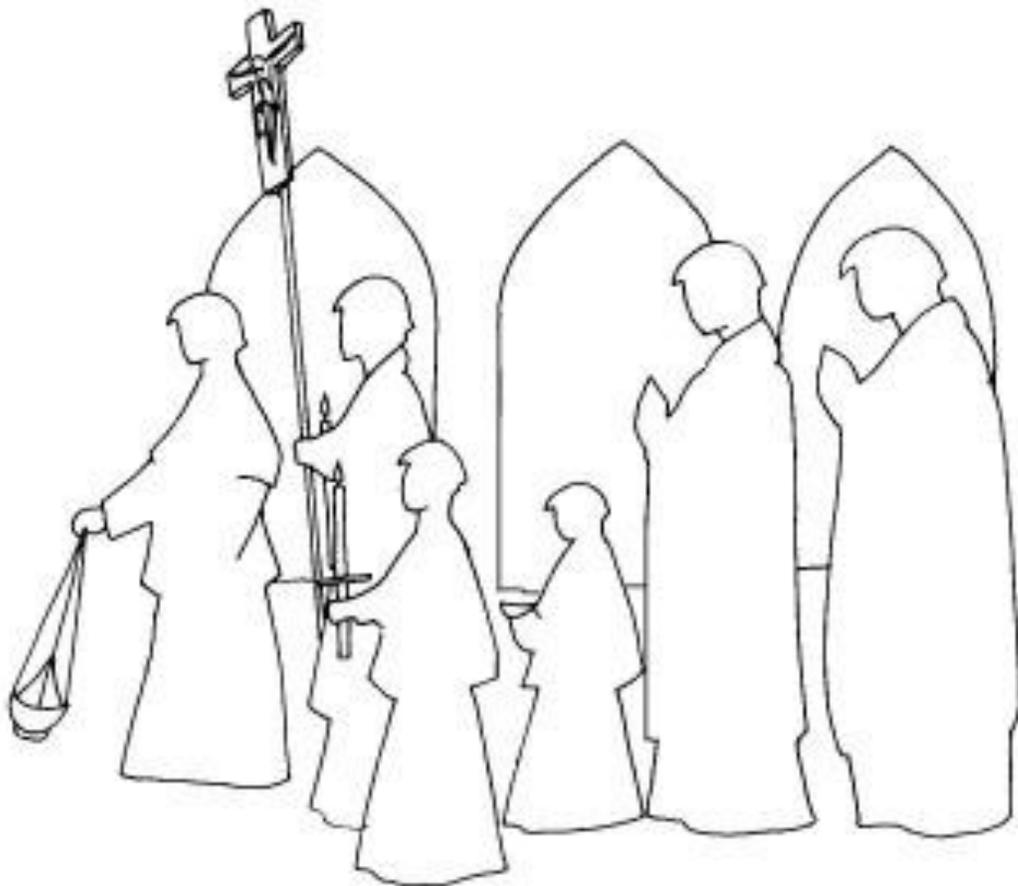
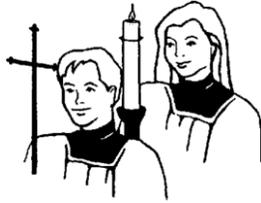


Holy Innocents Altar Server Handbook





WELCOME!

This *Altar Server Guide* is intended as a general guide. Your pastor may require different procedures.

To the Altar Server candidates:

Welcome and thank you. You have decided to become an altar server. The Altar Server's 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. Your participation as an Altar Server is special. When you serve the priests and deacons, you serve the people of God, and above all, you serve Christ. I welcome you and I pray that you will learn to understand the rites of our holy faith and serve the church with joy and reverence. Are you ready? Let's begin!

So let's begin. Just like when they build a house or other type of building they start with a foundation. The foundation is part of the building that supports the rest. You need a strong foundation in order to have a strong building. Remember when Jesus said to Peter "You are my rock and on this rock I will build my church." You can say Peter was the foundation of the entire church.

People also have foundations – we can call them characteristics. Characteristics are the things we would like to see in an altar server.

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS SHOULD A SERVER POSSESS?

