



ALTAR SERVER TRAINING MANUAL

Our Lady of Perpetual Help
St. Mary's Albany

Altar Server Training Agenda

Prayer, Welcome and Introduction

- History of the Ministry
- Importance of Altar Servers to the Liturgy

Attire and Posture

- Need to blend in and not be a distraction
- Teamwork (standing and sitting)
- Attention of the Priest / Deacon / Acolyte

Functions of the Server & Overview

- Candle Bearers
- Cross Bearer
- Book Bearer
- Thurifer & Boat (Incense... later training)
- Vesting and pre-Mass responsibilities Procession
- Holding the Roman Missal
- Receiving the Gifts and Preparing the Altar
- Post Communion Responsibilities – Altar and Roman Missal
- Recessional
- After Mass – extinguish candles – neatly put away alb and cross

Station Breakout and Practice

- Procession / Recession / Gifts
- Roman Missal / Preparing the Altar / After Communion

Parent / Altar Server Wrap Up

- Importance of Ministry / Scheduling, Substitutes, Communication / Review of Attire / Arrival Time / Attention on the Clergy-Sacristan / Shadowing

Thank you for your willingness to serve our parish community. Your role is very important to the Mass. The following are qualifications and guidelines to provide consistency and help you feel comfortable as you serve.

Altar Server Qualifications before Training

- Altar Servers should be baptized Catholics, who have received their first Holy Communion.
- Minimum age 4th grade, male or female. Altar Servers should be individuals who strive to live a moral and faithful life.
- Altar Servers should be mature enough to understand their responsibilities, and carry them out with appropriate reverence.
- Altar Servers should receive Holy Communion in the masses they serve, so they should go to regular confession.
- Altar Servers should be well instructed in what they are called to do, including proper behavior and attire.
- Altar Servers should be able to respond appropriately to the parts of the mass, both recited prayers and various sung parts of the mass.

Altar Server Guidelines

Proper Clothing: Servers should come to Church dressed in pants, dresses, or skirts (no jeans please). Please make sure that shoes are securely on your feet (no high heels or open back shoes or sandals). Please do not wear sneakers, unless they are clean “church shoes”.

Vestments: Albs are located in the sacristy in the Church. Please choose one that is the appropriate length (to the top of your shoes). Crosses are located behind the door. Cinctures are in the drawer. Always check with the priest celebrant or the sacristan what color of cincture to wear.

Arrival time: Please arrive 15 to 20 minutes prior to the Mass. This allows you enough time to vest, and perform the pre-mass duties of a server.

Preparation Prayer Before Serving

Father in Heaven, your Son, Jesus Christ, showed his love for you by serving his needy brothers and sisters. I now ask you to give me your help as I serve you and your people. Open my mouth to praise you in word and song. Open my ears to hear your word. Open my hands to do your work well. Take from my heart all distracting thoughts. Help me to know what I should do, and to do it well. Help me to serve reverently at your holy altar, and so give you praise and glory, now and forever. Amen.

Altar Server Procedures Before Mass

- Get the candles from the altar. The procession candles should be lit right before you get into place for the opening procession. If there is only one server, leave the candles on the altar but make sure that they are lit 10 minutes prior to Mass. The cross is in the front near the doors to the Church.
- Please be aware of the time and be prepared to line up 1 or 2 minutes before Mass begins.
- Check with the Sacristan or Priest to see if your assistance is needed for any final preparations.
- If it is Easter Time or there is a baptism scheduled, please light the Paschal Candle 5 minutes before Mass. Please use the “lighter pole” to light and extinguish this candle. The candle is made of beeswax so it is important that we don't create drips or burn it unnecessarily.

Altar Server Duties

If there are 3 servers, this is how duties are divided

Cross Bearer

- Lights the candles 5 minutes before Mass begins
- Carries the cross at the beginning of Mass
- Assists in setting the Altar
- Receives the gifts with the Priest
- Clears the Altar during communion by putting away the large Roman Missal and its stand
- Carries the cross at the end of Mass

Candle Bearers (2)

- Carry the candles at the beginning of Mass
- During the Gospel Acclamation, get the candles and light the way for the Book of the Gospels
- Bring pitcher of water to the Priest and wash the Priest's hands
- Remove empty wine cruet
- Carry candles at the end of Mass
- Extinguish candles before removing altar server alb
- Takes care of the Book of the Chair (the small Roman Missal) and brings it to the Priest when he says, "Let Us Pray", and then again after communion
- Sets the Altar
- Receives the gifts with the Priest

Altar Server Procedures During Mass

Procession: Cross bearer (1) leads followed by Servers 2 & 3 (candles). The Lector or Deacon follows. The Priest is the last to process.

