



St. Ursula Catholic Church

ALTAR SERVER'S GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your willingness to serve as an altar server. You are serving in an important way at the Mass. Serving at Mass will involve learning some new words and some very specific things to remember. It's important to realize that you are serving not only the priest, but your family, the whole Church community at St. Ursula, and you are serving God in helping with prayers and with the Eucharist.

This server's guide covers the main details of serving at Mass and Funerals. This guide should help you grow more comfortable and refined in your role on the altar. We ask that you keep this hand-out so that you can review the instructions later, when needed.

FUNDAMENTAL POINTS

As an altar server, you are involved in some of the *holiest and most sacred events* in our tradition of Catholic worship. Mass is a combination of Word and Sacrament. We hear God's Word spoken to us through the scriptures and in the homily, then we respond to that Word with our prayers and in receiving the *body and blood* of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. The priest receives our sacrifice to God in the form of bread and wine and invoking the power of the Holy Spirit, these are transformed into His body and blood, to become nourishment for our souls, leading us closer to God's immense love and mercy and especially towards everlasting life with Him. It is a *great mystery*, but it lives at the core of our faith. All of our hope is placed in the saving power of God's word and presence, most especially in His presence that comes to us in the Eucharist.

Through prayer and reflection, we all can appreciate the significance of what is actually happening at Mass. It is important to be sure that you, as an altar server, be **attentive** and **sensitive to the presence of God** during the Mass, and afterwards. God calls us to respond to his great love and mercy with a sense of **reverence, wonderment** and **gratefulness**. We must all help each other remember to **show reverence to God** at all times, but most especially when you're serving. Some ways you can do this is to:

- 1) **Sit still**, be calm and settle your nerves;
- 2) Only **speak when necessary**.
- 3) **Respond** with the congregation at the appropriate times;
- 4) Do your best to **enter into the spirit** of the celebration—sing with God's family;
- 5) **Keep your movements smooth and slow** (not sluggish though!).

POSTURE AND HAND MOVEMENTS

Believe it or not, what you do with your hands is very important! When you're standing or sit-

ting and your hands are busy, or if you can't seem to sit or stand still, you will be a source for distraction for your friends and family in the pews, the other altar servers, and most surely, the priest.

Folded Hands

Your hands are to be “folded” during most parts of the Mass. What this means is to put your open hands together, palms facing each other, and fold your thumbs one over the other. Point your fingers up, not straight up, but at a slight angle that is comfortable. Also, you need not apply pressure on your palms and wrists. Just keep them together, comfortably. Placing your hands in this way is supposed to be a sign of prayer, not of tension. Remember, as altar servers, **you are leading others to pray!**

*Review of a few things that are **NOT reverent** (please avoid doing any of these!!)*

- **No running anytime in Church**, even when you're not serving.
- **No chewing gum in church**, even when you're not serving.
- No sitting in a slumped position. Always do your best to sit-up straight and to stand straight. When seated, refrain from swinging your legs.

ARRIVAL FOR SERVICE

When you are scheduled to serve, try to arrive **at least 15 minutes** before Mass. You'll need to sign-in, get vested, light candles and be in the sacristy before beginning the procession. Be sure your parents know that you need to get to church early.

SCHEDULE PROBLEMS

If you are unable to serve when you are scheduled, please contact another server to fill-in for you as soon as possible (don't wait until the night before!). Use the schedule for altar servers. Look at the other Saturdays and Sundays on the schedule and see who else serves at Masses for the same time you're scheduled for. Try to work out a “swap.” That is, be willing to switch your serving time for theirs. Switching is the fairest way to work out schedule problems. Remember, as soon as you receive your schedule, write your dates on your family's calendar. Again, be sure your parents know your serving schedule.



