIGURE 1- ORDER OF PROCESSION

INTRODUCTORY RITE

GREETING

STAND and Respond

CROSS: Some priests may read a greeting from the white binder- be ready and watch for a sign from the priest.

PENITENTIAL RITE (OR KYRIE)

STAND and Respond

RITE OF SPRINKLING

During certain times of year or for certain Masses, the Rite of Sprinkling with Holy Water may be celebrated. The Priest or Deacon will usually tell the servers before Mass if this is happening.

After the priest says the initial greeting, the priest and deacon go to the baptismal font. All servers go to the Baptismal Font with them.

The CROSS should bring the Book of Blessings to the Priest and holds it at the baptismal font for him. Once the Priest is done with the reading, the CROSS may return to their chair.

Each CANDLE server retrieves a sprinkling bowl and holds it for the either priest or the deacon. As they walk around the church, the CANDLE walks at their side with the bowl. If there is no deacon, one CANDLE remains at their chair and the other CANDLE goes to help with the bowl.

Once the Rite is complete, Mass continues as usual. However, the Profession of Faith may be skipped if Baptismal Vows are renewed during the Rite of Sprinkling.

GLORIA

STAND and Respond

CROSS: At the words "...you alone are the Lord..." the CROSS picks up the Book of Prayers and holds it for the priest, stepping directly in front of the priest.

NOTE: During Lent and Advent the Gloria is not prayed. Be prepared to move with the book at the words "May almighty God have mercy on us..."

OPENING PRAYER

CROSS holds the book for the priest. Return to your seat after the prayer.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING, RESPONSORIAL PSALM, SECOND READING

SIT and Respond

ALLELUIA AND GOSPEL

CANDLES: After the second reading, as soon as the READER says: "The Word of the Lord", the CANDLES get the candles and stand in place. When the "Alleluia" starts (singing), CANDLES move forward to a point even with the altar. Once the priest or deacon reaches the ambo, the CANDLES move to either side of the Ambo, and face the Ambo.

For the point at which the people say "Glory to you, O Lord", the people make a sign of the cross on their forehead, their lips, and their hearts. CANDLES are holding the candles with both hands, and do not make this sign.

At the end of the Gospel ("Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ"), CANDLES return the candles to their place at the altar and take their seats in front of the organ.

CROSS: STAND with hands folded

HOMILY

SIT and Listen

PROFESSION OF FAITH

STAND with hands folded

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

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

CROSS: If there is no Deacon, at the end of the Profession of Faith when they say "*I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins...*" retrieve the folder of prayers and hold it for the priest

STAND with hands folded

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

OFFERTORY

When the prayer of the faithful is finished, CROSS and both CANDLES prepare the altar.

CROSS: remove the gospel book stand from the altar and place it on the back table (not the credence table) Take Sacramentary and place it on the bookstand on the Altar. *For Fr. Michael, do not use the bookstand.* Then, STAND at the back of the credence table, ready to help the other servers.

CANDLES: Place the priest's chalice on the altar.

Carry it with one hand on the stem, and one hand holding the paten and pall on the top. Make sure that there is a corporal on the altar on the left side at the front. Place the cups from the back table on the corporal. Place the purificators from the back table on the corporal, but closer to the Priest, and separated out neatly.

CANDLES stand and wait next to the credence table until the priest stands to get the offertory gifts.

When the priest walks towards the front of the steps to get the gifts, CROSS and CANDLES go with him. The CANDLES stand to his left and left, the CROSS stands to the left of the left CANDLE.

The priest will receive the gifts and hand them to the servers: the ciborium to the CANDLE on his right and the cruet to the CANDLE on his left. If the priest bows to the offertory family, offer a head bow with him. ALL return to the sanctuary with the priest.

PREPARATION OF THE ALTAR

There is no talking among the servers, especially during this part of Mass.

The CROSS STANDS behind the credence table to assist the other servers.

The CANDLE carrying the ciborium STANDS at the corner of the altar on the right side and waits for the priest to take it from them. DO NOT PLACE THE CIBORIUM ON THE ALTAR.

