

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI PARISH
WARWICK, RHODE ISLAND

ALTAR SERVERS MANUAL



Although the duties of the altar server are many and varied,
the most important responsibility of the altar server during Mass

is **TO PRAY!**

Preliminary Rules:

To be an altar server at Saint Francis you must first have received the sacrament of reconciliation and made your first communion.

- An altar server must attend every Mass for which they are scheduled. If for some reason the server cannot attend the assigned Mass, it is the server's responsibility to find a replacement. If there is a problem finding a replacement, contact Father Kiley.
- Please arrive **20 minutes** before Mass begins. Upon arrival, the female server should vest in alb, cincture (the rope), and scapular; male servers in cassock and surplice.
- Dress as you would to go anywhere important. Male servers should dress in collared shirts, dress pants or khakis. Female servers should wear dresses, skirts, or some other appropriate attire. **Blue Jeans, beach attire, gym clothes, and T-Shirts are never to be worn at Mass. Such clothing is not appropriate dress for serving at the altar.**
- **NO SNEAKERS, WORK BOOTS, or FLIP-FLOPS. Appropriate dress shoes should be worn, (preferably black shoes for male servers.)** Also, black sneakers are discouraged.
- Everyone, including altar servers, should genuflect when crossing in front of the tabernacle, when entering a pew when Jesus is present Body, and Blood in the Eucharist, and at the beginning and end of Mass. Servers do not genuflect once Mass has begun.
- Servers must demonstrate the ability to make use of the "tools of the trade" such as matches, candle lighters, books and candles, etc.

ALTAR SERVER JOB DESCRIPTION & RESPONSIBILITIES

Typically, there will be four servers assigned to a particular Mass on Sunday. The four positions will be defined as the following.

The Cross Bearer;

The Book Bearer.

Server One; Server Two.

The Cross Bearer: This is typically the older or more "seasoned" server, who carries the cross during the Entrance, Offertory, and Closing Processions. This server will be responsible for lighting the candles before Mass as well as extinguishing them afterwards. The Cross bearer should supervise other servers, and will make sure everything is in its proper place before and after Mass.

The Book Bearer: He or she will be responsible for also holding the book for the priest during the opening and closing prayers (a.k.a. *the "Let us Pray" prayers*).

Server One: This server is one of the candle bearers for the opening, gospel, and closing processions. Server One will also be responsible for the following tasks: Bringing the book to the altar during the preparation of the gifts, going down to the foot of the altar with the priest to receive the gifts, holding the wine for the priest and deacon, assisting in the washing of the hands, ringing the bells during the consecration, and taking the book off the altar after communion.

Server Two: Like Server One, this server is a candle bearer for the opening, gospel, and closing processions. However, during the Offertory, this server will bring up the chalice to the altar, and will be responsible for un-assembling and re-assembling the chalice during the appropriate times at Mass. Server Two will be responsible for the following tasks: assist in receiving the gifts at the foot of the altar with the priest, holding the water for the priest and deacon during preparation of the altar, pouring the water when the priest washes his hands, and bringing the water to the priests for the purification of the chalice after communion.

Please Note: On occasion, there will be a need for other servers to serve as an incense bearer (Thurifer) and candle bearers (bat guys) on special liturgical occasions. These servers will be responsible for lighting the incense, and disposing of the left over charcoal after Mass and securing the Eucharistic Prayer candle during Mass.

The Order of Mass

Before Mass & Entrance Procession.

- All servers should be vested and ready to go 5 minutes before Mass.
- The altar candles are lit by the cross bearer 10 minutes before the start of Mass. Use the appropriate instrument to light the candles. If possible, avoid taking flames from the votive candles, as was the previous practice.
- A brief prayer may be said before the start of Mass with the priest and other liturgical ministers.
- The procession forms at the main entrance in the foyer of the Church.
- The order of procession will usually consist of the following: (1) Cross, (2) Servers One and Two holding the candles, the book bearer, the lector, deacon (if present), and the priest. In cases where there is an incense bearer, that server will lead the procession (ahead of the cross). The bat guys and any extra servers will follow the regular candle bearers.

Thurifer

Cross Bearer

Server One; Server Two

Bat Guy; Bat Guy

Bat Guy; Bat Guy

Book Bearer

Lector

Deacon

Priest

- Please begin the procession as soon as singing begins. Please do not walk too quickly, **IT IS NOT THE BOSTON MARATHON.**
- Once at the altar, the Cross bearer should make a slight, reverent head bow, and then proceed to place the crucifix in the proper stand, and then go to your place.
- The Candle Bearers should make a slight head bow as well. Their processional candles will be placed in their appropriate place by the credence table. The servers then go to their places.

