

Altar Server Training Manual



St Peter in Chains Parish



Welcome and Thank you!

The Altar Servers form a very important part of the Church and every Parish is enriched through their dedication and service. It is a very important responsibility, and requires a sincere commitment. Only if you are serious about committing to the following expectations should you apply to be an Altar Server.

- All servers are expected to be at the Church at least 15 minutes before Mass begins.
- All servers are expected to fulfil their assigned times to serve.
- All servers are expected to find their own replacement at Mass if they cannot make it for whatever reason (a list of servers will be provided).
- All servers are expected to hang up their vestments properly after Mass.
- All servers are expected to pay attention to the Priest during Mass.
- All servers are expected to know and say the appropriate responses throughout the Mass.
- All servers are expected to serve at funerals and weddings when asked and when possible.

It is a great privilege to serve at the Altar of our God and therefore servers are chosen from those who display a desire for a more intimate union with Our Lord and God, Jesus Christ.

Our loving Saviour becomes present on the Altar, just as He was at the Last Supper and Calvary. Accordingly, servers have a solemn responsibility to do their assigned duties with dignity and reverence.

The primary duty of an Altar Server is to assist the priest, as a representative of the people of the Parish, in a visible manner, as the mystery of Calvary unfolds on the Altar. All actions of the server are woven from signs and symbols whose meaning is rooted in the works of creation and in human culture, specified by events in the Old Testament and fully revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is imperative that all servers do their assigned tasks in the prescribed form and manner.

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ALTAR SERVERS



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Introduction

Many Parishes have Altar Servers start as young as six years old and some of these continue serving well into their seventies. All people of good faith are welcome and those who think they may desire to serve are encouraged to do so. All that is required is a desire to serve at the Altar of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Saint Thomas said, "The celebration of the Holy Mass is as valuable as the death of Jesus on the Cross." Padre Pio said, "It would be easier for the world to survive without the sun than to do so without the Holy Mass." What a honour to serve our Lord at this most praiseworthy gift of love.



Requirements for Altar Servers Candidates

- A strong desire to serve at the Altar of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.
- Be an active member of the Parish community and believe in the teachings of The Holy Catholic Church.
- Have already made their First Holy Communion.
- Know all the prayers of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass from memory. The required prayers can be found in *Appendix A, Prayers*. Know how to properly genuflect. See *Appendix B, Genuflecting*. Know how to make the sign of the Cross. See *Appendix C, Sign of the Cross*. Know how to receive Holy Communion in the approved manner. See *Appendix D, Reverence in Receiving Holy Communion*. Know the Real Presence of Jesus the Christ begins at the moment of the consecration and endures as long as the Eucharistic species subsists.

"Godhead here in hiding, whom I do adore
Masked by these bare shadows, shapes and nothing more,
See, Lord, at thy service low lies here a heart
Lost, all lost in wonder at the God thou art.
Seeing, touching, tasting are in thee deceived;
How says trusty hearing? That shall be believed;
What God's Son has told me, take for truth I do;
Truth himself speaks truly or there's nothing true."

St. Thomas Aquinas, "Adoro te devote"



Responsibilities of Altar Servers

- Attend Holy Mass on every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation when physically possible.
- Cultivate a personal prayer life within the Church. Prayer is an indispensable condition of being able to obey God's commandments.
- Altar Servers are not to leave the sanctuary after the start of the Mass for any reason except bathroom emergencies, illness, or when directed to do so by the priest. There are no other exceptions. If you think that there is another good reason, ask the priest before leaving the sanctuary. Thirst is never a good reason. Attend all Altar Server meetings as announced.
- Serve at every Mass they are scheduled for. When you fail to serve at a Mass without sufficient cause you are denying the whole Parish of one member of the team. See on how to arrange for a substitute when you know in advance of a scheduling conflict.
- Arrive at the Mass to be served at least fifteen minutes before the starting time to prepare for the Celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist.
- Perform the duties assigned during the Mass in the prescribed orderly manner.
- Stay for at least ten minutes after the Mass to return the Sanctuary, Sacristy, and preparation areas to a neat and orderly appearance.
- Make your own arrangements for another Altar Server to take your place when you will miss a Mass you are scheduled to serve. Do not call the Presbytery if you cannot make the Mass, you must find your own substitute.



