

**St. Thomas More Catholic Church**  
**Altar Server Guidelines**

**What does an Altar Server do?**

The primary role of the altar server is to assist the priest in the celebration of the liturgy during Mass. This is done through specific actions and by setting an example to the congregation by active participation in the liturgy (hymns, responses, etc.), by looking alert and sitting or standing at the appropriate times.

Servers carry the cross, the processional candle(s), 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.

Altar servers must attend every Mass that they have been scheduled. When a server cannot be present they must arrange for a substitute, or they are considered absent. If a server has had too many absences, they will be contacted to discuss if the Altar Server commitment is one they would like to continue.

(a more detailed description of the role of an Altar Server is on pg. 2)

**What are the requirements to be an Altar Server?**

To serve at STM, you must meet the following requirements:

- age 10 or older (5<sup>th</sup> grade)
- have received First Confession and Holy Communion
- practicing your Catholic Faith (attending Mass regularly)
- be willing to follow the guidelines & commitments of an Altar Server
- pass the Altar Server Test: administered each year in February to new servers
- complete a short interview with the Altar Server Training Coordinator

**What are the commitments?**

- Attend 3 training sessions each year
  - Spring (testing, new procedures ~ usually in February)
  - Summer (practical ~ offered at the daily Masses under the guidance of a Mentor)
  - Fall (Liturgical seasons, incense training)
- Be prompt in scheduling your server commitments
  - Using the online schedule, please make sure it is turned in before the deadline so that you can be scheduled for the next scheduling session. Schedules are set up quarterly ~ you will be notified via email as a reminder to schedule.
- Be faithful to your scheduled Mass
  - If you are unable to fulfill the commitment, it is the responsibility of the server to find a substitute and let the Altar Server Coordinator know by sending an email to [stm.altar.server@gmail.com](mailto:stm.altar.server@gmail.com)

## Altar Server Duties:

### Before Mass

- altar servers must arrive 15 minutes before their scheduled Mass time
- check in by signing the sheet on the bulletin board
- dress properly for Mass
  - choose the correct size alb by holding the alb up against you, where the top of the alb meets your shoulders – if it is touching the floor, this size is correct.

*Albs that have hoods hanging to the far right are reserved for high school servers only*

- Choose the correct color for the Liturgical Season (scapular and cincture)
- The cincture is tied to the right side in a double knot and should be on average 5-8 inches above the floor when tied
- Check that you are wearing dress shoes for boys and closed-toed dress shoes for girls.

*No server is to wear tennis shoes, flip flops, slip-ons, or open-toed shoes*

- Girls must pull their hair back in a pony tail
- The Altar Server Mentor will assign your position for the Mass
- Candles are to be lit 10 minutes before the Mass begins.

### After Mass

- Place Roman Missal back on the Altar Server credence table
- Extinguish candles
- ALL servers are to make sure albs are hung back in order, albs & cinctures are hung properly, sink area is clean

### 3 Positions Assigned:

- I. Candles (2 servers needed)
  - a. Carry candle 2/3 of a step behind and to the side of the cross bearer
  - b. *Anticipate the Gospel reading!* Get up to get the candles right after the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading is finished. When the Alleluia begins, walk to the altar, standing behind, on the edge of the rug as the Priest or Deacon lifts the Lectionary. Move with them as they walk to the ambo.
  - c. Hold the candle evenly with the server across from you – the candle ‘illuminates the Gospel’ – make sure it is held steady.
  - d. When finished, return the candles besides the cross and sit
  - e. *Anticipate the Gift Bearers!* After the homily and during the song for the Presentation of the Gifts, Server #1 gets the chalice & Server #2 gets the cruet of water from the credence table. Server #1 places chalice on the left side of altar, server #2 walks to right side of altar, places cruet on right edge of altar, waiting to receive the bread. Server #1 joins him/her after placing the chalice on the altar.
  - f. Receive the gifts: Server #1 receives the money basket and puts it in place. Server #1 also receives the cruet of wine, holding it ready for the Priest. Server #2 receives the bowl of bread and places it on the altar, then picks up the cruet of water, holding it ready for the Priest.
  - g. Both servers, wait until Priest is finished with BOTH cruets, then bow and place cruets on the credence table.
  - h. Return to your place – remembering to reverence the altar as you cross the sanctuary to your seat

## 2. Book

- a. Sit in the chair closest to the Tabernacle
- b. *Anticipate bringing the book to the celebrant!* Be ready with the book in your lap, ready to walk to the Priest to hold properly for his use.
- c. At the Presentation of the Gifts, when server #1 & #2 bring the cruet & chalice to the altar; you will also bring the Missal to the Altar, place it on the left side.
- d. Return to the credence table and stand ready with the cross bearer to wash the hands of the Priest
- e. Hold towel in the washing of the hands.

## 3. Cross Bearer

- a. Sit in the chair closest to the wall.
- b. Carry cross – straight, deliberate, position of hands is important.
- c. When the server with the Book gets up to place the book on the altar, you also go at that time to the Credence table getting ready with the pitcher and bowl for the washing of the hands.
- d. *Anticipate* the ringing of the bells – 3 distinct rings at the consecration.
- e.

### Serving with Proper Posture & Position

Because serving on the altar is serving our Lord through the Priest and at the same time drawing the Congregation to a greater sense of worship, these guidelines are to be followed for proper posture and position:

- While standing (holding cross, candles or while folding hands) – stand with your back straight & upright
- While genuflecting: Make sure it is done with reverence and has a deliberate movement ~ going down on one knee – making sure knee has touched the ground – and pausing for 1 second before standing.
- While reverencing the altar: whenever you cross behind or in front of the altar, you should stop, making sure your feet are together, facing the altar, hands are folded in prayer position, bow your head slowly and reverently – then continue to walk. This is not done in a rushed manner, but as an acknowledgement to the place where the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass happens, as well as acknowledging & honoring the relics that are present
- Prayer Position of hands: hands are *always* in a prayer position – folded with elbows slightly bent – when they are not in use. Just like the Deacon and Priest.
- When sitting in chairs: sit upright, without slouching. Hands are in your lap, not on the sides or under the scapular. Feet are together in front, no folding of legs. Just like the Priest and Deacon.
- When kneeling during the consecration: be attentive to what is happening at the Mass. Kneel up, backs straight, hands gently resting on the chair in front of you.