

Procedures for Altar Servers

St. Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Community

Background on the Liturgy

Two Events Are Basic to Understanding the Mass:

1. The story of the Exodus and Covenant at Mount Sinai (10 commandments)
 - God frees his people from slavery and leads them through the Red Sea to freedom.
 - The blood of the lamb on the doorpost is the sign of liberation.
 - The people make unleavened bread because they are in a hurry to leave.
 - God makes a covenant with his people at Mount Sinai.
 - Blood is used to seal the covenant.
 - God feeds his people with bread on their journey through the desert to the Promised Land.
2. The Story of the Last Supper
 - Jesus takes bread familiar to the Jews and gives it a new meaning and reality: "This is my Body, given for you."
 - Jesus takes the cup of wine and gives it new meaning and reality: "This is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant. It is shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven."
 - Jesus perfects the old covenant by establishing the new covenant in his blood. He is now the Lamb sacrificed to save his people and the bread that comes down from heaven that gives his people the strength to walk through this life to the Promised Land.

The Altar Server has four basic responsibilities:

1. Listen to the Word of God.
2. Offer thanks in the Eucharist.
3. Participate fully in the Mass (When serving and anytime that you attend Mass).
4. Follow through on your commitments and responsibilities to this ministry. Be prepared. Serve when you are scheduled or find a substitute.

Responsibilities Specific to Altar Servers

- Arrive no later than 15 minutes before the beginning of liturgy. The priest or sacristan (the person who sets up for Mass) may have instructions for you. Arrive early!
- Sign in and let the Sacristan know that you are there.

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I. Before the Liturgy Begins

1. Vest in an **Alb** and a **Cincture**. (Use a cincture that is the same color as the vestments for that weekend, e.g. white, green, purple or red).
2. Check the **Sacramentary** and be sure that the ribbons are in the right place. If you are Server 1 be familiar with where the **Opening Prayer** is.
3. Place the **Sacramentary** on the First Server Chair (the server chair that is farthest from the **Credence Table**).
4. Be sure that there is a worship aid on the chair of each person serving at Mass.
5. The Cross Bearer should get the Cross and be ready to lead the procession five minutes before Mass begins.
6. Five minutes before Mass, servers 1 & 2 light all four candles, close the doors in front of the **Tabernacle**, and bring two candles to the back of the church. Prepare to process to the Altar area.
7. All Servers should be at the entrance to the worship space five minutes before Mass begins. You should be ready for the procession to begin (candles lit, etc.).

II. During the Liturgy

Introductory Rites:

1. The Cross leads the procession (unless incense is being used).
2. Servers follow the Cross Bearer in the procession.
3. When the procession gets to the Altar platform the Priest, Deacon, Servers, and everyone in the procession will reverence (bow) to the Altar after the Book of the Gospels is placed on the Altar by the Deacon or Lector (The Deacon will place the Book of the Gospel and remain at the Altar. A lector will place the Book on the Altar and return to the other ministers to reverence the Altar). Servers holding the candles should reverence the Altar by slightly bowing the head. The Cross Bearer should stand erect. Others Servers should bow from the waist.
3. The Priest (and the Deacon) will be in the middle (in front of the Altar) with those holding the candles on either side. The Cross Bearer should go stand on the far left end (the side opposite the choir) of those lined up to reverence the Altar. Wait for Father to reverence (bow) to the Altar. Those holding the candles (and other Servers) should bow to the Altar by bowing the head. The Cross Bearer does not bow the head but stands erect. The Cross Bearer returns the Cross to the stand, and may sit with the assembly.
4. Servers proceed to their seats and join in SINGING THE GATHERING SONG.
5. After making the sign of the Cross Server 1 picks up **Sacramentary** and stands on the floor level close to the priest's chair facing the priest.
6. As soon as the priest says "*Let Us Pray*" approach prepared to open the **Sacramentary** to the Opening Prayer. (The Opening Prayer is usually after the Glory to God. During Advent and Lent, it will be after the Penitential Rite.) *Practice holding and handling the book.*
7. Server 1 approaches the Presider's Chair and opens the **Sacramentary** to the Opening Prayer. Hold the book so the priest can read it easily. At the end of the prayer return to your seat and place the **Sacramentary** next to your chair.

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III. Liturgy of the Word

Listen carefully and keep your eyes on the person proclaiming the Sacred Scripture.

Gospel Procession

1. As soon as the music begins for the Gospel Acclamation, Servers 1 & 2 should go behind the Altar (facing the assembly), reverence the Altar together, and move toward the candles (closest to the ambo). Server 1 should go up first and take the candle closest to the ambo after bowing.
2. When both servers are in position, face each other and pick up the candles. **Move in unison.**
3. After the priest/deacon picks up the **Book of the Gospels** the Servers will walk ahead of him and stand on either side of the ambo with the flat brass plate held the same height as the surface of the ambo. (Servers holding the candles do not make the triple sign of the Cross on their foreheads, lips and hearts at the beginning of the gospel.)
4. Look at the priest/deacon and focus on the reading of the Gospel.
5. At the conclusion of the gospel Servers carry candles back to the bases. They face each other and at the same time replace the candles on the holders. The Servers come together behind the Altar, facing the people, bow and then both return to their seats.

