



SO YOU WANT TO BE AN ALTAR SERVER AT SAINT MARY'S

The Altar Servers form a very important part of the Church and every Parish is enriched through their dedication and service.

But, what does it take to be an Altar Server? Is it for you? Do you have the qualities and enthusiasm to serve the Priest in celebration of the Mass and other services?

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1. Introduction

Altar servers must have a deep sense of the spirit of the liturgy and be trained to perform their functions in a correct and orderly manner. You may want to do it but when you actually do you may find you do not like it. As a Server you have a special ministry in the Church. It is your privilege to assist the priest at the Altar. This means that there is a certain way that is appropriate to behave. Remember that you are always part of the congregation even if you are sitting in a different place to them. A good server not only serves the Sunday Mass, but also makes themselves available for other services.

Being a server means serving God and his people at mass. That is what makes serving Mass worth doing, and worth doing well. That is what makes good servers want to do their best Part of the ministry of servers is to help "set the pace" for all who take part in the Mass. What you do there and how you do it can help other people to understand the Mass better and make their love for God stronger.

As a server you should try to become very involved also. The people in church will be watching you carefully. They are not so interested to see if you make mistakes, but they like to see what it means to be really involved in the Mass. People will take more interest in the Mass if they see you taking more interest in it while you serve."

Altar Servers can be said to be a very fortunate that he/she been chosen by God to give his service during the celebration of the liturgy. The liturgy is a public act of worship that the church gives to God, so the service of the Altar Server is extremely important. The role of the Altar Server is very important because he/she is one of the closest persons to the Altar and to the Priest representing Jesus Christ during the celebration of the Holy Mass and the administration of the Sacraments. The service of the Altar Server is very appreciated by the church. Good Altar Servers give their service with major attention and respect. Their behavior is a very important aspect because it can arise in other Servers that wish to serve on the altar

1.1 Requirements for Altar Servers Candidates

A Candidate should fulfil the following requirements:

A strong desire to serve at the Altar of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Be an active member of the parish community and believe in the teachings of The Holy Catholic Church.

Have already made their First Holy Communion.

Know all the prayers of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass from memory.

Know how to properly genuflect.

Know how to make the sign of the Cross.

Know how to receive Holy Communion in the approved manner.

1.2 Characteristics of a Server

A Server should possess the following characteristics:

Don't fumble and stumble.

Don't daydream, yawn or fall asleep.

Anticipate what might happen next.

Can mould into the background and thus become invisible to the congregation.

Be able to work together in a team.

Be able to facilitate the public expression of shared prayer.

2. Some base rules

2.1 Before you come to Church.

Make sure you get a good night sleep. It is very off putting for the congregation to watch a server keep yawning.

Make sure your shoes are clean.

Make sure your hands and fingernails are clean.

Make sure you have been to the Toilet.

Make sure you have had something to eat and drink.

2.2 When You Come to Church:

Arrive at the church at least fifteen minutes before Mass begins. If the weather is bad, you will probably have to leave home a bit earlier than usual.

Servers should come to church properly clothed. The wearing of sneakers is not allowed. If one has solid black sneakers, he/she may wear them.

When you arrive at the church, stop and think about what a special building you are entering. Your church is a place where God lives with his people in your parish, and a place where God's people come together to praise God.

Put on a clean, unwrinkled cassock. Treat these vestments with care. And to check that if the cassock is not too short. To do so look at yourself in the mirror and see if your socks are showing, if so you will need a bigger size. Please also remember to hang them back up after using your cassock.

Get things ready according to you allocated job. The MC for the day will tell you what your job is.

Place the cruets (small pitchers) filled with water and wine in their usual place: either on the credence table in the sanctuary, or with the ciborium on the table in the church for the offertory procession. (At back of church.)

Check to see that the bowl and finger towel for washing the priest's hands are on the credence table. Also place the chalice on the credence table. Place the key to the tabernacle in front of tabernacle.

