

# Called to *Serve*

## *Altar Servers*

### **INTRODUCTION**

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

This server's guide covers the primary details of serving at Mass. This guide should help you grow more comfortable in your role on the altar. Please keep this so that you can review the instructions later.

### **FUNDAMENTAL POINTS**

As an altar server, you are involved in some of the holiest and most sacred events in our Catholic worship. Mass is a combination of Word and Eucharist. We hear God's Word spoken to us through the scripture and in the homily, then we respond to that Word with our prayers and in receiving the Body and Blood of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. The priest receives our sacrifice to God in the form of bread and wine and then, by invoking the power of the Holy Spirit, these are transformed into His Body and Blood, to become nourishment for our souls. The Eucharist is a great mystery, and it is the very center of our faith.

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

- 1) Sit still, be calm; 2) respond and pray with the congregation at the appropriate times; 3) do your best to enter into the spirit of the celebration—sing with God's family; 4) keep your movements smooth, but not too fast or too slow.

## **POSTURE AND HAND MOVEMENTS**

Believe it or not, what you do with your hands is very important! When you're standing or sitting and your hands are busy, or if you wiggle and can't seem to sit or stand still, you will be a distraction for your friends and family in the pews, the other altar servers, and the priest.

Your hands should be folded during most parts of the Mass, unless you are holding a book and singing. Without pressing your hands together tightly, just keep them together, comfortably. Placing your hands in this way is a sign of prayer. Remember, as altar servers, you are leading others to pray.

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

- No running anytime in church, even when you're not serving.
- No chewing gum in church, even when you're not serving. Keep your hair looking neat, your hands clean, and wear appropriate shoes (girls, no flip flops!).
- No sitting in a slumped position. Always sit-up straight and stand straight. When seated, keep both feet on the floor.

## **ARRIVAL FOR SERVICE**

When you are scheduled to serve, arrive at least 15 minutes before Mass. You'll need to sign-in on the tablet near the robe closet, put on your robe, light candles and be in the sacristy before beginning the procession. Be sure your parents know that you need to get to church early. Your hands should be clean.

## **SCHEDULE PROBLEMS**

If you are unable to serve when you are scheduled, please contact another server to fill-in for you as soon as possible (don't wait until the night before!). Use the schedule for altar servers. Try to work out a "swap." That is, be willing to switch your serving time for theirs. Trading is a good way to work out schedule problems. Remember, as soon as you receive your schedule, write your dates on your family's calendar. Be sure your parents know your serving schedule.

## **THE ORDER OF THE MASS**

### **1. ENTRANCE PROCESSION**

For, training purposes, the servers will be called "Cross Server" or "Candle Server", depending upon whether they carry the cross or the candles in the Entrance Procession. After putting on your robe and lighting the candles, go to the back of the church with the priest. The procession begins when the people begin to sing the entrance hymn. Walk up the aisle slowly, slower than you normally walk. Carry the candles high. Do not clink the

bottom of the cross on the floor or steps, and do not tip it. Carry the cross very reverently. It is the symbol of our faith.

When you reach the altar, wait for the priest and deacon. The priest and deacon will bow. As they bow, you simply remain standing—do not bow at the waist; instead, simply bow your head. The rule is: if you're carrying something long (like candles or cross), then you do not genuflect or bow at the waist.

All servers turn left at the same time, and follow the first candle bearer to the sacristy. Tip the cross only enough to carry it through the doorway. Once in the sacristy, extinguish your candles and place them in their stand. The cross bearer puts the cross in its stand. Then go back to the sanctuary and stand with your hands folded.

## **2. SIGN OF THE CROSS -- Stand with hands folded**

The priest begins with the sign of the cross (which you make too), greets everyone and introduces the Mass. The deacon or priest reads the Penitential Rite which ends "... Lord have Mercy." You answer with the same responses as the rest of the people.

## **3. GLORY to GOD -- Stand and sing with hands folded.**

## **4. OPENING PRAYER**

When the Glory to God is sung, it ends with the words, "...in the glory of God the Father, Amen." the server nearest the book picks up the red book from the little table, and holds it until the priest says, "Let us pray". Then walk behind the priest's chair and stand in front of him. Be sure that the book is facing the priest and in the right direction – not upside down. Hold the book high enough for the priest to read it.

