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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.

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 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.

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.

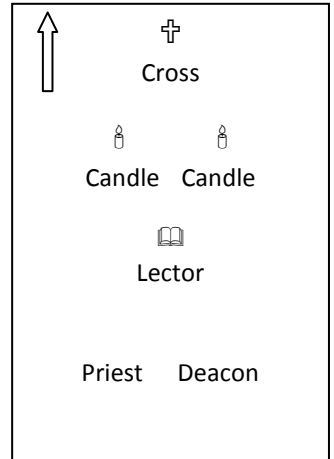


FIGURE 1- ORDER OF PROCESSION

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.

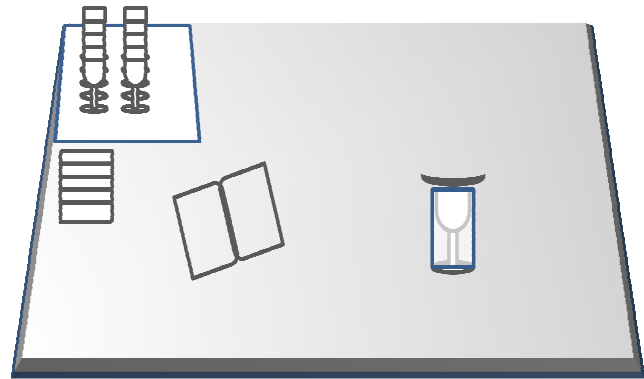
The CANDLE carrying the ciborium STANDS at the corner of the altar on the right side and waits for the priest to take it from them. DO NOT PLACE THE CIBORIUM ON THE ALTAR.

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".



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.