ABOUT SERVING

By serving at the altar, you are participating in the greatest mystery of our faith: that God would come to dwell among us and offer his divine Son as a sacrifice for our redemption. Serving well allows everyone to pray reverently and maintains the dignity of the Mass. A good server is attentive to the liturgy and able to move when needed without drawing attention to him/herself. Serving at the altar is an honor that is not open to everyone. Always conduct yourself in a way that commands respect, maintaining an attitude of honor and respect. Altar servers help everyone pray and worship God, but especially assist the priest in the celebration of the sacred mysteries. Everything in the liturgy is directed to manifesting the glory of God.

Servers should be mature enough to understand their responsibilities and to carry them out well in a graceful and reverent way. They should ordinarily have already been admitted to receiving Holy Communion.

Servers should receive proper formation before they begin to function. The formation should include instruction on the Mass and its parts and their meaning, the various objects used in the liturgy (their names and use), and the various functions of the server during the Mass and other liturgical celebrations. Servers should also receive appropriate guidance on maintaining proper decorum and attire when serving Mass and other functions.

Since the role of server is integral to the normal celebration of the Mass, at least one server should assist the priest. On Sundays and other more important occasions, two or more servers should be employed to carry out the various functions normally entrusted to these ministers.

Acolytes, altar servers, readers, and other lay ministers may wear the alb or other suitable vesture or other appropriate or dignified clothing (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 339). All servers should wear the same liturgical vesture.

Servers carry the cross, the processional candles, hold the book for the priest celebrant when he is not at the altar, carry the incense and censer, present the bread, wine, and water to the priest during the preparation of the gifts or assist him when he receives the gifts from the people, wash the hands of the priest, assist the priest celebrant and deacon as necessary.
Servers respond to the prayers and dialogues of the priest along with the congregation. They also join in singing the hymns and other chants of the liturgy.

Servers should be seated in a place from which they can easily assist the priest celebrant and deacon. The places next to the priest are normally reserved for the deacons.

Servers may not distribute Holy Communion unless they have been mandated for this function by the bishop.

Thank you for your willingness to be an Altar Server.

**HOW TO DRESS**

Traditional culture understands that to be well-dressed and well-groomed is a form of respect. Because altar servers are in the midst of the sacred worship of the Church, they should be groomed and dressed in a manner that shows honor and respect for God, others, and self. Servers must have clean hands, no body odor, and be appropriately dressed. Servers are to wear albs while serving. Because the alb covers most clothing, close attention should be paid to shoes and hair.

All need to be neat and clean in appearance, including:
- Hair needs to be combed and not in the way of the face. The server should have a wide enough angle of view to see what is happening in the sanctuary.
- Clothing should reflect Christian modesty.
- Shoes, socks, or stockings should be dark in color. No sandals, flip-flops, sneakers, lights, rollers, or noisemakers. Ladies heels 1 ½" or shorter.
- Shirts should not be bright or have large patterns. Alb material is thin and bright colors and patterns may show through.
- No chewing gum. The Eucharistic fast only allows water and medicine for one hour before receiving Holy Communion.
- Cell phones are to be powered off, or preferably not carried at all while serving.

**HOW TO CARRY ONESELF**

In order to promote and encourage the faith of the people, the altar servers must move in a way that is graceful. This reduces the attention that they draw to themselves, and allows the faithful to remain focused on the liturgy.

Do not draw attention to yourself by unnecessary talking, fidgeting, sloppy posture, or unnecessary movement. A good altar server should move only when necessary to complete a specific function. Remain reverent at all times, do not goof around, run, or yell. Do not make faces, touch the other servers, or carry on conversations. Everyone can see what you are doing. Do not draw attention to yourself.

Instead, carry yourself in a dignified way. When walking, walk with head up, back straight, and hands together in prayer. Hands should be with palms together, fingers pointed up, thumbs crossed right over left, in front of your chest. If holding something with one hand, hold the object with the right hand and place the left hand, with fingers together, palm in, flat over your heart. Never walk with hands at your sides.

Servers usually move as a group. Before sitting, standing, or moving, look at each other in order to move at the same time.

While sitting, feet should rest flat on the floor, with the palms of your hands resting on top of your thighs, just above the knees. Look to where the liturgical action is taking place in case you are needed.

Whenever the celebrant stands, also stand. When the celebrant sits, also sit unless there is a duty to perform.