Order of Preparation

✠ *Arrival for Mass:*

Every Altar Server should perform these tasks when scheduled to serve at Mass.

- Servers must arrive 15 minutes early for every Mass they are scheduled to serve at.
- Quietly put on your alb and cross in the space designated for the Altar Servers to dress in. Prepare for Mass and say the "Before Mass Prayer" together.

✠ *Preparation for Mass:*

Wine & water:

- Rinse wine and wine cruets with clean water and allow to drip dry for a few seconds.
- Fill the wine cruet with the wine bottle.
- Fill the other cruet with cold fresh water.
- Place wine and water cruets on the offertory gift table at the back of Church.

Paten:

- Remove the paten from where it is stored.
- Arrange the small unconsecrated hosts and one large unconsecrated host neatly on the gold paten.
- Place gold paten and unconsecrated hosts on the offertory gift table with the wine and water cruets.
- The priest will tell you if further ciborium and hosts will be required for the Mass. If they are place them on the Credence Table in the Sanctuary.

Chalices:

- Get clean Purificators from the Purificator drawer in the sacristy.
- Place the Purificators on the altar in the Sanctuary, to the right of the Corporal Cloth.
- Remove the linen covered Pall from the drawer and place it on the chalice.
- Place the prepared Chalices on the Credence Table in the Sanctuary.

Bowl, plate and towel:

- Remove the washing bowl from its storage spot and clean it if required.
- Get a clean, fresh cloth from the Finger Cloth drawer. Place the bowl, and towel on the Credence Table.

Candles:

- At ten minutes to Mass time light all the candles.

Altar Servers' Prayer:

- At five minutes to Mass time, the Altar Servers come together and pray the Altar Servers' Prayer.



Order of the Mass

Entrance Procession:

Wait for the priest at the entrance where the Entrance Procession is to begin. Servers should wait for the start of the bell and the entrance hymn. At the start of the entrance hymn, the servers will lead the entrance procession to the Altar. The Bell is rung once and the procession begins up the side aisle and down the middle aisle. When the Servers approach the Sanctuary, the cross-bearer will face the altar, bow, and move to the cross-bearer position. The cross-bearer will place the processional cross in the stand. All servers will then genuflect to the tabernacle (at their assigned positions) when the priest genuflects.

Opening Prayers:

During the Glory to God in the Highest (Lord have mercy... during lent), a server will come forward and hold the Sacramentary. Hold the Sacramentary at the height that the priest hands it to you. Keep the pages flat, and do not move about while the priest is reading. When the priest is finished, close the Sacramentary and return it to the priest. Sit down in your chair for the first readings.

The Alleluia:

At the end of the second reading, during the Alleluia, the designated altar servers should get up and walk to the procession candles. They should stand with their candles and cross and wait for the priest to collect the Book of the Gospels from the altar. They then, during the singing of the Alleluia, walk to the pulpit. The candles are at the right and left of the pulpit, at the same height.

The Gospel:

All servers should pay very close attention to the words of Jesus in the Gospel and face each other to demonstrate to the people how they are paying attention. Maintain these positions during the Gospel and then return the candles when the Gospel is over, glow to the altar, and return to your seats. Sit down and listen to the homily.

The Collection:

When the pass-keepers have the procession ready and the collection is complete, servers go the front step of the Sanctuary, to the right and left of the priest, and receive the gifts. One server should take the wine and the patin with the hosts

and place it on the altar. The servers should take the water and wine cruets and the hosts from the priest and take them to the altar.

Preparation of the Gifts:

The servers should then hand the priest, wine and then water, as directed. Stand together until priest is finished. When the priest has poured the wine and water into the Chalice, bow together to the priest when he is finished and return the cruets to the Credence Table. Servers then bring an unfolded finger towel and the washing bowl. When the priest comes, the server should hold out the bowl for the washing on fingers. The other server will then hand the unfolded towel to the priest. When the server has the towel back, both servers should bow to the priest and return to the credence table. No server is to sit down. They are to return to their place and remain standing. Remain standing there until the Offertory Prayers is finished and then all kneel.