You should check to make sure all the proper items are set up for mass. Also, remember that during mass people are watching you. They do make comments to the priests and the M.C. about how well or bad the servers were at Mass. You are not supposed to be laughing or talking while serving. However, you are to respond to the priest and sing with the congregation throughout the Mass.

Be quiet in the sacristy and avoid making unnecessary noise. At mass. At this time you can say a prayer before mass begins.

Be especially ready to help the priest if he is a visitor to your parish. He may ask you some questions about how Mass takes place in your church. If he does, try to answer them clearly. He wants to serve the people at Mass well, just as you should and you can be a big help to him.

About five minutes before Mass is scheduled to begin, one of the servers lights the candles on the altar. Sometimes you may be asked to light other candles also. During the weeks after Easter, you will light the large Easter Candle that has a special place in the sanctuary. Lighting the candles tells the people that Mass is about to begin. You should light them in such a way that people will find it a pleasure to watch. When lighting the candles, know that you are suppose to do and be careful for the safety of the church and all who are in it, including yourself. Keep the flame away from your vestments.

The cross bearer leads followed by the two candles followed by the lector and then the priest accompanied by the fourth server Note: The cross and candles always lead the procession/recession. If incense is used, then the incense bearer (thurifer) leads. When you are processing to the altar remember this is not a race. We have plenty of time to get to our destination. Walk slowly.

Servers can distract the congregation in their prayer because of the way servers are standing or sitting. Hands should be folded in one of two positions – locked together held at the chest or pressed together at the chest. If two servers need to move they are to move together. Don't move without your partner.

Take everything to the sacristy, and extinguish the candles using the candles snuffers. Finally, return your alb to its hanger and place it in its right order and manner of hanging. Should you ever have any question regarding your service at the Altar, do not hesitate to ask the priest or the M.C.

Join in the prayers of thanks

3. TRAINING

You will receive appropriate training to get you started. During the training you will learn some basic information about the Catholic Church. You will also learn how to carry out specific tasks while serving at the Altar. Once you have successfully completed this initial training usually about six months you will be enrolled into the Altar Servers Guild. If you are still enjoying serving then after about a year you will receive your medal.

3.1 Posture

Posture is how you are using the parts of your body at a particular time. A server has to carry out a number of different actions at mass, and so there are a number of different postures.

3.2 Walking

We do a lot of walking everyday and sometimes we get sloppy as we do it. Always walk with your back straight and your head held high.

3.3 Bowing

When you bow to someone or something at mass, it should be a smooth forward inclining of your head and shoulders. When you bow to the altar, bow deeply at the waist and bring yourself slowly to your full height. When you bow to the priest, bow your head slowly and gracefully. Never walk and bow at the same time: stop before bowing.

3.4 Genuflecting

When you genuflect, keep your hands in front of your chest while you go down on your right knee. Keep your body straight. Do not wobble back and forth, or you may look like a newborn lamb trying to walk. Be sure that your alb isn't going to trip you on the way down or up.

3.5 Kneeling

When you kneel, your body should be upright and your hands should be in front of your chest, well above your waist. If you lean your body forwards or backwards you will hurt the muscles in your back or the ligaments in your knee.

3.6 Standing

Always stand up straight with both feet firmly on the floor six to eight inches apart. This will give you balance and comfort at the same time. Don't lean against the furniture or against the walls.

3.7 Sitting

Sit down on your stool or chair carefully and gracefully. Once you are seated, sit tall and don't slouch. Place your hands on your lap or flat on your thighs in a relaxed manner. Watch how the priest holds his hands and do as he does.

3.8 Hands

Unless you are sitting down or carrying something (like a candle); your hands should be kept joined in front of your chest; either locked together, or palm-to-palm, fingers pointing upward. Keep your hands high up on your chest. If you are carrying something in one hand hold the other hand flat on your chest.

