

# Altar Server Guidelines

## St. Pius X

[ Revised as of September 19, 2006 ]

### **BEFORE ARRIVING AT THE CHURCH**

1. Review these notes on what duties that you will have at the Mass.

### **BEFORE MASS**

1. Arrive at least 15 minutes before the start of Mass.
2. Come to the vesting sacristy and sign in.
3. Go to the working sacristy and put on cassock with appropriate colored rope. If you are unsure of the color to use, please ask the priest, deacon or lector.
4. Light Candles - Four near the altar and depending on the season and baptisms, the Easter Candle.
5. Return the candle lighter to the working sacristy and go back to the vesting sacristy. The cross bearer will need to get the cross from the sanctuary and take it to the vesting sacristy.
6. Meet the priest/deacon/lector at the back of the church on the side of the baptismal font, near the table for the gifts. Be ready to process up with the priest.

### **CROSS BEARER (1) DURING ENTRANCE AND START OF MASS, UP TO THE PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS**

1. Lead the procession down the center aisle after the gathering song begins, and the priest gives you the OK to go. Do not rush. Take your time. It is not a race to get done. (Figure 1 shows the order for the procession in.)
2. When you reach the stairs of the sanctuary, walk a few steps to the right and wait for everyone to arrive.
3. After the priest, lector and other servers bow, walk up the right side of the altar and place the cross in the stand.
4. Move across the sanctuary, behind the altar, back to your seat.
5. Pick up your missalette.
6. After the priest says, "Let us pray", go to the presider's chair and be ready to hold the book for the opening prayer.
7. Remain at your seats and participate in the Mass until the singing of the Holy Holy.

**ACOLYTES (2) DURING ENTRANCE AND START OF MASS,  
UP TO THE PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS**

1. Process down the aisle behind the cross bearer, walking side by side with the missalette open and singing. (Figure 1 shows the order for the procession in.)
2. When you reach the stairs of the sanctuary, walk a few steps to the left and wait for the priest.
3. Bow with the priest and lector.
4. Walk around the left side of the altar to your seats.
5. When the collection is being taken up, the altar needs to be prepared. Here is what needs to be done:
  - Remove the stand that holds the Book of Gospels
  - Place the Sacramentary on the altar, near the center.
  - Place the priest's chalice, small cruet of water and one purificator on the right side of the altar. (Figure 2 shows the prepared altar.)When the altar is prepared, return to your seats.
6. After the priest has moved to the altar, and the gifts of bread and wine are brought forward and placed on the altar, go to the credence table. Pick up the large water bowl and the large towel. Stand near the priest and wait for him to wash his hands. When he is finished, take the small water cruet, the large bowl of water, the large towel and the small purificator back to the credence table and set them down. Go back to your seats.
7. Remain at your seats and participate in the Mass until the singing of the Holy, Holy.

**ALL SERVERS DURING THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER**  
**THROUGH THE LAMB OF GOD**

1. At the start of the Holy, Holy, move to the side of the sanctuary. When the people kneel, you kneel on the steps.
2. Remain kneeling until after the Great Amen. When the rest of the people stand, you can stand too.
3. When the priest asks everyone to “extend a sign of Christ’s peace” walk to the side of the altar, and share the sign of peace with the priest and each other.
4. When the Lamb of God begins, bring the cups, purificators, and communion plates to the altar. If you are serving the 5:30 pm Saturday, 8:00 am or 10:00 am Sunday Masses, 7 cups will be used. If you are serving the NOON Sunday Mass, 5 cups will be used. Place 3 cups on one side of the altar, and the remaining cups on the other side (either 4 or 2 cups, depending on which Mass time you are serving as explained above). Place a purificator by each cup. The cups should be placed in a row starting at the back of the altar. The communion plates should be put on the altar in one stack. (Figure 3 shows the correct placement of cups, purificators, and communion plates for a Mass when 7 cups are used).
5. Move back behind the priest and join in the half circle of Ministers of Holy Communion that will be coming up during this time.

**COMMUNION**

1. You will receive the host at the same time as the Ministers of Holy Communion.
2. Hold onto the host until after the priest consumes his. When the other Ministers of Holy Communion consume their host, you may do the same.
3. After everyone has left the altar to distribute communion, go back to your chairs, sit down, take your song book and sing.
4. After communion, the altar needs to be cleared. Take the communion plates, the empty chalice and small purificator to the credence table. Make sure the Sacramentary is put back in the presider’s chair. There should be nothing left on the altar when communion is done and the priest sits down.

**\*Note:** The priest will have one of the Ministers of Holy Communion deliver the ciborium filled with consecrated hosts to and from the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. You will not have to worry about this.

