

Saint Mary's Catholic Church

Altar Server Manual

2023



Altar Server: _____



Dear Altar Server,

Our parish is so grateful for your decision to serve at Mass. It is a privilege to kneel so close as Jesus Christ becomes truly present in the Eucharist. And so, servers are chosen from those who display a desire to grow closer to Our Lord.

The duty of an Altar Server is to assist the priest, as a representative of the people, as the mystery of Calvary unfolds on the altar. What an honor to serve the Lord at this moment of our redemption. Although the duties of the altar server are varied, the most important responsibility of the altar server is to pray.

The place of the altar server in liturgical celebrations remains one of prominence and distinction. Servers have a solemn responsibility to do their assigned duties with dignity and reverence, so as to give God glory. The purpose for this manual is to give direction for our parish Masses and to be a guide to help you assist the priest at the Altar of God.

In Christ,

Father John Maria

pastor@stmaryskutztown.com

Table of Contents

Message to Altar Servers.....	2
General Requirements and Prayers	3
The Order of Mass.....	4
Sacred Vessels	5-6
Altar Server Duties at Mass	7-8

General Requirements

1. Who may serve: At Saint Mary's, all registered parishioners who are in the 3rd grade through High School are welcome to serve. All candidates must attend one training session and have the commitment and ability to perform their role with reverence.

2. Proper Dress: Altar Servers must show respect for the Mass they attend by wearing proper clothing. Please do not wear tee-shirts, tank tops or shorts. Regarding shoes, please do not wear flip-flops, or any open toe shoes/sandals. Shoes are preferred.

3. Attendance:

- ♦ Please arrive **15 minutes prior to the start of Mass** neatly groomed.
- ♦ If you are unable to serve at your scheduled time, please try to find a substitute. You will have more information when you are on the regular schedule.
- ♦ If you are unable to find a substitute, please contact the rectory and leave a message. **610-683-7443**
- ♦ The Altar Servers' duties are complete when they have set up for the next Mass or brought the appropriate items back to the Sacristy and neatly hung up their albs and cinctures in the Sacristy.

4. Prayer:

Altar Server's Prayer Before Mass

Inspire my mouth, O Lord, to bless Your Holy Name.

Cleanse my heart from all evil and distracting thoughts.

Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will that I may serve worthily at Your Holy Altar.

O Mary, Mother of Christ, obtain for me the most important grace of knowing my vocation in life. Grant me a true spirit of faith and humble obedience so that I may ever behold the priest as a representative of God and willingly follow him in the Way, the Truth, and the Life of Christ. Amen.

Altar Server's Prayer After Mass

O Lord, Jesus Christ, Eternal High Priest, I thank you for the privilege of having served at the holy altar of Your Sacrifice. Now, as I put aside the garments of your service, I ask that I may at all times think of You. May I ever seek You and find You; may I always follow You; may your priestly spirit be in my heart and Your Holy Name on my lips; and to Your Praise and Glory may every work of mine be done.

Ever ready in Your Service, may I always know and do Your Will in all things and, by Your Grace, persevere unto the end. Amen.

The Order of Mass

The Mass is the heart and soul of our worship of God. It is the celebration that gives us the strength we need to live a Christian life, and, because of its importance, the Church places a serious obligation upon all of its members to take part in the Mass every Sunday and Holy Day.

The Mass is a sacrifice where Jesus offers Himself to the Father. It is also a sacred banquet called the Eucharist (from the Greek word for thanksgiving) where we give thanks to God and join in Jesus' perfect prayer of praise and thanks to the Father. At the Last Supper Jesus told His disciples, "Do this in memory of me," and so for the past 2,000 years, the Church has celebrated the Mass with two main parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Knowing the overall structure of the Mass will help you understand your particular role.

The following is a basic outline of the Mass:

Introductory Rites

-Entrance Procession, Greeting, Penitential Act, Gloria, Collect (Opening Prayer)

Liturgy of the Word

-1st Reading, Responsorial Psalm, 2nd Reading, Gospel Acclamation, Gospel, Homily,
Profession of Faith, Universal Prayer

Liturgy of the Eucharist

-Presentation of the Gifts, Preparation of the Altar, Prayer Over the Gifts, Sanctus
(Holy, Holy, Holy), Eucharistic Prayer, Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen

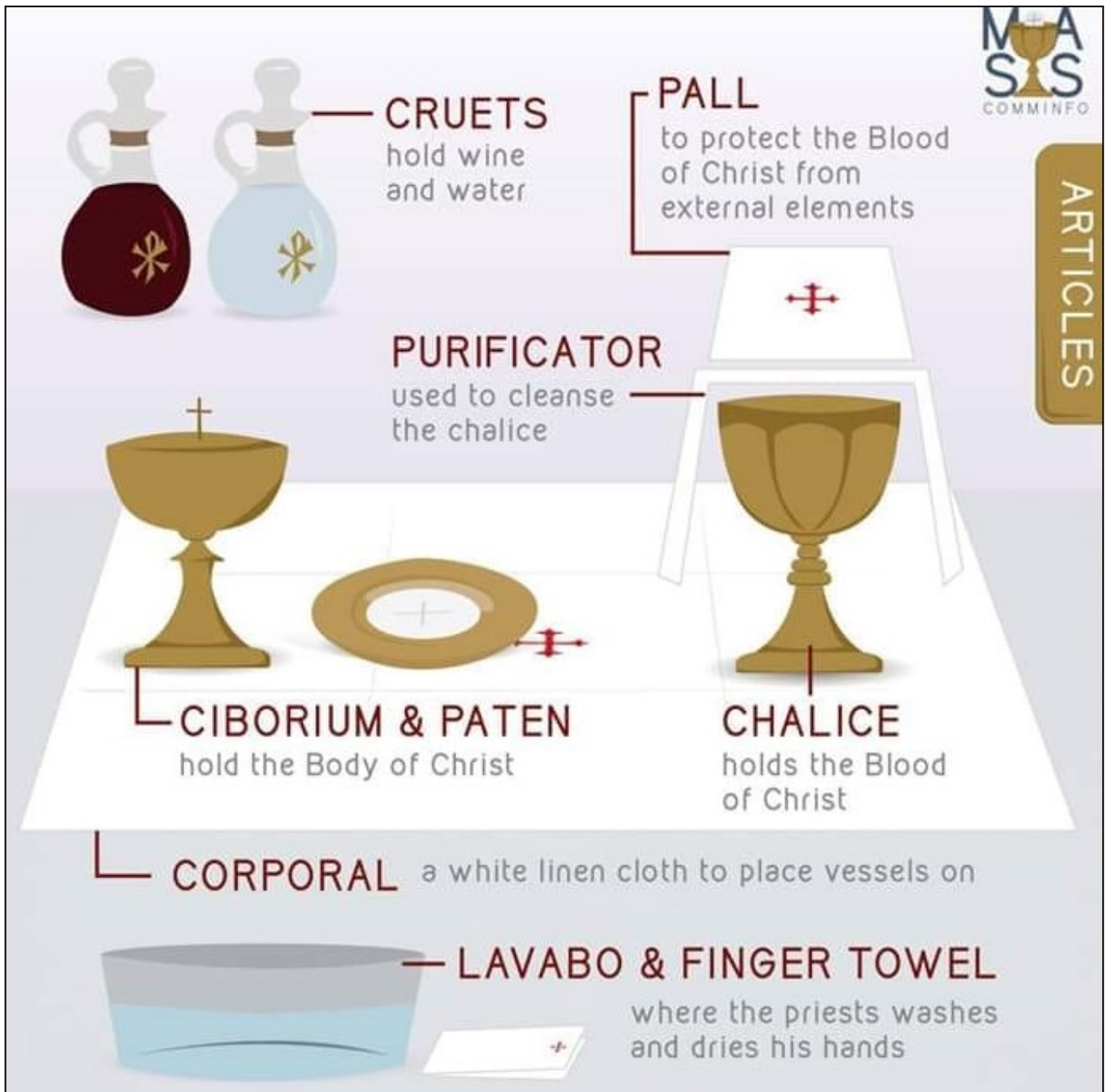
Communion Rite

-The Lord's Prayer (Our Father), Sign of Peace, Lamb of God, Holy Communion

Concluding Rite

-Prayer after Communion, Blessing & Dismissal, Recessional

Sacred Vessels



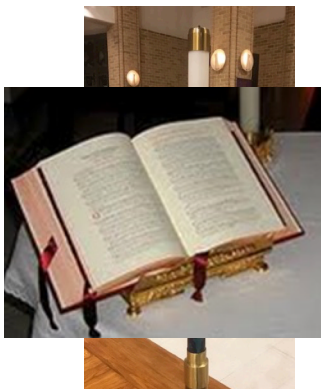
Ciborium (plural is *ciboria*)



Chalice with Paten



**Processional Candle
Roman Missal**



Processional Crucifix



Thurible & Incense Boat



Altar and Credence Table



Altar Server Duties at Sunday Mass

Before Mass

1. Please arrive at least 15 minutes before Mass time.
2. Inform the sacristan that you are serving and go to the vesting sacristy to put on the alb (white robe) and the cincture (white chord). The cincture should hang to your side. Pray the "Altar Server's Prayer before Mass."
3. About 10 minutes before Mass time, light the four candles.
4. After lighting the candles, go back to the altar to retrieve the processional crucifix. If there are additional altar servers (up to two), each must retrieve a processional candle.
5. Wait outside the left entrance, near the vesting sacristy. The lector and commentator will be waiting there as well. When the priest is ready, he will lead all in a short prayer.