At St. Williams- The servers will be seated in the chairs provided next to the credence table and altar. **At St. Francis,** servers will sit in chairs provided for them in the sanctuary.

Opening Rite

- After the procession, the servers stand at their respective places.
- The Gloria will be recited or sung, except during Lent and Advent. At the words, "Let Us Pray," the **Book Bearer** will approach the priest with the Sacramentary (the big red book) opened to the proper page for the opening prayer. Keep the pages as flat as possible, and keep your fingers away from the text. When the priest is finished, the server will put the book back to the proper place by the credence table.

Liturgy of the Word

- After the Opening Prayer, all the servers sit to listen attentively to the Word of God.
- The tradition **at St. Francis** is to use the candles for the Gospel procession. During the Alleluia, all stand. After the Deacon or Priest approaches the altar to pick up the Gospel, servers one and two come forward with the processional candles to lead the deacon/ or priest to the pulpit.
- The servers will stand on opposite sides facing each other during the proclamation of the Gospel. After the Gospel, the candle bearers place the candles in the appropriate place and go to their seats.

Preparation of the Gifts

- **Immediately** after the Prayer of the Faithful is completed (and the people sit down and the collection begins), **Server One** brings the Sacramentary to the altar, opens it and places it at the left hand side of the altar.
- **At the same time: Server Two** will proceed to the altar to unveil the chalice and take the corporal out of the Burse (the matching item placed on top of the chalice) . He will immediately place the chalice, corporal, purificator, and the other chalices used for the Precious Blood on the altar.
- When the collection is nearly completed, the **cross bearer** will proceed to the back of the Church to lead the offertory procession.
- **Servers One and Two** will proceed with the deacon or priest to the front of the altar to receive the gifts of bread and wine.
- When the priest goes to the altar to say the offertory prayers, **Servers One and Two** will **promptly** come to the altar with the cruets filled with wine and water to be poured into the chalice. Either the deacon or the priest will take them from you. After the pouring is completed, return the cruets back to the credence table. After the offertory prayers have been said, the priest will turn to his right, and servers one and two should come forward to the priest with the lavabo to wash

his hands. (**Server One** should hold the towel, and **Server Two** should pour the water.) After this action is completed, the servers should make a slight and reverent bow to the priest, and then return to their place.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

- After the "Holy, Holy", all servers kneel at their place.
- **Server One** will ring the bells on three occasions during the Eucharistic prayer.
- **First Ring:** When the priest stretches his hands over the gifts. (Please be attentive to this action, for it varies depending on what Eucharistic Prayer is used) Here, the bells are rung only **once**.
- **Second Ring:** When the priest raises the host. Server One will ring the bells **three** distinct times.
- **Third Ring:** When the priest raises the chalice. Server One will again ring the bells **three** distinct times.
- After the Eucharistic prayer is completed, all will stand for the recitation of the Lord's Prayer and Sign of Peace.
- **Important note to all servers:** Please exchange the sign of peace with those immediately around you in the sanctuary. Although it is well meaning, it is liturgically improper to go around the Church to exchange peace, for it disrupts the flow to the liturgy.
- After the Extraordinary ministers approach the altar after the Lamb of God, the altar servers stand in their respective places with the Communion plates to receive Holy Communion. Servers should make a slight bow before receiving the Eucharist.
- During the distribution of Communion, **Servers One and Two** will assist the with the distribution of Communion by holding the Communion plate under the chin or hands of the person receiving Communion.
- After Communion, the Communion plates are placed in the altar. Any remaining hosts are placed back in the tabernacle by the priest or deacon. After the hosts are returned to the tabernacle, **Server Two** will come forward with the water cruet for the cleansing of the ciboria and chalice. **Please Note:** the priest may take the cruet from server, or ask the server to do the pouring. Server One will return the Book and stand to the Credence table. After the chalice and ciboria are cleansed by the deacon or priest, **Server Two** will re-assemble the chalice placing the veil over the chalice, and the corporal back in the burse) and ciboria at the altar and take the all back to the Credence table.

End of Mass

- **The Book Bearer** will proceed with the opened book to the priest for the prayer after communion at the words, "Let US Pray."
- After the final blessing and dismissal, the Servers One and Two will immediately pick up the processional candles, along with the Cross Bearer and the cross, and the Book Bearer and proceed to the front of the altar waiting for the priest. The closing procession will follow the same order for the servers.

