



St. Matthias the Apostle Catholic Church

Altar Server Step-by-Step Guide

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BEFORE THE START OF MASS

LIGHTING THE ALTAR AND PROCESSIONAL CANDLES (10 minutes before Mass begins)

- One Altar Server will process down the center aisle, genuflect in front of the altar, turn left and proceed to the lighter box.
- Remove a lighter, retrieve and light the candlelighter.
- Holding the candlelighter so the flame is pointed upward, light the two processional candles, the four candles around the altar and the two candles at the ambo.
- Extinguish the candlelighter and return it to its place, and return the lighter to the box.
- Ensure the Bells are on the far left of the top sanctuary step.
- Process back to the center aisle, genuflect, turn and process to the back of church.

RETRIEVING THE PROCESSIONAL CROSS AND CANDLES (5 minutes before Mass begins)

- Three Altar Servers, wearing white gloves, will process side-by-side together down the center aisle, stop and genuflect together in front of the altar, turn left together and process in single file to the cross/candles.
- After retrieving the cross/candles, return in single file (with Cross Bearer in the middle) to the center aisle.
- Bow to the Tabernacle and then turn around together.
- The Cross Bearer will begin to process up the aisle first.
- The Candle Bearers will follow side-by-side 2 steps behind the Cross Bearer to the back of church.

*** If there are only one or two Altar Servers serving the Mass, only the Cross is used in the Procession.

RETRIEVING THE PROCESSIONAL CROSS ONLY (5 minutes before Mass begins)

- One Altar Server, wearing white gloves, will process down the center aisle, stop and genuflect in front of the altar, turn left and process to the Processional Cross.
- Remove the cross from its stand, return to the center aisle, bow to the Tabernacle, turn around and process to the back of the church.

ENTRANCE PROCESSION

This is the order for lining up at the back of church in preparation for the Entrance Procession:

1. **Cross Bearer** – lines up even with the third pew from the back
2. **Candle Bearers** – line up side-by-side with each other, behind the Cross Bearer
3. **Additional Altar Servers** (including any Apprentice Servers) – line up in pairs, side-by-side with each other, behind the Candle Bearers
4. **Deacon or Lector**, with the Book of Gospels
5. **Presiding Priest**

When the choir begins to sing the opening hymn, the Cross Bearer will turn his/her head to see that the priest is ready for the Procession to start.

- The Cross Bearer will begin the Procession;
- After two steps the Candle Bearers will begin to process;
- After two steps any additional servers will begin to process;
- After two steps any Apprentices will begin to process, followed by the Deacon/Lector and Priest.
- The Cross Bearer will pause in front of the altar, bow his/her head, turn left, and proceed to put the Cross in its stand, then move to the Altar Server seating and remain standing.
- When the Candle Bearers approach the front of the altar, the one on the right will move two steps to the right (line up with yellow mark on sanctuary step) and stand facing the altar, and the one on the left will move two steps to the left (line up with yellow mark on sanctuary step) and stand facing the altar.
- When the additional/Apprentice Altar Servers reach the front of the aisle, the one(s) on the right will move to the outside of the right Candle Bearer and stand facing the altar, the one(s) on the left will move to the outside of the left Candle Bearer and stand facing the altar.
- All Servers are to hold their positions until the priest has processed up to the center and has stopped in line with everyone.
- When the priest genuflects, the Candle Bearers will bow their heads and all additional/Apprentice Altar Servers will genuflect together with Father.
- The Priest (and Deacon if present) will then step up into the sanctuary – when the Priest reaches the top step, the Candle Bearers and additional/Apprentice Altar Servers will turn left together and process along the left of the sanctuary.
- The additional/Apprentice Altar Servers will process to the Altar Server pew and remain standing.
- The Candle Bearers will place the candles on the stands, blow the candles out, and then move to the Altar Server seating. The Cross Bearer and Candle Bearers will remove their white gloves and remain standing.

OPENING PRAYER

During the final words of the *Gloria* – “**For You alone are the Holy One...**”, one Altar Server will process up into the sanctuary, in preparation to hold the Roman Missal for the Opening Prayer.

