

# The Guide to Altar Serving

## St. Mary Immaculate Parish 2013

### Prior to Mass

- If you are scheduled to serve, be in the Sacristy at least ten minutes before the start of Mass so that you have time to sign in and put on your cassock and surplice.
- When all the servers have arrived determine who should fill the responsibilities of Crucifix Bearer and Candle Bearers.
- Retrieve the Crucifix and Candles from the Sanctuary and come to the back of the Church. You should be ready to go five minutes before the scheduled start of Mass.

### During the Mass

#### Entrance Procession

- The entrance procession is normally made up of the Crucifix Bearer and two Candle Bearer. (see IL 1)
- The Crucifix Bearer leads the procession with the two Candle Bearers slightly behind and flanking the Crucifix Bearer. (see IL 1)
- If additional servers are present they form up behind the Candle Bearers. (see IL 1)
- If only two servers are present both servers will carry candles and process in side by side. (see IL 1)
- If only one server is present that server will carry the Crucifix if they are physically capable of carrying it, otherwise they will process in with hands folded.
- The procession begins moving when the singing starts, not the music.
- The procession moves at a slow and steady pace, slightly slower than normal walking speed.
- When the procession reaches the foot of the sanctuary the servers spread out along the the first step with the Crucifix Bearer in the center, flanked by the Candle

#### What About Serving in Cana Hall?

Serving in Cana Hall follows the same basic pattern as established here in this guide. You will have to change some things to account for the differences in the physical layout.

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- Bearers; additional altar servers stand outside of the Candle Bearers.
- When all of the servers are in position, all of the servers turn left and walk in a single line following the edge of the first step. (see IL 2)
  - When the leading server in the line reaches the railing, the entire line stops and turns and faces the tabernacle.
  - Once the priest (and deacon if present) has bowed, the servers move together up the steps in an orderly fashion and place the Crucifix and Candles in their holders, the servers then go to their normal places.

Illustration 1

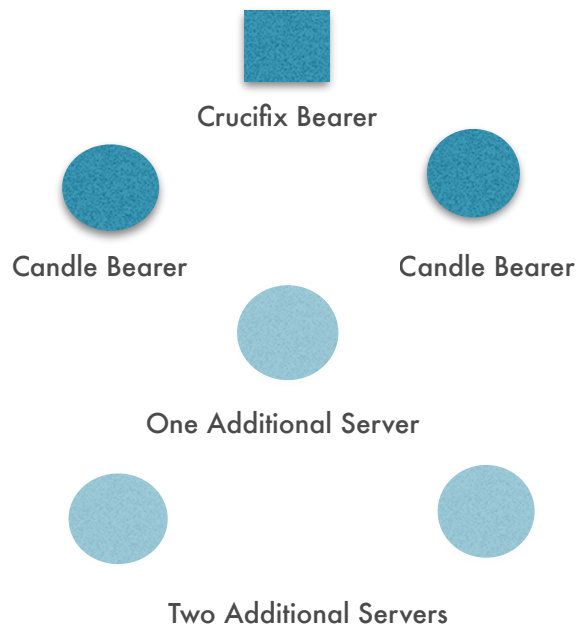
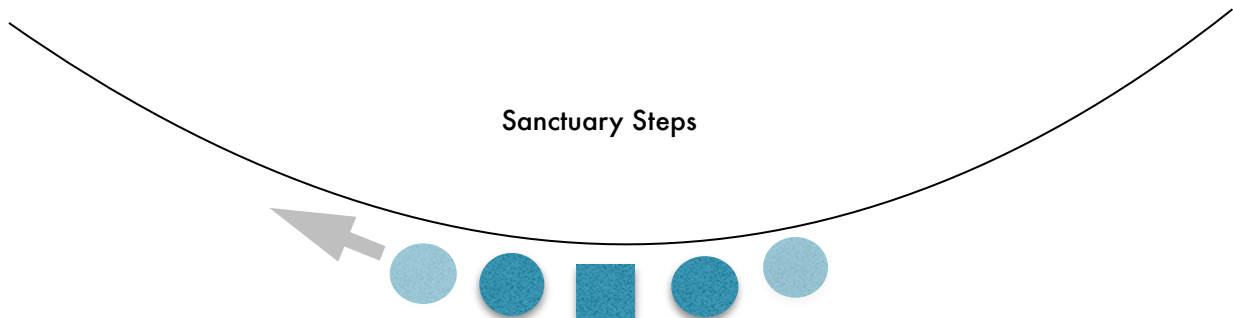