Do not walk in front of the priest or deacon when he is seated.

When walking and not carrying something, walk at a steady pace with prayer hands (palms together, fingers pointed up, in front of chest). There is no reason to hurry.

If the priest or deacon motions for something and you are uncertain what he wants, approach him slowly and ask him.

Even when you are not doing something, people are watching. You are performing a public action and should behave in a way that reflects honor.
and respect to God and his people.

There are two types of bows: simple and profound. The simple bow is a bow of the head only from the neck. This is made at the name of Jesus, the saint of the day, or to the priest. The profound bow is a bow of the entire upper body from the waist. The profound bow is made to the altar or when passing in front of the bishop. If you are carrying or holding an item do not bow when passing the altar.

In addition to bows, there is another kind of reverence called a genuflection. The genuflection is the reverence done to the Blessed Sacrament. In the context of the Mass, the priest genuflects after consecrating the body and blood of Christ, and before receiving communion. If the Blessed Sacrament is present in the main body of the Church, such as for Exposition or Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, everyone genuflects upon entering or leaving in procession. Because the Blessed Sacrament is reserved at St. Mary’s in a side-chapel that we do not pass in procession, we only bow to venerate the altar. If you pass in front of the Blessed Sacrament outside of Mass, you must always genuflect. When genuflecting, bend at the knees, with the right knee touching the ground and the left foot flat on the ground. The left knee forms a right angle. Keep your back straight while genuflecting.

In liturgical processions, always pass to the right of obstacles (e.g. baptismal font, altar).

ARRIVAL BEFORE MASS

Arrive 15-20 minutes before Mass. After that, a replacement may be asked to serve in your place. Please show respect for the Mass, the people, the priest, and the other liturgical ministers by being on time.

Always get a substitute when you cannot be there as scheduled. If you need a new altar server roster with names and phone numbers, call Esperanza. If you've tried 3-4 others and cannot find a substitute, have your parents request a sub via the Ministry Scheduler program.

Sign-in on the list outside of the work sacristy so that other servers and sacristan know you are present. If you are a substitute, add "sub for" and list for whom you are a substituting.

Find an appropriate sized alb, it should cover you down to the top of your shoes. You will need to look in the mirror to check the length. Over the alb, put on a cincture, and tie it around your waist. After vesting, quietly recite the “Prayer Before Mass” to prepare yourself for serving at the altar of God.

Ordinarily, at weekend Masses there should be four servers. It can be helpful to have as many as seven, especially when the bishop is the celebrant.

PREPARATION FOR MASS

After vesting in the alb and cincture, go to the bell tower and ring both bells for a couple of minutes. This should be done at 10 minutes before the Mass is scheduled to begin. The bells alert people that Mass is about to begin.

Next, go to the work sacristy and light the altar candles with the taper. Then, assist the sacristan as needed. If it has not already been done, carry the bread and wine, and the processional candles to the gift table in the back of the church. Put the chalices, purificators, corporal, pall, water, bowl and towel on the credence table, or make sure they are there. The credence table should be set in this manner (left to right): the priest’s chalice, purificator, pall, and a corporal; next chalice(s) for the faithful, an equal number of purificator(s), water to mix with the wine, the paten with the low-gluten host (if necessary), and the tray with the pyxes (if necessary).
Last are the lavabo set and towel for the priest to wash his hands, the additional bowl patens, and the ablution cup.

Make sure the Roman Missal (large red book), the Prayers of the Faithful (small red book) and the Sanctus bells are by the servers’ chairs before the start of the Mass.

Double check everything. Always ask if you are unsure about anything. Never be afraid to ask a question.

*If incense is being used, the thurifer assists the sacristan with lighting the charcoal 15 minutes before Mass. There should be three lit coals in the thurible at the beginning of Mass and one out on the stand near the credence table.*

Decide which role each server will do:

- **Thurifer** (If incense is being used.)
- **Incense Boat bearer** (If incense is being used.)
- **Crucifer** (If there is no server strong enough to carry the cross, then an adult may carry it. Ideally, the adult should vest in an alb, and sit with the servers.)
- **Torch bearers** (If there are not enough servers to carry both candles, then do not use them.)

If the bishop is present, **Miter and Crosier bearers** (Wear the vimpae over the alb, follow behind the bishop in the procession, and hold the miter and crosier as needed.)

