

Parish of St. Thomas More

Our Lady of Mercy Church

Order of the Mass & Duties of the Altar Server

It is essential that each Altar Server has an understanding of the Order of the Mass. This will make you feel more comfortable and aid in your ability to perform your duties with little or no direction from the priest or deacon.

The celebration of Mass is separated into four main parts; Introductory Rites, Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Eucharist and Concluding Rite. On the following pages you will find information about each part and the duties you are expected to learn and perform to the best of your ability. We encourage you to ask questions! This is a serious commitment you are making but, we want you to enjoy what you are doing as well.

We look forward to working with you and are grateful for your service to the parish.

I) INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Procession

Usually moves from the back of the Church down the main aisle.

Altar Servers lead the procession down the main aisle.

The procession normally includes at least two altar servers.

Order of Procession:

Thurifer (if incense is to be used)

Cross Bearer

Second Server (**S2**)

Lector (s)

Priest (Celebrant)

Cross Bearer (or thurifer) begins the procession as directed by the celebrant. The pace of the procession is moderate and reverent. When the procession reaches the foot of the sanctuary:

- 1) The Cross-Bearer should enter the sanctuary and place the processional cross in its stand.
- 2) The second server (**S2**) should follow close behind. The celebrant will stop to genuflect (or bow). *Do not attempt to bow if you are carrying something.*
- 3) Then the priest will go up to reverence the altar. At this point both servers should be standing by the credence table and then follow the priest as he passes to go to his chair. (*Cross-Bearer takes the seat closest to the priest. (S2) takes the other seat*) All remain standing.

Sign of the Cross and Greeting by the Celebrant

The Celebrant greets the people. All bless themselves with the sign of the cross.

Blessing and Sprinkling of Holy Water (Only performed on special occasions)

When used in the Liturgy, a designated Altar Server will carry the Holy Water Bucket and accompany the priest as he blesses the people with Holy Water. Ideally, these special instructions will be discussed before Mass in the sacristy. This server should be on the right of the priest. This is typically done during the Easter season and on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. When it is done, the Penitential Rite is omitted.

Penitential Rite

The server should memorize the appropriate responses and say them clearly.

Kyrie (Lord Have Mercy)

Said or sung unless used in one of the Penitential Rites.

Gloria

All servers should learn this prayer and be able to pray it with the people. This hymn is said or sung on all Sundays except during Advent or Lent and on great feasts and solemnities. All stand during the Gloria.

Opening Prayer

The Cross Bearer will hold the **Sacramentary** or the ****Book of the Chair** for the priest to proclaim the Opening Prayer. The servers along with the people respond “*Amen*”. This prayer concludes the Introductory Rites, at which point all sit.

*(**Note: Book of the Chair resembles a loose-leaf notebook, it has a decorative cover and the color will vary with the liturgical season. It is located on the table next to the celebrant’s chair.)*

II) LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading

Read by the Lector, this reading is usually taken from the Old Testament. During the Easter season, it is taken from the Book of Acts. Altar Servers remain seated during the first reading.

Responsorial Psalm

Usually led by the Cantor (leader in song), but may be recited by the Lector. The people respond with a verse from the Book of Psalms. Altar Servers remain seated and respond with the people.

Second Reading

Read by the Lector, this reading is usually from the Letters in the New Testament. During most weekday Masses, there is no second reading. Altar Servers remain seated during the second reading.

Gospel Acclamation

An “*Alleluia*” is sung during most of the year as a preparation for the Gospel. During Lent, “*Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ*” is sung. When the Acclamation is not sung, it is omitted. During the Alleluia verse there may be a Gospel Procession with the Thurifer (if incense is used). This is the point where **both** servers will go to the credence table and retrieve the processional candles from their stands. Then, walk together around the front of the altar and stop at the end to wait for the priest who will be following you. He will stop briefly to bow in front of the altar and then both servers will resume walking and stand facing each other on either side of the Ambo.

Gospel

A reading taken from one of the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke or John). It is proclaimed by a Priest or Deacon, never by a lay person. Proper responses to the reading are to be learned by all servers. Everyone stands for the proclamation of the Gospel. Once the Gospel has been proclaimed, the servers should return the candles to their stand and be seated for the homily that follows.

Homily

Explanation of the Sacred Readings and applied to the experiences of today. Altar Servers sit during the homily.

Profession of Faith (Creed)

Said on Sundays and other Solemnities. It is our Creed that summarizes our belief in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This prayer should be memorized. Altar Servers stand during the Creed.

General Intercessions (Prayer of the Faithful)

At this time the Cross Bearer will hold the ***Book of the Chair*** for the Priest. These are Prayers for the needs of the Church and other special prayers. The typical response to each petition is, “*Lord, hear our Prayer*”. Altar Servers stand during the Prayer of the Faithful.

III) LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Immediately after the Prayer of the Faithful, both servers have important responsibilities. Unless instructed to wait, the Cross Bearer should take the Processional Cross and go to the back of the Church. **At the proper time, he/she will lead the Offertory Procession of Gifts (bread and wine) to the priest.