The CANDLE carrying the wine cruet takes it back to the credence table. They remove the tops from both cruets. They then pick up the water cruet and wait for the other candle to come get the wine cruet.

NOTE: Several cruet tops have been broken lately: place the stoppers upside down on the table to keep them from rolling around.

Both CANDLES take the cruets to the altar and stand next to the priest, at the corner of the altar. Do not make the priest wait. You should be standing there waiting on him. Hold the cruets with the handles towards the priest so that he can take them from you. The wine cruet stands closer to the front of the altar. Stand right next to the priest, at the corner of the altar. He should not have to take a step to reach you.

At this time, the servers in the sanctuary may hear the priest offer the Blessing of the Gifts. When they hear the priest say "*....it will become for us the bread of life*", ALL respond, "Blessed be God forever".

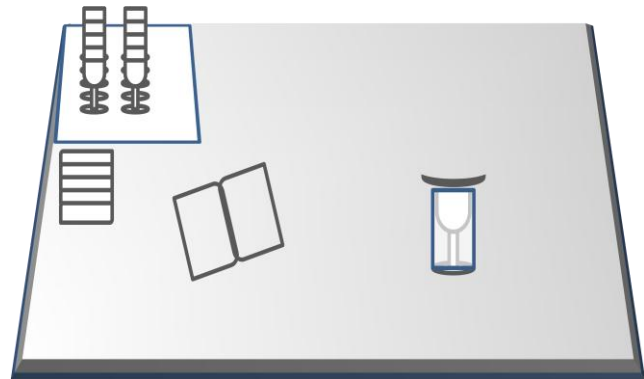


FIGURE 2- THE ALTAR BEFORE COMMUNION

When they hear the priest say "*...it will become our spiritual drink*", ALL respond, "Blessed be God forever".

When the priest hands back the wine cruet, CANDLES make a HEAD BOW and return the cruets to the credence table. CROSS replaces the stoppers on the cruets.

CANDLES retrieve the lavabo pitcher and bowl and finger towel. Return to the position at the Altar beside the priest. Do not make the priest wait. You should be standing there waiting on him. Stand right next to the priest, at the corner of the altar. The CANDLE closest to the front of the altar holds the pitcher in their right hand and the lavabo bowl in the left. The CANDLE holding the finger towel holds it opened with the top corners between their fingers.

The priest will turn and pray "Lord, wash away my iniquities, and cleanse me of my sins." The CANDLE holding the pitcher pours a *small amount* of water over the priest's fingers and into the bowl. The Priest takes the finger towel, dries his hands, and hands it back. The CANDLES make a HEAD BOW and return the bowl, pitcher, and towel to the credence table. If there is water on the bottom of the pitcher base, place it on the finger towel so as to not leave a water ring on the table.

ALL servers leave the sanctuary by the steps in front of the presider's chair and stand in their pews on the chapel side.

PREFACE

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

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

When the Sanctus acclamation ends with "*... blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.*" all KNEEL with hands folded through the remainder of the 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

After the Doxology and Great Amen, ALL STAND, with hands folded.

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 quickly move to form a line on the Chapel side of the altar, facing the choir, even with the presider's chair.

You must be in position for communion before the "Lamb of God" begins.

The CROSS takes the offertory ciborium from the priest and places it on the credence table. Then they bring the empty ciboria from the credence table to the priest, so that he may fill them for communion. Then, the CROSS returns to their place to stand with the other servers

LAMB OF GOD

STAND with hands folded

COMMUNION

The priest will offer communion to the Eucharistic Ministers, who offer it to the servers. You have the option of receiving the Blessed Sacrament in both species (Body and Blood).

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 place until the last Eucharistic Minister has left the sanctuary. Then ALL servers proceed back to their pew to offer prayers of thanksgiving.

Altar Servers have expressed concerns that they might be forgotten by the Eucharistic Ministers. This should never happen. If it does, calmly and reverently process down the front of the steps to the pews at the front. Join the line at the end of the next pew, and follow the line to receive communion as usual, then return to your pew.

