

# **Altar Server Guidelines**



**Holy Family Parish  
Kirkland, Washington**

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## Altar Server Guidelines

These first three pages give a high-level overview of the role of each Altar Server. The pages that follow are divided into sections that give much more detail on specific elements of each Server's tasks. Each of these sections is referred to, as needed, on these first three pages. Studying the first three pages will familiarize you with the overall flow of the Mass. You can refer to the other sections as necessary when you need more detailed explanations of how to do specific tasks during the Mass, e.g., setting the Altar.

### Before Mass

- You must **arrive** at least **20** minutes before Mass begins. If you are not **in the Vestry** by **15** minutes before Mass, the Facilitator will find a substitute Server to replace you. If you are **not vested** at least **10** minutes prior to Mass, the Facilitator will find a substitute Server to replace you.
- Choose a properly fitting alb. (it should end just above your shoe tops)
- Put on a cincture (rope) of the correct color for the liturgical season. The color of your cincture will always match the main color of the Priest's chasuble (his outer vestment). Use the proper knot to tie it. (see page 8)
- Wait quietly in the Vestry for the prayer before the Mass.

### Entrance Procession

- The order of the procession is as follows:
  - Thurifur (incense) if used
  - Cross Bearer [**Server 1**]
  - Candle Bearers (side by side) [**Servers 2 & 3**]
  - Lector 2 (Book of the Gospels)
  - Presider (Priest)
- WALK SLOWLY!
- The Cross Bearer starts up the aisle when the Cantor starts singing. The next person in the procession starts up the aisle when the person in front of them reaches the carpet in front of the baptismal font.
- When you reach the steps of the sanctuary, *go directly to your place*:
  - Cross Bearer (**Server 1**) and **Server 2** to the chairs on the left side (Sacristy side), **Server 3** to the right side.

### Liturgy of the Word

- After the Gloria is finished, listen for the Priest to say "Let us pray". **Server 2** goes and picks up the *Roman Missal*, stands in front of the Priest and holds the book. When the Priest is finished, close the book (be careful NOT to wrinkle the pages!!), place it on the table and return to your seat. Server 1 and Server 3 remain standing until Server 2 gets back to his/her chair, then all three sit down at the same time.

- The Readings: The Servers pay attention to the Scripture readings, join in the singing the Responsorial Psalm and Alleluia, and listen to the homily.
- The Creed: All Servers are required to know the Nicene Creed.

## Liturgy of the Eucharist

- Preparation of the Gifts: After the collection has started, and the Usher is at the third pew, **Server 1** (Cross Bearer) takes the Processional Cross to the Gift Table at the back of the church and waits to lead the procession to the altar.
- As the singing of the Preparation song starts, **Servers 2 and 3** prepare the altar. See the section below entitled “Setting the Altar” (page 4) for the detailed instructions on how to do this. When **Server 3** goes across the Sanctuary to help Server 2, s/he reverences (bows to) the Altar.
- **Servers 2 & 3** go with the Priest to the foot of the sanctuary and help receive the Gifts. The **Servers** stand on the first step of the Sanctuary. When Fr. Steve is presiding, he stays in front of the altar, and the Servers stand on either side of him. The servers do NOT bow to the Gift Bearers – only the Priest does this. When returning to the altar with the gifts, let the Priest go to the altar first, then the Servers go to the altar via the left side. The Host Bowl is placed on the corporal. The wine cruet is placed by the Priest’s chalice, NOT on the corporal. After placing the Gifts on the altar, go to the credence table. There is a new “waiting point” by the credence table. **Servers 2 & 3** wait there and approach the altar one at a time – except for the handwashing. When the Priest lifts the Host Bowl, **Server 2** brings the water pitcher with the handle facing out for the priest to take. After the Priest has poured the wine into his chalice and poured a drop of water into it, **Server 2** takes the wine cruet and the water pitcher back to the credence table. **Server 2 & Server 3** together bring the water pitcher and hand-washing bowl and towel to the altar. The **Server with the towel and bowl** stands to the left of the **Server with the water pitcher**. The Priest washes his hands. (make sure you pour enough water over Father’s hands). **Servers 1 & 2** bow to the priest, both Servers return the items to the credence table, return to their seats, and remain standing.
- RINGING OF BELLS: During the Eucharistic prayer, **Server 1** will ring the bells. At the point when Father brings his hands around over the altar (almost like he is going to dive), you ring the bells once. When he says “Take this all of you and eat it....” and then lifts the host over his head, ring the bells three times with a short pause in between each ring. When he says “...Shed for you... Do this in memory of me” and raises the cup over his head, ring the bells three times as you did for the host.
- Eucharistic Prayer: Altar Servers join in the singing and the prayers.
- Altar Servers remain standing at their seats for the Our Father.
- When the Priest goes to the tabernacle to get the ciborium out, the **Servers** turn and face the tabernacle. When the Priest genuflects, the **Servers** bow, and then turn to face the Altar. Then **Server 2** takes the stack of three empty ciboria with one lid to the Altar.
- Communion: All **Servers** receive communion with the Eucharistic Ministers. **Servers 1 & 2** stand at the end of the line of Eucharistic Ministers closest to the Sacristy. **Server 3** stands at the other end of the line, next to the Ambo. The Cross Bearer (**Server 1**) then returns to his/her place. **Server 3** takes the chalice (and tray if still on the Altar) back to the credence table. **Server 2** takes the *Roman Missal* (red book) and places it on the table near the priest’s chair. If Fr. Steve is presiding, leave the Missal on the Altar on his bookstand. Only the corporal, and the lid for the ciborium remain on the Altar. **All three Servers** then return to their places, remain

