

Church of  
**Saint Mary**

# Server's Guide



## **Prayer**

Loving Father, creator of the universe,  
You call your people to worship,  
To be with you and one another at Mass.  
I thank you for having called me  
To assist others in their prayer to you.  
May I be worthy of the trust placed in me  
And through my example and service  
Bring others closer to you. Amen.

## **A Theology of Lay Liturgical Ministry**

“But you are a 'chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises' of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” All liturgical ministers are, first and foremost, members of the Body of Christ. Through their baptism they are the “holy people and royal priesthood” whose right and privilege it is to participate in the ministry of Christ. How the lay faithful exercise this ministry in the world varies, but the fullest and most fundamental expression of it has always been “conscious, active and fruitful participation in the mystery of the eucharist.” (General Instruction Of The Roman Missal – GIRM)

## **Introduction**

Since the celebration of the Eucharist is the “action of the whole Church” (GIRM, Introduction #5), everyone in the assembly has “an individual right and duty to contribute their participation” (GIRM #58). Some of the faithful are called to serve God's people in a more particular way through one of the many liturgical ministries that have flourished in the Church since the Second Vatican Council.

This diversity of roles, functions and ministries enriches our celebrations and assists us in our prayer. Serving in one of these ministries is both an honor and a responsibility, and those who commit to it need nurturing and support.

This workshop has been prepared to help you grow in a deeper understanding and love for the liturgy, your ministry and ultimately the Lord whom we all serve.

# An Overview of Serving

## Introduction

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 to the congregation by active participation in the liturgy by their actions, singing of hymns, responses of the people, looking alert and sitting or standing at the appropriate times.

The goal of the Altar Server is to blend in so as not to call attention to oneself. The Altar Server does this through appearance, preparation, attentiveness and reverence.

A good rule of thumb is to move slowly and deliberately. It is easier to mask an error or recover from a mistake when moving slowly and confidently even in the midst of confusion. As you gain experience serving, you will realize that each priest has different preferences. For example, some priests like you to bring the book pillow to the altar. Others do not want the pillow. Learn to be flexible.

## Attire

The preferred dress for altar servers is ‘business casual’ meaning for:

- **Males:** clean buttoned shirt, long pants and socks and shoes. No jeans or short please. Never wear sandals or flip-flops. Gym shoes are not preferred but wear these only if clean and not tattered.
- **Females:** clean buttoned shirt, slacks, near knee length shorts, skirt, or dress. No jeans, leotard pants or short-shorts please. Be mindful of hem and neck lines. Closed toed shoes are preferred. Dress sandals are okay but flip-flops are not. Gyms shoes are not preferred but wear these only if clean and not tattered.

## Roles

*Crossbearer* – Generally the most experienced server, the Crossbearer leads the procession (except when incense is used).

*Acolyte* – Usually, there are two acolytes (also known as candle or torch bearers). They should carry the candles in procession so that these are

held at the same height following behind the Crossbearer. The acolytes interact most directly with the priests at the altar.

**Incense Bearer** – When incense is required at Mass, one server is dedicated to it. This server presents the thurible and incense boat (container) whenever it is needed at Mass. He is also called the thurifer.

**Book Bearer** – Presents and holds The Roman Missals for the opening prayer of Mass, called The Collect, and the ending prayer that precedes the final blessing and dismissal of the congregation.

## **1. Before Mass**

All servers should come to church dressed neatly - no jeans, T-shirts, or athletic shoes. Shoes should be shined and hair should be combed. Be in the sacristy at least 15 minutes before the start of Mass. Sign in at the Ministry Scheduler Pro kiosk. Determine who is the crossbearer, acolytes, etc. Vest immediately selecting the Liturgical Season color for the cincture. Light the appropriate candles in the sanctuary using a taper and retrieve unlit candles that flank either side of the ambo bringing these to the main sacristy to be used in the Entrance Procession.

## **2. Entrance**

The procession assembles in the back of the naïve of the church near the baptismal font. The Crossbearer leads the procession at a slow and dignified pace. (If there is incense, the Incense bearer leads the procession.) He is followed by the Acolytes carrying lighted candles. Leave and maintain a three pew distance between the Crossbearer and the Acolytes. Next comes the Deacon of the Gospel (or 2nd Lector if no Deacon is Present), con-celebrant Priests (if present), and Main Presider Priest (joined on his right by the Deacon of the Altar if present).

