

Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church

Altar Servers Manual



Altar Server: _____

Last Revised: June, 2010

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Introduction

Our parish is deeply grateful for your acceptance and commitment to be altar servers. Your service and dedication are important parts of our parish life.

The place of the altar server in liturgical celebrations remains one of prominence and distinction. As you are destined in a special way for the service of the altar, you should learn all matters concerning liturgical worship and strive to grasp their inner spiritual meaning.

The altar server retains a genuine and vital role in the liturgical assembly. Your role, through your actions and conduct, is to bring the assembly to a fuller understanding of the liturgy and a greater love for God. You have a place of honor at Mass, because you assist the priest in many ways. Your behavior and accomplishment are signs of your faith and your love for God and God's people.

Altar servers are chosen from the faithful who display a desire to participate in a more intimate way during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It is an extreme privilege to kneel so close to the altar as our loving Savior, Jesus Christ, becomes truly present, body, blood, soul and divinity. In the presence of Our King it is both wise and necessary for you to perform all assigned duties with attention, dignity and reverence.

Also keep in mind to attend to every action of the Divine Liturgy as a team, all serving the Sacred Mass in the same manner and style as your companion altar servers.

As you participate as instructed, you will enter into a fuller participation in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass while assisting the priests. Therefore, it is imperative that all servers do their assigned tasks in the prescribed form and manner.

This manual is designed to give you direction for our parish masses and to be a guide to help you as you assist the priests at the Altar of God.

Altar Server's Prayer Before Mass

Open my mouth, O Lord, to bless Your Holy Name.
Cleanse my heart from all evil and distracting thoughts.
Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will that I
may serve worthily at Your Holy Altar.

O Mary, Mother of Christ, obtain for me the most
important grace of knowing my vocation in life. Grant
me a true spirit of faith and humble obedience so that I
may ever behold the priest as a representative of God and
willingly follow him in the Way, the Truth, and the Life
of Christ.

Amen.

The Jubilee for Altar Servers during the Millennium Year

(Address at the General Audience, August 1, 2001, the 1,000th of Pope John Paul II's pontificate)

Dear Brothers and Sisters! Dear Young People!

Today St. Peter's Square is the square of youth. About a year ago, at the heart of the Great Jubilee 2000, youths from all over the world found solicitous welcome here for the celebration of World Youth Day. Today this Square, which hosts the 1,000th general audience since divine Providence called me to be a Successor to the Apostle Peter, receives the thousands of boys and girls, who have come from all over Europe on pilgrimage to the tomb of the Prince of the Apostles.

Dear altar servers! Yesterday you crossed St. Peter's Square in a long procession to be near the basilica's altar of Confession. By so doing, you prolonged in some way the path that the youth of the world began in the Holy Year. The motto of your pilgrimage to the Eternal City, "Toward a New World," is a sign of your willingness to take your Christian vocation seriously.

I greet you affectionately, dear young people, and I am happy that this meeting has taken place. In particular, I thank Auxiliary Bishop Martin Gächter, president of Coetus Internationalis Ministrantium, who has spoken such cordial words to me on your behalf. With special joy I address the altar servers of German-speaking countries, who numerically constitute the largest group. It is beautiful that so many young Christians have come from Germany! Your commitment to the altar is not only a duty, but a great honor, a genuine holy service. In connection with this service, I wish to propose some reflections to you.

The altar server's clothing is very special. It recalls the garment that each one puts on when he is welcomed in Jesus Christ in the community. I am referring to the baptismal gown, whose profound meaning Saint Paul clarifies: "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Galatians 3:27). Even if you, dear altar servers, can no longer fit into your baptismal gown, you have put on the clothing of altar servers. Yes, baptism is the point of departure of your "authentic liturgical service," which places you next to your bishops, priests and deacons (see [Sacrosanctum Concilium](#), No. 29).

The altar server occupies a privileged place in the liturgical celebration. He who serves at Mass, presents himself to a community. He experiences firsthand that Jesus Christ is present and active in every liturgical act. Jesus is present when the community comes together to pray and render praise to God. Jesus is present in the Word of sacred Scripture. Jesus is present above all in the Eucharist under the signs of bread and wine. He acts through the priest who, in the person of Christ, celebrates the holy Mass and administers the sacraments. Therefore, in the liturgy, you are much more than simple "helpers of the parish priest." Above all, you are servers of Jesus Christ, of the eternal High Priest. Thus, you, altar servers, are called in particular to be young friends of Jesus. Be determined to go deeper and to cultivate this friendship with him. You will discover that in Jesus you have found a true friend for life.

The altar server often has a candlestick in his hand. How can one not think of that which Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount: "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). Your service cannot be limited to the inside of a church. It must shine in everyday life: in school, in the family, and in different realms of society. Because, whoever wishes to serve Jesus Christ inside a church must be his witness everywhere.

Dear young people! Your contemporaries wait for the real "light of the world" (see John 1:9). Do not hold your candlestick only inside a church, but carry the light of the Gospel to all those who are in darkness and are living through a difficult time in their life.

I have spoken of friendship with Jesus. How happy I would be if something more sprang from this friendship! How beautiful it would be if some of you were to discover a vocation to the priesthood! Jesus Christ has urgent need of youths who will be at his disposition with generosity and no reservations. Moreover, might not the Lord also call one or two of you girls to embrace the consecrated life to serve the Church and the brothers and sisters? Even for those who wish to be united in marriage, the service of altar servers teaches that a real union must always include readiness for reciprocal and free service.

General Requirements

1. Who may serve: At Blessed Sacrament, all registered parishioners who are young gentlemen and ladies in the fourth grade and higher are welcome to serve. Interested third graders are considered on an individual basis. Servers are encouraged to participate through their senior year of high school, and are welcome to return to assist during college breaks. All candidates must have attended one training session, and have the commitment and ability to perform this role with reverence.

2. Proper Dress: Altar Servers show respect for the Mass they attend by wearing proper attire. Here are some rules to abide by when serving:

Clothing: Dress Pants/Slacks or for ladies – Calf-length dress skirts or dresses

- Dress shirts/Blouses must have sleeves
- No T-Shirts
- No Shorts
- No Jeans

**** You should look dressed up - "your Sunday best"- and your knee, shoulders and everything in between must be covered. ****

Footwear: Dress Shoes ONLY (Heels are to be no higher than 1 inch)

- No Sneakers
- No Sandals
- No Athletic Socks

**** All Foot Wear should look neat, presentable and dressy. ****

Jewelry: No rings, no earrings, no bracelets (including the rubber or string ones)

- If worn, necklaces are to be covered by cassocks and albs
- Watches are fine

**** All Jewelry must be taken off and placed in your pocket before mass begins. ****

Hair / Makeup: Hair should have a neat and clean look - out of the way of the eyes

- Hair color and makeup, if any, must be minimal and present a natural and wholesome appearance
- Girls with long hair are encouraged to wear their hair pulled back in a bun or pony tail

**** Look neat, presentable and wholesome when you serve. ****

3. Conduct/Demeanor: On and off of the altar, the altar server represents the Church to some degree and therefore their conduct and demeanor should be respectful. Servers must realize that their behavior and conduct set an example to others both inside and outside of the church. A server **must want to serve** at the Altar of God. Their decision to serve, with parental support, is always the main motivating factor. A reluctant or disinterested server is a distraction during the Mass. Altar servers must attend every Mass they are scheduled. The altar servers are responsible for arranging their replacements when needed.

