



Church of the Little Flower

Altar Server Instructions



To be an altar server is a special honor and a great privilege in the Catholic Church. Altar servers today can trace their roots or genealogy to the order of Acolyte, a ministry that once was reserved only for those who were going to be ordained priests. One can look upon being an altar server as a special and unique ministry by which you, a young person, can help to spread the word and the love of Christ through your actions and words. It is not difficult to be an altar server, but there are some things that you must know and remember.

What Certain Things Are Called:

Alb	The white gown that you will wear just as the priest and deacons does.
Ambo or Lectern	Where the lector stands to read the Scripture readings and the priest or deacon proclaims the Gospel.
Aspergillum	The liturgical instrument used to sprinkle people and objects with holy water.
Boat	A small liturgical vessel containing the incense that will be used with the thurible.
Chalice	A cup that Father will use to consecrate the wine into the Blood of Christ.
Ciborium	A cup, which looks similar to a chalice, but is used to store consecrated hosts in the Tabernacle. A Ciborium has a lid where as a chalice does not.
Cincture	A belt made out of cloth worn around your waist; it acts like a belt.
Corporal	A small cloth that sits on top of the altar where Father places the chalice, paten, and flagon. Its purpose is to catch any small crumbs of the Blessed Sacrament that may fall onto the altar.
Credence Table	The table that has the chalices, Communion bowls or patens, finger bowl, water cruet and finger towel.
Cruet	The little pitcher that hold either water or wine for use during the Mass.
Finger Towel	A towel that Father will use to dry his hands.
Flagon or Flask	The large glass decanter that holds the wine at Mass.
Lectionary (Book of the Gospels)	A large red book that contains the Scripture readings from which the lectors reads. (The Book of the Gospels is a special book that contains only the Gospel readings.)
Offertory Table	The table behind the last pew by the Boland entrance where the gifts are placed.
Paten	A small dish or bowl that holds the bread that will be used during Mass.
Purificators	The small towels that are used to clean the chalices during the distribution of the Precious Blood at communion
Sacramentary	The large red book from which Father prays during Mass.
Sacristan	The person who takes care of the sacred vessels and vestments used at Mass.
Sacristy	The portion of the Church building where the priests, deacons, servers, and lectors meet to vest and prepare themselves for Mass.
Sanctuary	The area of the Church that contains the altar and the ambo.
Thurible	A metal vessel for the ceremonial burning of incense. The thurible is also known as a censer.
Thurifer	The one who carries the thurible and boat when needed.

Basic Information:

When you are scheduled to minister as an altar server, you should arrive at least ten (10) minutes before Mass time, if not sooner. On special occasions, you may be instructed to be present even earlier. One of the priests or deacons will tell you of these special circumstances.

If you can not be at a Mass at which you are scheduled to serve, it is your responsibility to find a substitute to take your place. We also understand that sometimes finding a sub can be very difficult if you get sick right before you should be present. When this happens, please call the rectory (645-1445), and tell Father you will not be coming.

Talking is permitted in the sacristy, but one must keep the volume of their voice down. Remember that there are people in Church who are praying.

Your appearance should be as if you were going to be visiting someone and doing something very important – because you are! You will be with Christ, and you will be serving at his table. Hair should be combed; hands and fingernails should be clean; shoestrings should be tied. Please DO NOT to wear a T-shirt with pictures on it or with writing that can be seen through your alb.

Please remember that, as a server, you could serve at other parishes, maybe for a wedding of a family member, funeral, or things like that. They may do things a little bit differently than what we do at Little Flower. We call the things we do **Rubrics** – which means “**Red**” which is the color of the instructions are printed in when you follow the Sacramentary. Just because they do things differently it does not make them wrong and our parish right. Things like how big the sanctuary is and what traditions they have help to determine what is done at our parish as well as other parishes.

What Should I Do Before Mass?

When you arrive, go to the bulletin board and write your initials behind your name. If you are substituting for someone, write your name behind the person’s name for whom you are substituting.

Proceed to the hallway where the albs are hung. Find one that fits you correctly. The bottom of the alb should be right at your ankles. You may want to try a few on to find out which size fits the best but, remember, you are growing and, from time to time, you will have to see which size fits the best.

Find a cincture that fits you, and tie it around your waist. The long part should be positioned to your left side, NOT down the front. At Little Flower, we have different colors for the various seasons and feast days that are being celebrated. If you do not know the correct color, ask the priest or deacon which color to use.

The various vessels and items that are needed at Mass will normally be prepared and ready for you to put out on the various tables. The priest, deacon, or sacristan will pour the wine into the flagon, put the bread into the paten, have the purificators out, and ready for you to put in their proper places. At times, the priest or deacon may have already done this himself. **Please ask the priest or deacon or Sr. Cynthia if there is anything that needs to be done.**

Make sure that the following items are on the credence table.

- ◊ Water cruet
- ◊ Finger Towel
- ◊ Water dish
- ◊ Father’s red chalice
- ◊ Silver chalices (4 at 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. Masses, and 6 at 10:30 a.m. Mass)
- ◊ Purificators (4 at 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. Masses, and 6 at 10:30 a.m. Mass)
- ◊ Silver patens/bowls (1 at 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. Masses, and 2 at 10:30 a.m. Mass)

You will also need to make sure the following are on the offertory table:

- ◊ Flagon of wine
- ◊ Paten with altar bread
- ◊ Basket for offertory collection

You will also need to get the candles from the holders on the front of the altar and bring them back to the sacristy before Mass so that they can be carried out during the entrance procession. There are times during the year that you will not carry the candles in procession. When that time occurs, someone will tell you.

