



Manual for Altar Servers

“There is no higher dignity than to serve Christ.”

-Saint Ambrose, Father and Doctor of the Church

ST. PHILIP NERI CHURCH

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Welcome!

Dear Server,

Thank you for your generous service to Saint Philip Neri Church! Your service at the Lord's Altar is an expression of your faith in Jesus and your love for Him and His people.

In the Gospel of St. Mark, Jesus tells us that He "did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45). In Jesus, we see the ultimate meaning of love and service, as He came down to us from Heaven and gave His Life for us on the Cross so that we may live and enjoy Heaven with Him forever! This love that Jesus has for us is always available to us. As Catholics, we have the great privilege of receiving Jesus' love in the Sacraments. In the Sacrament of Baptism, we are drawn into the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as we become children of God. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we receive Jesus' loving forgiveness for the times we sin. In the Sacrament of Confirmation, we receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit, Who is the Love between the Father and the Son.

The Sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist is the ultimate Sacrament of God's love, since in this Sacrament, God gives us His *very* self – His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity! At every Mass, Jesus, through His priests, shares His love with us through the Holy Eucharist. The love that Jesus shows and gives to us on the Cross is actually made present when the priest consecrates the bread and the wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. What a great blessing, then, it is to be at Mass! What a great blessing to serve at the altar during Mass!

Since Jesus Himself is present at Mass, especially in the Holy Eucharist, serving at Mass is a responsibility which should not be taken lightly. As a server, you have the great responsibility of helping the priest as he celebrates Mass as well as helping the congregation better experience Mass through your reverence in the sanctuary. While this is a great responsibility that you have, you need not be afraid. Jesus will help you as you serve at the altar. All you need to do is turn to Him in prayer, which is why it is very important to pray to Jesus before, during, and after Mass.

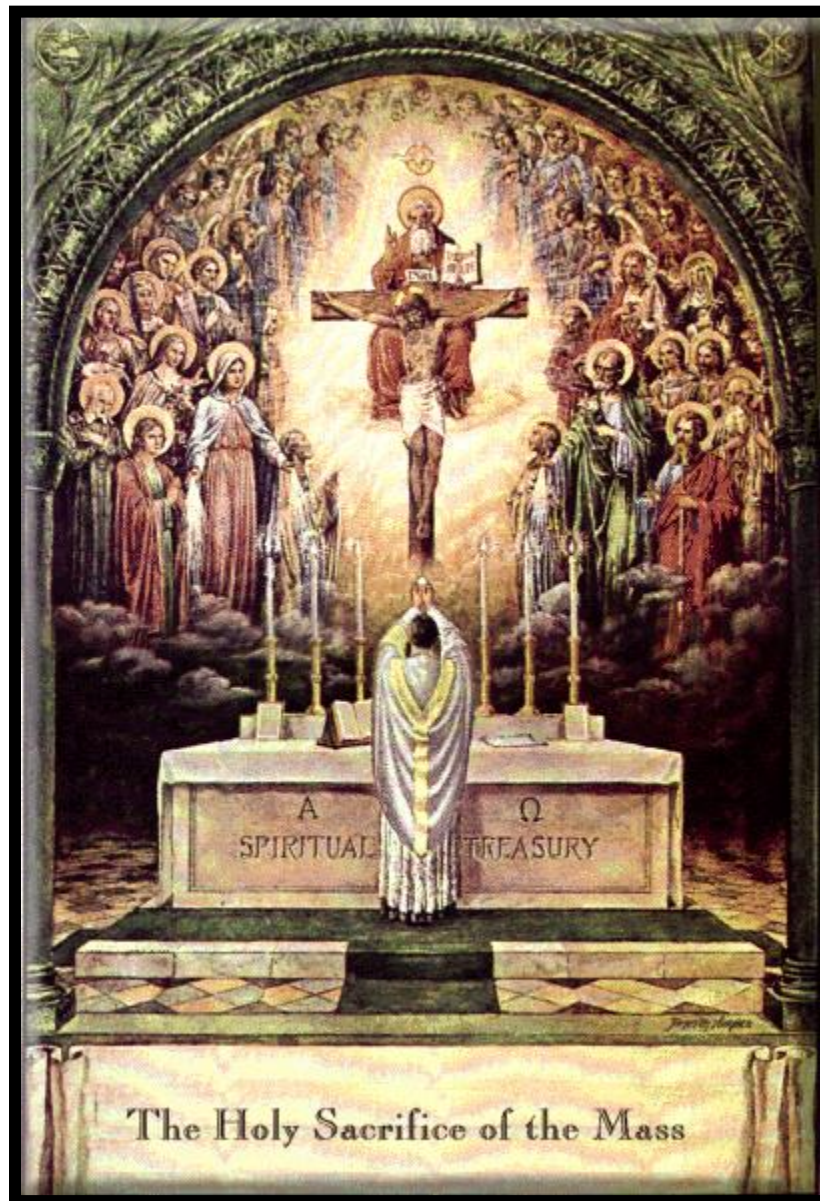
The parish clergy and staff are most willing to help you as well with any questions or concerns you may have. Father Ianelli, Coordinator of Altar Servers, will contact you regarding practices times and scheduling.

