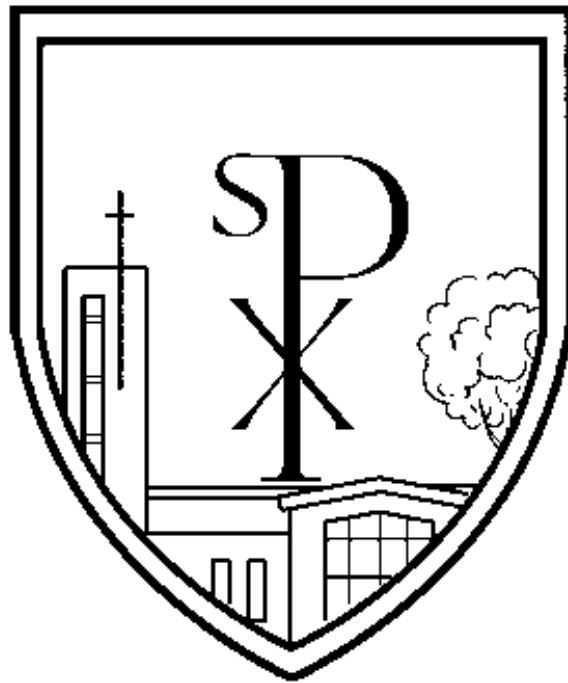




ALTAR SERVER TRAINING GUIDE 2026

Ad Majorem Dei Gloria
"For the greater Glory of God"

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Dear Altar Servers,

You are, in fact, already apostles of Jesus! When you take part in the Liturgy by carrying out your altar service, you offer a witness to all. Your absorption, the devotion that wells up from your heart and is expressed in gestures, in song, in the responses: if you do it correctly and not absent-mindedly, then in a certain way your witness is one that moves people.

The Eucharist is the source and summit of the bond of friendship with Jesus. You are very close to Jesus in the Eucharist, and this is the most important sign of his friendship for each one of us. Do not forget it.

(excerpt from Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to Altar Servers*, August 2, 2006)

The Altar Server's Ministry is of unique importance. Your participation as an Altar Server is very special. Other than priests and deacons, no one else is allowed to so closely play a part in the celebration of the greatest gift of the Most Holy Eucharist. As an Altar Server, you have been chosen to be a special minister, and you get to be so close to God and participate in the saving actions of Jesus in the Mass.

St. Ignatius of Loyola's motto was *Ad Majorem Dei Gloria*, "For the greater Glory of God". Altar Servers must remember that everything that they do is for the Glory of God, and out of love for His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This motto is from the heart of loving service, and this is the motto for our Altar Servers Ministry.

INTENTIONS

Altar servers must serve because they feel a personal calling to service. If you feel parents or others are pressuring you to serve, but you don't want to serve, quietly let the coordinator know.

The coordinator is here to assist you. They are happy to help you determine if this is the right time for you to begin altar service. If this isn't the right time, then you are welcome to start again when you are ready. Servers also must be prepared to meet the commitment required of them.

KNOWLEDGE

Altar servers must be willing to become very familiar with the Mass. They must understand why the Mass is important, and what happens during Mass. Altar servers will be required to demonstrate that they know the Order of Mass, the prayers of the Mass, and the postures and responses during Mass. All of this will be taught during the new server training period. Altar Servers must also demonstrate the ability to make use of the "tools of the trade" such as matches, candles, candle lighters, books and sacred vessels. All of this will be taught in training.

READINESS

Altar servers must arrive at least 15 minutes before Mass begins. Once an Altar Server puts on the alb and cincture, their conduct always must be professional and reverent. From the time they put on the Alb before Mass until the time they take it off after Mass, an Altar Server is "on duty". Altar Servers must always show respect for the sanctity of the church and the sacred vessels. The care of the vessels and vestments is a primary responsibility of the Altar Server.

POSTURES

The posture of the Altar Server should be reverent, attentive, confident, comfortable, and calm, without drawing attention to oneself. Move smoothly, but deliberately, not slowly. Always look toward "where the action is". When someone is speaking or reading part of the Mass, you are listening to them. When the Eucharist is being consecrated, you are looking at it. When the choir is singing, you are singing with them. Make no distracting motions or noises. Coughs and sneezes should be covered with a handkerchief or facial tissue. Make a habit of bringing them with you in case they are needed. Suppress the urge to yawn.