What Do I Do During Mass?

- Before Mass begins, all gather in the sacristy and pray that we are worthy to assist at Mass.
- At the beginning of Mass, we process into Church in the following order from the Blessed Mother's Chapel:
 - Crucifix
 - Altar Servers
 - Lectors
 - Deacon carrying the Book of Gospels
 - Priest
- ◊ **Walk** slowly down the aisle, turn right, and continue walking to the Boland aisle of the Church, and turn into the Sanctuary.
- ◊ Walk towards the altar, and stop at the foot of the steps of the altar.
- ◊ If there is a deacon at the Mass, he will walk up the steps and place the Book of the Gospels on the altar.
- ◊ The priest will bow and then go up the steps where he and the deacon will reverence (kiss) the altar together.
- ◊ When the priest and deacon come down the steps, all will reverence the altar by bowing; you then **put the candles on the ambo**. Then proceed to the chairs to sit.
- ◊ If there is a deacon at the Mass, one server sits to the left of the priest, the other two servers sits in one of the freestanding chairs. If there is no deacon, then both servers sit to the left and right of the priest.
- ◊ The server that sits either in the freestanding chair or directly to the right of the priest will hold the Sacramentary so the priest can say the Opening Prayer. Your cue to stand in front of Father is when he says, "**Let us pray.**"
- ◊ When the prayer is done, the server holding the Sacramentary puts it down on the little table next to the chair. Priest, deacon and servers then **sit**.
- ◊ After the lectors are finished reading, the organist will begin the music for the Gospel Acclamation. When the music begins, **all stand**. If there is a deacon, he will ask Father for his blessing. When the deacon or priest is in front of the main altar, all make a **slight bow**. When the deacon or priest comes down from the Altar with the Book of the Gospels you then process over to the ambo. When you get to the ambo, pick up the candles. When the priest, deacon, and members of the congregation sign themselves, you do nothing because you are already doing something, which is holding the candles.
- ◊ At the conclusion of the Gospel, the deacon or priest says, "The Gospel of Our Lord." The congregation says, "Praise Be To Our Lord Jesus Christ." This is your cue to extinguish the candles. Do not leave the ambo area until the prayer is completed, or the Alleluia is completed.
- ◊ For the petitions, **pick up and hold the binder** in front of the priest. Wait until he closes the binder before returning it to the little table.
- ◊ When the petitions are completed, the server nearest the book brings it to the altar and places it on the altar. The other server goes to the credence table and begins bringing up the cups, and if there are any extra ciborium's with host in them. When the altar is finally set, return to the Presider's chair and wait for Father to stand and receive the gifts.

- ◊ **Stand and follow** the priest when he goes to receive the offertory gifts. The priest or deacon will hand the offertory baskets to one of the servers. The other server will receive the flagon with the wine.
- ◊ The server that received the baskets will place them on the top step to the left or right side. The server that received the wine or host will take it to the altar and wait for the deacon or priest to accept it.
- ◊ The priest will then wash his hands. One server will hold the **cruet of water and the water bowl**. When the priest puts his hands above the water bowl, the server will pour a little water on them. The other server will hold the finger towel that the priest will use to dry his hands by folding their hands as if in prayer with the towel under the thumbs. When he hands it back to you, hold your thumbs up so Father can place the towel in under your thumbs. Take the towel, and place it back on the credence table.
- ◊ The priest will say, "Pray, brethren, that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the Almighty Father." Then the congregation will respond, "May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good, and the good of all his Church."
- ◊ **Kneel** when the Holy, Holy, Holy is completed. (**Be sure to sing this and all other songs!**)
- ◊ During the consecration, when Father elevates the Body and the Blood of Christ, one server will ring the bell that is on the steps.
- ◊ After the Amen, before the Lord's Prayer, **stand**. Please note that when you stand, do not use your hands to push up from the step into the standing position; rather, rise by lifting one knee and then the other. (**Be sure to pray this and all other prayers!**)
- ◊ When the Lamb of God is begun, **kneel**.
- ◊ When Father receives communion, go immediately to the area where you stand to receive communion. Stand to the right of the extraordinary ministers. When you have received Communion, one server retrieves the Sacramentary from the altar, and both servers return to their original chairs and **sit**. When the deacon or priest returns to the altar to remove the sacred vessels, please go and assist. They will hand you different items to be put back on the credence table.
- ◊ After Communion, the priest and deacon will sit and will say a prayer of thanks to the Lord. When the priest says, "Let us pray," the server who has been holding the Sacramentary **picks it up again and stands in front of the priest** so he can pray the Prayer after Communion. The other server also stands. The priest may want you to stay there so he can give a solemn blessing from the Sacramentary. The priest will then close the book, and you can again put it on the little table.
- ◊ The priest and deacon will then proceed to the altar; please follow them.
- ◊ Watch Father, and, when he bows, you too will make a **slight bow**. Turn around, and you will lead everyone out of the Sanctuary down the main aisle. As a courtesy, offer to take Father's and the deacon's hymnal so they can go to the exits to greet the people.
- ◊ Proceed into the vestibule and recite the prayers for after the Divine Liturgy.

What Do I Do After Mass?

- ◊ Extinguish the candles using the candlesnuffer.
- ◊ Turn off the even-numbered light switches, numbers two through twenty-two.
- ◊ Bring the items that are on the credence table back to the sacristy.
- ◊ Bring the baskets to the sacristy.
- ◊ Take off your alb and cincture, and hang them back up on the proper hooks. Be sure to hang your alb by the white tab in its neckband; please do not hang it by the hood.

You then may leave knowing that you have helped the people to experience the love and the presence of God in the most special way possible!