

Holy Trinity Catholic Church

Altar Server Procedures

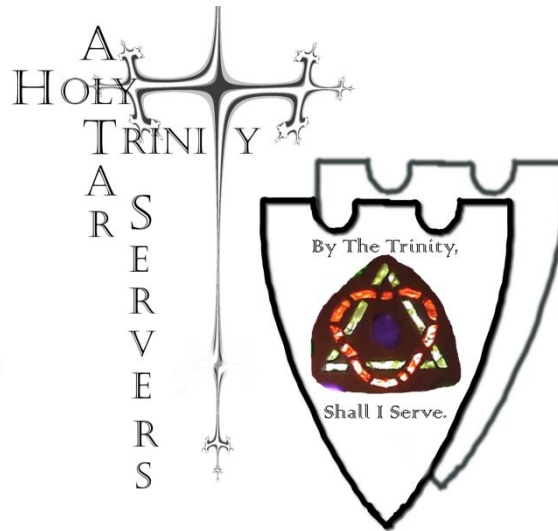


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Introduction

Altar servers are children chosen from among the parish who display a desire to participate in a more active way during the Mass. It is an extreme privilege to serve and kneel so close to the altar as our loving Savior, Jesus Christ, becomes truly present: Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity upon the altar.

The primary role of the altar server is to assist the priest in the celebration of the liturgy during Mass. This is done through specific actions and by setting an example for the congregation to follow by active participation in the liturgy by their actions; saying prayers; singing hymns; looking alert and reverently sitting, kneeling or standing at the appropriate times.

Servers carry the incense and thurible; the cross; the processional candle(s); hold the book for the priest celebrant when he is not at the altar; help prepare the altar in the absence of the deacon; escort and present the gifts (bread and wine) to the priest or deacon during the preparation of the gifts or assist them when they receive the gifts from the people; and wash the hands of the priest.

Thank you for volunteering to serve! May God bless you as you assist in His Sanctuary and at His altar.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fr. Jim". The signature is written in black ink and is centered on the page.

Requirements

1. General Requirements

When serving at the altar, it is both wise and necessary for a server to perform all of his or her assigned duties with attention, dignity, and reverence. All actions of the server are based on signs and symbols whose meanings are rooted in the tradition of the Church; specified by events in the Old Testament; and/or are fully revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is imperative that all servers do their assigned tasks in the prescribed manner.

The Sanctuary is a holy place and access to it is restricted to very few people.

- a. Servers are required to vest as directed by the parish priest. The cincture tie and knots/ends will be positioned on the right side of the waist. Ordained members of the clergy wear their cincture knots on the left side.
- b. Clothes worn under an alb should be such that they so *not* have patterns, pictures, stripes, checks or any other printed design which will show through the alb's fabric. Solid colored clothes are best.
- c. Dress shoes and appropriate socks or stockings should be worn. The Sanctuary is not an appropriate place for soiled sneakers, running shoes, or any other sports footwear.
- d. Servers carry the incense and thurible; the cross; the processional candle(s); hold the book for the priest celebrant when he is not at the altar; prepare the altar in the absence of the deacon; present the bread and wine to the priest/deacon during the preparation of the gifts or assist them when they receive the gifts from the people; wash the hands of the priest; and assist the priest celebrant and/or deacon, as necessary.

e. The incense and thurible are carried by those servers who have been trained as a thurifer.

2. Specifics

Who may serve?

A server can be anyone who has received First Holy Communion, is able to sit still and pay attention at Mass, and is registered as a parishioner at the Holy Trinity Catholic Church. At the Holy Trinity Parish, servers are generally 8 years old and older. Exceptions may be granted by the parish priest.

Why serve?

The coordinator of the server training should discern the reason(s) why a candidate wishes to serve and be reasonably certain that the candidate's desire and wishes, and not parental pressures, are the primary motivation. A reluctant or disinterested server can be a distraction to the priest, parishioners and fellow servers. A poor attitude can have a negative effect on the overall parish faithful.