The Mass

For Catholics, nothing is more important than the Mass. It is the heart and soul of our worship of God. It is the celebration that gives us the strength we need to live a Christian life. Because of its importance, the Church places a serious obligation on all of its members to take part in the Mass each Sunday and Holy Day.

First and foremost, the Mass is a sacrifice. Jesus offered His Father a sacrifice: Himself. Jesus promised us that “when we eat this bread and drink this cup” He would continue His great sacrifice until He comes again.

The Mass is a sacred meal called the Eucharist (from Greek meaning “thanksgiving”). In the Mass, we give thanks for all that God has done for us, and we all eat the same food – “the bread of life and the cup of eternal salvation.”

The Mass is a memorial of the Last Supper when Jesus instituted the Eucharist and told His followers “Do this in the memory of me.”

The way in which the Mass is celebrated has developed over two thousand years. Despite its development, two elements have always been the same: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The following is the basic outline of the Order of Mass, the Sanctuary, the Books used at Mass, and the Ministers at Mass – all of which you should learn well to get a basic understanding of the Mass as the instructions to serving the Mass unfold.

The Order of Mass

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Procession

Greeting

Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling Holy Water [*This rite is commonly celebrated during the Easter Season, but may also be used at other times, when used, the Penitential Rite is omitted*]

or Penitential Rite

Gloria: [*This ancient hymn of praise is used on all Sundays and Solemnities outside of Advent and Lent*]

Opening Prayer (also referred to as the “Collect”)

LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading

Responsorial Psalm

Second Reading: [*There is a second reading on Sundays and Solemnities, but not for most weekdays*]

Alleluia / Gospel Acclamation: [*The Gospel Acclamation is a small verse of Scripture or hymn*]

Gospel [*This is always proclaimed by the Bishop, a priest or a deacon*]

Homily [*The bishop, priest, or deacon then speaks to the people, on that day’s scriptures, on the feast or special occasion being celebrated or on any liturgical text from the Mass*]

Profession of Faith [*On Sundays and solemnities, the Nicene-Constantinople Creed is normally recited by everyone after the homily. The Apostles’ Creed may be used instead, esp. in celebrations of Masses with children.*]

General Intercessions (Prayer of the Faithful)

The Order of Mass

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Presentation of the Gifts / Preparation of the Altar

Prayer over the Gifts

Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy)

Eucharistic Prayer: *[There are four regular Eucharistic Prayers, two other Eucharistic Prayers for Masses of Reconciliation, three Eucharistic Prayers for Masses with Children, and or four recently approved Eucharistic Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions. Each prayer has a similar structure.]*

Memorial Acclamation *[One of four different options is “Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again”]*

Great Amen

COMMUNION RITE

The Lord’s Prayer (Our Father)

Sign of Peace

Communion

Prayer after Communion

CONCLUDING RITE

Greeting

Blessing & Dismissal

Recessional and Closing Song

The Sanctuary

The **Sanctuary** is the space at the front of the church within which most of the action of the Mass takes place. The word means “holy place.” It is often set apart from the rest of the church by being slightly elevated. There are many things in the sanctuary with which you should be familiar.

Our Sanctuary at Blessed Sacrament:



The Sanctuary

Main Altar – This is the large, high table located in the middle of our sanctuary. Most of the action of the Liturgy of the Eucharist takes place on the main altar. In ancient times, the altar was the place where a *sacrifice* was offered to God; therefore it is at the Altar where the *sacrifice* of the Mass takes place. Our Main Altar at Blessed Sacrament:



Ambo (Pulpit/Lectern) – This is the place from which the sacred readings and homily are given. Most of the action of the Liturgy of the Word takes place at the Ambo. It is the special place set aside for Sacred Scripture. Our Ambo at Blessed Sacrament:



The Sanctuary

Tabernacle, Tabernacle Key, Vigil Light and Ablution Bowl – The Tabernacle is the ornate place where the Eucharist is reserved, and is kept locked with the Tabernacle key. If the entire Church is “God’s House,” then the Tabernacle is “Jesus’ Room.” Hosts are taken from and returned to the Tabernacle at Communion time. The vigil light is a candle in a red holder that is lit when the Blessed Sacrament is present within the Tabernacle. Proper reverence by genuflection is to be given to the Tabernacle at all times the vigil light is lit. The ablution bowl is a bowl of holy water found near the Tabernacle. This bowl allows the priest and Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist to wash their fingers or hands after communion is distributed during the Mass. Our Tabernacle, Key, Vigil Light and Ablution Bowl at Blessed Sacrament:

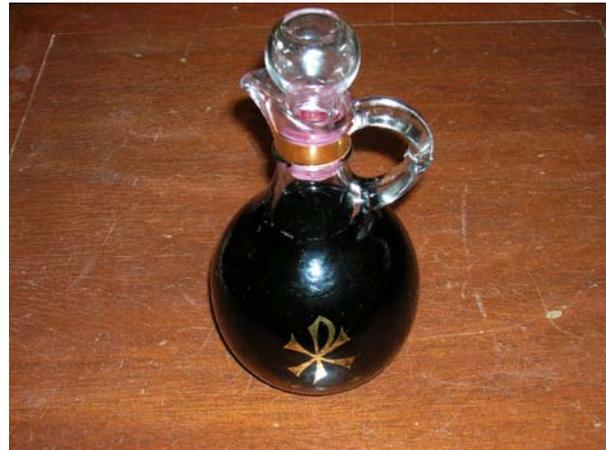


Candles and Candle Lighter – There are four candles at each corner of the green square framing the main altar. These candles are to be lit before Mass by the candle lighter. Our Candles and Candle Lighter at Blessed Sacrament:



The Sanctuary

Cruets, Bowl and Finger Towel – The cruets, the pitcher-like vessels, containing the water and the wine, the bowl and finger towel are to be used during the Preparation of the gifts. These will be kept on the Tabernacle credence table. Our Cruets Bowl and Finger Towel at Blessed Sacrament:



Bells – The bells are to be rung at the epiclesis and the consecration during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Our bells are kept near the kneeling cushion of the server whose duty it is to handle the bells. Our Bells at Blessed Sacrament:



The Sanctuary

Processional Cross – This is the crucifix mounted on a long pole that is carried at the head of the entrance procession and when bringing up the gifts. Our cross is kept in a stand in the altar servers' vestry before and after mass, and is kept in a stand behind the sanctuary during mass. Our Processional Cross at Blessed Sacrament:



Paschal Candle – The Paschal Candle, used during mass from the Easter Vigil through Pentecost, is placed at the left forefront of the Sanctuary. This candle is to be lit before Mass to commemorate the Risen Christ among us. After Pentecost, it remains at the baptismal font, and not lit during mass. Our Paschal Candle at Blessed Sacrament:



The Sanctuary

Credence Tables - Small marble areas on either side of our sanctuary for the purpose of holding the cruets, bowl, Sacramentary, chalice, ciboria, and other items required for the celebration of Mass. Our TWO Credence Tables are the Tabernacle Credence Table and the Organ Credence Table set up before mass at Blessed Sacrament:

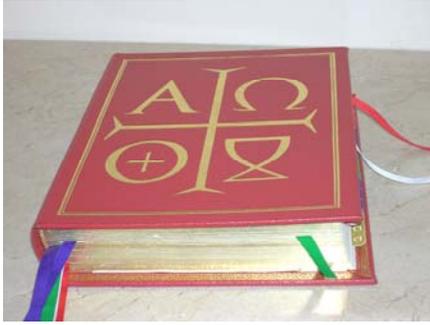


Presider's Chair – The chair from which priests lead the prayers and rites of the church. The adjacent chairs are for deacons or concelebrants. Our Presider's Chair at Blessed Sacrament:

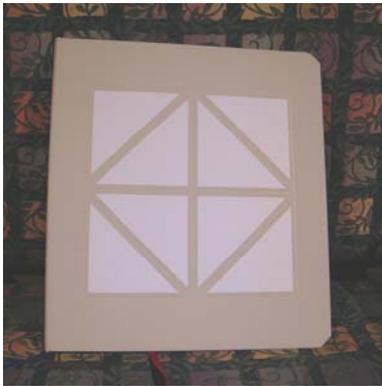


The Books of Mass

There are special books used during the liturgy. You should be familiar with each one, and where it is kept:



Sacramentary (Roman Missal) – This is a large book that contains all the words the priest uses during Mass, except the readings, hymns and homilies. Our Sacramentary is kept at the Tabernacle credence table with the cruets.



Presider's Book (Book of the Chair) – This book contains prayers from the Sacramentary needed by the priest when he is at his chair. This book or binder is kept at the seat of the server whose duty it is to handle the book.



Lectionary – This book contains all the sacred Scripture readings for Mass. It is usually at the ambo before mass.

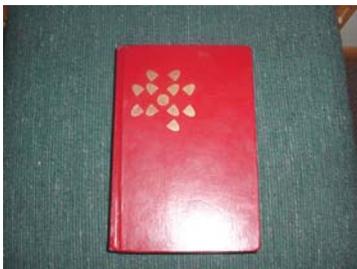
The Books of Mass



Book of the Gospels – This book contains the Gospel readings. It is usually carried in the entrance procession by the deacon or lector.



Book of Rites (The Roman Ritual) – This book is used for the celebration of sacraments. Sometimes each rite has its own special book: for example, the Rite of Marriage or the Funeral Rites. The priest will carry this book and will advise you when to use it.



Hymnal – This book contains the hymns and psalms for Mass. This book should be available at your seat so that you may sing during mass.

The Ministers at Mass

It takes quite a few people to celebrate Mass well. “To minister” means “to serve.” All of these people serve the parish and help the congregation at Mass to worship.

Priest Celebrant – The priest presides over the celebration of Mass. Sometimes, at what is called a concelebrated Mass, there may be more than one priest. But the one who presides is the one who you should be most concerned about. Mostly, your job is to help him.

Deacon – When present, the deacon usually proclaims the Gospel, preaches, prepares the gifts for Eucharist, helps to distribute Communion, and gives direction to the people.

Altar Servers – You and what this manual is about.

Lector – The person(s) who read(s) the first two readings.

Cantor – The person who leads the hymns, acclamations, and the responsorial psalms.

Ushers – These people greet the community as they arrive for Mass, take up the collection(s), keep communion lines orderly, and distribute the bulletins after Mass.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion – These ministers assist with distribution of Communion.

Additional Ministers include:

Choir Members and Musicians – These people sing and play the various instruments that accompany the music for the Mass.

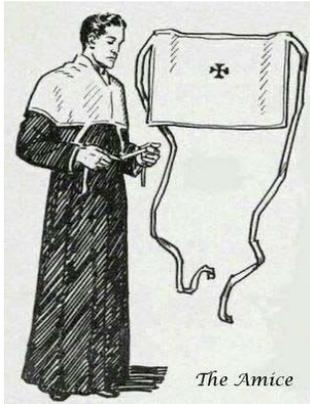
Commentator – This person makes announcements and helps the congregation follow the order of Mass.

Music Director – This person is in charge of all the music in the parish. Usually, this person is also the choir director or the organist.

Sacristan – This person usually works before Mass, making sure that everything that is needed is where it belongs. You will be asked to assist in these duties.

Explanation of Vestments

Vestments are special garments worn by the clergy at the celebration of the Mass, administration of the sacraments, in procession, when giving blessings, and in general whenever exercising their official priestly duties.



The Amice - The amice is a rectangular cloth with straps used to cover the priest's collar. It represents being mentally prepared. The priest places it for a moment on his head, and then allows it to rest upon his shoulders. As he does so he prays: "*Place, O Lord, on my head the helmet of salvation, that so I may resist the assaults of the devil.*"

History: Originally a covering for the head and neck worn like a hood, when indoors, it was lowered and thrown over the shoulders. It symbolizes the linen cloth that the soldiers put over Our Lord's Sacred Head; when thus blindfolded, He was mockingly asked who struck Him. For the priest it is the Helmet of Salvation [cf. Eph. VI, 17].



Explanation of Vestments



The Alb - The alb is a long cloth robe reaching to the feet used to cover the priest's clothing and body. It represents Baptism. The vesting prayer is: *"Make me white, O Lord, and cleanse my heart; that being made white in the Blood of the Lamb I may deserve an eternal reward."*

History: The alb, or tunic, was worn in ancient times by all who enjoyed any dignity. It recalls for us the garment with which Herod clothed Our Lord, and signifies the purity of conscience demanded of God's priests.



Explanation of Vestments



The Cincture

The Cincture - The cincture, or girdle, is a cord fastened about the waist to confine the alb and hold everything in place. It represents Purity. The vesting prayer is: *“Gird me, O Lord, with the cincture of purity, and quench in my heart the fire of concupiscence, that the virtue of continence and chastity may abide in me.”*

History: Walking and active exertion made it necessary for one to gird up a long garment like the alb. Hence the cincture was an essential article of dress. We think of the cord that bound Our Lord to the pillar when He was being scourged. It further symbolizes modesty, and also readiness for hard work in God’s service.



