

Saint Thomas More Church

Altar Server Manual

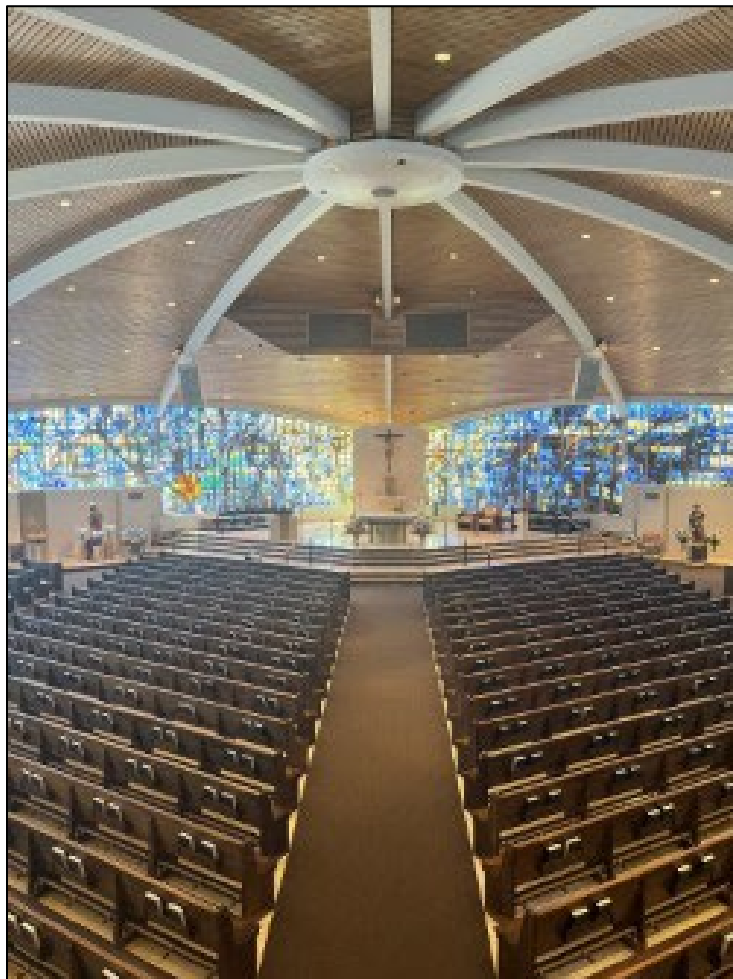
2023



Altar Server: _____

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Dear Altar Server,

Our parish is very grateful for your decision to serve at Mass. It is a privilege to kneel so close as Jesus Christ becomes truly present in the Eucharist. Therefore, servers are chosen from those who display a desire to grow closer to Our Lord.

The duty of an Altar Server is to assist the priest, as a representative of the people, as the mystery of Calvary unfolds on the altar. What an honor to serve the Lord at this most praiseworthy moment of our redemption. Although the duties of the altar server are varied, the most important responsibility of the altar server is to pray.

The place of the altar server in liturgical celebrations remains one of prominence and distinction. All actions of the server are woven from signs and symbols rooted in the Old and New Testament and passed down through Sacred Tradition. Accordingly, servers have a solemn responsibility to do their assigned duties with dignity and reverence to give God glory. The purpose for this manual is to give direction for our parish Masses and to be a guide to help you assist the priest at the Altar of God.

Oh, send out your light and your truth;
let them lead me,
let them bring me to your holy hill
and to your dwelling!
Then I will go to the altar of God,
to God my exceeding joy
and I will praise you...
O God, my God
-Psalm 43

In Christ,
The Clergy of Saint Thomas More Church

General Requirements

1. Who may serve: At Saint Thomas More, all registered parishioners who are in the 4th grade through High School are welcome to serve. All candidates must attend one training session and have the commitment and ability to perform their role with reverence.