## RECESSIONAL

1. When everyone stands, you stand. The priest will say, "Let us pray". This is the time the cross bearer picks up the book from the presider's chair, approaches the priest and holds the book for him to read. After the priest is done, replace the book and go back to your seat.
2. As soon as the song starts, the cross bearer should move across the sanctuary, behind the altar, and remove the cross from its stand. Wait there until the priest starts to move down the stairs. Join him in the same position that you were in to start the mass in front of the altar. Wait until the priest and other servers have bowed, turn and lead the procession out of the church.
3. If you are not the cross bearer, take your missalette and start singing the final song. As the priest moves down the stairs, join him in the same position that you were in to start the mass in front of the altar. Bow and turn and follow the cross bearer down the aisle. (Figure 4 shows the order for the procession out).

## AFTER MASS

1. Wait in the back of the church until the final song is done and the people have moved out of the aisle.
2. Cross bearer needs to put the cross back in a stand. There is one stand in the sanctuary, and there is another stand in the vesting sacristy.
3. Make sure the candles are out. If they are not, carefully extinguish them. Do not blow out the candles since this sprays the melted wax on the floor.
4. Hang up cassocks carefully in the vesting sacristy.
5. Check to make sure that you signed in when you arrived.

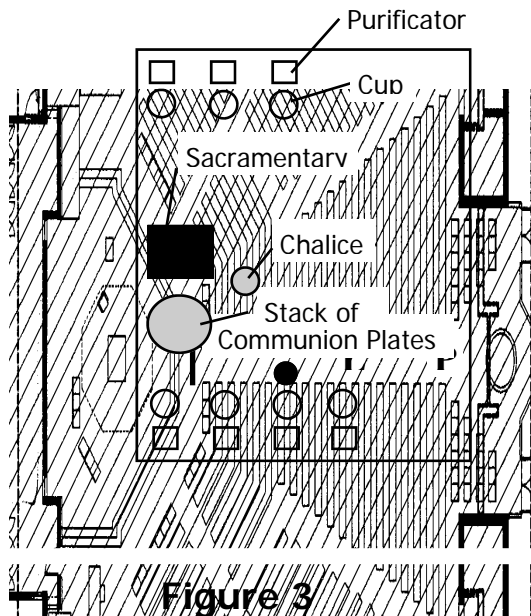


Figure 3

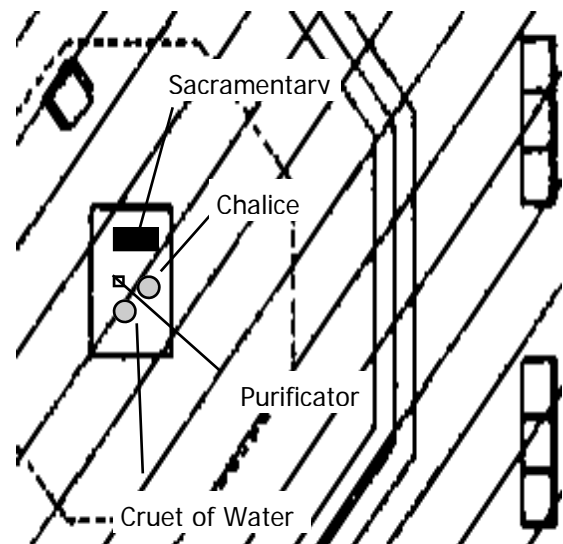
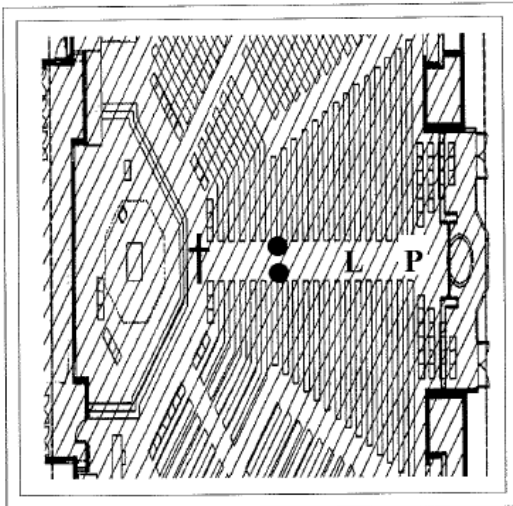