Explanation of Vestments



The Stole - The stole is a long narrow strip in the liturgical color and is used to identify the person a bishop, priest or deacon. It represents the power the priest has by virtue of ordination. It has a cross sewn in the middle and the priest kisses the middle cross and places the stole upon his neck. Deacons wear it over one shoulder. The vesting prayer is: *“Restore to me, O Lord, the state of immortality which I lost through the sin of my first parents and, although unworthy to approach Thy Sacred Mysteries, may I deserve nevertheless eternal joy.”*

History: A kind of neck-piece or kerchief, the stole was a part of the dress of the upper classes. The stole is a mark of sacramental authority and the power of Orders. As such, it is also used outside the Mass whenever this power is used (in the sacrament of Penance, when giving blessings in a more solemn fashion, when handling the Eucharist, in the administration of other sacraments, etc.). Worn as it is over the shoulders, it reminds us of the cross Our Lord carried, and of the yoke of Christ; the priest’s burden is a heavy one, which Christ nevertheless makes sweet.



Explanation of Vestments



The Chasuble - The chasuble is the outer and chief vestment of the priest. Its name means, "little house" and it represents the overshadowing power of Christ. It is exclusively reserved to the priest. The vesting prayer is: *"O Lord, Who has said, 'My yoke is sweet and My burden light,' grant that I may so carry it as to merit Thy grace."*

History: Imagine a large circular cloth with a hole cut in the center for the head. This will help one to visualize the ancient chasuble, which was an immense cloak which went over the head and completely enveloped the body. When it was necessary to use the hands, the garment had to be folded up on each side over the arms. Because of its inconvenience (for two assistants were needed to manipulate it), the vestment was gradually cut and altered until it now has its present shape. It is usually ornamented

on the back, and sometimes on the front of the garment. We occasionally see chasubles made in the Gothic or Mediaeval style. These are more ample, and drape over the shoulders down to the wrists. The cross on such chasubles has the shape of the letter 'Y', the top arms of which extend over the shoulders towards the front. It makes us think of the purple cloak worn by Our Lord when He stood before Pilate. This ample garment is an emblem of charity. The ordaining bishop gives it to the new priest, saying: "Receive the priestly garment, for the Lord is Powerful to increase in you love and perfection."



Explanation of Vestments



The Cassock – The Cassock is the principal vestment used by members of the clergy. It is a robe reaching down to the feet, and normally has 33 buttons (representing Christ’s earthly years). For priests it is black; for bishops, violet; for cardinals, red; and for the Pope white.



The Surplice – The Surplice is a smaller version of the alb, without a cincture, and is occasionally embroidered at hem and sleeves. It is a liturgical garment worn by all, clergy to altar servers, during processions, and when administering the sacraments. Like the alb it represents the garment given to each of us at our baptism.



Explanation of Vestments



The Cope – The cope is a cloak, opened in the front and fastened at the breast with a band or clasp, and is used for benediction, processions, and other occasions outside of Mass. It represents the Royalty of Christ, and is reserved for the most special occasions.



The Humeral Veil – The Humeral Veil is a long, wide rectangular fringed cloth that is often ornamented in the middle. It is worn by the priest or deacon when carrying the Blessed Sacrament in procession or giving benediction. Its purpose is to keep people from being

distracted by the hands and arms of the priest/deacon by covering them entirely, freeing the people to just focus on the Eucharist. It is worn around the shoulders like a shawl.



Sacred Vessels and Other Items

All altar vessels are called sacred, since they have been set apart for a distinctive role in worship. Here are some sacred vessels and other items that you should be familiar about:

SACRED VESSELS



Chalice – Chalice is Latin meaning “cup.” This is a consecrated cup made of gold or silver, and if silver, the interior must be of gold. It holds the wine for the Holy Sacrifice, and is a striking figure of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.



Paten – Paten is Latin meaning “plate.” This is a plate of gold or silver upon which the large bread for consecration rests.



Ciborium – The ciborium is a vessel which contains the small Hosts used for the Communion of the faithful. It can look like a chalice with a large top and cover or a large bowl with a cover.



Pyx - The pyx is a smaller vessel in which the Sacred Host is either preserved or carried. A pyx should have a hinged lid and a small carrying pouch called a “bursa.” It is often used for carrying the Blessed Sacrament to the sick.

Sacred Vessels and Other Items



Bowl Patens – These are similar to a ciborium, but shaped more like metal bowls and altar bread is placed in them to be consecrated for Communion.



Communion Cups – These are chalice-like vessels used at Communion when people receive the most Precious Blood.



Luna or Lunette – This is a circular receptacle, usually with glass sides, inserted into a monstrance to show the Sacred Host.



Monstrance & Throne – The monstrance is a metal vessel, usually gold or silver-plated, with a transparent section in which the Blessed Sacrament is carried in procession or exposed for Adoration. The throne is where the monstrance is placed during adoration, often depicting Angels kneeling in prayer.



Sacred Vessels and Other Items

OTHER ITEMS



Purificator - This is a cloth used for wiping the chalice, and the fingers and mouth of the celebrant after Communion. It is spread over the cup of the chalice and under the paten at the beginning and end of Mass.

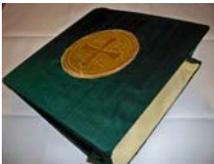
Pall - This is a square cardboard/plastic the chalice to prevent



pocket-shaped piece of cloth with a inserted in order to stiffen it. It is placed over dust or other matter falling into it.



Chalice Veil - This is the cloth which covers the chalice until the Offertory, and again after the Communion. It is the same liturgical color as the vestments.



Burse - A receptacle in which, for reasons of convenience and reverence, the folded corporal is carried to and from the altar. In Roman form the burse is ordinarily made of two juxtaposed pieces of cardboard about ten inches square, bound together at three edges, leaving the fourth open to receive the corporal. One outer side of the burse is of the same material and color as the vestments with which it is used; the rest is lined with linen or silk.



Corporal - The Corporal is a square piece of cloth. In size and appearance it resembles a small napkin. It is spread out on the altar, and the chalice is placed upon it. Its purpose is to ensure that any small particles or crumbs from the Sacred Host can be cleaned easily.

Sacred Vessels and Other Items



Aspersory and Aspergillum - The Aspersory is a container for holding holy water. The Aspergillum, the holy water sprinkler, is a stick-shaped implement with holes in it to dip into the Aspersory and catch the holy water for sprinkling the people and things



Holy Oils – There are three kinds: Sacred Chrism, Oil of Catechumens, and Oil of the Infirm. Sacred Chrism (left) contains an admixture of balm or balsam. The other two are pure olive oil (right)



Thurible & Incense Boat and Stand – The thurible is a metal vessel in the shape of a vase or cup, with cover suspended by chains. It is used for burning incense. The incense boat is a small metal container that holds the incense to be placed into the thurible. The boat has a cover and a spoon. Usually shaped like a boat, it is a symbol of the Church, the ark of Peter. Both the thurible and the incense boat are placed on their stand.