IV. Liturgy of the Eucharist

Preparation of the Gifts (After the General intercession/Prayers of the Faithful)

Setting the Altar:

6. As soon as the assembly is seated Server 2 should go to the **Credence Table**, get the **Corporal**, and place it on the Altar. The **Corporal** should be placed about 10 inches from the bottom edge of the Altar (see *Preparation of Altar* handout). Server 1 will get the **Sacramentary** and the **Chalice** with the **Purificator**. Place the **Chalice** with the **Purificator** inside to the right of the Altar between the edge of the **Corporal** and the edge of the **Altar**. The **Sacramentary** should be placed in the middle of the Altar below the edge of the **Corporal** and above the edge of the Altar (where the priest stands).
7. After placing the corporal Server 2 will bring the **Cruet/Pitcher** (with water) and place it on the Altar near the main **Chalice**.
8. Both servers should place all of the **Chalices** (cups) on the Altar (right edge).
9. When the priests (and the deacon) approach the front of the Altar to receive the gifts the cross bearer should join them. The priest/deacon will hand the basket representing the monetary gifts and place it to the left of the **Credence Table** (on the floor in front of the cross). If no deacon is present Server 2 should join them to assist. Server 2 receives the paten with the hosts from the priest. He/she stands near the Altar (left side) and waits for the priest to take the paten and place it on the Altar.

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After the gifts have been placed Server 2 should join Server 1 who is waiting at the left side of the Altar **on the floor level**.

10. After the deacon/priest has poured the wine into the chalices the cross bearer will approach the altar, get the **Flagon**, and place it on the **Credence Table**.
11. Servers 1 should return to the **Credence Table** to get the bowl and the towel/purificator and place it over the left arm. Server 1 should wait for Server 2 standing on the left side of the Altar (on the floor level). Both Servers should remain there until the Priest is ready for the **Lavabo**.
9. After water has been poured into the **Chalice**, the priest or deacon will hand the pitcher to Server 2. Both Servers should be ready to move forward slowly.
10. When Father bows after placing the Chalice on the Altar, the Servers approach the Altar. Server 2 will pour a small amount of water over the hands of the Priest. Server 1 will hold the bowl to catch the water. After Father dries his hands, both Servers return the towel, the bowl, and the pitcher to the **Credence table**. The Servers may then return to their chairs. Remain standing. Continue to participate in the Mass.

Placement of Liturgical Items Needed for the Distribution of Communion

11. During "The Lamb of God" both Servers should place **Patens** (plates), **Purificators**, and the gold **Ciborium** on the Altar. Bring the **Patens** should be brought first. After they are placed on the Altar, the Servers should unstack them and place the **Purificators** near the cups (see reference sheet for placement).
12. After all the liturgical vessels are on the Altar, open the doors to the Eucharistic Chapel, genuflect, and return to your chairs. Remain standing.

After the priest and the Ministers of Communion have gone to offer Communion to the assembly, join the communion procession. After receiving communion, Server 1 gets the **Sacramentary** from the Altar and returns to his/her chair. Server 1 and Server 2 join in singing the Communion hymn and remain standing until Father sits down.

13. When the priest returns to the chair after communion, server 2 brings the Lavabo bowl and water and Purificator to the chair for the priest and deacon. He/she should stand behind the priest's chair and wait.

Concluding Rite

14. After the hosts are placed in the Tabernacle, the priest (and deacon) will kneel on the first step facing the Tabernacle to pray in silence. When the priest stands and says "Let Us Pray", Server 1 picks up the **Sacramentary**, opens it and brings it to the chair for the Prayer after Communion. (At the end of the prayer, the priest MAY add a blessing.) Return to your seat and place the **Sacramentary** on your chair.
15. As soon as the final song begins the Cross Bearer will get the Cross and move to the main aisle of the worship space (stand at the front row of seats facing the **Tabernacle**).

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16. During the final song, Father will move toward the Altar, reverence the Altar and then turn and face the **Tabernacle**. Servers 1 and 2 will stand on either side of the priest/deacon. They will **genuflect** to the **Tabernacle** then process out of the church behind the Cross. Hold your hands in the prayer position.

After Mass

Walk down the hallway to return to the worship space to extinguish the candles and return the Cross. *Blow out the candles, HANG UP YOUR ALB* in the **Sacristy**. *Ask if you can be of help to prepare for the next Mass. If it is the last Mass ask if you can help put anything away. If it is the last Mass of the weekend, return to the **Sacramentary** to the Sacristy.*

Instructions for Baptism (After the Homily)

17. The priest/deacon will invite the parents and godparents forward. As soon as the parents and godparents move forward Server #2 will move slowly to the **Gifts Table** and picks up the container of the **Oil of Chrism** and a towel for each baby being baptized. Stand behind the families so as not to block the view.
18. When the family moves toward the font Server #2 will move to the font. After each baptism, the priest or deacon will take a towel and dry the baby's head. Then the priest will take the Oil and anoint each child on his/her head.

When the priest returns the **Oil of Chrism** to Server #2, the Server takes the towel(s) and the **Oil of Chrism** to Gifts Table. Server #2 may return to his/her seat when the priest/deacon and the family move toward the Altar.

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Other Important Information for Servers

- It is important that you pray when you are preparing to serve and while you are engaged in your ministry.
- Your actions and gestures should be careful and reverent, in keeping with the mystery of the Eucharist you are serving.
- Posture is important in serving. Stand up straight with your weight on both feet evenly. When sitting, sit up straight with both feet on the floor. Sit still. Do not fidget. Hands should be folded in prayer when you are standing and folded in your lap when you are sitting.
- It is important not to draw attention to yourself when serving by fidgeting or making faces at people in the assembly.
- PARTICIPATE IN THE MASS. SING the songs and SPEAK THE RESPONSES.
- **It is imperative that Altar Servers are present when scheduled to serve.**
- If you cannot serve when scheduled make every effort to **find a substitute**.
- If you fail to serve three times, you will be removed from the active ministry list and placed on the substitute list.

~ Thank you for the Gift of Your Ministry ~