

St Maria Goretti Parish Altar Server Guidelines

- THIS IS YOUR MINISTRY
- THIS IS HOW YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE
 - THIS IS HOW YOU SERVE OTHERS.



Pope John Paul II said to Altar Servers (August 1, 2001):

“The altar server has a privileged place in liturgical celebrations. *Those who serve at Mass present themselves to a community. They experience from close at hand that Jesus Christ is present and active in every liturgy.... Jesus is present above all in the Eucharist, under the appearances of bread and wine.* He acts through the priest who celebrates Holy Mass and administers the sacraments in persona Christi [in the person of Christ]. Therefore in the liturgy you are far more than mere "helpers of the parish priest". Above all, you are servants of Jesus Christ, the eternal High Priest. Thus you altar servers especially are called to be young friends of Jesus. Strive to deepen and foster this friendship with him. You will discover that in Jesus you have found a true friend for life. **Your service cannot be restricted to the inside of a church.** It must shine out in your everyday life: at school, in the family and in the different social contexts, for those who want to serve Jesus Christ in a church must be his witnesses everywhere.”

Pope Benedict XVI said to Altar Servers (August 2, 2006):

"Dear Altar Servers, ... **When you take part in the Liturgy by carrying out your altar service, you offer a witness to all.** Your absorption, the devotion that wells up from your heart and is expressed in gestures, in song, in the responses: if you do it correctly and not absent -mindedly, then in a certain way your witness is one that moves people.... **You are very close to Jesus in the Eucharist, and this is the most important sign of his friendship for each one of us.** Do not forget it. **This is why I am asking you not to take this gift for granted so that it does not become a sort of habit, knowing how it works and doing it automatically....** if you put your innermost self into carrying out your service, then you will truly be his apostles and bear fruits of goodness and service in every context of your life: in the family, at school, in your free time.... May you always be friends and apostles of Jesus Christ?"

Guidelines for Altar Server

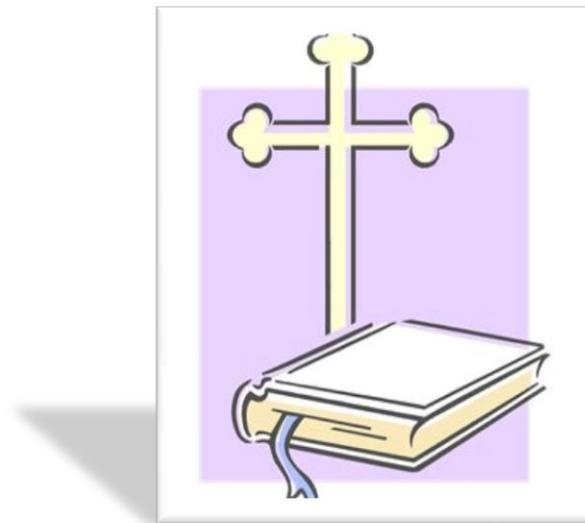
The following guidelines were prepared by the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy and presented to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops for discussion at the June 1994 Special Assembly on Thursday, June 16, 1994. The suggested guidelines have been slightly revised according to the third typical edition of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal. They may be used as a basis for developing diocesan guidelines.

1. Although institution into the ministry of acolyte is reserved to lay men, the diocesan bishop may permit the liturgical functions of the instituted acolyte to be carried out by altar servers, men and women, boys and girls. Such persons may carry out all the functions listed in no. 100 (with the exception of the distribution of Holy Communion) and nos. 187 - 190 and no. 193 of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*.

The determination that women and girls may function as servers in the liturgy should be made by the bishop on the diocesan level so that there might be a uniform diocesan policy.

2. No distinction should be made between the functions carried out in the sanctuary by men and boys and those carried out by women and girls. The term "altar boys" should be replaced by "servers". The term "server" should be used for those who carry out the functions of the instituted acolyte.
3. Servers should be mature enough to understand their responsibilities and to carry them out well and with appropriate reverence. They should have already received Holy Communion for the first time and normally receive the Eucharist whenever they participate in the liturgy.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.

