

**ALTAR SERVER GUIDE**  
**Good Shepherd Parish**  
**Revised November 2015**

***GENERAL INFORMATION***

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

Servers carry the cross, the processional candles, hold the missal (book) for the priest when he is not at the altar, carry the incense and censer, set the altar, assist the priest to receive the gifts from the people, offer the bread, wine and water to the priest at the altar during the preparation of the gifts, wash his hands and assist the priest & deacon as necessary.

Altar servers must attend every Mass that they have been scheduled. When a server cannot be present he/she must arrange for a replacement.

Altar servers must have previously received their First Holy Communion.

***DRESS***

Whatever you wear underneath an alb (white robe) will show through. Servers should therefore wear white or solid colors. Dress shoes should be worn whenever possible.

***GENUFLECTION & BOWING (GIRM\* nn. 274-275)***

All Catholics should genuflect whenever entering a church, the sanctuary or crossing in front of the tabernacle: they should face the tabernacle and genuflect, that is, touch the floor with the right knee. This demonstrates respect for our Lord, Christ the King. When a physical ailment makes a genuflection impossible, a profound bow from the waist is substituted.

An exception for altar servers is when carrying objects such as the processional cross or candles. They do not genuflect when they carry something; they bow their heads simply instead.

But for the exception noted above, one bows the head to other persons. A profound bow from the waist is reserved to the altar.

*\*General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)*

# Altar Server Instructions for Good Shepherd Parish

## *Before Mass*

1. Arrive at least 15-20 minutes before the Mass begins.
2. Sign your name on the board in the sacristy.
3. Wash hands (and use anti-bacterial solution during the flu season).
4. Locate your alb and put it on. Tie a cincture at your waist (and put on a cross if customary at your church location).
5. Decide which server will do what: cross, candles, set the altar, bells, etc.
6. Ask the priest when he will need the small missal at his chair:
  - a. At the very beginning of Mass, or for The Collect (“let us pray”)?
  - c. After the homily for the Profession of Faith (Creed)?
  - d. For the Prayer After Communion (“let us pray”)?
7. Ask the priest whether he wants the small or the large missal on the altar. Use the book stand when the large missal is selected.
8. Accompany the priest to the processional area.

## *Opening Procession/Introductory Rites*

**Order of Procession:** incense (when used), processional cross, candles (when used), other additional servers, Book of the Gospel, priest (or deacon & priest side-by-side).

1. Usually, the **cross bearer** leads the procession (incense leads when incense is used). Arriving at the front of the church (below any steps), the cross bearer bows to the tabernacle, goes immediately into the sanctuary to place the cross in its stand, and then goes to his/her seat.
2. **Candle bearers** walk alongside the cross bearer when there is room – or immediately behind when there is no room, bow their heads toward the tabernacle at the front of the church, immediately place candles in their holders, and then go to seating. **Other servers** not carrying anything walk two-by-two (or alone), with hands folded as in prayer. When you arrive at the front of the church, genuflect toward the tabernacle before mounting the steps, approach the altar for a profound bow (from the waist) and then take their seats. **Note that at Most Holy Trinity Church, the genuflection is omitted because the tabernacle is not located in the church proper.**
3. The **book bearer** takes the small missal in hand upon arriving in the sanctuary and brings it to the priest at the desired time. Stand directly in front of him with the missal. If you are taller than the priest, stand a bit to his right. When he has concluded the prayer(s), return to your seat and keep the missal near you until it is needed again.

## *Liturgy of the Word*

*If you don't know the parts of the Mass, follow along in the hymnal. Remember that you are sitting in a spot that is visible to most of the people at Mass. Sit as still as possible to give good example and to avoid being a distraction.*

1. During the readings, look toward the lector and listen quietly. Respond after each reading and sing the Responsorial Psalm.
2. Stand with the community to sing the Gospel Acclamation (“Alleluia”), listen attentively to the Gospel reading, and then sit to listen to the homily.
3. After the homily, wait for the priest to stand. Remain standing and join with the community for the Profession of Faith (Creed) and the Prayer of the Faithful.

