

- SACRARIUM** Covered sink in the sacristy used only for washing the sacred vessels and disposing of holy materials.
- SACRISTY** The room behind the sanctuary where the liturgical items are stored.
- SANCTUARY** The area at the front of the church where the altar is located.
- SANCTUARY LAMP** Candle burning in the sanctuary of the church indicating the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle.
- STOLE** Long narrow strip of fabric vestment that is worn on top of an alb but below a chasuble signifying priestly ordination.
- TABERNACLE** Place where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved.
- TAPER** Wick used to light candles.
- THURIBLE** Metal vessel suspended from chains in which incense is burned.



CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION



ALTAR SERVER HANDBOOK

ORDER OF THE SUNDAY MASS

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Procession
Greeting
Penitential Rite
Gloria
Opening Prayer

LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading
Responsorial Psalm
Second Reading
Gospel Acclamation
Gospel
Homily
Creed
Prayer of the Faithful

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Preparation of the Altar and the Gifts
Eucharistic Prayer
Lord's Prayer
Sign of Peace
Breaking of Bread
Communion
Prayer after Communion

CONCLUDING RITE

Final Blessing and Dismissal
Recession

CRUET Small glass vessel used for holding the wine and water required for Mass.



EMHC (Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion) A person who is commissioned to distribute the Body and Blood of Christ

INCENSE BOAT Small vessel containing incense that will be burned in the thurible.

LAVABO Bowl used for washing the priest's hands at the offertory of the Mass

LECTIONARY Large book containing the Scripture readings for Mass.

MISSAL Large red book containing the prayers of the priests for Mass.



MONSTRANCE Vessel used for the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

PALL Hard, square piece of fabric that is set upon the chalice.



PASCHAL CANDLE Large decorated candle that symbolizes Christ's resurrection. It is usually kept by the baptismal font.

PATEN Small shallow plate or disc on which is placed the Presider's host that is to be consecrated.



PRESIDER Priest (or bishop) who is the main celebrant for a Mass.




PURIFICATOR A rectangular white cloth used with the chalice.



PYX Small vessel in which the Blessed Sacrament is taken to the sick.



SERVER GLOSSARY

ALB	White vestment worn over clothing at Mass. It is worn by priests and deacons under their other vestments.
ALTAR	Dignified and stationary place on which the sacrifice of Our Lord is offered to the Father and made present to us.
AMBO	Pulpit from which the Sacred Scriptures are proclaimed.
AMBRY	Small repository for the blessed oils.
ASPERGILLUM	Instrument used for sprinkling holy water. 
ASPERSORY	Container used for holy water that is used with the aspergillum.
BOOK OF THE GOSPELS	Large book that contains the Gospel readings. The deacon or the lector carries it in procession to the altar at the beginning of Mass.
CHALICE	Sacred vessel used to hold the wine that is consecrated into the Precious Blood. 
CHASUBLE	The outer and chief vestment worn by the priest.
CIBORIUM	Sacred vessel that is bowl-shaped and is used to hold the bread that is consecrated into the Sacred Host. Multiple ciborium are called <i>ciboria</i> . 
CINCTURE	Rope worn around the waist over the alb.
CORPORAL	Large square cloth that is placed on the altar and on which the sacred vessels are placed during the Consecration.
CREDENCE TABLE	The small table on which necessary objects for Mass are placed until they are needed.

INTRODUCTION

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

This ministry is a unique one in the Catholic Church. Other than priests and deacons, no one else is allowed to so closely play a part in the preparation of the Eucharist. When you serve the priests and deacons, you serve the people of God, and above all, you serve Christ!

This manual is designed to help you as you assist at our parish Masses.

“I am asking you to not take this gift for granted so that it does not become a sort of habit, knowing how it works and doing it automatically; rather, discover every day anew that something important happens, that the living God is among us and that you can be close to him and help him so that his mystery is celebrated and reaches people.”