- Process over to the credence table and take the Roman Missal off the bookstand.
- Holding the book flat with two hands, with the front cover facing up and the spine of the book on the right, walk back to stand in front of the priest. The priest will open the Roman Missal to the appropriate page.
- Once the page is set, hold the book with both hands along the bottom edge, with the weight of the book resting on arms and chest to support it.
- *If there is a deacon present and if he has already picked up the Roman Missal off the credence table, process over to the deacon.*
- *The deacon will open the book to the appropriate page and place it in your hands.*
- *Once the deacon has set the page, hold the book with both hands along the bottom edge, with the weight of the book resting on arms and chest to support it, and then walk over to stand in front of the priest, facing him.*
- After the prayer, close the book if the priest has not done so, and return it to the bookstand on the credence table, with the front cover facing up.
- Return to the Altar Server seating and sit down.

NOTE: The *Gloria* is not sung or recited during Lent or Advent. During these times, the Altar Server will process up into the sanctuary during the final words of the Penitential Act/Kyrie, in preparation for the Opening Prayer.

PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS

CHILDREN’S COLLECTION (10:30AM AND 1:00PM MASSES)

Immediately after the Prayers of the Faithful, while two Altar Servers are preparing the altar, the third Altar Server will assist with the Children’s Collection.

- Process up into the sanctuary to retrieve the Children’s Collection basket from the priest or deacon.
- Walk to the front of the altar and stand on the step, holding the basket out in front while children from the congregation come forward to place their offering into the basket.
- When all the children’s offerings have been received, turn and place the basket at the base of the altar.
- Return to the Altar Server seating and sit down.

PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS (continued)

PREPARING THE ALTAR

Immediately after the Prayers of the Faithful, two Altar Servers will process up into the sanctuary to prepare the altar.

This is the order of tasks to prepare the altar:

ROMAN MISSAL AND STAND

- Server #1 will pick up the book with both hands and then step to the right to allow Server #2 enough room to pick up the bookstand.
- Server #2 will place the bookstand on the top left side of the altar cloth, angled slightly to the center. Once Server #2 has placed the bookstand, he/she will immediately turn to the right and return to the credence table to transfer the chalice.
- Server #1 will place the book on the stand and immediately turn to the right and return to the credence table to transfer the ciboria.

CHALICE

- (*while Server #1 is setting down the Roman Missal*) Server #2 will pick up the Chalice using two hands (one on the stem and one flat on the top), turn to the right and place it on the center top portion of the altar cloth, then turn to the right and return to the credence table to transfer the communion cups.

CIBORIA

- (*while Server #2 is transferring the chalice*) Server #1 will take the two ciboria from the credence table, turn to the right and set them on the top right side of the altar cloth, then turn to the right and move to the credence table to retrieve two communion cups.

COMMUNION CUPS

- (*while Server #1 is transferring the ciboria*) Server #2 will take the purificators covering the communion cups and set them on the other purificators, then will pick up two cups, turn to the right and set them side-by-side on the right side of the altar in front of the ciboria, then turn to the right and move to the credence table to retrieve two more communion cups.
- After transferring the ciboria, the Server #1 will begin to transfer communion cups also, in the same manner, until all have been transferred.
- Leave all the purificators on the credence table.
- Whichever Server is done first, he/she will process to the edge of the sanctuary, turn toward the altar and stand reverently until the other Server has finished and joins him/her.
- Both Servers will bow at the same time toward the altar, turn together and process down to the Altar Server seating, then turn and sit at down at the same time.

*** If only one Altar Server is serving the Mass, the order of tasks to prepare the altar is: Roman Missal and Stand, Chalice, Ciboria, Communion Cups.

PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS (continued)

PRESENTING THE GIFTS – 2 SERVERS

Immediately as the priest stands to receive the gifts being brought down the center aisle, two Altar Servers will stand and process to the front of the sanctuary (base of the stairs).

