



Holy Cross Catholic Church

Altar Server Reference Guide



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Introduction



This manual is intended for the instruction of altar servers at **Holy Cross Catholic Church** in Kernersville, North Carolina.

For the Holy Cross youth who aspire to be an Altar Server, please read this manual to fully understand the commitment involved in serving at mass. Children who want to participate as an altar server during mass must be willing and interested to be involved in this ministry. Similarly, parents must take an active role in supporting their child in this ministry by ensuring that their child arrives to their assigned Mass on time.

For experienced altar servers, please use this manual as a *GUIDE* to refresh and sharpen your skills. Your dedication to this ministry is reflected in your continued commitment to serve Jesus and our Parish.

Thank you for answering God's call to serve!

Eligibility & Training

There are two altar server positions;

- Candle Bearer
- Cross Bearer

- ✚ Boys and girls who have received their First Communion & First Reconciliation (Confession) are eligible and encouraged to become an altar server. Each candidate must complete a **Training session** before serving (check bulletin for sessions available throughout the year).
- ✚ '**Shadowing**' is the next step in learning how to altar serve properly. An altar server candidate will shadow the actions of an experienced altar server for 3 to 4 masses, or until he/she feels comfortable. Participating as the fourth altar server, they will fully dress and take part in the mass celebration. This opportunity allows the soon-to-be altar server to experience the mass on the altar, without the pressure of performing altar server duties.
- ✚ The **Candle Bearer** is the first position available to 'beginner' altar servers.
- ✚ After serving for 1-2 years as a Candle Bearer, you may request to serve as a **Cross Bearer**. Since Cross Bearers are trained with the duties of the Candle Bearer, they are equipped to provide guidance to less experienced altar servers who choose to participate in this important ministry.

Sacristy Room

Altar Server Duties



Sacristy closet



Processional Cross



Gather in Prayer

1. Arrive at the church at least 15 minutes before mass is scheduled to begin.
2. Confirm that two Candle Bearers and one Cross Bearer are present to serve at mass. If not, alert an adult in the Sacristy.
3. If one of the Candle Bearers is not present, the Cross Bearer should take the Cross to the altar (right side of altar), place it in its stand and return to the Sacristy. The Cross Bearer will take on the responsibilities of the missing Candle Bearer.
4. Choose **alb** (robe), **cincture** (rope-like belt), and **crucifix** (necklace) to wear during mass. These can be found in the Sacristy closet (right side of room).
5. Join in prayer with the Priest, Deacon, Lectors, Eucharistic ministers, and anyone else who will be included in the Entrance Procession.
6. About 5 minutes before mass starts, the Candle Bearers walk down the center aisle, bow before the altar and retrieve the candles from their holders. Return to the back of the church, remembering to bow at the front of the altar again.
7. Cross Bearer picks up the Processional Cross which is hanging in the Sacristy.
8. Gather at the back of the church with the Priest & Deacon.

Entrance Procession

Altar Server Duties



1. Line up at the Baptismal Font. Candle Bearers will each carry one candle. Cross Bearer will carry the Processional Cross.
2. Once the choir begins to sing, the Cross Bearer will lead the procession; the Cross Bearer walks down the center of the aisle and the Candle Bearers follow. The LEFT Candle Bearer walks down the left-side of the aisle and the RIGHT Candle Bearer walks down the right-side of the aisle. Remember to walk slowly and reverently.
3. The Cross Bearer will stop at the bottom of the altar, bow head, then walk onto the altar and place the cross in its stand.
4. The Candle Bearers stop as they reach the bottom of the altar, then move slightly to one side to allow the Priest to follow.
5. When the Priest bows, everyone bows. The LEFT Candle Bearer enters the altar on the left side, the RIGHT Candle Bearer enters on the right-side of the altar.
6. Each Candle Bearer places their candle in the candle holder, then slowly proceeds to their seat. As the LEFT Candle Bearer walks across the altar, remember to stop and bow toward the Tabernacle. Then proceed to your seat (behind the column). The RIGHT Candle Bearer walks straight to the bench in front of the column, closest to the assembly. REMAIN STANDING.
7. The Cross Bearer is responsible for the Roman Missal (book).

Greeting *Altar Server Duties*



1. The Priest begins the mass with the Sign of the Cross.
2. Priest asks us to recall our sins, the Penitential Rite, and asks God for forgiveness. Everyone responds 'Lord have Mercy, Christ have Mercy, Lord have Mercy'.
3. The Gloria prayer will be recited or sung, except during Lent.
4. After the Gloria, the Priest will say, "Let us pray..." which is the cue for the Cross Bearer to bring the Roman Missal (book) over to the Priest. Stand directly in front of the Priest so that the Priest can look out at the congregation.
5. After the Priest has finished reading the prayer, the Cross Bearer will close the Roman Missal and place it on the small table located between the Priest's chair and the Cross Bearer's chair.
6. Everyone will be seated to listen to the Liturgy of the Word.



