

Saint Thomas More Church

Altar Server Manual

2024



Altar Server: _____

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Message to Altar Servers

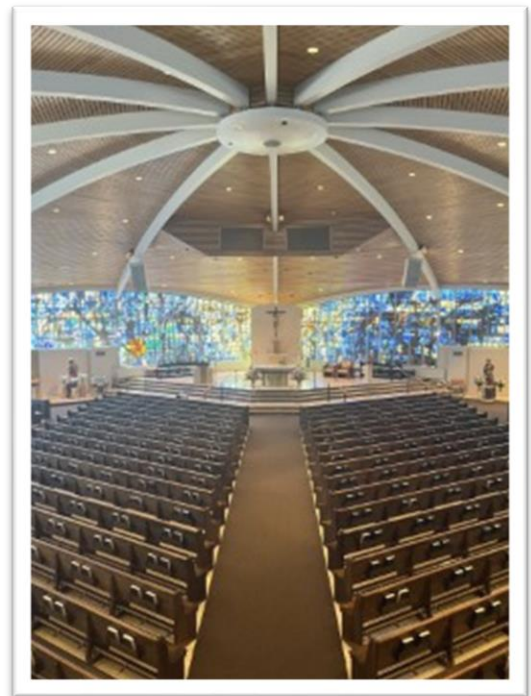
Dear Altar Server,

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.**

† 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.

† 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. It has two parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Here is a basic outline of the Mass:

Introductory Rites

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

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading, Responsorial Psalm, Second 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, Preface, Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy), Eucharistic Prayer, Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen

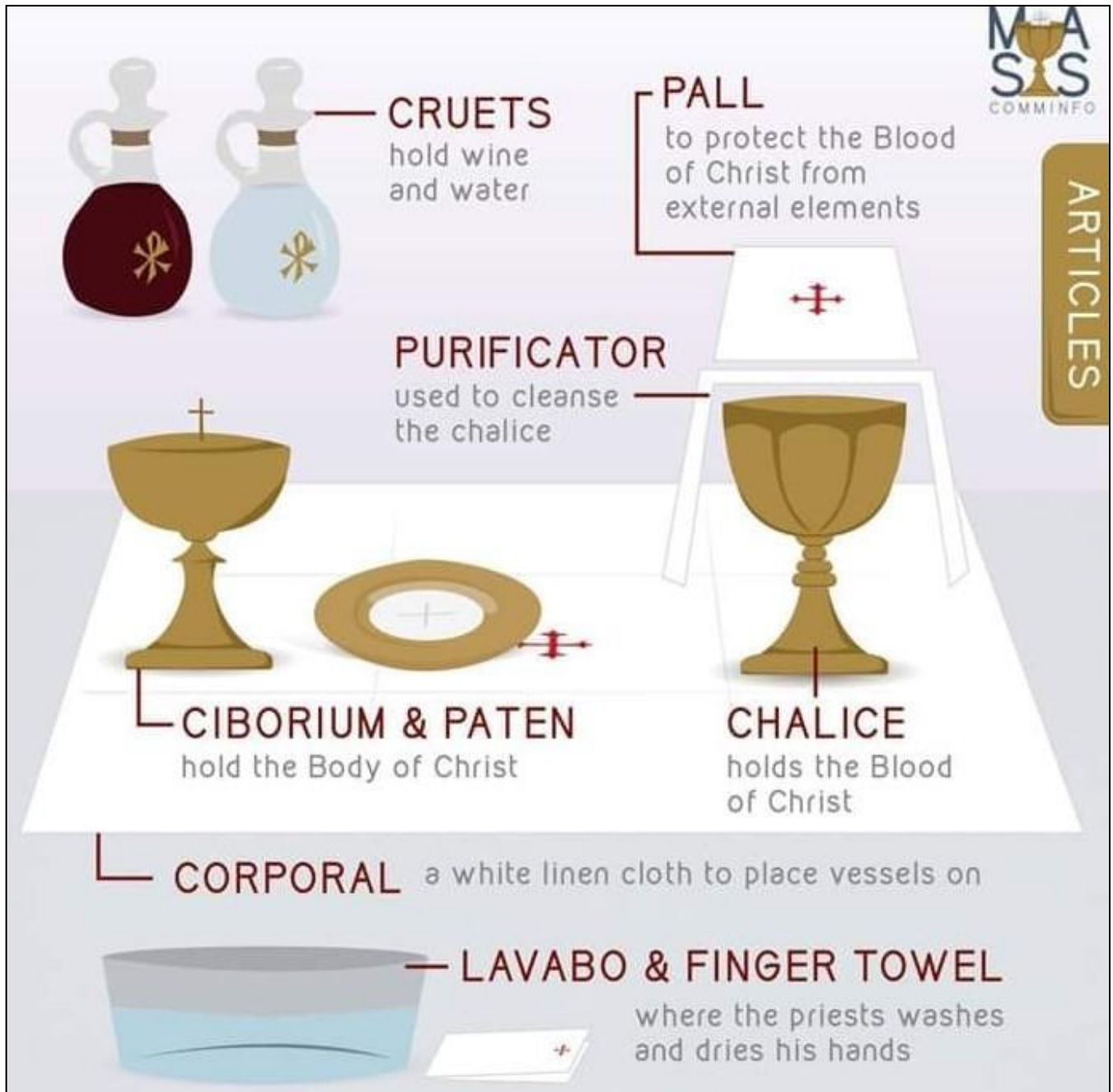
Communion Rite

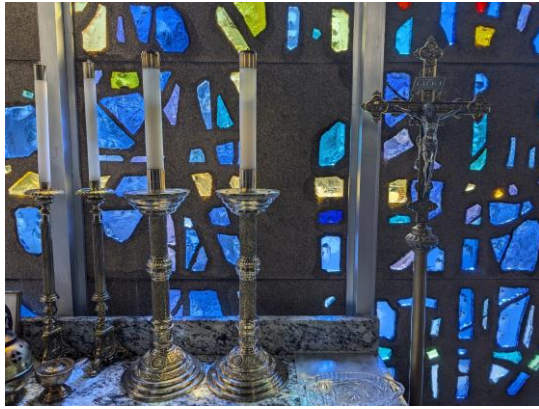
The Lord's Prayer (Our Father), Sign of Peace, Communion

Concluding Rite

Prayer after Communion, Blessing & Dismissal, Recessional

Sacred Vessels





Processional Cross and Candles



Aspergillum in Aspersorium



Pyx (for the sick or low gluten Hosts)



Thurible with Incense Boat



Monstrance



Communion Paten



Tabor (to put Monstrance on)



Ciborium (plural: Ciboria)

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.



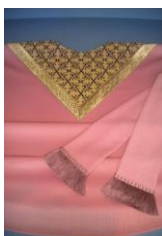
White or Gold: a symbol of celebration, triumph, purity, and innocence. White is used on all feast days of the Joyful and Glorious Mysteries of our Lord's life such as Christmas and Easter, on the feasts of the Blessed Mother, angels, and saints who were not martyrs. White is worn frequently as every 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. Look on the sheet for 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; assists with the Communion paten.

Book Bearer (BB): Holds the Book of the Chair and binder for the priest; brings the Missal to the altar; assists with the Communion paten; brings ciboria lids to the tabernacle and returns Missal to credence table.

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 Communion paten, 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 11.
2. When you arrive at the base of the stairs of the sanctuary, bow your head toward the tabernacle. Walk over and place the cross in the stand near the Saint Joseph statue making sure Jesus is facing the people. With *hands folded chest high* walk to your place in the sanctuary and *stand* at your seat.
3. After the Homily, Creed, and Intercessions (Response: Lord, hear our prayer), the congregation will sit. Remain standing and walk with *hands folded chest high* to the cross and take it. Then walk to the center aisle and stand at the base of the stairs while facing the altar. Wait until the Acolytes flank you and the three of you bow to the altar/tabernacle. See the **Offertory Procession Diagram** on page 11.
4. 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 walk up the center of the aisle. When you arrive in the front, turn to the right, and return the cross to the stand. Then with your *hands folded chest high*, return to your seat.
5. When it is time for the Sign of Peace, walk with the Book Bearer and stand to the side of the altar to shake the hand of the priest first and then anyone else on your side of the sanctuary. With your *hands folded chest high*, return to your seat.