Note: If other Parishioners are included in the procession (ex: Baptism), they follow the Servers. Once the choir starts singing, slowly process up the aisle. Servers should be reverent and should not sing as they process. Hands should be in the prayer position if you are not carrying something. Servers need not bow once in front of the altar but goes up the sanctuary immediately and put the candles and cross in their stands. Rejoin the Priest and Lectors. Everyone bows. Proceed to your seat and remain standing. While you are doing this, the Priest will bow before the Altar, kiss the Altar and go to his seat. Please sit when he sits.

Opening Prayer: Toward the end of the Gloria, or after the Penitential Rite during Advent and Lent, the server seated nearest to the Priest should prepare holding the small Roman Missal. Once the priest says, “Let us pray...”, server gets the Roman Missal and stands in front of the Priest with his/her back to the congregation, holding the Roman Missal high so it is comfortable for the Priest to read. Do not move while the Priest is reading. You may want to steady the book against your upper chest. When the Priest is finished, close the Roman Missal and sit down in your chair, taking the Roman Missal with you.

LITURGY OF THE WORD:

First and Second Readings: Remain seated.

Gospel Acclamation: Remain standing until the homily. Candle bearers hold the candles at the ambo for the entire duration of the Gospel.

Prayers of the Faithful: Stand.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST:

Preparation of the Altar during the Offertory:

- One server brings the chalice (with everything on it) to the altar and hand it to the Deacon (or Priest). If there’s no Deacon, put it on the altar. The other two servers help bring the communion cups and the purificators to the altar.
- The big Roman Missal should also be brought to the altar and placed on the book stand.
- Sometimes the servers are asked to unfold the corporal. Be alert.

Receiving the Gifts:

- Whoever is free should assist the Deacon or Priest in receiving the gifts. One server is needed if only two gifts are offered but if there are 3 or more gifts offered, two servers are needed.
- Once server is handed the gift(s), he/she puts them immediately on the altar, on top of the corporal. Server then proceeds immediately to the credence table.

Preparation of the Gifts:

- Once the Priest or Deacon goes back to the altar after receiving the gifts, one server brings him the water for the wine. Wait for the Deacon or Priest to pour water into the wine and take back the water (along with the cover of the big wine cruet) to the credence table. Get the wine cruet once Priest or Deacon is done pouring wine into the communion cups.
- One server should already be ready with the bowl and finger towel.
- The two servers step forward so the Priest can wash his hands.
- The server holding the water should pour it over the Priests hands into the bowl.
- After the Priest has washed his hands, the servers should bow their heads, return the bowl and water to the credence table and go to seats.

Eucharistic Prayer:

- Stand after the Priest says: "Pray my brothers and sisters that my sacrifice and yours..." or once the congregation stands.
- After the Holy, Holy, Holy, kneel at the foot of the Sanctuary (near the choir).
- One server rings the bell (3 short times or 1 longer time) during the consecration of bread and wine.

- Servers stand for the Our Father, holding hands but remain at the foot of the sanctuary.

Sign of Peace:

- Go up the sanctuary and exchange the sign of peace with the other servers and clergy and go to your seats and remain standing. At this time, the Deacon may hand to one of the servers the big Roman Missal. Be alert.

Communion:

- Servers join the line of the Extraordinary Ministers of Communion.
- The Priest will offer you the Precious Host while one of the Extraordinary Ministers will offer you the Precious Blood.

During Communion:

- Go to the kneelers once the Priest, Deacon and the Extraordinary Ministers go down to distribute Communion. (If the big Roman Missal and its stand are not yet put away, the Cross bearer will put them away at this time).

After Communion:

- Go to the credence table once you see the priest goes to the altar. Bring water to the Priest or Deacon for the purification of the vessels and take any ciborium that has been already purified back to the credence table.

Conclusion:

- Stand when the Priest says “Let us pray...” (book is brought to the Priest by server nearest him).
- After the final blessing, as the song begins, servers retrieve the Candles and Cross and move to the center aisle.

- The Cross is farthest down the aisle, while the Candles stand flanking the Priest, Deacon and Lectors.
- They should bow to the Altar when the Priest does.
- Then turn and lead the Priest and Deacon and Lectors down the aisle.
- The Priest normally waits for the second refrain to begin before departing.
- Once the group has reached the back of the church, the servers should return the Cross and candles to their original stands
- Once this is done, the servers should return their albs and crosses to the vesting area.
- Please hang them back on hangers under the correct size and make sure that the sleeves are pulled out and the zipper on the neck is pulled up.

Thanksgiving Prayer After Serving

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the eternal High Priest. You lead all your saints in heaven and your people on earth in praising God, our Father. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for letting me come before your altar, so that, with your help, I can praise my Father in heaven as his server. Help me to find joy in serving at your altar. Help me to find gladness in knowing and doing your will in all things. Glory to you, Lord Jesus, and to the Father and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Prayers Recited at Mass

Every Altar Server must be able to recite the prayers of the Mass.