—Pope Benedict XVI, Address to Altar Servers

Table of Contents

General Reminders	Page 4
Procedures for Sunday Mass	Pages 5-9
Incense at Mass	Pages 10-12
Serving at Daily Mass	Page 13
Server Glossary	Pages 14-16

GENERAL REMINDERS

- **Be helpful:** Always remember that your main job is to help the priest. Don't be afraid to ask the priest questions if you are unsure of something.
- **Be watchful:** There are bound to be changes and unexpected events happen. Watch and listen to the priest for any special instructions.
- **Be thoughtful:** Mistakes happen. Things get dropped or forgotten. If this happens, don't panic. Just go slowly and get what was dropped or forgotten.
- **Think ahead:** Always think ahead to the next part of Mass, and what your part in it is.
- **Prayer hands:** When standing, walking or kneeling with nothing in your hands, your hands should be together in prayer, palms together.
- **Don't be a distraction:** The best servers are the ones not noticed. When you are sitting, do not cross your arms, fidget with your hands, or play with the alb or your hair.
- **Genuflecting and bowing:** Outside of Mass, whenever you walk past the front of the tabernacle, you should genuflect to the tabernacle. During Mass, if you pass between the altar and tabernacle, you should bow to the altar.
- **Dress your best:** Even though you will be wearing an alb, dress like you are going to Mass. Your shoes are important, because they are the only articles of your clothing that show. Shoes should be clean and quiet. Dress shoes or loafers usually look best. No flip flops or tennis shoes are allowed. Bright clothing is often visible through the server albs and should be avoided.
- **Confidence and dignity:** Do not be sloppy and lazy. Show respect for God, for your church, and for the people around you.
- **How to hold a cruet:** When carrying or holding a cruet, hold the bottom with the handle facing the priest. Never set a cruet on the altar; always hand it to the priest.

SERVING AT DAILY MASS

Trained altar servers are more than welcome and **highly encouraged** to serve at one of the parish's daily Masses. This can give the server more experience and added confidence. Daily Mass is more simple and serving it is slightly different. *Note: School Masses are for the most part treated like a Sunday Mass but with there being no Gospel procession.*

BEGINNING OF MASS

- No candles or processional cross are used in procession at daily Mass.
- The Mass begins with the server processing into the Church in front of the priest with hands together in prayer. Upon reaching the sanctuary step, the server genuflects and immediately goes to the Presider's chair and waits there for the Opening Prayer. During the Opening Prayer, the server holds the Missal in the same way as on a Sunday Mass but instead of returning the Missal to the small table next to the Presider's chair, takes it and the Missal stand to the altar before taking a seat in the normal pew location.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

- There is no Gospel procession.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

- During the Preparation of the Altar, the server brings the items to the altar from the credence table in this order:
 - ◇ Ciboria (if there are any) and then extra chalices (if there are any).
 - ◇ Presider's chalice.
 - ◇ Cruets of water and wine.
 - ◇ After the Presider is done with the wine and water, the server returns to the credence, and takes the cruet of water, lavabo and towel to the Presider for the washing of the hands
- The bells are rung like normal.
- After the Presider is finished distributing the Eucharist, the server helps clear the altar and return the items to their original locations. Then returns to the Presider's chair for the concluding prayer.
- After the concluding prayer, the server goes to the front of the sanctuary steps and waits there to genuflect with the Presider before beginning the recessional.

INCENSE TIPS

- When handing the thurible to the Presider, do not have the chain wrapped around your hands. The easiest way to hand the thurible to the Presider is to hold the thurible with the ring at the end of the chain and then simply hand that ring to the Presider.

INCENSE AT FUNERALS

Incense is used at every funeral but not in the same way it is used at a normal Sunday celebration. During a funeral, incense is used as follows:

- During the Our Father, either a server or sacristan needs to light one coal.
- Once the Prayer after Communion is completed, a server takes the thurible and incense boat to the front of the sanctuary and waits for the Presider. After the Presider makes some remarks, he places incense in the thurible, blesses it, and then incenses the casket or cremains. Once he is finished with the thurible, he hands it back to the server.
- Once the Presider has completed the final prayer, the thurible leads the recessional walking at a slow and even pace.



PROCEDURES FOR SUNDAY MASS

BEFORE MASS

- Arrive *at least* 15 minutes before the scheduled liturgy dressed appropriately and sign in using the altar server book.
- Select an alb that is ankle length.
- Light the candles in the sanctuary.

INTRODUCTORY RITES

With the exception of the actions below, servers participate in the same actions as the rest of the congregation during Mass.

PROCESSION

- All liturgical ministers and servers gather in prayer immediately before the liturgy in the Ministry Room (St. Martha Room).
- As the announcements for Mass are read, all servers line up next to the baptismal font with the cross-bearer in the middle of the two candle-bearers.
- Once the musicians have begun *singing*, servers process towards the sanctuary in a slow and even pace. Candle-bearers should hold the candles vertically and not tilted so that oil does not drip from the candles.
- Upon arriving at the sanctuary steps, servers go up the sanctuary steps without stopping, briefly pause after the last step, together do a head bow towards the tabernacle, and then together place the candles and processional cross into their stands behind the ambo. *Note: If a server is not carrying anything in the procession, the server genuflects upon arriving at the sanctuary steps and proceeds immediately to the pew without entering the sanctuary.*
- Candle-bearers then proceed to their pew while the cross-bearer goes to the Presider's chair and stands beside it.

