

Altar Server's Guild of the Cathedral of Christ the King



Altar Server's Manual

The Importance of Serving the Mass

The Mass is the center of our Catholic lives, and nothing is more important. Through this holy sacrifice the Lord is made present in our midst, and we give worship to our Creator. When we understand this, we can see why altar servers should strive to show the greatest reverence whenever serving the Holy Mass. Keep in mind that altar servers fulfill an ancient service to the Church, and for centuries young people have learned piety and responsibility through serving the Mass. The most important thing an altar server can learn (and the most important thing an altar server can demonstrate to others) is a deep respect for the Mass. By their service, altar servers can mature and grow in grace. This is an opportunity to learn more about God, to learn more about his Church, and to become more confident as a Catholic. Our altar servers are true leaders amongst their peers and within our parish. We owe a great debt of gratitude to our altar servers, who honor our Lord and who are the pride of our Cathedral parish.

The Importance of Decorum & Posture

Altar servers are not only present to fulfill certain functions, but they are primarily present to impress upon the people of God this great reverence we should all have for the Mass. This reverence is called *decorum*, which should *not* be *merely* a show, but it should reflect an interior attitude of prayer and of faith. Even in the sacristy, servers should be reflective and respectful, and silence is just as appropriate in the vesting area as it is in the sanctuary. Being prompt and prepared is paramount. Altar servers are also meant to be discrete, uniform, and to work in unison. They should never be a distraction. Moreover even the gestures the server uses are dictated by tradition. They move together. They stand together. They sit together. They kneel in a uniform way. They hold their hands in the same way, either standing (palm to palm) or sitting (palm to legs). Even the position of a hand they are *not* using is given its proper place (resting against the chest).

The Duties of the Server

First and foremost the server should strive to live a life that is worthy of the calling he or she has received to serve. That having been said, cathedral altar servers should also be baptized Catholics, having already received their first holy communion. Their parents should be registered parishioners of Christ the King, and support the parish stewardship with some identifiable gifts. Servers should be willing to serve for at least one entire year, or until they move. They should be committed to growth in prayer, and in their Catholic Faith, and they should be available for occasional retreats or training days. They should go to confession with regularity. In short, they must be responsible Catholics!

Servers are to come ready to serve, clean, and dressed in appropriate attire.

- Remember, servers are representing their Christian dignity
- A general neatness in appearance is appropriate
- Jeans and shorts are unsuitable
- Trousers should ideally be dark and clean
- Shoes (never sandals) should be ideally black or at the very least dark. A server's shoes should also be polished and clean, and the heels of the shoes should not be high.
- Tennis shoes or sports shoes are inappropriate
- Gentlemen server should wear dark or black socks as well.
- Lady servers should choose discrete and sensible shoes and stockings
- Shirt or blouse collars should not extend conspicuously beyond the cassock
- Nothing should draw attention to yourself
- Servers should avoid strange hair cuts, indiscrete jewelry and tattoos

Liturgical Items

These items are typically used in the Mass. Please learn the names of these items and be able to identify them.



cassock



surplice



taper with snuffer



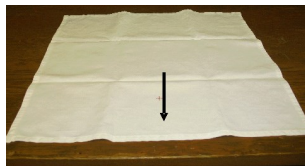
thurible & boat



ambo



bells



corporal



purificator

Prayers

Prayers of preparation and thanksgiving are posted in the altar servers' closet. The following are very traditional prayers of preparation and thanksgiving composed by St. Thomas Aquinas.

Prayer Before Mass

Almighty and ever-living God, I approach the sacrament of Your only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ, I come sick to the doctor of life, unclean to the fountain of mercy, blind to the radiance of eternal light, and poor and needy to the Lord of heaven and earth. Lord, in your great generosity, heal my sickness, wash away my defilement, enlighten my blindness, enrich my poverty, and clothe my nakedness.