2. Proper Dress: Altar Servers must show respect for the Mass they attend by wearing proper attire.

Clothing:

- ◆ Dress pants/slacks or girls may also wear dresses or skirts of an appropriate length at least down to the knee
- ◆ Dress shirts/blouses must have sleeves, shoulders should be covered
- ◆ **No T-shirts, shorts or jeans**

Footwear:

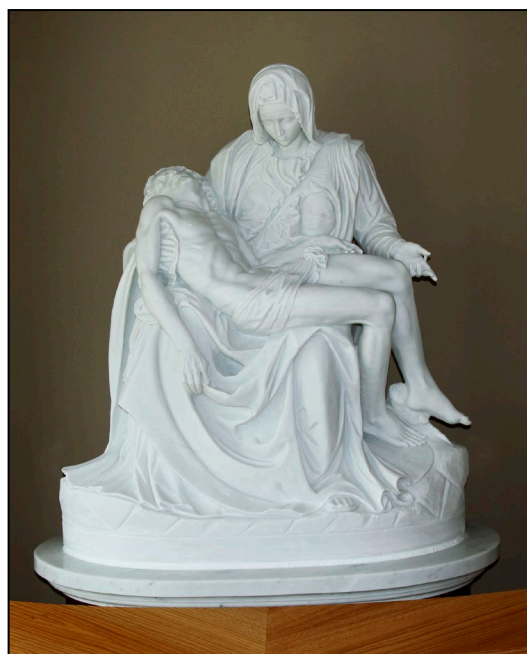
- ◆ Dress shoes only; all footwear should look neat and presentable
- ◆ **No sneakers, flip-flops, or any open toe shoes/sandals**

Hair:

- ◆ Hair should look clean and neat, out of one's eyes

3. Attendance:

- ◆ Arrive no later than **15 minutes prior to the start of Mass** neatly groomed and dressed.
- ◆ If you are unable to serve at your scheduled time, use the online scheduler to find a substitute.
- ◆ If you are unable to find a substitute, please contact the rectory and leave a message.
- ◆ The Altar Servers' duties are complete when they have set up for the next Mass or brought the appropriate items back to the Sacristy and neatly hung up their albs and cinctures in the Altar Server Sacristy.



The Order of Mass

The Mass is the heart and soul of our worship of God. It is the celebration that gives us the strength we need to live a Christian life, and, because of its importance, the Church places a serious obligation upon all of its members to take part in the Mass every Sunday and Holy Day.

The Mass is a sacrifice where Jesus offers Himself to the Father. It is also a sacred banquet called the Eucharist (from the Greek word for thanksgiving) where we give thanks to God and join in Jesus' perfect prayer of praise and thanks to the Father. At the Last Supper Jesus told His disciples, "Do this in memory of me," and so for the past 2,000 years, the Church has celebrated the Mass with two parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The following is a basic outline of the Mass:

Introductory Rites

-Entrance Procession, Greeting, Penitential Act, Gloria, Collect (Opening Prayer)

Liturgy of the Word

-1st Reading, Responsorial Psalm, 2nd Reading, Gospel Acclamation, Gospel, Homily, Profession of Faith, Universal Prayer

Liturgy of the Eucharist

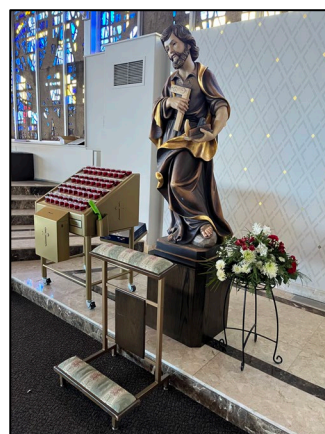
-Presentation of the Gifts, Preparation of the Altar, Prayer Over the Gifts, Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy), Eucharistic Prayer, Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen

Communion Rite

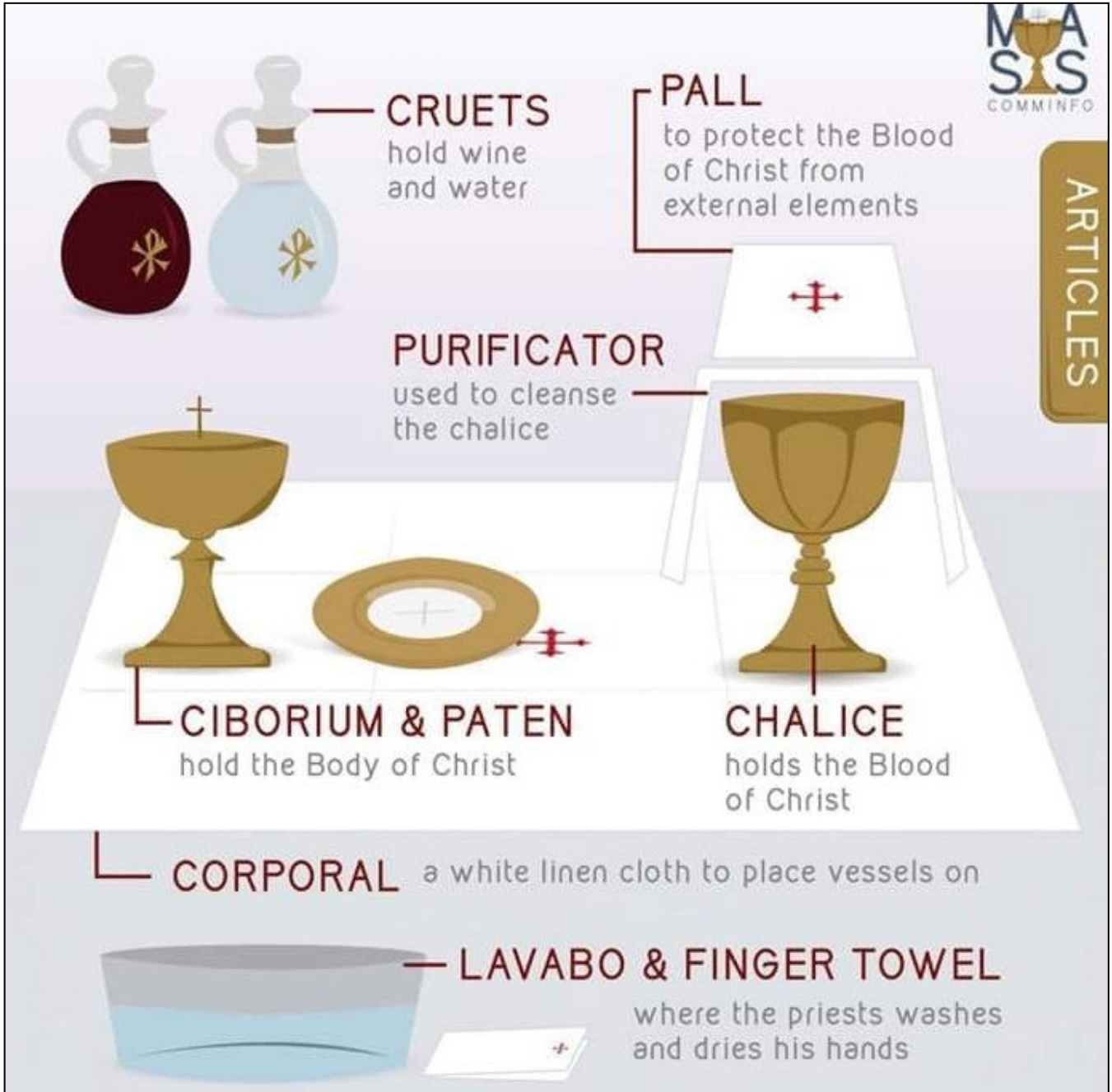
-The Lord's Prayer (Our Father), Sign of Peace, Communion

Concluding Rite

-Prayer after Communion, Blessing & Dismissal, Recessional



Sacred Vessels





Ciborium (plural is ciboria)



Processional Candles



Monstrance



Processional Cross



Aspergillum in an Aspersorium



Pyx (for the sick and for low gluten Hosts)



Thurible & Incense Boat

Sacred Vestments & Liturgical Colors



Green: A symbol of hope and growth. Green is the color of Ordinary Time to show that our common state in life is one of growing in our relationship with God, longing and hoping for eternal life.

White or Gold: A symbol of celebration, triumph, purity, and innocence. White is used on all feast days of the Joyful and Glorious Mysteries of our Lord's life such as Christmas and Easter, on the feasts of the Blessed Mother, angels, and saints who were not martyrs. White is worn frequently as every Mass is a celebration of Christ's Resurrection and is often worn at funerals to celebrate the life of the deceased and to pray for their triumphal acceptance into heaven.