DURING COMMUNION

After Communion, servers offer their prayer of thanksgiving KNEELING in the pews.

Just before Eucharistic Ministers begin to return from Communion, CROSS returns to the Sanctuary. CANDLES walk with the CROSS, and return to their chairs on the choir side.

CROSS removes the Sacramentary and book stand and returns them to the back table. CROSS then removes the empty priest's chalice covered with the pall, to the credence table. Then CROSS STANDS at the corner of the altar to assist the priest by taking the empty ciboria from the priest and returning them to the credence table.

CROSS remains standing with the priest until the priest returns to the president's chair and sits down. Then they SIT at the same time as the priest.

When the priest sits down, the CROSS takes and holds the Book of Prayers (brown) on their lap.

CONCLUDING RITE

CLOSING PRAYER

CANDLES STAND with hands folded

When the priest stands, the CANDLES go STAND next to each candle.

When the priest says, "Let us pray", the CROSS 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

When the deacon or priest says, "*The Mass is ended...*", ALL servers move to retrieve the processional cross and candles.

CROSS takes the cross to the second black diamond in the main aisle and turns to face the altar.

CANDLES take the candles to either side of the first black diamond in the main aisle and turn to face the altar.

ALL turn with the priest and deacon (CANDLE Servers turn towards one another) and process out following the pattern used on the way in. ALL process to the right of the Baptismal Font.

Process out slowly to the main entrance. When you get to the back row of the Church, extinguish the candles. Return the processional cross and candles to the vestry.

AFTER MASS

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

ALL SERVERS should check the vestry for announcements. The CROSS server will be responsible for making sure that the Altar candles are extinguished. All candles are to be extinguished. Keep your Alb on until all of your duties are completed.

One server remains in their alb and goes to extinguish the candles on the altar, using the snuffer. They remove everything from credence table and take it to the working sacristy. Then, they remove chalice and ciboria from the credence table and take them to the working sacristy.

Clean up any spills on the credence and preparation tables.

All servers return their albs and cinctures 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. Look around to see that the vestry and the bathroom are neat and tidy. This room belongs to you as ministers. As ministers, you should take care of it.

No servers leave until everything is done.

REFERENCES

VESTMENTS

The vestments we use today are thus very ancient in origin. They help us tell easily who is doing what at Mass. In the earliest days of the Church, Mass was usually celebrated in people's homes. There were relatively few Church members then. The priest and other ministers wore what everybody else wore. As years passed, the Church community got much bigger, so Mass had to be celebrated in large buildings. Sometimes there were thousands of people there. People had to be able to tell easily who the various ministers were. As a result, special garments were adopted for the various ministers at Mass.

ALB	The Alb is a long, white, dress-like vestment can be used by all liturgical ministers. It is used by altar servers in place of a cassock and surplice. Alb is short for <i>tunica alba</i> , which means "white tunic"
BENEDICTION VEIL	Also known as a humeral veil, this is a long, narrow, shawl like vestment used at Benediction and in processions where the Blessed Sacrament is carried.
CASSOCK	A long outer garment worn by some clerics and servers. It is usually black, but for servers red or white cassocks may be worn for special feasts.
CHASUBLE	The chasuble is the sleeveless outer vestment, slipped over the head, hanging down from the shoulders and covering the stole and alb. It is the proper Mass vestment of the priest and its color varies according to the feast.
CINCTURE	This is a long cord used for fastening some albs at the waist. It holds the loose-fitting type of alb in place and is used to adjust it to the proper length. The cincture is usually white, although the liturgical color of the day may be used.
COPE	A cape-like vestment that is put on over the shoulders and hangs to the ankles, it is open in the front and clasped at the neck. The priest frequently wears it in processions, at Benediction, and in other services. Copes can be found in any of the liturgical colors.
DALMATIC	The dalmatic is a loose-fitting robe with open sides and wide sleeves worn by the deacon. It takes its color from the liturgical feast.