May I receive the bread of angels, the King of kings and Lord of lords, with humble reverence, with the purity and faith, the repentance and love, and the determined purpose that will help to bring me to salvation. May I receive the sacrament of the Lord's Body and Blood, and its reality and power. Kind God, may I receive the Body of Your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, born from the womb of the Virgin Mary, and so be received into His mystical body and numbered among His members. Loving Father, as on my earthly pilgrimage I now receive Your beloved Son under the veil of a sacrament, may I one day see him face to face in glory, who lives and reigns with You for ever. Amen

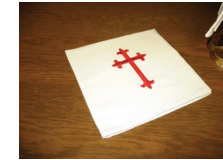
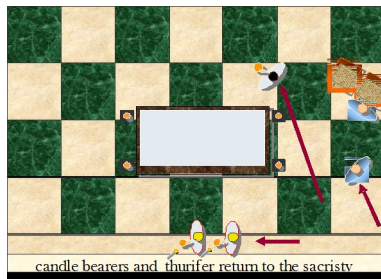
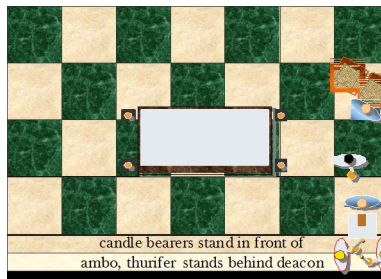
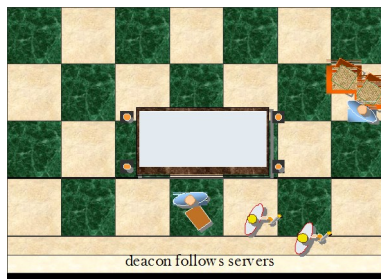
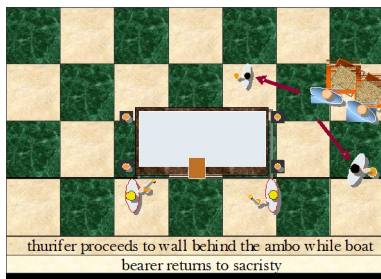
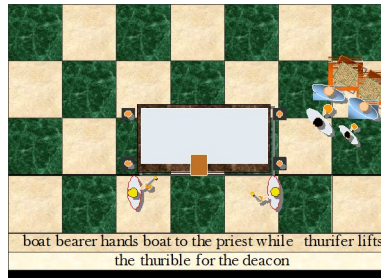
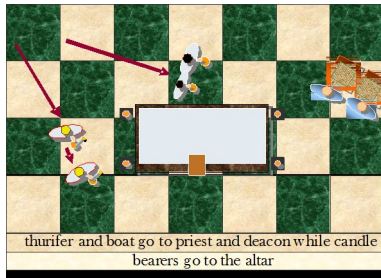
Prayer of Thanksgiving After Mass

Lord, Father all-powerful and ever-living God, I thank You, for even though I am a sinner, your unprofitable servant, not because of my worth but in the kindness of your mercy, You have fed me with the Precious Body & Blood of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that this Holy Communion may not bring me condemnation and punishment but forgiveness and salvation.

May it be a helmet of faith and a shield of good will. May it purify me from evil ways and put an end to my evil passions. May it bring me charity and patience, humility and obedience, and growth in the power to do good. May it be my strong defense against all my enemies, visible and invisible, and the perfect calming of all my evil impulses, bodily and spiritual. May it unite me more closely to you, the One true God, and lead me safely through death to everlasting happiness with You.

And I pray that You will lead me, a sinner, to the banquet where you, with Your Son and holy Spirit, are true and perfect light, total fulfillment, everlasting joy, gladness without end, and perfect happiness to your saints. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Incense During the Gospel (Diagram)



pall



chalice & patten with host



flagon



cruets



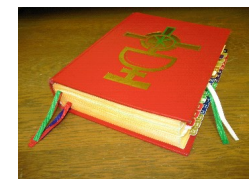
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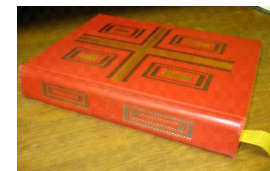
ciborium



credence table



Roman Missal



lectionary



book of the Gospels

Procedures After Mass

After Mass, servers return to the sacristy and place the thurible, boat, cross and candles in their proper places. Servers should also extinguish all the candles using the "snuffer" on the taper. Cassocks and surplices should be hung up in their appropriate sections. Servers should then make their prayer of thanksgiving after Mass.

Liturgical Vocabulary

Ambo - The stand from where the lector proclaims the readings and the priest or deacon proclaims the gospel.

Bells - The bells rung by the servers during the Mass.

Boat - The small container that holds the incense.

Book of the Gospels - The book which contains the gospel readings for every Sunday and feast day. It is normally beautifully decorated to emphasize the importance of the gospel. It is also called the Evangelary.