The Crossbearer goes directly up the steps on the St. Joseph side of the altar without stopping or bowing. The Crossbearer places the cross in its stand located in the alcove adjacent to the credence table. The Crossbearer reverently with hands folded at chest / heart level goes to his seating stool, standing facing the altar.

The Acolytes veer to the left and flank the ambo on either side and place the lit candles in the stand and then return to the foot of the sanctuary. In unison with the Presider, Con-Celebrants and Deacons they reverence the tabernacle by genuflecting.

The Acolytes rise, hands folded at chest / heart level and hold their positions until all Priests and Deacons have ascending the sanctuary steps. Then the Acolytes turn and walk along the floor at the base of the sanctuary steps proceeding to their seating stools. With hands folded at chest / heart level they turn and face the altar and remain standing for the opening prayers of the Mass.

[If there is incense, the incense bearer moves directly to the sanctuary on the the Mary side of the altar and waits for the presider. The incense bearer hands the boat to the presider, lifts the top of the thurible, and waits for the presider to put incense in the thurible. The presider returns the boat and takes the thurible and backs away from the altar so that the presider can navigate around it. Later, the presider returns the thurible to the incense bearer. The incense bearer goes to the sacristy.]

### **3. Opening Prayer**

An Acolyte brings The Roman Missal (the RED book) to the priest when he hears the words, "Let us pray." The Roman Missal should be carried with BOTH hands and held at chest level near the heart. The Acolyte presents the book to the presider so that it can be opened to the correct place. The Acolyte holds the book, remaining flexible as the priest may adjust the book height or tilt. It is a good idea to wrap the fingers around the bottom of the book once the page is set by the priest to prevent the page from turning. Hold the book until the priest says "Through our Lord Jesus Christ...for ever and ever." Close the book, hold with two hands at chest level near the heart. Give a slight head bow to the presider and then return to the seating stool. Keep hold of the book and remain standing facing the altar until the presider invites the congregation to sit for the Liturgy of the Word.

### **4. Liturgy of Word**

During the Liturgy of the Word, all servers should remain seated with eyes focused on the ambo. No yawning, cincture twirling, or fidgeting or looking around. Pay attention to the readings and to the homily. Sit up straight with feet flat on the floor.

### **5. Offertory**

While the Offertory gifts are gathered, the servers assist the Deacon or Priest in setting the altar.

Immediately following the Intercessory Prayers of Petition the servers rise in unison and with hands folded at chest level near the heart enter the sanctuary on the St. Joseph side and go to the credence table.

Note: If the Precious Blood will be offered to the congregation at Communion time (all weekend Masses except the Sunday Evening Mass), then the CROSSBEARER server will move from the St Joseph side of the sanctuary to the Mary side of the sanctuary via the back sacristy. **[No altar server is permitted to move from one side of the sanctuary to the other by passing between the altar and the tabernacle.]** The Crossbearer will bring forward the Sacred Vessels containing the wine to be consecrated and present the Sacred Vessels to the Deacon or Presider. Do not set the tray on the altar. Once all Sacred Vessels and purificators are removed from the tray the CROSSBEARER server will return the empty tray to the credence table on the Mary side of the sanctuary. The CROSSBEARER with hands folded at chest level near the heart will then return to the St Joseph side of the Sanctuary via the back sacristy and return to the seating stool.

The Acolytes bring the Roman Missal (with the pillow if the presider wishes), the Chalice and paten with preside host to the altar , any additional chalices, and any other necessary items to the altar. When hands are empty then are to be folded and held at chest level near the heart. The Acolytes then return to the seating stools on the St. Joseph side of the sanctuary.

[If incense is used at the Mass, the thurifer server goes to the back sacristy and stokes the thurible and takes up a position near the wall by the Mary statue. Once the altar is set with Roman Missal, Sacred Vessels and Host brought forward in the offertory procession, the thurifer server brings the censer and boat to the presider, who fills the censer. The thurifer server retreats back to the position near the wall and waits there while the presider incenses the altar. If a Deacon is present the presider with hand the thurible to the Deacon, who then incenses the presider and other clergy present and then the people. Then the thurible is returned and thurifer server returns thurible to the stand near the credence table of the Mary side of the sanctuary.]