SERVERS ALB	This is a vestment used by servers in place of the cassock. It is similar to the priest's alb, but sometimes has a cowl (hood). It is usually fastened around the waist with a cincture, often in the liturgical color. Ours does not have a cowl.
STOLE	A stole is a long cloth scarf, often ornately decorated, of the same color and style as the chasuble. According to the manner in which it is worn, it is a mark of the office of priest or deacon. A priest wears it around the neck, letting it hang down in front. A deacon wears it over his right shoulder and fastened at his left side like a sash. (There is a smaller stole, white on one side and purple on the other, which many priests use for the anointing of the sick and the Sacrament of Reconciliation.)
SURPLICE	This is a wide sleeved garment, slipped over the head, covering the shoulders, and coming down below the hips. It is worn over the cassock for services in which the alb is not used.

SACRAMENTALS

The Sacramentals that we use are Mass are also ancient in origin. Some come from the ancient traditions of the Old Testament sacrifice. Some are modeled after things we use every day. The most special of these are used to hold the Blessed Sacrament. Anything which touches the Eucharist is washed in a special sink, so that not even the smallest part of Christ's Body or Blood is treated disrespectfully.

Aspergil (Aspergillum)	The Aspergil is an implement used to sprinkle holy water. It may be a type of brush, or it may be a ball on a handle with holes in it. Early aspergilla were made from the Hyssop plant. The bucket into which the aspergillum is dipped is called the aspersion.
Boat (Incense Boat)	The Incense Boat is a covered metal bowl with hinged lids used to hold the incense to put in the Thurible. It usually has a matching spoon.
Book of Gospels	A special edition of the Lectionary, the Book of Gospels contains only the gospel readings for Mass. It is carried in procession. The Book of Gospels is often more decorated than the simpler lectionary.
Book of Prayers	The Book of Prayers is a brown book containing all of the daily prayers used at Mass throughout the year. When the new Roman Missal is issued in November, this will go away.

Candlelighter	The Candlelighter is a long hollow tube with a wick in it for carrying the flame to light the altar candles. Our serves a dual purpose, as it has an extinguisher on the end of it.
Candles	There are two main kinds of candles used in most Masses: The Processional Candles are carried in the procession, and used to call attention to the Ambo when the Gospel is being read. The Altar Candles remain on either side of the Altar. Other candles used include the Pascal Candle, the Chapel lamp, and the Advent candles.
Chalice	A Chalice is a special cup lined with gold used to hold the Blessed Blood at the Eucharist. Every Priest has at least one chalices of his own.
Ciborium (plural: Ciboria)	A Ciborium is a bowl, sometimes on a pedestal, lined with gold and used to hold the Blessed Body at the Eucharist
Cruet	A cruet is a small pitcher with a stopper used to hold the water and wine for consecration.
Finger Towel	A Finger Towel is a plain white linen towel for the priest to dry his fingers after the ceremonial washing (lavabo).
Lavabo	The Lavabo is the small bowl that catches the water poured over the priest's hands at the ceremonial washing. The name comes from an ancient prayer in Latin which begins, "I will wash" (<i>lavabo</i> , in Latin)
Lectionary	The Lectionary is the book of Scriptures from which the First and Second reading, and sometimes the Psalms are read.
Lunette	The Lunette is a small, circular windowed box that holds the Blessed Sacrament in the Monstrance.
Monstrance	The Monstrance is a large, ornate, often gold covered vessel to display the Blessed Sacrament for Benediction
Pall	The Pall is a square stiff linen cloth used to cover the chalice.
Paten	The Paten is a small ornate plate which sits on top of the Chalice and hold the Host at consecration
Purificators	Purificators are linen towels, folded in thirds, used to wipe the edge of a Chalice or Communion Cup after each communicant has received the Eucharistic Blood.
Pyx	A pyx is a small metal box to hold the Eucharist to be taken to the Ministry of the sick or homebound.
Sacramentary	The Sacramentary (officially called the <i>Roman Missal</i>) is the book of prayers and instructions

	for the priest which includes all Masses, special prayers, and rites.
Thurible	The Thurible is a metal container on a chain in which incense is burned

THE CHURCH BUILDING

Churches have changed over the centuries. Early Christians met in private homes to celebrate the Eucharist. Often, they met in secret, to avoid persecution. Churches in the middle ages were often the center of a town, and the largest building. Today's churches can be large or small, traditional or modern. All Catholic churches have important features in common.