standing, and sing the communion songs.

- After Communion, when the Priest returns the ciborium to the tabernacle, Servers turn toward the tabernacle, bow when the Priest genuflects, and then turn back to face the Altar.
- After communion, when the priest says “Let us pray” **Server 2** goes to the table with the *Roman Missal* (red book) and holds it up for the Priest. When the Priest is finished, the Server closes the book, places it back on the table, and returns to their seat.

### Concluding Rites

- Recessional: After the final blessing, as the Priest goes to reverence the altar (kiss it), the Cross Bearer (**Server 1**) takes the processional cross, walks down the middle aisle to the second pew and turns toward the altar. **Servers 2 & 3** take their candles and wait in front of the Cross Bearer (**Server 1**) facing the altar. When the Priest bows, turn (**Servers 2 & 3** turn inward) and then walk slowly down the aisle, walking side by side behind the Cross Bearer.

Thank you for serving God and Holy Family Parish by participating in this ministry!

## Setting the Altar

This must be done correctly so that the Priest does not have to rearrange everything when he comes to the Altar to begin the Eucharistic Prayer. Please study the steps listed below and the pictures on page 9 so that you will be able to set the Altar correctly every time you serve.

See picture "Credence Table - set for Mass" (page 9) for all of the things you will find on the credence table when you are ready to start setting the Altar.

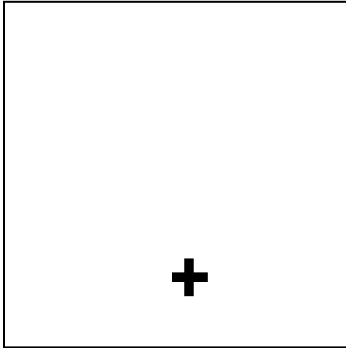
### **Servers 2 and 3:**

1. Go to the Altar, remove the bookstand, take it to the credence table and place it on the lower shelf. See pictures on page 9
2. Take the Priest's chalice which has the pall for the chalice, the Priest's purificator, and the corporal (the white cloths) stacked on top of it to the Altar.
3. Place the chalice (with the other items still stacked on top) on the far right side of the Altar.
4. Take the corporal off the top of the stack and unfold it **exactly** as described below in the section entitled "Corporal". (page 5)
5. Place the chalice to the right of the corporal as shown in the picture "Altar – set for start of the Liturgy of the Eucharist" on page 9.
6. Get the *Roman Missal* (red book) from the table next to the Presider's chair and place it to the left of the corporal at an angle as shown in the picture "Altar – set for start of the Liturgy of the Eucharist" on page 9.
7. Do **NOT** take the empty ciboria from the credence table and place them on the Altar at this time. (you do this later – at the Sign of Peace)
8. Do **NOT** bring the tray with the communion cups to the altar. The Prep Minister will do this. -- If the Prep Minister forgets, then you will need to do this. The **tallest** Server should carry the tray!!
9. **Servers 2 and 3** return to their seats, and remain standing.

# Corporal

The purpose of the corporal is to catch any particles of the Sacred Body and Blood of Christ that may be dropped during the Consecration and the Fraction Rite. So that these particles are not accidentally scattered when the corporal is refolded after the Eucharist, it is essential that it be unfolded and refolded correctly.

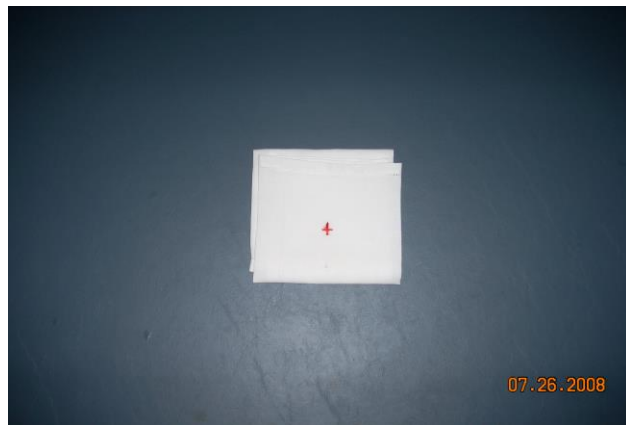
When placed on the altar correctly and unfolded correctly, the finished side will be up (hemmed side down) and 8 of the 12 creases will point downward (be "valleys"). (see the picture below) It takes exactly four folds to open the corporal, and another four to refold it correctly.



