

**ALTAR SERVERS GUIDE:**  
**For Sunday and Solemn Celebrations**  
(Effective 11/27/16 First Sunday of Advent)

I. Roles:

- a. Cross – brings the Cross in during the procession, leads the gifts, recesses with the Cross at the end of Mass
- b. Candles – a pair who bring the Candles in during the procession, participates with the Cross for the gifts, and during the recession.
- c. Book – holds the book for the presider for the opening and closing prayers, sits near the presider on the tabernacle side.
- d. Servers – a pair or individual person who assists with setting the Altar, receiving the gifts, washes the priest's hands, and returns items to the credence table.
- e. Acolyte – one of our adult servers who assists with the mass. They will help you along with the priest if you should get confused. If there is an acolyte, he sits near the priest on the choir side.

II. General:

- a. Please arrive at church about twenty minutes before Mass starts. Find your cassock, surplice, and cross. The server lights the candles on the altar and for the procession about eight minutes before Mass. Ask father or the Acolyte if he needs any help.
- b. There are six possible roles. When it is possible, all six roles will be occupied by an individual person. When there are fewer than six servers the roles will need to be distributed.
- c. When there are five servers, the book should assist the server with setting the altar and during the hand washing.
- d. When there are four people, the book takes on the responsibilities of the servers
- e. When there are three people, The Cross will take on the role of the Book, and the Candles take on the roles of the servers. The candles will not go down escort the gifts but will do the gospel procession.
- f. When there are only two servers, one will function as the book and Cross. No candles are brought up in the procession. Both will set the altar with the priest. The cross escorts the gifts while the book assists the priest with the gifts. They both participate in the gospel procession.
- g. If there is only one server, that person fill all of the roles with the assistance of the priest.

III. Processional

- a. Order: Master of Ceremonies, Thurifer, Cross, Candles side by side behind the cross, other servers side by side with some space, the reader, acolyte, and the priest.

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- b. After the prayer led by the priest, Cross and candles collect their items and go to the doors of the church. The remaining servers go straight to the doors of the church.
- c. During the procession the Cross sets the pace. If you have the cross, walk in at a calm pace, neither too fast or too slow. Everyone else should match the pace of the Cross.
- d. When you arrive at the base of the Sanctuary, you either bow or genuflect to the tabernacle. If there is nothing in your hand's, please genuflect. If you are holding something, please bow.
- e. Beginning in Advent the Processional cross and candles will be placed on a table on the floor level by the server pews. So, Cross and Candles will go to the left and place the Cross on its stand and the candles on the table.
- f. The book will go to his or her seat in the sanctuary near the priest and the servers to their seats in the pews. [Effective until December 31 2016.]
- g. [After January 1, 2017,] The arrangement of the chairs in the sanctuary will be slightly different. The presiders chair will remain where it is, and the book and acolyte chairs will move down to the landing area on the choir side. The chair closer to the sacristy is for the acolyte, and the chair on the congregation side is for the book.
- h. Mass begins with the sign of the Cross, followed by the penitential acts, then the Gloria is sung. During the Gloria, the book should prepare to hold/open the book for the opening prayer. Bring the book either open or hold it so that it can be opened. Hold the book at an angle and steady so that the priest can read from it.
- i. After the prayer comes the readings.

### IV. Gospel Procession

- a. On more ordinary Sundays:
  - i. During the second reading, the candles stand and prepare for the Gospel procession.
  - ii. The candle bearers bring their candles around the Ambo for the singing of Alleluia.
- b. In more solemn celebrations (*e.g. with thurifer present*):
  - i. During the second reading, the candles and Thruifer stand and prepare for the Gospel procession.
  - ii. the two Candle Bearers will climb the side steps of the sanctuary and head to the front of the altar, one on each corner, to wait for the priest or deacon to go to the center and get the Gospel book. Then the Candle Bearers will go down the steps to the positions in IV.a, and then after the Gospel is proclaimed return the candles to the side table in the same manner as in IV.a
  - iii. The Thurifer, who will always be seated/positioned on the choir area side of the sanctuary, will get the thurible and then climb up the side steps to the presider, then he will go around the front of the altar to the other side

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positioning himself in front of the procession and then place himself behind the Gospel proclaimer

- c. In either instance, after the Gospel is proclaimed, the servers return the candles/thurible to its stand and are seated for the Gospel.