STANDING

When standing, stand up straight, balancing your weight evenly on both feet, but do not lock your knees. Hands folded in the hands with palms together in the "prayer position" comfortably at about the middle of your chest.

PROCESSION

The procession is a sacred act. It is more than just a way for the priest to move from one place to another. It is a very formal way of moving with and glorifying Christ Himself in our presence. When you process, walk at a deliberate, but respectful pace. It should be just slower than you normally walk. If you are not the lead in the procession, give enough space, but keep pace with the lead. When carrying something while processing, hold it reverently with both hands and slightly in front of you, not resting on your chest.

WALKING

Walk. Never, run. You are the model of reverence, calm and grace. Walk deliberately to your place. Watch for others in your way and plan ahead to step around them. Never get in the way of the presiders, or of any minister holding the Blessed Sacrament. Hands are folded prayerfully or firmly grasping whatever you may be carrying.

SITTING

While sitting, sit up straight, not slouching. Feet should be directly in front of you. Legs should never be crossed. Keep your legs and feet still. Hands are placed on top of thighs. Respond to prayers and sing songs deliberately, and fully participate in the Mass.

KNEELING

While kneeling, keep your torso up straight, not slouching or resting on your feet. If kneeling behind a chair or pew, do not lean over it. Feet should be directly behind you. Keep your legs and feet still. Hands are folded prayerfully.

BOWING

There are two types of bows:

1. The bow of the head: Lower your chin to your chest and hold it there briefly.
There are several times in the Mass when this is done.
Anytime a priest bows to you, return the bow with a brief head bow.
When you are carrying something in your hand, only do the bow of the head.
2. The profound bow (full bow): Bend at the waist and bow forward with your upper body. This is used during the Profession of Faith and also a few other times.

GENUFLECTING

With your back straight and your hands folded prayerfully, lower yourself onto your right knee, and hold that position briefly, and then rise to stand. Genuflecting to the tabernacle, whenever Jesus is reserved in the tabernacle, is required. Our Lord's presence in the tabernacle is usually signified by the red sanctuary light. When it is not lit, the tabernacle is empty, as on Good Friday and Holy Saturday. We genuflect when we approach and leave the sanctuary. *Never genuflect when carrying anything (only do the bow of the head).

Order of the Mass

Before Mass

1. Arrive at least 15 minutes early to be sure you have time to dress and properly prepare for the Mass.
 2. Use the restroom and drinking fountain if needed.
 3. Put on alb and cincture in the Sacristy. Make sure that the alb is ankle length.
 4. Double check that everything is set out for the Mass in the credence table: small Roman Missal, Gospel processional candles, ciboria, chalices with palls, purificators, lavabo, and towel.
 5. Double check if the Offertory is ready at the back of the church: at least one ciborium with hosts, cruets for water and wine.
 6. Please light the altar candles and processional candles.
 7. Be ready to pray together with the Priest at the Sacristy before the Entrance Procession.
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Altar Server's Prayer Before Mass

Open my mouth, O Lord, to bless your Holy Name. Cleanse my heart from all evil and distracting thoughts. Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will that I may serve worthily at your Holy altar. O Mary, Mother of Christ, obtain for me the most important grace of knowing my vocation in life. Grant me a true spirit of faith and humble obedience so that I may ever behold Father as a representative of God and willingly follow him in the way, the truth, and the life of Christ. Amen.

Introductory Rites

Entrance Procession

1. Candle Bearers with their candles, and Cross Bearer with the processional cross, all wait quietly in the back with the Priest and other Ministers for the Procession.
 2. Procession begins once the cantor begins singing.
 3. Cross and Candle Bearers carry the cross and candles reverently. Always wait three steps between each other when processing.
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4. Cross Bearer sets the pace by walking very slowly and carefully. The Candle Bearers walk side-by-side right behind the Cross Bearer.
5. When you get to the front of the altar, wait for each person to line up.
 - a. Carrying something = pause, bow your head slightly
 - b. Not carrying anything = pause, bow reverently to the waist
 - c. While the Priest proceeds to the altar with the Minister carrying the Book of the Gospel, the Cross Bearer and Candle Bearers process together in unison to the left to where the Cross and Candles are set down. Afterward, the Altar Servers continue toward their seats, remain standing, and join in song if the music is still going.