A Server should possess the following characteristics:

- Naturalness and discretion of movement – don't fumble and stumble.
- Naturally alert and attentive – don't daydream, yawn or fall asleep.
- Natural Foresight – anticipate what might happen next.
- Be able to work together in a team.
- Be able to facilitate the public expression of shared prayer.

When a construction company builds a foundation for a new building they must follow a set of rules or guidelines. There are certain requirements they must follow – they have to do these things or the foundation will not support the building. If altar servers do not meet the requirements they will not be a strong foundation (support) for the Mass.

REQUIREMENTS FOR ALTAR SERVER CANDIDATES

A Candidate should fulfill the following requirements:

- A strong desire to serve at the Altar of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
- Be an active member of the parish community and believe in the teachings of The Holy Catholic Church.
- Servers must actively practice the Catholic faith and should regularly receive Communion.
- Have already made their First Holy Communion.
- Know all the prayers 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.



‘WHY DO YOU WANT TO BE AN ALTAR SERVER?’

New servers must meet with the Altar Server Coordinator to answer this question.

- Altar servers must serve because they feel a personal calling to service. If you feel parents or others are pressuring you to serve, but you don't want to serve, quietly let the coordinator know. The coordinator is here to assist you. They are happy to help you determine if this right time for you to begin altar service. If this isn't the right time, then you are welcome to start again when you are ready.
- Servers must be prepared to meet the commitment required of them. They should understand the principles of **Devotion, Dedication, and Discipline.**

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW TO BE A GOOD ALTAR SERVER?

A new server must be very familiar with the Mass. They must understand why the Mass is important, and what happens during Mass.

You will need to learn more about your faith. Altar servers play a very important role during the Mass. It is important that you not only know what to do but a little bit as to why you do it.

Just like everyone who works they need to learn more about the job they do. Many jobs have words that other people outside the job may not even know.

You will need to learn some new words and their meanings. Don't worry it's not as bad as vocabulary can be. Once we finish with the training you will be asked to put into practice what you have learned. How do you become good at something? Take baseball for instance – you can only become good by practicing. The more you practice the better you will become. If you pay attention during training and practice what you learned you will become a very good altar server.

Note: Before you serve for the first time, you will be required to demonstrate that you know the Order of the Mass, the prayers of the Mass, and the postures and responses during Mass. All of this will be taught during the new server training period. You must also demonstrate the ability to make use of the "tools of the trade" such as matches, candles, candle lighters, books and sacred vessels. All of this will be taught in training.



DEFINITIONS

Ablution cup – covered dish of water on the side of the tabernacle used by the priest, deacon, or extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to wash their fingers after distributing Communion.

Ambo – The platform, lectern or pulpit from which the reading and homily are given.

Aspergillum – The instrument used to sprinkle holy water

Boat – The metal container in which incense is held. It has a cover and comes with a small spoon.

Chalice – A cup of precious metal that holds the wine that becomes the blood of Jesus during the consecration.

Chasuble – the sleeveless outer vestment that the priest wears, covering the alb and stole.

Ciborium – A large cup or container of precious metal with a cover of the same material. This is what holds the Body of Jesus during the consecration for distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful.

Cincture – A long cord or rope used for tying around the waist over the alb. The color to be used depends on the liturgical color for the day.

Communion Paten – A small saucer shaped plate of precious metal with a handle, usually wooden, used by the altar server to protect the Body of Jesus from falling to the ground if a minister or communicant accidentally drop a fragment of the Host (Not used at Holy Innocents).

Corporal – A white linen cloth, usually with a cross in the center, used to protect any particles of the Precious body and Blood of Jesus from falling to the altar cloth. It is always folded and folded as to protect any particles from being lost. The corporal is like the body winding sheet used to hold the crucified body of Our Lord in the tomb.

Credence Table – The table in the sanctuary where the cruets, chalices and ciboria are kept before and after the consecration.

Cruet – The vessel that holds the water for pouring into the wine prior to the consecration and for pouring over the priest's hands during the consecration of the gifts.