Decide what duties each server is going to assist with during Mass:
- Presenting the Roman Missal for the Collect (opening prayer)
- Presenting the Creed and Prayer of Faithful
- Server setting the altar if the priest/deacon is not
- Servers assisting with the gifts
- Ringing the bells
- Bringing forward the patens
- Presenting the Roman Missal after Communion

If there is only one server, carry the cross, if possible.
If there are two servers, one carries the cross, and the other walks behind. If the servers are not strong enough to carry the cross, then they carry the processional candles, and an adult leads with the cross.
If there are three servers, carry the cross and processional candles.
If the priest wants to use incense, and there are only three servers, one carries the cross, and the other two the thurible and boat in the procession and recession, with the cross and boat bearer carrying the candles for the Gospel procession only. The fourth and fifth servers carry the thurible and incense boat at the beginning of the procession.

Do not always do just one role, get to know all of them so that you will be comfortable in any role.

**THE MASS**

**Entrance Procession:**
Wait in the entrance of the church for the priest and deacon to arrive and Mass to start. The entrance procession will begin in the back of the church by the baptismal font. Light the processional candles on the gift table before Mass begins.

The procession starts moving when the people begin to sing. Do not start when the introductory music begins, but wait until the singing begins. The thurifer and boat bearer lead the procession. The thurifer is always to the right of the boat bearer. When there is no thurifer and boat bearer, the crucifer leads the procession. Candle bearers walk side by side, followed by additional servers in pairs and with hands folded.

Servers line up as shown:
Walk at a consistent, normal pace, neither slow nor fast. Do not crawl. Do not hurry. Do not follow the tempo of the music. Carry the cross reasonably high. It balances best if you place one hand slightly below the crosspiece and one hand further down. If there are processional candles in the opening procession, they come after the cross. Everyone always goes to the right of the baptismal font. Additional servers process behind the candles. Leave the distance of 4-6 feet between you and the person in front of you. Maintain the same distance all the way to the front of the altar.

When you arrive at the altar, without any pause, without any stopping, make a slight bow of the head from the neck, in front of the altar. The crucifer continues processing to the right around by the ambo, places the cross in its holder, and proceeds to the servers’ chairs. The candle bearers follow the crucifer around the right of the altar, place their candles on the credence table, and proceed to their chairs. Do not stop, do not pause; keep the procession moving. When you get to your chairs, remain standing.

Servers that carry something make only a slight bow of the head as they approach the altar. Servers not carrying something pause and make a profound bow from the waist in front of the altar. All servers walk to the right of the altar.

The thurifer and boat bearer immediately go and stand behind the altar. After the priest kisses the altar, the thurifer and boat bearer bow slightly, step up to the priest at the altar, and present the thurible and boat to the priest. If there is no boat bearer, the thurifer hands the thurible to the deacon and holds the boat, or if there is no deacon, hands the boat to the priest before opening the thurible. The boat bearer opens the boat and holds it next to the opened thurible. After the priest takes the thurible, the servers step down and wait behind the altar. After the priest or deacon hands the thurible back to the thurifer they bow slightly, the servers take them to the thurible stand and walk to their seats.

Candle bearers place the processional candles on the credence table, then stand in front of the servers’ chairs.

After the priest kisses the altar (or finishes incensing the altar) one server gets the Roman Missal and opens it to the Collect. When the priest says, “Let us pray,” the server walks directly to the priest and presents the Roman Missal. If the server is as tall as the priest the server stands to the side of the priest while holding the Missal. If the server is shorter than the priest, the server stands in front of the priest. After the Collect and the people’s response “Amen,” close the Missal, turn, and walk directly back to the servers’ chairs. Return the Roman Missal to the server table. All the servers wait to sit down together once the priest and deacon are seated.

First Reading, Responsorial Psalm and Second Reading:
Listen attentively to the Scripture readings. Sit up straight with your hands on your lap. When you stand for the Gospel stand with dignity, placing hands palms together in front of your chest.

The servers remain seated until the end of the second reading. As the reader returns to his seat, all servers stand and walk together to the credence table.
Gospel Procession and Proclamation:
The thurifer and boat bearer bring the thurible and boat to the priest. Bow and open the thurible and boat for the priest. After the priest places incense in the thurible, the boat bearer and thurifer bow and walk to in front of the candle bearers, facing the nave. (If there are not enough servers for a boat bearer, the thurifer carries the boat.)

If there are at least two servers, then candles are used in the gospel procession. Candle bearers take the processional candles and walk side by side, stopping when in line with the rear altar candles.