Collect

1. As soon as the Priest says/chants "Let us pray," retrieve the Roman Missal and bring it to him.
 - a. There are usually two times during the Mass when this happens – at the beginning before the readings and again at the end after communion.
 - b. Note: There are exceptions during special Masses which include sacraments, baptisms, funerals etc. but you will be told about the changes beforehand. Be alert and ready to hold the book whenever the priest motions to you that he needs the book, even if he has not yet said "Let us pray".
2. Hold the Roman Missal exactly where the priest places it. Hold the book with your hands on the edge of bottom corners and rest the book against your chest.
3. When finished, bow your head towards the priest, return the Roman Missal to the credence table, and return back to your chair.

Liturgy of the Word

Sit prayerfully and respond (eyes on what is happening in the Mass and hands on top of legs).

First Reading

Responsorial Psalm

Second Reading

Candle Bearers light the Gospel processional candles on the credence table.

Gospel Procession

1. As the Alleluia begins, Candle Bearers carry the Gospel processional candles and stand to the left and right of the tabernacle, and facing the altar, wait for the Priest or Deacon to get the Book of the Gospel.
2. After the Priest or Deacon picks up and holds up the Book of the Gospel, Candle Bearers position themselves to face left towards the ambo.
3. The Candle Bearers process in unison shoulder to shoulder, towards the left and right of the ambo. Facing each other, place their candles on the front corners of the ambo, and remain holding onto the candles securing in place.
4. Stay in place until after the Gospel is finished and the Priest or Deacon places the Book of the Gospel in its place in front of the ambo.
5. Then while the Priest or Deacon is placing the Book in front of the ambo, the Candle Bearers process in unison shoulder to shoulder towards the credence table and placing the candles back.
6. During the Gospel, the other Altar Servers remain at their chairs standing and respond (prayer hands and eyes on action).

Gospel

Stand and listen attentively. Remain standing until after the Priest or Deacon kisses the Gospel (eyes on action).

Homily

Sit and listen attentively.

Profession of Faith

1. Stand and respond (prayer hands and eyes on action).
2. Make a PROFOUND BOW at the words “and by the power of the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.”

Universal Prayer

Stand and listen (prayer hands and eyes on action).

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Offertory

Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar

1. When the Ushers get to the first pew to start the collection, the Cross Bearer takes the Cross and goes to the back of the church, ready to lead the Gift Bearers to the front steps of the sanctuary.
2. While the Cross Bearer carries the Cross to the back of the church, the other Altar Servers begin to prepare the altar for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
 - a. The Presider's Chalice is placed on the top center of the main corporal.
 - b. The other chalices are placed on the corporal in the left corner of the altar.
 - c. The ciboria are placed on the corporal on the left side of the altar, opposite from Roman Missal. Then they are uncovered, placing the covers right-side up in the center of the altar.

Receiving the Gifts

1. The Altar Servers in the sanctuary follow behind the priest to the front of the altar.
2. Depending on which gift you are handed by the priest you do one of the following:
 - a. Server who is handed the collection basket should place it in the front center of the altar. Then go back and stand next to the Priest and be ready to receive other gifts.
 - b. The Altar Servers receive the ciborium with hosts and cruets and remain in place until, with the Priest, they offer a slight bow of the head in unison towards the Gift Bearers.
 - c. After the bow of the head towards the Gift Bearers,
 - i. Servers carrying the wine and water cruets, stand ready next to the altar, ready to hand them to the Priest or Deacon.
 1. When handing the cruets to the Priest or Deacon, make sure that the handle is facing towards the Priest or Deacon, so it is easier for them to handle.
 - ii. Servers carrying the ciboria will place them on the corporal on the left side of the altar, uncovering them, and placing the covers right-side up in the center of the altar. Then one of the altar servers goes to pick up the lavabo and the other server takes the towel, and stands ready next to the Servers with the water cruet.

- d. When the priest brings his folded hands over the lavabo, the server with the water cruet pours only a little bit of water over his fingers, then the one with the towel offers it to the priest. All stand together. As the priest hands over the towel and bows toward the Servers, the Altar Servers in unison, return the gesture with a slight bow of the head. Then they return all the objects in their hands to the credence table and return to their chairs.
- e. At their chairs, they move the kneelers forward in front of them and have the bells ready for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Preface

Stand with hands folded through the *Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy...)*.

