

HOW TO BE AN ALTAR SERVER AT OUR LADY OF THE SACRED HEART

Thank You For Being An Altar Server

It is a great privilege to serve at the Altar. God will bless you for your service at Mass and other ceremonies. The priests, deacons and members of the congregation appreciate your willingness to help with the celebration of Mass. We thank you and thank your parents who have offered to help you to do this to the best of your ability.

What Do I Do Before Mass Begins?

You will receive a schedule telling you what Masses you are assigned to serve. This will come to you about twice each year. Check this schedule carefully so that you know which Masses you will serve, and make sure that your parents see the schedule so that they know which Masses you will be serving. If you are not able to be at the Mass that you are scheduled for, please call another server and ask them to take your place.

On the days you are assigned to serve, wear neat, clean clothes and good shoes or sneakers.

Come to the Altar Server's Sacristy (vesting room) fifteen or twenty minutes before Mass is scheduled to begin. It does not help the priest if you come only five minutes before Mass. There are several things which you need to do before Mass begins and these take time.

Once you have arrived in the Altar Server's sacristy, put on a robe (it should come down to just above your ankles), tie it with a white cord, place an Altar Server Cross around your neck (the cord should go under the hood on your robe). Check to make sure that you look neat. Help one another to look neat, as well.

Once you have you robe on, make sure that the following items are on the Credence Table (the table just inside the Altar Server's Sacristy door): (1) the bowl for the washing of the priest's hands, (2) the towel, (3) and the glass pitcher full of water. The priest, deacon or Eucharistic Minister may ask you to place other items on this table, for example, chalices (cups for Communion wine) or ciboriums (cup-like containers for Communion bread) also called the hosts. If they ask you to help with these items, make sure that each chalice or cup has a purificator in it (a small cloth used by the priest to wipe the chalice dry). Purificators are found in the top right hand drawer of the vesting case in the Priest's Sacristy).

Ten minutes before Mass begins, one server should light the candles, two near the altar and the two candles near the pulpit. (During the Easter Season, you should also light the large Easter Candle).

Make sure that you have a hymnal with you so that you can sing the hymns and pray the prayers with the people in the congregation. Remember, you are not in church just to serve, but to pray and sing with the people. If you are carrying something in the Opening Procession, make sure that your hymnal is on the chair you will be using for Mass so that it will be there when you need it.

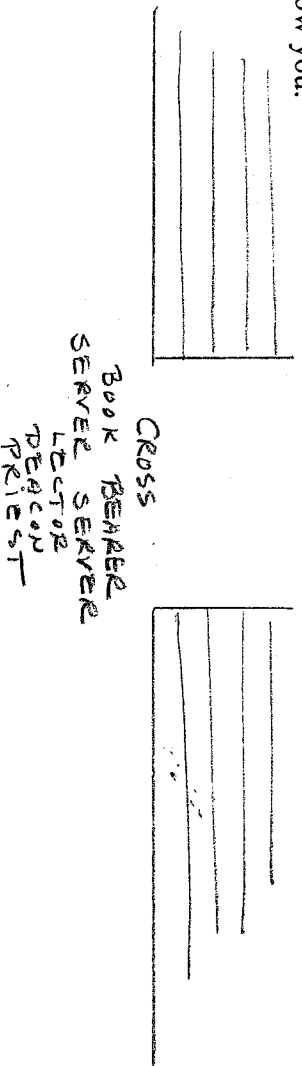
Just before the priest, deacon, Eucharistic Ministers and servers go to the back of the church for the Opening Procession, decide which part you will take in the Mass. Many times the priest or deacon will help you with this. You will either be (1) the Cross Bearer, (2) the Book Bearer, or (3) the Server of Water and Wine.

What Do I Do If I Am The Cross Bearer?

As the Cross Bearer, you will lead the three processions at Mass: (1) The Opening Procession, (2) The Procession with the Bread and Wine; and (3) The Procession to the back of the church at the end of Mass.