The gospel procession begins after the priest or deacon elevates the Book of the Gospels and turns to walk down the steps. If present the thurifer leads the procession. The candle bearers walk side by side around the front of the altar at a steady pace to the ambo.

The thurifer walks to the left side of the ambo and stands slightly back. The boat bearer splits and goes to the right of the ambo. The candle bearers split and stand on each side of the ambo, facing each other.

The priest or deacon will take the thurible to incense the Book of the Gospels and will return it to the thurifer before proclaiming the Gospel. The thurifer swings the thurible back and forth at full chain behind the ambo until the Gospel is finished.

After the gospel response, the candle bearers walk side by side to the credence table walking behind the celebrant’s chair. The thurifer and boat bearer follow the candle bearers back to the credence table. When putting the thurible on the stand, the thurifer adds a whole coal to the thurible. After placing the candles on the credence table, the servers walk to their seats, hands folded, and sit down together. The servers remain seated during the homily. While seated open the Prayer of the Faithful book to the Creed on the inside front cover.

Creed and Prayer of the Faithful:
When the priest stands after the homily, the server brings the Prayer of the Faithful book, open to the Creed, to the priest at his chair. At the end of the Creed the priest will turn to the Universal Prayer. The priest will say the invitation to prayer, then the server moves to the front of the deacon. If there is no deacon, the server stays in front of the priest. Once the deacon finishes the petitions, the server moves back to the priest, who reads the concluding prayer.

After the Prayer of the Faithful, the server returns the Prayer of the Faithful book to the server table. All servers rise and go to the credence table, taking the Roman Missal with them.

Preparing the Altar:
At the conclusion of the Prayer of the Faithful, the server(s) bring the corporal to the altar first. Next they bring the main chalice, followed by the additional chalices, purificators, water cruet, any low gluten hosts to be consecrated, the Missal stand, and the Roman Missal. These items should all be handed to whomever is setting the altar, do not place them on the altar yourself. There is no need to bow when bringing these items up to the altar.

If a priest or deacon is setting the altar:
Servers bring the items from the credence table to the priest or deacon. Each server picks up an item and lines up single file at the base of the steps. When handing items to priest or deacon, step up to the top step as needed to hand the item to the priest or deacon. Turn to the left, leave the altar, and return to the credence table to get another item if needed. Once the altar is set, return to the servers’ chairs and be seated until the Presentation of the Gifts.

If a server is setting the altar:
The most experienced server should bring forward the corporal, and unfold it. The items should be laid out as indicated in the diagram below. Remaining servers will bring the items to the altar in the manner described above. The Roman Missal should be opened to the offertory prayers. Once the altar is set, return to the servers’ chairs and be seated until the Presentation of the Gifts.
Offertory:
After the collection is complete, the priest and deacon will walk to the
front of the altar. Two servers follow, one walking to the right of the altar,
and one the long way around to the left. The servers stand next to the
priest and deacon. The priest will hand the servers the gifts of bread and
wine. The servers walk back the way they came to the back of the altar and
wait for the priest or deacon to take the gifts. The server holding the wine
should remove the lid of the flagon/decanter before handing it to the
deacon or priest. The servers wait to receive the empty wine flagon and
water cruet. They turn left, walk to credence table and place them on the
credence table.

While the priest offers the gifts, the thurifer and boat bearer bring
the thurible and incense boat to the back of the altar. When the
priest turns to his right, the servers bow slightly and ascend to the
top step. The boat bearer opens the boat and holds it next to the
opened thurible. If there is no boat bearer, the thurifer hands the
thurible to the deacon to open and holds the boat. If there is no
deacon and no boat bearer, the thurifer hands the boat to the priest and opens the
thurible. When the priest takes the thurible, step down and wait behind the altar.

The priest incenses the offerings, the altar, and cross. Next the deacon incenses the
priest, and then the people.

If there is no deacon:
The thurifer goes up to the top step after the priest has incensed around the altar,
takes the thurible, makes a profound bow, incenses the priest with three double
swings (all in the center), and makes another profound bow. Next the thurifer goes
around the right of the altar and staying on the top step, at the center front of the
altar, bows to the people, incenses them with three double swings (center, left, right),
bows to the people again, turns to the right, descends the steps, and returns the
thurible to the stand by the credence table.