Eucharistic Prayer

When *Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy...)* ends, kneel with hands folded through the remainder of the Eucharistic Prayer. Sing and Respond as appropriate.

Ringling of the Bells

1. *Epiclesis*

When the Priest raises his hands and down over the host and chalice, ring the bell One time (one twist of the wrist).

2. *Elevation of the Eucharistic Host*

When the Priest raises the Host, ring the bell Three times (Three twists of the wrist) and stop.

3. *Elevation of the Eucharistic Chalice*

When the Priest raises the Chalice, ring the bell Three times (Three twists of the wrist) and stop.

Communion Rite

After the *Doxology (Through Him, and with Him, and in Him...)* and the *Great Amen*, all stand, with prayer hands.

The Lord's Prayer

Stand with prayer hands.

The Sign of Peace

When the priest calls for an exchange of Sign of Peace, wait until the Priest comes over to greet you first, and then greet each other. Remain standing with prayer hands.

Agnus Dei (Lamb of God)

Kneel at the conclusion of *Lamb of God*.

Holy Communion

1. Remain kneeling, and receive Holy Communion while kneeling.
2. Only after the Eucharistic Ministers have moved to their stations, can the Servers move and sit in their chairs. The distribution of Holy Communion is a very holy time and the Altar Servers should sit quietly and prayerfully.
3. When the Priest and/or Deacon return to the altar, one of the Servers takes the water cruet and stands near the altar ready for the Priest and/or Deacon.
4. With the purpose to help clear the altar, the other Altar Servers stand ready to receive sacred vessels from Priest or Deacon to transfer to the credence table.
5. When the Priest or Deacon reposes the ciborium filled with hosts into tabernacle,
 - a. if seated or kneeling, Altar Servers remain in place.
 - b. If standing, face the tabernacle and genuflect when the Priest/Deacon genuflects.

Concluding Rites**Closing Prayer & Blessing**

1. After a few moments of meditation, the Priest will say/chant "Let us pray" at which point the Book Bearer brings him the Roman Missal.
2. After the conclusion of the prayer, return the Missal to its place, go back to your chair, and remain standing.

Dismissal and Recession

1. After the Blessing, and the Priest or Deacon proclaims *Go in peace*, the Altar Servers retrieve the Cross and Candles.
2. Together in unison, the Altar Servers move toward the front steps of the altar, stop at the first pew, and then turn to face toward the altar.
3. The Servers stand and wait until the Priest and/or Deacon also meet them at the front steps of the sanctuary, and face toward the altar.
4. When the Priest genuflects, any Altar Servers with something in their hand bow their head slightly toward the altar.
5. Together in unison, turn to face the baptismal font, and process slowly toward the door of the church.

6. Arriving in the lobby, stand on the left side together, still with the Cross and candles and face the priest to receive a special blessing with the formula:

Priest: *Our help is in the name of the Lord.*

Servers: **Who made heaven and earth.**

Priest: *May almighty God bless you,
the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

Servers: **Amen.**

After Mass

1. Return the processional candles and the cross to their stands by the entrance of the church. Extinguish the processional candles.
 2. After the conclusion of the Closing Song, return to the sanctuary and extinguish the altar candles, and assist the Sacristan with bringing back the sacred vessels to the sacristy. Remember to do this safely with respect for what you are carrying. Do not take more items that can be responsibly moved.
 3. Pray the Altar Server's Prayer After Mass.
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Altar Server's Prayer After Mass

O Lord, Jesus Christ, Eternal High Priest, I thank You for the privilege of having served at the holy altar of your Sacrifice. Now, as I put aside the garments of that service, I ask that I may at all times think of You. May I ever seek You and find You; May I always follow You; may your priestly spirit be in my heart and Your Holy Name on my lips; and to your praise and glory may every work of mine be done. Ever ready in your service, may I always know and do your will in all things and, by your grace, persevere until the end. Amen.

4. After the Prayer, Remove albs and cinctures, and hang them back up. If they are stained or dirty, put them on the floor of the cabinet.
5. Close the closet doors after replacing albs and cinctures in correct spots.

Thank you for your service!