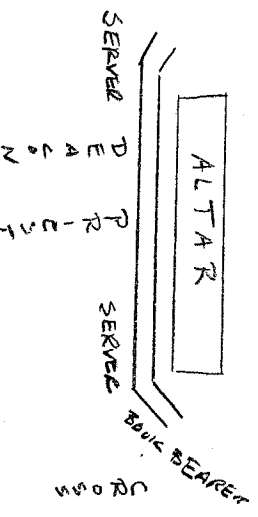
Make sure that your hymnal is on your bench in the sanctuary (the area nearest the altar), outside the door to the Priest's Sacristy, since you will not be able to carry it in the Opening Procession.

When the priest or deacon indicates that it is time to go to the back of the church, take the cross from its stand and carefully carry it to the back of the church, using the side aisle. In the back of the church, stand in the middle of the Center Aisle and wait for the Procession to begin. When the people begin to sing the Opening Song, walk slowly up the Center Aisle, making sure that the image of Jesus is facing straight forward. Hold the cross up high. As you move up the aisle, the rest of the people in the procession will follow you.



(Positions of Altar Servers in the Back of Church for the Opening Procession)

Step up into the sanctuary, move to the right and stand near the bench where you will be sitting during Mass. Wait for the priest to come into the sanctuary. When the priest bows to the altar, you bow your head slightly. Once the priest begins to go to his chair, place the cross back in its stand (in the Priest's Sacristy), then, come out into the sanctuary and stand at your place next to the bench. This will be your place for the rest of the Mass.



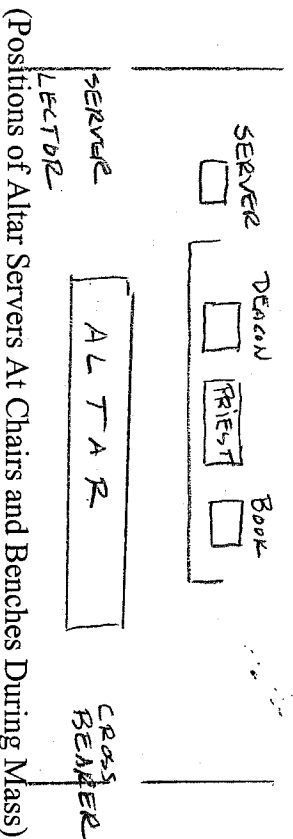
(Position of Altar Servers in the Sanctuary As They Bow To The Altar)

After the homily and Prayers of the Faithful, when the ushers begin to take up the collection, take the cross directly down the Center Aisle to the back of the church, so that you can lead the people carrying the bread and wine to the altar in just a few minutes. Stand in the Center Aisle facing the front of the church. When the ushers have finished taking up the collection, and the people who will be bringing up the gifts are in place, the

usher will give you a signal to begin the procession up the Center Aisle. Again, walk slowly and reverently. Carry the cross high. Step up into the sanctuary and immediately take the cross into the Priest's Sacristy and place it in its stand. Return to your bench.

At the end of Mass, after the final blessing, go to the sacristy and get the cross. Immediately walk out of the sanctuary, into the Center Aisle, between the first pews, and face the altar. When the priests and others have bowed to the altar and turn to begin down the Center Aisle, you turn and walk slowly to the back of the church. When you reach the back of the church, return to the Priest's Sacristy and place the cross back in its stand. Then, follow the instructions in the section called "What Do I Do After Mass?"

If there are only two servers, the Cross Bearer should take the chair to the immediate left of the priest and also act as the Book Bearer. He/she may also have to help the priest or deacon with receiving the bread and wine from the people, if there are only two servers.



What Do I Do If I Am The Book Bearer?

