

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish

Altar Server Guide



“For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God” Romans 8:14



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



“In the liturgy, you are much more than simple ‘helpers of the parish priest.’ Above all, you are servers of Jesus Christ, of the eternal High Priest. Thus, you, altar servers, are called in particular to be young friends of Jesus. Be determined to go deeper and to cultivate this friendship with him. You will discover that in Jesus you have found a true friend for life.”

— Pope John Paul II, August 2001

Important Words to Know

Altar Server room - is where the altar servers get ready. It is also known as the Altar Servers Sacristy.

Chalice - the cup used to hold the wine for Communion. Sometimes referred to as The Cup.

Ciborium - covered cup used to hold hosts for Communion.

Credence table - small table used for holding sacred vessels.

Host - communion bread.

Paten - the flat dish used to hold the hosts for Communion.

Purificator - the white cloths used to wipe the chalice at communion time.

Sanctuary - the area of the church where the Altar table is located. Where Mass is celebrated.

Sacramentary - the book used by the priest at Mass.

Sacristy - is the room where the priest gets ready. It is also known as the Priest's Sacristy.

Tabernacle - The gold box on the wall used to hold consecrated hosts, the Body of Christ.

Important Information



Mass is a joyful time. Be happy and smile. However, Mass is not a time to laugh or talk to other servers, unless it has to do with what you're doing.

Always pray the prayers and sing the hymns with the priest and people.



When you are moving from one place in the sanctuary to another, don't run or skip. 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, remain kneeling until the Tabernacle is closed.

You will receive a schedule informing you what Masses you are assigned to serve. The schedule comes out every three months. You and your parent or guardian should check the schedule carefully, so you know which Masses you will serve. If you are not scheduled, please feel free to check to see if help is needed.

Sign the sign in sheet, so we know you were at your assigned Mass. If you served for someone else, sign in next to their name.

You should wear neat, clean clothes and good shoes or sneakers.



Come to the Altar Server's room (vesting room) fifteen to twenty minutes before Mass is scheduled to begin. Enter the sacristy from the hallway, not the Sanctuary/Altar area.

Put on your robe (it should come down to just above your ankles). Put a cord around the robe. Ask the priest or deacon what color cord to wear. Check to make sure you look neat. Help one another to look neat, as well.

Once you have your robe on, make sure that the following items are on the credence table (just inside the Altar Servers' room door).

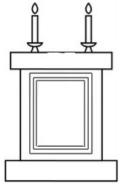
- Bowl for washing the priest's hands
- Towel
- Glass pitcher full of water



The priest, deacon or Eucharistic Minister may ask you to place other items on this table, for examples, 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 sacristy).





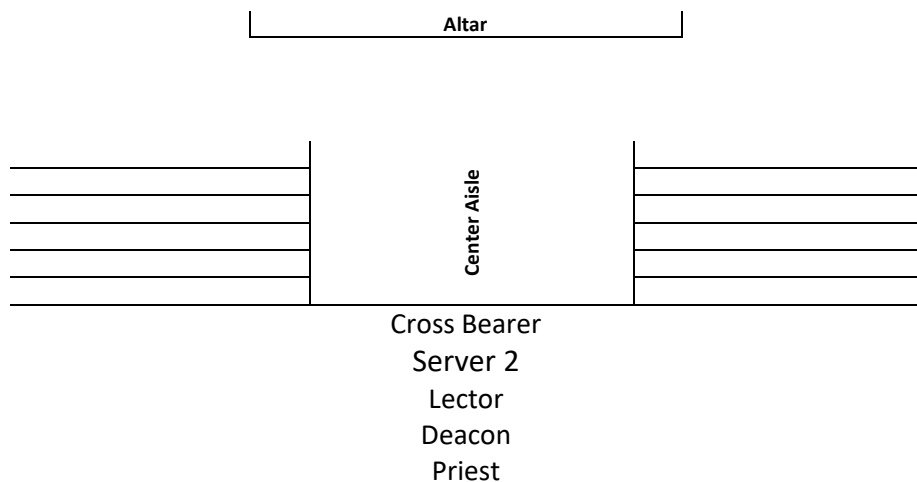
Ten Minutes before Mass begins, one server should light the candles. Two candles are near the Altar. Two candles are near the ambo (where the Gospel is read). During the Easter Season, you should also light the large Easter Candle. The Easter candle will take two servers to light. One server lowers the candle, while the other server lights it. Feel free to ask an adult to help you.

