



# ALTAR SERVER MANUAL

*St. William the Abbot*  
Roman Catholic Church

# Table of Contents

2 Called to Serve

3 Training

4 Scheduling & Dress Code

5 The Mass

7 Miscellaneous

8 Funerals

9 Altar Server Prayers

10 Glossary

---



“

THERE IS  
NOTHING SMALL  
*in the service of God*

”

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

# Called to Serve

---

Thank you for answering God's call to serve St. William the Abbot by becoming an altar server! For many of you, this is the first church ministry you are able to be an active participant in, and our hope is that this experience draws you closer to God as you continue your faith journey.

As an altar server, you are involved in the most sacred events of Catholic worship. In assisting the priest and deacons, you make worship more reverent, efficient, and beautiful. Your service is very important!

At the altar, your service is directed firstly to God, secondly to help the clergy, and thirdly as assistance to the people who are gathered by God for worship. A "good" server is careful, reverent, and works as a member of a team with the other liturgical ministers, serving for the glory of God.



# Training

---

The Altar Serving Ministry is open to girls and boys from 5th through 12th grade. A training class here at St. William the Abbot is needed for anyone new to the ministry, even if you have served at another parish. Once you have completed training, you will need to successfully shadow existing altar servers for a number of Masses before you can serve on your own.

## SHADOWING

- Each new server will have to shadow 6 Masses within 3 months of the training date. If you do not complete these steps in time, you will be asked to re-train with the next training class.
  - The Altar Server Schedule will list the available shadow openings for each Mass
  - Once you shadow each Mass, please have the priest, deacon, or seminarian sign your training sheet (which is to be kept in a binder in the work sacristy)
    - It is your responsibility to make sure you have your training form signed at each of your Masses
  - Please use these Masses as opportunities to ask questions with the servers you are shadowing
  - When shadowing, you are expected to be on-time, in cream-colored training alb, and following the dress code guidelines

# Scheduling & Dress Code

---

## SCHEDULE

- The coordinator of this ministry, Mrs. Impemba, will distribute the Mass schedule for you to sign up
- There are 3 slots available for servers and they are first-come, first-served (if a Mass already has 3 servers, please do not sign-up or expect to serve)
- All servers should sign-in in the work sacristy upon arriving no later than 10 minutes before the start of the Mass
  - The sacristy is not a place to congregate or hang-out, once you have finished serving, please leave to the main part of the church
  - Only those scheduled to serve should be in the sacristy
  - No food or drink is permitted in the sacristy area
- If Mass is about to start and you realize we are shorthanded with less than 3 servers, and you are dressed appropriately as outlined below, please feel free to sign-in and assist (please do not do so after Mass begins)
- If something comes up and you are not able to serve your assigned Mass, it is your responsibility to find a replacement from the email distribution list

## DRESS CODE

- No shorts, jerseys, jeans, pajamas, sweatpants, flip-flops, slippers, open-toed shoes/sandals, sneakers of any kind are permitted
- Use of your cell phone or any other electronic device is absolutely not allowed
  - Please silence them before entering the church and leave them in the work sacristy until after Mass
- Once you arrive and sign-in, please put cassocks and surplices on over your clothes
- Please discard any gum before entering the church
- You are representing our parish community, please make sure you are neat in your appearance

## REQUIREMENTS

- Servers are expected to serve 6 Masses in each time period (January through May, June through August, September through December) to remain active
- Once you become inactive, you will have to re-take a training class to become active again



# Serving at Mass

---

An altar server not only helps the clergy with the Mass, but you will also help people pray. We want the people at Mass to be able to focus entirely on God. To make this happen, it's extremely important that our Altar Servers are always reverent and quiet. We expect you to avoid unnecessary talking to each other and to keep your movements to a minimum and to what is absolutely necessary. Whenever you are not holding something when walking or standing, please keep your hands in the praying position.

## ENTRANCE

- We invite you to say the Altar Server Prayer in the sacristy before you begin
- 5 minutes before the start of Mass, please head to the front vestibule to line up; Altar Server #1 from the sign-in sheet will be the cross-bearer for the mass
- Begin the procession once the singing starts (not the music), or when otherwise instructed by the priest, deacon, or seminarian
- When you arrive at the steps of the sanctuary, Altar Server #1 will go directly to place the processional cross in its stand; Altar Servers #2 and #3 should bow or genuflect and go directly to their seats

## OFFERTORY

- Server #1 should take the Processional Cross immediately after the Prayers of the Faithful to the gift table at the back of the church; Once the priest moves to the steps of the sanctuary, they will lead the people bringing the gifts to the front; when you arrive at the front, place the cross in the base and take your seat
- Servers #2 & #3 should complete the following:
  - Bring chalice (with paten on top) to the left (Holy Family) side of the altar
    - One hand should hold the base of the chalice, while the other lays flat upon the paten
    - Bring water and wine cruets to the altar in your right hand with the handles facing out and your left hand over your chest
    - If bringing the gifts directly from the credence table, hand them to the priest
    - Server #2 should hold the water and bowl and Server #3 should hold the towel

