

St. Frances Cabrini Parish

Altar Server Handbook

I rejoiced because they said to me,
“We will go up to the house of the Lord.” Psalm 122:1

Lord, may I always go to your house with an open, friendly and rejoicing spirit.

Glossary of Terms

ALB: A long white vestment, which is worn by both, the priest and the altar servers for mass.

ALTAR: The table on which the Liturgy of the Eucharist is celebrated upon.

BOOK OF GOSPELS: Contains the Gospel readings that are read by the priest or deacon.

CENCER: A metal container that gets very hot, held by a chain and used for incense, during special masses and funerals.

CHALICE: A cup, used by the priest that contains the water and wine that later change to the blood of Christ.

CIBORIUM: A bowl or any other container that holds the hosts, and later the body of Christ.

CORPORAL: A large white cloth that is placed in the center of the altar on which the bread and wine are placed for the consecration.

CRESCENCE TABLE: the table on which the various supplies, such as the chalice, are placed until they are needed during the mass.

CRUET: A vessel that holds the water or wine.

FINGER TOWEL: Used by the priest to dry his hands during the offertory.

HOSTS: small wafers of unleavened bread that later becomes the Body of Christ.

LECTIONARY: A book containing the bible stories of the first and second readings.

PATEN: A flat plate, usually matching the chalice and used by the priest, on which the large host is placed.

PRESIDER BOOK: A three-ringed book usually placed on or near the celebrant's chair that contains the order of the mass and special prayers used for that mass.

PULPIT: The place from which the readings are proclaimed and the priest delivers his homily.

PURIFICATOR: A small white cloth with a red cross sewn on it that is used to wipe the chalice and other containers which held the consecrated bread and wine.

SACRAMENTARY: The red book that is used for the opening prayer, on the altar during the offertory and Eucharistic prayer and again at the closing for the final prayer.

SACRED VESSELS: The chalice, paten and ciborium's that hold the body and blood of Christ.

SACRISTY: The room where the priests and servers dress (vest) for mass.

STOLE: A vestment, worn over the priest's neck, that hangs down in front of him and is a symbol of his priestly authority.

TABERNACLE: The locked container where consecrated hosts are stored.

WATER: Held in a cruet and mingled with the wine. Also used to wash the priests hands during the offertory and purify (clean) the vessels after communion.

General Server Responsibilities:

Arrive 15 minutes before mass, put on your alb and get your server medallion from the prayer room.

Retrieve and prepare either the cross or your candle, which ever you are carrying.

Remain in the gathering space and wait until father is ready for mass to begin. This is when you should line up and be ready to enter the sanctuary. Cross first, then candles and the server II.

Process to the left of the altar then stand behind the altar, leaving enough room for father and the proclaimers to stand between you and the altar.

After father bows, cross bearer puts the cross away, the candle bearers can place the candles in the holders and the server II can get the presider book and prepare to present it to father for the opening prayers.

After father is finished with the presider book, immediately put that book away and retrieve the sacramentary and prepare for father to use it for the opening prayer.

For the Gospel, the candle bearers should retrieve the candles as soon as the alleluia starts and stand on either side of the pulpit facing each other during the gospel. Once the gospel is complete, the candles can be put back and you can take your seat.

After the readings and the homily, the server II once again brings out the presider book for the prayers of the faithful.

When the collection begins, the candle bearers get their candles and go to the gathering space and prepare to lead the offertory procession. The cross bearer and server II go to the credence table and begin bringing over the various vessels, etc. needed to celebrate the Eucharist. Once the items are on the altar, servers should join father as he waits for the offertory gifts. He will hand you the gifts and you are to take them to the altar. Candle bearers, once the candles are secure, should also help carry things to the altar.

The cross bearer and server II should have the bowl and finger towel ready to wash fathers hands with **a small amount of water**. The water cruet, bowl and towel can be taken back to the credence table. At this point, all four servers should be back at the chairs.

During, the Holy, Holy, all servers should move to the front of the altar and prepare to kneel once the Eucharistic prayer begins.

During the sign of peace, servers should move again to the credence table and bring over the trays of chalices, ciborium's (if needed) and pacificators to prepare for communion.

After communion, assist with the clean up of the altar and the server II should get the sacramentry and prepare to hold it for father for the closing prayer. Once the final hymn begins, cross and candles bearers should retrieve these items and line up as in the beginning. Once father genuflects and turns, begin moving along the left side of the altar and exit the sanctuary. Put away the candles and cross and then, **hang up your albs in the proper place.**

If there is only three servers, use the cross and candles. The cross bearer can take on the duties of holding the various books. If there are only two servers, leave the candles lit on the altar and process in with just the cross and the server II can walk in front of father. The two servers can then use the candles at the usual times. The recessional should be done in the same fashion as the processional.

Some general information about serving.....

The two biggest problems with the altar server program are failing to keep the scheduled time and servers who want to quit serving after the schedule is mailed out. We ask that either you make sure to report on your scheduled time or get a sub to take your place. You do not need to call me to say that you have a sub. Secondly, remember that we ask for a one-year commitment to the program. After the schedule is out, it is very difficult to find servers to take the place of those who quit for whatever reason so please honor your commitment and stick with it unless there is a real need for you to quit such as moving out of the parish. Pat or Laurie from the parish office will call you the week before you are scheduled to serve to remind you of your upcoming mass time.

Please remember to wear light colored clothing and dress shoes under you alb. Jeans and tennis shoes are not allowed. Proper grooming is expected. When selecting your alb size, it should go to your ankle area. Longer albs will cause you to trip when you walk and climb the stairs to the altar. The alb closet in the server sacristy has been straightened and organized, as you will see. Please hand up you alb when mass is over. PLEASE don't roll it up in a ball and throw it on the floor. Believe it or not, this happens every week and this is not something that an altar server should be doing and the priests are usually the ones that have to clean up after you and this isn't fair to them.

Watch the bulletin each week for special announcements and notices about serving. We use the bulletin to announce special events and holiday mass sign ups.

Servers are always needed for special events such as the Stations of the Cross, funerals and holidays. I will put sign up sheets in the parish office and invite you to **call during the evening office hours** to sign up for these events. Until you have had several serving experiences, we ask that experienced servers sign up for the difficult holiday masses that are full of variations to normal masses, especially the events during holy week. Always check with your parents about your own holiday plans before committing to the holiday masses.

We know from our faith that whenever two or more are gathered in the name of Jesus, he is present among us. Therefore, it is very important to be there, look good and do well. Not only is the congregation watching you, but remember that Christ is present too and we all know the importance of demonstrating our faith and commitment to it to Him.

The easiest, most efficient way to contact me is through the church office. I sincerely thank all of you for making this commitment to our parish and to Jesus and to all the family members who sacrifice for and support the servers. Together, we can have a great program here and I'm proud to be a part of it.