GREETING

PENITENTIAL RITE

GLORIA

OPENING PRAYER

- The cross-bearer should be prepared at the end of the Gloria (or if there is no Gloria, then at the end of the Penitential Rite) to take the Missal to the Presider.
- After the Presider says, “Let us Pray,” the cross-bearer stands in front of but slightly to the side of the Presider holding open the Missal steady and securely.
- At the end of the prayer, the cross-bearer gently closes the Missal, places it on the small table next to the Presider’s chair, and returns to the pew with the other servers. *The server should be sure to bow to the altar when passing between the altar and tabernacle.*

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

SECOND READING

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

- As the Presider stands and the music begins, the candle-bearers together enter the sanctuary, get their candles, and immediately proceed to the top step of the side steps of the sanctuary on the Presider’s chair side without bowing to the altar.
- As the Presider walks towards the steps with the Book of the Gospels, the candle-bearers walk in unison down the sanctuary steps and lead the procession around the sanctuary to the ambo using a slow and steady pace.
- Upon arriving at the ambo, the candle-bearers stand on either side of the ambo while the Presider proclaims the Gospel.

GOSPEL

- After the Gospel is proclaimed, the Book of the Gospels is placed on front of the ambo, and the Gospel acclamation is *completed*, the candle-bearers return the candles to the stand and return to their pew.

HOMILY

CREED

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

procession and stands in front of them. The thurifer leads the procession, again walking slowly and gently while swinging the thurible back and forth. After the procession arrives at the ambo, the Presider will introduce the Gospel as normal but before he proclaims the Gospel he will take the thurible and incense the Book of the Gospel. He will then hand the thurible back to the thurifer. After the Gospel is proclaimed and the Gospel acclamation is concluded, at the conclusion of the Gospel, the thurifer returns the thurible and boat to their stand.

- *Preparation of the Altar and Gifts:* After the Presentation of the Gifts but before the Washing of Hands, the thurifer takes the thurible and incense boat to the Presider. The Presider will again place incense in the thurible and bless it. The Presider then incenses the gifts and the altar. Once he is finished, he hands the thurible back to the thurifer. The thurifer then bows slightly to the Presider, incenses him with three double swings, and bows again. The thurifer then proceeds to the front of the sanctuary and gestures to the congregation to stand. Once the people are standing, the thurifer bows slightly, incenses the people with three double swings (once in each direction of the congregation), and concludes with another slight bow. The thurifer then returns the thurible and incense boat to their stand.
- *Incense during the Consecration:* During the ‘Holy, Holy, Holy’, the thurifer takes the thurible to the front steps of the sanctuary during and kneels on the front step when the congregation kneels. The thurible then incenses toward the altar with three triple swings when the priest elevates the Host and then when he elevates the Chalice. The thurifer stands and returns the thurible when the congregation stands as the Presider introduces the Our Father.

CONCLUSION OF MASS

- At the conclusion of Mass, the thurifer may process out with the thurible again leading the procession.

INCENSE AT MASS

Throughout the liturgical year, there are various occasions on which incense is used to enhance the liturgical celebration, such as Easter, Christmas, and major solemnities. Incense is primarily used *four times* during Mass: the beginning of Mass, the Gospel Procession, and the Preparation of the Altar and Gifts. The altar server who assists the priest with incense is called the *thurifer*.

BEFORE MASS

- Empty the thurible of ashes into the bucket of ashes located in the sacristy.
- Light the coals 5-10 minutes before the Mass. The coals spark when they are first lit but to keep them burning, it is helpful to swing the thurible back and forth for a few minutes at the beginning.

