

Altar Server Manual



ALTAR SERVER
A JOB SO BIG ONLY A KID CAN DO IT

Dear Altar Server,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for stepping up and offering your time and talent to serve our parish community as an Altar Server. The role of an Altar Server is very important in that, in a very real way, you act as “the hands of the Priest,” ensuring that we celebrate the sacred liturgy with dignity and reverence.

As an Altar Server you are called upon to advance your life as a disciple of Jesus Christ. This service is rooted in your baptism as a Christian. As such, it also demands that you strive to imitate the Lord in the way that you conduct yourself, both inside and outside the church building. The way in which you conduct yourself during the liturgy serves as an example to all who are worshipping at whatever Mass or other service at which you are assisting.

I encourage you to grow in holiness by doing the following on a regular basis:

- **Attending Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, regardless of whether you are assigned to serve or not.** (This is one of our principal duties as baptized Catholic Christians.)

- Continuing to develop your relationship with Jesus Christ through prayer. The Mass is the highest form of communal prayer in which we participate as Catholics, yet it must be supported by our personal commitment not just to knowing about God but knowing God through personal prayer.

- Committing yourself to being a person for others through acts of service and charity. Whenever you are given an opportunity to make someone’s life a little easier through volunteering to serve, take advantage of it. As a Christian, that’s one of the principal ways that we live out our faith outside of formal worship.

As you grow older and begin considering what you might want to do with your life, I hope that you will give due consideration to serving the Lord in the Priesthood or religious life. God calls each of us to a vocation and it’s important that we keep our hearts and minds open as to how God might be calling us to live our lives: as a Priest or consecrated religious, as a married person (and probably as a parent as well), or as a consecrated single person for the Lord. The more we commit ourselves to developing our relationship with God, the more clearly, we might come to discover the Lord’s will for our lives.

Again, thank you for using your time and talent to serve God and our parish as an Altar Server. Know how much we appreciate your willingness to be of service. If you ever have any questions, please don’t hesitate to ask the Priest who is celebrating the Mass. I look forward to serving with you!

Fr. Mark Stec Pastor

Fr. Felix Chukwuma Pastor

PATRON SAINT OF ALTAR SERVERS: ST. TARCISIUS

Tarcisius was a twelve-year-old acolyte during one of the fierce Roman persecutions of the third century, probably during that of Valerian. Each day, from a secret meeting place in the catacombs where Christians gathered for Mass, a Deacon would be sent to the prisons to carry the Eucharist to those Christians condemned to die. At one point, there was no Deacon to send and so St. Tarcisius, an acolyte, was sent carrying the "Holy Mysteries" to those in prison.

On the way, he was stopped by boys his own age who were not Christians but knew him as a playmate and lover of games. He was asked to join their games, but this time he refused, and the crowd of boys noticed that he was carrying something. Somehow, he was also recognized as a Christian, and the small gang of boys, anxious to view the Christian "Mysteries," became a mob and turned on Tarcisius with fury. He went down under the blows, and it is believed that a fellow Christian drove off the mob and rescued the young acolyte.

The mangled body of Tarcisius was carried back to the catacombs, but the boy died on the way from his injuries. He was buried in the cemetery of St. Callistus, and his relics are claimed by the church of San Silvestro in Capite.

In the fourth century, Pope St. Damasus wrote a poem about this "boy-martyr of the Eucharist" and says that, like another St. Stephen, he suffered a violent death at the hands of a mob rather than give up the Sacred Body to "raging dogs." His story became well known when Cardinal Wiseman made it a part of his novel *Fabiola*, in which the story of the young acolyte is dramatized, and a very moving account given of his martyrdom and death.

Tarcisius, one of the patron saints of Altar Servers, has always been an example of youthful courage and devotion, and his story was one that was told again and again to urge others to like heroism in suffering for their faith. In the *Passion of Pope Stephen*, written in the sixth century, Tarcisius is said to be an acolyte of the pope himself and, if so, this explains the great veneration in which he was held and the reason why he was chosen for so difficult a mission.

PRAYER OF AN ALTAR SERVER



O God, You have graciously called me to serve You at Your Altar. Grant me the graces that I need to serve You faithfully and wholeheartedly. Grant, too, that while serving You, I may follow the example of St. Tarcisus, who died protecting the Eucharist, and walk the same path that led him to Heaven. St. Tarcisus, pray for me and for all Servers.

The Parishes of St. Joseph-Olney, Holy Cross-Wendelin, St. Lawrence-Lawrenceville and St. Joseph-Stringtown appreciates your service of time and talent. You are a vital part of each liturgy at which you serve. Please keep these notes for future reference. Thank you for all that you do to help our parish community to pray well.

You'll Be Doing More than You May Think: "As you process into church you are leading everyone into the presence of God. When you carry the cross solemnly at the head of the procession you are saying to all the faithful, 'See, we all are called to take up our cross and follow Christ. This is our banner for battle. This is our rallying sign!'"

