

Altar Server Guidelines

St Andrew the Apostle Catholic Church

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<http://standrewapostle.org/ministry/altar-servers/>

Altar Server Parent Coordinators

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Why am I serving?

Thank you for responding to God's call to serve at His altar at St. Andrew Apostle. Please keep in mind that being an altar server is a sacred ministry that carries with it responsibility. The altar server's role in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is not only to assist the Priest but to also to lead the congregation in worship. The congregation gathered for the Mass looks to the altar server to increase their reverence for the Mass. The better you serve, the more Glory goes to God.

What do I wear?

Even though you will wear vestments, it is important to wear dress clothes. It is preferable that all servers wear a collared shirt, dark colored long pants, dark socks and dark dress shoes. Girls are allowed to wear a skirt but it should be at least knee length. Girls should not wear high heel or open toe shoes. No one should wear sandals or boots. Hair style should be plain and worn down (this is primarily for the girls). No "updos"; such as pony tails or braids. No make up should be worn. The altar server is to blend in and not cause distraction.

How do I act when I am on the Altar?

Very simply, if you are not doing one of your duties as a server, then you should be praying or paying attention to the readings. Your hands should be in a prayer position -- with your thumbs right over left, hands flat together, fingers pointed towards heaven and placed over your heart. (Think of the way we see Mary, our Blessed Mother) Keeping your hands in this position will help you stay focused on the Mass.

There should ***not be any*** extraneous talking or movements, such as fidgeting, playing with your cincture, etc. while in the sanctuary. This takes attention away from the altar.

Instructions for Serving Mass

Before Mass

- A. All servers are expected to *arrive 20 minutes* before the scheduled start of the Mass.
- B. Get vested immediately. The correct length for the alb should be touching or just above your shoes. If you are wearing an alb please choose an appropriate length cincture and tie around your waist using one of the way to tie the knot. The cincture should fall at your side and touch drag on the floor.
- C. While you're tying your cincture, say a short prayer to your guardian angel asking for his assistance.

Angel of God, my guardian dear,
to whom God's love commits me here,
ever this day be at my side,
to light and guard, to rule and guide.
Amen

D. Determine server positions

Server 1 will process carrying a candle on the left of the Crucifer and sit on the ambo side of the sanctuary after placing the candle on the credence table. Server 1 is primarily responsible for initiating the preparations for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Server 2 will process carrying a candle on the right of the Crucifer and sit on the Celebrant's side of the sanctuary after placing the candle on the credence table. Server 2 is primarily responsible for presenting The Priest with the Roman Missal for the Opening and closing prayers. Server 2 will also assist Server 1 during the Preparation of Holy Communion.

Crucifer will process carrying the crucifix between Server 1 and Server 2 and sit on the Celebrant's side of the altar after placing the crucifix in its holder. The Crucifer is either the tallest or the oldest of the servers. The Crucifer leads the other two servers in action on the altar. The Crucifer is also responsible for lighting and extinguishing the altar candles.

- E. The Crucifer should walk up the side aisle to enter the sanctuary and bow towards the tabernacle. Obtain the candle lighter from the sacristy to light the candles on the altar, replace the candle lighter and obtain the crucifix for the processional and return to narthex. Please remember to bow to the tabernacle when leaving the sanctuary.
- F. When waiting for the beginning of Mass, the Crucifer should stand holding the crucifix with care and respect.

G. Preparation for the Processional

- a. Server 1 & 2 should light the processional candles in the vesting room and carry out to the narthex moments before the processional.
- b. All three servers should participate in the prayer led by the Priest just before the processional. The Priest may say, "Procedamus in Pace." You should respond, "In nomine Christe, amen."
- c. Line up with the Crucifer in the middle with Server 1 to the left of the Crucifer and Server 2 on the right.

During Mass

A. Processional

- a. The Procession to the altar begins when the first words of the hymn is sung by the Cantor.
- b. The Crucifer will determine the pace. The pace should be slow and even.
- c. Upon reaching the sanctuary, all three servers should stop and bow only their heads in reverence to the altar and tabernacle. Candles should be placed on the credence tables and the Crucifix in its stand. The candles should remain lit for the entire Mass. The servers walk to their seats and remain standing for the opening prayers for Mass.

