

ST. MATTHEW THE APOSTLE CHURCH GUIDELINES FOR ALTAR SERVERS

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for sharing your talents and devoting your time to be an altar server at St. Matthew the Apostle Church. Altar servers serve an important liturgical function by assisting the clergy before, during and after the liturgy, and serving as prayer leaders for the people.

PROPER CLOTHING

Altar servers should always come to church properly dressed as they are coming to give their best in praise and worship to God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Appropriate altar server clothing:

- Long pants for males and females, no shorts or jeans. Girls may wear skirts.
- Plain white dress shirt/blouse (no stripes or patterns).
- Dress shoes are to be worn; the wearing of athletic shoes or flip flops is not permitted.
- Female servers are to have their hair pulled back if their hair touches their shoulders.
- No one is to chew gum while attending Mass.
- **Please note that if appropriate clothing is not worn to serve Mass, you may be asked not to serve.**

ALBS

Albs are positioned according to the size noted at the top of the alb. The alb hangs to the top of the server's shoes. Each server wears an alb and cincture, with the cincture hanging to the left side. A wooden cross is placed around the neck with the rope positioned under the hood of the alb. After Mass, hang the alb on the correct hanger and place in it proper numerical order. Place the cincture on the hanger.

ARRIVAL TIME

Please arrive at least 20 minutes before Mass begins. Like any sports team or other activity, you need to arrive early for preparation. Make sure your parents know of the need for you to arrive early in order to assist with Mass preparation, and be vested in plenty of time prior to the start of Mass.

As soon as you arrive at church, **sign-in at the station.** Print your name in the blue book at the lectors' station. If you are substituting, write the name of the person you are replacing and then write your name.

PREPARATION FOR MASS

Preparation is important! Please check to make sure the following has been completed:

- **Altar candles are lit.**
- Wine cruet (with stopper) and dish with hosts are on the gift table in the back of the church.
- Kneeling pad and bells are in place.
- Water cruet, finger bowl and towel are on credence table 1.
- Sacramentary and binder with petitions are on credence table 2 (behind priest's chair).

FORMAT OF THE MASS

Procession and Recession

The cross bearer leads, followed by the two candle bearers, the lector(s), the fourth server (“side kick”) and lastly, the priest.

Process to the altar with dignity – not too fast, and not too slow. As you process up the main (center) aisle, the cross bearer stops just before the first step. The candle bearers flank the cross bearer and all simultaneously give a “chin-to-chest” bow in reverence to the tabernacle, then proceed in unison to credence table 1, with the cross bearer leading the candle bearers. The cross bearer places the processional cross in the stand next to credence table 1. Candle bearers place the candles on credence table 1, then all three servers, in unison, go to their designated seats. When the cross bearer arrives at the seat to the left of the priest, he/she picks up the Sacramentary to be prepared for the priest to use it for the Penitential Rite or the Opening Prayer.

The side kick stops just before the first step, slightly to the left. When the priest arrives, the side kick and priest genuflect on the right knee in unison. The side kick then walks around the baptismal font side of the altar to take his/her seat on the right of the priest.

Altar Server Seating

- Cross bearer: sits on the left of the priest.
- Candle bearers: sit behind the ambo.
- Side kick: sits on the right of the priest.
- If a deacon is present, the deacon will sit on the right of the priest, the cross bearer sits on the left of the priest; and the side kick sits with the candle bearers behind the ambo.

Posture

Posture is very important when serving. Servers can distract the congregation in their prayer if correct posture is not used. **Hands should always be folded and pressed against the chest.** Servers are to sit with their legs together, feet flat on the floor, and hands resting in the lap. The alb should cover the front of the legs and not hanging to one side when the server is seated.

If two servers need to move as part of the liturgical action, they are to move in unison.

Remember that during Mass people are watching you. They do make comments to the priests about how well or poorly you are serving. Refrain from laughing, talking and unnecessary movement while serving. **Altar servers are expected to respond to the priest and sing with the congregation throughout the Mass.**

If you become ill during Mass, please sit down in the apse or quietly leave the church.

Prayers, Intercessions, Announcements, Solemn Blessings

The Opening Prayer, Prayer after Communion, Announcements, and Solemn Blessing are in the Sacramentary (big red book) that the cross bearer will hold for the priest at the chair. This book is located behind the priest’s chair. The petitions are in the binder which is also behind the priest’s chair.

Preparation of the Altar and Gifts

When the ushers reach the fifth pew, the candle bearers stand together, go to credence table 1, pick up their candles, and process to the back of the church to the table that holds the gifts of bread and wine.

While the candle bearers are processing to the back of church, the cross bearer goes to credence table 3 and brings the chalice to the altar and then the tray of Communion dishes (and tray of cups if Communion is under both forms) to the altar. The side kick goes to credence table 2, gets the Sacramentary and book stand (no book stand for Fr. Sill) and places them on the ambo side of the altar. The priest will move to the altar to prepare the gifts. The cross bearer and side kick may return to their seats until the priest moves to the foot of the steps to receive the gifts. The cross bearer joins the priest at the foot of the steps and stands on his right side. The side kick goes to credence table 1, picks up the water cruet and then stands on the presider chair side of the altar.