Through the intercession of Saint Philip Neri, may the Lord bless you abundantly in your service at the Altar of the Lord!

Sincerely in Christ Jesus,
Father Ianelli

Prayer Before Serving Mass

Heavenly Father, as I prepare to assist You at Your altar, I declare my faith in You. At this Mass, keep me from distractions. Let me remember that in assisting the priest I am assisting Jesus in offering You the merits of His passion and death. I thank You for allowing me the opportunity to give my service to You. At this Mass, I join with your Priest in offering You the sacred Body and Blood of my Savior, Jesus Christ, Your Son. May my sharing the Divine Food in Holy Communion bring me eternal salvation. Amen.



Notes for Decorum

As an altar server, it is very important to perform your duties with dignity and reverence, since such a performance will better help the priest and the congregation to enter into the Mass.

Proper hygiene (combed hair) and clothing is important as well. Good dress pants (boys or girls) and knee-length skirts (girls) should be worn as well as good dress shoes. **NO** shorts, sweatpants, or sneakers are to be worn while serving Mass. (NOTE: the only exception would be if a server, while school is in session, has gym class on a particular day).

Please hang any coats or jackets on the coat hanger rack next to the altar server vesting closet.

When you are in the procession, it very important to keep your hands folded if you are not carrying something.

Since you are in the sanctuary, “the Holy of Holies,” it is very important to always keep your hands folded when you are standing and not carrying anything in your hands. When sitting, you should sit upright, not slouched, and keep the palms of your hands on your lap.

You should also show proper reverence if you are walking into/out of the sanctuary before or after Mass. This is done by a simple genuflection on your right knee.

After Mass, make sure you hang your alb *neatly* back on the hanger and in size order.

Since you are the member of a “crew” of servers, it is important to look out for and help each other. First and foremost, **PRAY** for each other. If you are scheduled to serve at a Mass but are unable to attend, it is your responsibility to find someone to fill in for you. If someone you are serving with is unsure about what to do, be patient with that server and kindly show him/her what is to be done. If you are both unsure, do not be afraid to ask the priests and deacon about what is to be done. Encourage other servers and do not be afraid to compliment them for a job well done. There is absolutely **NO** place for teasing, bullying, or bringing other servers down.

Finally, be positive and joyful since you are doing God’s work!

Saint Philip Neri Ceremonies Crew

Toward the end of 7th grade, some altar servers will be chosen by Father Ianelli to serve on the Ceremonies Crew. Members of the Ceremonies Crew serve from the end of 7th grade to the end of 8th grade. The Ceremonies Crew serves at special Masses or Liturgies throughout the year, such as Holy Week, Confirmation, Forty Hours, Masses with a Bishop, as well as Weddings and Funerals. They also help train new altar servers as well. Father Ianelli will select servers for the Ceremonies Crew based on a servers’ **dedication** (serving at Masses in which he/she is scheduled to serve) and **ability** (reverently serving at the altar and awareness of responsibilities while serving).

Serving Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation

Preparation before Mass

Altar servers are to arrive at the church *promptly* **15 minutes** before Mass begins. Once you enter the church, go directly to the altar server vesting room, which is located next to the sacristy (where the priests and deacons vest).

Once you enter the altar serving vesting room, sign your name in the appropriate date and time slot for the Mass you are serving in the binder on the countertop.

If you are substituting for another server, please write “sub.” If you are coming from the congregation because a scheduled server has not arrived, please write “F.C.” (abbreviation for “From Congregation.”)

Albs [white vestment] are hung in the closet. Select an alb that fits properly [reaches down to your ankles], then select a *cincture* [belt], and finally select a sash which corresponds to the liturgical day.

After you have vested, the candle-bearer will light the processional candles (candles on each side of the altar). The cross/Missal-bearer will place the wine cruet and ciborium on the gift table in the back of the church.