6. After receiving Communion pick up the Communion paten and walk toward the Saint Joseph statue. You will stand to the left of the minister distributing Communion and extend the paten under the chin or hands of the person receiving the Eucharist. When the minister finishes that line follow him/her to the next station or, if done, carry the paten reverently and place it on the altar for the priest to purify. Return the paten.
7. At the end of Mass, wait until the priest moves to kiss the altar. Get the cross and wait in the center aisle between the first pews facing the altar. The Acolytes with candles will flank you, and Book Bearer will be in front of you. 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. See the **Recessional Diagram** on page 11.
8. Place the cross in the stand next to the counter in the sacristy.

Book Bearer (BB)

1. The Book Bearer walks behind the Cross Bearer and two Acolytes in the procession with *hands folded chest high*. See the **Entrance Procession Diagram** on page 11.
2. When you arrive at the base of the stairs of the sanctuary, genuflect on your right knee toward the tabernacle. With *hands folded chest high* walk to your place in the sanctuary and *stand* at your seat.
3. When the priest cues you, go and hold the Book of the Chair for the priest. Carry the Book with its cover facing away from you with your hands on the bottom. When the priest finishes, return the Book to the credence table and return to your seat. The Gloria is not prayed or sung during Advent nor Lent.
4. After the homily, the priest returns to the chair. If the priest cues you, with *hands folded chest high*, bring the binder from the credence table to the priest for the Creed (Profession of Faith) and the intercessions (Universal Prayer). When the intercessions are finished, return the binder and pick up the Roman Missal and its stand (by the bottom of the stand). Carry and place them on the altar. Return to your seat with *hands folded chest high*.
5. When it is time for the Sign of Peace, walk with the Cross Bearer and stand to the side of the altar to shake the hand of the priest first and then anyone else on your side of the sanctuary. With your *hands folded chest high*, return to your seat.
6. After receiving Communion pick up the Communion paten and walk toward the main aisle. You will stand to the left of the minister distributing Communion and extend the paten under the chin or hands of the person receiving the Eucharist. When the minister finishes that line follow him/her to the next station or, if done, carry the paten reverently and place it on the altar for the priest to purify. Return the paten.
7. Bring any ciboria lids to the shelf by the tabernacle and return the Roman Missal and stand to the credence table.
8. When the priest stands or cues you, carry the Book of the Chair to him with its cover facing away from you with your hands on the bottom. When the priest finishes, return the Missal to the credence table and stand by your seat.
9. At the end of Mass, wait until the priest moves to kiss the altar and walk with *hands folded chest high* to right in front of the Cross Bearer and Acolytes, facing the altar. When the priest genuflects

toward the tabernacle, you genuflect then walk behind the Cross Bearer and 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 flanking the Cross Bearer. See the **Entrance Procession Diagram** on page 11.
3. When you arrive at the base of the stairs of the sanctuary, bow your head toward the tabernacle.
4. Walk toward your place in the sanctuary, place the candles on the ledge, blow out the flames, and *stand* at your seat with hands folded chest high.
5. When everyone sits 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. With *hands folded chest high* walk to the base of the altar stairs in front of the altar and bow to the altar/tabernacle. Flank the Cross Bearer and walk to the gift table in the rear of the church. Assist the gift-bearers by handing them the wine and water cruets and any ciboria. Walk next to the Cross Bearer with *hands folded chest high* 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. See the **Offertory Procession Diagram** on page 11.
7. Both Acolytes walk to the left side of the altar, holding the cruets with **lids off 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 or deacon hands the cruets back to the Acolytes, both Acolytes **bow to the priest or deacon**, walk to the credence table and put down the wine cruet. One Acolyte keeps the water cruet in one hand, leaves the lid on the table, and takes the lavabo dish in the other hand. The other Acolyte takes and drapes the finger towel over folded hands and under thumbs.
9. Both Acolytes walk to the side of the altar. 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 (do not put the finger towel in the bowl). Walk to your seat with *hands folded chest high* and stand with *hands folded chest high*.
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 fourth 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 it is time for the Sign of Peace, walk with the other Acolyte and stand to the side of the altar to shake the hand of the priest first and then anyone else on your side of the sanctuary. With *your hands folded chest high*, return to your seat.
12. After receiving Communion pick up the Communion paten. One Acolyte will walk toward the main aisle and the other Acolyte toward the Mary statue. You will stand to the right of the minister distributing Communion and extend the paten under the chin or hands of the person receiving the Eucharist. When the minister finishes that line follow him/her to the next station or, if done, carry the paten reverently and place it on the altar for the priest to purify. Return the paten.
13. When the priest is finished distributing Communion and returns to the altar, one Acolyte takes the **water cruet** and stands closest to the altar. The second Acolyte follows with *hands folded chest high* and stands next to the other Acolyte. 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 walk to the credence table, put the water and chalice down, and sit.
14. One Acolyte lights the candles.
15. At the end of Mass, wait until the priest moves to kiss the altar and take the lit candles and flank the Cross Bearer in the middle of the main aisle between the first pews facing the altar with the Book Bearer in front of you. 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.

