

THE MINISTRY OF ALTER SERVER

I. General Information

A. Scheduling:

1. The schedules are sent out quarterly and emailed 3 weeks before the beginning of the next quarter.
2. Please make note of your assignments. If you are not able to make an assignment please find a substitute in advance. This is a calling by God for you to assist the priest and deacons at Mass. This is a responsibility that you elected, not your parents. Therefore it is your responsibility, not your parents to arrive on time so that everything is prepared for Mass. Our goal is for God to tell us well done good and faithful servant (server).
3. The altar server schedule is available on staugie.com under St Augustine Ministry schedule which is on the right side of the home page.

B. Altar Server's Dress code:

1. The Church is God's house. When visiting God especially the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we should dress appropriately as we are attending a very important occasion. Since the server will be wearing an alb most of your clothes will be covered except your feet and ankles. Please wear a nice pair of shoes similar to what you would wear if attending Mass and not serving. You never know when you may be asked to serve at Mass. One should use their best judgment since the focus should be on your serving, not what one is wearing. No shorts, no athletic shoes, crocs, or flip flops.

C. Arrival Time:

1. We would like to have servers arrive approximately 10-15 minutes before church as a courtesy to Father, the deacon or the sacristan at that particular Mass. Servers who arrive late may be replaced by Father, the deacon or sacristan. Generally a replacement will be made approximately 6 minutes before Mass since a short prayer for all ministers is said at 5 minutes before Mass.

II. Server Responsibilities:

A. You are Serving the Lord!

1. The Mass is the heart and soul of our worship to God. It consists of two major parts; The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The Mass is a memorial, an important event reflecting on Christ's life through his Word, and Christ's death and resurrection through the Eucharistic celebration. As servers you are integral part of the entire Mass. Remember the priests, deacons and lectors are all representatives of Christ in the Mass, therefore you are truly serving Christ.

B. Prior to Mass

1. **Be prepared:** know all the duties of serving such as lighting the candles, the timing of the procession in and out, holding the missal, when to go to the altar with the cups, chalice, cruets, etc.
2. **Sign in,** get dressed and attend to your duties in an efficient manner.
3. **Select an alb and cincture:** The alb should be long enough to come to the top of your shoes. You will also need a cincture to tie the alb around your waist. Remember your alb size and refer to the calendar to determine what color (purple, red, green, or white) cincture to wear. Remember you the alb and cincture are sacred vestments and should be treated as such.
4. **Posture and reverences:** The role of the Altar server is to assist the Priest and the whole community in the celebration of the Mass. Your posture and attitude are important aspects of your job since your demeanor will have an effect on the congregation. If you are well dressed and groomed, the congregation notices that and this will ultimately affect how they present themselves at church.

- a) Hold your hands in the position of praying unless you are carrying something or sitting
- b) Stand with your weight evenly placed on both feet. This is especially important when you are holding the sacramentary or the thurible.
- c) Sit straight and keep knees close together.
- d) Pay attention to the Priest and the flow of the Mass and make sure your posture is the same as the posture of the congregation (generally they will be kneeling when you are kneeling etc.).

5. Upon arrival at Church after getting dressed make sure of the following:

- a) Altar candles are lit (there is generally a lighter on the side altars with several wicks to use).
- b) Check to see what is on the credence table. The following items should be there if not place them on the table:

(1)	Water container	Sunday	Weekday
(2)	Bowl for finger washing	Sunday	Weekday
(3)	Finger towel	Sunday	Weekday
(4)	Ciboriums full of host to be consecrated	Sunday	
(5)	Tray with four communion cups	Sunday	
(6)	Chalice	Sunday	
(7)	Five purificator cloths .	Sunday	

- c) Put key for Tabernacle on the Tabernacle Altar
- d) Offertory table at back of Church – Wine flask Sunday NO
 - (1) & Ciborium with Large Hosts Sunday NO
 - (2) .

C. The Mass: Individual Parts (outline of duties and proper position at Mass for all ministers – bolded items pertain to lector)

1. Procession facing the Sanctuary from the back of Church: As soon as the first word is heard in the processional song the cross bearer will start a slow walk toward the sanctuary.