If you are scheduled to be the cross-bearer, go to the sacristy next to the chapel and take the processional cross off of the holder. If you are a candle-bearer, go to the sacristy next to the chapel and pick up one of the candles. Once the cross and candles have been obtained, wait, quietly and prayerfully, for the priest, deacon, and lector(s) to arrive to the sacristy next to the chapel. You may place the bases of the cross and torches on the floor until you gather with the priest, deacon, and lectors for the prayer before Mass. **NOTE: If only one server is present, that server will process with the Processional Cross. If only two servers are present, then the candles will not be carried in. In this case, only the Processional Cross will be carried in.**

Entrance Procession

After the prayer before Mass, line up for the procession and proceed to the main entrance of the church. The order for procession is as follows:

candle-bearer cross-bearer/Missal-bearer candle-bearer
lector
deacon
priest

The cross-bearer and candle-bearers will begin the procession once the **singing begins**. Proceed at a slow, dignified pace down the center aisle.

When the cross-bearer reaches the base of the sanctuary, bow and go *immediately* (do **not** wait for the other servers, lectors, deacon, and priest) to the left of the ambo (place where the Readings of the Mass are read) where the stand for the processional cross is located. Once the cross is on the stand, pick up the Liturgical Notebook (binder) and stand with it in the corner until you bring it over toward the priest for the Introductory Rite and *Collect* (prayer right before the readings are read).

When the candle-bearers reach the base of the sanctuary, bow together and go *immediately* toward each side of the altar and place the candles in the stands. Then go and stand in your place in the sanctuary (right side of the sanctuary).

Seating

Three chairs are placed on the right side of the sanctuary.

When standing/sitting on the right side of the sanctuary, the order is as follows:

priest	deacon	[wall]
		cross/Missal-bearer
		candle-bearer
		candle-bearer

Cross/Missal-bearer

The cross/Missal-bearer has two responsibilities. First, he/she carries the processional cross at the beginning and the end of Mass. Second, he/she carries the Liturgical Notebook (binder) as well as the Roman Missal (large red book) for the priest celebrating the Mass.

As mentioned above, the cross/Missal-bearer will get the processional cross before Mass. He/she will then place the cross on the stand in the sanctuary at the beginning of Mass.

After the cross has been placed in the sanctuary, he/she will then go to the table on the left corner of the sanctuary, get the Liturgical Notebook and go directly to the presider's chair (chair where the priest celebrating the Mass sits).

The cross/Missal-bearer holds the Liturgical Notebook in front of the priest **three** times during the Mass.

The **first time** is at the beginning of the Mass when the entrance hymn ends. He/she holds the Liturgical Notebook from the Sign of the Cross through the *Collect* (prayer right before the readings are read).

The **second time** is after the homily. Bring the Liturgical Notebook over to the priest for the Profession of Faith (the Creed) and remain standing in front of the priest until the closing prayer of the Prayer of the Faithful.

The **third time** is after the Communion Rite for the Post-Communion Prayer. Bring the Liturgical Notebook over to the priest and remain standing in front of the priest from the beginning of the prayer through the final Blessing.

The Cross/Missal-bearer also leads the faithful who are carrying the gifts to the sanctuary. After the Prayer of the Faithful, the Cross/Missal-bearer places the Liturgical Notebook on the credence table and then goes to the back of the church while the people who are presenting the gifts gather. When the Cross/Missal-bearer arrives to the front of the sanctuary, he/she bows to the priest and then stands with the other servers to receive the gifts.

After the final Blessing, place the Liturgical Notebook back on the stand and take up the processional cross from its holder (left side of the ambo). Go to the center isle and stand a few feet from the bottom step of the sanctuary in *single-file* order. Just as in the beginning of Mass, cross/Missal-bearer will lead the procession. Once the priest genuflects, bow your head and turn around to lead the procession back to the Narthex (main entrance of the church). Once you have entered the Narthex, turn around and face the priest for the *Prosit* (the prayer after Mass).

Candle-bearers

As mentioned above, the candle-bearers will get the candles from the sacristy next to the chapel before Mass begins.

When the candle-bearers reach the base of the sanctuary during the procession, bow together and go *immediately* toward each side of the altar and place the candles in the stands. Then go and stand in your place in the sanctuary (right side of the sanctuary).

After the closing prayer of the Prayer of the Faithful, the candle-bearers will go to the opposite side of the sanctuary for the preparation of the altar.