AMBO	The Ambo is the raised reading stand where the Scriptures are read and the homily is normally given. It is sometimes incorrectly called a "lectern" or "pulpit". The term "Ambo" means that there is only one stand which serves all of the purposes.
AMBRY	The Ambry is the locked cabinet that stores the blessed oils used for Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders, and the Anointing of the Sick. The bishop blesses these oils during Holy Week at the Chrism Mass. When they are brought back to the Parish from the Cathedral the oils are placed in glass vessels and stored in a locked cabinet or niche located near the baptismal pool.
CHAPEL OF RESERVATION	The Chapel of Reservation or Eucharistic Chapel is the small room where the tabernacle is kept. Its door is marked with a red candle to indicate the presence of Christ in the Tabernacle.
CHOIR	The choir refers to that group of persons who assist the assembly in their duty of singing the liturgy. Choir also refers to that area of the church space reserved for this group of persons. Musical instruments that support the music ministry are located in this space as well.
CREDENCE TABLE	The Credence Table is a smaller table near the altar where the sacred vessels are kept during mass when they are not being used at the altar.
NARTHEX	The Narthex is the enclosed room between the outside doors and the nave. At Incarnation, our Narthex is a gathering space for people to meet before and after Mass. Our Narthex allows access to the cry room, the gift shop, and the restrooms.

NAVE	The Nave is the main area of the church where the people at mass sits. The term "nave" comes from the same word as "navy" and represents the ship of our salvation, like in Noah's Ark.
SACRARIUM (also PISCINA)	The Sacrarium is a sink with it drain going directly into the ground usually fitted with a cover and lock. It is used to dispose of sacred linen wash and rinse water, used holy water, used baptismal water and blessed ashes. The Sacrarium is never used for anything else.
SACRISTY	The Sacristy is the room where the vestments and Sacramentals are kept. Incarnation features two sacristies: the "back sacristy" where the priests put on their vestments, and the "working sacristy" behind the Altar where all the Sacramentals are kept.
SANCTUARY	The sanctuary area is the open space immediately around the altar. Our Sanctuary is a raised platform with steps. It is in this space that you find the presider's chair, altar, ambo, cross, and candles.
STOUP	The holy water fountains or bowls at the entrances of the church.
TABERNACLE	The Tabernacle is a gold-lined box that holds the consecrated Eucharist. It is locked to prevent the Eucharist from being treated sacrilegiously.

ADVANCEMENT LEVELS

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. Altar Servers wearing vestments are an extension of the clergy.

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.

The most disciplined Altar Servers are rewarded with more responsibility, including training new servers.

ADVANCEMENT LEVELS - AN OVERVIEW

APPRENTICE

An Apprentice is a candidate that is learning how to become an Altar Server. Apprentices will be scheduled at the Masses they wish to serve. At the discretion of the presiding priest, Apprentices may process in the opening and closing procession. Apprentices sit in reserved seats that allow them to be close enough to directly observe and learn from the Altar Servers.

Altar serving can be a little scary at first. The apprentice program is a chance for new servers to get past being nervous and build the confidence that they need to enjoy service. It also gives the Altar Server Coordinator an opportunity to observe new servers and determine when they are ready to be active Altar Servers

JUNIOR ALTAR SERVER

Once an apprentice becomes certified, they are promoted to Junior Altar Server. Junior Altar Servers are learning new parts of the Mass and new responsibilities. In this first year, they are demonstrating to themselves and to the community that they are fully capable of service at all parts of the Mass.