- One Altar Server will stand on the left of the priest, facing the congregation, and the other Server will stand on the right of the priest, facing the congregation. If there is a deacon, the deacon and priest will stand together in the center and the Altar Servers will stand one on each side of them.
- The priest will take the ciboria of hosts from the gift bearers and hand it to one of the Servers.
- The priest will take the decanter of wine from the gift bearers and hand it to the other Server.
- The priest will then take the basket from the gift bearers, offer it up and hand it back to them.
- As the gift bearers turn to return to the congregation, the Servers will turn toward the altar and step up into the sanctuary together with the priest.
- The Altar Server with the ciboria of hosts will walk along the far side of the altar and stand, holding the ciboria until the priest or deacon is in position behind the altar and reaches for it. After giving the ciboria to the priest/deacon, that Server will immediately walk to the credence table, take the cruet of water, remove the stopper, then holding the cruet with the handle facing out, will walk over to stand next to the Server who is holding the decanter of wine.
- The Altar Server with the decanter of wine will walk along the near side of the altar to the credence table, remove the stopper and hold the decanter with the handle facing out, then turn and step to the near corner of the altar, ready to present the decanter to the priest or deacon at the altar.
- With the two Servers standing together with the water and wine, the priest/deacon will take the decanter of wine, pour the wine into the chalice, then will hand the decanter back to that Server, then will take the cruet of water, pour a small amount into the wine, then will hand the cruet of water back to that Server. Both Servers will respond together with a bow of the head. Then the Servers will turn, take the decanter and cruet to the credence table, and put in the stoppers.
- One Server will then pick up the pitcher of water in the right hand and the lavabo in the left hand, and the other Server will pick up the finger towel and drape it over his/her hands with palms together and fingers pointing away turn. Both Servers step back to the altar.
- After the priest has said the blessing over the gifts, he will turn away from the altar for the hand washing ritual.
- The priest will hold his hands over the lavabo while the Server pours the water in a steady stream over his fingers until he indicates the Server should stop.
- The priest will then take the towel from the second Server and dry his hands.
- When the priest returns the towel to the Server, both Servers will respond together with a bow of the head. Then the Servers will return to the credence table, set down the lavabo, pitcher and towel, then process together to the Altar Server seating, and turn and remain standing.

PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS (continued)

*** If only one Altar Server is serving the Mass, the tasks to present the gifts are as follows:

PRESENTING THE GIFTS – 1 SERVER

Immediately as the priest stands to receive the gifts being brought down the center aisle, the one Altar Server will stand and process to the front of the sanctuary (base of the stairs) to stand on the right of the priest, facing the congregation.

- The priest will take the ciboria of hosts from the gift bearers and hand it to the Server. (If there is a deacon, the priest will hand the ciboria to the deacon.)
- The priest will then take the decanter of wine from the gift bearers and hand it to the Server.
- The priest will then take the basket of offerings from the gift bearers, offer it up and hand it back to them.
- As the gift bearers turn to return to the congregation, the priest will take the ciboria, and the Server will turn around carrying the decanter of wine and step up into the sanctuary together with the priest.
- With the decanter of wine, the Server will walk along the near side of the altar to the credence table.
- The Server will remove the stopper from the decanter and the stopper from the water cruet on the credence table. Holding the water cruet in the left hand and the wine decanter in the right hand, with the handles facing out, the Server will turn and walk to the altar to present them to the priest or deacon at the altar.
- The priest/deacon will take the decanter of wine, pour the wine into the chalice, then will hand the decanter back to the Server, then will take the cruet of water, pour a small amount into the wine, then will hand the cruet of water back to the Server. The Server will respond with a bow of the head. Then the Server will return the decanter and cruet to the credence table and put in the stoppers.
- The Altar Server then will drape the finger towel over the left forearm and pick up the lavabo with the left hand, and the pitcher of water with the right hand, and return to the altar and stand ready.
- After the priest has said the blessing over the gifts, he will turn away from the altar for the hand washing ritual.
- The priest will hold his hands over the lavabo while the Server pours the water in a steady stream over his fingers until he indicates the Server should stop. The priest will then take the towel and dry his hands.
- When the priest returns the towel, the Server will respond with a bow of the head. Then the Server will return to the credence table, set down the lavabo, pitcher and towel, then turn and process to the Altar Server seating, and turn and remain standing.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

During the final words of the *Holy, Holy, Holy* Acclamation – “**Blessed is He who comes...**”, all Altar Servers serving the Mass will move from their seats to the edge of the sanctuary stairs, to kneel on the floor at the start of the Eucharistic Prayer and to remain there throughout the prayer. Apprentice Altar Servers will stay in their place in the pew to kneel.

- The Altar Server responsible for ringing the Bells will be on the far left. NOTE: If the Bells were not moved into place during the pre-Mass candle lighting, the Server responsible for ringing the bells will move them to the far left of the top sanctuary step now.

RINGING OF THE BELLS

FIRST RINGING

- During the first part of the Prayer, when the priest holds his hands over the bread and wine, and says – “**...become for us the Body and Blood...**”, or – “**...that you accept and bless these gifts...**”, ring the bells in one continuous ringing for 2 seconds as those words are being said.

SECOND RINGING

- During the consecration of the bread into the Body of Christ, when the priest has finished saying – “**...This is my Body, which will be given up for you**” and lifts the Sacred Body of Christ, ring the bells in three distinct rings (1 full second for each ring, 1 full second between each ring).

