



St. Maximilian Kolbe
Catholic Church

Altar Server Manual - Updated Spring 2007

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for volunteering to serve at the altar of the Lord at St. Maximilian Kolbe! As altar servers, you play an important role in the celebration of Holy Mass, and are a valuable asset to the priest and the parish community. This packet is a rundown of the various responsibilities of the altar server and is primarily meant to help servers to serve Mass well. Remember that you are serving Almighty God at each Mass. Again, thanks for serving your parish and our Lord!

PRELIMINARY RULES

Although the duties of the altar server are many and varied, the most important responsibility of the altar server during Mass is **to pray!**

To be an altar server at St. Maximilian Kolbe, you must first have received the Sacrament of Reconciliation, made your First Communion, and be in 4th grade or above.

An altar server must attend every Mass they are scheduled for. If for some reason the server cannot attend the assigned Mass, it is the server's responsibility to find a replacement. If there is a problem finding a replacement, contact Carmen Arroyo at: altarservers@avaloncatholic.org

Please arrive 15 minutes before Mass begins. Upon arrival, the server should vest in alb and cincture (the rope).

Appropriate Attire: Dress as you would to go anywhere important. Male servers should dress in collared shirts, dark colored dress pants. Female servers should wear dresses, skirts, or some other appropriate attire. Blue jeans, beach attire, gym clothes and T-shirts are never to be worn at Mass. Such clothing is not appropriate dress for serving at the altar.

NO SLIP ONS, WORK BOOTS or FLIP-FLOPS. Appropriate dress shoes should be worn (preferably black shoes for male servers). All shoes must have a back. Also, black sneakers are allowed, but they must be SOLID black.

Everyone, including altar servers, should genuflect when crossing in front of the tabernacle, or entering a pew when Jesus is present, Body and Blood, in the Eucharist.

Servers must demonstrate the ability to make use of the "tools of the trade," such as matches, candle lighters, books and candles, etc.

JOB DESCRIPTION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Typically, there will be three servers assigned to a particular Mass on Sundays at both parishes. The three positions will be defined as the following:

- The Cross Bearer (also known as the Crucifer)
 - Server One

 - Server Two

The Cross Bearer: This is typically the older or more "seasoned" server, who carries the cross during the Entrance and Closing Processions. He or she will be responsible for also holding the book for the priest during the opening and closing prayers (a.k.a. the "*Let us Pray*" prayers). This server will also be responsible for lighting the candles before Mass, bringing the book to the altar during the preparation of gifts, taking the book off the altar after communion, and in the absence of the Deacon, setting the altar for communion. The Cross Bearer should supervise other servers, and will make sure everything is in its proper place before and after Mass.

Server One: This server is one of the candle bearers for the opening, Gospel, and closing processions. Server One will also be responsible for the following tasks: going down to the foot of the altar with the priest to receive the gifts, holding the gifts for the priest and deacon, assisting in the washing of the hands (by holding the bowl and towel), and extinguishing their own candle after mass.

Server Two: Like Server One, this server is a candle bearer for the opening, Gospel, and closing processions. Server Two will be responsible for the following tasks: assist in receiving the gifts at the foot of the altar with the priest, holding the water for the priest and deacon during preparation of the altar, pouring the water when the priest washes his hands, bringing the water back to the credence table after the priest washes his hands, and extinguishing their own candle after mass.

Please Note: On occasion, there will be a need for a fourth server to serve as an incense bearer on special liturgical occasions. This server will be responsible for lighting the incense, and disposing of the leftover charcoal after Mass.

THE ORDER OF MASS

Before Mass & Entrance Procession

All servers should be vested and ready to go 5 minutes before Mass.

The candles are lit by the Cross Bearer approximately 10 minutes before the start of Mass.

Typically, a brief prayer may be said before the start of Mass with the priest and other liturgical ministers.

The procession forms at the back of the pews, by the gifts table.

The order of procession will consist of the following: (1) Cross, (2) Servers One and Two holding the candles, the deacon (if present), and the priest.

In cases where there is an incense bearer, that server will lead the procession (ahead of the cross).

Please begin the procession as soon as singing begins. Please do not walk too quickly; **it is not the Boston Marathon**. A good pace is about 1 step per second.

Once at the altar, the Cross Bearer should proceed to place the crucifix in the proper stand. Then you return to the foot of the altar to wait for the other servers.

The Candle Bearers should proceed to place the candles on the altar. It is important for the two servers to place the candles in their holders **at the same time**. You then walk together to the foot of the altar and join the cross bearer for a profound bow before taking your seats.