Chalice - The cup used on the altar by the priest during the Mass which will hold the Blood of Christ. It is made of precious metal.

Ciborium - A special covered bowl for keeping ["reserving"] the Body of Christ.

Corporal - The white linen square that is spread out on the altar over the place on which the Blessed Sacrament is to be placed.

Credence Table - The table on which are placed the cups, purificators, the chalice, the ciboria, cruets, and anything else needed for the celebration of the Mass.

Cruet - Small glass pitchers that hold the water and wine used in the celebration of the Mass.

Flagon - The large pitcher that holds the wine which is brought forth during the offertory procession.

Lavabo - The pitcher, bowl, and towel used to wash the priest's hands.

Lectionary - The book which contains the readings from sacred scripture for every Sunday and feast day.

Pall - The thin square piece of cardboard covered with cloth which is placed on top of the chalice.

Patten - The thin metal plate which holds the single large host used by the priest for the celebration of the Mass

Purificator - A small cloth used to wipe the edge of the chalice as the Blood of Christ is distributed during communion.

Sacramentary - The book which contains the prayers and rituals for the Mass. It is also known as the Roman Missal.

Taper with Snuffer - The long metal tube which holds a wax lighter used for lighting candles. Some tapers also have a bell-shaped portion used to cover a candle flame and extinguish it (snuffer).

Thurible - The special bowl in which incense is burned on charcoal.

Incense During the Gospel (see diagram on next page)

For the Gospel procession the candle bearers, thurifer, and boat will all proceed to the sacristy after the first reading. Immediately after the second reading is concluded, the thurifer and boat bearer will exit the sacristy and approach the priest and deacon. The candle bearers will move with their candles to the corners of the front of the altar and face each other. The boat bearer will hand the boat to the priest. The thurifer will lift the thurible so that the deacon can open the lid. The priest will place incense into the thurible and hand the boat back to the boat bearer. The deacon will then close the lid. Here, however, the thurifer will not hand the incense to the deacon. Instead, after the deacon closes the lid, the thurifer will move and stand against the wall behind the ambo, and the boat bearer will return to the sacristy and wait there. The deacon will then approach the altar between the candle bearers and will pick up the book of the Gospel and will turn to face the congregation. As soon as he turns, the candle bearers will proceed together (in front of the deacon) down the steps and stand in front of the ambo facing each other. After the deacon comes to the ambo with the book of the Gospels, the thurifer will step behind him and be ready to hand him the thurible. The thurifer remains there behind the deacon until the end of the Gospel and swings the thurible slightly. When the Gospel is concluded, all servers proceed back to the sacristy and then return to their places quietly.

Instructions for Using Incense

Incense may be used three times during the Mass (at the very beginning of Mass, during the Gospel, and during the offertory). The procedure for incense is slightly different during the Gospel. Occasionally, the priest may ask to have a Gospel procession with the candles even though he may not use incense. In this case the candle bearers would simply follow the same procedures below .

Incense at the Beginning of Mass and During the Offertory

The thurifer and boat bearer will approach the priest and deacon, and the boat bearer will hand the boat to the priest. The thurifer will lift the thurible so that the deacon can open the lid. The priest will place incense into the thurible and hand the boat back to the boat bearer. The deacon will then close the lid of the thurible. At the beginning of Mass and during the offertory (this part is different for the Gospel), the deacon will then take the thurible from the thurifer and hand it to the priest. The thurifer and boat bearer should step out of the way and wait to take back the thurible after the incensation. After receiving the thurible back, they should return the thurible and boat to the sacristy and all servers should proceed to their seats together.

If there is no deacon, the thurifer may be asked to incense the priest and the congregation after the priest has incensed the altar. The following procedure should be followed in this case: Before and after an incensation, a profound bow is made to the person or object that is incensed.

The following are incensed with three swings of the thurible ["Ductus," or three double swings as explained below]: the Most Blessed Sacrament, a relic of the Holy Cross and images of the Lord exposed for public veneration, the offerings for the sacrifice of the Mass, the altar cross, the Book of the Gospels, the Paschal Candle, the priest, and the people. The pattern is two small swings three times – if facing the congregation and they are a clock – swing at 10, 12 and 2.