SENIOR ALTAR SERVER

The main body of servers is made up of Senior Altar Servers. They are promoted to this position based on their proven track record of service. They may learn new responsibilities for special services, but their competence at weekend Mass is well established.

LEAD ALTAR SERVER

Some Senior Altar Servers will show a commitment to leadership in their service. They reach out to newer servers to help them learn. They drive their Altar Server teams to excel. These servers may be recognized as Lead Altar Servers, and given responsibilities beyond what other servers are asked or permitted to do.

APPRENTICE

The Apprentice Program gives new Altar Servers the opportunity to learn by closely watching experienced Altar Servers. The Apprentice's job is to watch and learn.

Apprentices dress in albs and walk in procession with the regular Altar Servers, behind the CANDLES. They immediately take their seats at the far end of the servers' reserved row on the chapel side of the church. At the Sign of Peace, the Apprentices come into the Sanctuary with the other Servers to receive Communion, and then return to their pews. At the closing Procession, the Apprentices stand in front of the first pew, on either side of the CANDLES. Then, they follow the CANDLES down the aisle.

At the discretion of the head server for a Mass, an Apprentice may be called upon to serve in place of an absent server. Therefore, apprentices should be prepared to actively serve, if required.

REQUIREMENTS:

Persons meeting the requirements to become an Altar Server (see page 2) are admitted to the Apprentice level after attending a new Altar Server training.

Apprentice Altar Servers are expected to be familiar with the Order of Mass. They should know the Prayers of the Mass well enough to participate fully. For reference, see "Missal Guide to Mass" on page 30.

- 1) Apprentices must be able to recite the following prayers from memory:
 - a. The Lord's Prayer
 - b. Lamb of God
 - c. Holy, Holy, Holy
- 2) Following training, Apprentices must be able to identify the following parts of the church:
 - a. Altar
 - b. Ambo
 - c. Sanctuary
 - d. Sacristy (working Sacristy)
 - e. Vestry (front Sacristy)
 - f. Altar Server chairs
 - g. Presider's Chair
- 3) Following training, Apprentices must be able to identify the following Sacramentals:
 - a. Book of Prayers (vs the white binder)
 - b. Sacramentary
 - c. Chalice
 - d. Ciborium
 - e. Cruets

After three Masses serving as an Apprentice, the Altar Server may request to become certified as a Junior Altar Server.

JUNIOR ALTAR SERVER

Junior Altar Servers are learning to master service at the Mass. They are competent in their duties, and are working to learn more about the various roles and responsibilities of the Altar Server.

REQUIREMENTS:

Served at least four times as an apprentice, and attended two practices;

or obtained the Altar Server coordinator's sign-off (for example, if they are transferring from a different parish)

- 1) Must meet all of the Apprentice requirements.
- 2) Must be able to recite the following prayers from memory:
 - a. *all of the Apprentice prayers*
 - b. Gloria
 - c. "May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands..."
 - d. at least one Memorial Acclamation
- 3) Must be able to identify the following parts of the Church:
 - a. Eucharistic Chapel
 - b. Credence Table
 - c. Nave
- 4) Must be able to identify the following Sacramentals:
 - a. All the Sacramentals from the Apprentice list
 - b. Book of Gospels
 - c. Lectionary
 - d. Lavabo
 - e. Corporal
 - f. Purificators
 - g. Pall
 - h. Paten
 - i. Finger Towel
- 5) Must be able to show the following:
 - a. Profound Bow
 - b. Head Bow
 - c. Genuflection
 - d. How to light candles using matches, a lighter, and the candlelighter
 - e. How to properly extinguish a candle using the snuffer
 - f. How to carry the processional candles and cross
 - g. How to tie a cincture
 - h. How to use the lavabo with one server and with two servers

SENIOR ALTAR SERVER

Senior Altar Servers have demonstrated a high proficiency at regular service at the Mass. They have served at special occasions and are capable of fulfilling almost all of the needs of the Parish for Altar Service.