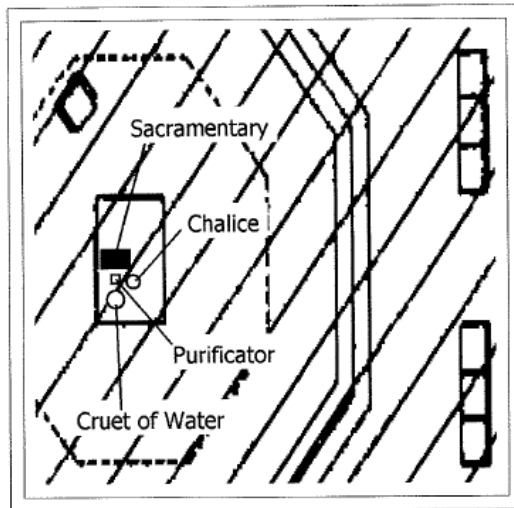
Figure 2

## **ADDITIONAL NOTES**

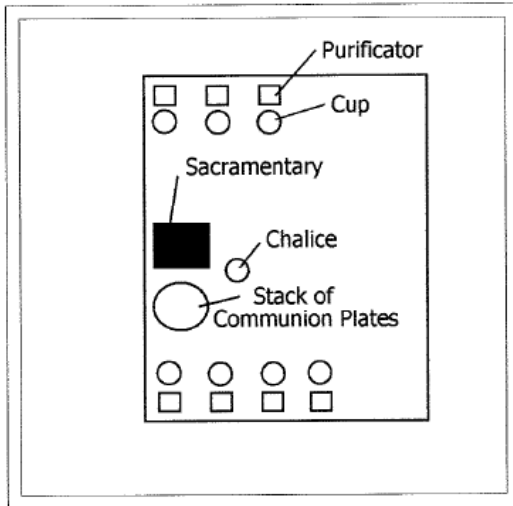
- ✓ This ministry is a service that you perform for the Church. As a ministry, your service as an Altar Server should take priority over your other commitments like friends, baseball, soccer...etc. Attend the training. Act professionally on the sanctuary. Make it to the Masses you are scheduled for, or get a substitute. If you can't give your ministry your best effort, resign from serving.
- ✓ If you can't serve at the Mass you are assigned to, **you will need to find your own replacement.**
- ✓ Please dress respectfully for Mass. Be aware that most cassocks are made from lightweight material. What you wear underneath can show through. For this reason, the server should be sure to avoid bold stripes and designs. It is recommended that you wear solid colors, but white would be the most appropriate choice of shirts and blouses. Likewise pants, dresses and skirts should also be of some solid color. Dress shoes should be worn whenever possible. Sneakers are for casual dress and sporting events.
- ✓ When you are in the sanctuary, you should have your hands folded as in prayer. When seated, your hands should be in your lap. Remember, you are up in front of everybody in the Congregation, and they will see every move you make. Unnecessary movement will be a distraction.
- ✓ Servers respond to the prayers and dialogues of the priest along with the congregation. They also join in singing the hymns and other chants of the liturgy. **Use your missal.** Remember, you are seen by all the parishioners, and how you conduct yourself is important to their understanding of the Mass.
- ✓ Posture is very important when serving. Servers can distract the congregation in their prayers if correct posture is not used. Hands should be folded in one of two positions: locked together at the chest or pressed together at the chest. Servers are to sit with their legs together, feet flat on the floor, and hands resting in the lap. Do not slouch.
- ✓ A server needs to know the principal prayers of the Mass: The Gloria, Our Father, Nicene Creed, Lamb of God, Lord, I am not worthy, and Holy, Holy.
- ✓ No one should chew gum while attending Mass.
- ✓ If during Mass you feel ill, quietly move off the sanctuary and to the Sacristy.
- ✓ If you are at Mass and there are no servers, please come up and volunteer to help.



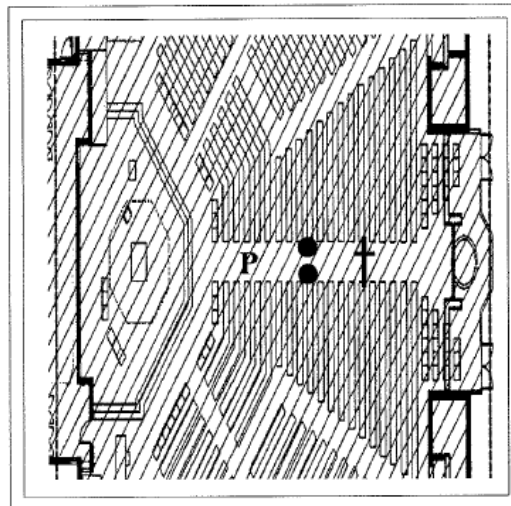
**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**



**Figure 3**



**Figure 4**

KEY:  
 L = Lector      P = Priest      ● = Acolytes      † = Cross Bearer