

This book belongs to _____
My address is _____
My parish is _____
Address _____
Phone _____
I began training on _____
I served my first Mass on _____

Here is a list of servers I can call for substitution when necessary...

Name _____
Address _____

Phone _____

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Altar Server Manual

For centuries, young people like you have been an integral part of the Mass. It's not an easy job. As an altar server, you'll sometimes have to rise early in the morning. Other times you'll have to stay up late at night. Some days you'll have to do both.

Your duties as an altar server will involve everything from assisting the priest with his vestments—to lighting candles, carrying the books used at Mass, ringing bells, and saying prayers.

Your most important role is that of prayer leader. Many people think of prayer as a one-way conversation with God, but it is actually a two-way conversation—one that requires active listening on the part of those offering prayers if they are to receive the answers they seek. As an altar server, you will help them listen. Nothing you do will be a distraction to those who are trying so hard to hear. You will help the service flow smoothly so that the congregation can concentrate on all the wonderful sounds surrounding them: the music, the priest's prayers, their own prayers, and the words of Scripture that are read aloud. With your help, their time of worship will be more meaningful and more deeply felt.

Responding is another essential element of prayer. At Mass, the congregation responds through prayer and song – giving praise and thanks to God for all the great things He has done. Unless the task you are performing at the moment makes it impossible, you will be responding along with everyone else, praying and singing whenever it is appropriate. When people see you participating so actively in the Mass, they will feel more comfortable about joining in themselves.

As you can see, you have an important leadership role in the celebration of the Mass.

THE MASS

The Catholic Church places a serious obligation on all its members to participate in the Mass each Sunday, as well as on every holy day — because it is a celebration of all that we consider to be the heart and soul of our religion. We come together to worship our Lord, Jesus Christ — and to reenact the Last Supper, where Jesus said, “Do this in memory of me.” The bread and wine used in the service becomes the Body and Blood of Jesus, just as Jesus has told us it would.

Sacrifice to God is an essential element of the Mass. The concept of sacrifice is also at the very heart of our religion. It is mentioned in the Bible time and again: Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam, offered sacrifices to God...Abraham (referred to in the liturgy as “our father in faith”) was prepared to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, to God...and Jesus offered Himself to His Father in sacrifice, promising us all that if we “eat this bread and drink this cup,” He would continue His great sacrifice until He comes again.

The Mass also serves as a memorial, helping us keep the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ fresh in our minds and hearts. Through the readings, we are reminded of the many other great deeds God has done for His people.

The sacred meal we share during the Mass (“the bread of life and cup of eternal salvation”) is called the Eucharist (from the Greek word eucharistia, which means “thanksgiving”). Each time we participate in the holy meal, we are expressing anew our thankfulness for all that God has given us.

LITURGICAL SEASONS

The liturgical seasons are there to help us change, grow, and become more mature as followers of Jesus Christ. One of the clearest signs of these seasons is the changing liturgical colors. With each change of seasons, the Church changes the color of vestments as a visible sign of our need to change and grow. The colors used are:

White — Used in Masses of the Easter and Christmas seasons; on feasts and memorials of the Lord Jesus, other than on the Passion; on feasts and memorials of Mary, the angels, saints who are not martyrs, All Saints (November 1), John the Baptist (June 24), John the Apostle (December 27), Chair of Peter (February 22), and Conversion of Paul (January 25). White is used on festive occasions (such as marriage and baptism) and may be used for Masses of the Dead. White is a sign of joy.

Red — Used on Passion Sunday and Good Friday, Pentecost, Mass of the Holy Spirit, celebration of the Passion, feasts of the Apostles and Evangelists except for John, and feasts of martyrs. Red symbolizes both the blood of Christ and martyrs and the Holy Spirit.

Green — Used on the Sundays and weekdays of ordinary time. This color symbolizes growth and hope.

Violet — Used in Advent and Lent. It may be used in Masses of the Dead. It is a symbol of penance and preparation.

Black — May be used in Masses of the Dead, though it is no longer common.

Rose — A color indicating joy. It may be used on Gaudete Sunday (Third Sunday of Advent) and Laetare Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent).

Gold — Substitutes for other colors and may be used on special feasts and occasions.

On days when Votive Masses are permitted a color suited to the Mass itself or to the color of the day or season may be used. Masses for various occasions use color of the day or season.

The way in which Mass is celebrated has developed over almost two thousand years. The early Christians called it “the Breaking of the Bread.” Despite its development, two elements have always been the same: listening to God’s Word in Scripture and partaking of the consecrated eucharistic meal. Today we refer to these elements as the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Following is the basic outline of the Mass, which you should learn well.

THE ORDER OF MASS

Introductory Rites

- *Procession.* Usually from the back of the church down the center aisle. Usual participants: cross-bearer, other servers, lector, concelebrants, deacon, priest.
- *Greeting.* By the celebrant.
- *Blessing and Sprinkling Holy Water.* This is not always done, depending on the feast and local custom. When it is done, the penitential rite is omitted.
- *Penitential Rite.* This can be done in various ways. We’ll learn the necessary prayers and responses later.
- *Kyrie (Lord, have mercy).* Said or sung unless used in one of the penitential rites.
- *Gloria.* This hymn is said or sung on all Sundays outside of Lent and Advent, and on great feasts. You should memorize this hymn.
- *Opening Prayer.*

Liturgy of the Word

- *First Reading.* Read by lector, usually from Old Testament.
- *Responsorial Psalm.* Usually led by the cantor (song leader) but may be recited. It is never omitted.
- *Second Reading.* Also by the lector. On most weekdays there is no second reading.
- *Gospel Acclamation.* The cantor sings it first and the congregation repeats. It may be omitted when not sung.
- *Gospel.* Taken from one of the four Gospels, it is read by priest or deacon, never by a lay person. You must learn the responses to the readings.
- *Homily.* By priest or deacon, explaining the Scriptures.
- *Profession of Faith.* Proclaimed on Sundays and certain feasts. All join in this declaration of beliefs. We’ll learn the words later.
- *General Intercessions.* We also call these the Prayer of the Faithful. You lead the people in response to each petition.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

- *Preparation of the Gifts.* This is also called the Offertory. Depending on local custom, the cross-bearer may go down and lead the people bearing the gifts to the altar. Meanwhile other servers may prepare the altar and light the candle(s) on each side, then accompany the priest to receive the gifts. There is a prayer at the end, which we will learn shortly.
- *Eucharistic Prayer.* There are various Eucharistic Prayers, but the responses you need to know are pretty much the same for each. Here are parts of the Eucharistic Prayer you should know: the Preface; the Holy, Holy; the Institution (also called the Consecration), the Memorial Acclamation; the Great Amen.
- *Communion Rite.* This part begins with the Our Father and ends with the Prayer after Communion. There are several prayers you should know here.

Concluding Rite

- Brief announcements may be made here.
- *Greeting and Blessing.* There are varied forms for this to which you respond.
- *Dismissal.* The priest sends the congregation out to serve God and his people. The ministers leave in procession, departing the altar area in the order in which they entered.

Since servers are important ministers of the celebration, you should be very familiar with the order of Mass. You have to know well the things you do so that they are second nature to you. This leaves you free to concentrate on your involvement in prayer.