



Altar Server Guide



Prayer before Serving at Mass

Heavenly Father, as I prepare to assist You at Your altar, I declare my faith in You. At this Mass, keep me from distractions. Let me remember that in assisting the priest I am assisting Jesus in offering You the merits of His passion and death. I thank You for allowing me the opportunity to give my service to You. At this Mass, I join with your Priest in offering You the sacred Body and Blood of my Savior Jesus Christ, Your Son. May my sharing the Divine Food in Holy Communion bring me eternal salvation. Amen.

Revised: 9/12/2022

The Ministry of Altar Server

Altar Servers are a very important part of the Liturgy as they assist the priest on the Altar during Sunday Masses, School Masses, Weddings, Funerals, and Holy Days throughout the year. Altar Servers help serve the people of God in the Eucharistic celebration leading them by their prayerful participation.

Girls and boys who are in the fifth grade can begin serving at Mass after signing the Altar Server Agreement with their parents and have gone through a short training session.

Before Mass

- During the course of the week, it is a good idea to review the Sunday readings so that you are familiar with the Word to be proclaimed and the theme of the Mass.
- Dress appropriately.
 - We always dress our best when we meet someone important. There is no one more important than Jesus Christ who we will be meeting in person at every Mass. Thus, we should dress our best.
 - As an Altar Server everything we do should point to the presence of Jesus in the Word and Sacrament. Thus, our attire should not be a distraction.
 - Remember that you will be wearing alb and cincture and thus your shoes will be visible, so nice shoes are recommended. Also, bright colored shirts may show through the alb, so muted colors should be worn. Solid colored shirts and black pants are suggested.
- Arrive at least 15 minutes before Mass and check in with the priest.
 - If you do not arrive on time, there is a chance that a substitute will be found to take your place and you will not be able to serve.
- After arriving, dress in alb, cincture, cross.
 - Make sure the alb's length should not be shorter than 4 inches above the ankle, and that the cincture is long enough to go around your waist with room to spare.
- Work with the other servers to separate your roles:
 - Cross:
 - Responsible for carrying the processional cross, lighting candles on the altar or processional candles.
 - Book:
 - Responsible for holding the book for the priest at the appropriate times and placing the book on the altar.
 - Bells:
 - Responsible for ringing the bells at the appropriate time during the Eucharistic prayer.
- Remain in the sacristy for directions from the priest.

During Mass

- An Altar Server helps the congregation participate in the Mass by their own active participation. This is done well when it is not distracting.
- Prayerful postures should always be maintained.
 - When standing, hands should be folded in prayer.
 - Sit straight up and keep both feet still and flat on the floor.
 - When moving around the Altar, or processing in and out, always do so at a slow and steady pace.

- Perform the proper gestures at the proper times:
 - Examples are: the sign of the cross, the three crosses during the Gospel and bowing during the creed.
- Always look and focus your attention to the part of the Mass that is taking place.

The Order of the Mass

The Beginning of Mass

Just before Mass is to begin, the Altar servers retrieve the cross (cross), and if available the other two retrieve the processional candles (Book and Bells). Carefully carrying those items, they should proceed to the back of the church with the priest and deacon.

Entrance Procession.

The entrance procession begins at the back of the church. The Cross bearer leads the procession with the Book and Bells Servers standing one on each side carrying the cross. They are followed by the priest and the Deacon. Refer to figure 1 below.

Upon reaching the first position in front of the stairs leading up to the altar, everyone pauses and makes a slight turn towards Jesus fully present in the tabernacle. At the same time, all bow towards Jesus. See figure (2).

Proceeding up the steps, the Cross Server carries the cross to the spot where it is stored and takes his place by the seats on that side. The Bells and Book Servers proceed up to the corners of the carpet and wait for the priest and deacon to arrive. Again, all bow in unison towards the Altar. Then the servers place the candles in their spot on the altar and proceed to their positions. The Bells Server moves to his seat behind the priest, while Book Server retrieves the book and his seat next to the priest. All remain standing. Refer to figure (3) for positions.

Opening Prayer

When the priest says, "Let us pray," the Book Server moves to the priest who opens the book to the proper page and give the server the book to hold for him. Do not be worried if the priest adjusts the book so that he can read it better. Standing slightly to the side, hold the book still and steady.

After the prayer ends with "AMEN", the Book Server places the book on the Credence table (3).

Liturgy of the Word.

Remembering that God is present in four ways at the Mass, in the Eucharist, the Word, the People and the Priest, we focus our attention to the Ambo. After the readings Altar Servers respond, "Thanks be to God." Altar Servers Stand during the Gospel, sing the Alleluia and make the three small crosses on their forehead, lips, and heart. At the end of the Gospel they respond, "Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ."

Offertory

After the General Intercessions the Book Server places the Missal on the Altar. The Book and Bells server go to credence table (1) and take the Chalice and any Ciborium and place it on the Altar. If a deacon is present, they present these items to the deacon who places them on the Altar. After the Altar is set, the Book and Bells Server remain standing behind the priest until the collection is complete.