THE ORDER OF THE MASS

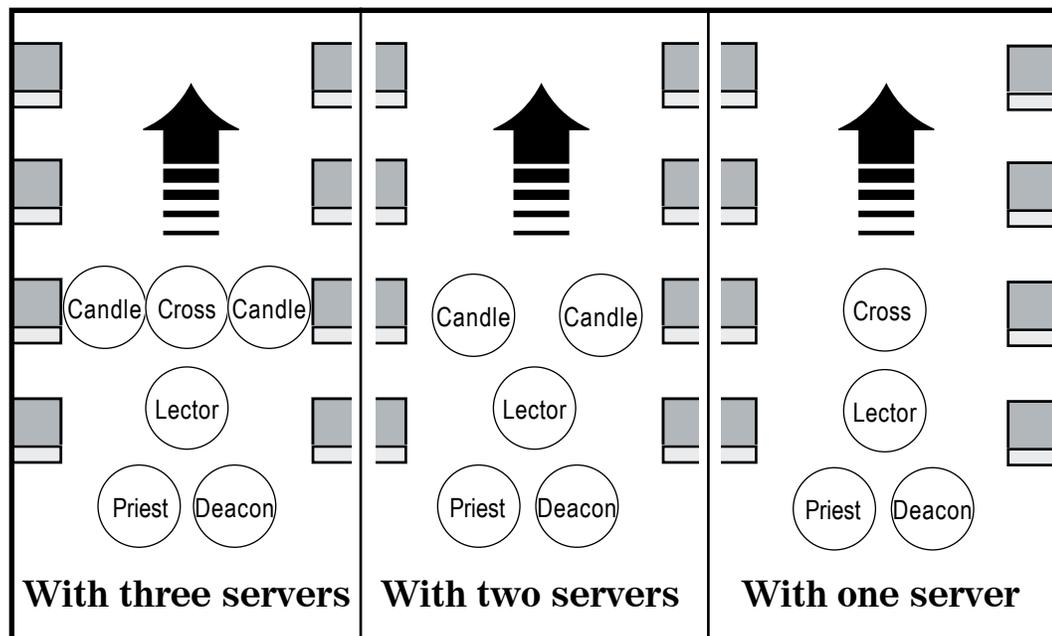
1. ENTRANCE PROCESSION

The **order of the procession** is shown in the figure below. The procession begins when **the people begin to sing** the entrance hymn. Walk up the aisle **slowly**, slower than you normally walk, but not at a snail's pace.

At the 7:30 Sunday Mass, the procession begins from either the sacristy itself, or from the entry just outside the sacristy. The celebrant will instruct you when to enter (usually after the announcements are read). If the processing is starting from the Church entry, just outside the sacristy door, walk straight out until you reach the middle aisle and then make your turn toward the altar. Don't cut across; make your path nice, orderly and square.

Cross and candle bearers: step up onto the altar step (try not to "clink" the bottom of the cross on the step), take a couple of steps toward the altar, spread out (to make room for priest and deacon) and stop. Wait for the priest and deacon. The priest and deacon will either bow or genuflect. As they do so, you simply remain standing—do not bow at the waist; you may make a head bow. The rule is: **if you're carrying something long** (like candles or cross), **then you do not genuflect or bow at the waist.**

All servers turn left in unison, and follow the first candle bearer to the sacristy. Once in the sacristy, extinguish the candles and place them in their stand, hang the cross next to the safe or give the candles and cross to the sacristan. The candle bearers will then go to their seats on the side closest to the sacristy and stand with their hands folded at the chest (see diagram on next page). The cross bearer walks through the hallway behind the altar, enters the sanctuary on the opposite side, goes to their seat and remains standing with hands folded.



Order of the Procession at Sunday Mass.