B. Opening Prayers

- a. The Altar Servers are to remain standing during the beginning of Mass.
- b. Please lead the congregation in responses to the prayers. If you do not know them by heart please learn them or refer to the pew cards on the table near the servers' chairs. It is important to actively assist in the Mass. Hands should be folded in prayer position with hands flat together, fingers pointing to heaven and placed over your heart. (Think of the Mary our Blessed Mother looks when she prays. Notice the Priest and Deacon always have their hands in this prayer position)
- c. After the Gloria is sung, the Priest will say "Let us pray" That is when Server 2 will present the Roman Missal to the celebrating Priest to read the Prayer of the Collect. Please take care to present The Priest with the Roman Missal right side up and at an appropriate height.
- d. When the prayer is finished The Priest will close the Roman Missal and then the server returns to his seat and places the Roman Missal on the table between the chairs. All three servers should remain standing until the Crucifer begins to sit to listen to the readings.

C. Liturgy of the Word

- a. The servers remain seated for the First Reading, the Responsorial Psalm and the Second Reading. Hands should remain flat on the lap and feet should be flat on the floor. If your feet do not touch the floor, please do not cross or swing your legs.
- b. When the Gospel Acclamation begins all servers should stand. At the first words of the Gospel acclamation, Server 1 and 2 move to the candles on the credence tables and take the candles and stand at the bottom of the stairs leading up to the altar. The Crucifer should place his hands in the prayer position for the entire reading of the Gospel.

- c. Once the Priest or Deacon climbs the stairs to the altar both servers should follow him to the altar and stand at the edge of the altar holding the lit candles.
- d. Server 1 will then turn towards the congregation and lead the procession to the ambo for the proclamation of the Gospel by the Priest or Deacon. Server 2 follows the Priest or Deacon.
- e. Each server takes their respective place at the side of the Ambo and holds the candle at the same height and remain standing there until the Gospel is read and the response, "Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ" is said.
- f. The servers return to their seats in this way. Server 1 walks directly to place the candle on the credence table and then back to his seat on the ambo side and Server 2 turns and goes to the middle of the sanctuary bows to the altar and returns the candle to the credence table and then takes his place.
- g. The Crucifer remains standing until Servers 1 and 2 get back to their places and then all three servers sit together. During the homily, hands should remain flat on the lap and feet flat on the floor.

D. Profession of Faith and General Intercessions

- a. All Servers should stand at the Profession of Faith with hands in prayer position.
- b. At the end of the General Intercessions, Server 2 and the Crucifer sit and Server 1 takes the large Chalice placing his hand on top of the pall and places it on the altar, bowing to the altar after placement. Then he carries the smaller Chalices and places them on the altar, bowing to the altar after placement.

E. Offertory

- a. At the beginning of the Offertory hymn, the Crucifer takes the Roman Missal and places it on the altar, bowing to the altar after placement.
- b. The Crucifer then takes the Crucifix and walks down the side aisle to the back of the church. The crucifer stands in the middle of the main aisle as the people assemble to process up the aisle. The Crucifer looks to the Priest to determine when to begin walking. When the Priest reaches the center of the sanctuary, the Crucifer begins to walk up the aisle. The pace should be slow and even.
- c. When the Priest stands, Server 1 and Server 2 should stand and move to the center of the entrance to the sanctuary. Server 1 is at the Priest's right and Server 2 is at the Priest's left.
- d. The Priest will receive the gifts and give them to the servers. The Priest will give the flagon of wine to Server 1 and the ciborium with the bread to Server 2. Server 1 and 2 will turn to their right and walk towards the side of the altar. Server 1 will go directly to the credence

table to remove the top of the flagon and place the top on the credence table. He will then ascend the stairs to bring to the altar. Server waits for the priest to pour the wine into the chalices and receives the empty flagon, bows to the altar and then descends the stairs to bring the flagon to the credence table.

- e. Meanwhile, Server 2 brings the ciborium directly to the altar, removes the cover, places the ciborium on the altar, bows to the altar and descends the stairs to place the cover on the credence table.
- f. At this point Server 2, takes the cruet of water removes the top, sets the top on the credence table. Server 2 then brings the cruet of water to The Priest and waits until he is given the cruet back and the server bows. Server 2 then returns to the credence table to on which place the cruet.
- g. Server 1 is at the credence table waiting for Server 2 to gather the lavabo and lavabo cloth. When Server 2 returns with the cruet of water, working together, the servers take the lavabo bowl and pitcher with the cloth to the Priest so he can purify his hands. After the Priest gives the cloth back to the Server, both servers bow in unison.