Assignments

There should normally be 5 servers assigned for every Mass. When incense is being used there will be a **thurifer** (server who carries the thurible), **boat bearer** (server who carries the boat), **crucifer** (server who carries the processional cross), and **2 candle bearers** (servers who carry the processional candles). The crucifer will also be the **book bearer**, and the candle bearers will be the ones responsible for helping the deacon to prepare the altar during the offertory and clear the altar after communion. When there is no incense, or if there are more than 5 servers, the servers who are not assigned to a specific task (i.e. thurifer, boat, crucifer, or candle bearers) will be the ones to help prepare and clear the altar.

Procedures Before Mass

- Altar Servers should sign in 20 minutes before Mass is scheduled to begin and should introduce themselves to the priest. "Walk-in" substitutes may serve if they arrive 10 minutes prior to Mass and are needed.
- Choose a cassock and surplice that fits appropriately (extending to the top of the shoes).
- Lead servers should assign servers to specific duties and take charge to make sure that all is prepared for the Mass by consulting the checklist in the servers' closet and by making sure to ask the priest or mass coordinator if there is anything special that needs to be prepared (ex. will incense be used?).
- Processional candles and all candles around the altar and tabernacle should be lit by the two candle bearers 10 minutes prior to Mass.
- Servers should make their own prayer before Mass and be ready 5 minutes prior to Mass, waiting outside the sacristy for Father to lead all in a communal prayer of preparation.
- After the prayer, all servers should proceed to the back of the Church with the cross, candles, thurible, and boat (when using incense).

Instructions for Serving the Mass

The Mass is divided into four principal parts. Our goal at the Cathedral is not only to help servers learn how to serve at God's holy altar but also to understand the Mass more deeply so as to be able to offer the Mass as a profound act of worship.

I. Introductory Rites

Entrance Procession (Servers process slowly. When they reach the sanctuary, crucifer and candle bearers proceed to the sacristy immediately. Thurifer and boat wait beside the altar for incensation. All proceed to their seats after incensation)

Greeting

Penitential Rite

Gloria (Book bearer should watch deacon to know when to bring the book and approaches the deacon when signaled, or if the deacon does not signal, book bearer should be ready with the book half way through Gloria)

Opening Prayer (After the priest prays the opening prayer, book bearer returns the book to the stand and returns to seat)

II. Liturgy of the Word

First Reading (After the first reading, candle bearers proceed to sacristy for the gospel procession—and thurifer with boat if incense is being used)

Responsorial Psalm

Second Reading (After the second reading, thurifer and boat bearer approach the priest, and candle bearers move to their places at the corners of the altar, facing each other, for gospel procession. thurifer and boat bearer follow instruction for using incense during the Gospel)

Gospel Acclamation (After the priest bows at the altar or the deacon picks up the Book of the Gospels and turns, candle bearers proceed to their places in front of the ambo)

Gospel Reading (After the gospel, servers return to the sacristy, and proceed back to their places together)

Homily

Creed

General Intercessions (After intercessions, book bearer places the book on the altar and retrieves the cross and proceeds down the center aisle to lead up the gift bearers in the offertory procession. Other servers proceed to the credence table to assist with the preparation of the altar. Thurifer and boat proceed to sacristy and wait for incensation of the gifts)

III. Liturgy of the Eucharist

Offertory (Crucifer leads the offertory procession and waits off to the side next to the priest. Candle bearers accompany the priest to help receive the gifts. Crucifer deposits cross in the sacristy and waits for candle bearers to finish washing priest's hands. If there is incense, the thurible and boat bearer will approach the priest before he washes his hands. After all this is completed, all proceed to their places at the foot of the sanctuary)

Eucharistic Prayer (Server kneeling closest to the bells will ring the bells 3 times: one short ring at the epiclesis, and three rings each at the raising of the host and chalice during the consecration)

Our Father (Servers do not hold hands – keep hands folded)

Lamb of God

Communion (Servers stand in their places to receive communion. After sitting or kneeling to pray for some time, servers should wait next to the credence table to assist the deacon in clearing the altar)

Prayer after Communion (When the priest and deacon stand, book bearer approaches the deacon. After the closing prayer, book bearer returns the book to the stand and goes to retrieve the cross)

IV. Concluding Rites

Final Blessing and Dismissal (After the blessing and dismissal, thurifer, boat, crucifer, and candle bearers immediately retrieve thurible, boat, cross, and candles)

Closing Procession (All servers proceed half way down aisle and turn to wait for the reverence and then turn and process out of the Church)