The Eucharistic Prayer:

All servers take their positions at the right and left of the altar and kneel on the Altar Step.

The Sanctuary Bells:

The bells will be rung at three separate times during the Consecration:

First: When the priest holds both his hands over the gifts of wine and water, ring the bell once. At the elevation of the bread, the server should ring the bell with three distinct rings; one for the Father, one for the Son, and one for the Holy Spirit during the elevation of the Body of Jesus Christ our God. This should be done slowly.

Second: At the elevation of the wine, the server should ring the bell with three distinct rings; one for the Father, one for the Son, and one for the Holy Spirit during the elevation of the Body of Jesus Christ our God. This should be done slowly.

Because these are solemn times, (the bread and wine we offered just before has now become the real BODY and BLOOD of Our God, Jesus Christ) ring the bells reverently. The bell is rung for the third time, when the priest drink the Precious Blood of Jesus from the Chalice.

The Closing Prayers:

The servers should assist the priest in removing all objects from the Altar after the

purification of the chalices, paten, and ciborium(s). Even after these items have been purified, they must still be held in reverence because of the sacramental use of these items during the Consecration. All servers are to sit until the priest says: "Let us pray" then one server will proceed directly in front of the priest and hold the Sacramentary as at the beginning of Mass. Hold the Sacramentary at the height that the priest hands it to you. Keep the pages flat, and do not move about while the priest is reading. When the priest is finished, close the Sacramentary and return it to the priest.

The Exit Procession:

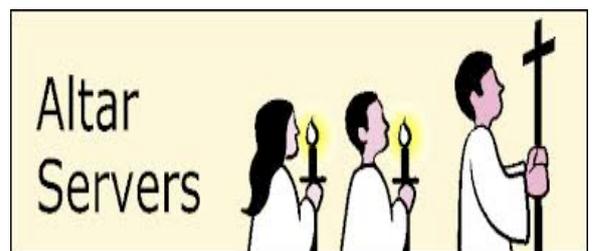
When the priest is kissing the altar, the servers should proceed to the front of the sanctuary, pick up the cross, and go to their standard positions. Cross-bearer should pick up the processional cross. The other servers remain on the sanctuary, the priest will turn to the tabernacle and genuflect. When the priest genuflects, the servers in the Sanctuary genuflect also with him and the other server with the cross bows to the altar. All servers then turn and proceed down the centre aisle.



Duties after Mass

- Remove water and wine cruets from credence table.
- Pour unused wine back into bottle.
- Rinse wine and wine cruets with clean water.
- Remove the Chalice and Ciboria from the Credence Table.
- Place all used Purificators in the special basket in the Sacristy reserved for their keeping.
- Place Chalices and Paten in their proper places.
- Place linen covered Pall in the drawer.
- Place Chalice and Ciboria in their proper places.
- Remove bowl, towel, and dish from credence table.
- Dry bowl with towel. Place towel in soiled linen drawer.
- Place bowl and dish in proper places.
- Extinguish the candles by using the proper tool. Do not touch the wicks.

- Remove all hymn books, mass sheets and papers from the sanctuary and place them on the preparation table in the Sacristy.
- Quickly and quietly take off your cross and alb. Place it neatly on a hanger.



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Appendix A Prayers

Every Altar Server should be able to recite the prayers of the Mass from memory. The prayers for Mass can be found in most prayers books and in the Mass sheets.

The Altar Server Prayer:

Oh Lord, My God, I humbly come to serve at your Altar by assisting your priest in offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Please give me the grace to perform my duties with reverence, attention, and devotion for you are worthy of all my love. I ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Appendix B - Genuflecting

Whenever an Altar Server is entering the sanctuary or crossing in front of the tabernacle, the server must genuflect. (Exception: do not genuflect while carrying anything, just bow.)

You should genuflect this way:

Stop in front of the tabernacle then turn and face the tabernacle.

Genuflect on the right knee so the right knee touches the floor.

Pause with knee on the floor and bow your head to Jesus present in the tabernacle.

Rise from the floor, still facing the tabernacle.

Turn and continue in the direction you were heading.