Postures At Mass

Posture is how you are using the parts of your body at a particular time. An altar server has to carry out a number of different actions at mass, and so there are a number of different postures. Know what you are to do while serving, and when you are to do it. Always do things smoothly. If you make a mistake, never get flustered.

- **Hands** – Unless you are sitting down or carrying something (like a candle), your hands should be kept joined in front of your chest; either locked together, or palm-to-palm, fingers pointing upward. Keep your hands high up on your chest. If you are carrying something in one hand hold the other hand flat on your chest.
- **Bowing** – When you bow to someone or something at mass, it should be a smooth forward inclining of your head and shoulders. Never walk and bow at the same time: stop before bowing. There are two types of bowing, the bow of the head and the bow of the body as described below:
 - **Bow** – This bow is a slow nod of the head, made when:
 - The name of Jesus is mentioned
 - Leaving the priest after an action (i.e. water and wine etc)
 - **Profound Bow** – This bow is made from the waist with hands folded. It should be made slowly and reverently when:
 - Crossing the altar if the Blessed Sacrament is not present
 - At the moment of elevation during consecration
 - During the Creed at the words “by the power of the Holy Spirit, He was born of the Virgin Mary and became man.”
- **Genuflecting** – When you genuflect, keep your hands in front of your chest while you go down on your right knee. Keep your body straight, bow your head briefly, and rise to the standing position. Be sure that your cassock/alb does not trip you on the way down or up.
 - As a rule, if the Blessed Sacrament is reposed in the Tabernacle, a genuflection is made before and after Mass, and outside of mass whenever passing in front of the Tabernacle. *Exception: The cross-bearer when carrying the processional cross does not genuflect.*
- **Walking** – Always walk with your back straight and your head held straight and high. The pace should not be rushed but deliberate. The cross-bearer always sets the pace in processions. When walking in pairs, act in unison, remember you are a team.

Postures At Mass

- **Kneeling** – When you kneel, your body should be upright and your hands should be in front of your chest, well above your waist.
- **Standing** – Always stand up straight with both feet firmly on the floor six to eight inches apart. This will give you balance and comfort at the same time. Do not lean against the furniture or against the walls.
- **Sitting** – Sit down on your chair carefully and gracefully. Once you are seated, sit tall and do not slouch. Place both feet firmly on the floor. Place your hands on your lap or flat on your thighs in a relaxed manner.
- **Eyes** – During Mass always look towards the place where the action is happening: the celebrant's chair, the ambo or the altar. When a reader is reading the scriptures, you should be looking at the reader. Keep your attention on the presider in case he is need of your assistance.

Preparations for Mass

Before Coming to Church:

- Make sure you get a good night sleep.
- Make sure your shoes are clean.
- Make sure your hands and fingernails are clean.

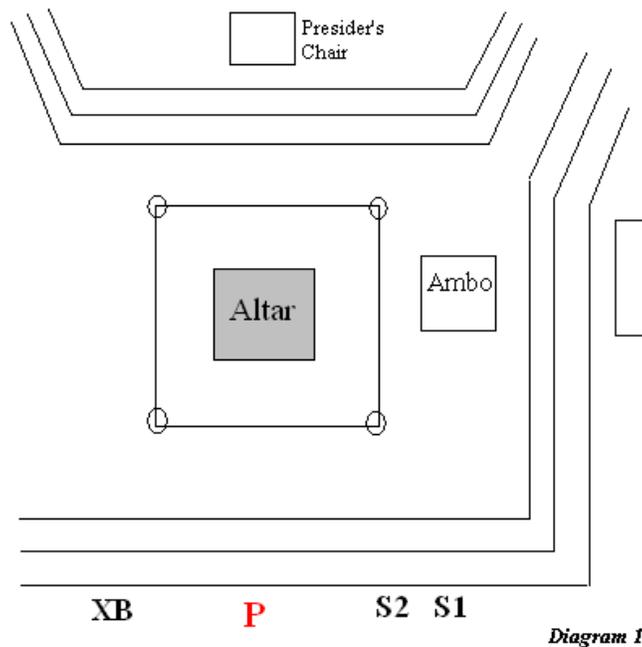
When You Come to Church:

- Arrive at the church at least **fifteen minutes** before Mass begins. If the weather is bad, you will probably have to leave home a bit earlier than usual.
 - Put on clean, unwrinkled vestments – Cassock and Surplice for gentlemen and Alb, Scapulars, and Cinctures for ladies. Treat these vestments with care, and check that the cassock/alb is not too short or too long. They should touch the top of your shoes. Note where you got your vestment from so you can put it back.
 - Check to see that the cruet (filled with water), the bowl and finger towel along with the Sacramentary are on the on the Tabernacle Credence Table. If they are not, make sure to place them there appropriately.
 - Check to see that the chalice with the chalice veil is on the Organ Credence Table. Take notice of any bowls of hosts on the right side, so you will be ready to bring them to the altar at the appropriate time. If no chalice is noticed, alert the priest or deacon immediately.
 - Check to see if the bells are in the servers seating area, and the book or binder are in their place.
 - Check to see if the wine and ciborium are on the back offertory table. If they are not present, alert the priest or deacon.
 - Check to make sure the candles around the altar are lit, including the Paschal candle if present. If they are not lit, light them at least five minutes before mass begins. Lighting the candles tells the people that Mass is about to begin. When lighting the candles, be careful for the safety of the church and all who are in it, including yourself. Keep the flame away from your vestments.
-
- After all of the above items are checked and completed, all the altar servers will meet in the area near the priests' vestry. When the priest is ready, he will invite you inside the vestry to say a prayer with you before starting mass. Some priests may not say a prayer.

Instructions for Serving at Mass

The following instructions are for Sunday masses for three altar servers: A cross bearer (XB), Server 1 (S1), and Server 2 (S2). Here we will designate, Server 1 to be the Book Bearer and Server 2 to be the Bell Ringer.

XB - Once the priest is ready to begin mass, XB will line up ahead of the procession. The other two servers, S1 and S2, will be behind him, followed by the lector and the priest. When the people begin singing the entrance hymn, the XB will carry the procession cross and lead the procession into the sanctuary. The eyes of S1 and S2 should be focused on the processional cross during the entrance. After walking down the main aisle and entering the sanctuary XB will stand to the left of the altar in front of the candle and patiently await the priest. S1 and S2 will stand to the right of the altar in front of that candle and do the same. The deacon/lector will place the Book of Gospels on the altar and return to the front. The priest, lector, S1, and S2 will genuflect to the Tabernacle. The XB will not genuflect as the XB is carrying the procession cross. The XB will bow. (See Diagram 1)



Instructions for Serving at Mass

ALL - All servers will then proceed to their assigned locations – S1 and S2 to their seats, and the XB to the back of the sanctuary to place the cross on its stand. After placing it on the stand, XB will come on around the back of the seats and will stand reverently with S1 and S2.