When the Gloria is not sung, (such as during Advent or Lent), be ready sooner. The priest will read the opening prayer, and close the book. The server walks behind the priest's chair and puts the book back on the little table, and everyone sits down.

## **LITURGY OF THE WORD**

First Reading, Responsorial Psalm & Second Reading: Sit and listen attentively.

Gospel Acclamation: Stand and sing with the people.

Gospel: Stand.

Homily: Sit attentively.

## **5. PROFESSION OF FAITH (Creed) -- Stand and pray.**

## **6. PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL -- Stand and respond to the prayers.**

When the Prayer of the Faithful is finished, the priest or deacon will prepare the altar, as the ushers are taking the collection.

## **7. OFFERTORY**

When the priest goes to the front of the altar to receive the gifts, the “Candle Servers” (those who didn’t carry the cross) join him, one standing at each side, facing the people.

The priest will receive the wine and hand it to a server, and then the container with the hosts, handing it to the other server. After you’ve received the wine and bread, pass behind the priest and take it to the left side (closest to the sacristy) of the altar and set it on the altar. If a deacon is there, he will take it from you. Remain standing at the side of the altar, for the priest to wash his hands.

One server picks up the washing bowl and the water cruet while the other server takes the hand towel and puts it over their arm. The priest will put out his hands over the bowl and the server pours water over the priest’s fingers, catching the dripping water in the bowl. The priest will whisper the prayer, “Lord, wash away my iniquities; cleanse me from my sin”. The priest dries his hands and returns the towel to the server. Both servers put their items back on the table and return to their chairs.

## **8. PREFACE -- Stand.**

## **9. HOLY, HOLY, HOLY -- Stand and sing.**

When the Holy, Holy, Holy acclamation ends with “... blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.” The servers kneel when the congregation kneels.

## **10. CONSECRATION – Kneel, with hands folded.**

The priest says prayers, and takes the bread and says, “Take this... this is My Body which will be given up for you.” Whenever the priest genuflects or bows, bow your head in reverence of Our Lord’s presence.

Then the priest takes the chalice and says, “Take this all of you and drink... sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of me.” and genuflects or bows, bow your head in reverence.

## **10. MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION -- Stand and sing, with hands folded.**

**11. Doxology and Amen** -- Stand and sing the Amen, with hands folded.

**12. THE LORD'S PRAYER** -- **Stand** and pray—hands folded.

### **13. THE SIGN OF PEACE**

Servers will extend the sign of peace to each other, the priest, deacon and other ministers. Look the person you're greeting in the eyes and say "peace be with you." After you've shared the sign of peace, be ready for any requests for items that the priest or deacon may need.

**14. LAMB OF GOD** -- **Stand and sing.** Go to the side of the altar (the line on the floor is where you stand) and be ready to receive Communion (or a blessing).

### **15. COMMUNION**

After the priest receives the Body of Christ and the Precious Blood from the chalice, he will begin to distribute to other ministers. The servers stand, hands folded, and ready to receive Communion. When the priest says, "The Body of Christ," you reply "Amen." After receiving Communion, all servers will return to kneel and sing with the congregation. Watch the priest for any directions he may give you.

### **16. AFTER COMMUNION**

The "Cross Server" is ready to hold the red book for the final prayer.

### **17. CLOSING PRAYER – Stand.**

When the priest says "Let us pray", the server should pick up the red book, and walk over to the priest as soon as he stands up, making sure that it is facing in the right direction. The priest says the closing prayer and you take the book back to the table, ready for the final blessing.

### **18. DISMISSAL AND RECESSION to the back of the church.**

When the priest or deacon says, "The Mass is ended, go in peace to love and serve the Lord", all servers stand. When the priest kisses the altar, all servers go to the step, face the altar, just as you did at the beginning of Mass. Bow your heads and then go to stand in the aisle near the front pew, facing the altar. Turn when the priest and deacon do (Candle Servers turning towards one another) and process slowly to the back of church, with folded hands. After Mass, go back to the sacristy, take the candle snuffer and go to extinguish the altar and ambo candles. Hang your robe **neatly** in the servers' closet – be sure that it is not on the floor! Pick up any other robes that may have fallen.