When the priest is ready to go from the Priest's Sacristy to the back of the church to begin Mass, carry your hymnal with you, and line up behind the Cross Bearer in the middle of the Center Aisle next to the other server. Follow the Cross Bearer down the aisle and into the sanctuary. When you step up into the sanctuary, move slightly to the right of the center of the sanctuary near the bottom step to the altar. Here, wait for the priest to arrive. Once he has taken his place in the center of the sanctuary, bow to the altar when the priest bows, and then go up to the chairs behind the altar. Your chair will be to the immediate left of the priest's chair. Sit and stand when the people do.

Once the priest has finished the Penitential Rite (and the Gloria, when it is sung), the Priest will say "Let us pray." Pick up the Book (called the Sacramentary) from the small table between your chair and the priest's chair. Stand directly in front of the priest facing him, and hold the book so that he can open the book to the right place. When he has finished the prayer, close the book and place it on the small table between the chairs.

Stay at your chair for the next part of the Mass, up to the Preparation of the Gifts. When the priest or deacon goes to the front of the sanctuary to receive the bread and wine, take the book and place it on the altar to the left of middle. At some Masses, you may have to go with the priest to help carry the bread and wine to the altar.

(If there are only two servers, once you have placed the bread and wine on the altar, go to the Credence Table (the small table inside the doorway of the Altar Server's sacristy) and pick up the bowl and towel and wait at the bottom of the altar steps until

these items are needed for the washing of the priest's hands. When the priest has prepared the bread and wine at the altar, he is ready to wash his hands. Come to the top step of the altar near the priest, along with the other server, and hold the bowl out so that the priest can place his hands over the bowl. Hang the towel over your left arm, so that the priest can take it when he needs it. The other server will pour the water over the priest's hands. Once the priest has washed his hands and given the towel back to you, go down the stairs and place them on the Credence Table and stand at the bottom step of the altar for the rest of Mass). Stand and kneel when the congregation does.

After you have received communion, go back to your chair to the left of the priest's chair and sit down.

After all the people have received communion, the priest will turn to the people and say, "Let us pray." When he says this, pick up the book from the small table, face the priest and let him open the book to the proper place for the final prayer. When the prayer is over, close the book and place it on the small table.

When the priest leaves his chair and goes down to the front of the altar, take your place in the Center Aisle, just in front of the Cross Bearer. When the priest bows, bow with him to the Altar. Then turn and follow the Cross Bearer to the back of the church.

When you get to the back of the church, return to the Priest's Sacristy and follow the instructions for "What Do I Do After Mass?"

What Do I Do If I Am The Server of Water and Wine (Two Servers)?

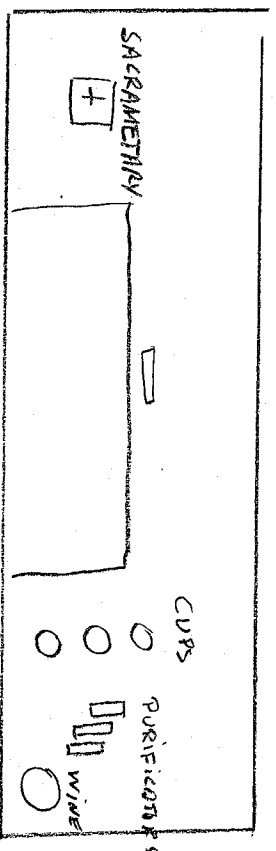
When everyone is ready, take your hymnal and go to the back of the church with the priest. Line up right behind the Cross Bearer, next to the other server. When the procession begins, follow the Cross Bearer up the Center Aisle and into the sanctuary. When you step up into the sanctuary, move off to the left, near the bottom step of the altar, and bow when the priest bows to the altar. Your chair for Mass will be to the immediate right of the priest, if there is no deacon. If there is a deacon, move to the bench at the bottom of the altar steps, near the pulpit.

Stay in your place during the next parts of the Mass, standing and sitting when the people do.

When the priest sits down and the collection is being taken up, the server on the bench goes the Credence Table and carefully brings the tray with the cups to the altar.

