

## **Emmanuel Altar Boy Guide**

This guide is meant to provide a basic framework for serving mass at Emmanuel. You are encouraged to learn and discover the sacrifice of the mass as there is much richness and love. Additionally, Mom's and particularly Dad's are key to the formation of a good altar boy. We encourage you to go over this document with your son and go in depth further on the topics. Dad's hold the key to building strong father's and priests for our future church.

**Schedule** – Emmanuel has been operating on a first come, first serve basis for a long time. There are many boys, particularly at the 10:30 mass, that do not get to serve. In order for all to serve our Lord, we are putting in place a schedule which will include 2 senior or older servers and 4 junior servers. Please make sure you have a copy of this schedule and if you wish to be added, contact the parish office.

### **Being a Good Server**

1. As a server, you should try to become very involved in the mass, so that other people will become involved also. People in the church will be watching you carefully. They will take more interest if they see you more interested while you serve. Our outward actions tell a lot about how we feel inside. We need to show that we love God and God's people.
2. Once the Mass begins, do not leave the altar unless asked by the priest or you have an emergency. Blowing your nose, using the restroom or getting a drink is not an emergency. This should be done before Mass. Use a tissue if needed discretely.
3. The Leader of the Altar Boy team should direct with discrete hand signals if needed. Altar boys should avoid speaking or whispering, or moving about as much as possible. When not engaged in an assigned duty stand attentive facing the Altar with hands in a prayerful position and eyes toward the reader or priest.

### **Before You Come to Church**

1. Get a good night's sleep so you won't be drowsy or yawning.
2. Shoes should be cleaned and quiet – maybe shine them the night before, and you don't want squeaky shoes on the altar.
3. If you have a cold or are otherwise sick, you should switch with someone else for another week so you are not sneezing and coughing on the altar and not exposing the priest to ill health.
4. Hands, fingernails, hair and face should be clean. You want to look your best for God and His people.
5. You must be in a state of grace, no mortal sin on your soul. If you do, please use the sacrament of confession or do not serve mass until you have done so.

### **When You Arrive at Church**

1. Please be present in the sacristy at least 15 minutes prior to mass. If you are not in the sacristy dressed, volunteer servers can dress in your place and you will lose your opportunity to serve. Boys are welcome to check in the sacristy and if, within this 15 minute time frame, not all 6 servers are present, dress and prepare yourself for mass as a volunteer. Please be charitable in working this out and, please be gracious in giving up your spot if you are late for whatever reason. Always feel free to call and switch with someone on the schedule. We are working on a sub sign up sheet where boys who come into the sacristy can put their name and time on a waiting list. You may then go to confession if you wish (encouraged) and not lose your spot. If you are not going to confession, you must still use the sign-up sheet and put the time on from the sacristy clock on the form. If you wish to serve, you must still be back in the sacristy no less than 15 minutes prior. Usually confession is done by then.
2. The church is a special place where God lives in a special way and His people come together to praise God. Always treat your church as very precious and all the items in it.
3. Put on a clean, unwrinkled cassock and surplice. Be sure to inspect it and if it is worn, dirty or needs sewn, please do not hang it up and bring it to the attention of the priest or another adult after mass. Set it aside in the sacristy so you don't forget. The cassock should not be too short, top of your shoes and not drag on the floor. Button it all the way up to your neck.
4. Ensure the cruets (small pitchers filled with water and wine) are in their place on the credence table on the far side. Also ensure the gifts table has what is necessary. If you aren't sure, please ask the priest prior to mass so all areas are prepared.

5. Check to see that the bowl and finger towel for washing the priest's hands are on the credence table. Put out a fresh finger towel if one is not present or used from the previous masses.
6. Know the books – the Lectionary for Mass is the book of scripture readings and is usually located on the far side ambo. The Sacramentary is the book of the priest's prayers and is usually placed on the altar prior to mass.
7. About 10 minutes before mass is to begin, light the candles. Lighting the candles tells people the Mass is about to begin. You should light them in such a way that people want to watch. Do not hurry, use a steady even and patient pace and use the candle lighter/snuffer. If you have problems reaching a particular candle, walk back to the sacristy and have a taller altar boy help. You don't want to knock over a candle.
8. Approximately, 5 minutes before mass, turn on the lights, and make sure the microphone system is on.
9. While in the sacristy, please be quite and reverent. The priest, readers, others helping at the mass are likely preparing and noises should be kept to a minimum. A few moments of quiet prayer is a good idea. Consider praying a short prayer together when you are dressed. Attached is '*Prayer before Serving*' prayer you may want to consider and memorize.