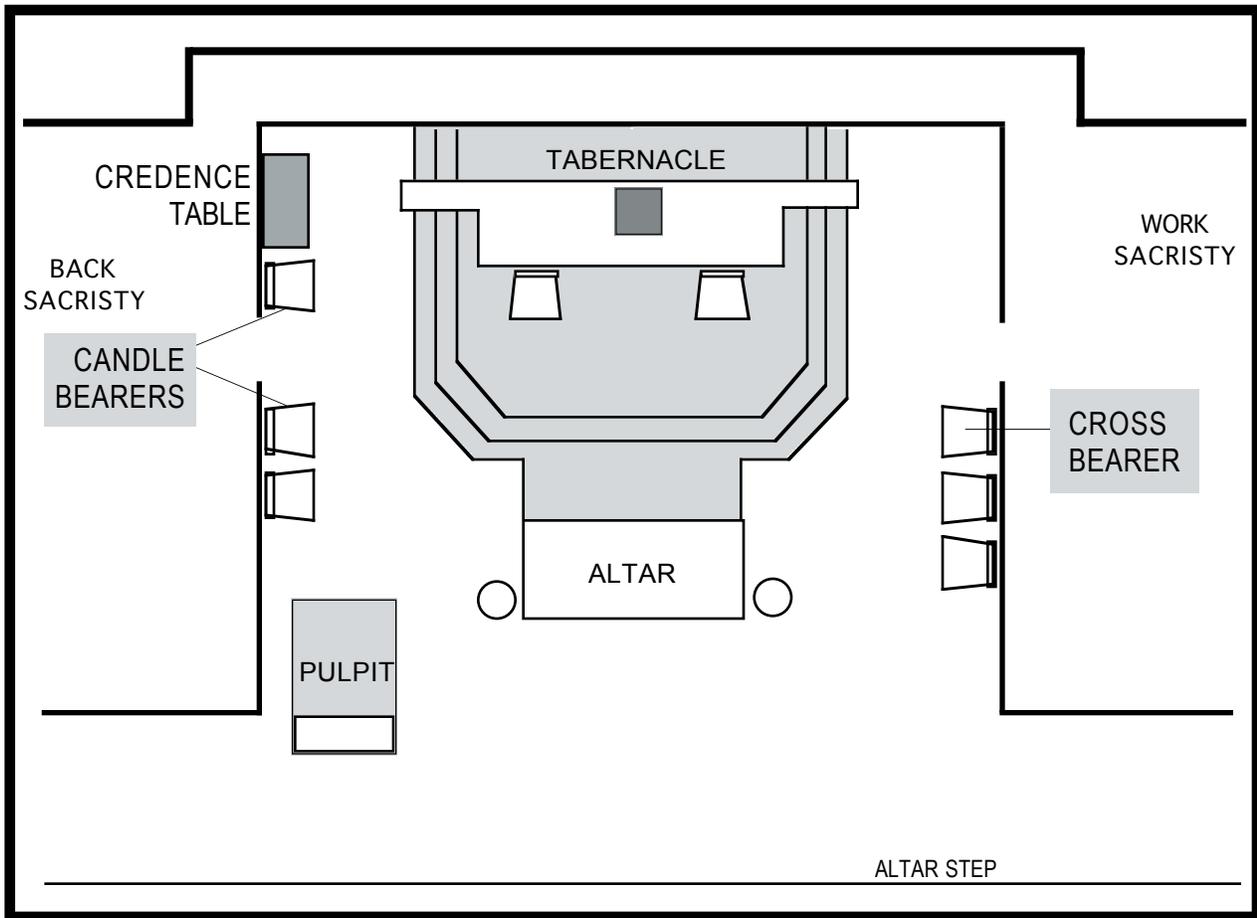


Diagram of Altar and where candle and cross bearers should sit.

2. SIGN OF THE CROSS

Stand with hands folded

The priest begins with the sign of the cross (which you make too), greets everyone and introduces the Mass. The deacon or priest reads the **Penitential Rite** which ends “... *Lord have Mercy.*”

The priest gives the absolution. “*May almighty God have mercy on us...*”

3. GLORIA

Stand with hands folded

As the Gloria concludes with the words, “...*in the glory of God the Father, Amen.*” the Candle Server closest to the Credence Table gets the Sacramentary from the shelf, turns and faces across the sanctuary.

When the priest says, “*Let us pray,*” the Server walks to a point in front of the priest and steps up onto the first step, hands the book to the priest, making sure that the book is facing the right direction. The priest will offer the opening prayer, and close the book. The server puts the book back onto the shelf in the credence table, and everyone sits down.

NOTE: During Advent (period before Christmas) and Lent (period before Easter), the Gloria is not recited or sung. During those times of the year, the Book Server will get the Sacramentary and turn to face across the sanctuary when the priest gives the absolution, which ends with the words, “...*and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.*”

4. LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading, Responsorial Psalm & Second Reading
 Alleluia (or *Praise to you...* during Lent)
 Gospel
 Homily

Sit
 Stand with hands folded
 Stand with hands folded
 Sit

5. PROFESSION OF FAITH

Stand with hands folded

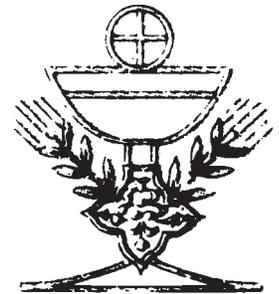
6. PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Stand with hands folded

When the prayer of the faithful is finished, the priest or deacon will step down to prepare the altar.

