

SAINT MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS CATHOLIC CHURCH

Sunday and Holy Day Mass Altar Serving Rules and Procedures

1. Normally there will be no more than four (4) servers attending at Mass:

Cross Bearer (CB)	1
Book Bearer (BB)	1
Acolytes (AC)	2

At certain Masses there will be six (6) servers. The two additional servers will be:

Thurifer (Th)	1
Incense Boat Bearer (IBB)	1

2. Arrive in the sacristy 15 minutes before Mass. Put on the proper cassock, cincture and surplice. Help each other select the correct sizes, if necessary, and see that the surplices are placed squarely on each others' shoulders. The most experienced server should light the appropriate candles or help the inexperienced servers light them. Pay attention to the lighting instructions posted near the extinguishers in the sacristy.
3. Five minutes prior to the beginning of Mass walk to the Church vestibule to be in position for the entrance procession. The order of procession is

Cross Bearer
Book Bearer
Acolyte Acolyte

At those Masses attended by a thurifer, she/he will lead the Cross Bearer:

Thurifer Incense
Cross Bearer
Book Bearer
Acolyte Acolyte
Boat Bearer

4. Process to the sanctuary when the priest says he is ready.

The CB ascends the stairs without stopping to place the cross on its stand in the sacristy and then moves to his place on the front bench.

The BB stops at the foot of the steps, genuflects, and moves to the place on the front bench where the sacramentary has been placed.

The ACs follow to the foot of the steps, genuflect, and move to their places on the back bench.

When present, the Th and IBB ascend the steps without genuflecting and meet the priest behind the Altar. The priest will add incense to the thurible and incense the Altar. While the priest is incensing the Altar the Th and IBB step back toward the credence table. After the Altar is incensed the Th advances toward the priest to take the thurible from him. The Th and IBB head bow, then properly stow the thurible and boat and move to their places. If a deacon or master of ceremony (MC) is present, the priest may hand the thurible to him and he will hand the thurible to the Th.

5. When the priest says, "Let us pray," the BB brings the sacramentary to the priest or to the deacon or MC if one is present. The deacon or MC or priest will open the book and the BB will hold it for the priest while he reads the Opening Prayer. When the priest is finished reading, he will close the book or he will allow the BB to close it. The BB then returns with the book to his place. The BB is not required to stop and bow when he is crossing the sanctuary.
6. If incense is used prior to the Gospel, the Th and IBB retrieve the thurible and boat during the Second Reading and approach the priest's chair (or deacon or MC if present) after the Responsorial Psalm. The IBB hands the boat to the priest who adds incense to the thurible. He will hand the boat back to the IBB. The Th and IBB process to the ambo on either side of the priest, Th on the left and IBB on the right, and fall in behind him when he reaches the ambo. After the priest says, "A reading of the Gospel according to ...", the Th hands the thurible to the priest. After incensing the Book of the Gospels the priest hands the thurible back to the Th. After the Gospel is read, the Th and IBB head bow, properly stow the thurible and boat and return to their places.
7. After the Prayer of General Intercessions, as the Offertory Collection begins, the CB gets the book stand on the credence table. He places it on the Altar and the BB places the sacramentary on it. The two servers back away from the Altar, stand side-by-side, and bow. The BB returns to his place. The CB walks to the credence table, removes the veil from the chalice, picks up the chalice and places it on the corporal on the right side of the Altar, then returns to his place. If a deacon or MC is present at the Mass, he will move the chalice to the Altar so the CB will return to his place with the BB.

8. When the ushers have almost completed the collection, the CB retrieves the cross, proceeds to the center aisle, and takes up a position facing the Altar even with the fourth pew. The two acolytes follow the CB and take up a position in front of him even with the third pew. The ACs waist bow toward the Altar, turn around facing each other, and follow the CB, who turns when the ACs turn, to the back of the Church.