Required Basic Knowledge of the Mass

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

Duties of the Server

Servers are primarily present to assist the priest. Here is a short list of server duties:

1. The server's first duty is to prepare for the Mass. The server should arrive at the Church early (usually 15 minutes before Mass).
2. Servers should not handle any consecrated bread or wine unless specifically directed by the priest or deacon in an emergency or exceptional situation. If the server suspects any consecrated fragments or wine remain on the sacred vessels they must inform the priest, deacon, or sacristan immediately.
3. Servers must remain in or near the sanctuary during the entire Mass and are not to leave the sanctuary during Mass for any reason other than illness or the direction of the priest or deacon. Altar servers are on duty from the time they enter the sanctuary at the start of Mass until the priest exits at the end of the Mass. Thirst, itches, and the like are not bodily necessities and therefore are never an excuse for leaving the sanctuary before the final procession.
4. Servers have many specific duties. These duties include holding the Sacramentary for the priest; helping to set-up the altar; washing the priest's hands; and singing, praying standing, sitting and kneeling.
5. While in the standing position, hands should be held folded in the praying position.
6. While in the kneeling position, hands should be held folded as in the praying position also. You must kneel maintaining your upper body upright; not slouching or resting/sitting on your heels.
7. When sitting, the hands should be held folded and resting on the lap. Please do not slouch, play with your cinctures, whisper comments amongst the other altar server(s), or otherwise cause the assembly to take special notice of you (e.g., you should not do anything which draws attention to you).
8. Altar servers must attend every Mass they are scheduled for. When a server cannot be present, that server must arrange for a replacement in advance of the scheduled Mass. If you are unable to do so, please contact the Altar Server coordinator, as soon as possible before the scheduled Mass and inform them.

9. Every server should not come to Mass to serve without eating a good breakfast. However, remember to respect the fast before Holy Communion (no eating one hour before communion)

Proper Dress

The server will dress in appropriate clothes and footwear for the Mass. Remember what you wear underneath an alb will show through the alb fabric. For this reason, the server should be sure to avoid bold stripes and designs of any kind which may show through. It is recommended that solid colors be worn (e.g., white or another light color would be the most appropriate choice for shirts and blouses). Likewise pants, dresses, and skirts should also be of some solid color. Shorts of any kind are discouraged.

Dress shoes should be worn. Soiled sneakers, no matter how expensive are for casual dress and sporting events, and really are not appropriate in the sanctuary or at the altar of Our Lord.

There are various size albs in the Sacristy. Yours should be ankle length--not floor length in order to facilitate walking up and down the Altar stairs without tripping..

When to Genuflect and When to Bow

When should a server genuflect? Whenever entering or leaving a Catholic Church (usually when entering a pew) or crossing in front of the tabernacle.

Genuflecting to the tabernacle is required; bowing is not an option to genuflecting unless there is a physical ailment or handicap which prevents genuflecting. If you are carrying or holding a liturgical object, you do not genuflect, just bow your head.

All Catholics should be aware of whenever Jesus is present on the altar after the Consecration, during Eucharistic Adoration or is reserved in the tabernacle. Everyone (servers included) should show the appropriate sign of reverence whenever crossing in front of the tabernacle or entering and leaving the Church (usually as they enter a pew).

Bowing of the head is done for: (1) A priest after presenting the wine and water and after washing his hands at the altar, (2) The altar (unless Jesus is present on it). We bow to the altar because it is the table of the Christ's Sacrifice. We bow to the priest because he offers the Body and Blood of Our Savior to the God, the Father in the Person of Jesus, and therefore should be shown respect.

When Jesus is present (reserved) in the tabernacle, He is just as present there, as when He is present on the altar or in the monstrance. Servers are encouraged to make frequent visits to Him in the tabernacle and spend some time with Him in private prayer. This is especially helpful before Mass. The red, church sanctuary candle when lit alongside the tabernacle, indicates when Jesus is present (reserved) in the tabernacle. When it is not lit, the tabernacle is empty (e.g., as on Good Friday and Holy Saturday).

Servers should remember that there is an exception to genuflecting: Whenever they are carrying the cross, sacred vessels, books, candles or other liturgical objects you should not genuflect. A simple bow of the head however is the appropriate reverence to be displayed.