THIRD RINGING

- During the consecration of the wine into the Blood of Christ, when the priest has finished saying – “**...Do this in memory of me**” and lifts the Precious Blood of Christ, ring the bells in three distinct rings (1 full second for each ring, 1 full second between each ring).

LORD’S PRAYER

When the congregation rises from the kneeling position for the Lord’s Prayer, the Altar Servers will rise and return to their seating area to stand (leave the Bells in place).

- Place your hands in the reverent prayer position (palms together, fingers pointing up) for the Lord’s Prayer – do not hold hands with the other Servers or the congregation.

SIGN OF PEACE

Share the sign of Peace with each other.

COMMUNION

After the *Lamb of God* is completed, the Altar Servers will kneel at their seats.

- When the Priest, Deacon, and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion begin to move from the sanctuary to their places to distribute communion, all Servers will rise and stand reverently at their seats until it is their turn to receive communion.
- Altar Servers will receive communion immediately after the choir & musicians, then return to sit in their seats (apprentice altar servers will kneel in the pew).
- During the distribution of communion, pay special attention to the priest, deacon, and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion – they may signal for help with something. If this happens, one Altar Server will stand and process over to that person to assist them in any way.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

As the final phrases of the *Anima Christi* are being said after Communion – “...**At the hour of my death, call me...**”, one Altar Server will process up into the sanctuary, in preparation to hold the Roman Missal for the Prayer After Communion.

- Process over to the altar and take the Roman Missal off the bookstand.
- Holding the book flat with two hands, with the front cover facing up and the spine of the book on the right, walk back to stand in front of the priest. The priest will open the Roman Missal to the appropriate page.
- Once the page is set, hold the book with both hands along the bottom edge, with the weight of the book resting on arms and chest to support it.
- *If there is a deacon present and if he has already picked up the Roman Missal off the credence table, process over to the deacon.*
- *The deacon will open the book to the appropriate page and place it in your hands.*
- *Once the deacon has set the page, hold the book with both hands along the bottom edge, with the weight of the book resting on arms and chest to support it, and then walk over to stand in front of the priest, facing him.*
- After the prayer, close the book if the priest has not done so, and return it to the bookstand on the altar, with the front cover facing up.
- Return to the Altar Server seating area, take a lighter from the box, light the two procession candles, return the lighter to the box, then sit down. The Cross Bearer and the Candle Bearers will put on their white gloves.

*** If there are only one or two Altar Servers, the procession candles are not lit.

Dismissal/ Recessional

When the priest finishes the final blessing, the Cross Bearer and the Candle Bearers will remove the cross and candles from their stands, turn around and stop.

- The Cross Bearer will process first, followed by the Candle Bearers and all additional/Apprentice Altar Servers processing in single-file to the center aisle.
- At the center aisle, the Cross Bearer will turn, process to the second pew, stop and turn around to face the altar.
- At the center aisle, the first Candle Bearer will turn and process to the left to the first pew and stop, and the second Candle Bearer will turn and process to the right to the first pew and stop, then the Candle Bearers will turn around together to face the altar.
- At the center aisle, the additional/Apprentice Altar Servers will turn and process to the Candle Bearers and, standing two side-by-side, will turn around together to face the altar.
- The priest (and deacon, if present) will step down from the sanctuary and turn to face the altar.
- When the priest genuflects, the Cross Bearer and Candle Bearers will bow their heads and all additional/Apprentice Altar Servers will genuflect together with the priest.
- When the priest turns around, everyone in the recessional will turn around. The Cross Bearer will begin to process up the aisle first, then the Candle Bearers will follow side-by-side behind the Cross Bearer, then the additional Servers will follow side-by-side behind the Candle Bearers, then the deacon and the priest will follow, processing to the back of the church.
- At the back of the nave, the Cross Bearer will turn right and process toward the side aisle and wait in the back. The Candle Bearers will turn right and process toward the side aisle, blow out the candles and wait with the Cross Bearer.
- All additional/Apprentice Altar Servers will continue processing into the narthex, and then will go remove their vestments.
- When the side aisle is clear, the Servers will process to the front of the church to return the Cross and Candles to the stands.
- Two Servers will return up the side aisle to the back to remove their vestments and leave. One Server will take the candle extinguisher, step up into the sanctuary, extinguish the four candles around the altar and the two candles at the ambo, then return the extinguisher to its place, and go up the side aisle to remove his/her vestments and leave.

*** If there are only one or two Altar Servers serving the Mass, only the Cross is used in the Recessional.