Red: A symbol of sacrifice and the color of blood, red is used on all feasts of the Lord's Cross and Passion, feasts of the Apostles, and all martyrs. It is also a symbol of the Holy Spirit and used on Pentecost recalling the tongues of fire when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles.

Violet: A symbol of penance and waiting. Violet is used during the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent. It reminds us of preparation and the longing for the coming of our Savior.



Rose: A symbol of joy and anticipation in the midst of the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent. Rose vestments are worn on the 3rd Sunday of Advent, *Gaudete Sunday*, and on the 4th Sunday of Lent, *Laetare Sunday*.



The **Chasuble**, in various liturgical colors, is worn for the celebration of the Mass with a matching **stole** symbolizing the Sacrament of Holy Orders. The **alb**, a white robe worn by the priest, with a **cincture** or belt (right), symbolizes chastity and purity of the priest's share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ.



The **cope** (left) is a long cloak used in processions, benediction, and other liturgies outside of Mass. The **humeral veil** is a long garment which goes over the celebrant's shoulders to cover his arms when carrying the Blessed Sacrament and is used for benediction.

Obligations Prior to Serving Mass

- ◆ Arrive 15 minutes prior to start of Mass in acceptable attire.
- ◆ Report to the podium by the Sacristy to sign in under your name. If you are a substitute, sign your name under the scheduled person's name and place an "X" over his/her name. Find out what color cincture to wear.
- ◆ Go to the Altar Server Sacristy and put on an alb that is ankle length and a cincture that hangs by your left knee. Pray the "Altar Server's Prayer Before Mass." Return to the podium.



Altar Server Designations

Cross Bearer (CB): Holds the processional cross and leads the entrance procession, offertory procession, and recessional.

Book Bearer (BB): Holds the binder for the priest; brings ciboria lids by the tabernacle.

2 Acolytes (A): Hold the candles during the entrance procession and recessional. Assist at the offertory, the preparation of the chalice, the washing of hands, the ringing of bells, the purifying of the chalice, and clearing of the altar.

Altar Server Job Descriptions

Cross Bearer (CB)

1. The **Cross Bearer (CB)** leads the procession. After the music starts, wait until the people begin singing the lyrics, then walk **slowly** up the main aisle of the church. See the **Entrance Procession Diagram** on page 13 illustrating the diamond formation.
2. When you arrive at the base of the stairs of the altar, move to the **right** by the first railing and face the altar while waiting until the rest of the ministers arrive at the altar. See the **Sanctuary Diagram** on page 13.
3. When the priest arrives, he will genuflect toward the tabernacle. You will do a head bow toward the tabernacle. Walk over and place the cross in the stand near the Saint Joseph statue making sure Jesus is facing the people.
4. Then with *hands folded chest high* move to your place in the sanctuary and *stand* at your seat.
5. After the Homily, Creed, and Intercessions (Response: Lord, hear our prayer), the congregation will sit. Remain standing and walk with *hands folded* to the cross and take it. Then move to the center aisle and stand between the first pews, while facing the altar. Wait until the Acolytes meet you and the three of you will bow to the tabernacle.
6. Lead the Acolytes to the back of the church and wait until the people have gathered to bring up the gifts. When they are ready, slowly move up the center of the aisle in the same way as the beginning of Mass. When you arrive in the front, turn to the right, and return the cross to the stand. Then with your *hands folded*, return to your seat.
7. At the end of Mass, wait until the priest moves to kiss the altar. Get the cross and wait in the center aisle at the 2nd pew facing the altar (facing away from the people). The Acolytes with candles will stand in front of you, and Book Bearer will be in front of them, once again in the diamond formation. All other ministers will line up in front of you facing the altar. They will genuflect to the tabernacle. Join them with a head bow. Then turn and **slowly** lead the procession to the rear of the Church.
8. Place the cross in the stand next to the counter in the sacristy.

