



Saint Mary Magdalen Altar Server Instructions



To be an altar server is a special honor and a great privilege in the Catholic Church. Altar servers today can trace their roots or genealogy to the order of Acolyte, a ministry that once was reserved only for those who were going to be ordained priests. One can look upon being an altar server as a special and unique ministry by which you, a young person, can help to spread the word and the love of Christ through your actions and words. It is not difficult to be an altar server, but there are some things that you must know and remember.

What Certain Things Are Called:

Alcove	The area immediately to the left and right of the sanctuary. The alcove is a walkway.
Alb	The white gown that the priest and deacons wears under their vestments.
Ambo or Lectern	Where the lector stands to read the Scripture readings and the priest or deacon proclaims the Gospel.
Aspergillum	The liturgical instrument used to sprinkle people and objects with holy water.
Boat	A small liturgical vessel containing the incense that will be used with the thurible.
Cassock	The black garment that you will wear. This is the same as what Father wears when he wants to go casual.
Chalice	A cup that Father will use to consecrate the wine into the Blood of Christ.
Chasuble	The outer garment that a priest wears at Mass.
Ciborium	A cup, which looks similar to a chalice, but is used to store consecrated hosts in the Tabernacle. A Ciborium has a lid where as a chalice does not.
Cincture	A belt made out of cloth worn around your waist; it acts like a belt.
Corporal	A small cloth that sits on top of the altar where Father places the chalice, paten, and flagon. Its purpose is to catch any small crumbs of the Blessed Sacrament that may fall onto the altar.
Credence Table	The table that has the chalices, Communion bowls or patens, finger bowl, water cruet and finger towel.
Cruet	The little pitcher that hold either water or wine for use during the Mass.
Dalmatic	The outer garment that a deacon wears at Mass.
Finger Towel	A towel that Father will use to dry his hands.
Flagon or Flask	The large glass decanter that holds the wine at Mass.
Lectionary (Book of the Gospels)	A large red book that contains the Scripture readings from which the lectors reads. (The Book of the Gospels is a special book that contains only the Gospel readings.)
Offertory Table	The table that is placed in the main aisle of the church where we place the bread and wine that will be consecrated during Mass. The gifts are all the gifts that we bring to the Lord during our life.
Paten	A small dish or bowl that holds the bread that will be used during Mass.
Purificators	The small towels that are used to clean the chalices during the distribution of the Precious Blood at communion
Roman Missal	The large red book from which Father prays during Mass.
Sacristan	The person who takes care of the sacred vessels and vestments used at Mass.

Sacristy	The portion of the Church building where the priests, deacons, servers, and lectors meet to vest and prepare themselves for Mass.
Sanctuary	The area of the Church that contains the altar and the ambo.
Surplus	The white outer garment that goes over the cassock. When you are wearing both the cassock and surplus it is referred to as being in "Choir Dress".
Thurible	A metal vessel for the ceremonial burning of incense. The thurible is also known as a censer.
Thurifer	The one who carries the thurible and boat when needed.
Vestibule	The area of the church building where people gather before and after Mass. The vestibule is not technically part of the church proper.

Basic Information:

When you are scheduled to minister as an altar server, you should arrive at least ten (10) minutes before Mass time, if not sooner. On special occasions, you may be instructed to be present even earlier. The priest or deacon will tell you of these special circumstances.

If you can not be at a Mass at which you are schedule to serve, it is **your responsibility to find a substitute** to take your place.

Talking is permitted in the sacristy, but one must keep the volume of their voice down. Remember that there are people in Church who are praying.

Your appearance should be as if you were going to be visiting someone and doing something very important – because you are! You will be with Christ, and you will be serving at his table. Hair should be combed; hands and fingernails should be clean; shoestrings should be tied.

Please remember that, as a server, you could serve at other parishes, maybe for a wedding of a family member, funeral. They may do things a little bit differently than what we do at Saint Mary Magdalen. We call the things we do **Rubrics** – which means "**Red**" which is the color of the instructions are printed in when you follow the Roman Missal. Just because they do things differently it does not make them wrong and our parish right. Things like how big the sanctuary is and what traditions they have help to determine what is done at our parish as well as other parishes.

What Should I Do Before Mass?

Proceed to the hallway where the cassocks and surpluses are hung. Find one that fits you correctly. The bottom of the cassock should be right at your ankles. You may want to try a few on to find out which size fits the best but, remember, you are growing and, from time to time, you will have to see which size fits the best.

The various vessels and items that are needed at Mass will normally be prepared and ready for you to put out on the various tables, that is the credence table and the offertory table. The priest, deacon, or sacristan will pour the wine into the flagon, put the bread into the paten, have the purificators out, and ready for you to put in their proper places. At times, the priest or deacon may have already done this himself. **Please ask the priest or deacon if there is anything that needs to be done.**

Make sure that the following items are on the credence table.

- ◇ Water cruet
- ◇ Finger Towel
- ◇ Water dish
- ◇ Father's chalice
- ◇ Two gold cups with purificators inside the cup.

You will also need to make sure the following are on the offertory table:

- ◇ Flagon of wine
- ◇ Paten with altar bread

You will also need to get the candles from the holders next to the altar and bring them back to the vestibule before Mass so that they can be carried in during the entrance procession. There are times during the year that you will not carry the candles in procession. When that time occurs, someone will tell you.