DURING MASS

- *Beginning of Mass:* At the beginning of Mass but prior to the procession beginning, the thurifer takes the thurible and incense boat to the Presider and hands him the incense boat. The Presider will then place incense in the thurible and bless it. The thurifer then takes the thurible and incense boat and stands in front of the other servers, leading the procession at the appropriate time, gently swinging the thurible back and forth. The thurifer processes into the sanctuary and waits beside the altar (on the ambo side) for the Presider. After the Presider has kissed the altar, he will turn to the thurifer, take the incense boat, and put more incense in the thurible. The Presider will hand the incense boat back to the thurifer, take the thurible, and incense the altar, cross, and Paschal candle (if Easter season). The thurifer remains in the sanctuary while the Presider incenses but stands out of the way. Once the Presider is finished with the thurible, he hands it to the thurifer and the thurifer returns it and the incense boat to their stand.
- *Gospel Procession:* At the beginning of the second reading, the thurifer goes to the sacristy and picks up the thurible and incense boat. After the second reading is completed, the thurifer takes the thurible and incense boat to the Presider. The Presider will then put incense in the thurible, bless it, and hand the incense boat back. The thurifer then meets up with the candle-bearers for the Gospel

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

PREPARATION OF THE ALTAR AND THE GIFTS

Cross-bearer

- At the conclusion of the Prayer of the Faithful, the cross-bearer immediately takes the processional cross to the small credence located at the rear of the church near the baptismal font on which the gifts of bread and wine for Mass are placed.
- Once the Presider stands, the cross-bearer slowly processes down the main aisle of the church, leading the gift-bearers to the priest.
- Upon arriving at the priest, the cross-bearer should return the processional cross to its stand in the sanctuary and return to the pew.

Candle-bearers

- Once the EMHCs have placed all the ciboria and chalices on the altar, one candle-bearer takes the Missal with the missal stand to the altar and places it on the left side of the altar. The other candle-bearer takes the Presider's chalice to the altar, holding the chalice in one hand and placing the other hand on top of the pall for stability, and places it on the right side of the altar.
- After the candle-bearers have placed their items on the altar, the server who carried the chalice remains at the altar to receive the cruet of wine from the priest. The other candle-bearer goes the credence table to pick up the cruet of water, lavabo and towel, and then returns to the altar with the water in one hand and the lavabo in the other hand with the towel on that same arm.
- After saying the prayers with the bread, the Presider takes the cruet of wine back from the server and when finished returns it to the server. After this, he takes the cruet of water and when finished returns it to the server.
- Once the priest has finished his prayers, he will turn to the servers for the washing of his hands. At that time, the server holding the cruet of water and lavabo should pour a sufficient amount of water on the hands of the priest over the lavabo.
- After the Presider has dried his hands, the servers together do a head bow toward him and return to their pew.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

- During the Eucharistic Prayer, a server rings the bells three different times:
 - ◊ The bells should be rung ***once*** at the Epiclesis, which is the moment the Presider places his hands above the chalice and asks for the Holy Spirit to come upon the gifts.
 - ◊ The bells should be rung briefly ***three*** times as the Presider elevates the Host, and ***three*** times when he elevates the Chalice.

LORD'S PRAYER

SIGN OF PEACE

BREAKING OF BREAD

COMMUNION

- After the Presider has finished distributing the Eucharist to the congregation, he returns to the altar, purifies the ciboria, and places the remaining Eucharist in the tabernacle. After he closes the tabernacle door:
 - The cross-bearer removes the Missal and missal stand from the altar and places it on the credence table.
 - One candle-bearer takes the cruet of water from the credence table to the Presider at the altar and waits there until the chalice is purified.
 - The other candle-bearer enters the sanctuary and waits beside the altar to receive the Presider's chalice once he is finished purifying it. Once he is finished, the server takes the chalice, holding it securely as before by holding the chalice in one hand and placing the other hand on top of the pall for stability, and together with the other candle-bearer, return their items to the credence table.
- After the servers have completed their tasks, the candle-bearers return to their pew and the cross-bearer proceeds to the Presider's chair and waits there beside it.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

- After the Presider says, "Let us Pray," the cross-bearer stands in front of but slightly to the side of the priest, holding open the Missal steady and securely.

- At the end of the prayer, the cross-bearer gently closes the book, places it on the small table next to the presider's chair, and waits there until the concluding hymn has begun.

CONCLUDING RITE

FINAL BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

RECESSION

- Once the concluding hymn has begun, the servers take their candles and processional cross from their stand (the cross-bearer should bow towards the altar when passing between the altar and tabernacle), go in unison to the main aisle of the church in line with the first pew, and wait together side by side facing towards the tabernacle.
- As the Presider genuflects towards the tabernacle, the servers do a head bow together, turn towards the back of the church, and begin the procession out of the church in a slow and even pace.

AFTER MASS

- After the Mass is concluded, servers should immediately return to the sanctuary and extinguish the candles. Once this is completed, servers return their albs to the hangers.