Illustration 2



## Opening Prayer

- The Crucifix Bearer should during the Penitential Rite (Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy) have the Roman Missal ready.
- When the priest calls out "Let us Pray," the Crucifix Bearer should immediately walk to the priest in a stately fashion holding the Missal in front of him.
- When the Crucifix Bearer reaches the priest, the priest will take the missal from him, open it to the correct page, and give back to the server to hold open as the priest prays.
- When the priest finishes, the server will close the missal if the priest has not already done so and return the missal to its place, and then go to his normal seat.

## Gospel Procession

- During the 2nd Reading, the Candle Bearers should get their candles and stand ready side by side in the passageway next to their seats.
  - If the Book of the Gospels is on the Altar, the Candle Bearers should move at the start of the Alleluia to the near edge of the Altar and turn and face the people, standing side by side. Once the priest or deacon has picked up the Book of the Gospels and is behind the Candle Bearers, the Candle Bearers move together side by side across the front of the Altar at a slow and steady pace until they reach the Ambo. At the Ambo the Candle Bearers separate and stand on either side of the Ambo facing the priest or deacon.
  - If the Book of the Gospels is NOT on the Altar then the servers move across the front of the Altar side by side once the Alleluia has started, until they reach the Ambo and take their places on either side of the Ambo, facing the priest or deacon.
- During the reading of the Gospel the Candle Bearers should remain still, it is not necessary to seal oneself with the sign of the cross as everyone else is doing. Everyone else is not holding a heavy candle. Keep the candle steady.
- Once the reading of the Gospel is completed and the priest or deacon has kissed the Gospel, turn and go back across the front of the Altar in the same way that you came.
- Return the candles to their place and take your seats.

Keep Your Eyes on  
the Priest

During the Mass pay  
attention to the priest.  
He might need you to  
do something (or  
remind you to do  
something) quickly.

## Preparation of the Gifts

- The Preparation of the Gifts begins once the Petitions are completed and everyone sits down.

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- Two servers should get the trays holding the ciborium and chalices and bring them to the altar. The tray holding the ciborium to the left side (facing the people) of the altar, the tray holding the chalices to the right side (facing the people) of the altar. A server should pick up a tray only if they are confident of carrying it safely (especially the tray holding the chalices). If only one server is confident about carrying the trays then that server will need to make two trips. If none of the servers are confident about carrying the trays tell the priest or deacon.
- One server should get the priest's chalice and carrying it with two hands place it in the center of the Altar.
- One server should get the Missal stand and place it on the left hand side of the altar (if the priest desires this, check with the priest before Mass).
- One server should get the Roman Missal and place it between the priest's chalice and the tray holding the ciborium (or on the stand).
- When the priest and/or deacon starts to move to the foot of the sanctuary to receive the gifts, the two Candle Bearers should move immediately and join the priest, standing together on his right.
- Once the priest and/or deacon has given you the gifts, wait for the priest to start to move back to the Altar before moving yourselves.
- The server carrying the glass bowl of hosts should go and stand at the right edge of the Altar (facing the people), and give the hosts to the priest or deacon, then immediately go join the other server at the Credence Table.
- The server carrying the wine should go to the Credence Table and make sure the water is ready for the other server to take.
- Once both servers are at the Credence Table they move together to the edge of the Altar and stand side by side waiting for the priest or deacon.
- Once the priest or deacon has taken both the water and wine, the servers turn and go back together to the Credence Table.
- At the Credence Table one server takes both the water and the bowl, and the other server takes the washcloth.
- Together the servers go to the priest. Once the priest has finished washing his hands, the servers move together to the Credence Table, put down the water, bowl, and washcloth and return to their seats.
- Other servers remove glass bowl and empty trays as necessary.

### Candle Bearers

When you are working together such as during the Gospel Procession or during the Preparation of the Gifts you need to work and move together. Think of yourselves as being tied together with rope or think of your fellow Candle Bearer as your wingman. Stay with your wingman!