"Do you carry the candles? You are saying, 'We all bear within our hearts the light of Christ we received at Baptism. We are the lights in the dark, the bright stars of the universe.' The candles accompany the cross and the gospel because the gospel and the cross bring light to the world."

"Do you hold or carry the book? You represent the evangelists and apostles who bore the word of God to the world. You also remind each one of us that we are called to bear the good news of God's love to the whole world."

{During the Liturgy of the Eucharist} **"You are the Angels before the Throne** – At the Holy, Holy, Holy you should go to the step of the altar and kneel for the consecration prayer. At this point you represent the angels of God bowing before the throne of God in adoration. You represent the angels before the throne of God. Bow low at the consecration. Ring the bell with care and beauty. The way you worship at this point will raise the hearts and minds of all the people. If you are reverent and silent and sincere you will help everyone else to worship more deeply in the beauty of holiness."

THE ORDER OF MASS

You may or may not know that there are many different parts to the Mass. As Altar Servers, there are different responsibilities during each part of the Mass. Please familiarize yourself with the parts of the Mass. The ones bolded are the parts that are important to recognize by what part it follows and what happens during it, so you'll know what you need to do next. In parenthesis are the words or items that may help you identify/remember.

Introductory Rites Procession and Processional Hymn
 Greeting/Penitential Act/Gloria
 Collect (Opening Prayer) (Book or Binder)

Liturgy of the Word

- First Reading (usually Old Testament)
- Responsorial Psalm
- Second Reading (usually New Testament/Epistle)
- Gospel Acclamation (usually the Alleluia)
- Gospel Reading
- Homily
- Creed / Profession of Faith
- Universal Prayer / Prayer of the Faithful (aka Intercessions or Petitions)

Liturgy of the Eucharist

- Preparation of the Altar (Chalice & Book)**
- Offertory & Preparation of the Gifts (Ciborium, water/wine cruet; then lavabo & finger towel)**
- Eucharistic Prayer (Stand then kneel in front of the Altar)**
- Communion Rite
 - Lord's Prayer (Our Father)
 - Sign of Peace
 - Communion (after receiving, you may return to your seats, after all received the Body of Christ, retrieve water cruet; Priest will purify Chalice;)**
 - Prayer after Communion ("Let us pray") (book)**

Concluding Rite

- Greeting ("Let us pray") (book)**
- Final Blessing (sign of cross)
- Dismissal Procession (and Recessional Hymn)

GESTURES DURING MASS

All gestures should be done slowly and reverently. By maintaining a straight back and holding your head high, you will move more gracefully and attract less attention to yourself (and less likely to trip on alb).

Prayer Hands:

In the sanctuary, it's important to have unity in posture and prayer. Did you know that in a deacon's rubric, he is to have prayer hands? A priest has different gestures that we are not to imitate, so you will consistently maintain prayer hands at all times. Palm against palm. Right thumb over the left to form an "x" or cross. Fingers pointing up at approx. 45-degree angle and held against the chest. Elbows close to the body.

Genuflections:

Right knee bent down to the ground, with a straight back and prayer hands.

Bow:

A bow shows reverence and honor. 2 types happen during Mass. Unless you are holding candle/Crucifix/Thurible, you will give a full bow.

Full bow: Bow the shoulders and head from the waist (as if a stiff board), slowly and reverently.

Head bow: A slow nod. It is also done at times it would be unsafe to give a full bow (i.e. holding candles/Crucifix/Thurible).

Sitting:

Upright posture with both feet together on the floor and with hands face down on legs. Remember to slowly sit and not flop into the chair.

Standing:

Upright posture with both feet together and prayer hands. Focus on remaining still, but do not lock your knees (it could increase your chances of fainting if you are hot).

Walking & climbing stairs:

Upright posture with head held high. Move gracefully and smoothly. Your confidence will make your actions appear deliberate. Never rush/jump stairs. When you must move swiftly, always remember to be in unison with the other Altar Server. If necessary, take the time to be in unison, especially at the bottom step before ascending the steps. When the deacon or Celebrant is waiting, take that second to deliberately ascend together. Remember, right foot first.

Kneeling:

Upright posture with prayer hands. When you first kneel, remember to pull the alb to the just before the end of your shoes (don't keep rechecking or adjusting).

Attention/Eyes:

Liturgy of the Word: Focus attention toward the person speaking (readings, homily, intercessions, etc.).

Liturgy of the Eucharist: Focus attention toward the Celebrant/Altar. Do not glance around the Altar or at the congregation. If you have difficulty, pick one thing on the Altar to focus on and say a prayer.

Prayers & Singing: Recite/sing the prayers/songs in a normal voice so that you are leading the congregation by your example. If you don't know all the prayers by heart, challenge yourself to have them memorized in the next several weeks.

Introductory Rites:

Entrance Procession:

- The Crucifer (cross-bearer) leads the procession. Walk slowly down the center aisle and stopping in front of the Altar.
- Servers follow behind the crucifer slowly down the main aisle. Do not follow too closely. Stop in front of the altar, leaving space for the priest (and deacon) directly in front of the altar. All will bow in unison at the foot of the altar.

