

# Altar Serving

*General Norms for Serving at the Altar,  
Second Edition*



*Created By: Connor Patrick*

Dear New Altar Server,

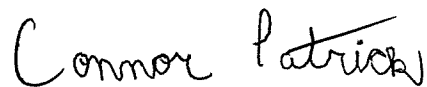
Welcome! Thank you so very much for your dedication and commitment to serving at the altar of God. Altar serving is one of the most important ministries of the Church. It is a special position that involves reverence and maturity, qualities that we believe you all possess. We are truly grateful that you want to be involved in the Church in this way.

This manual is here to help you during training, and for future reference. If you forget one of the details that you learn in training, you may refer to this manual or ask an experienced altar server for any kind of assistance.

We thank you for becoming an Altar Server and hope that this will be a life-long memory for you and develop your spiritual life more fully!

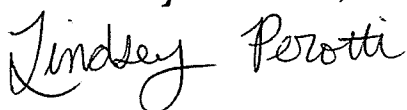
In Christ,

Connor Patrick

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Connor Patrick".

Fr. James Walsh, Pastor

Lindsey Perotti, Youth Minister

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lindsey Perotti".

# Chapter I: Preparation

Before Mass begins, many things must be observed in preparation:

- The credence table must be prepared with the water and wine cruets, chalice, lavabo bowl and towel.
- The Missal and Binder must be on the shelf.
- The gifts for the Offertory must be put at the end of the Center, Chapel, or Stafford Street Aisle.
- The candles on the altar must be lit.
- The processional cross must be ready, in its stand near the sacristy.

(These things most likely will be done by the Sacristan, but please be prepared to do them in the event that they have not been done)

1. Be sure to arrive at the Church 15 minutes before Mass begins.
2. When you arrive at the Sacristy, put on your alb (REMEMBER YOUR ALB SIZE) and put on the cross with the color according to the Liturgical Year.

3. Make sure everything on the checklist above has been prepared for Mass.
4. Then, when all the altar servers are ready, decide who has what job.
5. Five minutes before Mass begins, go to the side that you will process in from (Stafford, Chapel, or Center).

The procession will look like so:

Cross-bearer

Acolyte

Acolyte

Server

Server

Priest

\*(Procession size will vary due to number of servers)

# Chapter II: Roles

Before Mass begins, the roles that each altar server carries out should be decided.

The **cross-bearer** will likely be the most experienced altar server. He/she will carry the cross in the entrance and exit processions, and will be the lead altar server in those processions. The cross-bearer will also set the altar.

The **First Acolyte** will hold the Roman Missal at the Opening Prayer (Collect). He/she will also receive the Gifts with Father and wash Father's hands.

The **Second Acolyte** will hold the Roman Missal at the Closing Prayer (Postcommunion). He/she will also receive the Gifts with Father and wash Father's hands.

These three servers may perform other tasks during the Mass, depending on how many other altar servers there are. These include holding the Binder for Father at the "Prayer of the Faithful" and clearing the altar.

At special Masses, there may be other roles. These include:

The **thurifer**: The **thurifer** will carry the thurible (hence, the name) and hand it to Father during certain points of the Mass. He/she will lead all processions (in front

of the cross-bearer) and should know how to light the charcoals, and when (this will vary depending on which Mass is having incense). When *incense is inside*, it *should be held in the right hand*, with the left hand over the heart. When there is *no incense inside*, it *should be held in the left hand*, with the right hand over the heart.

The **boat-bearer**: The **boat-bearer** will carry the “boat”, containing the incense that is placed in the thurible. He/she will be next to the thurifer’s left in processions. The boat is to *be held in the right hand*, with the left hand over the heart (the same goes for the holy water bucket, which is usually only used on Easter).