Liturgy of the Word

Altar Server Duties



participate
through
word & song

1. Altar Servers have **minimal duties** during this part of the mass. Altar Servers need only to respond in word and song along with the congregation.
2. The **First Reading** is read by the Lector.
3. The **Psalm** is led by the Choir and sung by all.
4. The **Second Reading** is read by the Lector.
5. The **Gospel Acclamation**, the Alleluia, is led by the choir and sung by all; STAND.
6. The **Gospel** is read by the Priest or Deacon; at the end of the reading, respond 'Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ'; SIT.
7. The **Homily** is spoken by the Priest.
8. The **Creed** prayer follows the Homily. The Priest will stand, which will prompt everyone to STAND and recite the prayer.
9. The Lector or Deacon will read the **Prayers of the Faithful**; the petitions of the church. Everyone responds 'Lord, hear our prayer'. When finished, everyone will respond 'Amen'; SIT.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Altar Server Duties



carry tray to the altar



carry pitcher to the altar

1. Offertory collection will begin. The ushers will walk forward with the baskets to collect money.
2. The Candle Bearers go to the back of the church to lead the procession of the gifts. Remember to bow before the altar.
3. The Cross Bearer places the Roman Missal (book) on the left-side of the altar, then walks over to the credence table to begin setting the altar table. First, the tray is brought over from the credence table and placed on the altar. Second, the pitcher is placed on the altar. Once the priest has finished, place the pitcher back on the Credence Table.
4. Similar to the Entrance Procession, the altar servers will stop as they reach the bottom of the altar, then stand on either side of the priest. The Priest will accept the gifts and then give the gifts to the altar servers to bring onto the altar.
5. In no particular order, each altar server will accept one of the gifts from the Priest. Likely, the Deacon will place the Bread on the altar table; one of the servers will place the Wine on the altar table; another server will place the Basket on the floor in front of the altar. Once the gifts are properly placed, the Candle Bearers proceed to the Credence Table to assist with preparing the altar.
6. The Priest will carry the Communion for the Sick onto the altar.
7. If the Deacon is not present, the Candle Bearer must be prepared to handle the pitcher on the altar.

Liturgy of the Eucharist (continued)

Altar Server Duties



Priest washes his hands and prays, as one Candle Bearer holds the bowl and the other Candle Bearer pours water from the pitcher.

8. One of the Candle Bearers carries the bowl toward the altar.
9. The other Candle Bearer will carry the pitcher and towel toward the altar. Remember to unfold the wash towel and place it over one arm. Then, with the other arm, hold the pitcher.
10. When the Priest finishes preparing the altar, he will turn and take a step toward the Candle Bearers.
11. The Candle Bearer, who is holding the pitcher, will pour the water over the Priest's hands, collecting the water in the bowl.
12. Let the Priest take the towel. When he places the towel back on your arm, bow to him and return to the Credence Table together.
13. When the Priest has finished drying his hands, the Candle Bearers walk back to the Credence Table, together.
14. The Candle Bearers will place the towel, bowl and pitcher gently on the Credence Table.
15. Both Candle Bearers will return to their seat, bowing in front of the Tabernacle as they walk across the altar.

Eucharistic Prayer

Altar Server Duties



When does the Cross Bearer ring the bells?



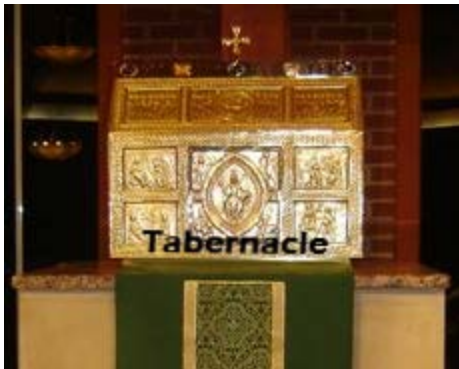
- ✚ Ring the bells when the Priest calls upon the Holy Spirit to descend upon our gifts. Watch the Priest as he prays and holds his **hands, palms down, over the gifts.**
- ✚ Ring the bells when the host (bread) is raised and **AFTER** the Priest says, '**... which will be given up for you.**' The Priest will genuflect which is a reminder for you to ring the bells.
- ✚ Ring the bells when the chalice is raised and **AFTER** the Priest says, '**... Do this in memory of me.**' The Priest will again genuflect which is a reminder for you to ring the bells.