- a) Servers are first
 - (1) Cross Bearer should be at the 3rd pew from the back
 - (2) Candle Bearers are just behind the 1st pew. As procession starts Candle bearers should be approximately 2-3 pews behind cross bearer.
- b) **Followed by lector**, then deacon if present, and finally Father
- c) Congregate at altar – Candle bearers are on either end, father and deacon are in the middle, **with lector just inside server on Mary’s side (ambo side)**, and cross bearer on Mary’s side outside of the candle bearer. All bow (servers only slightly) and then move to their stations.
 - (1) Candle bearers place candles in the sacristy, then move to seats at the side of the sanctuary. Each one will stay in their end of the sanctuary, the Virgin Mary side or St. Joseph side (book bearer).
 - (2) Cross bearer places cross in the cross cradle on the Virgin Mary side and then is seated on Virgin Mary side of the sanctuary next to the candle bearer.
 - (3) **Lector moves behind the ambo and is stationed there until the greeting**

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2. Introductory Rites

- a) Introductory prayer/blessing (sign of the cross)
- b) **Lector reads initial greeting to congregation (look to Father to pause)**
- c) Penitential rite / Kyrie
 - (1) **Lector usually remains behind ambo**
 - (2) During Lent and sometimes throughout the year the priest, deacon and all ministers kneel in front of altar, check with deacon or Father before Mass to be certain how the Kyrie/penitential rite will be handled.
- d) Gloria may be sung or recited
- e) Opening prayer recited by Father: book bearer gets the Sacramentary when Father says “Let us pray”. He/she then brings the Sacramentary to Father. Father takes the Sacramentary and places it on the book bearers open hands. Father reads the opening prayer.
- f) Everyone is then seated to listen to the biblical readings.

3. Liturgy of the Word

- a) **First reading (Old Testament) – read by lector**
- b) Responsorial psalm – usually sung by organist, choir and congregation – **if not sung then recited by lector** with responses from congregation
- c) **Second Reading (New Testament) – read by lector**

(1) After reading the lector should return to one of the first 3 pews on either side of the main aisle. The lector should turn and bow towards the altar once he/she reaches the midpoint of the altar, before leaving the sanctuary.

d) Gospel acclamation is generally sung by organist, choir and congregation. All stand.

e) Gospel (one of four) – (sign of the cross – head, lips, hear) is generally read/presented by Father or the Deacon

f) Homily – generally presented by Father or the Deacon (all sit)

g) The Creed – generally recited by congregation (all stand)

(1) When recited or sung the lector should move to ambo before congregation begins to recite about the “Holy Spirit” or the “Church”

(2) When not recited or sung the lector should move to ambo immediately after homily. Always pay attention to Father when the Creed is to begin. Generally Father will introduce an intercession to allow the lector to proceed to the ambo and read your intercessions.

h) Prayer of the Faithful (general intercessions - petitions) - read by lector

4. Liturgy of the Eucharist

a) Presentation and Presentment of the Gifts - offertory hymn is sung at this time.

(1) As congregation sits, altar servers go to work

(2) Book bearer brings Sacramentary to the altar and places it on the stand. Once this is completed be prepared to receive gifts from gift bearers.

(3) Alter servers (Mary’s side) bring the 4 cups, chalice, and water to the Altar and places them on a straight line at the edge of the Corporal. Once this is completed be prepared to receive gifts from gift bearers.

(4) As gift bearers approach the altar all servers follow Father or the Deacon to the front of the Sanctuary and are ready to receive the gifts either from Father or the Deacon.

(5) Bread and Water is presented by the gift bearers at the foot of the sanctuary and given to Father or the Deacon.

(6) Deacon or Priest accepts the gifts and gives Ciborium (with bread hosts) and wine vessel to servers on Virgin Mary side and the collection basket to the book bearer.

(a) The server receiving the Ciborium immediately proceeds to the Altar and places the Ciborium on the Corporal next to the Chalice.

(b) There will be more detail after this part of the outline. Need Hal's help as to how I should detail this.

- b) Prayer over the gifts – priest can sing or recite
 - c) Eucharistic Prayer and acclamations
 - (1) The prayer is surrounded by the Holy-Holy acclamation and Great Amen
 - (2) Congregation kneels at this time
 - d) Lord's Prayer - will be sung or recited by congregation
 - e) The sign of peace – generally shake hands of those immediately around you
 - (1) All Eucharistic ministers and servers gather behind the altar.
 - f) Breaking of the Bread and the Lamb of God
 - g) Distribution of Holy Communion
 - (1) All Eucharistic ministers of the body and blood move to their assigned stations for congregation to receive Holy Communion
 - h) Prayer after Communion
5. Concluding Rite
- a) Solemn final blessing (sign of the cross)
 - b) Announcements
 - c) Dismissal
 - d) Recessional – Servers collect the candles and cross and move to the front and side of altar, **lector enters the sanctuary and stands to the left of the altar;** priest and deacon are in the middles. All bow before leaving the altar. Part of closing song will be sung before generally leaving the sanctuary to process to the front of Church;

E. After Conclusion of Mass

- 1. Gather any belongings you left in the Sanctuary before Mass.