# Chapter III: Posture and Gesture

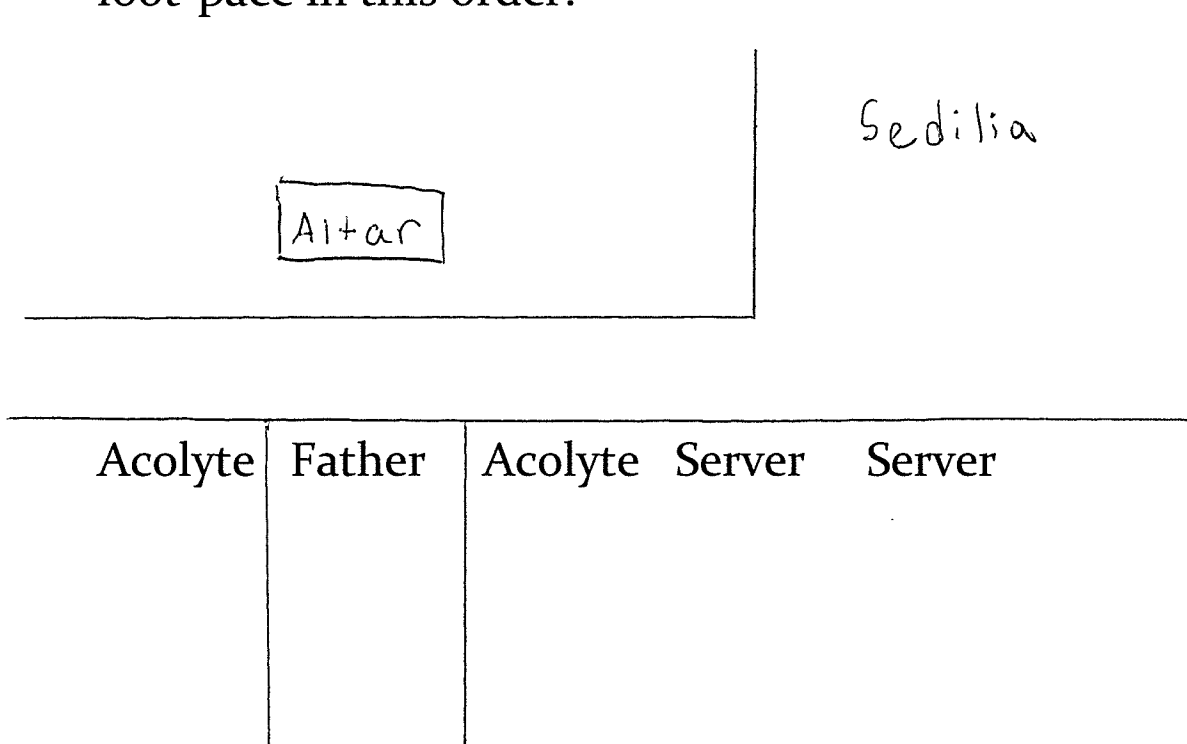
The altar server has a very important role during the Mass. He/she has the responsibilities of holding the Missal and Binder for Father, preparing the altar, purifying Father's hands, and other things.

The Holy Mass is the re-representation of Calvary upon the altar. Therefore, all movements should be reverent and slow. There should be no rushing or running.

The altar servers are the "representatives" of the congregation. They should be in prayer position (both hands folded, over the heart) when standing (and not holding an object).

# Chapter IV: At the Altar

Once you arrive at the Altar, you should line up on the foot-pace in this order:



\*\*The cross bearer should **not** bow with the rest of the servers. Since he (she) is carrying something, he/she will make a small head bow and put the cross in its usual spot next to the acolyte candles.

All will make a deep bow. Father will kiss the Altar, while the servers will go to the chairs ("Choir").



# Chapter V: Opening Prayers-“Prayer of the Faithful”

After Father goes to the Sedilia and begins with the Sign of the Cross, he will introduce the Feast and say the Kyrie and Gloria (except in Lent and Advent).

At some point close to the end of the Gloria, the **First Acolyte** should *go get the Missal* and *come to the Sedilia* for Father to read the Opening Prayer (Collect).

If there is no Gloria, the **First Acolyte** should *go get the Missal* and *come to the Sedilia* when Father says, “May Almighty God have mercy upon us...”

When Father has finished praying, the **First Acolyte** will *return to his/her seat*, and all will sit and listen attentively to the First Reading, Psalm, Second Reading, Gospel, and Homily.

After Father finishes the Homily, he will come to the Sedilia to say the Apostle’s Creed. At the point when he says, “I believe in the Holy Catholic Church”, one server should *get the “Binder” and bring it up to Father*.

Father will read some prayers, and when he is finished, the server will *return to his/her seat*, and all will sit.