S1 - S1 will immediately pick up the book (binder), and make eye contact with the priest. Some priest will want S1 to be up at the presider's chair immediately, and other priests will wait until the Opening prayer. If not at the presider's chair already, during the *Glory to God in the Highest (Lord have mercy . . . during Lent)*, S1 will be ready to await for the priest to say, *Let us pray*. When the priest says, *Let us pray*, S1 will proceed directly in front of the priest (do not reverence the altar here unless S1 is crossing the altar; crossing the altar should be done on main sanctuary floor) and allow the priest to open the book (binder). (See Diagram 2)

*If S1 is 5' or taller – S1 will stand on the step below the priest,

*If S1 is shorter than 5' – S1 will stand on the same level as the priest

- Hold the book open so the priest can read the prayer,
- Keep the pages flat, and fingers out of the text.
- Stand still (not swaying) while the priest is reading.

When the priest is finished with the Opening prayer, he will close the book (binder) or allow S1 to close the book (binder). S1 will bow to the priest and return directly to his/her seat for the Liturgy of the Word.

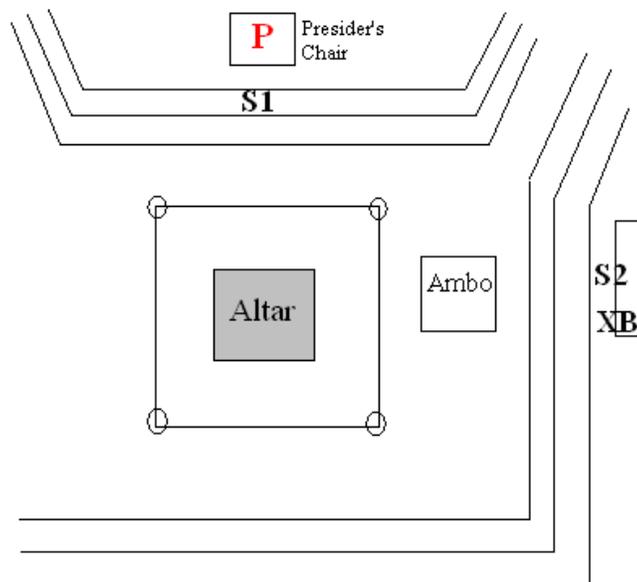


Diagram 2

ALL - All servers will sit down in their respective chairs for the readings remembering to be attentive and respectful - keeping their eyes on the reader.

S1 - At the end of the second reading and before the Alleluia, S1 will take notice if the lector has removed the lectionary from the ambo. If the lector has not, S1 immediately will go to the ambo, close and move the lectionary to the shelf inside the ambo, and return to his/her seat before the priest/deacon is at the ambo.

ALL - During the Gospel reading, all servers will be standing, attentive and respectful, facing the priest/deacon of the Gospel, for it is the Word of God. All servers will pay close attention to the words of the Gospel. Thereafter, all servers will sit down and be attentive to the homily.

S1 - After the homily the priest will return to his chair. S1 will be ready with the book (binder) for the Nicene Creed. When the priest stands for the creed, S1 will immediately carry the book for the priest at his chair.

ALL - During the creed, all servers **will recite the Creed**, and will remember to bow as instructed for the lines: *“by the power of the Holy Spirit, He was born of the Virgin Mary and became man.”*

S1 - S1 will remain with the priest for the General Intercessions, and will return to the seat after these prayers are completed. Some priests may ask you stand off to the side next to him during these prayers. With the book (binder), S1 will stand attentively and respectfully until the priest is ready.

ALL - All servers sit with the people during the collection.

XB - When the ushers are half way down the main aisle, XB will stand up, and go to the back of the sanctuary to retrieve the crucifix. XB will continue to the center aisle with the crucifix, and make a bow to the altar, turn toward the people, and walk to the back of the church to the offertory table and wait for the ushers to finish the collections.

Instructions for Serving at Mass

S1 & S2 – When the XB makes a bow to the altar, or when the deacon or priest approaches the altar, S1 and S2 will stand in unison to prepare the altar. S1 will walk across the sanctuary, making a profound bow to the altar while passing, and proceed to the Tabernacle Credence Table to get the Sacramentary. S2 will go to the Organ Credence Table to get the chalice, holding it carefully and respectfully.

S1 and S2 will prepare the altar in the following order:

- 1) S2 will bring the chalice, place it on the altar on the far Tabernacle side, and await the priest/deacon. The priest/deacon will remove the veil and return it to S2. S2 bows and returns to the Organ Credence Table to leave the veil and get the bowls of altar bread (if any).
- 2) S1 will then bring the Sacramentary (making a profound bow while passing the altar), and place it on the far choir side of the altar (or give it to the priest/deacon (bows if handing the Sacramentary to the priest/deacon), and will return to the S1 seat.
- 3) S2 will **then** bring the bowls of altar bread (if any) to the far Tabernacle side of the altar and give them to the priest/deacon, bows and returns to the S2 seat.
**If there are “empty” bowls, S2 will leave them there until Communion.

S1 and S2 will then patiently wait for the offertory procession. When the priest comes down to meet the procession, S1 and S2 will get up in unison walk around the sanctuary, and will get on either side of the priest - S1 on Tabernacle side and S2 on choir side.

XB - The XB will lead the offertory procession to the sanctuary when the usher gives the signal. As XB comes to the front of the sanctuary, XB will pause, bow and then continue to Tabernacle side of the sanctuary. XB places the crucifix in the stand, and continues around the back of the sanctuary and returns to the XB seat and remain standing until S1 and S2 return.

S1 & S2 – The priest will welcome the offertory procession, and will take the wine cruet and ciborium and give it to altar servers. S1 and S2 will follow the priest to the altar. If the ciborium is handed to a server, that server will immediately return the ciborium to the priest at the altar, (or if indicated by the priest, place the ciborium on the altar). The servers will meet at the Tabernacle Credence Table. The server carrying the wine will remove the tops of both the wine and water cruets, and await the other server. S2 will take the water cruet and S1 will take the wine cruet, and they both in unison will proceed to the altar slowly with the handles of the cruets facing out. They will stand with their toes touching the outer framing of the green marble on the floor. Facing the priest/deacon, S2 should be on the right and S1 on the left and inside of the candle. (See Diagram 3)

Instructions for Serving at Mass

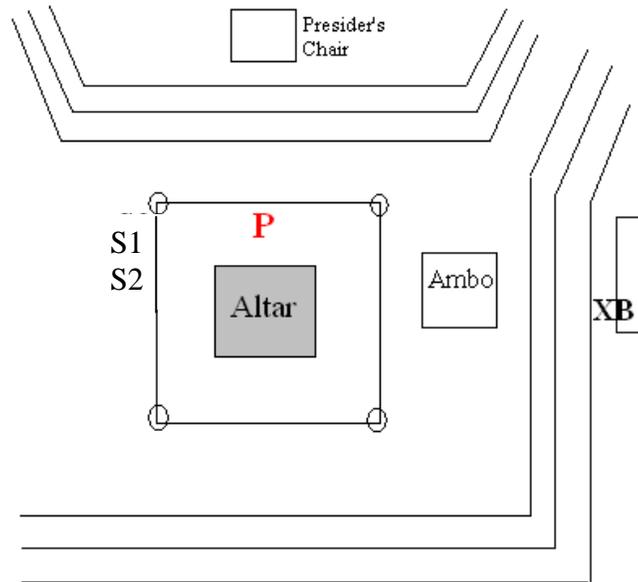


Diagram 3

S1 & S2 - After the priest has presented the bread, S1 and S2 will take half a step toward the priest, and hand him the cruets. S1 will be first with the wine, and then S2 with the water as directed. They will both bow together to the priest and then return to the Tabernacle Credence table.