The altar servers all sit in the first row on the left hand side of the sanctuary in front of the choir.

Opening Rite

After the procession, the servers stand at their respective places.

The Gloria will be recited or sung, except during Lent and Advent. At the end of the Gloria (at the line "Let Us Pray"), the **Cross Bearer** will approach the priest with the Sacramentary (the big red book) opened to the proper page for the opening prayer. **Remember to check with Father for the appropriate color ribbon.** Also, the height you hold the book is very important (you may need to rest it on your forehead.)

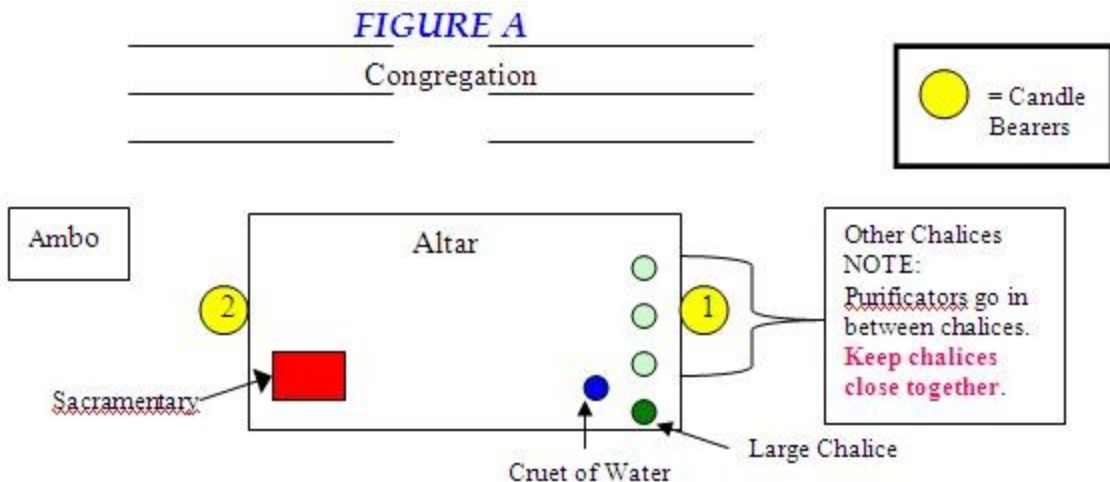
Keep the pages as flat as possible, and keep your fingers away from the text. When the priest is finished, the server will carry the book back with them to sit.

Liturgy of the Word

After the Opening Prayer, all the servers sit to listen attentively to the Word of God.

The candles are used for the Gospel procession. During the Alleluia, all stand. After the Deacon or Priest approaches the altar to pick up the Gospel, **Servers One and Two** to come forward with the processional candles to lead the deacon or priest to the pulpit. The servers will stand on opposite sides of the Gospel reader with the candle facing the book of Gospels. After the Gospel, the candle bearers retrace their steps, place the candles in the appropriate place and go to their seats. Again, it is important to move together. Think of it as a dance, where the timing is very important.

Offertory



Immediately after the Prayer of the Faithful is completed (and the people sit down and the collection begins), the **Cross Bearer** brings the Sacramentary to the altar, opened and place at the left hand side of the altar. **Check with Father about the color of the ribbon to use.**

At the same time: The Cross Bearer <if the Deacon is not there> will set the altar. **SEE FIGURE A.**

Servers One and Two will proceed with the deacon or priest to the front of the altar to receive the gifts. If you are handed the money basket, immediately turn around and place it in front of the altar.

When the priest goes to the altar to say the offertory prayers, **Servers One and Two** will **promptly** come to the altar with the gifts. Either the deacon or the priest will take them from you. Go immediately to the credence table **TOGETHER**, where **Server One** will get the towel and bowl for the washing of the hands. Remember, at ALL times, if you are walking, and not carrying anything, your hands must be folded prayerfully.

After the offertory prayers have been said, the priest will turn to his left, and **Servers One and Two** should come forward to the priest with the lavabo to wash his hands. (**Server One** should hold the towel and the bowl, and **Server Two** should pour the water.) After this action is completed, the servers should make a slight and reverent bow to the priest, return the items, including the water, to the credence table, and then return to their seat. **If no Deacon is present, Server Two should also retrieve the empty wine pitcher from the altar, and bring it to the credence table.**

Liturgy of the Eucharist

After the "Holy, Holy", all servers stand in place.