Make sure you have a hymnal to use when processing at the beginning of Mass. If you are carrying something during the procession (like the cross), put a hymnal on the seat you will be sitting at, so that it will be there when you need it.



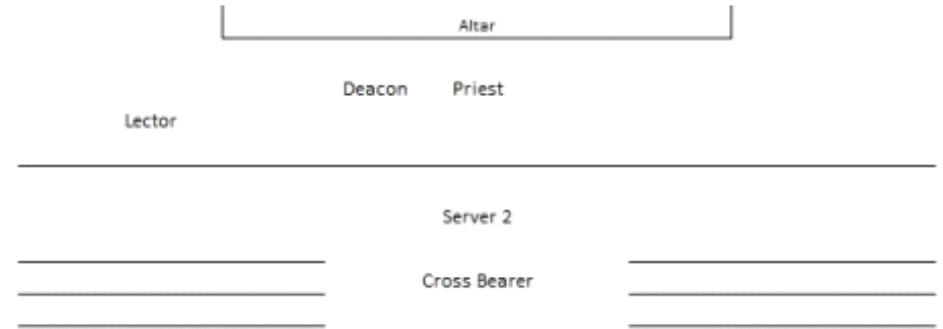
Before you go to the back of church with the priest, deacon and lector, decide who will be the cross bearer and who will be server 2.

About five to ten minutes before Mass begins, Father will let you know that it's time to go to the back of the church. The Cross bearer will get the cross, server 2 will get a hymnal and go to the back of the church and line up as shown below:



The final prayers will be said, the people will say, "Thanks be to God", and the music will start. When Father starts for the front of the Altar, the cross bearer will get the cross, and all will proceed to the front of the Altar near the second pew.

The positions should look like this:



Father will be nearest the Altar table, then the Deacon, the lector, server 2 then the cross bearer. Everyone will stand and face the Altar until Father bows to the Altar, bow with him, then turn towards the back of the church and begin processing out. Follow the cross bearer to the back of the church.

When you reach the back of church, turn left and head towards the sacristy in the front. Be careful and considerate of the parishioners leaving the church in the opposite direction.

Once you return to the sacristy, one server put out the candles near the Altar and ambo (Easter candle too). The other server will carefully take the tray of cups back to the sacristy and place it on the counter near the phone. The bowl for washing hands should be emptied, dried and placed back on the credence table. The water pitcher should be refilled, the towel re-folded and both put on the credence table.

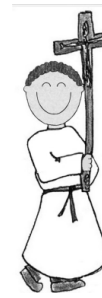
Once everything is done take off your robes and hang them up neatly. Please do not throw them on the floor or in the closet.

Father will be preparing the water, wine and bread for the Eucharistic prayer. One server should immediately bring the pitcher of water to Father while the other waits at the credence table. Stand with the pitcher, until Father asks for it, then hand it to him. He will pour wine and water into the chalices, then will hand both the water and wine pitchers back to you. Return the wine pitcher to the credence table, and keep the water pitcher.



The other server will get the bowl, and hold it with two hands. This server will also have the cloth for drying hands draped over their left forearm. When Father turns toward you both go up the steps to him. The server with the bowl will hold it under Father's hands, while the other pours water over his hands. Remember, he wants to wash his hands, not just his fingers. When he's finished, he will take the towel and dry his hands, then place it back on the server's arm. Both servers return the bowl, pitcher and towel back to the credence table. Then stand next to each other, next to the stairs at the Altar.

After the Altar Servers have received Communion, and the Eucharistic Ministers have left the Altar, the servers can kneel where they were standing to say an after Communion prayer. Please remain kneeling until communion is complete and the Tabernacle is closed.



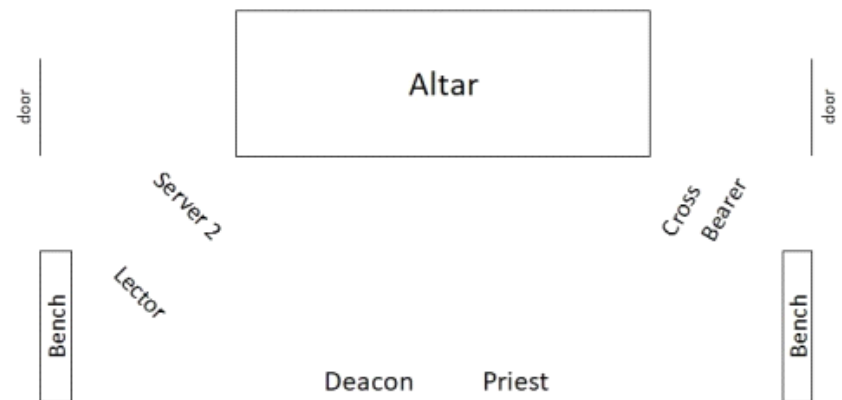
The cross bearer should hold the cross with both hands. Keep the crucifix above head level. Keep the cross upright, not leaning forward, backward, left or right. Don't let the cross sway left and right. This takes practice, but it will get easier the more you do it.