# Chapter VI: Offertory- Sanctus

Once the Offertory Chant begins, the **cross-bearer** should *get the Chalice and set the altar*. The two **Acolytes** should go with Father to *receive the Gifts*. The **cross-bearer** should *come back for the Water Cruet*, and another server should *bring the Missal to the Altar*. After Father has begun raising the Chalice, the two **Acolytes** should *go up to the altar with the Lavabo Bowl and Towel* to wash Father's hands. All will *return to their seats until the Sanctus is finished*, and then follow the **cross-bearer** to the altar steps to *kneel for the Canon* (Eucharistic Prayer).

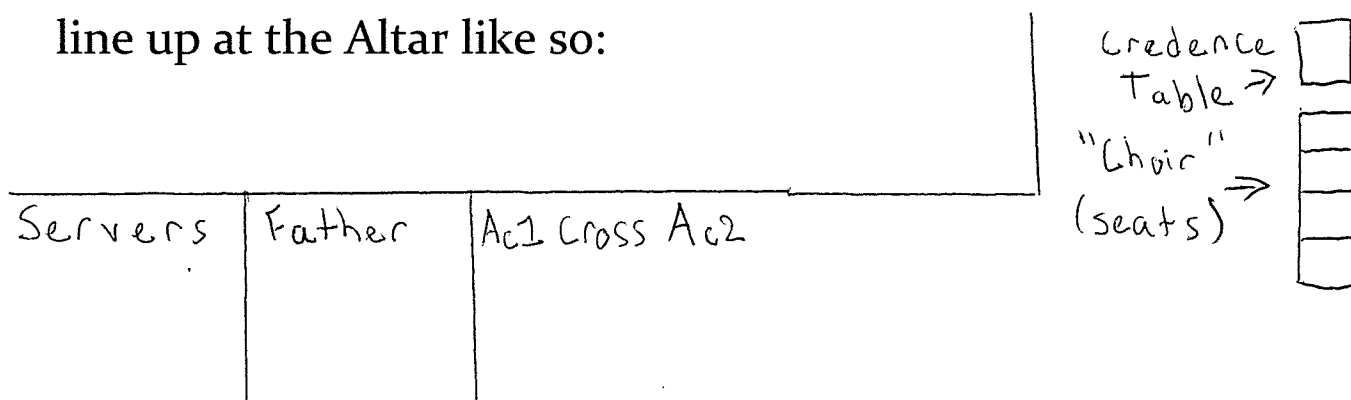
# Chapter VII: Canon-Closing

## Prayer

For the Canon, kneel and stand at the appropriate times. For the Sign of Peace, ***do not make un-reverent gestures. Be sure to be reverent and respectful at ALL TIMES!!!***

After you receive Communion, go back to your seats. The **cross-bearer** brings the ***Water Cruet up to the altar*** for the Purifications and takes the Roman Missal off of the Altar. The **two Acolytes** (or any other servers) should ***get the trays off the altar and bring them to the table near the sacristy.*** The **cross-bearer gets the Chalice and water cruet** from the altar after the Purifications, and sits back down. The choir may sing a hymn.

After this, everyone will stand for the Postcommunion prayer. The **Second Acolyte** should ***bring the Missal up to Father***, and wait until Father is finished to go back to the seats. The Mass has ended. Father says the Final Blessing, and all of the altar servers process out. You should line up at the Altar like so:



# Glossary

**Alb**- White garment that servers wear.

**Canon**- Also called the “Eucharistic Prayer”. This starts from the Sanctus (Holy Holy Holy) and ends with the Our Father. Being the most important part of the Mass, it is when the bread and wine are changed into Jesus’ Body and Blood.

**“Choir” (Altar Server Seats)**- Where the altar servers sit during Mass. Referred to as the “choir” because monks used to sit on either side of the altar, facing each other, and chant songs during the Mass.

**Collect**- The opening prayer. It sums up what the Feast of the day is.

**Credence Table**- The table where all of the vessels for Mass are placed, next to the “Choir”.

**Cruets**- Glasses that hold the water and the wine.

**Postcommunion**- The closing prayer, after Communion, hence the name.

**Roman Missal**- The big, red book that Father reads from.

**Sedilia**- Where Father sits during Mass.