

Altar Server's Handbook - STM

Start at home: dress with the intention of serving

Nice clean shoes – not dirty

No sandals without backs like flip flops or crocks – too likely to fall off or cause you to trip

Girls – long hair pulled back

Getting dressed in the sacristy:

Cassock should be ankle length – too long and you may trip

Surplice should be two sizes bigger than the cassock

After Mass hang up cassock and surplice neatly

Words to know

Chalice	purificator	bells	cassock
Cruets	corporal	altar candles	surplice
Ciborium/Ciboria	wash bowl	candles	altar
Paten	wash towel	cross	cross bearer
Chalice pall	water pitcher	tabernacle	candle bearer
credence table	candle lighter & snuffer		Roman Missal/Sacramentary

Things to remember always:

- Help each other – you are a team
- Hold doors when processing out and into the church. The first one through the door holds it for everyone behind them
- Do not let the swinging doors in the back of the church hit the person behind you. Be watchful
- Do not rush down the aisle during procession. Walk slow and steady
- Pay attention to what is going on during Mass. Anticipate what will happen next and be ready for it
- Always bow to the altar when you walk in front of it. If you have anything in your hand then just nod your head respectfully.
- Sign in by writing your full name, date, and Mass time
- Be 15 minutes early to the Mass you will be serving at to assist in preparation
- If you are unable to fulfill your serving schedule please find someone to replace you and do so early in the week; if you cannot find someone please call the office and let the priest know you will not be present at the assigned time.
- Always put up your cassock and surplus in a neat fashion in the closet
- Sit up straight in chairs with arms folded in prayer or at your lap
- When standing remember not to slouch but to stand erect with hands folded in prayer
- **be reverent at the altar**
- avoid drawing attention to oneself

To serve at the altar is a privilege that can be taken away if one does not act appropriately at the altar. Your actions and attitudes as you serve will be seen by all who attend Mass, please be respectful of your duty and fulfill it with great dignity. To serve requires much focus and attention. You must participate and serve in the Mass with much maturity. The way you serve will lead other people in prayer; this is a great honor. You as a server are very important to the worship of the congregation; please pray as you serve so that you may come to know Jesus a little better so as to serve him with much fervor loving Him more dearly and following Him more closely each and every day.

Cross bearer

- will carry the cross in the opening procession as well as closing recessional
- leads the procession during opening and recessional hymns
- brings the Missal (big red book) to the priest for the opening prayer and for the prayer after communion
- rings the bells during the consecration: when the bread is elevated and when the chalice is elevated
- the bells are to be rung with three consecutive rings during each elevation

Candle bearers

- will light the candles on the altar 10 minutes prior to the beginning of the Mass
- will light candles for procession 5 minutes before the beginning of Mass
- follow behind the cross Bearer during the opening procession and the closing procession
- The candle bearers will hold the candle off-center of their bodies with it being closer to the pews. The candle bearer on the left will hold it closer to his/her left side and the candle bearer on the right will hold it closer to his/her right side. Always hold the candle straight up and do not tilt it.
- will process during the gospel and stand one on each side of the ambo during the proclamation of the gospel
- will bring the sacred vessels to the altar during the preparation of the altar before bringing up the gifts during the offertory procession
- will go in procession during the offertory to lead up the gifts. When arriving in the sanctuary will place candles on the communion rail and assist in bringing gifts to the altar
- will bring the water and wine to the deacon or priest and assist at the altar as needed
- will bring the water bowl and towel to wash hands of priest
- will retrieve candles from communion rail after the washing of the hands of the priest
- after communion will help remove sacred vessels and place on credence table

After the Mass:

- make sure the candles at the Altar are extinguished using the snuffer
- bring the Sacred Vessels from the credence table back into the Sacristy
- put soiled linens in drawer
- put wine and water cruets in refrigerator

THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST

Sundays, Feast Days, and Friday School Masses

- The procession will begin at the back of the church and will proceed down the center aisle at a slow and steady pace. There should be no more than two pew lengths between the cross bearer and the candle bearers and between the candle bearers and the Priest or Deacon.
- The cross bearer will lead the procession with a candle bearer one each side directly behind him/her. The procession will begin with the first words of the entrance hymn unless otherwise mentioned by Father.
- When the procession reaches the altar, the cross bearer will stand in front of the altar to the far right with a candle bearer next to him/her on the left. The second candle bearer will stand on the far left of the altar allowing space for the priest and the deacon to stand between the two candle bearers.
- After reverence of the altar (with a slow nod of the head, not bow with the body), the cross bearer will put the cross in its place in the Priest Sacristy. The candle bearers will place the candles in the Server Sacristy on the table (the candles are to remain burning throughout the celebration). The servers are then to stand at their seats.
- The cross bearer will bring the Sacramentary to Father when he says "Let us pray." The cross bearer will carry the book straight up, flat and in line with his/her body, remembering to nod his/her head as he/she stops in front of the altar. Father will take the book and open it and place it where he wants it held. The cross bearer will move his/her hands to hold it in the position set by Father. During the prayer, the cross bearer will look at the book and watch what Father reads instead of looking all around or disinterested. After the prayer, Father will close the book and the cross bearer will return the book to its place carrying it in an upright manner as before. He/she will then sit and prepare to listen to the readings.
- (When the Deacon is present or whenever the Book of the Gospel is on the altar)
 - At the Alleluia, the candle bearers will retrieve the candles and find their positions at the front of the altar with the Priest or Deacon between them. They will nod their heads and not tilt the candles when reverencing the altar. They will then process the Book of the Gospel to the ambo where the Gospel will be proclaimed. During the Gospel proclamation the candle bearers will stand on each side of the ambo facing one another. They will hold the candles on their side closest to the people. After the proclamation of the Gospel, the candle bearers will precede to the altar, reverence the altar with a slow nod of the head, and then carry the candles to the Server Sacristy, after which they will sit.
- After the prayers of the faithful, the candle bearers will assist the Priest or Deacon in preparing the altar. They will give him the chalice with the chalice pall first. The cross bearer will give the Sacramentary to the Priest or Deacon to put on the altar. On Sundays the Sacramentary stand will also be given to be put on the altar.
- After the preparation of the altar, the candle bearers will retrieve the candles and the cross bearer will retrieve the cross and go to the front of the altar. The servers will reverence the altar with a slow nod of the head and then go down to center aisle to the back where they will lead the gift bearer to the altar. Remember to process in at a slow steady pace.
- Upon reaching the altar, the cross bearer will put the cross in its proper place and then go to his/her place and sit. The candle bearers will place the candles on the communion rail before assisting in bringing the gifts to the altar.
- Once the ciborium is placed on the altar, that candle bearer will bring the water cruet to the altar and wait there with the other server who had the wine cruet until the Deacon or Priest gives it back. **It is handed with the handle facing the Deacon or Priest and the lid removed.**

- After the candle bearers returns to the table with the cruets, both candle bearers will assist in washing Father's hands. One candle bearer will take the pitcher of water. The other server will be responsible for carrying the bowl and having the towel draped on his/her arm. As they approach the altar they should ascend the second step so that Father does not have to bend so low. After the washing of the hands, the servers nod their heads to Father and then turn to bring the pitcher, bowl and towel back to the credence table.
- After the washing of the hands, the candle bearers will proceed to the front of the altar, reverence it with a bow, and then proceed to the communion rail to get the candles. With the candles, they will proceed to the front of the altar, reverence it with a head nod, and then take the candles to the Servers Sacristy. They will then return to the seats yet remain standing.
- After the Holy, Holy, Holy is sung, the servers are to kneel on the first step near the altar. The cross bearer will have the bells next to him/her.
- During the elevation of the host, the cross bearer will ring the bells to a count of three. During the elevation of the chalice, the cross bearer will again ring the bells to a count of three.
- After the Sign of Peace, the candle bearers will bring any other ciboria to the altar (usually on Sundays).
- After the Lamb of God, the servers will kneel on the first step.
- The servers will stand to receive communion. Once they receive, they are to be seated.
- After Communion is completed, the candle bearers will proceed to the credence table. The water cruet, with the lid off and handle facing outward, will be taken to the Deacon or Priest for the cleansing of the chalices and ciboria, if any. Both candle bearers will remain at the altar to receive vessels as they are cleaned. Once all the items are removed from the altar and placed on the credence table and the Priest or Deacon has left the altar, then the candle bearers can sit down together.
- The cross bearer will retrieve the Sacramentary (and stand) from the Priest or Deacon and put it on the table.
- The cross bearer will bring the Sacramentary to Father when he says "Let us pray." The cross bearer will carry the book straight up, flat and in line with his/her body, remembering to nod his/her head as he/she stops in front of the altar. Father will take the book and open it and place it where he wants it held. The cross bearer will move his/her hands to hold it in the position set by Father. During the prayer, the cross bearer will look at the book and watch what Father reads instead of looking all around or disinterested. After the prayer, Father will close the book and the cross bearer will return the book to its place carrying it in an upright manner as before.
- As soon as the music begins for the recessional hymn, the cross bearer is to get the cross and the candle bearers are to get the candles. When the Deacon and/or Priest proceed to the altar to reverence it with a kiss the servers then process to the front of the altar and find their places as they did when they processed in.
- After the final reverence of the altar (bearers nodding their heads in reverence), the cross bearer will lead the procession down the center aisle with candle bearers one on either side and the Deacon and/or Priest following behind. The bearers should never be more than two pew lengths in front of those behind them. The pace should be slow and steady in a manner of reverence.
- After processing to the Priest Sacristy, the servers will put out the candles using the snuffer, never blowing them out. They will also retrieve from the credence table all the vessels there except the water pitcher and bowl used in the washing of the hands.
- Once that is done and everything is in its proper place, all the servers can go to the Server Sacristy to undress and neatly hang up their cassocks and surpluses.