The **two candle servers** go to the credence table and bring the following *in this order*:

- a. One server takes the **Sacramentary** to the altar and hands it to the deacon or priest (or places it to the right of the corporal, on the altar, if the priest or deacon is busy).
- b. The other server takes the celebrant's **chalice** and gives it to the deacon or priest. If the deacon or priest is not ready or not present, place the chalice to the right of the book. With **Fr. Paul and Fr. John**, always carry the chalice with one hand on top, holding the pall, and the other hand holding the stem of the chalice.
- c. For masses that offer both species (Body and Blood), please bring over all chalices. Either hand them to the priest or deacon or line them up so that they will be easy to fill (done by the deacon or priest).



The Candle Servers then may return to their seats (be seated) and wait for the priest to receive the gifts.

7. OFFERTORY

When the priest stands up to receive the gifts, The **Candle Servers** join him at the first step of the altar.

At Sunday Mass, one server stands to the right of the priest and the other stands to the left.
At daily Mass, only **one** server is needed.

At Sunday Mass, the priest will first receive the collection basket and hands it to the server at his right. Once you've received the basket, turn immediately and take it to the sacristy. Give the collection basket to the sacristan who will be waiting there for it.

The priest will then receive the wine and hand it to the remaining server. Once you've received the wine, pass behind the priest and walk either to the credence table, where you will wait for the other server to get the water cruet, **or** take it to the left side (closest to the sacristy) of the altar if a deacon is serving at the Mass.

The Server who gave the collection basket to the sacristan, goes to the credence table, removes the top (if there is one) from the water cruet and takes the water cruet up to the altar. Walk over together, right away. **Don't wait for the deacon or priest to give you a nod.** There is nothing wrong with you standing ready, right beside the altar. Be sure to get close enough so that the priest or deacon doesn't have to reach. The server with the wine should **stand to the right** of the server with the water. The priest or deacon will take the wine and water and pour it. He will then hand the cruets back. Both servers should **stay in position** until both cruets have been handed back. The two servers bow, turn (toward one another) and return the cruets to the credence table.

NOTE: If the *large decanter* for the wine is used, such as at the 7:30 and 10:30 Masses, both servers should stay in position until the priest or deacon hands the emptied decanter back after having prepared all the chalices. The servers bow, together, turn (toward one another) and return to the credence table.

Upon returning to the credence table, the server who has the water, picks up the washing bowl and the water cruet while the other Server sets down the wine cruet or decanter and takes the hand towel and **opens it**. Both go back to the altar, preferably with the water pourer **to the right** of the towel bearer. **Go right away**; don't wait for the priest to turn—it's more important that you are right there waiting for him. **Don't make him wait for you!** Again, move in close enough so the priest can reach easily and doesn't have to stoop over too far. The priest will put out his hands over the bowl and the Server pours water over the priest's fingers, catching the dripping water in the finger bowl. The priest will whisper the prayer, *Lord, wash away my iniquities; cleanse me from my sin.* The other Server hands the finger towel to the priest. The priest dries his hands and returns the towel to the Server who grasps the towel with the thumbs of his/her folded hands. Both Servers **bow**, turn toward one another, and return the items to the credence table.

The two Servers then return to their places and **remain standing** with their hands folded. The Cross Server stands when the response, *May the Lord accept the sacrifice...* begins. Basically, the Cross Server should stand whenever the congregation stands.

8. PREFACE

Stand with hands folded

9. HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

Stand with Hands folded

When the Holy, Holy, Holy acclamation ends with "... *blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.*" all remain standing with hands folded.



10. CONSECRATION

Stand with hands folded

Right after the priest takes the bread and says, "*Take this.. this is My Body which will be given up for you.*" When the priest genuflects or bows, you can offer a **head bow** in reverence of Our Lord's presence.

Similarly, after the priest takes the chalice and says, "*Take this all of you and drink... sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of Me.*" and genuflects or bows, you can offer a **head bow** in reverence.

11. MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION

Stand with hands folded

This is when the priest says, “*Let us proclaim the mystery of faith.*”

12. ELEVATION OF HOST AND CHALICE Stand with hands folded

This is when the priest will say “*Through him, with him, in him...*” and it is the highest point in the Mass. Of all moments in the Mass, this is **the time** to pay the most attention!

13. GREAT AMEN

At the end of the Amen, all servers continue to stand with their hands folded. Sing the Amen!

14. THE LORD’S PRAYER

Stand with hands folded

15. THE SIGN OF PEACE

Servers will extend the sign of peace to each other, the priest, deacon and other ministers. **Please actually say something; do not look down and mumble.** Look the person you’re greeting in the eyes and wish them “peace be with you.” After you’ve shared the sign of peace, bring any extra patens and chalices from the credence table to the altar.



16. LAMB OF GOD

Stand with hands folded

At the end of the Lamb of God, **all servers remain standing** with hands folded. The two candle servers should be standing to the left of the altar. The Cross server, should be standing to the right of the altar. Sing or recite the Lamb of God.

17. COMMUNION

After the priest receives the Consecrated Host and the Precious Blood from the chalice, he will begin to distribute to other ministers. The servers stand and should be ready to receive communion. When the priest says, “The Body of Christ,” you reply “Amen.” You have the option of receiving the Precious Blood from the chalice. After receiving communion, all servers will return to their seats and make their thanksgiving.

18. AFTER COMMUNION

The Candle Server, who did not hold the book for the opening prayer, takes the sacramentary from the altar and returns to their seat and rests the book on their lap in order to be ready for the final prayer. **Do not remove the chalice or any other items remaining on the altar.**

Each priest may have their own way of doing some things. We’ve tried to outline them here, and we ask that you be flexible and attentive to each priest’s requests.

Msgr. Baumgartner (Fr. Tom) and **Fr. Hynes** (Fr. Gerry): They will take care of their chalices themselves, handing them to the sacristan. The Servers just remain seated unless asked to assist in some way.

Fr. Paul and **Fr. John** will need the Candle Server (not holding the sacramentary) to bring the water cruet over to the altar for the purification of the chalice. The Server pours a small amount of water into the chalice. After pouring, return the cruet to the credence table. Immediately return to the altar (with hands folded) and the priest will hand the chalice to the you, carry it (with hand on top, as before) back to the credence table.

19. CLOSING PRAYER

Stand with hands folded

When the priest sits down, one of the servers (the one who did **not** hold the book for the opening prayer) should have the Sacramentary ready for the closing prayer.

When the priest says, “*Let us pray*”, the Server with the book walks over to a point in front of the priest, steps up one step, and hands the book to the priest, making sure that it is facing in the right direction.

The priest says the closing prayer and gives the final blessing (*May almighty God bless you...*).

20. DISMISSAL AND RECESSION

When the priest or deacon says, “*The Mass is ended, go in peace to love and serve the Lord*”, all servers return to the sacristy in order to get candles and cross. Cross bearer uses the hidden hallway behind the altar. They all line up in the doorway of the sanctuary.

When the priest/deacon leave their chairs to venerate (kiss) the altar, all servers go to the front of the altar and stand on each side, facing the altar, just as you did at the beginning of Mass. If you’re the candle that stays on the sacristy side, please let the priest and deacon walk in front of you as you walk around the altar. The priest/deacon will genuflect or bow, but you need not do so as you are, again, carrying something. Turn when the priest and deacon do (Candle Servers turning towards one another) and process out following the pattern used on the way in.

Process out **slowly** to the main entrance. When you get to the back row of the Church, extinguish the candles. In warm, nice weather, you’re welcome to return to the sacristy by going outside. In colder weather, the best you can, slip back down the side aisle, but be courteous to those coming out that way.



SPECIAL NOTES FOR FUNERALS

Funerals are usually served by 7th and 8th graders. As you can imagine, funerals are a time of grieving for families, so it is especially important to show your respect for God by being attentive to not only the needs of the priest, but also to be sensitive to the needs of the family who may be struggling through their loss of a loved one.