3.9 Eyes

During Mass always look towards the place where the action is happening: the celebrant's chair, the lectern or the altar. When a reader is reading the scriptures, you should be looking at the reader. When you are talking to someone you expect that person to look at you the same is true at mass. Never look at the people in the congregation, rather look just above their heads. If there is an MC keep an eye on him or her. They might want you to do something at any time.

3.10 General Appearance

Know what you are to do while serving, and when you are to do it. Never fidget. Always do things smoothly. If you make a mistake, never get flustered.

4. DIFFERENT JOBS THAT ALTAR SERVERS CARRY OUT.

MC - Master of ceremonies. This is one of the most experienced server who is able to take charge of the whole ceremony. This server will also deal with problems as they arise in the Mass. If done well then no one will know that any problems have occurred.

Thurifer - This is a senior server who will carry the Thurible. The thurible will be required during the service and it is the job of the Thurifer to have it ready as required. Care must always be taken as a smouldering charcoal fire is used in the thurible that reaches extremely high temperatures.

Cross-bearer - The server, who carries the processional cross at the beginning and end of the service.

Acolyte - Acolytes serve in pairs, and carry candles at the beginning and end of the Mass, as well as at the gospel.

Boat Bearer - The boat contains incense that is used in the thurible. It is the boat bearers' job to make sure that the boat is available when required by the Thurifer.

Book bearer - This server has the job of holding the book of prayer for the priest at the beginning and end of the service. It is this server's responsibility to make sure that the book is open on the correct page and is held in such a way that the priest can read it with ease.

Bell ringer - This server will ring the bells at the consecration. Care is required to ring them at the appropriate moment and to ring them at the correct volume and duration.

Gift collector - The job of this server is to go and lead the procession of the gifts into the church. They also take the collection and place it in front of the Altar

5. THE HISTORY BEHIND SOME OF THINGS IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

5.1 The Church

Most assemblies set aside a special place to gather. Long ago, people who gathered for worship might have called such a place a temple. Today we call it a church, which is another word for "assembly." Our church, no matter how different it is from other churches, will have things in common with the temple where the Israelites worshipped God.

5.2 The Tabernacle

This was God's home. In Moses' time, it was a large tent. No human, except for the high priest, ever went into this tent and he, only once a year. In our time, the tabernacle is a much smaller place where we keep the bread that has become the body of Christ. It looks a little like a cupboard, but it is really a shelter for God. The tabernacle is still covered by a cloth representing the tent.

5.3 Bread

Long ago before Jesus was born bread was very nourishing and was sometimes all that people ate. Bread represents all food and means 'life'. If you share bread with your neighbours that means you are willing to share your life with them.

Sometimes, people still call wheat "the staff of life." If the bread you see at Mass looks more like a wafer than bread, just remember the story of the first Passover. The Israelites ate "unleavened bread" because they were in a hurry to get away from the Egyptians. Normal breads, with leaven or yeast, takes an hour or two to rise. The Israelites had no time. Centuries later, Jesus and the Apostles ate unleavened bread on the feast of the Passover as a way of remembering the freeing of their ancestors from Egypt. Centuries after Jesus, we use unleavened bread at our Mass - and that's a way of remembering Jesus who was remembering Moses.

5.4 Wine

In Jesus time, wine was an everyday drink. Like bread, it also represents all drink and all life. It is sometimes red in colour, like blood, and full of 'spirits' that can make people lively (if you drink too much). On ceremonial occasions, Jewish people take a cup of wine and give a specific blessing to God. Blessed are you, O Lord Our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who gave us the fruit of the vine. At mass if you listen closely, you will hear the priest say something like this during the Preparation of the Gifts and you, along with other members of the assembly, will answer, "Blessed Be God, Forever." At Passover, Jews and Christians say this prayer four times and drink four cups of wine. Jesus did the same thing when he celebrated Passover, including the time we call the Last Supper. We do the same as a way of remembering Jesus who was remembering his ancestors.