7. 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.
8. 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.
9. Servers should be seated in a place from which they can easily assist the priest celebrant and deacon. The place next to the priest is normally reserved for the deacon.
10. Servers may not distribute Holy Communion unless they have been mandated for this function by the bishop.
11. The *Order for the Blessing of Altar Servers, Sacristans, Musicians, and Ushers (Book of Blessings*, nos. 1847-1870) may be used before servers first begin to function in this ministry.¹



¹ **Guidelines for Altar Servers** © 2013 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Preparing to Serve Mass

BEFORE MASS

1. Get a good night's sleep before your serve so that you will not be drowsy at Mass when you serve in the morning.
2. CHECK YOUR SHOES. Make sure that your shoes are clean and quiet. Noisy or loud colored shoes can be a distraction during Mass. Some shoes that are appropriate for the basketball court, the mall, or the class room, may not be appropriate to serve mass. If your shoes are clean and good order, it shows that you know how important serving mass is to you and to your parish. God wants your best; make sure that you always give your best when serving God and your parish.
3. DON'T BE SICK: If you have a cold, be sure you have a handkerchief or Kleenex I your pocket.
4. WASH YOUR HANDS – Clean hands and face make a good impression. Use the sink and soap in the sacristy for last minute clean ups. If you can look your best for your sweet sixteen parties, don't you think you can look your best to serve your God in the Holy Eucharist?

WHEN YOU COME TO CHURCH:

1. GET THERE EARLY: Arrive at church at least fifteen (15) minutes before Mass begins. Don't be afraid to get an early start if the weather is bad or if other family matters develop as you prepare to serve Mass.
2. KEEP IT HOLY: When you arrive at church remember what a holy and special place it is. As Catholics, we believe that God is present in the Holy Eucharist in the tabernacle.

The church is the home for all people in the parish. Treat your parish church with reverence as it contains many treasured memories of God's presence in the life of the Parish.

3. LOOK YOUR BEST: Put on a clean, unwrinkled altar server's alb. Learn to tie your cincture or cord so that it looks neat and complements your alb. Make sure that it is not too short or too long. Use the mirror to check your appearance.
4. Make sure the cruets (small pitchers) are filled with water and wine and are in the usual place. Check the altar and the credence table to make sure that the cruets and the altar breads are also on the credence table.
5. See to it that the water pitcher is filled with water and there is a towel for the washing of hands of the priest. Make sure you know where the finger bowls and waters are kept in the event that you have to locate it in a hurry.
6. Know what books that are needed are in the proper place for the Mass. If there is a deacon at mass, make sure that the Gospel book is available for him or consult with the deacon to make sure. The Lectionary for Mass (the book of Scripture readings) should be on the lectern. The Missal (Sacramentary) the book of the priest's prayers should be placed on the chair behind the priest's chair. Make sure that there are mass books available for you during mass.
7. Make sure that all of the candles are lit. During Easter Season make sure that the Easter Candle is lit also. Lighting the candles tells people that Mass is about to begin. Light the candles with reverence and bow reverently each time you pass the tabernacle.
8. Be quiet in the sacristy and avoid making unnecessary noise. Use the time to prepare the sacred time that you are spending with the Lord. Priests, deacons, ministers of the Holy

Eucharist often appreciate a few moments of silent prayer before they serve God's people at Mass.

9. Be especially ready to help the priest if he is a visitor to your parish. He may ask you questions. Make sure you are familiar with church and those parishioners who may be able to help the visitor. In this way you and the visiting priest will serve the people well.

"The altar server has a privileged place in liturgical celebrations. Those who serve at Mass present themselves to a community. They experience from close at hand that Jesus Christ is present and active in every liturgy."

Pope John Paul II said to Altar Servers (August 1, 2001):

POSTURE AT MASS

What is posture? Posture is using your body parts at a particular time. A server has to carry out a number of different actions at Mass, and so there are a number of different postures. You are very visible at Mass. At one point or another, every person at Mass will be looking at you – so be a great example for them! Pay attention to walking, standing, sitting, bowing, genuflecting, and kneeling. As you process with the priest in church, fold your hands in front of you at chest level in respect. Be Prayerful!

All servers are expected to participate in the liturgy. When the priest leads a prayer, say the prayers. Say the appropriate responses throughout the Mass. When the choir sings, join in and sing joyfully! If you just have to yawn, be very discreet. Be attentive, sitting up straight and watching the priest the entire Mass. Don't look as if serving Mass is the worst punishment. During Mass, all Altar Servers stand up and sit down in unison. After Mass, process out reverently.

What should I wear?

God loves us as we are. He made us. Before we were even thought of he knew us. He knows the number of heart beats we will have in our lifetime. He also called us to a more excellent way. He sent His Son to show us the Way to everlasting life. Our response is to try to be holy as God is holy. Our service of God as altar service should show how grateful we are that God loves us so much. One way to show it is the way we dress. He has given us His best, His Son. We should give Him the best we have.