If you are requested to serve at a Funeral Mass, please try to arrive **at least 15 minutes before the Mass begins**. During the week, some of you may be coming from School to assist. If so, be sure to get excused from class early enough to perform the duties you need to do before the Mass begins.

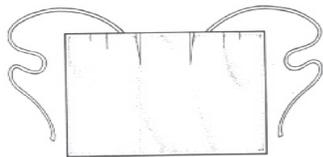
In general, a Funeral Mass is very similar to a normal Sunday Mass. Listed below are some

things which differ from a regular Sunday Mass. Father Paul likes to offer additional incensations, one at the beginning and one at the end of the Mass. Fr. John only makes one incensation and that is as the gifts are being prepared.

- Generally, we will start from the sacristy. You won't be carrying candles, but one server carries the vessel with Holy Water. Walk across the sanctuary, stop and turn **toward** the altar. Offer a head bow, turn with the priest and go all the way back to the back of Church. Once you get about five feet from casket, at back of Church, turn and wait for the priest to tell you when to process in.
- If there is a server that is not carrying anything, they should have their hands folded while processing.
- After processing in, stop at the first step and turn to face the congregation. In other words, do not go to your chair right away. The priest will greet the people and stay in front of the altar in order to perform a sprinkling rite. The server holding the Holy Water does not hand the vessel to the priest but holds it so that the priest can easily reach for the sprinkler handle. During this time, the other server should stand attentively, with hands folded.
- After sprinkling the casket, the priest will return the sprinkler to its vessel and go up to venerate the altar. The Servers go to their seats and remain standing. The Server with the Holy Water goes into the sacristy, sets down the Holy Water, and returns, standing in front of their seats. The priest may need a server to hold either the sacramentary or the Funeral Book for the priest during the opening prayer.
- Like daily Mass, when the gifts of bread and wine are brought up, only one server needs to come forward to receive the wine from the priest.
- If there is to be **incense** during the preparation of the gifts, this happens before the priest washes his hands. One of the Servers gets the thurible and boat from the sacristy. Usually, a sacristan will be there to hand things to you. The Server should then take the thurible and boat to the priest or deacon. Hand the boat to the priest and lift up the top of the thurible so that the priest can easily place the incense into the burner. The priest will hand the boat back to the server and take the incense burner. The server should merely stand attentively with the boat in hand and wait for the priest to incense the altar and casket. He will hand the burner back to the server, at which point the server should bow and walk back to the sacristy with the burner and boat. At this point, the **other server** should be ready to assist in the washing of the priest's hands by carrying the, bowl, water and towel. Drape the towel over one of your forearms.
- After communion, there will be a closing prayer. Often there may be a family member or friend of the deceased who will offer some words of remembrance (a *eulogy*). The priest will invite the people to prayer in what is called the Final Commendation. When he steps down off the altar and stand before the casket, there should be a Server flanking him on either side. The priest may want you to hold the book for him and he may guide you where he needs you. Just do what he needs you to do. Again, Fr. Paul typically incenses the Casket at this time.
- At the very end of Mass, the priest (or deacon if he is present) will say, *In peace let us take our brother/sister to his/her place of rest.* When the priest steps down, you do so as well. Walk along side of the casket and, behind it, turn around facing the altar again. The pall bearers, along with the funeral directors, will take their places along side of the casket. Usually the funeral director will nod when they're ready to go. Turn (toward each other) and process out slowly to the back of Church. Once at the back of Church, line up next to the priest as the pall is removed from the casket. Do not exit early; wait until the priest has dismissed you. Otherwise, stand attentively and greet mourners if they should approach you.

APPENDIX: A GUIDE TO THE ITEMS USED IN THE MASS

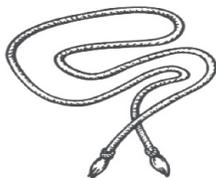
VESTMENTS



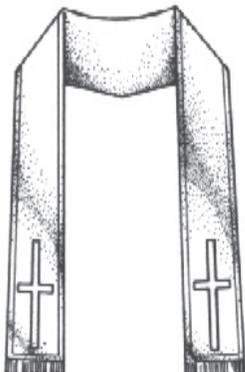
- *Amice*: This is a rectangular piece of cloth with two long ribbons attached to the top corners. The priest puts it over his shoulders, tucking it in around his neck to hide his collar. It is tied around his waist.