Take the cups off the tray and place them on the altar, off to the right (not in the middle).

Take the purificators (cloths) out of the cups and lay them on the altar. Return the tray to the Credence Table.



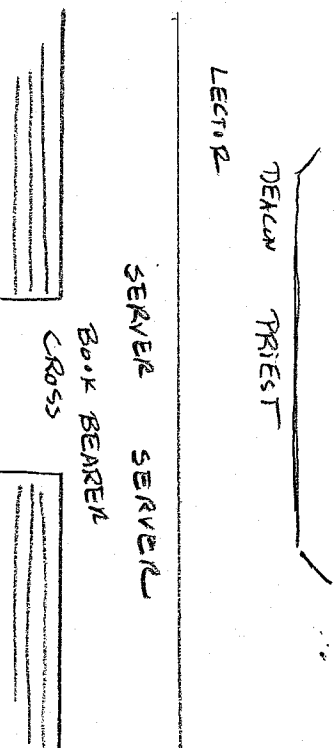
(Positions of Cup and Cloths On The Altar After the Presentation of Gifts)

When the priest or deacon goes to the front of the altar to receive the bread and wine, go with him. Place the items he gives you on the altar, to the right of center (not in the middle). Go down the credence table and one server brings the pitcher of water up to the priest. Stand next to the priest until he returns the water pitcher to you. Go down the steps and stand next to the other server who is holding the bowl and towel over the right arm. When the priest turns toward you, both go up the steps and pour some water over the hands of the priest when he places them over the bowl. When the priest is finished washing his hands, go down the steps and return the pitcher of water to the Credence Table. Come to the bottom step of the altar and stand and kneel when the people do until you receive Communion.

After Communion, return to your place, until the Final Blessing.

When the priest goes down to the front of the altar, join the other servers near the first pew, in front of the Cross Bearer and Book Bearer. When the priest bows to the Altar, bow with him, then turn and follow the Cross Bearer to the back of the church.

When you have reached the back of the church, return to the Priest's Sacristy by way of the side aisle, and follow the instructions in the section called "What Do I Do After Mass?"



(Position of Altar Servers For the Final Procession After Mass)

What Do I Do After Mass?

Once you have returned to the sacristy, one server puts out the candles near the altar and near the pulpit.

Everyone takes off their robes and hangs them up neatly. Please do not throw them on the floor.

One server brings the tray with all of the chalices to the long counter in the Priest's Sacristy.

One server brings the bowl to the sink in the Priest's Sacristy and empties it.

One server brings the pitcher of water and sets it on the sink in the Priest's Sacristy.

Now, your work is done.

Very Important Information

When you are serving, be serious. This is not a time to laugh or talk to other servers, unless it has to do with what you are doing.

When you are sitting or standing in the sanctuary, don't fidget or fumble with your cross, buttons or other items. When you are standing, your hands should be folded together. When you are sitting, your hands should be on your lap.

Always pray the prayers and sign the hymns with the priest and people

When you are moving from one place in the sanctuary to another, don't run or skip. Don't take more than one step at a time at the altar steps. Walk with reverence and move slowly.

When Mass is being celebrated, do not leave your place, unless it is an emergency. This is also true during communion. After you have received Communion, go back to your chair or bench, pray silently and remain there. This is not the time to go to the bathroom (unless it is an emergency) or to leave the sanctuary.

Important Word To Know

Sacristy – the room where the priest (Priest's Sacristy) and altar servers (Altar Servers' Sacristy) get ready.

Chalice – the cup used to hold the wine for Communion, sometimes called the cup.

Paten – the flat dish used to hold the hosts for communion

Ciborium – the covered cup used to hold the host for communion

Host – communion bread

Purificator – the white cloths used to wipe the chalice at communion time

Sacramentary – the book used by the priest at Mass

Tabernacle – the box on the wall of the church used to hold consecrated hosts, the

Body of Christ

Tabernacle key – the key which opens the tabernacle