F. General Actions

1. Folded hands: Put palm against palm, fingers fully extended next to each other, left thumb goes over right knuckle and right thumb goes over left forming a cross. Keep elbows close to body, while hands are held in front of breast with fingers pointed at a 45% angle.
2. Sign of Cross: Begin with hands folded. Then place left hand on breast as you begin saying "In the name of the Father" touch your forehead with fingers of right hand; as you say "and of the Son" your right hand should touch your breast just above your left hand. When you begin to say "and of the Holy.."then you touch your right shoulder with fingers of right hand and then the left shoulder when saying "Spirit." When you say "Amen" bring your hands back to folded position.
3. When to genuflect: If there is a tabernacle with the Blessed Sacrament in the sanctuary a genuflection is made before and after Mass and when passing in front of the tabernacle. If the tabernacle is not central bows may be substituted. ????
4. When to Bow:
5. Carrying Cross
6. Carrying Candles
7. Walking

G. The Ministers at Mass

It takes quite a few people to celebrate Mass well. In larger parishes there can be as many as forty or fifty people ministering (if you count the choir). In smaller parishes, the number is usually far smaller. "To minister" means "to serve." So all of these people serve the community, helping them worship well.

Priest Celebrant - This is the priest who presides over the celebration of the Mass. Sometimes, at what is called a concelebrated Mass, there can be more than one priest. But the one who presides in the one you should be concerned most about. Mostly, your job is to help them.

Deacon - This person may or may not be part of your team. When present, the deacon usually proclaims the Gospel, preaches, prepares the gift for Eucharist, helps to distribute Communion, and give directions to people.

Acolytes - You, and what this book is about.

Lector - This is the person who reads the first two readings. There can be two lectors: one for the first reading, one for the second. In some parishes, this person also leads the responsorial psalm.

Cantor - This is the leader of song. This person leads the hymns, acclamations, and frequently the responsorial psalm.

Music Director - This person is in charge of all the music in the parish. Frequently this person is also the choir director or organist.

Musicians - These people play the various instruments that accompany the music for the Mass. Choir members are also ministers.

Commentator - This person makes announcements and helps the congregation follow the order of Mass. The lector can fill this role.

Ushers - These people greet the community as they arrive for Mass. They try to be sure that everyone is comfortably seated. They take up the collection at Mass.

Sacristan - This person usually works before Mass, making sure that everything that is needed is where it belongs. You may be asked to help with his work.

Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist - These ministers assist at Communion. In some parishes they are part of the procession.

H. Service Books Service Books These are the special books used during the liturgy.

Sacramentary (Roman Missal) - This is a large book that contains all the words the priest uses during Mass, except the readings. Write here where the book is stored. _____

Book of the Chair - This book is kept by the chair where the priest sits or stands. It contains those prayers from the Sacramentary that the priest needs when he is at this place.

Lectionary - This book contains all the Scripture readings for Mass. It is usually carried in the entrance procession by the lector and placed on the stand from which the readings are done (lectern or pulpit). _____

Book of the Gospels - This book contains the Gospel readings (taken from the Lectionary). It is usually carried in the entrance procession by the deacon when there is one present. It is usually placed on the altar, then carried to the pulpit or ambo at the Gospel. _____

The Roman Ritual - This book is used for the celebration of sacraments. Sometimes each rite has its own special book: for example, the Rite of Marriage or the funeral rites. Ask your leader about this. _____

Ordo - This book tells what feast day it is, what the readings are, and what is the proper color of the day. It is usually found on the vesting table.

Hymnal - This book contains the hymns and psalms for Mass. You should keep this book near you so that you can sing whenever possible.

(Note: Official books should be used during Mass. Unless absolutely necessary, substitutes, such as monthly missalette, should not be used near the altar).

I. THE SANCTUARY The sanctuary is that space at the front of the church within which most of the action of the Mass takes place. The word means “holy place.” In most churches this space is somewhat elevated. There are many things in the sanctuary with which you should be familiar.

Main Altar - This is the large, high table usually located in the middle of the sanctuary. Most of the action of the liturgy of the Eucharist takes place near the main altar.

Altar Cloth - This is the tablecloth for the main altar. It is usually white but also comes in liturgical colors.