5.5 Water

Just like bread and wine, water represents life. You can live a long time without food, but only a few hours without water. During the Preparation of Gifts, the priest mixes a little water with the wine and later washes his hands with water, just like you wash your hands before you eat - or do you? The washing of hands with water symbolises innocence. Pilate publicly washed his hands after Jesus trial. "So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, 'I am innocent of this man's blood'" (Matthew 27:24). The most important water is in the baptismal font. If the baptismal font is at the door of your church, you can bless yourself with its water as you enter.

5.6 The Chalice

The chalice is the most important part of our 'table setting'. In the Middle east, where Jesus came from drinking from a common cup was a very powerful symbol. It meant you were to shed your blood for those who drank with you. Soldiers drank from the same cup before going into battle. Jesus and the apostles drank from the same cup on the night before Jesus died. The important thing about the cup is that we share it. Those who drink from the cup bind themselves to each other and to Jesus, the Messiah. That is why drinking from the cup is one way to receive communion.

5.7 Candles

The mass is a ceremonial meal. Just as your family might use candles for a special meal at home, so we use candles at church. This makes the consecration meal more special or holy. Candles play a large part of Catholic culture. They burn with a living flame and so indicate life. At Mass candles are lit to symbolise Jesus as the light of the world, and to link our present-day Eucharist with those of the early Church in the Catacombs. Candles help to create a sense of occasion, and used to be carried in procession before the Roman Emperors as a mark of respect,

As today they are carried before the Book of the Gospels. Candles are usually in even numbers; this serves to remind us that Jesus is both true God and true Man.

5.8 Incense

It signifies prayer and sacrifice, and is also a sign of honour and respect. During the days of persecution attempts were often made to force Christians to burn incense in front of a statue of the Roman Emperor. To do so, of course, was to turn one's back on Christ. It is surprising, therefore, that it eventually became common practice for Christians to use incense in their worship.

5.9 Paschal Candle

This candle symbolises Christ the light who has overcome the darkness of the world. It used to be lit on Easter Eve and burned at services until Ascension Day. Nowadays it burns at all services up till the day of Pentecost, which is the new termination of the Easter season.

During the Easter season the Candle stands at the Gospel side of the Altar. After the Easter season it is moved to stand beside the baptismal font. It is lit for all Baptisms and Funerals.

5.10 Tablecloth

At home when you have a special meal you may use a special tablecloth. The same happens at Mass. If there is no tablecloth, you can find a small square of cloth called a "corporal" that represents a tablecloth.

5.11 Corporal

This should be placed in the centre of the altar with the creases down so that it can be folded without turning over.

6. BEGINNERS

When you show full understanding and are able to put what is required of you into practice you are ready to move on to the intermediate stage. It may take some time to get to the intermediate stage, as you need a good basis on which to build for the future.

6.1 Time Keeping

Always arrive in good time, at least 20 minutes before the start of Mass and 30 minutes on special occasions. This will allow plenty of time for the Mass preparation required and will avoid rushing at the last minute.

6.2 How to Dress

It is important to realise that it is a great privilege to serve the liturgy of the Church and should be reflected in how we dress and behave. Thus it is important that you wear appropriate clothes and footwear for serving at the liturgy. Dress smartly and, if at all possible, wear a pair of smart, dark coloured shoes. No shoes with flashing lights in. No watches that make a noise. No headgear.

6.3 Vestments

Respect the vestments you wear; keep them clean and in good condition. Hang them up properly when you have finished serving. Most importantly you should remember that looking after your vestments and the way you dress are your responsibility.

6.4 How to Behave

When in the sacristy or in church, show the greatest of respect for where you are and for those around you. Do not distract others by the way you behave. Never talk on the sanctuary, except when participating in the Mass. Sit and kneel in an appropriate manner. When you are not holding something, join your hands together. Never run or cause people to look at you thus distracting them from their prayers. Remember to pay close attention to the things happening so that you are ready to do what you have to when you have to. Take full part in the Mass including the singing of the hymns.

