Altar Server Ministry Guidelines

revised: October, 2019

Our Values
We are one team with one purpose.
We express our love for Jesus Christ through service.
We create an irresistible environment.

Standards
Show Up! Fulfill your role on the team!
Be joyful!
Be prepared!
Be a minister and worship!

ROLE
Your ministry as an altar server follows in a long line of young people assisting the priest and the congregation in a reverent and enjoyable Mass. Say a prayer to St. John Berchmans (pictured), who is the patron saint of altar servers, when you have any questions, and ask your sacristan for help.

BEFORE MASS
1. Arrive Early: Be at the church 20 minutes before worship begins—and sign in, which is helpful to your sacristan!
2. Robe in the Sacristy: Please dress appropriately, especially avoiding slick shoes, and wear light colors that won’t show through your white robe. Clothing that is too casual can distract from the holiness and celebration of the Mass.
3. Light all four candles around the altar.
4. Divide Up Duties:
   a. Sacramentary (big red book), which is kept by your chair.
   b. Candles during gospel reading.
   c. Preparing the altar during the offering: corporal, sacramentary, chalice and purificator, water and cruets.
   d. Two servers return with dish and towel as the priest comes to the altar to wash his hands.
5. Sacramentary: Check to make sure the big red book is on one of your chairs—as well as a songbook, if you are carrying the cross.
6. Songbook: Please carry your songbook and join in the singing of the opening song.

ENTRANCE AND PROCESSION
1. Cross Bearer Processes First: The second server follows the first. If there are three servers, the extra two walk side by side behind the cross bearer. Always walk slowly and reverently.
2. Step to the Right: Walk to the right side of the steps all the way to where the railing begins.
3. Bow to the Altar: Join in bowing with the presider and lectors, unless you’re the cross bearer.
4. Walk slowly: Take your seats reverently. (Cross bearer: place the cross in holder.)

ENTRANCE AND PROCESSION
1. Bring the Sacramentary to the Presider or Deacon: Have the red book in your hands and anticipate when the presider is about to say, “Let us pray.” Immediately walk up the ramp.
2. Walk Slowly: Carry the sacramentary reverently to the presider or the deacon.
3. Return Down the Ramp: After the prayer, take the sacramentary back to your chair.

LITURGY OF THE WORD
1. Listen Attentively: Be quiet and respectful during the readings and psalm.
2. During Christmas and Easter Seasons Only: When the presider stands for the gospel, two servers go to the altar, pick up the back two candles, and carry them to the front of the altar.
The presider will go to the front of the altar to pick up the gospel book, nodding at you to walk down the steps. Turn to your right and walk on the floor next to the steps past the ambo and up the steps behind the ambo. Stand at the front corners of the ambo facing each other while the gospel is read. When the gospel is finished return the candles directly to their stands by the altar and walk down the ramp to your seats.

PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS
1. While the ushers receive the offering, place the following items on the altar using the ramp:
   a. The corporal (unfold it at the altar).
   b. The sacramentary.
   c. Gold chalice and one purificator (be sure the chalice is right side up).
   d. The water cruet.
   e. Carry the other six gold cups to the altar and give them to the sacristan or deacon.
2. Return to Your Seat by Way of the Ramp.
3. Go to Stand by the Presider After the Offering: The servers receive various gifts. After all of them are handed out, the servers go behind the altar to place them. The money basket goes off to the side by the ambo. The bread and wine go on top of the altar.
4. Hand Washing: Go to the credence table and get the bowl and towel for the washing of the hands. If there is only one server, drape the towel over one arm and carry the bowl with the same arm. If there are two servers, one holds the bowl and the other holds the towel.
5. Go to the Altar: The server with the bowl picks up the water cruet. After washing the presider’s hands, return to the credence table and put the towel, bowl, and cruet on the table. The server with the towel takes the wine pitcher back to the credence table.
6. Return to your seat by way of the ramp.
7. Sing “Holy”: Then go to the front step by the hand railing, kneeling on the first step.

SIGN OF PEACE
1. Bowls to the Altar: After exchanging the Sign of Peace, go to the credence table, carry two gold bowls (one in each hand, never stacked), and set them on the altar. The sacristan will help you carry the six purificators from the credence table and place them the altar.
2. Stand at the Altar: All communion distributors will stand at the first step in front of the altar. Servers stand next to the cup ministers on the far right.

COMMUNION
1. Receive Communion: The servers receive Communion at the same time as the Eucharistic ministers and remain standing in their places.
2. Clean the Altar: While Communion is being distributed remove everything from the altar EXCEPT the corporal.
3. Return to Your Chair for the Rest of the Communion Time.
4. Fold Up the Corporal: As soon as the priest and Eucharistic ministers have taken the bowls off the altar and returned the remaining hosts to the tabernacle, go to the altar and fold up the corporal and bring it back reverently to the credence table.
5. Closing Prayer: When the presider says, “Let us pray,” immediately bring him the Sacramentary by way of the ramp, then return to your chair.

RECESSIONAL
1. Move to Your Places at the Beginning of Mass: While the presider moves to the front of the altar, go to the same place where you stood at the start of the service. (Cross bearer: remove the cross from its pedestal near the work sacristy door and bring it along.)
2. Process Out: Bow to the altar and slowly process out in the same order that you processed in.
3. Put the Cross in its Stand: Return the processional cross to the stand in the gathering space.
4. Extinguish the Candles by the Altar: Use the candle lighter from the work sacristy.
5. Hang Up Your Robe: Place your alb and cincture in the vesting sacristy.