S1 will cap the wine cruet and place it on the credence table. S1 will then take the finger towel and place it over the wrist, and carry the bowl with both hands. Facing the priest/deacon, S2 should be on the right and S1 on the left and inside of the candle. They will stand with their toes touching the outer framing of the green marble on the floor. When the priest is ready, S1 and S2 will take half a step toward the priest. The priest will place his hands in the bowl, and S2 will pour some of the water from the cruet on his hands. The priest will then take the finger towel from S1 and wipe his hands. After the priest replaces the towel, the servers will both bow together to the priest and then return to the Tabernacle Credence table. Both servers will neatly arrange the cruets, towel, and bowl on the table leaving room for the Sacramentary to be placed there at Communion.

On the top stair (same stair as the presider's chair), with S1 leading, both servers will go to their seats, stopping to make a profound bow to the altar. Returning to their seats, S1 will now be in the previous seat of S2. In this way, S2 will be closer to the bells.

Instructions for Serving at Mass

ALL - No one is to sit down at this time. All servers should remain standing. After singing the Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy), all servers will kneel for the Eucharistic Prayer.

S2 - S2 will be ready and alert after kneeling.

S2 will ring the bells reverently:

- Once at the epiclesis (when the priest holds both hands over the chalice)
- Three times at the full elevation of the Consecrated Host.
- Three times at the full elevation of the Consecrated Wine.

(The bells are rung three times in honor of the Trinity; bells rung three distinct times for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.)

ALL - Because the elevation of the Body and Blood of Jesus are solemn times, (the bread and wine we offered just before has now become the real BODY and BLOOD of our God, Jesus Christ), make a profound bow to the Body and the Precious Blood when the priest elevates the Host and Chalice.

S2 - After the Eucharistic Prayers, all servers will sing the Great Amen. All servers will then stand for the Our Father. Be alert to respond to the Sign of Peace from the priest before exchanging peace with each other. After the Sign of Peace, S2 will ensure that any empty bowls on the Organ Credence Table are brought to the altar. S2 will bow after giving them to the priest, and return to the S1 seat.

S1 - After singing the Lamb of God, all servers will kneel together. They will stand in unison when the priest approaches them for Communion. After they have all received Communion, they will all kneel and offer a silent prayer of thanksgiving. After the priests have left the sanctuary to distribute Communion, S1 will stand, step over the cushion, and remove the Sacramentary from the altar and return it to the Tabernacle Credence Table, and then return to kneel with the others.

ALL - When Communion is ending, and the priests and deacon (if one is in attendance) begin to return to the altar, all the servers will stand. XB will remain standing.

Instructions for Serving at Mass

S1 & S2 – S1 will move to the choir side credence table, facing towards the Tabernacle. S2 will move to the Tabernacle credence table, remembering to make a profound bow to the altar upon crossing it. S2 will remove the cover from the water cruet and step down to the main sanctuary floor and watch for the return of the Holy Eucharist to the Tabernacle, at which time **ALL servers will genuflect along with the priest/deacon**. At this time, the XB will sit, and S2 will carry the water cruet to the right side of the altar for use in the purification of the chalice. S2 will pour the water over the priest's fingers as directed, will bow to him when done, and return to the credence table and cover the cruet. S2 will then move back to the S2 seat and sit along side the XB. (See Diagram 4)

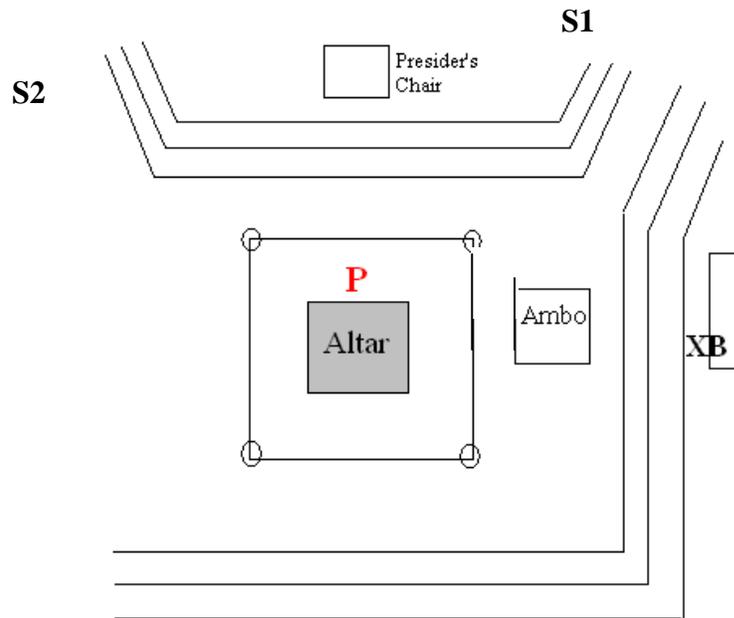


Diagram 4

S1 will wait for the priest to dress the chalice, and then carefully pick it up and return it to the Organ Credence Table. S1 will then return to his original seat with the book and be ready and alert.

S1 - All sit until the priest says: "Let us pray." S1 will proceed directly in front of the priest and allow the priest to open the prayer book and continue holding the book for the priest as with the opening prayer. When the priest finishes, S1 will close the book and return with it to the S1 seat.

Instructions for Serving at Mass

ALL - After the final blessing, XB will walk behind the servers' chairs to the back of the sanctuary to get the processional cross. After taking the cross off of its stand, XB will proceed to the area in front of the steps leading to the sanctuary (on the Tabernacle side), and join the priest and other servers facing the altar. S1 and S2 will make their way to the front of the altar as the priest kisses the altar. When the priest genuflects, S1 and S2 will genuflect also. XB will bow. All servers then turn and proceed to the rear of the church. XB will lead the procession out of the church into the gathering space. When outside the doors, XB will turn and face the doors, and S1 and S2 will face the processional cross.

At that time, the priest will face the processional cross, and say: "Pro Sit" to which the altar servers will respond: "Omnibus et Singulis" (**Ohm**-nee-bus eht **Sing**-u-lees).