When the collection is complete and the priest stands, he will walk to the bottom of the steps and wait for the people to bring forward the gifts. The Book and Bells Servers come down the steps and remain slightly behind him. The priest will receive the bread and the wine from the people and will give one to each Server. The priest will take the collection and place it in front of the Altar.

After the priest takes his place in the Sanctuary, the Cross Server takes his place standing on the side of the Altar. See figure (4).

The Book and Bells Servers will carry the gifts to the side of the altar. While taking your place, the Server carrying the wine retrieves the cruet with the water and stands at the side of the altar. See figure (4).

At the side of the Altar the bread is given to the priest or deacon who places it on the Altar. Then the wine is given to the priest first, after he pours some into the Chalice the water is then offered. Remain standing there. After the water is poured into the Chalice, he will hand the water back to you. Both servers go back to Credence table 1.

The server holding the water retrieves the Lavabo (bowl), the other server retrieves the towel. Both servers then return to the positions on figure (4). As the priest begins, "Lord wash me from my iniquities..." the Server pours the water over the fingers of the priest. Then the priest will turn towards the other server and dry his hands on the towel. After that is complete, both servers return the items to credence table 1 and take their places on the side of the Altar.

The Eucharistic Prayer

All Servers kneel at the appropriate times and actively respond to the prayers. Hands should be held in a prayerful posture.

The Bells server makes sure that the Bells will be within his reach when he kneels. The Bells Server rings the Bell at 3 times:

1. When the priest puts his hands over the gifts.
2. When the priest elevates the Body of Christ.
3. When the priest elevates the Chalice.

Sign of Peace

Reverently exchange the sign of peace with one another and then with the priest and deacon. Then return to the positions indicated in figure (4).

Communion

Receive communion from the priest and quietly return to your seats.

The Book Server should retrieve the book and hold it in their lap.

After communion is distributed, the priest will return the hosts to the tabernacle and proceed to the altar to purify the Chalice. When the priest arrives at the Altar, the Bells Server should retrieve the water and bring it to the priest who will pour some into the Chalice and hand it back to the Bells Server who returns it to Credence table (1). They then return to the side of the Altar as the priest will hand him the Chalice and any other vessels that remain which the Bells Server will return to Credence table (1) as well.

After the Altar is cleared, the priest will return to his chair and the Bells Server is to do the same.

Concluding Rites

When the priest says, "Let us pray." All servers should stand. The Book Server will bring the book to the priest as in the opening prayer. The priest will open the book and hand it to the server to hold open for him. When the prayer is over return the book to Credence table (3) and return to your chair and be ready to process out.

Dismissal

When the closing song begins or when the priest moves to process out, the Cross Server retrieves the cross and stands in front of the stairs. The Book and Bells Server retrieve the candles and stand slightly behind the priest and deacon. When the priest bows or genuflect, everyone turns around and processes to the back of the church. The candles stand on each side of the cross. See figure (5).

If the candles are not used in the recessional, then please extinguish them with the candlelighter with snuffer.

Remain at the back of the church until the priest dismisses you. He may want to say a short prayer. Then return the cross and the candles back to their places. You may want to ask the priest or deacon if they need help with anything else.

