

## **Altar Servers:** Revised on August 4, 2009

**Mission:** In service to the Holy Trinity at the altar, the St. Mary Parish Altar Servers assist the priest in the celebration of the Mass and other liturgical services.

Our ministry consists of students who serve at weekend Masses as well as adults who serve at weekday and funeral Masses.

We perform our duties with dignity, reflecting on the true presence of Christ in the Mass.



**Organization:** A representative from the adult Altar Servers serves on the Worship Commission, and assists the Liturgy Coordinator in the recruitment, training, and updating of all the participants in this ministry, both students and adults. This person works closely with the Liturgy Coordinator in the fulfillment of all these duties. Each year, the Liturgy Coordinator asks the adult Servers to propose the names of individuals for consideration as the representative for all the Altar Servers. After consulting with the Pastor, the Liturgy Coordinator selects the representative from this ministry to the Commission.

**Training:** Student Altar Servers are usually selected and trained at the end of fifth grade by the Liturgy Coordinator and the representative from the Altar Servers, and normally serve until at least the end of eighth grade. The protocols for Altar Servers are shared personally and in writing with the students and the adults during training sessions and updates that are held regularly for all Altar Servers. Teen Altar Servers are selected and trained in consultation with the Youth Ministry Director. Adult Altar Servers are selected and trained by the Liturgy Coordinator and the representative from the Altar Servers.

**Scheduling:** Grade school Altar Servers are scheduled to serve at least once per month, and are encouraged to serve twice a month. The number of active grade school Altar Servers is regulated in order to make this kind of monthly and potentially bi-weekly scheduling rotation possible. Usually there are three servers assigned to each Mass. Teens who serve on Sunday evenings are scheduled by the Youth Ministry Director. Adults who serve at funerals are scheduled by the Altar Server Representative, who is contacted by the parish secretary for each funeral. Some adult Funeral Servers also serve as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, and/or Sacristans, and thus are in dual-ministries. Care must be taken to avoid over-involvement and burn-out among parishioners who may be overextended with multiple ministries.

**Youth Ministry:** Youth Ministry Altar Servers are scheduled for the Sunday evening Mass during the school year by the Youth Ministry Director, and their training is done in consultation with the Liturgy Coordinator. Teens are encouraged to volunteer to serve at the altar during the summer months as well.

**Other Altar Servers:** St. Mary School staff and teachers select Altar Servers for the weekday school Masses. Altar Servers for sacramental celebrations are chosen from among the siblings of those receiving First Communion and Confirmation. Altar Servers are not used for weddings at this parish. Adult Altar Servers are used for funerals at this parish. When families request otherwise, consideration will be given for students and teens to serve at weddings and funerals.

**Nomenclature:** Sometimes Altar Servers are referred to as acolytes, altar boys, altar girls, etc. At this parish, especially because some adults function in this role at funerals and weekday Masses, they are all simply referred to just as Altar Servers. However, one of the steps to ordination as a deacon or priest is the official institution into the ministry of Acolyte, which is canonically different from being an Altar Server.

## **Altar Server Guide:** Updated on July 20, 2009

### Before Mass Starts:

- Arrive fifteen minutes early and sign-in to mark your attendance.
- Put on your robe and cord. Hang up any robes that are on the floor.
- Light the acolyte candles about ten minutes before Mass.
- Line up inside the church door for the beginning of Mass when instructed.

### At the Beginning of Mass:

- Wait for the priest's signal to begin the procession. Walk at a moderate speed.
- Bow in front of the altar, and then go to the side with the cross and the candles.
- The candle servers put the candles in their stands, and then go up to their places on the altar.
- Please pick up a missalette and join in singing the rest of the opening hymn.
- The cross server puts the cross in its stand, and then immediately brings the book to the priest.

### During the Liturgy of the Word:

- All three servers should follow along with the missalette that is in the corner of the cushion.
- During the reading of the Gospel, two servers stand on either side of the pulpit, facing inward.

### At the Beginning of the Offertory:

- As soon as the offertory music begins, the cross server goes to the back of church with the cross.
- Immediately, the candle servers transfer the liturgical items from the side table to the altar:
  - Do not place anything on the altar. Instead, just give the items to the priest or deacon.
  - Bring up the sacramentary book, the chalice, the cups, the ciboria, and the water pitcher.
  - Do not bring up the washing bowl and the towel until after the offertory procession.

### At the Offertory Procession:

- The cross server leads the gift bearers from the back of church to the altar right away.
- The candle servers help the priest or deacon receive the gifts of bread and wine at the altar steps.
- Do not place the bread and wine on the altar. Hand them to the priest or deacon at the altar.

### At the Offertory:

- The cross server comes up to the altar to receive the empty wine pitcher from the priest or deacon.
- The candle servers come up to the altar with the washing bowl and towel for the priest's hands.
- If incense is used, the candle servers step back out of the way during the actual incensing.

### The Eucharistic Prayer and Communion:

- The servers kneel on the altar steps when the people kneel during the Eucharistic Prayer.
- At the Lord's Prayer, the servers stand when the people stand, and then kneel for Communion.
- After receiving Communion, the servers take the book and the tray for the cups off of the altar.
- During Communion, all three servers sit at their places on the altar, and join in singing the hymn.

### After Communion:

- When the priest returns to the altar after Communion, the server comes back to the altar.
- The priest or deacon gives the big chalice and the ciboria to the server. They go on the side table.
- The priest or deacon purifies the chalices at the side table either during Mass or afterward.
- The cross server then brings the book to the priest for the closing prayers of the Mass.

