

## ALTAR SERVERS

Among the liturgical ministries established by the Church for the purpose of suitably giving worship to God is that of acolyte. The function of an "instituted acolyte" is to assist the priest during the Eucharist. In the absence of such instituted acolytes, their liturgical functions may be carried out by altar servers. It is the right and duty of the baptized faithful to perform the other ministries listed in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 68, para. 2, and nos. 142-147. As a rule they should be baptized Catholics, male or female, adult or child, who have made their first Communion and who receive the Eucharist whenever they participate in the Liturgy.

### Formation

Servers should receive proper formation before they begin to function. The formation should include instruction on the Mass and its parts and their meaning, the various objects used in the liturgy (their names and use), and the various functions of the server during the Mass and other liturgical celebrations. Servers should also receive appropriate guidance on maintaining proper decorum and attire when serving Mass and other functions.

### Duties

Since the role of the server is integral to the normal celebration of the Mass, at least one server should assist the priest. On Sundays and other more important occasions, two or more servers should be employed to carry out the various functions normally entrusted to these ministers.

Servers carry the cross and the processional candles, hold the book for the priest celebrant when he is not at the altar, carry the incense and censer, present the bread, wine, and water to the priest during the preparation of the gifts or assist him when he receives the gifts from the people, wash the hands of the priest, and assist the priest celebrant and deacon as necessary.

Servers respond to the prayers and dialogues of the priest along with the assembly. They also join in singing the hymns and other chants of the liturgy.

Servers should be seated in a place from which they can easily assist the priest celebrant and deacon. The place next to the priest is normally reserved for the deacon.

### Appropriate dress

The alb is the preferred vestment for servers. GIRM, no. 298. Vested servers are within the tradition of the Church; being vested prevents difficulties regarding appropriate dress for these ministers.

Caution

Servers may not distribute Communion unless they have been mandated for this function by the bishop; that is, commissioned as an Extraordinary Minister of Communion. The age norm for Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist is 18. (cf. "Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist," Pastoral Manual.)

Blessing

The "Order for the Blessing of Altar Servers, Sacristans, Musicians, and Ushers," (Book of Blessings nos. 1847-1870) may be used before servers first begin to function in this ministry.