Once the altar is set by the Deacon or Presider and the gifts of the people are collected, the Deacon and/or Presider will descend the steps of the sanctuary.

As this happens the Servers rise with hands raised chest high and folded near the heart flank the Deacon and Presider on either side. Never walk in

front of the clergy member, but also move behind them going up on the step if necessary.

All wait for the Gift Bearers to bring forth the ciborium containing additional hosts to be consecrated along with cruets of water and wine. The Deacon and/or Priest will accept these gifts from the people and hand these to the Servers.

The Deacon or Priest will turn and enter the sanctuary by going up on the Mary side of the altar. All servers will wait for the clergy to clear the steps and then enter the sanctuary by ascending the steps on the St Joseph side. The Servers holding the ciborium will present these to the Deacon or Priest who will take these from the server and place them on the corporal. Do not place ciborium on the altar.

After handing the ciborium to the deacon or priest the servers will go to the credence table on the St Joseph side of the sanctuary and retrieve the water pitch, basin and towel. The remaining server will present the wine cruet and the water cruet to the deacon or priest, wine first, then water. Do not place the cruets on the altar. The two servers bring forward the water pitcher, basin and towel and hold a position behind the cruet bearer waiting until wine and water are added to the presider chalice by the deacon or priest. After the wine and water are added to the presider chalice the deacon or priest will hand each cruet back to the server. Return the cruets to the credence table and with hands raised chest level and folded near the heart return to the seating stools on the St Joseph side of the sanctuary.

NOTE: If incense is used at the Mass the servers with the water pitch, basin and towel will hold until the presider and deacon are finished with the thurible. In all cases the presider will wash his hands before the consecration of the bread and wine. The servers return the water pitcher, basin and towel to the credence table. With hands raised chest level and folded near the heart the servers return to the seating stools on the

## **6. Eucharistic Prayer**

At the Holy, Holy, Holy, all the servers take a cushion to the bottom steps of the sanctuary on the St Joseph side and kneel. An Acolyte rings the bells once (one ring) at the Epiclesis. The Epiclesis begins when the priest extends his hands flat over the bread and wine.

Later, the same Acolyte rings the altar bells three times (three rings) at each elevation. He should listen for the words, "which has been given up

for you” and, “do this in memory of me.” Take special care to avoid accidentally ringing the bells.

[If incense is used, at the *Holy, Holy, Holy*, the incense bearer walks to the front of the altar and kneels. During each elevation, he raises the thurible and incenses the Blessed Sacrament. Afterwards, he returns to the sacristy.]

## **7. Communion**

Stand with hands raised to chest level and folded by the heart. The Deacon or Priest or Extra Ordinary Minister of Holy Communion will distribute communion to each server. Receive communion in the normal way.

After the Communion Rite is over, the Acolytes should be ready for the priest or deacon to clear the altar of all sacred vessels and the Roman Missal. Take the vessels and the Roman Missal back to the credence table.

If the presider or deacon is going to purify vessels at the altar one Acolyte should bring the water cruet to the altar and be ready to pour a small amount of water into a ciborium or a chalice. The priest or deacon will let you know when to pour.

After the altar is cleared of all sacred vessels and the Roman Missal, with hands raised to chest level and folded near the heart, altar servers return to the seating stools.

## **8. End of Mass**

When the presider returns to the chair and says, “Let us pray,” an Acolyte brings The Roman Missal forward. Remember to process with the book held with both hands, chest high near the heart. Present the Missal to the presider so that it can be opened to the correct page. The Acolyte holds the book for the concluding prayers. Then return to the seating stool with book held in both hands, chest high near the heart.

After the final blessing by the presider and the dismissal voiced by either the deacon or the presider, the Crossbearer with hands raised and folded at the heart goes into the sanctuary to retrieve the crucifix from the stand.

Meanwhile the two Acolytes process together (with hands raised to chest, level, and held at the heart) to the main aisle and take up a position

on either side of the aisle facing the altar. Note, the candles remain lit and stay in the stands flanking the ambo.

The Crossbearer goes to the center of the aisle three pews from the Acolytes and turns and faces the altar.

All servers hold their positions until the presider, con-celebrants, and deacons have revered the altar and reach the foot of the steps of the sanctuary. Note: The presider may remain at the foot of the altar for one or more verses of the processional hymn. As the priests and deacon(s) genuflect the Acolytes make a simple head bow to the tabernacle, turn toward each other and face the baptismal font. At the same time the Crossbearers turns, face the baptismal font, and leads the procession. The servers go directly to the main sacristy.

