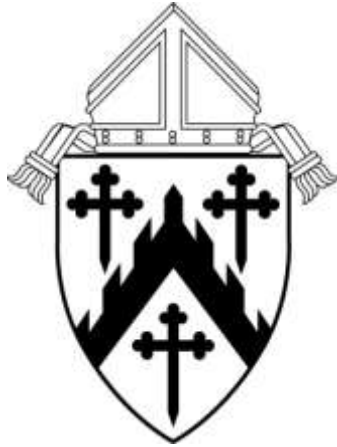


DIOCESE OF DAVENPORT



Policies Relating to Altar Servers

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Policy promulgated at the Pastoral Center of the Diocese of Davenport—effective April 13, 2013
Memorial of Saint Martin I, Pope and Martyr

Most Reverend Martin Amos
Bishop of Davenport

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§IV-250 POLICIES RELATING TO ALTAR SERVERS

INTRODUCTION

The celebration of the Eucharist is the action of Christ and of the Church, namely, of the holy people united and ordered under the Bishop. It therefore pertains to the whole Body of the Church, manifests it, and has its effect upon it. Indeed, it also affects the individual members of the Church in a different way, according to their different orders, functions, and actual participation.⁷⁴ In this way, the Christian people, “a chosen race, a royal Priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession,” expresses its cohesion and its hierarchical ordering.⁷⁵ All, therefore, whether ordained ministers or lay Christian faithful, in fulfilling their function or their duty, should carry out solely but totally that which pertains to them. (General Instruction of the Roman Missal [GIRM], 91).

The People of God which is gathered for Mass is coherently and hierarchically ordered, and this finds its expression in the variety of ministries and the variety of actions according to the different parts of the celebration (GIRM, 294).

§IV-250.1 Those Eligible to Minister as Altar Servers and their Preparation

IV-250.1.1 Policy

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.

In the Diocese of Davenport, men and women, boys and girls, may minister as altar servers.

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, or in their manner of vesting. 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.

Servers should be mature enough to understand their responsibilities and to carry them out well and with appropriate reverence. They must be baptized Catholics and have already received Holy Communion for the first time.

IV-250.1.2 Policy

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.

Procedures

Pastors are responsible for the selection and preparation of altar servers. Pastors may delegate this responsibility to another suitable person.

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.

§IV-250.2 Vesture

IV-250.2 Policy

Servers should normally be vested (GIRM 339). This is within the tradition of the Church and prevents difficulties regarding appropriate dress for these ministers. All servers should wear the same liturgical vesture.

In the Diocese of Davenport, the proper vesture for altar servers is the alb with cincture (unless the alb is tailored so as not to require one). The cincture is usually white, but may be of the liturgical color of the day. A cross or other identifying pendant may also be used, according to local custom.

The cassock and surplice is not proper vesture for altar servers, who are not clerics. However, if parishes are already in the habit of using such vesture for servers, they may continue to do so until they can be replaced with albs. As noted above, it is not permitted to vest some servers in cassocks and others in albs.

Procedures

Parishes are responsible for supplying the proper vesture for their altar servers.

§IV-250.3. Functions

IV-241.1.1 Policy

Servers may carry out all the functions listed in no. 100 and nos. 187-193 of the GIRM.

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. When appropriate, a server may also ring a bell as a signal to the faithful.

However, the preparation of the altar, that is, arranging the corporal(s) and vessels, is properly the task of the deacon when present. In his absence, the instituted acolyte takes this role. In the absence of both, a server may assist in this regard. See Diocesan Policy §IV-220: *Policies Relating to the Liturgical Ministry of the Deacon*.

Servers may not distribute Holy Communion unless they have been mandated for this function by the bishop. Even if so mandated, they would normally not do so at a Mass where they are functioning as an altar server. Usually, only an instituted acolyte would carry out both duties.

Procedures

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. They would normally exercise only that ministry and not, for example, also serve as reader or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion.

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. They normally receive the Eucharist whenever they participate in the liturgy.

Servers should be seated in a place from which they can easily assist the priest celebrant and deacon. If possible, and if the flow of the liturgy would not be impeded, they should be seated outside of the sanctuary. The place next to the priest is reserved for the deacon.