The Greeting:

Priest: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Servers: Amen.

The Penitential Rite:

I confess to Almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done, and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore, I ask Blessed Mary, ever virgin, all the angles and saints, and you my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

The Glory to God:

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father. Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Profession of Faith:

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through Him all things were made. For us men and our salvation He came down from heaven, *Server(s) bow here as you say:*

and by the Power of the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Presentation:

Priest: Blessed are you Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made. It will become for us the bread of life.

Server: Blessed be God forever.

Priest: Blessed are you Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this wine to offer, fruit of the vine and work of human hands. It will become our spiritual drink.

Server: Blessed be God forever.

The Prayer over Gifts:

Priest: Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

Server: May the Lord accept this sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of His Name, for our good, and the good of all his holy Church.

The Holy, Holy, Holy:

Server: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

The Lamb of God:

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: have mercy on us. Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: have mercy on us. Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: grant us peace.

The Communion Prayer:

Priest: Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb.

Server: Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Altar Server Scheduling

Altar Servers' schedule is posted in the sacristy. The schedule is also emailed to the persons concerned. It is usually done on a 4-week rotating basis.

If you think you cannot make it to your scheduled serving for whatever reason, please look for a substitute as early as possible.

Even if you are not scheduled to serve for a particular Mass time, please always check to see if there are servers and be ready to serve if needed.

Finally, while emergencies happen, your schedule is available early enough to prevent last minute requests for substitutions. We depend on you. We depend on your parents as well to insure you fulfill your commitment.

Special Occasions and Holy Days:

Servers for Special Occasions such as Confirmation and Holy Days such as Christmas, Easter, and Holy Week are usually asked to sign up a week or two before the celebrations.

Liturgical Terms and Definitions

Absolution - In the sacrament of penance, the act by which a priest, having the necessary jurisdiction, remits the guilt and penalty due to sin.

Advent - A period of prayer in preparation for Christmas, including four Sundays. It is the beginning of the Church's liturgical year.

Alb - A full length white vestment worn over the clothes by priests, deacons and altar servers.

Altar - In Catholic Churches the table on which the Sacrifice of the Mass is offered.

Ambo - Elevated pulpit or lectern from which the 1st and 2nd Readings and the Gospel are read. Referred to as the Liturgy of the Word.

Aspersory and Aspergillum - The Aspersory is a container for holding Holy Water. The Aspergillum is a stick-shaped implement with holes in it to dip into the Aspersory and catch the Holy Water for sprinkling the people and things.

Baptismal Font - A stone, metal, or wooden receptacle for holding baptismal water used in the solemn administration of the sacrament of Baptism.

Boat - the container which holds incense.

Book of the Gospels - The book from which the Priest or Deacon reads the Gospel.

Bowl/Pitcher - used for washing the priest's hands during the Preparation of the Gifts

Chalice - The cup-shaped vessel or goblet used at Mass to contain the Precious Blood of Christ. For centuries it was made of precious material; if it was not of gold, the interior of the cup was gold-plated.

Chasuble - the outer garment the priest wears whose color corresponds to the liturgical season.

Corporal - A square white linen cloth on which the Host and Chalice are placed during Mass. It is also used under the monstrance at Benediction or under the Blessed Sacrament at any time.

Ciborium (Ciboria) - A covered container used to hold the consecrated small Hosts.

Communion Cups - small gold chalice-looking cups containing the Precious Blood of Jesus used at communion.

Credence Table - Small table located near the altar that holds sacred vessels and books.

Cruet - small pitcher-like container used to hold water or unconsecrated wine at Mass.

Deacon - A man specially ordained to the service of the Church's ministry. The role of deacons is to assist priests in preaching, the conferral of baptism, performance of marriage, the administration of parishes, and similar duties.

Finger Towel - small white towel used for drying the priest's hands.

Funeral Pall - a large cloth used to cover the casket at funerals.

Holy Water - Sacramental water blessed by a priest, invoking God's blessing on all who use it.

Host - A victim of sacrifice, and therefore the consecrated Bread of the Eucharist considered as the Sacrifice of the Body of Christ. The word is also used of the round wafers used for consecration.

Incense - Aromatic gum or resin in the form of powder or grains that give off a fragrant smoke when they are burned. It is used on solemn occasions

Lectionary - The book of Scripture Readings usually from which the Old and New Testament readings are read.

Lector - Person appointed to read the word of God in the liturgical assembly. Accordingly they read the lesson

from Sacred Scripture, except the Gospel, in the Mass and in other sacred celebrations.

Liturgical Seasons - the various seasons of the church's year which begins the First Sunday of Advent each year.

(See following pages)

Monstrance - The sacred vessel which contains the consecrated Host when exposed or carried in procession.

Narthex - The gathering area between the exterior doors of the church and the doors to the Nave (worship area).