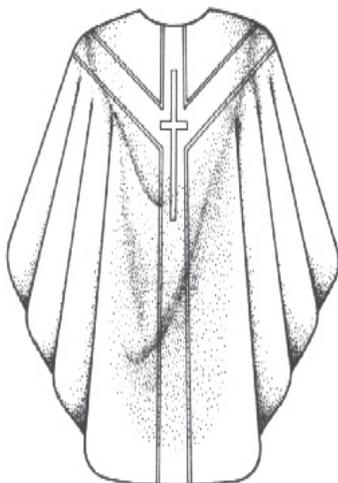
- *Alb*: This long, white, dress-like vestment can be worn by all liturgical ministers. An altar server can assist the priest or deacon/ seminarian by making sure that it hangs properly in the back.



- *Cincture*: This long cord is used for fastening some albs at the waist. It holds loose fitting albs in place and is used to adjust the proper length. The cincture is usually white.



- *Stole*: A stole is a long cloth “scarf,” often ornately decorated, of the same color and style of the chasuble. A priest wears it around the neck, letting it hang down in the front. A deacon wears it over his left shoulder and fastened at his right side, like a sash. Neither do seminarians nor other lay-ministers wear stoles.



- *Chasuble*: The chasuble is the sleeveless outer vestment, slipped over the head, hanging down from the shoulders and covering the stole (sometimes) and alb. It is the proper Mass vestment of the priest and its color varies according to the feast or liturgical season.

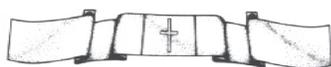
GUIDE TO THE ITEMS USED IN THE MASS (continued)



- *Dalmatic*: The dalmatic is a loose-fitting robe with open sides and wide sleeves worn by the deacon. The color varies according to the liturgical feast or season of the liturgical year.



- *Cope*: A cape-like vestment that is put on over the shoulders and hangs to the ankles, it is open at the front and clasped at the neck. The priest wears this at Benediction and in certain processions. Copes can be of any liturgical color.



- *Humeral Veil*: This is a long, narrow, shawl-like vestment used at Benediction and in processions when the blessed sacrament is carried.



- *Server's Alb*: This is a vestment used by servers in place of a cassock (at St. Ursula, we use cassock and surplice, see below). It is similar to the priest's alb, but sometimes has a cowl (hood). A cincture is often tied around the waist.



- *Cassock*: A long outer garment worn by clerics and servers. Usually black, but on special feasts, it can be red or white. (At St. Ursula, ours are black.) The length should reach to the tops of one's shoes.



- *Surplice*: This is a wide-sleeved garment, worn over the cassock.

GUIDE TO THE ITEMS USED IN THE MASS (continued)

ALTAR VESSELS



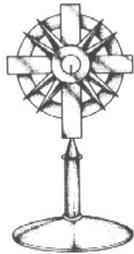
- *Chalice*: The large cup used at Mass to hold the wine that becomes the blood of Christ. Some can be very ornate.



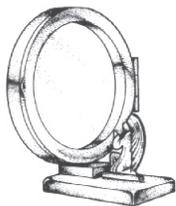
- *Paten*: This is a saucer-like dish that usually matches the chalice with which it is used. It holds the bread that becomes the body of Christ.



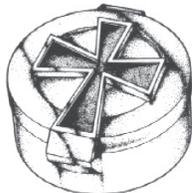
- *Ciborium*: This is a cup- or bowl-like vessel with a lid. It contains hosts that will be used for communion. It is also used to reserve the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle.



- *Monstrance*: This is a large, ornate vessel used to hold the Blessed Sacrament for Adoration, Benediction and solemn Eucharistic processions.



- *Lunette*: A thin, circular receptacle, having a glass face that holds the Consecrated Host used for Adoration and Benediction. It slides into the monstrance on a little track.



- *Pyx*: A case, about the size of a pocket watch, in which Communion is carried to those who are sick or unable to come to church.



- *Communion Paten*: Not much in use anymore, this is a plate with a handle that a server uses to catch communion crumbs. The server stands to the right of the Communion minister and holds the plate under the chin of the one receiving Communion on the tongue.