## *Liturgy of the Eucharist*

1. **As soon as the Prayer of the Faithful is completed, set the altar** as follows:
  - a. Place 3 corporals on the altar. Unfold them so that any cross is in the center closest to you.
  - b. Set the patens (plates) filled with hosts on the corporal on the side of the altar furthest away from the credence table.
  - c. Set the chalices pre-filled with wine with purificators on the side of the altar closest to the credence table.
  - d. Set the priest's chalice on the on the side of the altar closest to the credence table.
  - e. Set the missal on the center corporal (at St. Joseph, do not place on microphone)
  - f. Note that any empty vessels should be delivered *after the sign of peace*.
2. After the altar is set, a server walks with folded hands down the central aisle to the table of gifts. At the designated spot, remain facing the back of the church; when all is ready, turn and lead those carrying the gifts to the priest.
3. Other servers accompany the priest to receive the offertory gifts. First, place the money basket as close to the altar as possible, preferably underneath. Return to the priest in front of the altar if necessary, to help receive the other gifts. One server takes the wine cruet from the priest, goes to the credence table, removes the cover (& that of the water cruet). Another server may place the paten of hosts that come down the aisle on the corporal holding the patens already on the altar.
4. One or two servers bring the water and wine cruets (with tops removed), from the credence table to the priest (or deacon) at the altar; be sure to have handles out so priest/deacon can grab them easily. When the priest gives them back, bow and return the cruets to the credence table.
5. A server opens and carries a towel to the priest while a second server carries a bowl and water cruet to wash the priest's hands (if one server only: drape towel over an arm to carry the bowl with one hand and cruet with other. Pour water over the priest's hands. After the priest has dried his hands and returned the towel, both servers bow together and return to the credence table and to their seats.

6. Bell ringing is customary at some churches. When the priest elevates (raises) the large Sacred Host, ring the bell counting to three in your head, and then stop ringing (or stop ringing if the priest lowers Host sooner than counting to three). Repeat for the elevation of the chalice.

7. Join with the community to sing responses. At the Sign of Peace, shake each other's hand, including the priest's. Then bring to the altar any additional empty chalices or patens needed for the distribution of Communion.

8. When the eucharistic ministers come to the altar, join with them and receive Communion. After receiving Communion, return to your seats.

9. After the priest and other ministers have begun to distribute Communion to everyone, remove the missal and any empty vessels from the altar and then deliver the platter with the pix (to bring Communion to the sick).

10. After Communion, the eucharistic ministers return any empty vessels and purificators to the credence table, while patens with Sacred Hosts remaining are placed on the altar. The priest returns to the altar and then places the ciborium in the tabernacle. Meanwhile, servers should clear any empty vessels from the altar as they become available and place them on the credence table.

11. The priest will then purify all vessels at the credence table. While the priest is purifying and after the altar is clear, servers should properly fold all three corporals one- by-one and place them on the credence table. The central corporal is not removed before the priest empties the altar of the platter of pyx.

a. Fold 1/3 up from bottom. b. Fold 1/3 down from top. c. Fold 1/3 in from right and d. fold remaining end in from the left.

### **Closing Prayer/Closing Procession**

1. When the priest says, "Let us pray" a server brings the missal to him. When he closes the book, bring it back to your seat.
2. During the closing hymn, as the priest moves to kiss the altar, the cross bearer carries the cross to the aisle in front of the altar, standing center back, prepared to easily turn and lead procession out after all have revered the tabernacle (or altar at Most Holy Trinity Church), in the same manner and order as during the opening procession.
3. Return to the sacristy and hang your alb, cincture (and cross) in the appropriate location.
4. With the guidance of the sacristan, extinguish candles using the proper tool, clean up any notes/papers from the sanctuary, and help return any items from the credence table to the sanctuary.

*Thank you for your ministry!*