When the people begin to sing the opening song, walk slowly up the center aisle toward the Altar. Make sure that the image of Jesus is facing forward and that the cross is straight. As you move up the aisle the other server, lector, deacon and priest will follow you.

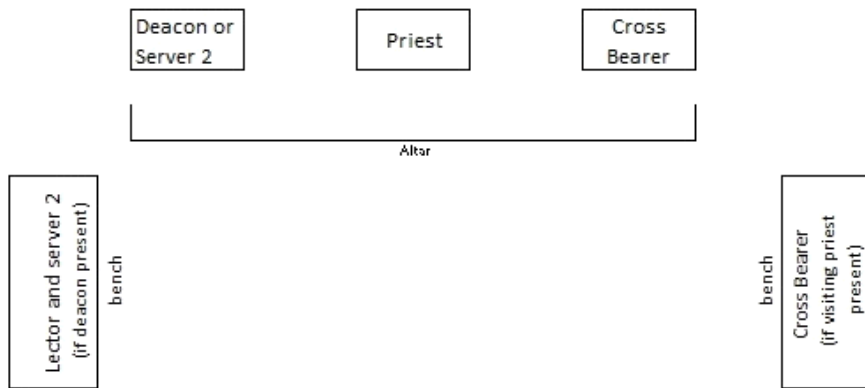


When you reach the Altar, the cross bearer will go to the right and stand near the bench against the wall, and face the Altar. Server 2, go to the left, and stand just to the left of the Altar's edge, and face forward. The lector will stand behind server 2. The priest and deacon (if present) will stand in front of the Altar.

This is where everyone should be when they arrive at the Altar:

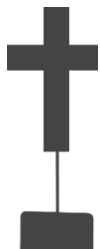


When everyone is in place, all will bow to the Altar and go to their seats. The cross bearer will bow his/her head only, then take the cross into the sacristy and place it back in its stand, then go to the seat next to Father. Server 2 should sit next to Father. If there is a deacon present server 2 will sit on the bench next to the lector. Like this:



After the prayers of the faithful, Father will sit in his chair, and the ushers will begin taking the collection.

Cross bearer: As soon as the ushers step towards the front pew, the cross bearer will get the cross, and go to the back of the church (sometimes the middle where the break is) to the table of gifts and wait. The gift bearers will come up and stand behind you. Once they are in place the usher will tell you when to process up the aisle toward the Altar. Walk slowly up the aisle. The people carrying the gifts will follow you.

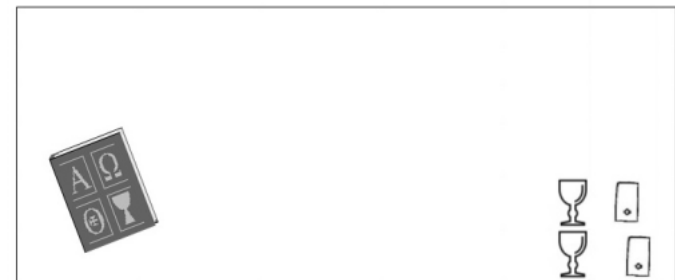


When you reach the Altar, continue without stopping, directly to the sacristy and put the cross back in the stand. Then go around the back (from the Sacristy to Altar Server room) to the credence table and wait for server 2.

Server 2: As soon as the ushers step towards the front pew, get up and go to the credence table. Carefully bring the tray of cups to the Altar. Take the cups off the tray and place them on the Altar, off to the right (not in the center). Take the purificators out of the cups and place them next to the cups. Return the tray to the credence table, then return to your seat next to Father.



Here's where things should be placed on the Altar:



When the people with the gifts process to the Altar, the priest or deacon will go to the front of the Altar to receive the gifts (bread and wine), go with him. He will take the gifts, and hand one of them to you. Take it to the Altar, and place it next to the cups on the Altar on the right. Not in the center of the Altar. Then meet the cross bearer at the credence table.