Ambo (Pulpit) - This is the place where the readings are done, Gospel proclaimed, and homily given. In many churches there is also a lectern (simple reading stand) to the side from which announcements are made and used by cantor or commentator.

Credence Table - A small table, usually on the Gospel-side wall, on which is kept the Sacramentary and chalice (until transferred to the altar after the Prayer of the Faithful). The wine, water, and finger dish and towel are kept here.. Sometimes the sacred vessels are purified here after Communion.

Candles - There can be variations here. Ordinarily, there are candles on each side of the pulpit, lighted before Mass by servers, or carried in with the procession. Unless there is a separate Blessed Sacrament room, ordinarily candles are lighted before Mass on each side of the tabernacle. Lastly, after the Prayer of the Faithful, candles on either side of the altar are lighted by a server, while other servers prepare the Altar of Sacrifice with Sacramentary, corporal, and Mass vessels.

Paschal Candle - The paschal candle, used from the Easter Vigil through Pentecost Sunday, is placed near the altar or ambo and is lighted for all masses to commemorate the Risen Christ among us.

Cruets - The pitcher-like vessels containing the water and wine are kept on the credence table.

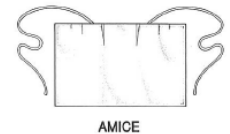
Processional Cross - This is the cross mounted on a long pole that is carried at the head of the procession and in bringing up the gift. It is kept in a stand at the side of the sanctuary.

Tabernacle - This is the safe-like container in which the Eucharist is kept. It is located in various places in different churches. Your leader will teach you the proper reverences to it. Hosts are taken from here at Communion time.

Bells - In parishes that use bells (some do not), they are rung at the consecration. Your leader will give you instructions on what is done in your parish. The bells are usually kept near the servers' places. If used, learn how to ring them properly.

J. VESTMENTS In the earliest days of the Church, Mass was usually celebrated in people's homes. There were relatively few Church members then. The priest and other ministers wore what everybody else wore. As years passed, the Church community got bigger, so Mass had to be celebrated in large buildings. Sometimes there were thousands of people there. People had to be able to tell easily who the various ministers were. As a result, special garments were adopted for the various ministers at Mass. The vestments we use today are thus very ancient in origin. They help us tell easily who is doing what at Mass.

Amice - This is a rectangular piece of cloth with two long ribbons attached to the top corners. The priest puts it over his shoulders, tucking it in around the neck to hide his cassock and collar. It is worn whenever the alb does not completely cover the ordinary clothing at the neck. It is tied around the waist. The priest puts this on himself. Some religious orders use it as a cowl or hood.



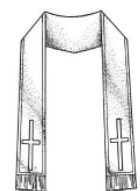
Alb - This long, white, dress-like vestment can be used by all liturgical ministers. It is helpful for the server to stand behind the minister, when he vests, to see that the alb hangs properly in the back.



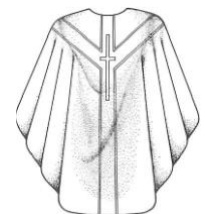
Cincture - This is a long cord used for fastening some albs at the waist. It holds the loose-fitting type of alb in place and is used to adjust it to the proper length. The cincture is usually white, although the liturgical color of the day may be used.



Stole - A stole is long cloth "scarf," often ornately decorated, of the same color and style as the chasuble. According to the manner in which it is worn, it is a mark of the office of priest or deacon. A priest wears it around the neck, letting it hang down in front. A deacon wears it over his right shoulder and fastened at his left side like a sash. (There is a small stole, white on one side and purple on the other, that many priests use for the anointing of the sick and the sacrament of reconciliation.)



Chasuble - The chasuble is the sleeveless outer vestment, slipped over the head, hanging down from the shoulders and covering the stole and alb. It is the proper Mass vestment of the priest and its color varies according to the feast. The server, standing behind, should see that it hangs properly during vesting.



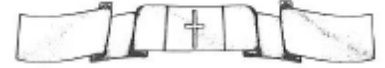
Dalmatic - The dalmatic is a loose-fitting robe with open sides and wide sleeves worn by the deacon. It takes its color from the liturgical feast.



Cope – A cape-like vestment that is put on over the shoulders and hangs to the ankles, it is open in the front and clasped at the neck. The priest frequently wears it in processions, at Benediction, and in other services. Copes can be found in any of the liturgical colors.



Benediction Veil – Also known as a humeral veil, this long, narrow, shawl-like vestment used at Benediction and in processions where the Blessed Sacrament is carried.



