

# Role of an Altar Server

Although not all tasks are listed for an Altar Server, the following deals directly with Sunday Eucharist. During special celebrations there will be other responsibilities unique to those celebrations. Direction can be sought from the coordinator of liturgies at your parish.

You should arrive at the church 15 minutes before Mass to prepare yourself and make sure everything you need to serve in your role is available.

## Things to Look For

- Alb and Cincture or amice if needed
- Stand for processional cross is in place in the sanctuary or some other suitable place
- If incense is to be used make sure the following are in a suitable place: stand for thurible, charcoal, incense, boat and spoon, and lighter.
- Candle stands are close to the Altar.
- Hymn book is by your seat so you can participate in singing.
- Roman Missal is on a table close to where you will be sitting. Make sure ribbons are placed in such a way that you need only open the Roman Missal using the ribbon as a guide to open it. Ribbons hanging to the side of the page makes for easy opening.
- Familiarize yourself with the credence table and its contents, make sure everything you need to dress the altar and serve the priest or deacon at the preparation of gifts is on the table.

## Things to Do Before Mass

- Dress in the alb. (Optional for Adults but Appropriate for Altar Servers of all ages)
- Ask what you will be carrying in procession.
- Coordinate yourself with other Altar Servers so each of you will know what your role will entail.

## Various Responsibilities of the Altar Server During Mass

- All actions are carried out with reverence.
- Reverence and posture are modelled for the assembly by the server.
- Silences are respected and participation in all aspects of the mass is very important.
- Carry the processional cross or one of the candles or thurible during the opening procession.
- Hold Roman Missal for the Priest when needed
- Carry and present the thurible and incense when incense is required, replenish charcoal if necessary (this should not happen if the charcoal is not lit too early before the celebration begins), incense when required.
- Participate in Prayers and singing.
- Take things from the credence table to the altar when needed. If no deacon is present place objects such as the corporal, Roman Missal, chalice(s), pall, paten, and purificators(s) on the altar. If a deacon is present you need to bring these things to the altar but the deacon will place them.
- Take from the altar such things as the empty decanter from the wine and anything else the Priest or Deacon passes to you.
- Take to the altar for priest or deacon when needed: water for mingling (normally contained in a cruet), lavabo, water decanter, and hand towel.
- Although it is preferred one person not fill two roles within one liturgy, the altar server can also serve as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. This is only when enough Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are not available and you have been designated as Extraordinary Minister. (See Diocesan guidelines for Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion)
- If a deacon is not present, after Eucharist has been served and Precious Blood has been consumed, take everything from the Altar and place things in their respective place on the credence table.
- The item you carried in the opening procession, carry it out in the closing procession.

## Details of Executing Your Role

*Note: If incense is not used all instances of thurifer, thurible, and incense are disregarded.*

### Opening Procession

**Thurifer** - Lead the procession carrying the smoking thurible and have it gently swinging at your side.

**Cross Bearer** - If there is not enough room in the aisle to walk between the candle bearers walk in front of them carrying the cross high but not so high that you risk stumbling. (Corpus on the Cross is to be facing forward for Opening Procession)

**Candle Bearers** - Walk in procession and accompany the cross. If not enough room for all three in the aisle the Cross goes first and candles bearers follow the cross holding the candles high but not so high that you risk stumbling.

### Approaching the Altar

If you are carrying something do not do a profound bow. A head bow, when you approach the altar and before you enter the sanctuary, will suffice.

**Thurifer** - Proceed to your seat in the sanctuary where you will remain standing.

**Cross Bearer** - Proceed to the sanctuary and place the processional cross in its holder. If there is already a cross with the Corpus on it in the sanctuary, the processional cross is placed outside the sanctuary in a dignified place. If there is no cross with the Crucified Christ in the sanctuary or there is a cross with the Risen Christ, place the processional cross with the Crucified Christ on it in a stand that is waiting in the sanctuary. Proceed to your seat where you will remain standing.

**Candle Bearers** - Proceed to the sanctuary and place the candles in their holder and proceed to your seat where you will remain standing.

**Thurifer** - When the priest is ready, take the thurible to him so he can incense the cross and altar. When he returns it to you place the thurible on the thurible stand and proceed to your seat where you will remain standing.

### Collect / Opening Prayer

When the priest says "Let us pray" observe a time of silence. When Priest opens his arms to the orans bring the Roman Missal to the priest and hold it front of him, book should be open. If you are too tall and block the people from seeing the priest, stand off to the side and hold the Roman Missal in front of the priest. When the priest finishes the opening prayer close the Roman Missal, if the priest hasn't already done so, put the Roman Missal in its place and proceed to your seat. Remain standing until the priest sits. All other altar servers sit at this time and pay attention to the readings.

### Participate in the Mass

Whenever there is singing the altar server sings. Altar servers also participate in all postures and prayer of the people which include bowing, kneeling, standing and blessing themselves.

### Gospel

**Thurifer - With Priest** - When the Gospel Acclamation begins pick up the thurible and incense boat. Go to where the priest is and he will put incense from the boat into the thurible. Precede the candle bearers and the priest who is carrying the Book of Gospels to the ambo. There the priest will take the thurible from you after signing the Book of Gospels and himself with the cross. He will then incense the Book of Gospels. The priest will pass the thurible back to you. The thurifer stays near the ambo as the Gospel is being proclaimed. After the reading return the thurible and boat to its proper place and proceed to your seat where you will sit and listen to the homily.