### V. Preparation of Gifts

- a. The acolyte and altar servers will set up the altar. If no acolyte is present the presider (*or concelebrant, if the Bishop is presiding*) will set up the altar with the servers.
- b. Nothing should be placed on the corporal. Bring the items two at a time to the person setting the altar.
- c. The items should be arranged such that the starting with the main chalice, all of the chalices are in a line with the purificators and water cruet in front of them and the extra plates behind them.
- d. Only two servers should perform this function because of the amount of space in the sanctuary.

### VI. Offertory

- a. On a regular Sunday: only the Cross Bearer will go to the Offertory table to lead the Gift Bearers. If only one altar server is available – then no Cross Bearer to lead the Gift Bearers
- b. On a more solemn occasion (*Christmas Midnight Mass, Easter Vigil, Holy Thursday, etc.*), if there are three or more altar servers, then the Gift Bearers will be led by both a Cross and two candles. However, if there are only two or less altar servers, then no Cross Bearer to lead the Gift Bearers
- c. When the gifts are ready to come to the sanctuary, the priest with the servers and the book go down to receive the gifts.
  - i. If you receive the large cruet of wine, place it on the altar in front of the chalices.
  - ii. If you get the hosts, do not place them on the corporal. Normally you should wait and hand father the hosts when he comes to the altar. If you are alone, place the hosts to the left of the book.
  - iii. If you get the basket with the collection place it on the choir side of the Altar.
  - iv. If you get the book of the prayers place it on the stand.
- d. The cross, book, and candles go to their pews for the rest of Mass.
- e. The servers or those filling in these roles go to the credence table. They wait for Father or the deacon to pour the water into the wine and then retrieve the water. Likewise, they retrieve the wine cruet after it is all poured.
- f. While one server is retrieving the wine cruet, the other server prepares for the hand washing.
  - i. That serve takes either the vessel of water and the towel or the bowl and moves so that their fellow server can get to the table.

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- ii. The other server picks up the other half of the washing vessels and both wait for the priest to come to wash his hands.
- iii. One server pours a calm but generous amount of water over the priest's hands and then hands him the towel. They bow to the priest and return their vessels and return to their pews.

### VII. Eucharistic Prayer and communion

- a. During the Eucharistic prayer the server rings the bell at three moments
  - i. During the epiclesis when the priest places his hands over the gifts. The bell is rung one time.
  - ii. During the elevation of the host. The bell is rung three times.
  - iii. During the elevation of the Chalice. The bell is rung three times.
- b. After the sign of peace and during the singing of the Lamb of God, all servers go the sanctuary and stand in front of the tabernacle in a line.
- c. After receiving the Eucharist, each server returns to his or her seat from the beginning of Mass. The book goes to his or her chair next to the priest.
- d. When communion is coming to an end, the servers receive the vessels back from the ministers and place them on the credence table.
- e. The Book prepares for the post communion prayer waiting for "Let us Pray".

### VIII. Recessional

- a. After the closing prayer, all servers prepare for the recession, collecting the cross and candles, standing ready to recess from the church.
- b. After the final blessing as the hymn starts, the cross goes to about the middle of the first section of pews and turns back to the sanctuary, he or she is joined by the candles, and the remaining servers.
- c. All bow or genuflect with the priest.
- d. The Cross leads the recession a measured pace.

### IX. After Mass

- a. Each server returns their item to their place in the sanctuary.
- b. Take off your cross, surplice, and cassock. Place them back where you found them.
- c. See if Father or the Acolyte needs anything.

### X. Terms

- a. Credence Table: The table set to the side of the sanctuary on which are placed the chalices, ciborium, and other vessels before Mass has begun.
- b. Master of Ceremonies (MC): An adult who guides all of the servers and assist during the mass. We may have an MC for higher feasts.

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- c. Thurifer: The server who is responsible for the thurible. High school servers and Acolytes will fill the role of thurifer. We will instruct you when the time comes.
- d. Thurible: A device that holds charcoal for the burning of incense. We may use incense at higher celebrations.
- e. Sanctuary: The space set off from the main body of the Church where Altar, Chair, and Ambo are located.
- f. Genuflect: To bow down on one knee in adoration of God.
- g. Ambo: the podium from which the readings are read.
- h. Corporal: a small square cloth on the altar where the hosts and chalices are placed during the celebration of the Mass.
- i. Ciborium: a plate shaped vessel for Hosts.
- j. Purificator: a small white towel used with the chalice.

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