Note: Never genuflect when carrying the Procession Cross, books, or lit candles as you may harm yourself or others.



Appendix C - The Sign of the Cross

The sign of the cross is an external acknowledgment of our Triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and our salvation through the Cross of Jesus. Each Altar Server should make the sign of the cross in a uniform fashion when in the Sanctuary. This is to promote a simple statement of order flowing from the Peace of Jesus, and the Unity of the Holy Trinity present in the Sanctuary.

The Sign of the Cross is done in the following manner:

Start with the hands held in the prayer position and say, " In the name of " . . . With the right hand touch the centre of the forehead with the tip of your fingers and say, . . . " The Father and of " . . . Move the right hand to the centre of your chest and touch it as you say, . . . " The Son, and of " . . . Move the right hand and touch your left shoulder as you say, . . . " The Holy " . . . Move the right hand and touch your right shoulder as you say, . . . " Spirit " . . . Return to the prayer hand position and say, . . . " AMEN. "



Appendix D - Receiving of Holy Communion

The presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is a real and true presence. The whole substance of the bread and wine is transformed into the real substance of Jesus' resurrected Body and Blood. While the appearance of the bread and wine remain, it is no longer bread and wine. It is, after the words of Consecration, the whole Jesus Christ, truly, really, and substantially contained. The whole substance of the bread is changes into the substance of the body of Jesus Christ and the whole substance of the wine is changed into the substance of his blood. This change is called transubstantiation.

All Catholics may receive Holy Communion either standing or kneeling. If received kneeling, there is no further requirement for an outward sign of reverence; if receiving while standing, an appropriate acknowledgment of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ (e.g. Liturgical norms call for an act of adoration before reception of the Body and Blood of Our God, Jesus Christ. This is, in most Parishes, either a genuflection (or a profound bow) should be given. Altar Servers may receive Holy Communion on the tongue, or on the hand. Prior to receiving Holy Communion, the server is to bow from the waist to Jesus in the consecrated bread and wine as the priest, deacon, or extraordinary minister says: "The Body of Christ" or "The Blood of Christ."

Altar Servers are permitted to receive both the Body and Blood (if they so wish) of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. Altar servers are encouraged to receive every Sunday and receive the Sacrament of Penance at least once a month.



Appendix E - Prayer Position

Every Altar Server must be able to maintain the prayer position the entire time the server is standing or kneeling. When standing or kneeling, the posture must be straight. The hands must be held together at the chest with the fingers pointing up and out. Thumbs are to be crossed, the remaining fingers are to be straight and uncrossed.

When sitting the server is free to hold hands in any comfortable position. Sitting should also be straight with feet on the floor. Whenever the server is in the Sanctuary, there is to be no talking for any reason except the communication of matters pertaining to the proper order of the Mass such as prayers, responses to the priest, instructions to fellow servers, or directions to other servers when necessary.



Appendix F - Liturgical Objects

Chalice: The Chalice recalls the same type of cup used by Jesus at the Last Supper to hold the wine He consecrated into His Blood. It is usually made of a precious substance such as gold or silver. If the chalice is silver the insides of the cup must be gold plated. The chalice is anointed with holy chrism by the Bishop prior to use at the Mass.

Purificator: The Purificator is used for cleansing and drying the Chalice and the fingers and mouth of the priest after his communion. It is usually made of linen cloth and has a cross embroidered into the material.

Paten: The paten is a small round plate, made of the same material as the Chalice. It is used to hold the bread to be consecrated into the Body of Jesus.

Pall: The Pall is a square piece of linen, reinforced with plastic or similar material. It is used to cover the Chalice and prevent anything from falling into it.

Corporal: The corporal is a piece of linen, usually about fifteen inches square, placed on the Altar to hold the Chalice and Hosts. It is called a Corporal because of the Latin word, corpus (body), because the Body of Jesus rests on it.

Alb: The alb is a flowing white linen robe covering the entire body. Alb is the Latin word for white and is used to as a symbol of our sinfulness being changed into the light of Jesus.

Cincture: The Cincture is a cord used to secure the Alb around the waist. It symbolises the cord that bound Jesus to the pillar while He was scourged and is useful in reminding us to be strong spiritually in the battle against evil.