Mass Begins / Introductory Rites

6. When the entrance hymn begins, start the procession towards the altar. Walk at a steady but solemn pace. Remember that everyone else follows your lead.
7. Stop at the front of the Altar, bow to the Altar, and continue to walk toward the crucifix stand (and candle stands). Place the crucifix (candle) gently in its stand and go to your seat. Your seats are on the left of the altar, near the organ.

Liturgy of the Word

8. Participate in the Mass as usual until the end of the prayers of the faithful (concluding with prayer to St. Michael). Always keep in mind that people attending the Mass can see you clearly. Your participation in the Mass in a reverent and respectful way sets an example for all those who are attending.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

9. After the intercessions, the people will sit down for the preparation of gifts. Server will remain standing, then go up the steps, bow to the Altar, and go to the table in the back to move the Roman Missal and its stand from there to the left side of the Altar.
10. At this time the priest will go to the front of the Altar to accept the gifts. Follow him and stand beside him. Receive the basket from the priest and wait for him to accept bread and wine. When he starts walking towards the Altar, place the basket at the foot of the Altar (front or side depending on the placement of altar decorations on that day) and go to the credence table next to the altar.
11. The priest/deacon will prepare the altar, and first take the ciborium with altar bread. As the priest offers the bread, take the tops off the cruets of water and wine.
12. The priest/deacon will then prepare the chalice. Hold the cruets with handles toward the priest/deacon, so that he can first pour some wine, and then a little water into the chalice. As he offers the chalice, you may bow to the priest, and place the cruets of water and wine down. Close only the wine cruet with its top.

13. Next, the priest will cleanse his hands in preparation for the most solemn part of the Mass. If there is one server, place the towel on your left forearm, and hold the lavabo (bowl) in your left hand. Pick up the water cruet and pour some water over the priest's hands, over the bowl. Hand him the towel. (If there are two servers, one holds the towel, while the other holds bowl and water cruet.) When finished, put the water cruet and lavabo down on the credence table. Do NOT close the water cruet with its top. Bow to the priest as he bows to you.
14. As the priest says, "Pray brothers and sisters....", the congregation will stand and pray. You may go down to the altar steps, near the kneeling cushion.
15. After the singing of *Holy, Holy, Holy*, kneel on the altar steps where the kneeling cushions are placed. When you kneel, you should be able to reach the bells.
16. When the priest extends his hands over the offerings (this is the moment when the Holy Spirit comes down on bread and wine and they become the Body and Blood of Jesus), ring the bells steadily without any pauses. Stop before the priest starts making the sign of the Cross over them.
17. After the priest says, "*Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my Body, which will be given up for you,*" when he raises the consecrated Host to show to the people, ring the bells. (Ring the bells 3 times, with brief pause in between.)
18. Similarly, after the priest says, "*Take this, all of you, and drink from it, ..., do this in memory of me,*" when he raises the chalice to show to the people, ring the bells. (Ring the bells 3 times, with brief pause in between.)
19. Again, continue to participate in the Mass as usual.

Holy Communion

20. Before the priest or the Eucharistic Minister goes to your side of the church, go and stand in the front of the line to receive Holy Communion. Then go to your kneeler and pray, as you would in any Mass.
21. When you are ready, go up the steps, bow to the Altar, take the Roman Missal and its stand, and move them again to the table in the back. Be very careful when retrieving the missal not to pull on any altar linen or disturb sacred vessels on the Altar. They still contain the Precious Body and Blood of Jesus. After placing the missal on the back table, bow to the Altar again as you walk over to your kneeler.

Concluding Rites

22. After the final blessing, when the priest goes to kiss the Altar, go to retrieve the processional crucifix (or candles). With the crucifix (candles), follow the priest to the front of the altar and stand there behind him, in the middle aisle.
23. When Father genuflects, profoundly bow to the Altar, and turn around to begin the recession.
24. After the end of the hymn, take the crucifix (candles) back to the altar, place them on their stands, and extinguish the candles.
25. Assist the sacristan in bringing vessels back to the sacristy.
26. Put your alb back in the closet neatly. Pray the "Altar Server's Prayer after Mass," and you are free to go. Thank you!