- **Boys:** Wear dress shoes (no flip-flops, crocs or tennis shoes). Wear long pants, semi-casual or dress pants (no jeans or shorts). Shirts should be semi-casual (no shirts with big logos or pictures.)
- **Girls:** Wear dress shoes (no high heels, flip-flops, crocs or tennis shoes). Pants should be semi-casual or dress pants (no jeans or shorts). Dresses and skirts are always welcome.
- **Schedule:** You are an important part of the Mass. Please serve when you are scheduled to do so—or find a substitute to serve in your place. The schedule will be posted on the parish website at www.smgnoia.com under “Altar Servers.” You are showing great “Reverence” and “Responsibility” when you make sure your position is covered in case you cannot serve.

How can I help others worship God with holiness?

1. **WALKING** – Walk with dignity and reverence. There are different walks for different occasions. A basketball player will walk or trot out on to the court to show his enthusiasm for the game. In the same way you should walk with your back straight and head held high and with the dignity and joy of one who wants to serve Jesus Christ and His people.
2. **BOWING** - When you bow it should be a smooth, forward leaning motion. It should include your head and shoulders.
3. **GENUFLECTING** – When you genuflect, keep your hands in front of your chest while you go down on your right knee. Keep your body upright. Make sure your alb is not going to trip you.
4. **KNEELING** – When you kneel, your body should be upright and your hands should be in front of your chest, well above your waist.
5. **STANDING** – Stand upright and straight. Keep both feet firmly on the floor about six to eight inches apart. This will give you balance and comfort. Do not lean against furniture or against walls.

6. **SITTING** – Sit down on the chair carefully and gracefully. And once you are seated, sit tall and do not slouch. Place both hands on your lap or flat on your thighs in a relaxed manner.
7. **HANDS** – Your hands are JOINED TOGETHER IN FRONT OF YOU AT ALL TIMES unless you are carrying a book, cross or other vessels used during the Mass. Either interlock your fingers, or place your hands palm to palm with fingers pointed up ward. Hold your hands the way the priest does. Keep your hands high above your waist and around your chest.
8. **EYES** – During mass, look towards the place where the action is happening: the altar, the ambo, the priest’s chair, the congregation, the choir row. When the Lector is reading the Scriptures, look at the Lector or reader. God speaks to us through His words in Scripture and prayer. When the priest or deacon prays and speaks look at him. During the homily, you should pay attention the homily explains the readings of the Mass.
9. **KNOW WHAT TO DO AND WHEN TO DO IT** – *“I will go to the altar of God, to God who gives me joy to my youth.”* (Psalm 42:4) Know your role at Mass and perform it well. Don’t give the impression that you are being punished and would like to leave immediately. Don’t be afraid to smile as you serve Mass. As you know what you are supposed to do also think of what you are to do next. This will eliminate gaps in the liturgy. Remember to sing, listen and pray with the people of God. You serve a very important function in the liturgy.



IMPORTANT WORDS TO THINK ABOUT:

Reverence: Respect somebody or something deeply

Honor: A special privilege that is cherished.

Responsibility Accountability: You can be counted on to do what you commit to do

VOCABULARY:

SANCTUARY: The raised area where the Altar, the Ambo and the Priest Chair are located.

ALTAR: The table on which the offerings (the sacrifice) of the Mass are consecrated.

AMBO/PULPIT: The place from where the Scriptures are proclaimed and the homily are given.

CREDESCENCE TABLE: The tables in the back of the Sanctuary on which the cups, plates, chalice and water bowl are placed before Mass begins.

SACRISTY: The room next to the narthex where the priests, Altar servers and other ministers prepare for Mass.

ALB: the white robe that the servers wear.

CINCTURE: cord “belt” that is tied around the alb (the different colors are for the different “Seasons” of the Church’s year).

STOLE: the thin “scarf -like” part of the priest’s vestment.

CHASUBLE: the large colored garment worn by the priest over his alb. (The different colors are for the different “Seasons” of the Church’s year).

CORPORAL: the square “place mat” placed on the Altar by the priest when preparing the gifts.

CHALICE: a cup used for the distribution of the consecrated wine (“the Blood of Christ”).

CIBORIUM: a plate or a bowl with a top used for the distribution of the communion bread (“the Body of Christ”).

PURIFICATOR: a small white cloth used to wipe off the chalices.

CRUETS: small containers used for water and wine.

SACRAMENTARY: the big, red book used by the priest for the various prayers.

LECTIONARY: the large book carried by the Lector used for the Scripture readings. This book is on the pulpit/ambo.

PROCESSIONAL CROSS: a cross or crucifix carried by the server in the procession in and out.

THURIBLE: used for incense (looks like a decorated bowl on a long chain).