How to Genuflect

There are two prescribed methods of genuflection:

- When the tabernacle doors are closed and Jesus is not present on the altar after the consecration or exposed for Eucharistic Adoration, genuflect in this manner: Stop, then turn and face the tabernacle.
- If Jesus is present on the altar (e.g., during the Mass after consecration or during Eucharistic Adoration): Stop, turn, and face the altar.
- Genuflect so the right knee touches the floor.
- Pause with the right knee on the floor and bow your head to Jesus.
- Rise from the floor, still facing the tabernacle or altar.
- Turn and continue in the direction you were going.

Preparation for Mass

Sign-in on the appropriate altar server schedule, so the Sacristan, coordinator, and priest know that you are present for the Mass as a server. Please arrive 15 minutes ahead of the scheduled Mass time.

At least 15 minutes prior to the scheduled Mass time a server should:

1. Insure the candles and cross are brought to the back of the church (near the baptismal font) in preparation of the entrance procession.
2. Light all appropriate candles (e.g., the two altar candles).
3. Select an appropriate sized vesture. The server's vesture should fit loosely, but not be so long as to drag on the floor or too short so it is above the lower shin. The servers' cincture is to be tied on the right side of the waist; the left side denotes those who are ordained clergy.

Entrance Procession:

1. The processional cross will lead the procession (unless the thurible is to be processed into the church). In that case, the thurible will lead, followed by the cross and candle bearers.
2. The procession normally includes a minimum of 2 candle bearers. If there are an insufficient number of servers (e.g., 3 or 4) available, the altar candles will be left in the stands alongside the altar and the procession will continue without candles.
3. The normal order of procession will be the cross bearer, the other servers (candle bearers), the Deacon (or Lector) with the Book of Gospels, followed by the Presiding Priest.
4. When the singing starts, the procession will move down the center aisle to the front of the Sanctuary and face the altar. The cross bearer will stand to the priest's right (at the base of the Sanctuary steps) in front of the altar. The other server(s) will go to the left of the priest and stand in front of/near the Ambo (at the base of the Sanctuary steps). The Deacon or Lector will proceed directly to the altar, place the Book of the Gospels in the wooden book stand, and then return to stand.
5. The priest will enter the Sanctuary first. He, the Deacon, and any other priests will reverence (kiss) the Altar.
6. While the priest/deacon move forward to reverence the altar:
 - a. The cross bearer will go place the cross in the stand and then stand in front of the servers' bench.

- b. The candle bearers place the processional candles on their respective stands alongside the altar and then proceed to stand in front of the servers' bench.

Duties During Mass

During the Glory to God in the Highest (or the Lord have mercy), the appointed server will pick up the Sacramentary and wait for the priest to say, Let us pray.

When the priest says, Let us pray, the server will proceed directly to and stand in front of the priest with the Sacramentary. Hold the book high enough and open so the priest can read the prayer. Keep the pages flat; your fingers out of the text; and do not move about while the priest is reading. When the priest is finished, close the Sacramentary quietly, and once the "Amen" has been said by the assembly, return to the servers' bench. There should be no movement by the server until the assembly has said "Amen."

Servers may sit down on the servers' bench after the Opening Prayer for the readings.

All servers should pay close attention to the readings, words of the Gospel, and homily. After the Gospel has been proclaimed and the assembly says "Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ", sit down on the servers' bench and listen to the homily.

During the offertory:

An altar server will bring the Sacramentary to the altar. If the deacon is present, the Sacramentary will be handed to him. In the absence of a deacon, the Sacramentary will be placed on the altar; so it is positioned to the left of the corporal.

If the deacon is present, he will set the altar himself by moving the chalice, purificators, etc., from the credence table to the altar. In the absence of the deacon, the Priest will set the altar (similar to the diagram found in Attachment #2 of this booklet).

Once the altar has been set, two altar servers will proceed to the back of the church and escort the gift bearers forward to the front of the altar (once the priest and/or deacon have moved forward to stand in front of the altar waiting to receive the gifts).