Extinguisher – Pole like instrument used for lighting and extinguishing the candles

Finger Towel – White cloth the priest uses to dry his hands after they have been washed during the preparation of the gifts.

Holy Water Font – The holy water fountains or bowls at the entrances of the church.

Lavabo of Finger Bowl – The glass bowl used to catch the water as it is poured over the priest's hands during the presentation of the gifts.

Monstrance – This is a large, ornate vessel used to hold the Blessed Sacrament for Adoration, Benediction and solemn Eucharistic Processions.

Lunette – A thin, circular receptacle, having a glass face that holds the Consecrated Host used for Adoration and Benediction. It slides into the monstrance on a little track.

Lectionary – the book of readings used for the liturgy of the word. It usually contains all the biblical readings used for the three year Sunday cycle of readings and the two-year daily Mass readings.

Pall – A square piece of cardboard or plastic which is covered by linen and used to cover the chalice.

Paten – A small saucer shaped plate of precious metal that holds the Host. The servers should be very careful when they have to handle it.

Purificator – A linen cloth used to clean the communion cups.

Pyx – A case, about the size of a pocket watch, in which Communion is carried to those who are sick or unable to come to church.

Roman Missal – the book containing the prayers said by the priest during the Mass. Sometimes referred to as the Sacramentary.

Sacrarium – A sink with its drain going directly into the ground, usually fitted with a cover and lock (We do not have this at Holy Innocents).

Sacristy – The room where the sacred vessels and vestments are stored.

Sanctuary – The raised area in the front of the church where the altar and credence table are located.

Stole – A long cloth, often ornately decorated, which the priest wears around his neck and hangs in front, under the chasuble.

Thurible – The metal container in a chain in which incense is burned.

Thurifer – The person who is in charge of bringing the incense to the priest during the Mass.

Vestibule – the area at the rear of the church.



DIFFERENT JOBS THAT ALTAR SERVERS CARRY OUT AT MASS



Thurifer – this is an experienced server who will carry the Thurible (incensor). 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 smoldering charcoal fire is used in the thurible which reaches extremely high temperatures.



Cross Bearer – the server, who carries the processional cross at the beginning and end of the service.



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.

SOME BASIC ALTAR SERVER RULES

Altar Servers are on duty from the time they enter the sanctuary at the start of Mass until they finish cleanup after the end of Mass.

- ❖ Attend Altar Server Training Classes and all scheduled meetings.
- ❖ Altar Servers should not leave the sanctuary after the start of mass for any reason except bathroom emergencies, illness, or when directed to do so by the priest.
- ❖ Serve at every Mass that you are scheduled for. If you cannot attend your scheduled Mass, it is **YOUR** responsibility to find your own replacement
- ❖ Leader must arrive at least 30 minutes before the Mass starts to get dressed and make sure that the Altar is prepared.
- ❖ Make sure the candles are lit, bread, wine, water cruet, lavabo, finger towel, sacramentary, chalice, ciboria, communion cups, purificators, stand for the Book of the Gospel, corporal and the priests notebook are in their proper place.
- ❖ Maintain a prayerful posture at all times. When standing or kneeling, hands are **ALWAYS** to be folded with palm against palm, pointing up, unless you are holding something (the cross, a candle, the Roman Missal, etc.). When sitting, sit up straight with your hands on your legs. Do not play with your cincture. No cell phone use at all during Mass.

- ❖ After the Mass, return to the Sanctuary to clear the credence table and extinguish the candles. Put away albs and cinctures, neatly.
- ❖ Be quiet and respectful during the Mass. No talking, except to pray or communicate about assignments with the priest or other servers.
- ❖ Pay attention and respond immediately when the priest or other ministers ask for help.