**Finished side up - hemmed side down**

## How to Unfold the Corporal

Place the folded corporal on the altar as shown in the picture below. Corporals have a red cross sewn into the lower 1/3.



## Refolding the Corporal

The correct way to refold the corporal is to do it in the reverse order from how you unfolded it.

It takes exactly four folds to fold it up correctly. When you do, it will be a small square just like when you started. (see the picture on page 4)

DO NOT turn the corporal over before you start refolding it. DO NOT shake it out.

DO NOT set the ciboria aside to fold the corporal. If the ciboria are still sitting on the corporal, wait until they are removed by the Priest.



## Handling the Thurible (Censer)

At funeral Masses and certain special Masses, the Priest uses incense. If you are asked to assist the Priest with the thurible (the brass or silver container on a chain), you need to know the following:

- 1 – an adult will have set up the thurible before Mass and will light it at the appropriate time
- 2 – you will be coached before Mass by the Priest so you know the appropriate time(s) to bring the thurible from the Sacristy to the Priest
- 3 – the safest way to carry the thurible is shown in picture #1 on the page 10 – your thumb goes through the large ring at the end of the chain
- 4 – you carry the boat (the small covered container with the incense in it) in your other hand (see picture #2 on page 10) – which hand you use for the thurible and the boat is up to you; do what feels most comfortable
- 5 – when you get to the Priest and he is ready for the thurible, hand him the boat, then with your free hand grab the chain in the middle (see picture #3 on page 10) and lift the chain until it reaches your other hand (see picture #4 on page 10)
- 6 – grasp the middle of the chain with the same hand that has the big loop over your thumb (see picture #5 on page 11)
- 7 – with the hand that is now free again, lift the top of the thurible so that the burning briquette is exposed (see picture 6 on page 11); the Priest will put some incense on top of the burning briquette; be SURE to lift the top with the wooden knob on the top!! – the metal is hot and you will burn your fingers if you touch any of the metal!!
- 8 – after the Priest has placed the incense on the burning briquette, lower the top back down – make sure it is resting squarely on top of the bottom portion (see picture #7 on page 11)
- 9 – take the boat back from the Priest with your free hand
- 10 – hand the Priest the thurible – he will take the big ring off your thumb, and grab the middle of the chain to begin the incensing
- 11 – when he is finished, he will hand the thurible back to you
- 12a– at a funeral Mass, you will normally stay where you are, and then process out with the thurible – swing it gently forward and backward as you walk, being careful not to hit anything with it or get it close to your alb
- 12b– at the special Masses, you will return it to the Sacristy and the responsible adult will take it from you

# Cincture Knot



## CM ALMY HOW TO TIE A ROPE CINCTURE



Fold cincture in half



Wrap around waist with knots on your right side



Grab end of loop made by the fold and overlap as shown



Using right hand, slip loop over left hand, keeping hold of cincture



Grab knotted end with your right hand



Slip knotted ends through loop (where left hand is making sure that single loop is on top of double cincture.) Feed knotted ends through loop from top to bottom



Drop loop and then tighten around waist



Knot is on left hip

**NOTE:** The knot is to be positioned on your RIGHT hip, not your left as shown in the picture.

## Altar Pictures



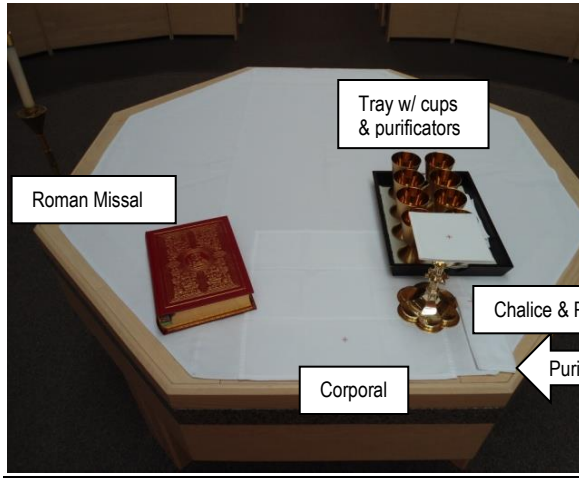
Credence Table – set for Mass



Altar before Mass – bookstand in place  
(centered right-to-left near the front edge)



Bookstand – stored under Credence Table



Altar – set for start of the Liturgy of the Eucharist



Altar – after Sign of Peace  
Altar Servers have placed ciboria – ONE lid only

## Thurible Pictures



1 - Thumb through large ring



2 - Hold boat by base



3 - Grasp chain at midpoint



4 - Lift chain up for grasping by other hand



5 - Chain grasped at midpoint



6 - Lift top by wooden knob



7 - Put top down – make sure it is seated properly!!

