

# Altar Servers Training Manual

St. Joseph and St. Agatha Church

## Altar Server Training Manual

### General Guidelines

- If you are unable to serve at your assigned time, please try to find a replacement to take your place in advance. If you cannot find a replacement, please notify someone that you will serve with so that they will know to try and find someone that day.
- Please arrive at least 15 minutes before the start of Mass.
- As you vest, be mindful of where you are and behave appropriately.
- It is important to be appropriately dressed - especially your shoes - as this is what people will see during the liturgy.
- Try to keep the closet where the cassocks (black garments) and surplices (white garments) neat, and the door closed when it is not in use.

### Before Mass Begins

- The altar servers are responsible for ensuring that the candles in the sanctuary are lit. If they are not, please do so approximately 5-10 minutes before Mass begins. After the candles are lit, pick up the candles and the processional cross.
  - If there is only one altar server, that person will carry the processional cross.
  - If there are only two altar servers, one will carry the cross, and the other will carry a candle in the procession immediately behind the cross bearer.
  - If there are three altar servers, one will carry the cross, and two will carry the candles slightly behind the cross bearer. Ideally, there should be symmetry in the procession. By this I mean that the two candle bearers should be roughly the same height.
- While standing at the back of the Church with the cross and candles, stand to the side so **that you are not blocking the center aisle.**

### Entrance Procession

- When the cantor starts with the welcome, move into the center aisle with the processional cross lined up with the last pew. When Father or the Deacon gives you the signal, start moving forward at a slow, dignified, steady pace. When you reach the altar, pause for one second, and then move to place the processional cross and candle(s) in their stands and move to your assigned position.
- There was a saying in the 1800's that "children are to be seen, but not to be heard." For altar servers, the reverse is true, "you are not to be seen, but are rather to be heard." Your job is to make sure that you don't visually distract the congregation, but at the same time, you need to sing, pray, and say the responses so that you can be heard. (Back in the old days, the altar boys were the only people beside the priest who would speak as part of the Mass - and that was in Latin)

### The Mass Begins

- Once the Mass begins, you need to simply participate until the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins. The one obligation is that the "book bearer" needs to hold the book for the opening prayer. If the Gloria is sung, then "Let us pray" will happen immediately after it is over - so be ready. Go to the celebrant and he will hand you the open sacramentary (big red book). You will need to hold it at a position and an angle so that it can be easily read. How you hold book and where you need to stand will be determined by how tall you are. When the people say "Amen", you may return the sacramentary to the priest and sit down to the left side of the priest.

### The Liturgy of the Word

- Altar servers are generally not responsible for anything during the Liturgy of the Word, except listening attentively to the proclamation of the Scriptures. The one exception is that for certain important liturgies (Christmas, Easter, Confirmation) there may be a Gospel procession. For this, the candle bearers would accompany the priest or deacon from the altar to the ambo with the Book of the Gospels. IF this procession is ever used, you will be instructed at that time how it is to take place.

### Preparation of the Gifts

- After the General Intercessions, the people will be seated and the ushers will begin the collection. As soon as everyone sits, the server who is "book" assists Father or the Deacon prepare the altar. Bring chalices, bowls, purificators (Pyx if they are on the credence table) to the altar. The cross bearer should take the processional cross to the back of the Church and wait for the gifts to be brought forward.
- When the offertory procession begins, the priest or deacon will go to the bottom step in front of the altar. This is your cue to join him. He will hand you either the cruet with the water or the flagon with the wine. Take these to the side of the altar, do not set them on the altar, wait for the priest or deacon, he will take them from you.
- When handling a cruet or flagon to someone, always hand it over with the handle pointed toward them. This makes it easier to ensure that the transfer takes place without the vessel being dropped.
- The the cross bearer returns the processional cross to its stand. At this point the other two servers should take the lavabo bowl, towel and water cruet and stand near the altar waiting for the priest to wash his hands. The signal to be ready to come forward is when the priest makes a long bow to the altar. If two altar servers are available, it is best for one to hold both the water cruet and the other should hold the bowl and towel. After this is accomplished, return the bowl and pitcher to the credence table and return to your seats.

### Eucharistic Prayer

- During the Eucharistic Prayer, kneel along with the congregation. One altar server should ring the bell when the priest elevates the Host and Chalice. The bell should be rung three times with a quick twist of the wrist.

### Communion

- Altar servers do not have any specific responsibilities during the communion rite. However, be alert as there may be an occasion when the priest needs you to retrieve or do something. Receive communion and return to your pew. If the Deacon is not present, be alert to bring the water cruet to the altar as soon as the priest returns to the altar. You should assist retrieving the sacred vessels from the altar if needed. †
- As soon as the priest or deacon says the dismissal - "The Mass is ended, go in peace" or "Go in peace glorifying the Lord by your lives"- then take the cross and the candles and stand in line with the first pew facing the altar. Remain there until the priest and deacon bow facing the altar and then turn around. At this point you should turn and lead the procession to the back of the Church.
- Clean UP
- Return the processional cross and candles to their places in the sacristy, Extinguish the candles carefully.
- Then you can return to the closet and remove your cassock and surplice. Please make sure that they remain on the hangers. If you see anything that has fallen to the ground, please put it back on a hanger. Close the closet door.