Book Bearer (BB)

1. The Book Bearer walks behind the two Acolytes in the procession with *hands folded*. See the **Entrance Procession Diagram** on page 13 illustrating the diamond formation.
2. When you arrive at the base of the stairs of the altar, move to the right and face the altar while waiting until the rest of the ministers arrive at the altar. You will be to the left of the Cross Bearer. See the **Sanctuary Diagram** on page 13.
3. When the priest genuflects/bows toward the tabernacle, genuflect by touching your right knee to the ground and not making the Sign of the Cross. Then, with *hands folded*, move to your place in the sanctuary on the right and *stand* at your seat.
4. When the priest cues you, go and hold the Missal for the priest. When the priest finishes, return the Missal to the table next to the priest and return to your seat. The Gloria is not prayed or sung during Advent nor Lent.
5. After the homily, the priest returns to the chair. When the priest cues you, with *hands folded*, walk to the priest. He will hand you the binder to hold for the Creed and the Intercessions. When the Intercessions are finished, hand the binder back to the priest and return to your seat with *hands folded*.
6. After the priest goes to distribute Communion, bring any ciboria lids to the shelf by the tabernacle.
7. When the priest stands after the Communion Rite, go to hold the Missal for him for the Closing Prayer. Return it to the table at the end of the prayer.
8. At the end of Mass, wait until the priest moves to kiss the altar and move with *hands folded* to right in front of the Acolytes and Cross Bearer, facing the altar, once again in the diamond formation. When the priest genuflects toward the tabernacle, you genuflect then walk behind the Acolytes to the back of the church.

Acolytes (A)

1. One Acolyte lights the two processional candles in the sacristy immediately before Mass.
2. The two Acolytes (A) walk side-by-side with processional candles behind the Cross Bearer. See the **Entrance Procession Diagram** on page 13 illustrating the diamond formation.

3. When you arrive at the base of the stairs of the altar, move to the **left** and face the altar while waiting for the rest of the ministers. See the **Sanctuary Diagram** on page 13.
4. When the priest genuflects/bows toward the tabernacle, do a head bow. Then move with the *processional candles* to your place in the sanctuary on the left, blow out the flames, place them on the ledge, and *stand* at your seat.
5. When everyone sits for the offertory after the intercessions, the two Acolytes bring the chalice and any ciboria and/or pyx (anything gold or silver) from the credence table to the altar. **THE LAVABO BOWL AND TOWEL STAY ON TABLE.**
6. Move with *hands folded* to the base of the altar stairs in front of the carpet and bow to the tabernacle. Follow the Cross Bearer to the gift table in the rear of the church. Assist the gift-bearers for the Mass by handing them the wine and water cruets and any ciboria. Follow the cross with *hands folded* and lead the gift-bearers to the priest. When at the base of the altar stairs, both Acolytes move to the *left*, stand shoulder-to-shoulder facing the priest, and wait for the priest/deacon to hand each of you one cruet of wine or water. Follow the priest and deacon to the altar.
7. Both Acolytes move to the left side of the altar, holding the cruets with **lids off/open and handles facing the priest** until the priest/deacon prepares the chalice. The Acolyte with the wine stands closer to the altar. The priest/deacon will take the wine cruet first and then hand it back. He will then take the water cruet and hand it back.
8. As soon as the priest/deacon hands the cruets back to the Acolytes, both Acolytes **bow**, move to the credence table and put down the wine cruet. One Acolyte keeps the water cruet in one hand and takes the lavabo bowl in the other. The other Acolyte takes and drapes the finger towel over folded hands and under thumbs. Both Acolytes walk to the side of the altar.
9. This time the Acolyte with the water stands closer to the altar. When the priest turns toward you, pour a small amount of water over his hands, into the bowl. The other Acolyte keeps hands folded so the priest can place the finger towel on them. When finished, **bow to the priest** and place everything on the credence table and return to your seat with *hands folded*. Remain standing with *hands folded*.
10. While kneeling during the Eucharistic Prayer, one Acolyte rings the bells 4 times during the liturgy:
 - 1.) The First-time the bells are **rung one time** during the Epiclesis.
The Priest will hold out his hands flat and side by side over the gifts.
Depending on the Eucharistic prayer, this may happen quickly or take a few minutes.
The bells are rung to signify the invocation of the Holy Spirit.

2.) The Second time the bells are **rung three times** when the priest elevates the Host high above his head.

When the bells ring it tells the people that the bread has become the Body of Christ.

3.) The Third time the bells are **rung three times** when the priest elevates the Chalice high above his head.

When the bells ring it tells the people that the wine has become the Blood of Christ.