DRESS CODE FOR ALTAR SERVERS

- ❖ Servers should wear closed toed shoes that will not fall off during Mass (i.e. no flip flops or sandals).
- ❖ Boys are to wear a collared shirt and dress pants. Girls are to wear dresses, skirts, or other appropriate attire. Blue jeans, beach attire, shorts, gym clothes, and t-shirts are not appropriate attire for serving at the altar.
- ❖ Hair should be combed neatly, appropriate for boys and girls. Girls should have their hair tied back so that it is not in their face.
- ❖ No jewelry is to show when you serve with the exception of small/appropriate earrings on girls, only. Do not wear anything that will make noise and/or will be distracting, or that will cause you to have problems serving. No face piercing of any kind is allowed and must be removed prior to getting dressed in your alb and cincture.
- ❖ Servers should wear an appropriately sized alb, which should come to the top of their shoes, no higher than the top of the ankle. Please make sure that you wear the appropriate colored cincture (look at the calendar that is on the bulletin board in the sacristy). The cincture should be tied around the waist and knotted on the left side. The cincture is **NOT** to be worn low, around the hips.
- ❖ NOTE: When our bishop comes to visit, all hair must be pulled out of your face. No exceptions. This is a matter of safety (so you don't burn your hair) and keeping everything sanitary (so your hair doesn't fall into the Eucharist).

GUIDELINES FOR SERVING AT THE MASS



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 had something to eat and drink an hour before Mass starts.

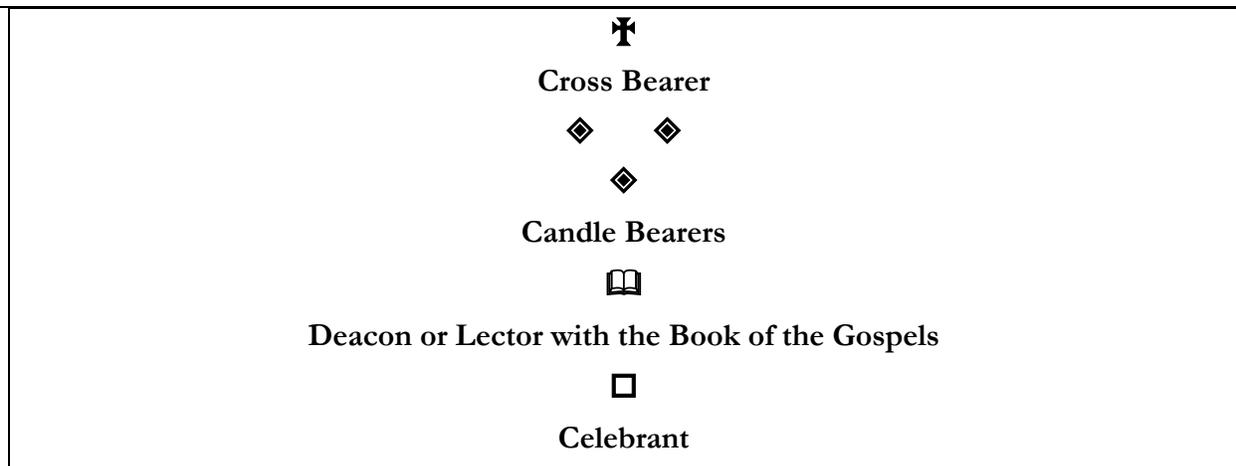
Before Mass:

1. The leader should arrive and be dressed 30 minutes before Mass begins.

- a. Make sure the alb is the right size. The bottom should be right above the tops of the shoes.
 - b. Check the calendar to make sure the cincture is the right color.
2. Check to make sure that everything is set up on the altar for the Mass (If there is a visit priest, talk to him before Mass to see if he does anything differently).
3. a. Make sure the candles are lit, bread, wine, water, cruet, lavabo, finger towel, sacramentary, chalice, ciboria, communion cups, purificators, stand for the Book of the Gospel, corporal, and the priest's notebook are in their proper places.
4. Gather in the Community Room with the priest and anyone else who will be in the entrance procession.
 - a. Make sure you talk to the other servers to determine who will do what.
 - b. Remember, candles are only used if there are at least 3 servers

THE MASS

ENTRANCE PROCESSION



1. After the prayer, the altar servers will line up in the following order:
 - a. Thurifer (if present)
 - b. Cross-bearer
 - c. Candle bearers
 - d. Other Servers
 - I. If there is only one server, only the cross will be carried.
 - II. If there are two servers, one will carry the cross and the other will line up behind them with their hands folded.