After the offertory:

After arriving in front of the altar, the two servers will move to the left and right of the priest/deacon and turn around to face the assembly. The servers will then assist with receiving the gifts, if/as needed by the priest/deacon.

If given portions of the gifts (e.g., bread, wine, etc), once the priest/ deacon turn to go behind the altar, the servers will likewise turn and go to the ends/corners behind the altar. The items that they are holding will be reverently presented to the priest/deacon—not placed directly on the altar by the server(s).

After the deacon has prepared the Altar, the priest will step forward to start the Eucharistic Prayers. The two servers will go to the credence table and retrieve the water cruet, small hand towel, and bowl. A server will unfold the wash towel and place it over their arm (wrist area). With your other arm, they hold the washing bowl. The other altar server will hold the water cruet. Both altar servers will then stand

behind and to the left of the priest. When the priest turns towards the servers, they will approach him and pour the water over the priest's hands, collecting the water in the bowl. Let the priest take the towel and when he has placed the towel back on your arm, bow to him and return the items back to the credence table.

All of the altar servers then return to stand in front of the servers' bench.

All servers remain standing in front of the servers' bench, until the assembly kneels. The servers move forward and kneel on the edge of the first carpeted stair leading to the sanctuary, when appropriate.

During the exchange of the Sign of Peace, altar servers exchange the Sign of Peace with the other altar server(s) and should not enter the sanctuary to exchange the Sign of Peace with the priest and/or deacon; they will come to the altar servers. Please, do not go out into the assembly to exchange the Sign of Peace with others.

During Communion of the Faithful:

Once the priest, deacon, and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion have left the sanctuary area and have moved forward to give communion to the assembly, the altar servers will move forward behind the altar to remove and return the Sacramentary to the servers' bench.

Instruction on the Patens

When assisting the priest with the Communion paten during Holy Communion the server must always hold the paten level from the time it is picked up until it is returned to the priest or deacon after all have received. It must never be tilted or turned so as to spill any fragments of the Body of Jesus which may have been caught by it. It is the responsibility of the server holding the paten to protect the Body of Jesus from falling on the floor. A new server should practice using the paten with another server till proficiency is obtained. They must be instructed in how to hold a paten properly during communion in order to catch any fragment of the Host that may fall. This should be practiced until there is no hesitation even when people receive in the hand.

After Communion of the Faithful:

All of the servers will remain seated on the servers' bench until the priest says: "Let us pray." The book server will proceed directly to and stand in front of the priest with the Sacramentary and hold the book for the priest as with the opening prayer. Again, hold the book open so the priest can read the prayer. Keep the pages flat, your fingers out of the text, and do not move about while the priest is reading. When the priest is finished, close the Sacramentary quietly, and once the "Amen" is said by the assembly, return to the servers' bench. There should be no movement by the server until the assembly has said "Amen."

Recessional Procession:

While the priest/deacon move forward to reverence (kiss) the altar:

1. The candle bearers should proceed to the front of the altar, bow, move forward to pick up the candles, and return to standing to the left of the priest/deacon in front of the altar.
2. The cross bearer will pick up the processional cross and stand to the right of the priest/deacon in front of the altar.

3. If the thurible is used, the server will pick up the thuribal and boat and stand between the priest/deacon and the cross bearer in front of the altar.

When the priest and deacon bow, all servers not carrying anything should bow also. Those carrying things should just simply bow their heads towards the altar. All servers then turn and proceed quickly to their exit procession positions in the center aisle in the following order: Thurible (if used); cross bearer, candle bearer(s), other servers, the deacon, and the priest.

Duties after the Mass:

After the exit procession, go into the Sacristy, blow out the candles (if/as appropriate), and take off your server's alb and hang it neatly in the servers' closet. Clean up any messes you made on the credence and preparation tables or seat you were using.

If the server albs or cinctures become dirty, torn, or otherwise unserviceable, please put them aside and bring it to the attention of the altar server coordinator; sacristan, deacon, or priest, as soon as possible, so they can be repaired or replaced.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

From the beginning of the Mass to the end, please always keep your eyes (as much as possible) on the priest and deacon; you may be called on to go and get something or assist the priest or deacon in some way.