6.5 Before Mass

It is important that you pay close attention to what goes on before Mass begins. Become familiar with what is required for each Mass, where things are to be found and where they need to go.

6.6 During Mass

It is important that you have a good attitude to serving and that you realise what you are doing, why you are doing it and for whom. You will be expected to maintain a high standard of serving.

6.7 Tasks

During the beginners stage of your training you will be expected to carry out the following tasks.

Be able to carry the candles, and to know when they are used.

Be able to assist at the preparation of the gifts.

Be able to move around the sanctuary in a dignified manner to the positions that you are supposed to be in without being prompted to do so.

Ring the bell at the appropriate times.

Carry the boat without spilling the incense.

Be able to maintain the high standards already set.

You will also be asked to do other tasks like putting out Hymnbooks, and mass sheets.

It is important that you know what happens at the different parts of the Mass. You should know what the responses are and be able to join in at the appropriate time. Take notice of where the candles are placed and when they are required during the Mass.

The candles are carried in procession behind the thurible and cross bearer.

They are placed in an appropriate place.

At the gospel the candles are processed up to and held either side of the lectern.

After the gospel the candles are returned to their previous location.

At the end of Mass they are collected and carried in procession out of church behind the cross bearer.

6.8 Assisting at the Preparation of the Gifts

The first action is to lead the procession of gifts into from the back of church.

Next bring the cruets to the priest

When finished with the jug and the flagon of wine place them on the credence table.

After this the incense is needed. Take the boat and follow the Thurifer up to the priest.

After incensing the altar the priest washes his hands and so you bring forward a bowl containing water and a lavabo. He dries his hands on the linen cloth. Return the items to the credence table after use refolding the lavabo.

6.9 Moving Around the Sanctuary

You should now be able to move around the sanctuary in a dignified manner that does not draw attention to yourself and distract others.

6.10 Ringing the Bell

During the Eucharistic Prayer the bell is rung on four separate occasions:

The first time is when the priest places his hands outstretched over the chalice invoking the Holy Spirit.

The second time is when the priest shows the host to the congregation at the Consecration.

The third time is when the priest shows the chalice to the congregation at the Consecration.

The fourth time when priest drinks from the chalice.

6.11 After Mass

Join the other servers in the Sacristy in a prayer of thanks. Help bring all the items from the sanctuary into the sacristy and put them away neatly. Note where things go. You are not finished till all the things have been cleared from the sanctuary and been put away properly.

6.12 Completion of this Stage

This stage will be complete when you can do all of the above well and when you have shown yourself to have the potential to be a good server. Faithful attendance is most important and you must maintain the high standards you have shown.

7. INTERMEDIATES

Once you are competent at the beginners stage and have shown you are ready to move on you will start the intermediate stage.

7.1 Tasks

During this stage you will learn to:

Set the church for Mass.

Clear up after Mass.

Set the Altar for the consecration.

Show an understanding of what happens during the Mass.

Maintain the high standards already set.

Be able to designate jobs to the various servers.

7.2 Setting the Church for Mass

It is important that everyone knows how to set up for Mass and what things should be where.

7.3 Lectern

On the lectern should be placed the lectionary that will be used for the readings during the Mass. Check it is on the correct page.

7.4 Tidying Up After Mass

Take careful note of what things are brought from the sanctuary and what things are left on.

Remember when carrying anything that they are valuable objects and should be treated with care.

Never carry more than two things at once.

Never run with anything in case you drop it.

Remember that everything has a home and should not be left in the sacristy for someone else to clean away.

This is just as important as serving and so no one should go until everything has been cleared away or the next Mass prepared for.

Finally, hang up your vestments properly and keep the vesting area in good order.

7.5 Maintaining High Standards

It is important that you have a good attitude to serving and that you realise what you are doing, why you are doing it and for whom. You will be expected to maintain a high standard of serving.