Once the collection is completed and the gifts are ready, the candle bearers process down the aisle to the priest. Candle bearers, leading the gift procession, do not stop but continue processing, in unison, along the steps to the right of the altar to credence table 1. They place their candles on the table, pick up the bowl and towel and wait at the ambo side of the altar.

In the offertory procession, the cross bearer receives the wine from the priest and then follows the priest to the altar and stands next to the side kick on the presider chair side of the altar. The cross bearer removes the stopper in the wine cruet before the priest (or deacon, if one is present) takes the wine cruet. Remember to have the *cruet handle facing the priest*. The priest will pour wine into the chalice and hand the wine cruet back to the cross bearer. The side kick then hands the water cruet to the priest (deacon), *again with the handle facing the priest*, who pours a small amount of water into the chalice and then hands the water cruet back to the side kick. Once the priest gives the water cruet back to the side kick, he/she walks behind the priest, gives the water cruet to the candle bearer and returns to his/her seat. The cross bearer takes the wine cruet to credence table 1 before returning to his/her chair.

After the side kick hands the water cruet to the candle bearer, the candle bearers *move forward* toward the priest. The server, with the cruet, pours the water on the priest's fingers and the other server hands the opened towel to the priest. After the priest dries his hands, the priest will hand the towel to the server. The candle bearers, in unison, go to credence table 1, place their items on the table and then return to their seats.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

When the *Sanctus* is sung ("Holy, Holy, Holy") the altar servers move together to the first step on the ambo side of the sanctuary and at the end of the *Sanctus*, they kneel on the pad. The candle bearers kneel to the left, facing the altar, next is the cross bearer and the side kick kneels to the far right. Kneel in a straight, upright position with hands folded.

Hand Bells: A small set of hand bells is located on the steps. The side kick rings the bell **once** when the priest stretches his hands over the gifts. The side kick rings the bells again during the Consecration – as the priest “elevates” the host and as he “elevates” the chalice. When ringing the bells, shake the bells evenly and loudly **the entire time** the priest has the host or chalice raised. People will not be able to hear the bells if they are rung lightly.

When the priest (or deacon) says “Let us offer one another the sign of Christ’s peace...” the servers walk up the stairs and line up in front of the ambo. The servers remain at their position for the sign of peace and to receive Communion. After the priest and Extraordinary Ministers leave to distribute the Eucharist, the candle bearers and cross bearer return to their seats. The side kick removes the Sacramentary from the altar and returns it to table behind the priest’s chair before being seated.

When the priest is distributing Communion to the last two people, the candle bearer sitting nearest credence table 1, proceeds to credence table 1, retrieve the water cruet and then both candle bearers go to the ambo side of the altar. The altar server pours water into the chalice (or the priest may pour the water himself) and the priest cleanses it. Both candle bearers remain at the altar until the priest hands the Communion plate to the candle bearer holding the water cruet and the chalice to the other candle bearer. When carrying the chalice, the candle bearer places his/her hand on the top to hold all the items in place. The candle bearers return the items to credence table 1 and then go back to their seats.

The cross bearer holds the Sacramentary for the Prayer after Communion, announcements, and Solemn Blessing (if used).

After the blessing and immediately when the recessional song begins, the candle bearers and cross bearer pick up their items, process down the center aisle to the third pew, stop, turn and face the altar. They stand and wait for the priest to process down. The side kick goes to the bottom of the steps and stands to the priest’s left. The priest, lector and side kick genuflect, the candle bearers and cross bearer do a “chin to chest” bow and everyone turns and processes out of the church. The side kick processes out in front of the priest.

Cleaning Up

- Return candles and processional cross to the server sacristy.
- Extinguish altar candles using the candlesnuffer.
- Bring cruets, chalice, vessels and cloths to priest sacristy.
- Finally, return your alb to its hanger and place it in its right order and manner of hanging.
- Should you ever have any question regarding your service at the altar, do not hesitate to ask the priest.

Items used during Mass

- Processional cross: a server processes the cross in and out of Mass.
- Processional candles: two servers process with the candles in and out of Mass. Candles are also used during the procession of the gifts.
- Credence table 1: table behind the wet sacristy in the apse of the Church (north side of apse)
- Credence table 2: table behind the chairs for the priest, candle bearer and side kick.
- Credence table 3: table on the south side of the apse.
- Chalice: the large precious-metal cup.
- Distribution chalices: the smaller metal cups that are used at the altar and contain wine which, after consecrated, contains the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ to be distributed during communion.
- Paten (Communion plate or dish): The precious-metal plates used to hold the hosts which, after consecration, are the Body of Christ – the Eucharist.

- Purificator: the folded rectangular cloth (with a red cross) used to cleanse the chalice.
- Ciborium: Large precious-metal vessel (with lid) used to hold the Eucharist. The ciborium containing the Eucharist is placed in the tabernacle.
- Corporal: the folded square cloth on which the chalice and paten rest on the altar.
- Finger bowl: round bowl used for washing the hands.
- Finger towel: the small rectangular folded towel used to dry the priest's hands.
- Cruets: small pitchers used to hold the water and wine. The wine cruet has a stopper that remains in place until the priest pours the wine.
- Large host: used by the priest. They are kept in a small gold container in the sacristy.
- Sacramentary: the book that contains the prayers for the Mass.
- Lectionary: book that contains the Scriptural readings for Mass; the lector places this book on the ambo prior to the beginning of each Mass.

Revised: October 15, 2010