



St. Francis de Sales Parish

Holland, Michigan

Altar Server Guidelines

What (is the ministry?)

Altar servers assist the priest during Mass and other liturgical celebrations.

Why (is it important?)

It is a great privilege to serve at the altar of our God. Altar servers are chosen from those who display a desire for a more intimate union with our Lord Jesus Christ. Our loving Savior becomes present on the altar, just as He was at the Last Supper and Calvary. Accordingly, altar servers have a solemn responsibility to do their assigned duties with dignity and reverence.

Who (can serve and is served?)

Our parish invites boys, girls, adult men, and adult women to be altar servers. Those selected should be committed to growing in their faith, and remaining committed to the ministry for the period of their assignment. All people of good faith are welcome. Those who think they may desire to serve are encouraged to do so. All that is required is a desire to serve at the altar of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Servers should be mature enough to understand their responsibilities and to carry them out well and with appropriate reverence. They should have already received Holy Communion for the first time and normally receive the Eucharist whenever they participate in the liturgy. Servers should receive proper training before they begin to function.

When (is the ministry to be carried out?)

There are five opportunities to minister as an altar server:

1. Weekend Masses, including the Saturday Vigil Mass and all Sunday Masses
2. Funerals
3. Weddings
4. Quinceañeras
5. Masses held for certain feast days and holy days of obligation

How (is the ministry performed?)

Before Mass:

1. Check with the Sacristan to ensure that the credence table has been set up with the following:
 - a. Patens (bowls)
 - b. Chalices (cups)
 - c. Purificators (cloths)
 - d. Corporals (2)
 - e. Pitcher of holy water
 - f. Bowl for hand washing
 - g. Towel for hand drying
 - h. Extra corporal and purificator at the table; the priest or deacon will need this for purification of the vessels after Communion
 - i. Aspergil (sprinkling branch, or metal wand) and bowl with holy water (during the Easter season, Christmas, and the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord)
 - j. Extra charcoal and incense stand (for Masses where incense is used)
2. Check with the Sacristan to ensure that the Missal (the large red book of Mass prayers) is on the altar
3. Put on an alb over your clothes. Albs are found in the vestment closet in the sacristy. Use one of the ropes as a belt.
4. Ask the Mass coordinator if there are any special rites to be used during the Mass.
5. Prepare your heart for the ministry you are about to engage:

Oh Jesus, my King and Lord,

By the grace of the heavenly Father and the power of the Holy Spirit, guide me in all righteousness as I serve You today at the altar so I may be always worthy of Your presence. If I happen to make an error, may it be a lesson so my service will be perfect tomorrow. Jesus, I love you with all my heart. Amen.

OR

Loving Father, creator of the universe, you call your people to worship, to be with you and one another at Mass. I thank you for having called me to assist others in their prayer to you. May I be worthy of the trust placed in me and through my example and service bring others closer to you. I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, who is Lord forever and ever. Amen.

Procession:

1. Follow the cross bearer. The lector with the book of the Gospels will follow directly after you. If you have a partner, walk together side by side.
2. Join the congregation in singing the opening hymn. Take a hymnal from a pew in the back of church.
3. Pause to bow deeply and reverently together with your partner as you pass by the front of the altar.
4. Proceed around the front of the altar, up the platform, and to your seat.

During the Mass:

1. Stand when the congregation stands, sit when they sit, and kneel when they kneel.
2. Pay close attention to the priest at all times in the event he needs you to do something out of the ordinary (fetch a fresh battery, bring a cup of water, retrieve something from the sacristy, etc.).
3. Participate fully in the Mass, including the prayers, hymns, and Eucharist.
4. Maintain a reverent, prayerful posture (hands folded prayerfully, sitting and kneeling up straight, etc.).
5. During the Liturgy of the Word:
 - a. During special liturgical seasons, be prepared to help with a sprinkling rite, incense, or some special prayer or procession. Check with the Mass coordinator before Mass to see which, if any, of these rites might be used during the Mass you are serving.
 - b. The second lector will hand you the lectionary after the second reading. Place the book on the shelf under the credence table. If the lector forgets to hand you the book, simply stand up, walk to the ambo, and retrieve the book yourself.
6. During the Liturgy of the Eucharist:
 - a. Once the offertory hymn begins, place in order: One corporal on the ambo side of the altar, and the other corporal in front of where the priest stands, then the chalices (on the corporal closest to the ambo), and a single purificator on the altar. Then, in order:
 - i. Proceed to the credence table to get the pitcher of water. Hand it to the priest when he asks for it. He will pour a small quantity of water into one of the chalices and hand the pitcher back to you.
 - ii. If there are two servers, one remains near the altar with the pitcher of water while the other waits for the priest to fill the chalices with wine and then accepts the empty wine pitcher from the priest and returns it to the credence table. If you are the only server, take the water pitcher to the credence table, then return to the altar to accept the emptied wine pitcher from the priest.
 - iii. The server who returns the wine pitcher to the credence table retrieves the bowl and towel for hand washing and stands next to the server holding the pitcher of holy water. The towel should be draped over the arm of the server holding the bowl.
 - iv. The priest will turn toward the servers after completing his prayers over the bread and wine, at which time one server pours water over the priest's hands while the other server holds the bowl under the priest's hands to collect the excess water. The priest will dry his hands on the towel and return it to the arm of the server.
 - v. Immediately after the sign of peace place the patens (bowls) and purificators on the altar. Return to your seat.
 - vi. The priest will fill each paten with consecrated hosts. He will then set the large paten aside. Walk up to the altar, take the now empty large paten, and return it to the credence table (there should be a third corporal on which you place sacred vessels which need purification). Return to your seat.
 - vii. The priest will distribute communion to each of the extraordinary eucharistic ministers, who will then move to their stations.
 - viii. The bowl, towel, and wine pitcher can be taken to the sacristy by one of the servers. (Leave any vessels and the water pitcher on the credence table). Get in line for communion. Return to your kneeler once you've received communion.

- ix. When all of the people have received communion, be prepared to help carry patens (bowls) and corporals from the altar to the credence table. The priest will transfer any remaining consecrated hosts to the ciborium and purify (clean) the patens (bowls) and chalices at the credence table, and place them on the wooden tray.
[We could ask you to do this, but not at this time: One server should take the wooden tray with the patens (bowls) to the sacristy, and then return to his or her seat. If you are serving alone, leave these items on the credence table until the Mass has concluded, then return them to the sacristy.]
- x. When the congregation begins to sing the recessional hymn, sing with the congregation while observing the movements of the priest.
- xi. When the priest leaves the chair to reverence the altar, process with your partner side by side by:
 - 1. Walking past the priest, continuing to sing the recessional hymn.
 - 2. Following the cross-bearer down the ramp.
 - 3. Bowing reverently and deeply in front of the altar.
 - 4. Processing slowly down the main aisle to the baptismal font.
 - 5. If the recessional hymn has not concluded, stand near the baptismal font and finish singing the hymn.

8. Once the Mass is finished:

- a. Help the sacristan to return trays, etc. to the sacristy.
- b. Thank your partner for his/her service and assistance.
- c. Return your alb and belt to the vestments closet in the sacristy.
- d. Thank our Lord for the privilege of serving his church during the Mass just concluded:

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, and always act accordingly, as a privileged altar server. May I ever seek you and find you; may I always follow you; may your priestly spirit be my guide, and your service of love be my example. May your holy name always be 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 holy will in all things. May I remain pure and blameless and be found worthy to be your servant, and by your grace may I persevere to the end.

Amen.

OR

Lord Jesus, thank you for the opportunity to serve you during the holy Mass. In your sacred presence, my heart is filled with joy and peace. May your spirit always guide me so I may grow in your love by the grace of the Heavenly Father. Amen.