Additional Things to Keep in Mind

- After Mass, the Cross Bearer will extinguish the candles. Servers, please hang up albs/ cassocks and surplices after use.
- If only two servers are present, no candles will be used. The Cross Bearer will still lead the procession, and the other server walks in procession directly in front of the deacon or priest. In rare cases of one server, the cross will be used, and the server will assume all duties as needed.
- Weddings and funerals require minor adjustments. These will be explained to the servers as necessary prior to these liturgies.
- Mass with Incense: Incense may be used at the beginning of Mass, at the Gospel, at the Preparation of the Gifts and at the Consecration. The Incense bearer presents the boat or thurible to the priest or deacon who then continues the rite. The priest and people may be incensed by the thurifer if the priest indicates such. After incensing the people, the thurifer leads the boys down the center aisle from their positions in the first pew in front of the pulpit. They pick up their bats in the rear of church, light them and process slowly down the aisle led by the thurifer during the Holy Holy Holy. Then kneel next to the thurifer until the Our Father whence all proceed to the sacristy by the very side door and, replace their bats and then retake their seats. All is done with dignity.

Helpful Definitions Altar Servers Should Know

Alb – The full white garment worn by the priest, deacon, and in some cases the altar servers. The alb is symbolic of Baptism. The rope tied around the waist is called a cincture.

Altar- The place where the Eucharistic Sacrifice takes place. The altar is sacred and often contains relics of the saints.

Ablution Cup - covered dish of water on the side of the tabernacle which is used by the priest, deacon or extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist to wash their fingers after distributing Communion.

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

Aspergelum – The Holy Water Sprinkler.

Bat/Bat Guys — Those who carry candles of honors (bats) during Solemn Masses.

Burse - A square container for holding the corporal. It is selected for the liturgical color of the day. Used Corporals should always be placed in the proper container for sacred cloths after mass.

Cassock - A long tunic like garment which reaches from the neck to the heels which is worn by some servers and clergy.

Chalice - A cup of precious metal that holds the wine which becomes the Blood of Jesus after the consecration. All chalices should be placed in their places after Mass. If the Chalices were left unpurified by the priest or deacon for some reason they should be left out on the presentation table for purification by the priest or deacon. Never put an unpurified chalice away.

Chalice Veil (peplum) - A cloth covering used to hide the chalice and paten up to the offertory and after Communion. It is selected by the liturgical color for the service.

Ciborium - A large cup or container of precious metal with a cover of the same material which will hold the Body of Jesus after the consecration for distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful.

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 unfolded as to protect any particles from being lost. The corporal is like the body winding sheet used to hold the crucified body or Our Lord in the tomb.

Communion Plate or Paten: Flat plate with handle used to catch particles that might fall from the Sacred Host during Communion.

Credence Table - The table in the sanctuary where the cruets, chalices and ciborium are kept before and after the Consecration.

Cruets – The vessels containing the water and wine used at Mass.

Lavabo- The pitcher of water used when the priest washes his hands at the end of the offertory and before the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Lectionary - The book of reading used for the liturgy of the word. It usually contains all the biblical reading used for the three year Sunday cycle of reading 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. No lay person should ever touch the paten so be very careful when handling it in your official duties.

Purificator - A linen cloth used by the priest or deacon to dry the chalice after washing and purifying it. Used purificators should always be placed in the proper container for sacred cloths.

Sacramentary - The book containing the prayers said by the priest during the Mass.

Sacrarium (piscina) - A sink with it drain going directly into the ground usually fitted with a cover and lock which is used for the disposal of the following: The sacred linen wash and rinse water, used holy water, used baptismal water and blessed ashes. No other use is permitted.

Scapular — Black cloth that hangs in front and back of female servers.

Stock - The metal containers used to hold the oil of the catechumen, the oil of chrism and the oil for anointing the sick.

Stoup - The holy water fountains or bowls at the entrances of the church.

Surplice - A wide sleeved, linen worn over a cassock by clergy and altar servers in some parishes.

Thurible — The special vessel which holds burning charcoal and into which incense is placed. The device holding the incense is called the "boat."

Thurifer — The server who handles the incense and boat.

ALTAR SERVER'S PRAYER

Open 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 more worthily at your holy altar.
O Mary, Mother of Christ the High Priest, 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.