2. Once the choir has begun to sing, the altar servers will begin to process in. Walk at a normal speed. It is not a race. The cross bearer sets the pace for everyone behind them.
3. The Cross Bearer will walk to the right side of the sanctuary and stop, facing the altar, just past the front candle. The candle bearers will stop when they reach the bottom step. When the priest gets to the bottom of the steps and bows, all servers will bow then proceed around the sanctuary and place the candles on either side of the ambo and the cross back on its stand.
4. The servers go to their chairs and remain standing. The server who carried the cross is usually responsible for the Roman Missal.



GREETING

1. The priest begins with an introduction explaining the readings, or welcoming people to the Mass, then begins with the Sign of the Cross.
2. During the Penitential Rite, the priest asks us to recall our sins and ask God for forgiveness, we then respond with the Kyrie Eliason (Lord have mercy).
3. The Gloria will then be recited or sung. At the phrase “for you alone are the holy one, you alone are the Lord,” the cross bearer will walk to the side of the sanctuary with the Roman Missal.

NOTE: *During Advent and Lent, the Gloria is not sung/recited. Therefore, the Roman Missal will be brought up at the end of the Kyrie.*

4. After the Gloria, the priest will say, “Let us pray.” Which is the cue for the server with the Roman Missal to bring the book up for the priest to read the Collect (opening prayer).
5. After the priest is done with the prayer, the server will close the Roman Missal, place it on the Credence table, and proceed back to their seat. Servers will then sit down when the priest does. Remember to sit up straight with your hands on your lap.



LITURGY OF THE WORD

1. First Reading
2. The Psalm will be recited or sung
3. Second reading
4. After the second reading is read, two servers will go to the altar when the priest stands. Both servers immediately take position at the candles (lifting them) and wait till the priest or deacon moves to the altar to retrieve the Gospel. While holding the candles, both servers will give a slight bow of the head when the priest or deacon bows. Then both servers will process with the priest or deacon to the ambo for the Gospel reading allowing enough room for the priest or deacon to proceed ahead of them. Once the priest or deacon is at the ambo both servers move in close to the ambo, one server on each side.
5. The priest/deacon will read the Gospel and then end with “The Gospel of the Lord,” and the congregation responds with “Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.” Once the congregation has responded, the candles may be put back. After the candles are put back, the servers may go back to their seats and all will simultaneously sit.
6. The priest/deacon will then give the Homily.
7. After the Homily, the priest/deacon will go back to their seat and the priest will stand for the Profession of Faith. Everyone stands to recite the Creed.
8. The priest will start the Prayers of the Faithful, and then the lector or deacon will read the petitions of the church. After the lector or deacon has finished the petitions, the priest will say a prayer. All will respond “Amen.” And the congregation will sit down. The server who will be setting the Altar will then proceed to the sanctuary and begin setting the Altar.



LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

1. **Offertory collection** – After everyone has been seated, the ushers will walk forward with the baskets to take up the collection.
 - a. The server assigned to set the Altar will first remove the stand for the Book of the Gospel. Next, retrieve the chalice, corporal, and purificator, and appropriately place them on the Altar. Next, place the communion cups on the Altar (leave the purificators on the Credence Table). If there are any ciboria containing unconsecrated hosts, they need to be brought up at this time and placed on the corporal as well.
 - b. When the priest gets up and goes to the bottom of the steps to receive the gifts, two servers will go up and stand on either side of the priest. The priest will hand the servers the ciborium containing the hosts and the cruet containing the wine. When the priest turns to go up, the servers will also turn, go around the side and enter the sanctuary from the sides. The servers will then hand these items to the priest when he is ready to receive them.

2. **Preparation of the Gifts**
 - a. The server handing the ciborium to the priest will bow, turn, and go to the credence table to get the water cruet, bring it back to the priest and wait for him to take it. When the priest takes the wine cruet from the other server, the server is to bow, go to the credence table, and bring the lavabo and finger towel back.
 - b. The server holding the water cruet will wait for the priest to take the water, mix it with the wine, and then return it to the server. When the cruet is returned, the server will bow and wait.
 - c. The priest will turn to the servers and put his hands over the lavabo. When he does this, the server holding the water cruet will pour the water over the priest's hands. When the priest raises his hands, the server should stop pouring water. The priest will then take the finger towel off of the other server's arm, dry his hands, and put it back. Then both serves bow and walk back to the credence table.
 - d. The servers will then return to their seats and remain standing.



EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

1. The priest then begins with the preface and then will enter the congregation into the Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy), which will be sung or recited.
2. The altar servers will move to either side of the altar during the Sanctus, and as it ends, they will kneel. The priest will continue with the Eucharistic prayer by recalling the Last Supper.
3. The priest will then proclaim the mystery of faith, which will be sung or recited
4. The priest will then conclude the prayer by remembering the saints, all those who have departed before us, and chant or recite, “Through Him, with Him and in Him...” (Only the priest is to say this prayer)
5. The Great Amen will be sung or recited
6. The servers will stand up at the end of the Great Amen and will then recite the Our Father with the congregation.
7. The priest will then direct all to share in a sign of peace. The servers will share the sign of peace with each other and the priest. They are not to go out into the congregation. They are to then line up near the table of Credence to prepare to receive Communion. If there are any ciboria on the Table of Credence, bring them, without the lid, to the altar. Be prepared to take any items that the priest turns to hand you.

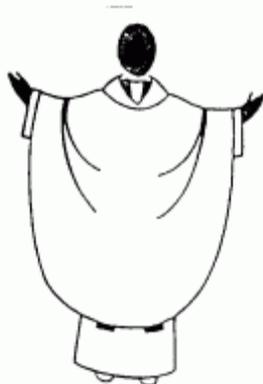




COMMUNION

1. **The Agnus Dei (Lamb of God)** will either be sung by the choir or recited by the priest, and the congregation will join in. At the point that the priest genuflects, all in the Sanctuary will bow together. When receiving the body and blood, you do not need to bow as you have already bowed when the priest genuflects. Once the servers have all received Communion, you will turn in unison to go and kneel behind the sanctuary for a short prayer (15-20 seconds). When kneeling, you must kneel facing the altar (facing Jesus) and be prepared to assist as directed. Pay attention to the Leader. When he or she stands up this is the cue for everyone to stand up and return to your seats where you may continue in prayer.
2. Once the priest is done distributing communion, he will return to the altar to purify and clear the altar. The server who handled the water cruet will need to bring the water cruet to the priest so that he can purify the chalice. When a server takes something back to the credence table, the next server will step over, and this will continue until the altar has been cleared.

NOTE: If the priest has not distributed the pix, DO NOT remove the corporal until after he has done so.



CONCLUDING RITE

1. The priest will then stand. Then the priest will ask everyone to stand and pray (the Prayer after communion)
 - a. The priest will say, “Let us pray.” Which is the cue for the server with the Roman Missal to bring it over for the priest to read the closing prayer.
 - b. The priest will then conclude the Mass with the sign of the Cross.

2. After the final blessing, the cross and candle bearers will go get the cross and candles, and then proceed to their respective sides of the Sanctuary. The cross bearer will walk to about 10 feet away from the bottom step (leaving room for the priest and other servers), in the middle, and turn and face the altar. The candle bearers will go to the position they were at when they stopped at the front of the steps during the procession. When the priest bows, the servers will bow, then turn and process out. Remember, it is not a race. Once you have reached the vestibule, proceed around to the left to take the cross and candles back to their stands. Then you will begin to clear the credence table and extinguish the candles. Once finished with all duties, put albs and cinctures back as you found them.

An Altar Server's Prayer

*Dear Lord Jesus,
thank you for
calling me to
serve You at
Your Holy Altar.*

*During the celebration of the Eucharist
I know that the priest takes Your place
when, together with your People and in
the name of the Church, he makes present
again Your Passion, Death and Resurrection.*

*Help me to carry
out my role with
prayerful dignity
and participation
in this memorial of
the Last Supper.*

*Let me remain close
to you on earth that
one day I may share
in Your glory. Amen*