REQUIREMENTS:

Served at least one calendar year as a Junior Altar Server, with a minimum of 10 Masses; Served in all positions (CROSS and CANDLES); served at least two special Masses or services (Easter Vigil, Christmas Midnight, Stations of the Cross)

- 1) Must meet all of the Junior Altar Server requirements.
- 2) Must be able to recite the following prayers from memory:
 - a. *all of the Junior Altar Server prayers*
 - b. Nicene Creed
 - c. Confiteor ("*I confess to almighty God...*")
 - d. all other acclamations of the Mass
- 3) Must be able to identify the following parts of the Church:
 - a. *all of the parts of the church required of Junior Altar Servers*
 - b. Ambry
 - c. Narthex
 - d. Sacrarium
 - e. Tabernacle
- 4) Must be able to identify the following Sacramentals:
 - a. *all the Sacramentals from the Apprentice list*
 - b. Aspergillum
 - c. Aspersorium
 - d. Boat
 - e. Lunette
 - f. Monstrance
 - g. Pyx
 - h. Thurible
- 5) Must be able to show the following:
 - a. All of the postures and duties at Mass
 - b. How to serve with only one or two servers
- 6) Must directly participate in the direct training of a more junior server

LEAD ALTAR SERVER

Lead Altar Servers have at least three full years of experience as an Altar Server. They have mastered service of the regular Mass and have participated in multiple special occasion Masses.

Lead Altar Servers are the Peer Leaders of the Ministry. They train other servers, particularly Apprentices. They advise the Altar Server coordinator in the conduct of the ministry.

Not all servers will qualify as Lead Altar Servers. Those who aspire to higher dedication in their service should discuss their intentions with the Altar Server Coordinator.

APPENDICES

HOW TO TIE A CINCTURE



CM ALMY HOW TO TIE A ROPE CINCTURE



Fold cincture in half



Wrap around waist
with knots on your
right side



Grab end of loop made
by the fold and overlap
as shown



Using right hand, slip
loop over left hand,
keeping hold of cincture



Grab knotted end with
your right hand



Slip knotted ends through
loop (where left hand is
making sure that single loop
is on top of double cincture.)
Feed knotted ends through
loop from top to bottom



Drop loop and then
tighten around waist



Knot is on left hip

From <http://www.almy.com/UI/Hotspots/Docs/Cincture.pdf>

ALTAR SERVER PRAYERS

Pick one of these prayers to say before serving at Mass:

PRAYER 1: (DEVOTION TO JESUS)

Oh Jesus, my King and Lord,
by the grace of the heavenly Father
and the power of the Holy Spirit,
guide me in all righteousness
as I serve You today at the Altar
so I may be always worthy of Your presence.
If I happen to make an error,
may it be a lesson
so my service will be perfect tomorrow.
Sweet Jesus, I love you with all my heart. Amen.

PRAYER 2: (REMEMBRANCE OF TARCISIUS, MARTYR)

O God, You have graciously called me to serve You upon Your altar.
Grant me the graces that I need to serve You faithfully and wholeheartedly.
Grant too that while serving You, may I follow the example of St. Tarcisus, who died protecting the Eucharist,
and walk the same path that led him to Heaven.

St. Tarcisus, pray for us and for all servers. Amen

PRAYER 3: (ALTAR SERVER PRAYER OF THANKS)

Loving Father, creator of the universe,
you call your people to worship,
to be with you and with one another at Mass.
I thank you for having called me
to assist others in their prayer to you.
May I be worthy of the trust placed in me
and through my example and service bring others closer to you.
I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ,
who is Lord for ever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER 4: (TRADITIONAL ALTAR SERVER PRAYER)

Open my mouth, O Lord, to bless your Holy Name.
Cleanse my heart from all evil and distracting thoughts.
Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will
that I may serve more worthily at your holy altar.

O Mary, Mother of Christ the High Priest,
obtain for me the most important grace of knowing my vocation in life.

Grant me a true spirit of faith and humble obedience
so that I may ever behold the priest as a representative of God
and willingly follow him in the Way, the Truth, and the Life of Christ. Amen.

MISSAL GUIDE TO MASS