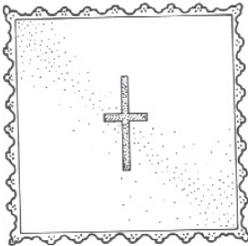
- *Large Paten or Bread Plate*: Used in some churches, this is used in place of a ciborium during the presentation of the gifts. The bread to be consecrated is placed on this large paten.

GUIDE TO THE ITEMS USED IN THE MASS (continued)

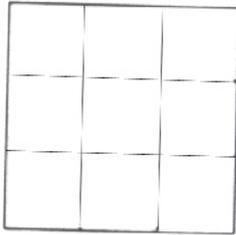


• *Flagon or Decanter*: This is a bottle or carafe-like vessel used to hold the wine that will be consecrated at Mass for the communion of the people. It is filled before Mass, taken to the rear of the church and is brought forward at the procession of the gifts. At daily Mass, smaller bottles, called *Cruets*, are used.

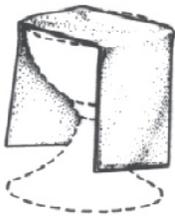
MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS



• *Pall*: This is a stiff square white cover that is placed over the paten when it is on the chalice and over the chalice during Mass to protect its contents.



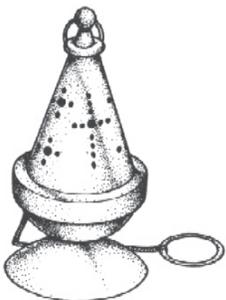
• *Corporal*: A white linen cloth usually starched, on which are placed the vessels containing the bread and wine during Mass. It is also used at Adoration and Benediction.



• *Purificator*: This is a triple folded white cloth used to cleanse the chalice and the celebrant's fingers after the last ablution (washing). In setting up the chalice, the purificator is placed over the top of the chalice (see diagram) beneath the paten.

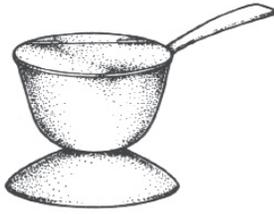


• *Finger Towel*: A folded rectangular cloth resembling a purificator, but much narrower, it is used by the priest to dry his fingers after they have been washed during the preparation of the gifts. It is kept with the water cruet and finger bowl.

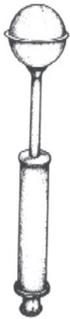


• *Thurible or Censer*: The metal container extended from a chain in which charcoal and incense are burned for liturgical ceremonies. It has a lid that can be raised. It is used at solemn Masses and a Benediction.

GUIDE TO THE ITEMS USED IN THE MASS (continued)



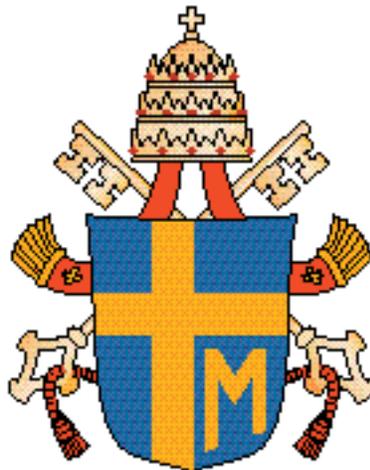
- *Boat*: This is a small metal container that holds the incense to be put into the thurible. It has a cover and comes with a small spoon. Frequently shaped like a boat, it is a symbol of the church.



- *Aspergillum or Sprinkler*: It is a perforated metal ball or tube on a handle that holds the holy water used by the priest to sprinkle the faithful or articles to be blessed. It is often kept in a small metal bucket (with a handle) that holds the holy water.



- *Candlelighter or Extinguisher*: Used for lighting and extinguishing candles. It is a pole-like instrument with a tube at one side on the top with a retractable wick for lighting candles. The server using it should have enough wick exposed so that the flame will not go out until all candles are lit. Then the tab should be used to retract the wick to put the flame out (once the flame is out be sure to leave a little of the wick sticking out—the wick is made of wax and it will stick to the inside of the tube when it cools, if you don't leave it sticking out a little.) Often the server cannot see the top of the candle (especially the Easter candle), so patience and practice may be needed, or you may need to ask for someone to help you.



Coat of Arms of
Pope John Paul II