

Nativity of the Lord Jesus

Catholic Church

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GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR ALTAR SERVERS

UPDATED – JUNE 18, 2019

Before Mass:

- Arrive at least 15 minutes before Mass, PLEASE!
- Say a prayer that you may serve God well.
- Put on your size of cassock and surplice.
- Light the altar candles & processional candles. (During the Easter Season, light the Easter Candle.)
- Look to see if the tabernacle key is in the tabernacle. If it is not there, then tell the priest or deacon.
- Take your processional candle; go to the church doors. Make sure to hold the candle so that you DO NOT blow it out.
- Be prepared to pray all the prayers & to sing whenever you are not doing something else that would prevent this.

When Mass begins:

- Walk side-by-side behind the cross bearer. When you reach the foot of the altar, go directly to the candle stands & place them in the stand. Do NOT go toward the tabernacle; do NOT genuflect.
- Then go to your chairs...the 2 on the far ends of the row of chairs. The server closest to the credence table should go behind the chairs to get to their chair. Remain standing.
- When the Gloria is almost complete (when we start to sing the words, "...with the Holy Spirit," – or if there is no Gloria – after the "Lord have mercy") the server closest to the credence table gets the Roman Missal & brings it to the priest. At the end of the prayer, return it to the credence table, return to your chair & sit down.
- When the priest (and deacon) stands for the "Alleluia", stand & get the processional candles. Take them & stand on either side of the altar, facing the deacon or priest. When the deacon or priest begins to go to the ambo, move with him & stand on either side of the ambo, facing the deacon or priest. When the Gospel is finished, after the Book of the Gospels is placed on the stand, then put your processional candles back in their stands and return to your seats. You should sit down *with* the priest or deacon.
- Sit during the homily – look at the homilist while they preach.
- Stand for the Creed & General Intercessions (petitions).

- At the completion of the General Intercessions do NOT sit down with the rest of the people. Go directly to the credence table. It does not matter which server brings which of the following items. BUT, it IS important that the items come in the following order for the deacon or priest to set the altar:
 - chalice
 - 2 Communion Cups
 - 1 Communion Cup & Pall. NOTE: the cups are filled with wine. BE CAREFUL NOT TO SPILL ANY WINE.
 - 4 purificators
 - Roman Missal
- Both servers return to their seats & remain standing until the deacon or priest moves to receive the gifts. Both servers follow down the steps, on the side of the altar they are on, & stand – one to the priest’s left & one to his (deacon’s) right. The priest will hand the water & wine to the servers (or to the deacon who will give these to the servers). Take what you have received & both servers go to the altar, organ side.
- Take the lid off of the wine cruet. Do NOT go to the credence table. Hold the cruets so that the handles face the priest or deacon.
- When the priest or deacon is finished with the cruets, both servers move TOGETHER, taking the cruets to the credence table.
- The server carrying the wine cruet should set it down & put the lid on it. This server then picks up the towel & OPENS IT UP FULLY, holding it with both hands. The server carrying the water cruet also picks up the small bowl for washing the priest’s hands. This server should have BOTH the water cruet & the bowl. Both servers go together to wash the priest’s hands. Then together return the towel, bowl & water cruet to the credence table, & return to your chairs.
 - After returning to your chairs, remain standing. Do not cross in front of the deacon or any concelebrating priest. If necessary, go behind the chairs to get to your place.
- After the “Holy, Holy, Holy” is sung, each server goes to the back corner & kneels on the top step. The server by the credence table kneels next to the credence table; the server by the organ kneels immediately next to the Gospel Book, candle stands, & bells.
- At the consecration, the server closest to the organ picks up the bells & rings them (THREE SHORT RINGS) when the priest elevates the host, & again when the priest elevates the chalice. Then place the bells back on the floor.
- After the Great AMEN, stand & return to stand in front of your chair.
- At the Sign of Peace, exchange it with the other server & any priest or deacon who comes to extend the sign with you. Make sure your voice is clear & sincere in wishing “Peace be with you” to each person.
- The server closest to the credence table should then get the 2 ciboria and place them on the altar.

- When it is time to receive Communion, both servers should stand immediately next to each other in front of the chairs at the credence table end of the chairs. After you receive the Sacred Body, you will be offered the cup. If you do not want to receive the Precious Blood, simply bow your head when it is offered to you. Then, get the patens. The server closest to the organ should then assist the priest during distribution of Communion. This server should stand to the priest's left. The other server should assist whoever distributes the Sacred Body to the priest's left. Stand to the right of this person (immediately to the left of the other server).
- After Communion, the priest or deacon, or emHC, will take the patens from the servers. Each server should wait until the paten is cleaned & returned to them. Then return the patens to the credence table.
- As the priest (and deacon) are finished with the sacred vessels at the altar and the purificators, the servers can take them to the credence table. All gold items should be on the center corporal. The cruets, finger bowl and towel are placed to the right of this corporal. Make sure there is room to set the Roman Missal after the closing prayer.
- The server removing the Roman Missal from the altar should set it on the chair of the server closest to the credence table.
- Return to your chairs (without going in front of the priest – go behind the chairs if the priest is already at his seat) and sit.
- When the priest stands for the closing prayer, both servers stand & the server with the Roman Missal holds it for the priest until the blessing. Both servers make the Sign of the Cross during the blessing. The server with the Roman Missal returns it to the credence table after the blessing. (This server should be facing the priest during the blessing.)
- After the blessing, both servers get the processional candles and go to the foot of the altar steps and stand on either side of the cross bearer. After the priest and deacon genuflect (bow), turn and process side-by-side behind the cross bearer.

After Mass:

- After you reach the narthex, blow out your candle, take the hymnals or missalettes from the priest and deacon if they have them, and return your candle to the stand next to the Gospel stand and the hymnal or missalette to the priest or deacon's chair.
- Hang up your surplice and cassock carefully & neatly in size order to the left of the hanging mesh bag. Check to see if any other cassocks or surplices have fallen to the floor & hang them up correctly if needed.
- Make sure the candles have been extinguished. (If there is a Baptism at Mass or it is the Easter Season, make sure the Easter Candle is also extinguished, but NOT after the 8:30am Mass.)

General Notes:

- Get your own substitute if you cannot be at your assigned Mass.
 - It is not fair to the priest (or anyone else) to find someone minutes before Mass when they are preparing themselves for Mass.
 - If you cannot find your own substitute, please call the parish office as soon as possible. However, we have found that when the office calls for a substitute, many of the servers who can fill in have NOT been contacted by the server in need of a substitute.
- Pay attention – be open to requests to do something differently. (Sometimes there are special things happening.)
- Be prayerful in your disposition –
 - fold your hands at chest-level when not holding something;
 - stand up straight;
 - move relatively slowly & reverently. If you make a “mistake”, do not hurry to correct it; rather move slowly & few people will notice there was a “mistake”.
- Look awake...direct your gaze toward what is happening at each part of the Mass...e.g. the homily – look at the priest or deacon.

Please be aware that if you are asked to serve for a special occasion that will require more specific instructions (e.g. Holy Week services / Confirmation. etc.) you will probably be asked to come to a practice sometime prior to the special occasion. Note: this applies to all servers. Experienced servers need to share their commitment & expertise with newer servers.

Thank you for your gift of service to the Lord & Nativity of the Lord Jesus parish!

6/18/19