The altar servers will then return to the altar servers' sacristy. XB will return the processional cross to its stand. Remembering they are still in church, they will quietly remove their vestments and carefully hang them up for the next servers.

For masses with 2 Servers: XB and S1

XB will also retain the duties for S2 as noted in the above instructions, remembering to:

- 1) Assist in preparing the altar for the offertory when the ushers begin the collections, and THEN retrieving the cross.
- 2) After returning, coming back out the side of the Tabernacle to assist S1 with the water and wine.

For masses with 1 Server: XB

XB will also retain the duties of BOTH S1 and S2 as noted in the above instructions, remembering to:

- 1) Begin preparing the altar for the offertory immediately after the General Intercessions and THEN retrieve the cross for the procession of the gifts.
- 2) After returning, coming back out the side of the Tabernacle to assist the priest with the water and wine. Also, remembering to carry the bowl, towel and the water together.

Altar Server's Prayer After Mass

O Lord, Jesus Christ, Eternal High Priest, I thank You for the privilege of having served at the holy altar of Your Sacrifice.

Now, as I put aside the garments of that service, I ask that I may at all times think of You. May I ever seek You and find You; May I always follow You; may your priestly spirit be in my heart and Your Holy Name on my lips; and to Your praise and glory may every work of mine be done.

Ever ready in Your service, may I always know and do Your will in all things and, by Your grace, persevere unto the end.

Amen.

Prayers to Know

You are already familiar with most of the prayers at Mass from having attended Mass for such a long time. The important thing to remember is that prayers are never mumbled. They are said clear and in a conversational tone. Here are some longer prayers that you should know accurately and well to say or sing during Mass.

After the priest introduces the rite, one of three forms may be used. One of them is known as the Confiteor, that you will need to know:

CONFITEOR **I confess to almighty God,
and to you my brothers and sisters,
that I have sinned through my own fault**
(Servers may strike their breast with closed right hand)
**in my thoughts and in my words,
in what I have done, and in what I have failed to do;
and I ask blessed Mary, ever virgin,
all the angels and saints,
and you my brothers and sisters,
to pray for me to the Lord, Our God.**

The Gloria is sung or said on Sundays, outside of Advent and Lent and on solemnities and feast days:

GLORIA **Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to His people on earth.
Lord God heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father;
receive our prayers.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

Prayers to Know

On Sundays and Solemnities the Nicene-Constantinople Creed is recited:

PROFESSION OF FAITH

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally
begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, one in being with the Father.
Through Him all things were made.
For us men and our salvation He came down from heaven:
(All bow during the next two lines)
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
He was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man.
For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
He suffered, died, and was buried.
On the third day He rose again in fulfillment of the scriptures: He
ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He
will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his
kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son, He is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to
come. Amen.**

Toward the end of the preparation of the gifts, after he washes his hands:

- (Priest) Pray brethren, that our sacrifice, may be acceptable
To God, the almighty Father.
- (All) **May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands,
for the praise and the glory of His name,
for our good and the good of all His Church.**
- (Priest) The Lord be with you
- (All) **And also with you**
- (Priest) Lift up your hearts
- (All) **We have lifted them up to the Lord**
- (Priest) Let us give thanks to the Lord, Our God.
- (All) **It is right to give him thanks and praise**

Prayers to Know

SANCTUS

After the preface, we sing or say the Sanctus:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Latin

*Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus
Deus sabaoth. Pleni sunt coeli et terra,
gloria tua. Hosanna in excelsis.
Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.*

MEMORIAL ACCLAMATIONS

After the consecration, the priests, sings or says,

Let us proclaim, the mystery of faith

The response with one of four memorial acclamations:

(A) Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

**(B) Dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life.
Lord Jesus, come in glory.**

**(C) When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim your death, Lord Jesus,
until you come in glory.**

**(D) Lord, by your cross and resurrection you have set us free. You are the Savior of the
world**

The Lord's Prayer

The priest introduces the Our Father.

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

(Priest) Deliver us Lord...

**(Response) For the kingdom, the power, the glory are yours,
Now and forever.**

Prayers to Know

Latin

LAMB OF GOD

Lamb of God,
you take away the sins of the world:
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God,
you take away the sins of the world:
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God,
you take away the sins of the world:
grant us your peace.

Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi:
Miserere nobis.

Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi:
Miserere nobis

Agnus Dei,
Qui tollis peccata mundi,
Dona nobis pacem.

(Priest) This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.
Happy are those who are called to his supper.

(ALL) Lord, I am not worthy to receive you,
but only say the word and I shall be healed.

Liturgical Colors

The liturgical seasons are there to help us change, grow and become more mature as followers of Jesus Christ. One of the clearest signs of these seasons is the changing liturgical colors. With each change of seasons, the Church changes the color of vestments as a visible sign of our need to change and grow.



White or Gold: The symbol of Celebration and triumph, purity and innocence. It is used on all feasts of the joyful and glorious mysteries of our Lord's life (e.g. Christmas and Easter), on the feast of our Blessed Mother, on the feasts of angels and of all saints who were not martyrs. White/Gold can always be worn since every mass is a celebration of Christ's Resurrection, and is often worn at funerals to celebrate the life of the deceased and pray for their triumphal acceptance into heaven.



Red: The symbol of Sacrifice because it is the color of blood, is used on all feasts of our Lord's Cross and Passion, on the feasts of the Apostles and of all martyrs. It is also a symbol of the Holy Spirit when it is used on Pentecost and in Masses of the Holy Spirit, in memory of the tongues of fire of the First Pentecost.



Purple: The symbol of Penance and Waiting, it is used during the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent, and on days of fast. It reminds us of preparation. It also may be worn during funerals as an alternative dark color, to show mourning and the preparation of the dead/



Rose: The symbol of Subdued Joy that half a penitential season is over, is authorized only on the Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday) and on the Fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday) as an alternative to violet.



Green: The symbol of Hope and Growth, Green is the color of budding and living vegetation. It is used during Ordinary Time, to show that our common state is one of growing in our relationship with God, longing and hoping for eternal life.



Black: The symbol of Mourning and Death, it may be used in funerals or a day commemorating the dead or great loss of life, like All Soul's Day. It is rarely used.

Note of Thanks



I want to tell you of our deep appreciation for the devotion and attention you have given to serving at Mass in our parish of Blessed Sacrament. This is a service which you have rendered to Almighty God in the sacredness of the sanctuary.

I extend these words of thanks, not alone, but for the priests you have served, your family and friends, and for the many who have attended the Masses at which you have served.

I am sure that the messages in this manual will be inspirational and of encouragement to you at prayer, at school, at work, and at play.

I am hopeful that the contents will be of daily usefulness to you in the months ahead. Equally as important, in the years to come, I pray that this manual will afford you, many pleasant memories of your days as an altar server.

Yours in Christ

Pastor – Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church