When the Offertory gift bearers are ready, the three servers lead them up the aisle to the waiting priest. The CB ascends the steps without stopping and returns the cross to its stand. The ACs ascend to the top of the steps and wait to receive the gifts from the priest. When the CB ascends the steps, the BB stands behind the ambo to receive the Offertory collection basket. The AC who receives the flagon walks behind the Altar, places it in the upper right hand corner of the Altar on the Altar cloth, removes the top and places it on the credence table. The other AC receives the ciborium, walks behind the Altar, places the ciborium on the corporal on the Altar or the Altar cloth if the corporal is not present, removes the lid and places it on the credence table. The BB takes the collection basket and places it under the credence table and returns to his place.

9. After placing the flagon on the Altar the “flagon AC” takes the cruet of water from the credence table to the Altar and gives it to the priest, deacon, or MC when he reaches for it. The AC head bows and returns to the credence table after the cruet has been returned to him, places the cruet on the table and takes up the pitcher.

The “ciborium AC” places the ciborium lid on the credence table, places the towel on his left arm, takes the washing bowl in hand and waits for the other AC to return to the table. When both ACs are ready they approach the Altar and wait for the priest to wash his hands.

When the washing of the hands is complete the ACs head bow, return the bowl, pitcher, and towel to the credence table and then go to the right side of the Altar and stand. They kneel after the Holy, Holy, Holy is sung or recited.

If incense is used the Th and the IBB fetch the thurible and boat while the gifts are being received. They meet the priest and deacon or MC behind the Altar after the prayer over the chalice. The IBB gives the boat to the priest who adds incense to the thurible. The boat is returned to the IBB and the Th hands the thurible to the priest. Both servers step back away from the priest. When the thurible is finally returned to the Th, both the Th and IBB head bow and wait in place until the Holy, Holy, Holy is sung. The Th moves to the center aisle and kneels on the lower step. When the priest raises the consecrated bread and again when he raises the consecrated wine the Th incenses them.

10. When the priest raises the consecrated bread and again when he raises the consecrated wine, the AC on the right rings the bell for a count of three. Place the bell against the altar so nobody can accidentally kick it.
11. During the Sign of Peace the ACs bring the Communion cups and purificators from the credence table to the right side of the Altar and place them in a line on the Altar. One AC returns the Communion cup tray to the credence table while the other stands ready to take the empty flagon and place it on the credence table. The ACs then join the other servers to receive Holy Communion.
12. After receiving Communion all the servers except the CB and BB return to their places and sit. The BB retrieves the sacramentary from the book stand and returns to his place with it. The CB follows the BB and returns the book stand to the credence table. He returns to his place pausing to head bow toward the Altar as he crosses the sanctuary.
13. When the priest says, "Let us pray," the BB brings the sacramentary to the priest or to the deacon or MC if one is present. The priest, deacon or MC will open the book and the BB will hold it for the priest while he reads the Closing Prayer. When the priest is finished reading, he will close the book or he will allow the BB to close it. If the priest immediately gives the final blessing, the BB should back away from the priest while facing him. The BB then returns with the book to his place.
14. After the priest gives the final blessing, the CB retrieves the cross and leads the other three servers out of the sanctuary. The CB stops at the first extended pew and faces the Altar. The BB and two ACs follow the CB and take up positions in front of the CB facing the Altar. When the priest genuflects or bows, the servers without anything in their hands should genuflect or bow with the priest, then turn together and process out of the Church. The CB and BB should turn to their right and the ACs should turn toward each other.

At those Masses attended by a Thurifer and Incense Boat Bearer, they follow the acolytes out.

15. Return to the sacristy, help clean up as needed, extinguish the candles, hang up your cassocks, surplices and cinctures.

NOTE: The most experienced server at each Mass must assume the role of Altar Server crew leader. He or she is responsible for insuring that all the Altar Server duties are properly completed before, during, and after Mass. Work as a team. Help each other.