## Eucharistic Prayer

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- During the Holy, Holy, Holy... the servers come and kneel at the right side of the altar (facing the people), with the Crucifix Bearer closest to the altar and to the bells. The Crucifix Bearer is responsible for passing out the knee cushions to the other servers.
- Crucifix Bearer rings the bells once when the priest lowers his hands over the gifts.
- Crucifix Bearer rings the bells three times when the priest raises the Eucharist, and again when the chalice with the Blood of Christ is raised.

### Communion

- During the Sign of Peace, servers should wait to exchange the Sign of Peace until the priest (and deacon if present) have exchanged the Sign of Peace with the servers.
- When the priest consumes the Body and Blood of Christ the Crucifix Bearer should ring the bells once for each.
- After the priest has consumed the Body and Blood of Christ the servers should take their places flanking the Tabernacle (an even number of servers on either side of the tabernacle if possible).
- Once all persons in the sanctuary have received communion and left the sanctuary the servers should remove the Roman Missal and any empty trays from the altar and place them on the Credence Table.
- When the priest returns to the sanctuary one of the Candle Bearers should get the water ready and bring it to the priest at the Altar. Wait for the priest to finish using the water and then return the water to the Credence Table.
- When the priest finishes purifying the sacred vessels the servers should begin removing the sacred vessels from the altar and taking them to the Credence Table. The priest's chalice should be carried with two hands.

#### Look Sharp!

As an Altar Server you become a leader in the parish. People - not only those your own age, but everyone - will look to you for an example of how to act during Mass. If you act as if the Mass is important other people will believe as well. Your posture is important! Stand and sit straight.

### Closing of Mass

- The Crucifix Bearer after all the sacred vessels are removed from the Altar should get the Roman Missal ready for the Closing Prayer. The Closing Prayer may be preceded by announcements, ministry talks, or may occur immediately after the priest returns to his seat.
- When the priest calls out "Let us Pray" bring the Roman Missal to the priest as in the Opening Prayer.
- Return the Missal to its place when the priest has finished the prayer.

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- After the Crucifix Bearer has put away the Roman Missal; the Crucifix Bearer and the Candle Bearers should get the Crucifix and the Candles and form up beside their seats. The other servers should remain seated until the Bearers have retrieved the crucifix and candles and then take position behind them. Servers should use the same formation as in the Opening Procession.
- When the closing music begins wait for the singing to start, then begin moving down the steps at a slow pace, paying care to stay together.
- The Crucifix Bearer should lead the servers directly to the center isle and go about two pews deep, stop, and when all the servers have stopped, turn and face the Altar.
- When the priest and/or deacon has reached the bottom step, bowed, and turned around; the servers should turn around facing the doors, and begin moving slowly up the isle.
- Once the servers have reached the doors the Crucifix Bearer and Candle Bearers should return the Crucifix and the Candles to their places. It is no longer necessary to move together or go slowly.

## Glossary

**Altar** - The table on which the sacrifice of the Mass is completed.

**Ambo** - Place from which the readings are proclaimed. Also called podium or lectern.

**Candles** - The candles used in the Opening, Gospel, and Closing Processions. Also called torches.

**Candle Bearers** - Usually younger, less experienced Altar Servers. However, they have one of the most important and responsible role to complete during the Preparation of the Gifts.

**Chalice** - Sacred vessels used for the Blood of Christ. There are two kinds: communion chalices and the priest's chalice. The priest's chalice is often of great personal value to its owner and needs to be handled with special care.

**Ciborium** - Sacred vessels used for the Body of Christ.

**Corporal** - Large piece of white linen placed on the center of the Altar during Mass.

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**Credence Table** - Small table behind the Altar Server seats used to hold various things needed during the Mass.

**Crucifix** - The processional cross with Christ (corpus) on it.

**Crucifix Bearer** - Usually the most experienced Altar Server. Leads other servers during Mass.

**Purificator** - Small white linen piece used to wipe the edge of the Chalices.

**Roman Missal** - The book, red in color, that contains all of the prayers needed by the priest to say the Mass.

**Sacristy** - Room in which the priests, deacons, and altar servers get ready for Mass.

**Sanctuary** - Raised part of the Church that contains the Altar, Tabernacle, Ambo, and seats for the priests, deacon, and altar servers.

**Tabernacle** - Large locking container in which the Eucharist is kept in between Masses. It is located directly behind the Altar.