Definitions

Ablution cup: Covered dish of water on the side of the tabernacle used by the priest, deacon or Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to wash their fingers after distributing Communion.

Alb: A white, linen gown worn by altar servers, acolytes, deacons, and priests when performing official functions at the altar during Mass, funeral services, etc.

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

Boat: A metal container (with a small spoon) which is used to store unused incense.

Chalice: A cup made of precious metal that holds the wine, which becomes the Blood of Christ during the consecration.

Ciborium: A large cup or container made of precious metal which will hold the Body of Christ after the consecration for distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful. This is commonly stored in the tabernacle to enable the priest and/or other ministers to later visit and distribute communion to the sick, hospitalized, homebound, etc.

Cincture: A white, rope-like device which is used to secure an alb around the waist. The cincture must be tied on one end around the waist and be sufficient in length to allow a portion to naturally fall along the side of the leg of the wearer. The tied portion and knotted ends will be on the *right side* for servers and left side for those who are ordained to Holy Orders.

Corporal: A white, linen cloth, usually with a cross in the center, used to protect any particles of the Precious Body and Blood of Christ from falling to the altar cloth. It is always folded and unfolded as to protect any particles from falling onto the floor or carpeting.

Credence Table: The table in the sanctuary (directly behind the altar) where the water cruet, chalice(s), corporal, purificators, and ciborium are kept before and after the Consecration in the Mass.

Crucifix: A cross containing a figure of Jesus Christ nailed to it.

Cruet: A small, glass container normally used to store water and/or wine.

Luna: A thin, circular receptacle, having a glass face that holds a Consecrated Host used for Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction. It slides into the monstrance on a little track or slide.

Lectionary: The book of biblical readings used for the Liturgy of the Word during the Mass, Communion Services, etc. It usually contains all the biblical readings used for the three year Sunday cycle of reading and the two year daily Mass readings.

Monstrance: This is a large, ornate vessel used to hold and display the Blessed Sacrament for Eucharistic Adoration, Benediction and solemn Eucharistic processions.

Paten: A small saucer-shaped plate of precious metal that holds the Host. Used by the priest and/or Extra Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to distribute the Body of Christ during Communion.

Purificator: A white, linen cloth used by the priest, deacon, or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion during communion and to dry the chalice after purifying or cleansing it. Used purificators must always be placed in the proper container or drawer specifically designed for the cleaning of sacred cloths.

Pyx: A case, usually the size of a pocket watch, in which consecrated hosts are carried to those who are sick, homebound, hospitalized or are otherwise physically unable to come to church for Communion during a scheduled Mass.

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

Sacrarium: A sink with its drain going directly into the ground; usually fitted with a cover and lock which is used for the disposal of the following: The sacred linen wash and rinse water; used holy water; used baptismal water; blessed ashes, etc.

Sanctuary: The most sacred part of the church in which the altar is located. At the Holy Trinity Catholic Church, the sanctuary is elevated and is situated in front of the pews.