While the gifts are being offered, or during the incensations, one
or two servers get the lavabo set and finger towel and wait by
the credence table. If there is one server, the ewer is held in the
right hand, the bowl in the left hand, and the towel is draped
over the left forearm. If there are two servers, the one on the right carries
the pitcher, and the one on the left carries the bowl and the towel over the
left forearm.

When the priest makes the profound bow after offering the gifts, or as he is
being incensed walk to the base of the altar. When the priest turns to you,
bow, ascend to the top step to wash the priest’s thumbs and index fingers.
When the priest has dried his hands, bow, turn inward and return to the
items to the credence table. If there is no incense, all the servers return to
their chairs. If there is incense, all servers except the thurifer and candle
bearers return to the server chairs as a group and remain standing. The thurifer and candle
bearers wait with hands folded by the credence table. The thurifer may add a spoon
of incense to the thurible.

Holy, Holy, Holy (Sanctus):
While the choir and congregation sing the Holy, Holy, Holy, the thurifer takes the
thurible and the candle bearers take the processional candles and walk to the front of
the altar. The thurifer leads and the candle bearers walk side by side behind the
thurifer. When the Holy, Holy, Holy ends, they kneel down on the first step in the
center front of the altar, the thurifer is flanked by the candles on each side.

At the end of the Holy, Holy, Holy, the servers standing at the server
chairs kneel as a group. The servers may approach the altar and kneel on
the lowest step or kneel in front of the server chairs. All servers must kneel
in the same place (i.e. either all kneel at the chairs, or all kneel on the altar
step).

Eucharistic Prayer:
The servers remain kneeling during the Eucharistic Prayer. One server
rings the bells at three different times. The first ring is a short single ring at the epiclesis (when the priest extends both his hands, palms down, over the offerings). In most of the Eucharistic Prayers this gesture is made shortly after the Holy, Holy, Holy. In the first Eucharistic Prayer, the epiclesis happens after the priest first makes a sign of the cross over the offerings with his right hand. Pay close attention to the priest’s gestures to prevent a mistaken ring. The deacon kneels at the epiclesis, providing an additional signal.

The second ring takes place at the elevation of the consecrated host. After the priest says the words of consecration, “This is my body…” he genuflects and raises the host high. At this point the server rings the bells three distinct times. At the end of the third ring hold the bells up until they finish sounding and then gently set them on the pillow.

The third ring is like the second, but for the elevation of the chalice. After the priest says the words of consecration, “This is my blood…” he genuflects and raises high the chalice. The server rings the bells three distinct times, letting the final ring decay on its own, before setting the bells down on the pillow.

After the elevation of each the host and the chalice, the thurifer incenses them with three double swings (all in the center, to the sacred species). The thurifer and candle bearers remain kneeling until the priest says, “The mystery of faith.” While the choir and people sing the Mystery of Faith, the servers rise and return their items to the credence table and thurible stand. They join the other servers kneeling at the server chairs.

**Our Father and Sign of Peace:**
All the servers stand together when the people stand for the Our Father. During the Our Father, the servers stand with palms facing, fingers together, hands together in front of the chest. They do not hold hands, they do not extend their hands in imitation of the priest’s gestures.

During the Sign of Peace the servers may briefly exchange peace with each other, then all walk to the credence table. Two servers take the patens to the priest. Do not wait until the Blessed Sacrament arrives from the tabernacle. After handing the patens to the priest or deacon, turn left and walk back the credence table. After all the servers are at the credence table, wait with hands folded facing the altar. Remain standing until lining up for communion.

**Communion:**
After the priest consumes the Precious Blood from his chalice, the servers walk forward together and form an arch around the rear of the altar. They are joined on either side by the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC). After receiving communion, the servers wait until the EMHC have received their vessels for distribution. (If you choose not to receive the Blood of Christ, cross your arms over your chest when the chalice is offered to you.) When the EMHC move to their places of distribution, the servers may return to their seats.

Two of the servers go to the altar to retrieve the Roman Missal to the server table, and the Missal stand to the credence table. The server who returns the Missal stand to the credence table, takes the cruet of water and places it on the altar on the way back to the servers’ chairs. The servers return to their chairs, kneel in prayer, and give thanks to God for Christ’s sacrifice for us and the gift of Holy Communion during its distribution.