7.6 Completion of this Stage

When the person responsible for the servers is satisfied that you are competent in all of the above you will move on to the advanced stage. As before, it may be appropriate for you to wait for a period of time before moving on to the final stage.

8. Advanced

This stage is directed to those who have finished the two previous stages of the course. It will cover the more difficult jobs that you will have to do. A head server ought to have completed this stage of the course.

8.1 Tasks

Be able to maintain a high standard in what you have learned in the two previous stages.

Be able to use the thurible.

Be able to carry the processional cross.

Have some understanding of what to do on big feasts.

Show leadership qualities.

Anticipate and sort issues before they become problems.

8.2 Using the Thurible during Mass

The server carrying the thurible leads the procession and, after genuflecting, moves to the altar where incense will first be used. The priest places incense into the thurible and with it reverences the altar and cross. The thurible is then returned to its stand.

At the end of the second reading the thurible is brought to the priest, who puts incense into it. The thurible will then be carried in procession to the lectern where it is used to reverence the Book of Gospels or Lectionary.

At the preparation of the gifts, the thurible is used to incense the gifts, the altar, priest and people.

The server may also offer incense when the priest shows the host and chalice to the people during the consecration. At the end of the Eucharistic prayer the thurible is then returned to its stand and is not needed any more. At the end of Mass, the server processes out with the others taking with the collection for safekeeping.

8.3 Carrying the Processional Cross

The server carrying the processional cross follows the thurifer to the altar, or leads the procession when there is no thurifer. The cross bearer bows to the altar and sets the processional cross in its place. At the end of the Mass the cross bearer collects the cross and leads the procession out of the church.

8.4 Understanding what to do on Big Feasts

The server has to be able to assist at big feasts such as Christmas and Easter. These are often more complex Masses and at this level you must be able to help as much as possible.

8.5 Displaying Leadership Qualities

At this stage you should be able to lead others who serve.

You must be honest and reliable.

You will need to make decisions and instruct others on what to do especially new servers.

You must be friendly to the younger servers and involve them in conversation.

You must encourage the younger servers to reach their full potential.

You should also oversee what happens before and after Mass.

You should lead by example so that when the task is completed the servers say they did it themselves.

Those who finish this part of the course will be qualified as head servers, where the need arises.

8.6 Maintaining a High Standard

You must be able to show that over a period of time you can maintain a good standard in what you have learned in the two previous stages. This way you will set a good example to those who are following you along the course.

8.7 Completion of this Stage

When you finish this stage of the course you will have reached a good level and you will be able to take part in the community's liturgy more fully. Always remember the honour that you have been given in being chosen to serve. Strive to develop your skills and improve the quality of your serving. Most importantly, remember the importance of what you do and that you do it not for yourselves or your own gain, but for the people of God, the Body of Christ of which we all are members.

9. The Archconfraternity of Saint Stephen The Altar Servers Guild

9.1 The objects of the Guild of Saint Stephen are:

To encourage, positively and practically, the highest standards of serving at the Church's liturgy and so contribute to the whole community's participation in a more fruitful worship of God.

To provide altar servers with a greater understanding of what they are doing so that they may serve with increasing reverence and prayerfulness and thereby are led to a deepening response to their vocation in life.

To unite servers of different parishes and their dioceses for their mutual support and encouragement.

9.2 History of the Guild

The Guild of St Stephen is an International Organisation of Altar Servers founded in England in 1904 by Father Hamilton McDonald when he formed a Society of Altar Servers at the Convent of the Sacred Heart in London.

The Guild spread, and in 1934, Pope Pius XI enabled all Guilds of Altar Servers throughout the British Commonwealth to be affiliated with the Archconfraternity at Westminster.