Greeting/Blessing/Penitential/Gloria/Opening Prayer:

- When the Celebrant says, "Let us pray." Retrieve the Roman Missal (book) from the credence table and stand in front of the celebrant.

Liturgy of the Word:

- Be seated and listen attentively to the readings.
- Stand at the singing of the Alleluia, remain standing listening attentively to the readings.
- All stand during the reading of the gospel, Profession of Faith (Creed), and Universal Prayer (Intentions).

Liturgy of the Eucharist: after Intercessions & begins with Preparation of the Altar.

- The Crucifer takes the cross, steps down out of the sanctuary, and proceeds to the back of the church (through the side aisle) to prepare to lead the procession of the gifts while the collection is taking place. Two hands should be used when carrying the cross.
- The Servers immediately get ready to prepare the Altar. Place the chalice and the Roman Misal (book) the left of the center of the Altar. The chalice is put on the right.

Preparation of the Gifts:

● Weekend:

- Crucifer leads the procession of the gifts in the same way as the entrance procession. After placing the cross back in its place, the Crucifer returns to his or her seat.
- The Servers accompany the Celebrant and/or Deacon to the center aisle to receive the gifts of bread and wine. Servers should be moving in unison.
- Usually, one Server will be handed the ciborium and the other the wine cruet.
- Both Servers walk to the Chalice side of the Altar.
- Server with the ciborium immediately ascends the stairs and places the ciborium on the corporal (or hand it/them to the Priest/Deacon). Bow.
- Server with water cruet should join the Server with the wine cruet next to the priest. The Priest states, "Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation....it will become for us the bread life." All respond, "Blessed be God forever." When the Priest turns, the servers (in unison) approach the Priest. (Note: When the choir is singing, the Priest will still recite the prayer, but the congregation won't. Be sure to watch for when he says it and turns).
- Server with wine cruet should hand the Priest/Deacon the wine with the handle facing the receiver. The Priest/Deacon will then hand the wine cruet back to the Server. Then the Server with the water cruet should hand the Priest/Deacon the water with the handle facing the receiver. The Priest/Deacon will then hand the water cruet back to the Server.

Both bow in union, turn to the inside. return to the credence table, and place cruets on the table.

- While returning to the credence table, the Priest will be giving blessing... “Blessed are you, Lord...”
- BS retrieves the lavabo pitcher and bowl, and CS picks up and opens the finger towel and holds it by the top corners.
- The Priest says a prayer (often silent or barely audible) and bows. After he bows and turns, both Servers approach the priest and the server with the lavabo pitcher and bowl) pours the water over the Celebrant’s hands (not too much) and into the bowl underneath. Server with (finger towel) offers the finger towel to the Priest. Server then forms prayer hands and receives the towel between the thumbs. After bowing in unison, both Servers should return to the credence table.

➤ Never walk between the Altar and tabernacle during Mass.

- Servers will then descend the stairs, and stand in front of the altar.

Eucharistic Prayer:

Begins with “The Lord be with you.”

- Servers are to stand on floor level opposite of each other with prayer hands. After you recite the “Holy, Holy... Hosanna in the highest,” servers should kneel on the first carpeted step. (Be sure to pull up your alb before kneeling so that it doesn’t get torn or become uncomfortable).

Communion Rite:

- After the Great Amen, Stand for the Our Father
- CS & BS - Stand after the Great Amen and for the praying of the Our Father (reciting with prayer hands--never open hands).
- Servers - When receiving Holy Communion, be sure to bow before receiving the Body and Blood of Christ. Also, be sure to say Amen.
- During the distribution of the Holy Communion you may be seated.
- After Communion, the Celebrant or Deacon will return to the Altar to purify the Celebrant’s chalice. Server is to stand next to the priest with the water cruet who will take it a pour water into the chalice.
- Server places water cruet on credence table and returns to the priest to the ciboria to the credence table.
- The Server will also retrieve the chalice to take to the credence table.

Prayer after Communion & Concluding Rites:

- after Chalice purification Celebrant returns to seat and either sits then stands or just stands. “Let us pray.” Server will take the Roman Missal to the Celebrant for the final prayer.
- When the Celebrant is finished, close the Missal and return it to the credence table. Remain Standing. \

Procession and Recessional Hymn:

- When the singing begins during closing hymn, the Crucifer should get the processional cross and line up at the edge of the sanctuary step on the floor level (center aisle), facing the Altar, with servers on either side.
- After the Celebrant reverences the altar and takes his position in front of the altar, all bow in unison.
- Servers should turn to the inside and process out: Crucifer should lead, followed the other two servers.

THANKSGIVING PRAYER / PRAYER AFTER SERVING

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the eternal High Priest. You lead all your saints in heaven and your people on earth in praising God, our Father. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for letting me come before your altar, so that, with your help, I can praise my Father in heaven as his server. Help me to find joy in serving at your altar. Help me to find gladness in knowing and doing your will in all things. Glory to you, Lord Jesus, and to the Father and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever.

Amen.