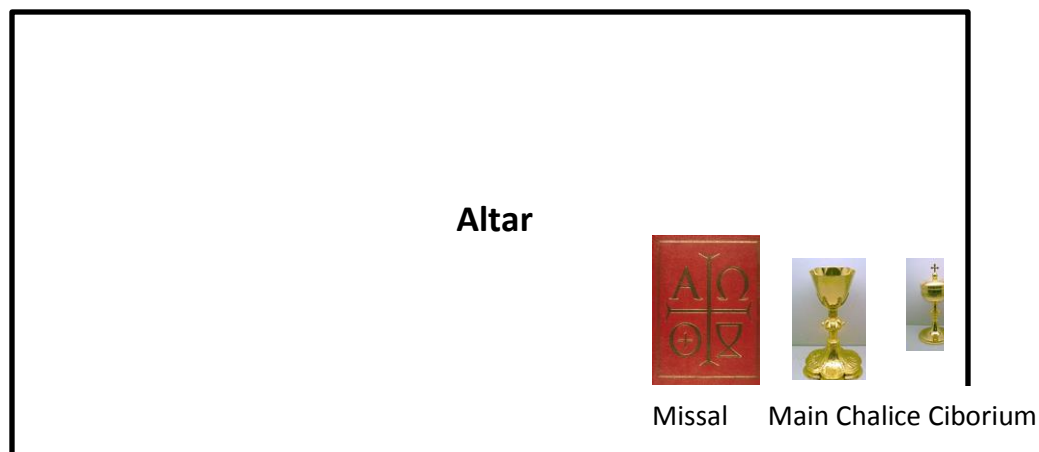
Preparation of the Altar

During the offertory collection, the altar servers will prepare the altar for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Once the Prayer of the Faithful concludes, the cross/Missal-bearer will place the

Liturgical Notebook back on the credence table, pick up the Roman Missal, and bring the Missal to the altar. He/she will then place the Missal on the altar and then go to the back of the church to lead the gifts bearers to the sanctuary.

While the cross/Missal-bearer is placing the Missal on the altar, the candle-bearers will go to the opposite side of the sanctuary toward the credence table (table with chalice, water and wine, other sacred vessels). First, one of the candle-bearers will bring over the **main chalice** (chalice with a purificator, pall, and corporal) and place it on the right side of the altar (side closest to the server). The priest or deacon will take care of preparing the main chalice. After placing the chalice on the altar, the server will reverently bow to the priest or deacon and go back to the credence table to bring up any other vessels (i.e. ciborium).

At the Preparation of the Altar, the Altar should look like this:



Presentation of the Gifts

Once the Missal, main chalice, and ciborium are placed on the altar, the candle-bearers will return to their chairs until the gifts are brought up from the congregation. The cross/Missal-bearer will go to the back of the church to lead the gift-bearers to the sanctuary.

When the priest and/or deacon go toward the base of the sanctuary to receive the gifts, the candle-bearers will follow him/them.

Before he/they go to the base of the sanctuary, the priest and/or deacon will bow to the altar. The servers will do the same on each side of the priest and/or deacon.

The order for the reception of the gifts is as follows (facing the sanctuary):

candle-bearer candle-bearer deacon priest Cross-Missal/bearer

The priest will hand the **paten** (bowl with hosts) to the deacon.

The **wine cruet** will be handed to the candle-bearer closest to the priest or deacon.

The candle-bearer with the wine cruet will wait at the right side of the altar (side closest to the server). The other candle-bearer will get the water cruet and meet the other server standing near the altar.

Hold the cruets with the handles facing outward (toward the priest or deacon). After the priest/deacon pours the wine and water into the chalice, he will hand the cruets back to the servers. The servers will then bow reverently to the priest/deacon and place the wine and water cruets back on the credence table.

One of the candle-bearers will get the pitcher and basin while the other candle-bearer unfolds the towel and holds it. They both will then go toward the priest for the washing of his hands. Once the priest gives the towel back to the server, both servers will bow reverently to the priest.

The candle-bearers will then join the cross/Missal-bearer at their chairs on the **right** side of the sanctuary.

Ring of the Bells

The bells are rung by one of the candle-bearers **three times during the Mass**:

1. ***Epiclesis* (ep-e-kle-sis) – priest extends his hands over the paten and chalice.**
2. **Elevation (raising) of the Body of Christ.**
3. **Elevation of the Blood of Christ.**



This is my Body...This is my Blood. Luke 22:19-20

During the Rite of Communion

After the *Sanctus* (Holy, Holy, Holy), the servers will kneel until the *Great Amen*. They will then stand for the Our Father. *After the Our Father*, all servers will move toward the priest and deacon to prepare for the Sign of Peace. During the Sign of Peace, come toward the priest and deacon and exchange the Sign of Peace with them. After the Sign of Peace, return to your chairs and kneel during the *Ecce Agnus Dei* (When the priest raises the Body and Blood of Christ and says “Behold the Lamb of God.”)