9.3 Constitution and Organisation

The Archbishop of Westminster is the Superior General of the Archconfraternity and he appoints a priest to be the National Director of the Guild. Lay Central Council consisting of a Lay President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and other members assists him in the running of the Guild. The Central Council is responsible for running the business side of the Guild. Many diocesan bishops appoint a Priest Director of the Guild for their own diocese and together these form National Council of Priest Directors, which is an advisory body to the

National Director. Some dioceses have organized their own local Lay Councils to assist the Diocesan Director in furthering the work of the Guild.

The Guild may be erected in any parish with the permission of the bishop of the diocese (see Canon 312 of the new Code of Canon Law) and shall then be affiliated to the Archconfraternity at Westminster Cathedral. Thus, in each parish, while maintaining its objects and keeping the rules of the Archconfraternity, the Guild can be independent in its constitution and organisation.

9.4 Membership

Membership of the Guild is open to any server, without limit of age, who can serve Mass, and who has shown a wish to live up to the objects and standards of the Guild.

Servers will have been given adequate training and reaches the necessary standard before being admitted to the sanctuary and then should serve satisfactorily for a minimum of six months before being enrolled as a member of the Guild. The parish priest, or the local director of the Guild, decides whether a candidate is eligible and worthy of admission to the Guild and he is empowered to perform the ceremony of enrolment and invest the server with the Guild medal, using the prescribed form of enrolment.

9.5 Rules

To serve at the altar with reverence, understanding and regularity and with due attention to personal cleanliness and tidiness.

To say short prayers in preparation for and in thanksgiving after, serving Mass.

To observe silence in the sacristy and great reverence in the sanctuary.

To say the Guild prayer every day.

9.6 We also recommend the following:

Be ready to serve at every opportunity, yet making sure that your fellow servers have an equal chance.

Take part in all services as fully as possible, by paying careful attention to everything that is being said or done and by joining in the prayers, responses and hymns -and especially by receiving Holy Communion at Mass.

Avoid doing anything, which might distract the attention of the people. Do not fidget or look around, or stare at the people in the church.

Carry out the ceremonies calmly and without drawing too much attention to yourself and remembering that you are part of a team.

Be in good time before services so that you can prepare properly.

See that you are suitably dressed for serving (especially footwear) and that your alb is clean and cared for.

Wear the Guild medal on all occasions when serving.

Do your best to attend Guild meetings and festivals so as to get to know other servers, especially those from other parishes.

9.7 The Guild Promise

I offer myself to God almighty,
to blessed Mary, our Mother
and to our holy patron, Saint Stephen.
And I promise to do my best to serve regularly
with reverence and understanding,
for the glory of God, the service of his Church,
and my own eternal salvation.

9.8 Becoming a Guild Member

There is a special ceremony of enrolment into the Guild. During the ceremony the server makes a solemn promise (the wording of which is given above) and is presented with the Guild Medal, which is made of bronze and is worn around the neck, hanging from a red cord.

9.9 The medal means two things:

First, the parish priest, or local director of the Guild, has decided this particular server is eligible and worthy to be admitted to the Guild. Second, the server accepts and wears the medal as a sign of commitment - commitment to server regularly: commitment to serve as well as possible. A commitment is a serious promise, and this promise is a serious one because it is made to God and the Church.

9.10 The guild medal

The letters xp are the first two letters of the name of 'Christ' in Greek. The top is the crown of victory given by God to everyone who overcomes evil, especially those who die for him. At the bottom are the palm branches, traditional signs of the martyrs who died for Christ.

The Latin words are the guild motto: they declare that to serve at the altar is to serve Christ himself. And the reward of all and faithful serving is a share in his kingdom.

Cui servire regnare est

To serve Christ is to reign

10. DICTIONARY

Acolytes' Candles - These two candles are carried either side of the cross in the entrance procession. They are then used to flank the Gospel when it is proclaimed.

Alb - A long linen tunic, worn since the four century. The name comes from the Latin word, 'albus', and meaning white.

Altar - The structure on which the Eucharist takes place.

Altar Missal - See sacramentary.