**Postures** – carrying yourself properly at mass is important

1. Walking – you do a lot of walking – don't walk like a tin soldier, but don't lumber around either. Back straight, head held high and don't run. Walk at a moderate pace, not fast or slow.
2. Bowing – when you bow, it should be smooth. When you bow to the altar, bow deeply at the waist. Do not walk and bow at the same time. Bow slow and smoothly.
3. Genuflecting – keep your hands in front of your chest and go down on your right knee. Watch you don't trip on your cassock on the way back up. Always genuflect when passing in front of the tabernacle.
4. Kneeling – stay upright and hands folded in front of you above your waste.
5. Standing – stand straight up, and don't lock your knees back or you will get light headed. Never lean on anything.
6. Sitting – sit carefully and gracefully. Sit tall and place your hands in your lap or flat on your thighs in a relaxed manner. Watch the priest for cues on how he is sitting.
7. Hands – unless you are sitting or carrying something, your hands should be joined in front of you palm to palm or locked. Again, watch the priest. If you are carrying something, hold the other hand flat on your chest.
8. Eyes – during mass, always look toward the place where action is happening. If someone is reading, look at the reader, if the priest is at the altar, you should be focused on the priest.
9. Listen, sing and pray – “I will go to the altar of God, to God who gives joy to my youth” Ps 42:2. Be pleasant and joyful at your service. Remember to listen, sing and pray. Please be sure you have a copy of the books at your seats and you know the song numbers prior to mass. Altar boys should sing at the mass and say all the prayers.
10. Do your best. If you aren't sure about something, try and ask prior to Mass. If you need to, you can very quietly ask another server if you must. Avoid this during the consecration – time when the priest is at the altar.

**Directions for Serving the Mass**

**Beginning the Mass**

Walk in a straight line, two by two for the entrance with dignity. If you are carrying the cross, walk slowly. If you are not familiar with the priest, ask him what direction he would like to go for the entrance. Walk with joy and pride at your service to the Lord.

When arriving at the altar, separate and allow the priest to walk between you to the altar. Kneel when the priest kneels, unless you are carrying the cross or candles. When the tabernacle is behind the altar, as is the case at Emmanuel, always genuflect with the priest when Jesus is present in the tabernacle. This is usually all but one day of the year. The altar is a representation of Jesus, however, in the tabernacle, Jesus is really present, body, blood, soul and divinity, and we must pay our King respect. Place the cross in the holder and move toward your seat. Know all the prayers by heart and if you don't know them, you must learn them.

Say the prayers, sing all the songs. It's best if you can memorize the prayers so you can be more attentive to the priests needs.

### **Liturgy of the Word**

Sit quietly and listen. God is speaking to us here and now. This demands our full attention. The first reading, psalm and second reading, we sit and listen to the reader. The third reading is the holy Gospel, always read by a priest or deacon and we stand as we honor this reading in a special way as it is the words of Jesus in what He said and did.

**Homily** – this is a special time for the priest or deacon to reflect on special lessons for us to learn. Please look at the priest at all times.

**Profession of Faith** – say this with the priest and people. I believe in God the Father almighty, etc...

### **Liturgy of the Eucharist**

1. When the gifts of the water, wine and bread are brought to the altar, watch for the priest to stand. Those on the far side should get up and meet the priest at the communion rail to receive the gifts. Please be careful when bringing these back to the table. Do the job gracefully, with honor and if you need several trips, this is okay. Take the chalice and other containers to the priest at the altar. Then return to pick up the cruets of wine and water. Additionally, whoever is assigned to receive the collection basket, please be watchful of when the basket is coming up the main aisle so you are prepared to receive it.
2. Always remove the cruet toppers from the water and wine before approaching the altar. Stand and have the handles of the cruets facing the priest so he can take them easily. When complete, slightly bow to the PRIEST. Currently, there are many bowing to the tabernacle. The priest is standing 'in persona Christi' or in the person of Christ so at this time of the mass **you bow to the priest**. Slight and slow bow with reverence.
3. Return to the table, put down the wine cruet and pick up the bowl and the other server should have the finger towel. If you are the only server, drape the finger towel over your forearm. Approach the altar and wait patiently for the priest to turn to you to purify his hands. Again bow to the priest and return the items to the table. Do not bang the items. At this time, the focus of the people should be on the priest. You don't want to draw attention to yourself.
4. The priest says – Pray my brothers and sisters.....this is when all altar boys should stand with the people and line up next to the altar at the bottom of the steps. All future attention and focus should be on the altar and priest as we are about to enter the most mysterious and precious part of the mass which deserves and requires your full attention.

### **The Eucharistic Prayer** – *the very center of the mass – the source and summit of the church*

1. You should join in all of the responses that the people are making. Again, your posture should be reverent, focused and eyes on the priest, listening and responding.
2. Ringing the Bells – there are 3 times we ring the bells at mass.
  - a. When the priest holds his hands over the bread and wine – 'Father we ask you to make these gifts holy...' (this first ring is new for Emmanuel - epiclesis)
  - b. When the priest holds up the bread
  - c. When the priest holds up the chalice with the wine
  - d. Some churches ring a forth, when the priest consumes the wine, at this point, we are not adopting this practice.

Ring the bells for approximately 2-3 seconds for each of the three rings.

Remember to say all the prayers, learn them and memorize them, and listen and watch the priest intently.