Credence table prepared for Mass



Sacramentary and stand



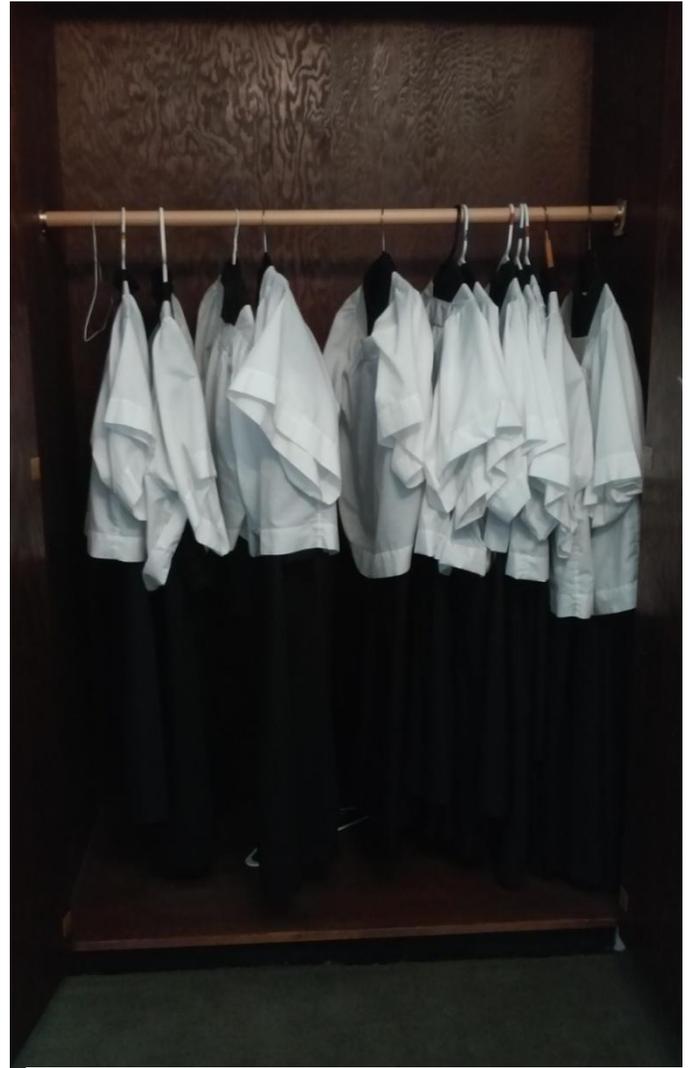
Hand washing pitcher, bowl, & towel



Cruet with lid off and handle facing out



Candle placed on communion rail



Cassocks and surplices hung neatly



Bells on cross bearer's side of the altar



From left to right: cruetes, 2 chalices, purificator, ciboria, chalice pall with ciborium and paten underneath