Book of Gospels - Contains all the Gospel readings for the Church's year. It is brought to the lectern during the Gospel acclamation. It may be carried into church as part of the entrance procession or put in a special place before the celebration begins.

Cassock - Full-length gown with sleeves worn by servers and priests.

Chalice - The cup that contains the precious Blood of Christ.

Chapel of Reconciliation/Confessional Box - Here we meet with the priest to confess our sins and, through the Sacrament of Reconciliation or Penance, receive God's forgiveness in the prayer of absolution.

Ciborium - A container that holds the body of Christ.

Cincture - A rope belt that is tied around the waist.

Corporal - Its name comes from the Latin word 'corpus' meaning a 'body'. It is a square of white cloth, on which the chalice and paten are placed during the Mass, to catch particles of the Blessed Sacrament, should any fall from the vessels. The corporal is placed on the altar either before Mass begins or during the preparation of the gifts.

Credence table - The little wooden side table on which all the things that are necessary for the Mass are placed.

Crozier - Carried by a Bishop. Looks like a shepherd's crook and reminds us that the Bishop is chief shepherd of the flock of Christ in any given area.

Crucifix - A cross on which is the figure of Jesus.

Cruet - Small jug that contains water or wine for the Mass.

Font - This is a pool or vessel of water in which people are baptised. It reminds us of our baptism, when we were washed clean of sin and became a member of God's family.

Gospel Book - A large decorated book containing only Gospel readings for the Mass. The deacon usually carries it.

Host - The consecrated Body of Christ.

Humeral veil - A long rectangular garment, held by a clasp at the front, worn by a priest or deacon when carrying a Ciborium or Monstrance containing the Blessed Sacrament.

Incense - A substance that gives off clouds of sweet smelling smoke when sprinkled onto burning charcoal.

Incense Boat - So called because it is usually shaped like a boat, it contains the incense, which will be burned in the thurible.

Lavabo Bowl and Towel - At the preparation of the gifts the priest washes his hands to signify the cleansing of the sins of those gathered and to prepare himself for what he is about to do.

Lectern - The desk from which the readers, deacon and priest proclaim the readings.

Lectionary - A book containing all the scripture readings for Mass. It is placed on the lectern before Mass begins, or it may be carried in the entrance procession.

Lunette - A crescent-shaped clip made of gold or of silver-gilt, which is used for holding the Host in an upright position when, exposed in the monstrance.

Mitre - A tall pointed hat in two pieces as worn by a Bishop. It reminds us of the tongues of fire that seemed to light upon the apostles on the first day of Pentecost.

Monstrance - A metal container on a stand. It is used at expositions and benedictions of the Blessed Sacrament. It may be plain or very elaborate, but it always has a little glass window through which you can see the host.

Pascal Candle - This speaks of our Lord's resurrection from the dead. During the Easter season this paschal candle has its place in the sanctuary. Thereafter it is placed next to the font for use during baptisms.

Presidential chair - The chair on which the presider sits.

Processional Cross - This is carried into church at the head of a procession, as a sign of our faith, and is the basic symbol of Christianity. It reminds us that Jesus died for us.

Purification - A cloth that is used to wipe the chalice each time it is used.

Pyx - A small metal container, used to take Holy Communion to the sick and Housebound.

Sacrament - A book that the priest uses at his chair and at the altar. It can also be called the Missal.

Sacristy - The room where the clergy and servers prepare themselves for the service.

Sanctuary - Sacred part of the church where the Altar, Lectern and presidential chair are.

Sanctuary Lamp - The lamp that is kept burning on the sanctuary to show that the Blessed Sacrament is present.

Stations of the Cross - These depict, usually in fourteen stages, the journey of Jesus to Calvary, his crucifixion on the cross and his laying in the tomb.

Stole - This important vestment, worn around the neck, shows that the priest is celebrating one of the Sacraments. It also shows that the priest has the duty to preach the Word of God.

Tabernacle - The cupboard where we keep the consecrated bread.

.....The End.....