### **The Communion Rite**

1. The sign of peace – you should stand and briefly shake hands –watching the priest at all times. Some priests will shake or bow to the servers; some may not and like this section to be very brief. This is an area of the mass which may be changed, soon, to another area so we will watch and be attentive to what the church does. But remember to watch the priest as this could be a very brief sign of peace and you should immediately be back in formal position based on the priest's cue.
2. You will kneel shortly after this section. Any time you are kneeling, this is a time of extreme importance at the mass. After the priest receives communion, (do not move until this point), you can then take a

paten, and you and the other altar boys will receive Jesus and then follow the priest or extraordinary ministers to the communion rail.

3. Patens – when you carry the paten, your job is to catch Jesus, the host, if He falls. Remember to keep one hand on your chest. The host is Jesus fully present and we do not want Him falling on the ground. Your job is to catch even the smallest particle that may fall. People are allowed to receive on the tongue, kneeling, on the tongue standing or in the hand standing. If the person is receiving on the tongue, be sure and place the paten under the chin, about 2 inches and be careful not to touch the person in any way. It has been shown that receiving on the hand causes the most drops. This is also the most difficult position to catch Jesus if He were to fall. Place the paten under the hands of the person as best you can. Once Jesus is in their hand, it is then up to the person to not drop Jesus. If Jesus were to fall on the paten, you should make sure the priest sees this and he will decide what to do. In some cases, the priest will leave the host on the paten and give the person another host. This is the priest's decision. Same is true if Jesus falls on the floor. You **MUST** make sure the priest is made aware of this immediately. This is a serious matter and the priest must know if he doesn't see it, you must tell him, quietly and with reverence. Be sure at all times, to keep the paten horizontal. There may be particles of Jesus that you can not see and you do not want to drop these. Return the paten to the extraordinary minister or altar when complete and the priest will ensure Jesus is not present on the paten by purifying it.

### **After Communion**

1. One server takes the water cruet to the altar and pours some water into the chalice or ciborium when the priest extends. Sometimes, the priest may choose to pour himself. Be prepared to turn the cruet with the handle facing the priest if this is his preference. Also, some priests like only one chalice with water, some like to have multiple chalices, so you must pause to see if the priest will want the water a second or even third time.
2. Return the water cruet to the table.
3. The other server on far side should be watching for the priest to place things on the far side of the altar. This is usually the sign that the priest wants these items removed and taken to the table.
4. The near side servers should be kneeling during the entire communion service, unless they are doing patens.
5. Once the vessels are purified and the altar is clear, all servers on both sides should stand with the congregation where they were kneeling until the conclusion of the Mass.

### **End of Mass**

1. Make a careful and reverent sign of the cross when the priest gives the closing blessing.
2. All turn and line up on either side to the front of the altar. Prepare to genuflect when the priest does and not before, again with reverence.
3. All should try and sing the closing song.

### **After Mass**

Do not re-enter the altar area until the closing song is finished. Then put out the candles in a reverent manner using the snuffer. Avoid blowing out the candles. If you must, you have to put your hand behind the candle and blow gently whereas not to get wax to splatter, which can also cause ashes to fall on altar clothes.

One person should calmly and carefully unplug the microphones (after 1030 mass) **Make sure the system is OFF before unplugging microphones.**

Take the cruets and bowl to the sacristy.

Remove your surplice and cassock and hang them up neatly. Again, remember if there was a problem with a surplice or cassock, this would be the time to tell the priest or other adult that is available. Please do not interrupt someone that may be praying after mass.

Avoid rushing, talking, etc. after Mass (as before). It is common for people to be praying after Mass. We want to do our duties on the altar in a reverent and calm manner whereas not to disturb people praying. Try and do all of your duties by traveling behind the altar or reredo. Again, you should be calm and reverent and not the focus of attention as people will be praying, looking at the altar and statues and you do not want to be a distraction during this important time, in any way.

Consider learning and memorizing the '*prayer after serving*' contained on the attached and while you are waiting for the closing song to finish, maybe kneel down as a group and say it together if you wish.

**Substitutes to Serve**

If you are a senior server, you may want to call and find a substitute in your absence. Because we have been on a first come first serve basis, there are usually plenty of servers for 1030 Mass. For Saturday evening and early Sunday Mass, you may need a substitute or ensure the other server will be in attendance. Do not serve if you are sick. Get a substitute. For the health of the priest and other people, we ask you to use proper judgment and try and 'switch' with someone for another week. If you need a current copy of telephone numbers and email address, call the parish office or email to nino at ctn dot net.

**Proper attitude and discernment for servers –** Dad's should help lead this with their boy

1. Preparing yourself for communion – it is important for altar boys to make regular use of the sacrament of confession. Certainly no mortal sins should be present when serving or receiving communion. It is your responsibility to make sure you get to confession. Your outward appearance is important; however your inward appearance to God is the most important.
2. Daily prayers – rosary, meals, divine mercy chaplet, stations of the cross on Fridays through the year
3. Short morning or nightly examination of conscience