# continued...

---

## CONSECRATION

- Bells
  - When the priest's hands are over the gifts (epiclesis), shake once
  - When Body, then Blood, is elevated, shake three times

## COMMUNION

- Come forward to top of the sanctuary steps to receive
- Place the water cruet on the altar while the priest is administering Communion
- Once Communion has ended, watch the priest and deacon closely; As soon as they are done with something, they will place it on the side of the altar - be ready to take it to the credence table (please note that when a seminarian is present, he may be directed by the priest to bring the vessels directly to the sacristy)

## RECESSIONAL

- Once the priest stands for the final blessing, Altar Server #1 should wait by the processional cross; After the priest/deacon has issued the dismissal, Altar Server #1 should take their place 4 pews away from the sanctuary steps and face the altar; Servers #2 and #3 will line up behind them facing the altar
- Servers will turn around and begin walking after the priest genuflects; Altar Server #1 will lead the recessional and place the processional cross back in its stand in the vestibule

## AFTER MASS

- The servers should return to the work sacristy together
- Place your cassocks and surplices on the appropriate hangar and hang them back up in the closet according to their sizes
- Leave the work sacristy clean and orderly

# Miscellaneous

---

- Our altar servers are expected to fully participate in the Mass and set an example to everyone around you by proclaiming the appropriate responses, singing, and paying attention
- Always keep your attention and focus on the priest, deacon, or seminarian as sometimes things change, or he may need you to get someone or something important to the mass
- Servers with experience are expected to help newer servers and those training with kindness and patience
- Servers must be commissioned for at least 3 months before they are eligible to serve funerals or special liturgies

## DAILY MASSES

- The daily 8:30am Masses are typically served by students at St. William the Abbot School
- For these Masses, you will process in from the sacristy hallway, and after Mass, though often the priest may go in a different direction, the altar servers should recess directly to the sacristy (not out the main doors)

## SPECIAL LITURGIES

- Several times throughout the year, special liturgical celebrations happen within our parish. These may include Holy Week, sacramental celebrations, or special holy hours and will often require additional training or run-throughs. Servers for these occasions will be scheduled by the Rectory Office and Mrs. Impemba.



# Funeral Masses

---

*Servers must be commissioned for at least 3 months before they will be able to serve a Funeral Mass. Mrs. Impemba will distribute the dates and times when Servers are needed. Funeral Masses can be emotional and overwhelming for some, and it is our responsibility and honor to provide the deceased love one's with a fitting tribute through this Mass.*

- Funeral Masses only need 2 Altar Servers, Server #1 remains the cross-bearer
- The Mass begins in the front vestibule; Altar Server #2 will assist the priest with the holy water and then leave it on the table in the vestibule
- The procession order is as follows: Altar Server #1, Altar Server #2, seminarians/deacons/concelebrants, main celebrant followed by the casket and the deceased's family
- The Mass continues as normal, though there is no offertory procession - the family will present the gifts from the front of the church (the table will be off to the side); please be ready to assist the priest with their acceptance
- After the altar has been cleared following Communion, both servers should use the sacristy hallway and position themselves by the incense; Altar Server #1 should hold the boat and Altar Server #2 should hold the thurible (the priest will indicate when he is ready)
- Once the priest has put the incense into the thurible, Altar Server #1 should put the boat back in the stand and use the sacristy hallway to come back to the other side of the sanctuary to get the cross
- Once the priest is done with the incense, Altar Server #2 will replace the thurible in its stand and use the sacristy hallway to go back to the other side of the sanctuary to be ready to line up for the recessional
- For the recessional, Altar Server #1 should position themselves halfway down the main aisle followed by Altar Server #2; the casket will follow the servers with the priest and the family behind it
- Once in the vestibule, Altar Server #1 should stand in the center and turn around and face the main part of the church while Altar Server #2 assists the priest with the holy water for the final blessing

# Altar Server Prayers

---

## *Prayer Before Mass*

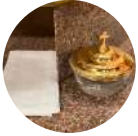
HEAVENLY FATHER, AS I PREPARE TO ASSIST YOU AT YOUR ALTAR, I DECLARE MY FAITH IN YOU.  
AT THIS MASS, KEEP ME FROM DISTRACTIONS.  
LET ME REMEMBER THAT IN ASSISTING THE PRIEST I AM ASSISTING JESUS IN OFFERING  
YOU THE MERITS OF HIS PASSION AND DEATH.  
I THANK YOU FOR ALLOWING ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE MY SERVICE TO YOU.  
AT THIS MASS, I JOIN WITH YOUR PRIEST IN OFFERING YOU  
THE SACRED BODY AND BLOOD OF MY SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST, YOUR SON.  
MAY MY SHARING THE DIVINE FOOD IN HOLY COMMUNION BRING ME ETERNAL SALVATION.  
AMEN.

## *Prayer After Mass*

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.