For 7:30 a.m. Mass Only: Two Acolytes

1. One Acolyte lights the two processional candles in the sacristy immediately before Mass.
2. The two Acolytes (**A**) walk side-by-side up the aisle with processional candles.
3. When you arrive at the base of the stairs of the sanctuary, bow your head toward the tabernacle.
4. Walk toward your place in the sanctuary, place the candles on the ledge, blow out the flames, and *stand* at your seat with hands folded chest high.
5. When everyone sits 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. Both Acolytes return to the credence table, one picking up the wine, the other the water. Walk to the left side of the altar, holding the cruets with **lids off 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.

7. As soon as the priest or deacon hands the cruets back to the Acolytes, both Acolytes **bow to the priest or deacon**, walk to the credence table and put down the wine cruet. One Acolyte keeps the water cruet in one hand, leaves the lid on the table, and takes the lavabo dish in the other hand. The other Acolyte takes and drapes the finger towel over folded hands and under thumbs.

8. Both Acolytes walk to the side of the altar. 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 (do not put the finger towel in the bowl). Walk to your seat with *hands folded chest high* and stand with *hands folded chest high*.

9. 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 fourth 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

10. When it is time for the Sign of Peace, walk with the other Acolyte and stand to the side of the altar to shake the hand of the priest first and then anyone else on your side of the sanctuary. With *your hands folded chest high*, return to your seat.

11. After receiving Communion pick up the Communion paten. Both Acolytes will walk toward the main aisle, one on the left and the other on the right. You will stand to the left or right of the ministers distributing Communion and extend the paten under the chin or hands of the person receiving the Eucharist. When done, carry the paten reverently and place it on the altar for the priest to purify. Return the paten.

12. When the priest is finished distributing Communion and returns to the altar, one Acolyte takes the **water cruet** and stands closest to the altar. The second Acolyte follows with *hands folded chest high* and stands next to the other Acolyte. 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 walk to the credence table, put the water and chalice down, and sit.

13. One Acolyte lights the candles.

14. At the end of Mass, wait until the priest moves to kiss the altar and take the lit candles to the middle of the main aisle facing the altar. 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.

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.

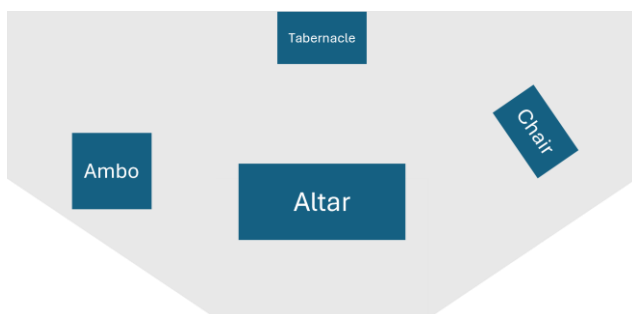
Altar Server's Prayer After Mass

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.

Entrance Procession Diagram

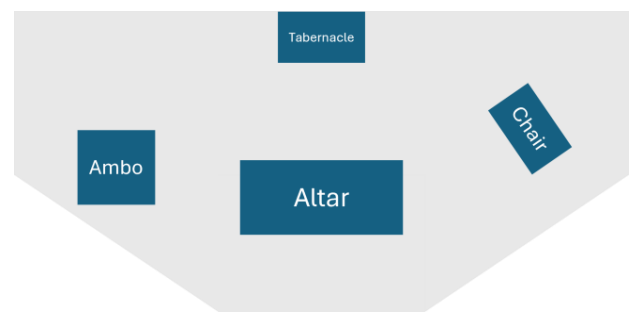
A CB A
BB
Priest Deacon

Offertory Procession Diagram



A CB A

Recessional Diagram



Deacon Priest
BB
A CB A