## Funeral Masses

If you are asked to serve at a Funeral Mass, there are a few things that are different. When you serve at a Funeral Mass, you need to be aware of them. Please familiarize yourself with the changes listed below so that you will know what to do.

When the deceased person's body is present at the Mass, it can either be in a casket or, if they have been cremated, in an urn. Sometimes, for various reasons, the person's remains will not be present at all. In that case, we celebrate a Memorial Mass rather than a Funeral Mass, and all of the changes listed below do not apply.

### Vesting

- The color of your cincture is always white for Funeral Masses

### Entrance Procession

- The procession begins in silence (the entrance song will be sung a little later)
- You enter through the doors on the right (same as for a regular Mass) – the casket, or the person carrying the urn, will be positioned outside the doors on the left
- The Cross Bearer (**Server 1**) leads the procession to the front of the baptismal font; **Servers 2 & 3** and the Priest follow; **Servers 2 & 3** do not carry candles [Note: if it is a Memorial Mass (no casket or urn present), then **Servers 2 & 3** do carry candles, as in a regular Mass]
- **Server 1** turns to the left around the front of the font, goes back a few steps toward the doors where the casket is, and stops next to the font; all three Servers are then standing next to the large adult font
- The casket is then pushed through the doors and stops just inside the doors
- **Server 3** takes the *aspersorium* (holy water sprinkling bucket) with the *aspergillum* (sprinkling wand), which are sitting on the ledge of the adult font, and hands them to the priest, who sprinkles the casket with holy water
- The Priest hands the *aspersorium* back to **Server 3**, who places it back on the ledge of the adult font
- The funeral pall (a large white cloth) is placed over the casket; if an urn is being carried in, a pall may be placed over it (but not always)
- The entrance song is then started; all three Servers turn toward the Sanctuary (altar) and lead the procession to the altar
- The Servers go directly to their seats in the Sanctuary and remain standing [Note: if this is a Memorial Mass (no casket or urn present), the Entrance Procession happens just like at a regular Mass]

### During Mass

- Opening Prayer – Fr. Nagel uses the *Order of Christian Funerals* book; Fr. Steve uses the *Roman Missal* – the book will be on the table next to the Presider's chair as usual
- At the Setting of the Altar and Preparation of the Gifts, **Server 1** does not go down with the Processional Cross to get the gifts.
- After Communion, just before the end of the Mass, sometimes a family member or friend will go to the Ambo and make some "remarks of remembrance" about the person who died; these remarks can take from 5 – 15 minutes

- After the Prayer after Communion, when the Priest starts going down to the casket or urn, **Server 1** gets the Processional Cross, takes it down to the center aisle, turns toward the casket/urn and stands about 6 feet away from it
- **Server 3** goes to the door of the Sacristy, takes the thurible and boat from the person standing there, or from the stand on which these are kept that has been placed in the doorway, goes down to the casket/urn, and stands by the Priest
- **Server 2** stands next to the Priest to hold his book while he prays  
[Note: if this is a Memorial Mass (no casket or urn present), **Servers 2 & 3** get the candles from their stands and process out just like at a regular Mass]
- After the Priest has incensed the casket or urn, he will hand the thurible back to **Server 3** – **Server 3** then goes down the center aisle and stands behind the Cross Bearer (i.e., closest to the font)
- **Server 2** goes and stands in front of the Cross Bearer (**Server 1**)
- When the Priest turns around toward the doors of the church, the Servers turn and lead the procession back to the doors through which the casket/urn was brought in. – Order: Thurifer (**Server 3**), Cross Bearer (**Server 1**), **Server 2**, Priest
- As **Server 2** passes by the font, s/he picks up the *aspersorium* and carries it out with them
- The Servers go out the doors and wait in the narthex
- The casket will stop just inside the doors; the funeral pall is folded and taken off the casket - the urn is normally left on the table where it was placed at the beginning of the Mass
- The casket is then taken out the doors of the church and placed in the hearse; the Altar Servers lead the procession to the hearse
- Before casket is placed in the hearse, the Priest will sprinkle it again with Holy Water and, sometimes, invite the family to do so also
- After the casket is placed in the hearse, bring the *aspersorium* and the thurible back into the church; place the *aspersorium* on the ledge of the font; take the thurible into the Sacristy and hang it on the stand
- Go to the Vestry, hang up your alb, wait to receive your stipend for serving and, during the school year, return to your class