Server's Alb – This is a vestment used by servers in place of the cassock. It is similar to the priest's alb but sometimes has a cowl (hood). It is usually fastened around the waist with a cincture, often in the liturgical color.



Cassock – A long outer garment worn by clerics and servers. It is usually black, but for servers red or white cassocks may be worn for special feast.



Surplice – This is a wide-sleeved garment, slipped over the head, covering the shoulders, and coming down below the hips. It is worn over the cassock for services in which the alb is not necessary.



K. ALTAR VESSELS Altar vessels are frequently called “sacred” because they have a distinctive role in our worship.

Chalice – The large cup used at Mass to hold the wine that becomes the blood of Christ.



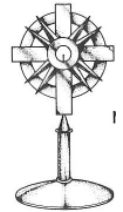
Paten – This is a saucer-like dish that usually matches the chalice with which it is used. It holds the bread that becomes the body of Christ.



Ciborium – This is a cup-like vessel (usually large) with a lid. It contains the host that will be used for Communion. It is also used to reserve the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle.



Monstrance – This is a large, ornate vessel used to hold the Blessed Sacrament for Benediction and Eucharistic processions.



Lunette – A thin, circular receptacle, having a glass face that holds the Consecrated Host used at Benediction. It slides into the monstrance on a track.



Pyx -1. A metal case in which the lunette is kept in the tabernacle. 2. A pocket watch-shaped case in which Communion used for sick calls is carried.



Communion Paten – This is a plate with a handle that a server uses to catch Communion crumbs. The server stands at the right side of the Communion minister and holds the paten under the chin of the one receiving when the person receiving Communion does not receive it in the hand.



Large Paten or Bread Plate – Because of the sign value, it is becoming more common to use a large paten, or bread plate, in place of the ciborium. On this are placed the breads that will be consecrated for Communion. This paten is ordinarily brought up in procession at the presentation of the gifts. It may be the duty of a server to see that this paten with its breads is brought to the rear of the church before Mass. If this task falls on you, be careful not to spill any breads while going down the aisle.



Flagon or Decanter – This is the bottle or carafe-like vessel used to hold the wine that will be consecrated at Mass for the Communion of the people. It is filled before Mass and brought to the rear of the church for the procession that will bring the gifts forward.

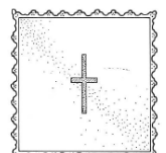


Communion Cups – These are the chalice-like vessels, often made of pottery, used at Communion when the people receive from the cup. They are usually kept on the credence table and brought to the altar at Communion time to be filled from the flagon.



H. MISCELLANEOUS Other articles used at Mass include the following:

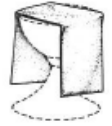
Pall – This is the stiff square white cover that is placed over the paten when it is on the chalice and over the chalice during Mass to protect its contents.



Corporal – A white linen napkin, usually starched, on which are placed the vessels containing the bread and wine during Mass. It is folded into a small square about the size of the pall. When unfolded, it is also used at the tabernacle at Benediction or when the Blessed Sacrament is taken out.



Purificator – This is a triple-folded rectangular white cloth used to cleanse the chalice and to dry the celebrant's fingers after the last ablution (washing). In setting up the chalice, the purificator is placed over the mouth, beneath the paten.



Finger Towel – A folded rectangular cloth resembling a purificator but much narrower, it is used by the priest to dry his fingers after they have been washed during the preparation of the gifts. It is kept with the cruets and sometimes brought forward with them.



Thurible – The metal container extended from a chain (or chains) in which charcoal and incense are burned for liturgical ceremonies. It has a lid that can be raised. It is sometimes called a censer.



Boat – This is a small metal container that holds the incense to be put into the thurible. It has a cover and comes with a small spoon. Frequently shaped like a boat, it is a symbol of the Church, the bark of Peter.



Aspergillum – Also called the holy water sprinkler, it is a perforated metal ball or tube on a handle that holds the holy water used by the priest to sprinkle the faithful or articles to be blessed. It is often kept in a small metal bucket (with a handle) that holds holy water.



Extinguisher – While this tool takes its name from putting out candles, it is also used to light them. It is a pole-like instrument with a tube at one side on the top with a retractable wick for lighting candles. The server using it should have enough wick exposed so that the flame will not go out until all candles are lit. Then the tab should be used to retract the wick and put the flame out. The other side of the top is a cup for extinguishing the candles. Often the server cannot see over the top of the candle, so practice is needed.



I. The Sacristy:

1. Extra Supplies

2. Cleaning and Washing of Vessels.

Additional items to Consider :

Condensed quick reference page

Video

Location of supplies