At the end of the processional hymn the altar servers return to the altar to extinguish all lighted candles using a taper/snuffer. Always remember to reverence the tabernacle before entering the sanctuary. Never walk between the altar and tabernacle. Help the deacon or presider carry the sacred vessels to the back sacristy where the clergy will purify and store the sacred vessels.

**Question: What do I do if I am the only server at Mass?**

Answer: Do everything. You should also remind the absent servers that you were counting on their help. You may also remind them to find substitutes. Those who have a habit of not showing will not be scheduled in the future.

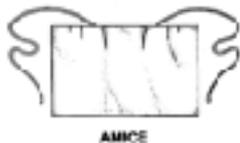
**Question: Why do certain priests prefer me to serve one way while others want me to serve another way?**

Answer: We all have preferences. We all have opinions on our favorite way to do things. Priests have similar preferences about how they like Mass to go. Always try to be flexible.

# Vestments



**Amice**—This is a rectangular piece of cloth with two long ribbons attached to the top corners. The priest puts it over his shoulders tucking it in around the neck to hide his collar.



**Alb**—This long, white, dress-like vestment can be used by all liturgical ministers. It reminds us of our baptismal gown.

**Cincture**—This is a long cord used for fastening some albs at the waist. They are colored to match the vestments of the clergy and the liturgical season.



**Stole**—A stole is a long cloth “scarf,” often ornately decorated, of the same color and style as the chasuble. According to the manner in which it is worn, it is a mark of the office of priest or deacon. A priest wears it around his neck, letting it hang down the front. A deacon wears it over his left shoulder and fastened at his right side.

STOLE



**Chasuble**—The chasuble is the priest or bishop’s sleeveless outer vestment.



**Dalmatic**—The dalmatic is a loose-fitting robe with open sides and wide sleeves worn by the deacon. It takes its color from the liturgical feast.



**Cope**—A cape-like vestment that is put on over the shoulders and hangs to the ankles, it is open in the front and clasped at the neck. The priest wears it at Benediction and other processions and services.

**Humeral Veil**—This is a long, narrow, shawl-like vestment used at Benediction and in processions where the Blessed Sacrament is carried.

**Cassock**—A long outer garment worn by clerics and servers. They may be black or red.



**Surplice**—This is a wide-sleeved garment, slipped over the head, covering the shoulders and coming down below the hips. It is worn over the cassock.

## Altar Vessels

**Chalice**—The large cup used at Mass to hold the wine that becomes the blood of Christ.



 **Paten**—This is a saucer-like dish that usually matches the chalice with which it is used. It holds the bread that becomes the Body of Christ.

**Ciborium**—This is a cup-like vessel (usually large) with a lid. It contains the hosts that will be used for Communion. It is also used to reserve the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle.



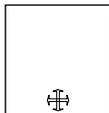
**Monstrance**—This is a large, ornate vessel used to hold the Blessed Sacrament for Benediction and Eucharistic processions.

**Cruet**—This is a small pitcher with a stopper on top. A server brings to the altar a pair of cruets, one containing wine and the other water.



**Pall**—This is the stiff square cover that is placed over the paten or chalice to protect its contents.

Corporal—A white starched linen napkin placed on top of the altar cloth. The priest places the paten and chalice on the corporal for the Eucharistic Prayer.



Purificator—This is a triple-folded rectangular white cloth used to cleanse the chalice.

PURIFICATOR

Thurible or Censer—The metal container extended from a chain in which charcoal and incense are burned. It has a lid which can be raised.



Credence Table—Servers bring most items needed during the Liturgy of the Eucharist from the credence table to the altar. After Communion, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion leave the ciboria and cups on the credence table for the priest or deacon to purify.

Taper—Servers use this long tool to light and extinguish candles. A wax wick is lit in the sacristy and is the only way that candles are lit in front of the congregation. The bell on the other side of the taper extinguishes candles. Servers never blow out candles because it sprays wax.



Ablution Bowl—The small bowl that sits near the tabernacle. Priests and deacons wash their fingers in it after they distribute Communion.

Aspergillum—The metal wand used to sprinkle holy water.