Once the bell has been rung when the priest drinks the Blood of Christ, all servers will come toward the priest to receive Holy Communion.

During the distribution of Holy Communion, servers may sit or kneel. It is very important, that, after receiving **the Body and Blood of Our Lord**, the server takes time to pray!

When the priest, deacon, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion return to the sanctuary, the servers will stand in their places. When the priest or deacon places the Holy Eucharist back into the tabernacle and genuflects, the servers will genuflect in their places as well.

After genuflecting, the cross/Missal-bearer will get the Missal and place it back on the credence table on the left corner of the sanctuary. He/she will then return to his/her chair in the right side of the sanctuary. The candle-bearers will also go to the right side of the sanctuary.

Concluding Rite

Once the priest stands for the post-Communion prayer, the cross/Missal bearer will bring the Liturgical Notebook to the priest. After the prayer and final blessing, the cross/Missal bearer will place the Liturgical Notebook back on the credence table and take up the processional cross out of the stand. During this time, the candle-bearers will pick up the candles from the stands on each side of the altar. The cross/Missal-bearer and the candle-bearers with candles will then meet the priest and deacon at the base of the sanctuary.

The order for the recessional is as follows (facing the sanctuary):

[Altar]

priest
deacon

candle-bearer cross/Missal-bearer candle-bearer

Once the priest genuflects, bow your head, turn around, and process back to the narthex (main entrance of the church). Once you have entered the narthex, turn around and face the priest for the *Prosit* (the prayer after Mass).

After Mass

In the narthex, **the priest** will say “*Prosit*” (Which is Latin for “May it profit us”).

The **servers** will then say “pro omnibus et singulis.” (Which is Latin for “For all and for one”).

The cross/Missal-bearer will then place the processional cross back on the holder while the candle-bearers place the candles back on the stands on each side of the altar.

The servers will then bring the main chalice, pitcher and basin, and the water and wine cruets from the credence table to the sacristy.

Place albs back *neatly and in size order* on the rack in altar server vesting room.

It is highly encouraged that you take few minutes after Mass to thank Jesus for receiving Him in the Holy Eucharist and helping you to serve Mass.



**O give thanks to the Lord
for he is good, for his love
endures forever. Psalm 136:1**

Glossary of Church Vestments & Vessels

Vestments



Alb



Cincture – “belt”

Church

Sanctuary



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Altar



Tabernacle – where the Holy

Eucharist is reserved.



Credence Table – table on which the chalices, patens, and other vessels are placed.



Presider's Chair – chair on which the priest sits during Mass.

Vessels Used During the Celebration of Mass



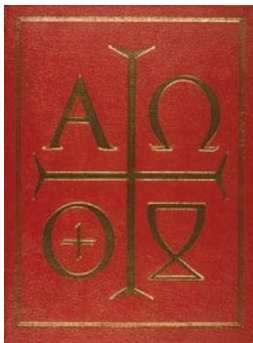
Thurible – vessel containing incense.



Processional Cross - Cross carried into the sanctuary (area in which altar is located) at the beginning and end of Mass.



Processional candle – candle which is carried into the sanctuary at the beginning and end of Mass.



Roman Missal – book which contains the prayers of the Mass said by the priest.



Corporal – square linen cloth on which the paten and chalice containing the bread and wine that is to be consecrated (changed into the Sacred Body and Blood of Jesus) is placed.



Pall – square cloth which goes on top of the chalice in order to protect the Blood of Christ from outside elements.



Main Chalice – chalice which the priest raises when he consecrates the wine into the Blood of Christ.



Side Chalices – chalices that are placed next to the main chalice and contain the Blood of Christ after the consecration.



Purificator – linen cloth used to purify (“clean”) the chalice after Holy Communion.



Paten – bowl in which the hosts that will be consecrated into the Body of Christ are placed.



Ciborium – vessel in which the hosts that will be consecrated into the Body of Christ are placed. Also, consecrated hosts are placed in the ciborium which is then reserved in the tabernacle.



Water and Wine Cruets – vessels which contain the water and wine that is poured into the chalice by the priest or deacon. Water cruet also used during the purification (“cleaning”) of the chalice and paten.



Pitcher and Basin – used to wash the hands of the priest at the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist.



Bells – rung four times during the Mass

1. *Epiclesis* (ep-e-kle-sis) – priest extends his hands over the paten and chalice.
2. Elevation (raising) of the Body of Christ.
3. Elevation of the Blood of Christ.