When the priest returns to the altar, he sends the Blessed Sacrament to the tabernacle and begins purifying the vessels. The servers line up single file on the right side of the altar, and wait for the priest to hand them the purified vessels. Ascend the steps as necessary, the priest should not have to walk to you, you walk up to him. After receiving an item, the server turns left, and returns the item to the credence table. When the altar is cleared, and the priest returns to his seat, the servers also return to their seats, and sit once the priest is seated.

**Prayer After Communion:**
When the priest stands and says, “Let us pray,” one server opens the Roman Missal to the Prayer After Communion and brings it to him. At the conclusion of the prayer, the priest will either close the Missal and send the server back to the other servers, or will hold the Missal open to give a Solemn Blessing.

**Recessional:**
After the priest or deacon has given the dismissal, and the people have responded, “Thanks be to God,” the thurifer, boat bearer, crucifer, and candle bearers pick up their items and wait in the sanctuary. As soon as the recessional music begins, the servers walk to the main aisle and line up according to the diagram, facing the altar.
After the priest bows to the altar, everyone turns to the right, or inward if side by side with someone, and walks out of the church. Everyone walks to the right of the baptismal font.

The servers place their items on the gift table and the crucifer places the cross into its stand. All follow the priest and deacon to under the bell tower and bow to crucifix with the priest and deacon. The priest says, “Prosit.” The response is, “Pro omnibus et singulis.” The translation is, “May it benefit all and each.”

The servers go to the vesting sacristy, remove their cinctures and albs and hang them up carefully in the closet. At the end of Mass be courteous to your fellow servers at the next Mass and the church’s property by hanging up your alb or putting away others that are out of place. Albs are sacred vesture and should be hung up carefully. If any have fallen on the closet floor, hang them up. Please close the closet doors before leaving the vesting sacristy.

After the priest bows to the altar, everyone turns to the right, or inward if side by side with someone, and walks out of the church. Everyone walks to the right of the baptismal font.

The servers place their items on the gift table and the crucifer places the cross into its stand. All follow the priest and deacon to under the bell tower and bow to crucifix with the priest and deacon. The priest says, “Prosit.” The response is, “Pro omnibus et singulis.” The translation is, “May it benefit all and each.”

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The thurifer goes back to the gift table and takes the thurible and boat back to the work sacristy and helps the sacristan extinguish the ashes.

If your alb is dirty, torn, or stained do not put it back. Please leave it on the coat rack and let the priest or deacon know if it needs to be washed or mended.

Glossary

The following terms are used in Catholic liturgy. It is important for Altar Servers to know, understand, and be able to use these terms.

**Acolyte:** A man who has been instituted by the bishop to serve at the altar. Instituted acolytes wear the alb, are permanently mandated as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, and may purify the sacred vessels after communion.

**Alb:** The long white robe with sleeves worn by priests, deacons, and servers at Mass. It symbolizes the white baptismal garment.

**Altar:** The sacred table on which the sacrifice of the Mass is offered. It is the symbol of Christ’s presence in the church. Altars are both tables for the sacred meal, and the places for the offering of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. The altar also symbolizes the tomb of Christ, which is why the priest venerates it with a kiss at the beginning and end of Mass.

**Altar Candles:** Candles placed around the altar that are lit only for liturgical celebrations.

**Altar Server:** A person who vests in the alb and cincture or cassock and surplice, and assists with the ceremonial functions of the liturgy.

**Ambo:** The place where the scriptures are proclaimed.

**Amice:** A rectangular linen cloth with two long strings. It is worn under an alb at the neck to cover secular clothing.

**Baptismal Font:** The basin of water at the entrance of the church. This water is blessed and used for baptisms, and for recalling the mystery of our own baptism when entering the church.

**Biretta:** A four-cornered hat with three or sometimes four fins worn by clergy.

**Blessed Sacrament:** The consecrated bread and wine, also called the Body and Blood of Christ. The Body of Christ may be reserved in the tabernacle. The reverence given to the Blessed Sacrament is a genuflection on the right knee.

**Blessed Sacrament Chapel:** The room to the left of the sanctuary where the Tabernacle is located. It is used for private prayer and reservation of the Blessed Sacrament.

**Boat:** Large metal container used to hold the incense. An altar server carries it with the thurible or alongside the thurifer depending on the number of servers present.