At the Sign of Peace, **the Cross Bearer** will take the Sacramentary off the altar and bring it back to their seat. **If no Deacon is present, the Cross Bearer should also bring the Communion bowls from the credence table and place them on the altar (on the same side where the Sacramentary was).**

Altar servers are first in line on the right side to receive Eucharist. Servers should make a slight bow before receiving the Eucharist.

End of Mass

The Cross Bearer will proceed with the opened Sacramentary to the priest for the prayer after communion. Again, this is at the "Let Us Pray." **Check with Father for the appropriate color ribbon to use.**

After the final blessing and dismissal, the Servers One and Two will immediately pick up the processional candles, along with the Cross Bearer and the cross, and proceed to the front of the altar waiting for the priest.

The closing procession will follow the same order for the servers.

The **Candle Bearers** will turn, at the same time, towards each other. <turn inwards>

The **Cross Bearer** turns the same way as the Father. You must pay attention to how the Father turns.

NOTE: No one turns until the Father turns.

Additional Things to Keep in Mind

After Mass, Servers One and Two extinguish the candles. Servers, please hang up albs and cinctures.

If only two servers are present, there will be no candles used. The **Cross Bearer** will still lead the procession, and the other server walks in procession directly in front of the deacon or priest. In this case, the **Cross Bearer** also assumes the duties of **Server One**. The other altar server will be **Server Two**. In rare cases of one server, the cross will be used, and the server will assume all duties as needed.

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS ALTAR SERVERS SHOULD KNOW

Alb – The full white garment worn by the priest, deacon, and the altar servers. The alb is symbolic of Baptism. The rope tied around the waist is called a **cincture**.

Altar - The place where the Eucharistic Sacrifice takes place. The altar is sacred and often contains relics of the saints.

Ablution Cup - covered dish of water on the side of the tabernacle which is used by the priest, deacon or extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist to wash their fingers after distributing Communion.

Ambo - The platform, lectern or pulpit from which the reading and homily are given.

Aspergillum - The holy water sprinkler.

Burse - A square container for holding the corporal. It is selected for the liturgical color of the day. Used corporals should always be placed in the proper container for sacred cloths after Mass.

Cassock - A long tunic-like garment which reaches from the neck to the heels and is worn by some servers and clergy.

Chalice - A cup of precious metal that holds the wine which becomes the Blood of Jesus after the consecration. All chalices should be placed in their places after Mass. If the chalices were left unpurified by the priest or deacon for some reason, they should be left out on the presentation table for purification by the priest or deacon. Never put an unpurified chalice away.

Chalice Veil (peplum) - A cloth covering used to hide the chalice and paten up to the offertory and after Communion. It is selected by the liturgical color for the service.

Ciborium - A large cup or container of precious metal with a cover of the same material which will hold the Body of Jesus after the consecration for distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful.

Corporal - A white linen cloth, usually with a cross in the center, used to protect any particles of the Precious Body and Blood of Jesus from falling to the altar cloth. It is always folded and unfolded so as to protect any particles from being lost. The corporal is like the body winding sheet used to hold the crucified body of Our Lord in the tomb.

Credence Table - The table in the sanctuary where the cruets, chalices and ciborium are kept before and after the Consecration.

Cruets - The vessels containing the water and wine used at Mass.

Lavabo - The pitcher of water used when the priest washes his hands at the end of the offertory and before the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Lectionary - The book of reading used for the Liturgy of the Word. It usually contains all the biblical reading used for the three-year Sunday cycle of reading and the two-year daily Mass readings.

Pall - A square piece of cardboard or plastic which is covered by linen and used to cover the chalice.

Paten - A small saucer shaped plate of precious metal that holds the Host. No lay person should ever touch the paten, so be very careful when handling it in your official duties.

Purificator - A linen cloth used by the priest or deacon to dry the chalice after washing and purifying it. Used purificators must always be placed in the proper container for sacred cloths.

Sacramentary - The book containing the prayers said by the priest during the Mass.

Sacrarium (piscina) - A sink with its drain going directly into the ground usually fitted with a cover and lock which is used for the disposal of the following: The sacred linen wash and rinse water, used holy water, used baptismal water and blessed ashes. No other use is permitted.

Stock - The metal containers used to hold the oil of the catechumen, the oil of chrism and the oil for anointing the sick.

Stoup - The holy water fountains or bowls at the entrances of the church.

Thurible - The special vessel which holds burning charcoal and into which incense is placed. The device holding the incense is called the "boat."

ALTAR SERVER'S PRAYER

Open 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 more worthily at your holy altar.

O Mary, Mother of Christ the High Priest, 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