After Mass

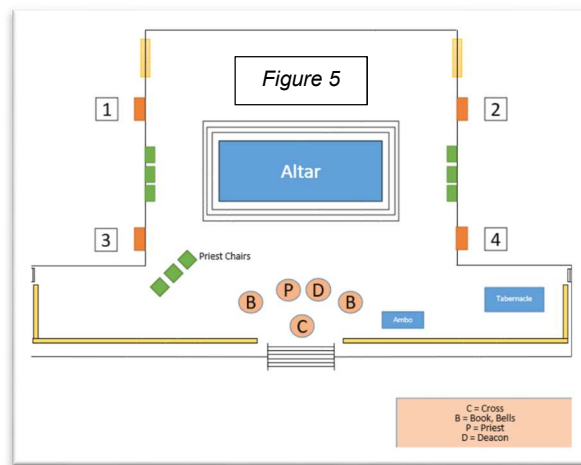
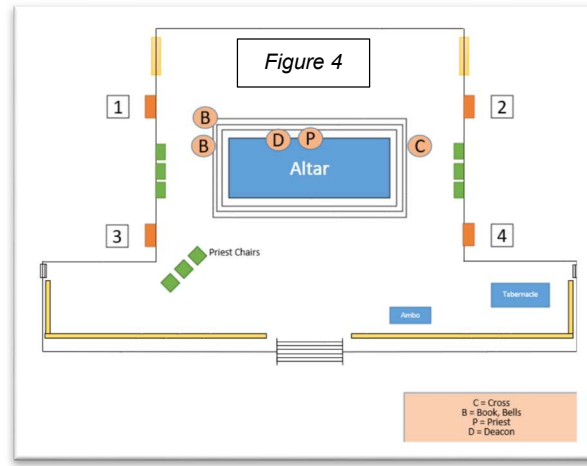
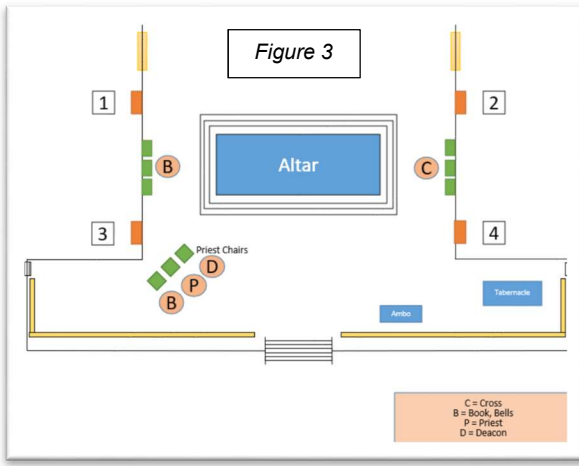
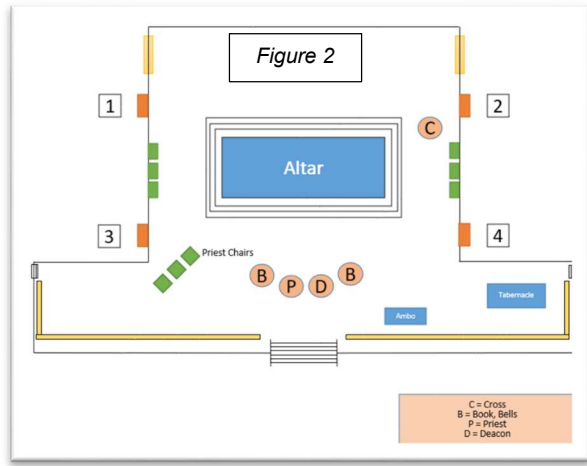
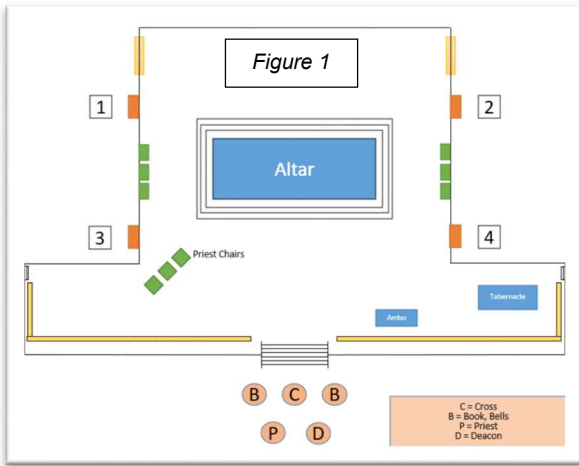
Remove the alb, cincture, and cross and hang them neatly on the hangers.

Mistakes

We all make them. Priest, deacons, servers, lectors, everybody. Do not get upset with yourself or become flustered. Do not worry about making mistakes. Simply remain calm, act reverently, and continue on with what needs to be done. If you are lost or confused, look to the priest or deacon to guide you. They are there to help you become a better server.

If you notice one of the other servers having trouble, kindly and quietly and reverently offer to help them. The more experienced servers should always look to help train the others servers when needed.

Figures:



Sacred Vessels



CHALICE



CIBORIUM



PATEN



CUSTODIA



MONSTRANCE



LUNETTE



DECANTER



CRUETS



PURIFICATOR



LAVABO BOWL



LAVABO TOWEL



CORPORAL



THURIBLE



BOAT



AMICE

Symbol of the Helmet of Salvation

The amice is a rectangular piece of white linen with two strings at the upper corners which a priest uses underneath his alb to cover his neck so that the Roman collar is hidden. The amice recalls the humiliation which was put upon Christ during his Passion.



ALB

Symbol of Purity

The alb is the long white, robe-like vestment worn by all clerics at liturgical celebrations. The alb (from Latin word *alba*, meaning "white") can be traced to the ancient Roman alb worn under a cloak or tunic; It symbolizes the innocence and purity that should adorn the soul of the priest who ascends the altar.



CINCTURE

Symbol of Chastity

The cincture ties the alb at the waist. It symbolizes the virtues of chastity and continence (the exercise of self-constraint against temptation).



STOLE

Symbol of the Priestly Office and Immortality

The stole, matching the liturgical color, is a long, scarf-like vestment worn over the alb and under the chasuble. The priest wears the stole around his neck so that it hangs equally down his chest in front. The deacon wears his stole over the left shoulder and tied at his right side.



CHASUBLE

Symbol of the Yoke of Christ

The chasuble, also matching the liturgical color, is the long, often ornate, sleeveless poncho-like garment worn by priests and bishops over the alb and stole during the sacrifice of the Mass. It symbolizes the virtue of charity, and the yoke of unselfish service for the Lord, which the priest assumes at ordination.