*****Note to Cross Bearer:*** *This procession does not begin until the priest comes from his chair and stands at the foot of the sanctuary. Be sure that the gift bearers are prepared to follow you. Upon reaching the priest, the Cross Bearer returns the cross to its stand and then will assist the other server (S2) in the final preparation of the altar.*

Meanwhile, **(S2)** will carry the Sacramentary to the altar and hand it to the priest. Then, he/she goes to the credence table and brings the Corporal, Chalice and other necessary items to the altar. *Once you hand these items to the priest you should bow slightly.* When this task is completed, stand by the credence table. When directed you will accompany the priest to the foot of the sanctuary for the reception of the gifts. Normally, the priest will hand you the wine cruet. Take this item and join the Cross Bearer at the credence table.

Remove the tops from the water and wine cruets and both servers should approach the side of the altar to present the cruets to the priest. **(S2)** will have the wine cruet and the **Cross Bearer** will have the water cruet. *(They should be held in the palm of your hand with the handle toward the priest).*

The priest will pour wine from the cruet into the chalice and then hand it back to **(S2)**. Then, he will take the water cruet, add water to the chalice and return the cruet to the **Cross Bearer**. At this point both servers (bow) and take the cruets back to the credence table.

(On Special Occasions)

If incense is used, the thurifer now hands the incense to the priest and opens the thurible so that the priest may impose incense. When the priest (deacon) has finished with the incense, he will hand the thurible and boat back to the thurifer to be properly placed on the stand.

Next, working together the **Cross Bearer** will take the lavabo dish and water cruet, while **(S2)** takes the finger towel in the open position to the priest. After he washes his hands you (bow), return these items to the Credence table and then move to your designated position at the foot of the sanctuary, but remain standing.

Eucharistic Prayer

All servers are to kneel. Bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. There are various Eucharistic Prayers. The parts of the Eucharistic Prayer are: The Preface, The Holy Holy, The Consecration, the Memorial Acclamation, and The Great Amen.

At the elevation of the Host and Chalice, the **Cross Bearer** rings the bells. They are to be rung three times at the top of the elevation, not while the priest is in the process of raising the host or chalice.

Communion Rite

All stand. This part begins with *The Our Father* which everyone says; followed by *The Sign of Peace* (the people greet each other in the Lord's name).

Exchange of Peace

At this point, both servers should move to a position on the side of the altar. The priest will exchange the sign of peace with you then you can exchange the sign of peace with each other and return to your position at the foot of the sanctuary. The sign of peace ends when *The Lamb of God* begins. After the Lamb of God all kneel.

Additional items for the Altar

While the Lamb of God is being sung, the priest will go to the Tabernacle to retrieve the main ciborium.

Holy Communion

After the priest gives himself Communion both Altar Servers should move to a position on the side of the altar to receive Holy Communion. After receiving, both servers should return to their previous position and kneel.

Post Communion Responsibilities

When the priest returns to the sanctuary after distribution of Holy Communion, he will return the ciborium to the tabernacle and close the door. At this point both servers should return to the sanctuary, stand by the Credence table and be ready to assist with the removal of items from the altar. First, the Cross Bearer will immediately bring the water cruet and stand at the side of the altar. *The water is needed for the (cleaning) purification process of the vessels.* Return the cruet to the Credence table. Then the Cross Bearer and (S2) should stand at the side of the altar and, working as a team, accept the items that the priest will hand you and return them to the Credence table. *Do not remove items from the altar unless you are instructed to do so.* Normally, the last item to be removed from the altar will be the Sacramentary. The Cross Bearer should step forward and take it from the priest. Lastly, both servers will follow the priest back to your seats.

Prayer after Communion

The Cross Bearer brings the Sacramentary to the priest and holds it while the priest prays the closing prayer. All are standing

IV) CONCLUDING RITE

Announcements

Any general announcements are made by the lector or priest at this time.

Final Blessing

This may be simple or solemn. If solemn, the Cross Bearer may be asked to continue holding the Sacramentary. Respond to the blessings with “*Amen*”.

Dismissal

The priest dismisses the congregation.

Recessional

Cross Bearer gets the Processional Cross and goes to the foot of the Sanctuary and stands facing the tabernacle in line with the first pew. (S2) will stand in front of the Cross Bearer facing the tabernacle.

The order of the recessional is the same as the entrance procession. The recessional begins after the priest genuflects (bows) and turns to face the people.

Now that you are a server (or soon will be one), remember this: We are dedicated to helping you succeed in this ministry. This may seem like a lot to remember but, you will have it down in no time! There are people counting on you. First, the priest and deacon depend on you. They need to know that you will be there on time and be prepared. You help them a great deal to ensure that things go smoothly. Also, remember that the congregation counts on you. Without you, an important part of the prayer leadership is missing. Without you, things can get sloppy. And no celebration of the Mass should be sloppy. A good server keeps things going smoothly.

No matter how well you are prepared, occasionally things go wrong. When something does go wrong, stay calm. Quick movements are distracting and can lead to tripping and other troublesome mistakes. When there is a problem, think about it for a moment; then, if possible, do what is necessary to correct the problem.

So, be responsible, stay focused and be calm. You have been called to serve. Your parish is grateful that you have responded to this call with a real sense of dedication to service.