**Thurifer - With Deacon** - If a deacon is proclaiming follow the same procedure but this time the deacon will bring the thurible and boat to the priest for the priest to place the incense in the thurible. The deacon will pass the thurible and boat back to you and you precede the candle bearers and the deacon to the ambo. As with the priest, after signing the Book of Gospels and himself, the deacon will take the thurible from you and incense the Book of Gospels then return the thurible to you. After the reading you return the thurible and boat to its stand and proceed to your seat where you will sit and listen to the homily.

**Candle Bearers** - When the Gospel Acclamation begins proceed to the candles and pick them up. Follow the thurifer and precede the priest or deacon who is carrying the Book of the Gospels to the ambo. Stand on either side of the ambo facing the deacon or priest. After the reading is complete return the candles to their stand and proceed to your seat. Sit and listen to the homily while focussing your attention on the homilist

### **Preparation of Gifts**

#### **With Priest and No Deacon**

Bring dressed chalice to the altar. Place corporal in center of the altar and unfold without lifting or shaking it in the following manner: First fold move to the left when it is opened. Second fold moves to the right. Next fold moves to the top and final fold moves to the bottom. When all folds are open the bottom of the corporal should be close to the edge of the surface of the altar (about one inch). When the corporal is unfolded a cross will be visible. **Never shake or lift the corporal as it may have been used at a previous celebration and may have captured particles of the Body of Christ.**

After the corporal has been placed, put the pall (if used) at the top right of the corporal and paten (if used) to the side of the corporal. Place a chalice and purificator to the right of the corporal. Place the Roman Missal to the left of the corporal. Place remaining chalices to the right of the corporal as well as the remaining purificators. (Do not place anything on the corporal) As the priest receives the gifts stay close to take things as the priest passes them to you. (If the money is passed to you do not place it in front of the altar.) After the priest receives the gifts and empties the contents of the wine decanter into the chalices, bring the cruet of water to the priest, after the priest mingles the water and wine and gives you back the water cruet, retrieve the decanter and cover(s) and place all items on the credence table but not on the credence table corporal. After the priest prepares the gifts the thurifer brings the thurible and boat to the priest. The priest places incense in the thurible and incenses the gifts, the cross and the altar. The priest passes the thurible back to the thurifer and the thurifer, from the side of the altar, incenses the priest then the people. The altar server then returns the thurible to its stand and proceeds to his or her seat. The other altar servers retrieve the lavabo, water and towel from the credence table and brings them to the priest for the priest to wash his hands. The server pours water over the priest's hands while holding the lavabo under the priest's hands to catch the excess water. The server provides the towel to the priest to dry his hands. The servers then return the supplies to the credence table (**not on the credence table corporal**) and take their place at their seats and remain standing.

**All stand as soon as the hands of the priest are washed and all remain standing until after the Holy Holy and just before the epiclesis. (Kneel when the priest places his hands over the gifts)**

**This is the time more incense will need to be placed in the thurible for the Consecration. Bring thurible and boat with incense to priest for him to place more incense in the thurible. (During consecration thurifer kneels at the side of the Altar)**

#### **Epiclesis**

When the priest is ready to consecrate the gifts everyone kneels, including the servers. If there are no kneelers, or if for some other reasonable cause, the server will remain standing and make a profound bow as the gifts are raised. During the consecration when the priest raises the gifts, the **thurifer**, while on his or her knees, incenses the gifts as each is raised. After the consecration is complete and everyone is standing, the thurifer places the thurible back on its stand and returns to his or her place and remains standing.

#### **With Deacon Present**

The exception when a deacon is present. The deacon will do what is needed for setting and unsetting the altar. The altar servers help the deacon by bringing and taking away items. The deacon will also incense.

## Communion

If the Extraordinary Minister has not done so, bring empty communion plates or ciboria to the altar. When the Communion procession begins the server, if not in the sanctuary, joins everyone else in procession to receive. If this is not possible then seek clarification from the priest before mass concerning when and how you should receive.

During the Communion procession remain standing until everyone has been served. After all have been served it is time to sit.

After all have been served and purification has taken place (purification takes place at the credence table) the altar servers clear everything remaining from the altar. If the corporal has not been removed the altar server folds it in the reverse of opening it. **Do Not Shake Or Lift The Corporal While It Is Unfolded - It May have captured particles of The Body Of Christ.** The servers place everything back on the credence table but not on the credence table corporal, place the Roman Missal on a table near their seat. The server returns to his or her seat and sits in silence.

**Note: Corporal is never left on the Altar**

## Concluding Prayer

After the Communion hymn and silence (or post communion hymn) the priest will stand and say "Let Us Pray". This is a time to observe silence as well. When the priest opens his arms for the orans a server brings the Roman Missal and stands in front of or off to the side of the priest and holds the opened Roman Missal in front of him. The priest recites the prayer after Communion. After the priest is finished the server returns the Roman Missal to its resting place and returns to his or her seat and remains standing.

## Recessional

After the Concluding Rite and Blessing the altar servers retrieve the items they carried in procession and proceed to the front of the altar. The altar servers wait for the priest to join them and all make a profound bow. (If someone is carrying something they do not make a profound bow but do make a bow of the head). All turn and leave in the order they came. Basket of food or money is not carried out in procession.

After the closing procession the articles the servers carried are placed where they found them when they first arrived, the candle bearers extinguish their candle (**never blow out candles, use snuffer - blowing out the candle may cause the wax to be blown off the candle onto another surface**) if they have been carried in recessional procession. The altar servers remove their alb and place it on a hanger and return the alb to its respective place. If the alb needs mending or cleaning the server will notify the parish sacristan (or other person responsible for care of vestments) concerning what needs to be done. If no corpus is in the Sanctuary the processional cross goes back to the Sanctuary after Mass