Eucharistic Prayer (continued)

Altar Server Duties



The Priest offers a Sign of Peace to each altar server



1. As the assembly begins to pray the 'Our Father', the altar servers may hold hands together.
2. After the Lord's Prayer, offer each other the Sign of Peace. The Priest may also offer the altar servers 'Peace'.
3. After the choir sings 'Lamb of God', line-up around the back of the altar in preparation for receiving the Eucharist. Other adults who participate as Eucharistic ministers will also be approaching the altar area.
4. As you prepare to receive Jesus' Body & Blood, remember to bow and say 'Amen' before receiving.
5. Return to your designated kneeler. You may sit in your seat **AFTER** the Priest has placed Jesus in the Tabernacle.
6. Sit until the Priest says, 'Let us pray'.

Exit Procession

Altar Server Duties



1. The Cross Bearer is responsible for holding the Roman Missal for the Priest as he reads the 'Prayer after Communion' (similar to the actions required for the opening prayer).
2. When the Priest finishes the 'Prayer after Communion', the Cross Bearer will close the Roman Missal and return it to the small table located between the Priest's chair and the Cross Bearer's chair.
3. After the Priest says, 'The mass has ended. Go in peace.', the Candle Bearers will remove the candles from their holders.
4. The Cross Bearer will remove the Processional Cross from its stand and proceed to the bottom of the altar.
5. The altar servers stand behind the Priest as he genuflects in front of the altar.
6. For safety reasons, Candle Bearers and Cross Bearers should ***not bow*** or genuflect when carrying crosses, sacred vessels, books, or candles.

Sacristy Room

Altar Server Duties



blow-out candles
and
place candles back on the altar



1. As the Candle Bearers approach the Sacristy room, they should extinguish their candles.
2. Cross Bearer returns the processional cross to its stand in the Sacristy room.
3. Altar servers remove their robes and hang them neatly in the Sacristy closet.
4. Place the crucifix and cincture (rope-like belt) on the hooks, located on the left-side of the Sacristy closet.
5. The Candle Bearers should return the unlit candles to the altar (see picture on left).

Responsibilities

- ✠ An altar server performs all assigned duties with **ATTENTION, DIGNITY, and RESPECT** because they are serving in the presence of Our Lord.
- ✠ Altar servers are scheduled to serve on a monthly basis. **When altar servers cannot be present for their scheduled assignment, they must arrange for a replacement.**
- ✠ The three primary positions during the mass are standing, sitting, and kneeling. In any of these positions, altar servers should maintain a straight formal posture. In the standing and kneeling positions, their hands should be held in the praying position. When sitting, altar servers should place hands on their lap or at their side.
- ✠ Make sure that the candles are lit, bread, wine, water, towels, bowl, prayer book, and any other sacramentals are in their proper place.
- ✠ An altar server should know the entire Order of the Mass, all the responses (Amen, Thanks be to God, etc.) and the principal prayers of the Mass (the Gloria, Creed, etc). Each server should fully participate in the mass through words, actions, and song. Also, please take the time to memorize these prayers if they do not already know them.
- ✠ Altar servers should not leave the sanctuary after the start of mass for any reason except bathroom emergencies, illness, or when directed by the Priest.
- ✠ Wear comfortable shoes; preferably black, brown, or white. NO flip flops, Crocs, or distracting shoes.
- ✠ When choosing from the selection of robes (albs), please choose a robe that extends to the tops of your shoes.
- ✠ Altar servers should have a neat appearance with combed hair. Recommend that girls wear their hair up so that the lit candles do not become a safety hazard.



Glossary of Terms

Alb - white robe worn by liturgical ministers

Altar - table for the sacrifice of the mass

Ambo - stand from which the Scriptures are read

Boat - container which holds the Incense

Book of the Gospel - the book containing the Gospels

Chalice - cup for holding the Precious Blood

Chasuble - the Priest's outer vestment; color corresponds to the liturgical season

Ciboria - container holding the Sacred Host

Cincture - rope-like belt

Corporal - white linen cloth for the Altar

Credence Table - small table for holding the sacred vessels and books

Cruet - small container holding water or wine

Glossary of Terms (continued)

Finger Towel - towel for drying the Priest's hands

Lectionary - Book of Scripture readings

Paschal Candle- large, white Easter candle

Pitcher/Bowl- items used for washing the Priest's hands

Presider's Chair - chair for the priest-celebrant

Processional Cross - cross used to lead processions

Roman Missal –book containing prayers and instructions for the celebration of the Mass

Sacristy - room for storing items for Mass

Stole - vestment worn over Priest's shoulders

Tabernacle - the container which holds the Blessed Sacrament

Thurible - container which holds the lit charcoal

If you have any questions, please contact our Altar Server Coordinator.

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