# Glossary of Terms

---



## **Ablution Cup**

A covered dish kept next to the Tabernacle which is used by ministers of the Eucharist to wash their fingers after distributing Communion



## **Alb**

A long white/cream colored liturgical garment worn by servers during their training



## **Altar**

The table in the sanctuary at which the bread and wine are prepared and turned into the Body and Blood of Jesus



## **Ambo (Lectern/Pulpit)**

The platform or podium where the readings take place



## **Baptismal Font**

The basin where baptisms take place (the basin is filled with holy water and poured over a baby's or baptismal candidate's head)



## **Bells/Altar Bells**

A handheld group of bells rung differently during the consecration



## **Boat**

The vessel that holds the incense which will be spooned into the thurible to create the smoke



## **Book of Gospels**

Contains all of the Gospel readings and is usually carried in by the deacon during the entrance procession



## **Cassocks**

A full-length garment worn by members of the clergy and other liturgical ministers during the celebration of Mass (fully-initiated altar servers will wear red or black cassocks with a white surplice)

# Glossary of Terms

---



## **Celebrant/Presider**

Another term for the priest who will be celebrating the Mass; the term “concelebrant” is used when more than 1 priest is present - one will be designated the main celebrant while the others will assist in parts of the Mass



## **Chalice**

A gold or silver cup used to hold the wine that will be transformed into the Blood of Christ; typically priests receive their personal chalice as a gift from their loved ones when they are ordained



## **Ciborium**

A metal container used to distribute the Eucharist



## **Clergy**

The collective term to describe men who have taken Holy Orders - bishops, priests, deacons, etc.



## **Corporal**

An altar linen spread out on top of the altar before consecration on top of which all other vessels will be placed



## **Credence Table**

A small table located either behind the altar or next to the altar where items and vessels needed for the celebration of the mass are placed



## **Cruets**

The vessels used for the water and wine



## **Deacon**

A man who has been ordained as a member of the diaconate who assists the priest in the celebration of Mass and performs many other daily duties within the church community



## **Extraordinary Minister (Eucharistic Minister)**

A lay person (someone who has not received holy orders) who has been commissioned to distribute the Eucharist

# Glossary of Terms

---



## **Holy Water Bucket (Aspersorium) & Sprinkler (Aspergillum)**

The bucket and sprinkler container for the holy water used various times for blessings



## **Incense**

Typically described as scented smoke, incense is used to purify and sanctify and symbolizes prayers drifting heavenward; it is made by burning frankincense and myrrh in a thurible



## **Lavabo**

A finger bowl and towel used by the priest to wash his hands before the Eucharistic Prayer



## **Gift Table**

A small table at the back of church where the bread and wine are placed before Mass; typically, people will be identified to “present the gifts” by bringing them to the altar during the offertory



## **Lectionary/Lector**

The book which contains the scripture readings and kept on/in the ambo; the lay person who reads the readings is known as a lector



## **Monstrance**

The ornate vessel used to house the Blessed Sacrament during Eucharistic Adoration



## **Pall**

A linen-covered square used to cover the chalice



## **Paschal Candle (Easter Candle)**

A large candle used during special liturgies, baptisms, and funerals to symbolize hope and new life through Jesus' resurrection; a new one is blessed and lit for the first time during the Easter Vigil every year

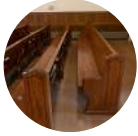


## **Paten**

The plate used to hold the large host which will become the consecrated body of Jesus

# Glossary of Terms

---



## **Pews**

The bench-like seats in the church



## **Presider's Chair (Celebrant's Chair)**

The chair in which the priest sits during the celebration of Mass



## **Processional Cross**

The cross carried by servers during the procession, offertory, and recession



## **Purificator**

A special linen used by the celebrant to wipe the chalice; it may also be laid on the spot that a consecrated host is dropped on until the priest or deacon is able to cleanse the area



## **Pyx**

A small container which is used to hold consecrated hosts when visiting the sick/homebound; here, we fill and bless them and distribute them to Extraordinary Ministers at Sunday masses



## **Sacrarium (Sacristy Sink)**

A sink with a special drain that can be used for disposing sacred things (dropped consecrated hosts, Precious Blood, holy water)



## **Sacristan**

The person responsible for setting up for liturgies and maintaining the sacristy and everything in it



## **Sacristy**

The room(s) where clergy prepare for the Mass and where items for the Mass are kept - ours is separated into 2 rooms: the vesting sacristy - used by the priests and deacons, and the work sacristy - used by the altar servers and sacristans; these areas are for prayerful preparation and not to be used as a gathering space



## **Sanctuary**

The raised area of the church where the altar is; it should be approached with the utmost respect and reverence



# Glossary of Terms

---



## **Seminarian**

A man who is currently attending the seminary to eventually become ordained a priest; they sometimes assist in the celebration of Mass and other parish activities; during the last few months of their studies, they will become a "Transitional Deacon"



## **Stole**

A scarf-like vestment worn by those who have received holy orders (priests, deacons)



## **Surplice**

A liturgical garment worn over a cassock



## **Tabernacle**

The fixed, locked structure in the center of our altar where the Eucharist is kept



## **Thurible**

The metal incense burner suspended by chains



## **Transept**

The 2 areas of pews to the sides of the main part of the church



## **Vestment**

Liturgical garments worn by the clergy; the chasubles are the colored outer layer that denotes the significance of the liturgical season or feast (green, red, white/gold, purple, rose)