Nave - the main body of the church reserved for worshippers, including the central and side aisles

Paschal Candle - A large candle in which five grains of incense have been incased as a symbol of Christ's wounds. It is blessed on Holy Saturday in a special service and is symbolic of the Risen Savior, Light of the World. It is then used in the blessing of baptismal water and remains during the Paschal season in the sanctuary, where it is lighted during liturgical services.

Presider's Chair - The chair in which the priest or celebrant sits.

Procession during Gathering Song - Normally the procession goes in this order:

- Processional Cross (1 server)
- Processional Candles (2 servers)
- (Additional servers)
- Lector
- Deacon
- Priest

Processional Cross - A crucifix mounted on a staff, carried in solemn services at the head of a procession of the clergy.

Purificator - A small piece of white linen, marked with a cross, used by the priest in the celebration of Mass. It is folded in three layers and used by the priest to purify his fingers and the chalice after Holy Communion.

Roman Missal - The book that sits on the altar containing the prayers the priest uses for Mass.

Sacristan - A person appointed for the care of the sacristy, sacred vessels, vestments, and other articles required by the priest/deacon for any liturgical function.

Sacristy - One or more rooms attached to a church, usually near the altar, where the clergy vest for Mass and where there is storage for sacred vessels, vestments, and other articles needed for liturgical use.

Sanctuary - The part of a church containing the altar.

Stole - A liturgical vestment composed of a strip of material, several inches wide, and worn around the neck by priests and bishops; at the left shoulder like a sash by deacons, for the celebration of Mass, administration of the sacraments, and ceremonies of the Blessed Sacrament.

Tabernacle - A cupboard or boxlike receptacle for the exclusive reservation of the Blessed Sacrament.

Thurible - The censer or vessel in which incense is burned at liturgical services. It consists of a cup-shaped metal body for holding charcoal and incense, with a separate lid for controlling the smoke and fire, and a chain, or chains, allowing the censer to swing safely without spilling its contents.

Vesting Room - The room where the clergy vest for Mass.

Liturgical Seasons

There are six (6) basic Liturgical Seasons:

- (1) Advent,
- (2) Christmas,
- (3) Lent,
- (4) Holy Week & Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday),
- (5) Easter, and
- (6) Ordinary Time.

Broken down a little further, the church calendar follows this schedule:

Advent

Christmas (birth of Christ)

Holy Family

Mary the Mother of God (New Year's Day)

Epiphany

Baptism of the Lord

Ordinary Time I

Lent

Ash Wednesday

Passion (Palm) Sunday

Sacred Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday.)

Easter Vigil (The Resurrection)

Easter (Celebrate the Resurrection at Masses - The greatest Feast of the year.) Second to Sixth Sundays of Easter

Ascension

Pentecost

Ordinary Time II

Trinity Sunday

Body and Blood of Christ

Ordinary Time II (continued...)

Solemnity of Christ the King

Liturgical Colors

WHITE - signifies light, innocence, purity, joy, triumph, glory

- Season of Christmas
- Season of Easter
- Feasts of the Lord, other than of His passion
- Feasts of Mary, the angels, and saints who were not martyrs
- All Saints (1 November)
- Feasts of the Apostles
- Nuptial Masses
- Masses for the dead (Requiem Masses)

Note: White is the color of Popes' non-liturgical dress. White can be replaced by Silver.

RED - signifies the Passion, blood, fire, God's Love, martyrdom

- Feasts of the Lord's Passion, Blood, and Cross
- Feasts of the martyrs
- Palm Sunday
- Pentecost

Note: Red is the color of Cardinals' non-liturgical dress

GREEN - signifies the Holy Ghost, life eternal, hope

- Used for Ordinary Time
- Time After Epiphany
- Time After Pentecost

VIOLET - signifies penance, humility, melancholy

- Season of Advent
- Season of Lent

Note: Violet is the color of Bishops' and Archbishops' non-liturgical dress.

ROSE - signifies joy

- Gaudete Sunday (Third Sunday of Advent)
- Laetare Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent)

Preparation Prayer Before Serving

Father in Heaven, your Son, Jesus Christ, showed his love for you by serving his needy brothers and sisters. I now ask you to give me your help as I serve you and your people. Open my mouth to praise you in word and song. Open my ears to hear your word. Open my hands to do your work well. Take from my heart all distracting thoughts. Help me to know what I should do, and to do it well. Help me to serve reverently at your holy altar, and so give you praise and glory, now and forever. Amen.

Thanksgiving Prayer After Serving

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the eternal High Priest. You lead all your saints in heaven and your people on earth in praising God, our Father. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for letting me come before your altar, so that, with your help, I can praise my Father in heaven as his server. Help me to find joy in serving at your altar. Help me to find gladness in knowing and doing your will in all things. Glory to you, Lord Jesus, and to the Father and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.