### At the End of Mass:

- After the closing prayer and blessing, the cross server puts the priest's book back in its place.
- All three servers then immediately line up in the main aisle with the cross and the candles.
- When the priest bows in front of the altar steps, the servers lead the procession out of church.

### After Mass:

- Extinguish the server candles in the sacristy, and hang up the robes and cords in the closet.
- If any of the altar servers did not sign-in before Mass, they should do so before they leave.
- Thank you for serving at the altar for Mass! It is sincerely appreciated. Please serve again.

*If you cannot make your serving assignment, please obtain a substitute from the list of servers.  
If you cannot find a substitute, please call the Liturgy Office at 708-326-9308. Thank you!*

## **Funeral Server Guide:** Updated on July 20, 2009

### **Before the Funeral**

- Arrive in priests' sacristy at least thirty minutes before Mass time.
- Place the key in the tabernacle, and set the sacred vessels on the credence tables.
- Remove the Lectionary from the ambo and put it in the work sacristy.
- Leave the Sacramentary (red book) on the altar, light the altar and paschal candles.
- Set funeral pall and holy water bowl on the ledge in the narthex.
- Bring the processional cross to the narthex, near where the pall and holy water are.
- Make sure that the censer, incense, charcoal and lighter are ready by the west side entryway.
- If the Pastor is the celebrant, light incense before Mass because he uses it at the offertory.
- If a visiting priest is the celebrant, ask him when he will be using the incense during the funeral.
- If incense is used towards the end of the Mass, light the charcoal during the homily.
- Remember to ask the priest whether there will be a eulogy at the end of the funeral.

### **Upon the Arrival of the Hearse**

- The cross bearer hands pall to the funeral director, then holds cross, standing behind the priest.
- The second server holds the bowl with holy water to the right of the priest.
- When the priest has finished blessing the casket, the server puts the water bowl on the ledge.

### **Procession to the Altar**

- The cross bearer leads, holding the cross so that the bottom of the wooden part of the processional cross is level with the server's eyes. The second server follows the cross bearer in procession.
- Both servers proceed slowly down the center aisle, making sure that the priest is behind them.
- At the front of steps to the sanctuary, all bow their heads toward the altar, then go to their places.
- The cross bearer places the processional cross on the stand next to the south pillar.
- Both servers stand in front of the first side pew.

### **Offertory Rites**

- After the General Intercessions, if there is an offertory procession, the cross bearer takes the cross to the back credence table, and then leads the gift bearers back up the center aisle to where the priest is standing. Otherwise, both servers bring the offertory gifts from the side credence table.
- While the gifts are being brought forward in procession, the second server brings the chalice and the water pitcher from the side credence table, and places them on the corner of the altar.
- In case of a visiting priest, the second server may help the priest receive the gifts of bread and wine, while the cross bearer returns the cross to its stand at the side.
- After the priest pours the water and the wine, the second server takes them both to the side table.
- If the priest uses incense at this time, the servers wait at the side credence table for it to finish.
- The cross bearer assists the second server in bringing the water, the lavabo bowl, and the towel to the priest for the washing of hands. These vessels are then returned to the side credence table.
- During the Eucharistic Prayer, the servers kneel in the front side pew.

### **The Sign of Peace**

- The servers may be asked to bring the ciboria from tabernacle. Please look for the priest's signal.
- Servers who are Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may be asked by the priest to help him with the distribution of Communion, especially in case of a large congregation or if the cup is offered.

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### **Communion Rite**

- During the distribution of Communion, the chalice is taken back to the side credence table.
- After Communion, the ciborium is returned to the tabernacle by one of the servers.
- The priest usually purifies the chalice at the side credence table, either at that time or after Mass.

### **Rite of Commendation**

- The cross bearer takes the cross to center aisle, about eight feet past the casket, facing the altar.
- The second server waits in front of the first pew to receive the censer from the priest, unless the priest chooses to return the censer to its stand next to the altar.
- If the second server has the censer, (s)he leads the procession out to the narthex after the final prayer. Otherwise, the second server follows the cross bearer.

### **Optional Eulogy**

- If there is a eulogy, the Pastor allows it after the incensing of the coffin at the Rite of Commendation.
- Other priests may allow the eulogy after Communion. Please ask the priest about this ahead of time.
- Sit down in the pews during the eulogy. If the altar server has the incense, it should be taken out to the narthex kitchenette during the eulogy so as to get it out of the way.

### **Recessional**

- After priest says, "Let us take our brother/sister to his/her place of rest," bow when the priest bows, and then turn around to lead the procession out to the narthex.
- The second server places the censer on the tile floor in the narthex kitchenette (not on any carpet), and waits to receive the pall from the funeral director.
- Both servers wait in the narthex while people leave the church to see if anyone needs assistance.

### **After the Funeral**

- Return the funeral pall and the tabernacle key to the priest's sacristy.
- Place censer on the stand outside the work sacristy, away from any carpet.
- Empty the holy water into baptismal font, or into the holy water container in the work sacristy, and then return the holy water bowl to the cabinet in the work sacristy.
- Extinguish the altar and paschal candles with the snuffer, unless there is another funeral following.
- Please wash and dry all the sacred vessels in the work sacristy, closing the locked door behind you.
- Make sure all the church lights are turned off, and make sure the sound system has been turned off.

*Thank you for working together as a team! Thank you very much for serving at St. Mary Parish funerals!*