What Do I Do During Mass?

- At the beginning of Mass, we process into Church in the following:
 - Thurifer (if one has been assigned)
 - Crucifix (if one has been assigned)
 - Altar Servers
 - Parents and child that may be baptized at that Mass.
 - Deacon carrying the Book of Gospels
 - Priest
- ◇ Walk towards the altar; proceed up three steps and move to the right or left still standing in front of the altar and wait.
- ◇ If there is a deacon at the Mass, he will move to the right, so give him some room.
- ◇ Father will come up the step, and then he will genuflect. If you are holding something, you simply bow your head.
- ◇ The Deacon and Father will walk around the altar and after the Book of Gospels is put down, they will reverence the altar by kissing it. **NEW: All servers continue standing where you are until the priest and deacon have completed reverencing the altar. They will then proceed to their chairs.**
- ◇ **NEW: After the priest and deacon have referenced the altar by kissing it, you then put the candles in the holders. If you are holding the thurible or the cross, you then can put them away.** Then proceed to the chairs.
- ◇ The book server that sits in the freestanding chair directly to the left of the priest will hold the Roman Missal so the priest can say the Collect. Your cue to stand in front of Father is when he says, **“Let us pray.”**
- ◇ When the prayer is done, the server holding the Roman Missal puts it down on the little table next to the chair. Priest, deacon and servers then **sit**.
- ◇ After the lectors are finished reading, the organist will begin the music for the Gospel Acclamation. When the music begins, **all stand**. **NEW: After the Deacon or Father starts walking towards the main altar to get the Book of Gospels, the servers will follow them to the altar, they will get the candles out of the holders and go to the left side of the altar (as you face the altar) to escort the Deacon or Priest to the ambo to proclaim the Gospel. One server will be on the right and left side of the ambo. When the Gospel is finished, put the candles back into the stand and then return to your chair and sit.**
- ◇ When the petitions are completed, the book server brings the Roman Missal to the altar and places it on the altar. The bell server goes to the credence table and begins bringing up the cups, and if there are any extra ciboriums with host in them. **NEW: You will hand the items to either the Acolyte (a seminarian), the Deacon or Father. You do not place any items on the altar yourself.** When the altar is finally set, stand next to the credence table staying inside the sanctuary and wait for Father to stand and to receive the gifts. Go the bottom of the steps to accept the gifts from Father.
- ◇ **NEW: The servers that received the wine or host will take it to the altar and wait for the deacon or priest to accept it.**
- ◇ The priest will then wash his hands. **NEW: One server will hold the cruet of water and the water bowl. When the priest puts his hands above the water bowl, the server will pour a little water on them. The other server will hold the finger towel that the priest will use to dry his hands by folding their hands as if in prayer with the towel under the thumbs. When he hands it back to you, hold your thumbs up so Father can place the towel in under your thumbs. Take the towel, and place it back on the credence table. **DO NOT PUT THE TOWEL IN THE BOWL**.**
- ◇ **Kneel** when the Holy, Holy, Holy is completed. **(Be sure to sing this and all other songs!)**

- ◇ During the consecration, when Father elevates the Body and the Blood of Christ, the bell server will ring the bell that is on the steps. When you are finished with the bells, please keep the bells in the location that is marked "**PLACE BELLS HERE**".
- ◇ After the Amen, before the Lord's Prayer, **stand**. Please note that when you stand, do not use your hands to push up from the step into the standing position; rather, rise by lifting one knee and then the other. **(Be sure to pray this and all other prayers!)**
- ◇ After the Lamb of God is finished, **kneel**.
- ◇ **NEW: After Father receives communion and then drinks the Blood of Christ and puts the chalice down on the altar, go immediately to the area where you stand to receive communion.** Stand to the right of the extraordinary ministers. When you have received Communion, the book server retrieves the Roman Missal from the altar, and both servers return to their original chairs and **sit**. **NEW: Do Not Remove any vessels from the altar yourself.** When the deacon or priest returns to the altar to remove the sacred vessels, please go and assist by standing at the bottom of the step to receive the items that need to be taken to the credence table.
- ◇ After Communion, the priest and deacon will sit and will say a prayer of thanks to the Lord. When the priest says, "**Let us pray,**" the book server **picks up Roman Missal and stands in front of the priest** so he can pray the Prayer after Communion. The bell server also stands. The priest may want the book server to stay there so he can give a solemn blessing from the Roman Missal. The priest will close the book when the prayers are finished, the book server then can put it on the little table.
- ◇ The priest and deacon will then proceed to the altar; please follow them.
- ◇ Watch Father, and, when he genuflects, you also will genuflect. Turn around, and you will lead everyone out of the Sanctuary down the main aisle. As a courtesy, offer to take Father's and the deacon's hymnal if they have one, so they can go to the exits to greet the people.

What Do I Do After Mass?

- ◇ Extinguish the candles using the candlesnuffer.
- ◇ Bring the items that are on the credence table back to the sacristy. **NEW: The sacred vessels go on the counter where Father and Deacon vest. Glass goes in the "kitchen". Rinse out the wine flagon, finger bowl and water cruet and place them in the dish rack.**
- ◇ Take off your cassock and surplis, and **hang them back up** on the hangars.
- ◇ You then may leave knowing that you have helped the people to experience the love and the presence of God in the most special way possible!