**Book of the Gospels:** A large book containing the gospels proclaimed at Mass. It is carried in the entrance procession by the deacon, lector, or reader. The deacon or priest carries it in procession before proclaiming the Gospel.
Burse: A square cloth envelope or ‘purse’ for holding the corporal. It is made of fabric that matches the priest’s vestments.
Cantor: A singer who leads the faithful in song.
Cassock: A long black robe worn by clergy, seminarians, and sometimes by altar servers. It is worn with a surplice. These garments are used for certain special celebrations.
Cathedra: The throne reserved for the bishop of the diocese.
Celebrant: The name used for the priest who is gathering, directing, and offering the assembly’s prayers to God.
Chasuble: The large colored garment worn by the priest over his alb and stole. Its color corresponds to the current liturgical season.
Chalice: A sacred vessel used during the consecration of wine into the Precious Blood of Christ. It is the metal cup used to hold and distribute the Precious Blood.
Chalice Veil: A large rectangular cloth, usually made of the same fabric as the priest’s vestments that is used to cover the chalice.
Ciborium: A sacred vessel used to reserve the Sacred Body of Christ in the tabernacle, also the bowls used for distribution of the Body of Christ. The plural of the word is ciboria. They usually have a lid.
Cincture: The rope belt that is tied around the waist of the alb. It is a symbol of chastity.
Concelebrant: An additional priest who is celebrating Mass, but is not the main priest celebrant. He may say some of the prayers that only the priests can say, and may assist the celebrant by functioning in some of the deacon’s roles.
Consecration: The words of the Eucharist, pronounced at Mass, by which is accomplished the very sacrifice that Christ instituted at the Last Supper. When the bread and wine offerings become the Sacred Body and Precious Blood of Christ.
Corporal: The large white square cloth that is placed on the altar while preparing the altar for the offertory. This cloth is folded four times and usually kept on top of the priest’s chalice and paten. The corporal is not to be shaken but folded and unfolded carefully on the altar.
Credence Table: The table where the sacred vessels and other items used for the celebration of the Mass are placed. It is behind the cathedra.
Crosier: The pastoral staff carried by the bishop.
Crucifer: The altar server who carries the processional cross.
Cruet: Small glass containers used for water and/or wine.
Dalmatic: The large colored garment worn by the deacon over his alb and stole. The color corresponds to the current liturgical season.
Deacon’s Chair: The chair to the right side of the celebrant’s chair where the deacon assisting at the Mass sits. There may be chairs on either side of the celebrant’s chair or cathedra for additional deacons.
Decanter: A large glass pitcher that is used to hold wine for the presentation of the gifts. Sometimes it is also called a flagon.
Epiclesis: The moment when the priest invokes the Holy Spirit to come upon the offerings and transform them into the Body and Blood of Christ. In the Eastern Orthodox tradition, this is considered the consecration, but in the Roman Catholic tradition, the consecration occurs at the Institution Narrative: “This is my body; this is my blood.”
Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (EMHC): A lay person who has been trained and temporarily mandated by the bishop to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion.
Gift Table: The table where the gifts presented during the mass are placed. The Processional Candles and Book of the Gospels are also placed on this table. It is located near the entrance of the church by the baptismal font.
Lavabo Bowl: A dish used in the cleansing of the priest’s hands during the Mass. It is small, shallow, and gold in color.
Lavabo Ewer: A pitcher used in the cleansing of the priests hands during the Mass. It is sometimes called a finger towel. They are usually smaller in size than a purificator.
Lavabo Towel: A small cotton or linen towel used in the cleansing of the priests hands during the Mass. It is small and gold in color.
Lector: A man who has been permanently instituted by the bishop to proclaim the Word of God in the liturgy, not including the Gospel.
Leonctionary: The book that contains the readings appointed for the Mass. It is placed on the ambo.
Miter: The tall pointy hat worn by the bishop.
Pall: A word that means “covering.” It is used for two items: the small, stiffened, square cover sometimes placed over the chalice; and the cloth covering for the casket at a funeral.
Paten: A sacred vessel used during the consecration of bread into the Sacred Body of Christ. It is the metal bowl used to hold and distribute the Sacred Body of Christ. In the case of the bowls, it may be used interchangeably with ciboria. Patens tend to be flatter and hold fewer hosts than ciboria, and do not have lids.
Pew: The bench seats were the faithful sit in church.
Prayer of the Faithful Book: The book that contains the Prayer of the Faithful that is used after the recitation of the creed.
Presider: An outdated and theologically incorrect term for the priest celebrant. This term applies to a lay person who leads a prayer service, and has no place in the context of the Mass.
Processional Candles: The short, lightweight candles carried by the
servers during the Mass.