4.) The Last time the bells are **rung one time** when the priest drinks from the Chalice. This happens during the Communion Rite after we kneel down following the Lamb of God. This signifies the completion of the saving sacrifice of Christ.

Remember 1:3:3:1

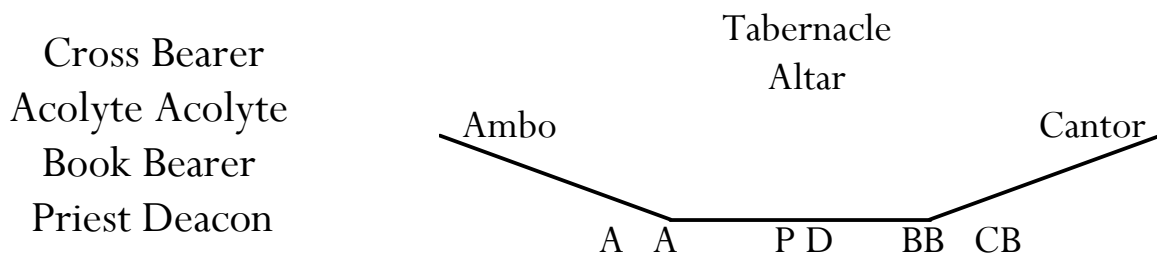
11. When Holy Communion is being distributed to the faithful, one Acolyte lights the candles.

12. When the priest is finished distributing Communion and returns to the altar, one Acolyte takes the **water cruet** to the side of the altar and the other Acolyte follows with *hands folded* and stands closer to the altar. Pour water into the chalice when the priest turns to you or hand him the cruet if he prefers. After he purifies the chalice, he will cover it. The Acolyte without the water will take the chalice and both Acolytes return walk to the credence table, put the water and chalice down, and sit.

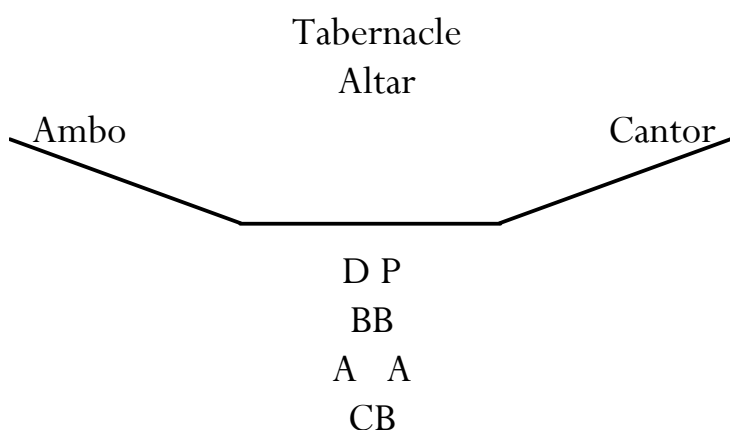
13. At the end of Mass, wait until the priest moves to kiss the altar and take the lit candles and **stand between the first pews** facing the altar and in front of the Cross Bearer and with the Book Bearer in front of you, once again in the diamond formation. When the priest genuflects/bows, do a head bow toward the tabernacle. Then slowly process out. Place candles on the counter in the sacristy and blow out the flames.



Entrance Procession & Sanctuary Diagram



Recessional Diagram



Altar Server's Prayer Before Mass

Inspire my mouth, O Lord, to bless Your Holy Name.

Cleanse my heart from all evil and distracting thoughts.

Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will that I may serve worthily at Your Holy Altar.

O Mary, Mother of Christ, obtain for me the most important grace of knowing my vocation in life. Grant me a true spirit of faith and humble obedience so that I may ever behold the priest as a representative of God and willingly follow him in the Way, the Truth, and the Life of Christ.

Amen.

Altar Server's Prayer After Mass

O Lord, Jesus Christ, Eternal High Priest, I thank you for the privilege of having served at the holy altar of Your Sacrifice.

Now, as I put aside the garments of your service, I ask that I may at all times think of You.

May I ever seek You and find You; may I always follow You; may your priestly spirit be in my heart and Your Holy Name on my lips; and to Your Praise and Glory may every work of mine be done.

Ever ready in Your Service,

may I always know and do Your Will in all things and,

by Your Grace, persevere unto the end.

Amen.