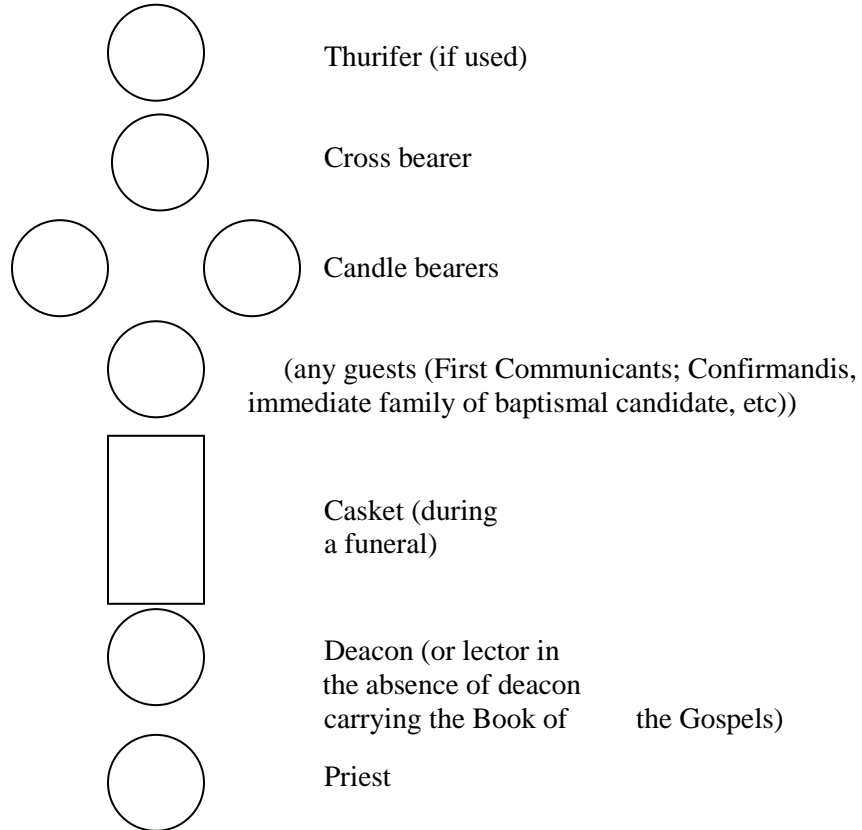
Stoup: The small holy water fountains or bowls at the entrances of the church.

Surplice: A wide-sleeved, white, linen worn over a cassock by clergy and altar servers.

Thurible: A circular-shaped, metal device used for incensing. A burning charcoal is placed inside it, upon which the priest or deacon places incense to make it burn and smoke before blessing the altar, gifts, a casket, etc.

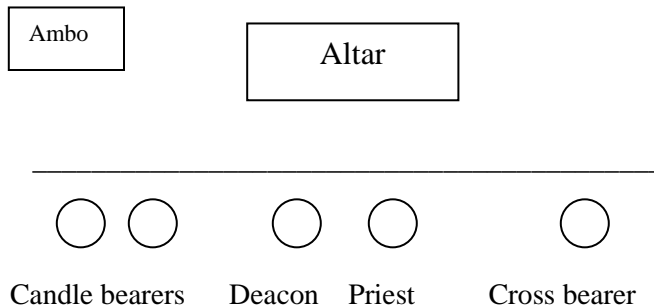
ATTACHMENT #1

**ENTRANCE AND RECESSIONAL
ORDER OF PROCESSION**



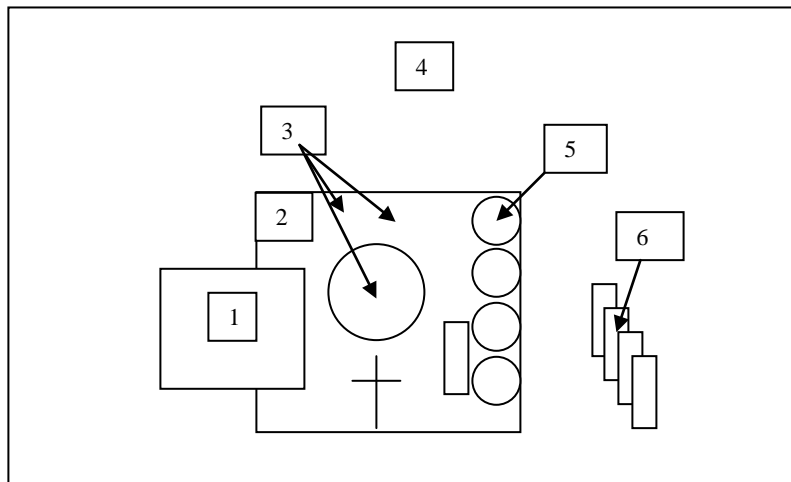
ATTACHMENT #2

**SERVERS, PRIEST, AND DEACON DIAGRAM
BEFORE THE ALTAR**



ATTACHMENT #3

ALTAR SET-UP DIAGRAM



- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Sacramentary |
| 2 | Corporal |
| 3 | Paten(s) with large host and wafers (hosts) |
| 4 | Priest's chalice |
| 5 | Communion chalices |
| 6 | Purificators |