**Processional Cross:** A tall crucifix carried by a server or other minister at the beginning and end of Mass.

**Purificator:** Small, white, rectangular linens used to purify the chalices during and after the distribution of Holy Communion.

**Reader:** A lay person who has been trained and prepared to proclaim scripture readings in the liturgy.

**Reredos:** Means the “rear wall.” It is the large, white, gothic structure behind the current main altar in the apse of the church. It has statues of the Crucified Christ, Mary, and Saint John in the middle. Saint Peter is on the right side and Saint Paul on the left side.

**Roman Missal:** The red book that contains the prayers of the Mass.

**Sacristian:** The person who prepares the church for the celebration of Mass, making sure all the necessary items are prepared and the proper number of ministers appointed.

**Sacristy:** The room where we prepare for Mass (vesting sacristy) and where Mass supplies are kept (work sacristy).

**Sanctuary:** The area of the church that contains the altar, ambo, cathedra, credence table, sedalia or celebrant’s chair, and deacon’s chair.

**Sanctuary Lamp:** The candle suspended from the ceiling near the tabernacle. It denotes the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

**Sanctus Bells:** A small set of three or four bells rung at the epiclesis and the elevation of the Sacred Host and Chalice to direct the attention of the faithful to the most solemn part of the Mass.

**Sedalia:** The chair where the priest celebrant sits during the Mass. It may include seats on either side for deacons or concelebrating priests.

**Server Chairs:** The chairs on the left side of the altar in front of the pews in the west transept. When the bishop is the celebrant, server chairs are placed behind the cathedra near the credence table.

**Server Table:** The small table between the server chairs.

**Statues:** Images of saints or events in the history of our faith that remind us of holy people we should imitate and what we believe as Catholics.

**Stole:** A strip of cloth that the priest and deacon wear over the alb but under the chasuble or dalmatic. The stole is a symbol of divine authority.

**Tabernacle:** The holy of holies, where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. It is the large object in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. It is always locked in order to keep the Body of Christ safe from profanation.

**Thurible:** A metal container with chains used to hold hot charcoals and incense. It is used to incense sacred objects, the offerings, and the faithful during the Mass.

**Thurifer:** The altar server that carries the thurible and sometimes the incense boat during the Mass.

**Vestibule:** The back or entrance of the church where the entrance procession begins.

**Vesting Sacristy:** The room outside of the church where the priest, deacon, and servers vest and prepare for Mass.

**Vimp:** (vimpa, plural: vimpae) The veils worn by the miter and crosier bearers when serving for the bishop.

**Work Sacristy:** The room behind and to the right of the sanctuary where the sacristan prepares the church for Mass.

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**PRAYERS FOR ALTAR SERVERS**

**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.
Altar Server's Prayer of Thanksgiving 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 that service, I ask that I may at all times think of You, and always act accordingly, as a privileged altar server.

May I ever seek You and find You;
may I always follow You;
may your priestly spirit be my guide,
and your service of love be my example.

May your Holy Name always be 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 Holy Will in all things.

May I remain pure and blameless and be found worthy to be Your servant,
and by Your grace may I persevere to the end.

Amen.
And red tells love the sainted
And holy martyrs knew.
Throughout your life, then, endeavor
God's graces to do right;
And be in heart forever
God's witness and God's knight.

Prayers of an Altar Server
O God, You have graciously called me to serve You upon Your altar. Grant me the graces that I need to serve You faithfully and wholeheartedly. Grant too that while serving You, may I follow the example of St. Tarcisius, who died protecting the Eucharist, and walk the same path that led him to Heaven.
St. Tarcisius, pray for me and for all servers.

Before Mass
Oh Jesus, my King and Lord, by the grace of the heavenly Father and the power of the Holy Spirit, guide me in all righteousness as I serve You today at the Altar so I may be always worthy of Your presence. If I happen to make an error, may it be a lesson so my service will be perfect tomorrow. Jesus, I love you with all my heart. Amen.

After Mass
Lord Jesus, thank you for the opportunity to serve You during the Holy Mass. In Your Sacred Presence, my heart is filled with joy and peace. May Your Spirit always guide me so I may grow in Your love by the grace of the Heavenly Father. Amen.

REMEMBER: ALWAYS TRY TO GET YOUR OWN SUBSTITUTE

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS:
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