F. Liturgy of the Holy Eucharist

- a. Both servers stand at the bottom of the stairs with hands in prayer position ready to begin the Prayers of Consecration.
- b. As the Priest turns back to the altar, the Crucifer stands and walks to the bottom of the stairs on the Celebrant's side with hands in prayer position.
- c. After the Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy) is sung, the servers immediately kneel on the first stair of the altar. All three servers should have their hands in prayer position.
- d. Server 1 should be ready to sound the bells. If Server 1 is not ringing the bells, his hands should be in the prayer position and the bells remain on the floor. As the Priest stretches out his arms over the gifts calling the Holy Spirit to make holy these gifts Server 1 rings the bells in a short but strong ring.
- e. When the Priest raises the Precious Body of Christ, Server 1 rings the bells with three distinct sounds (The Father, Son & Holy Spirit), allowing the bells to ring to their natural end before setting back on the floor.
- f. When the Priest raises the Precious Blood of Christ, Server 1 rings the bells with three distinct sounds (The Father, Son & Holy Spirit), allowing the bells to ring to their natural end before setting back on the floor.
- g. All three servers should stand after the Great Amen. Please stand without the use of your hands to push yourself up.
- h. All three servers should have their hands in the prayer position during the Our Father prayer.

- i. Sign of Peace – Please wait to exchange the sign of peace with the Priest before exchanging with the Deacon or other servers. Servers should immediately kneel down after *the Lamb of God* prayer.

G. Holy Communion

- a. After the Priest consumes the Precious Body and Blood, he will offer first to the Deacon and then to the Servers and then to the Extraordinary Ministers. Please ascend one stair to receive the Precious Body. Please return to kneeling as soon as possible after receiving the Precious Body.
- b. Begin to concentrate your mind on prayer. You can pray for your family, the Priests and other servers. It is important to spend this time in reverent prayer. Please do not watch the congregation receive Holy Communion, do not talk with each other or engage in any other behavior except praying.
- c. When the Priest and Deacon leave the altar to distribute Holy Communion, the Crucifer stands, approaches the altar, bow to the altar, close the Roman Missal and carries the Roman Missal to the table between the two altar server chairs on the Celebrant side of the altar. Then he returns to kneeling for the duration of Holy Communion.

H. Prayers after Holy Communion

- a. When Priest returns to the altar after Communion, Server 1 will stand and go to the credence table to bring the cruet of water to The Priest or the Deacon. Server 1 waits for The Priest to give him the cruet and returns it to the credence table.
- b. Server 1 and Server 2 will stand and wait at the bottom of the stairs to anticipate the clean chalices and/or ciborium. Server 1 will take the clean smaller chalices from the altar bowing before he turns to go to the credence table. Server 2 will take the clean ciborium from the altar and bow before turning to go to the credence table.
- c. After Server 2 sets the ciborium on the credence table, he immediately enters the sacristy to return to the Celebrants side of the altar. Server 2 will remain standing with the Crucifer at their chairs.
- d. Server 1 will take the clean larger chalice putting his hand on top of the pall, bowing to the altar before turning to return the chalice to the credence table.
- e. Server 1 will remain standing at his chair until looking to the Crucifer for the motion to sit in unison as The Priest return to the Celebrant's chair to sit.

I. Closing Prayers

- a. The Priest will stand, at this point all three servers should stand and the Server 2 should present the Priest with the Roman Missal for the Closing prayers. Please hold the book firmly so that the priest can open the book to the correct page.
- b. When The Priest closes the Roman Missal, Server 2 should return to his place and remain standing.

J. Recessional

- a. When the first words of the recessional hymn are sung the Servers should move towards the credence table. The Crucifer takes the Crucifix and Server 1 & 2 take the candles. They walk to center to the sanctuary and exit the sanctuary turning to face the altar with their toes touching the stair. The Crucifer should be in the middle.
- b. When Priest walks to the center of the Sanctuary in front of the altar he will genuflect and the servers will bow only their heads to the altar and tabernacle. As the Priest turns to the congregation the servers should also turn and slowly begin to walk down the main aisle.

After Mass

- A. The servers should return to the narthex with the Priest.
- B. The Priest may say, “Prosit.” and please respond, “Pro omnibus et singulis.”
When the congregation begins to leave Server 1 & 2 can enter the vesting room to replace alb on hangers and to extinguish the candles.
- C. The Crucifer should wait until most of the people exit the side aisle before walking back up the side aisle to replace the crucifix and extinguish the altar candles using the candle lighter.

D. Notes

- a. It is important to move in unison as much as possible. This will become easier as everyone obtains more experience in serving. It is important to become extremely familiar with the Order of the Mass so as to anticipate the next action to be taken.
- b. Altar servers should *never* genuflect while carrying the Sacramentals for the Mass.
- c. Servers should look straight ahead at the altar and not at the congregation. This helps the congregation to focus on the altar and not on what is going on in the nave.
- d. The goal of the server should be to increase the congregation’s reverence of the worship at the Mass.
- e. If the candles should go out during Mass, please take them, as discretely as possible, into the sacristy and relight them. Bring the lit candles back to the credence table and then take your appropriate place.