

Altar Server HANDBOOK

ST. TIMOTHY CATHOLIC CHURCH

January 2023
Updated: April 16, 2024



Called to Serve

Criteria to be an Altar Server at St. Timothy Catholic Church

- Fourth grade through Senior year of High School.
- Baptized.
- Received First Reconciliation and go to confession regularly.
- Receive your First Holy Communion and receive communion frequently.
- Attend Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days of Obligation

If you can answer **YES** to all the questions above, then you are eligible to be an Altar Server at St. Timothy Catholic Church.

You are being called. God wants you to play an especially important part in the life of our parish. He wants you to help our parish Priest by being a server. God does not call strangers. He calls friends. And he has called you, as Scripture says, "by your name."

God has been calling people to serve him for centuries. There are great leaders whose names we know: Abraham, Moses, David, and Mary. Even Jesus himself was called by his Father. This is not the first time God has called you, and it will not be the last. But this is an

incredibly special call. Respond to God's call with enthusiasm. Give it everything you've got!

You are an integral part of the Liturgy! The congregation sees you as a prayer leader. Stay focused and always be ready to help the Priest/Deacon. Participate fully in the Mass.

Appropriate Dress

Altar Servers are expected to be ready to serve at every Mass with the following attire:

- Long, solid dark or khaki pants
 - Girls can also wear solid color dark or khaki skirts or dresses.
- Solid white or light-colored collared shirt
- Black dress shoes
 - Girls are to wear black flat shoes (close-toed)
- Black socks
 - Girls can wear black or white socks or nylons.
- Hair is to be brushed and groomed.
- Girls may wear small earrings that do not draw attention to themselves; avoid bracelets.

Not permitted:

- Sneakers of any kind even if they are all black.
- Jeans, shorts, sandals, and shirts with inappropriate logos.
- Colored hair other than your natural hair color.
- No bows or colored ribbons.

Servers are expected to wear the appropriate dress above for every Mass they attend at our parish. This sets a good example for others and allows the youth to serve even when not on schedule, if asked to be a substitute.

Schedule

The Altar Server schedule is created for a two-month period and will be available around the middle of the previous month. The schedule is created using an online program called Ministry Scheduler Pro (MSP). This online system enables users to enter when they can serve as well as when they are not able to serve. Before each scheduling period a reminder is sent asking users to enter their “scheduling” parameters – such as which Mass one is open to attend and serve, as well as if one is going to be away for a particular weekend.

Substitutes

When one is not able to serve their schedule time, they can use MSP and request a substitute. And, if the server is not scheduled, they can certainly respond to a request for a substitute. At any time, a server can stop by the Sacristy before Mass and let the servers know that they are available for serving if needed.

General Expectations Before and During Mass

Remain focused throughout the readings and the prayers, thinking ahead to your role in the celebration.

When standing (when not holding a cross, candle, etc.), your arms should always be in the middle of your chest with hands folded together in the prayer position.

Remember when carrying sacred vessels, it is important that you hold the items reverently and steady.

When sitting, both feet are to be flat on the floor and your hands resting on your thighs.

Focus on the speaker so you will be ready to participate and fulfill your significant role as a vested participant and prayer leader.

Never carry electronic devices (a cell phone or other electronic device which can make noise) in your pocket while serving. Such items should be left with a parent or family member.

The servers' eyes and attention should follow the action of the Mass, unless it is necessary to concentrate on some other function being performed. The eyes should not wander.

Servers should bow *slightly* (a "head bow") to the Priest after each time they approach him, since the Priest acts in the person of Christ. In general, in the Roman Rite bowing is reserved for the altar, the crucifix and the Priest.

Procedures Once You Arrive

Sign-in Procedures

Altar Servers should arrive at least **20 minutes before the start of Mass**. For the occasion when there are specific/additional instructions to be provided to the Servers prior to the start of the Liturgy, you will be sent a notice asking that you arrive at an earlier time.

When you arrive at the church, stop at the MSP kiosk on the wall outside of the Chapel. Choose the appropriate Mass (should only be one showing) and check in. If you are substituting for someone, simply check in under their name.

If you have not signed in by 10 minutes before the beginning of Mass, the duties will be distributed among those who are ready to serve.

If you are not scheduled to serve, when you arrive at Mass, please stop by the Sacristy to check, and see if a server(s) is needed.

If you arrive late to serve and another Server has been recruited from the congregation and is dressed, ready to take your place, please allow that Server to continue in the Server capacity.

Before Mass

1. Please dress according to the attire guidelines shared previously in this document.
2. Dress in cassock and surplice. The cassock should not be touching the ground. It should be a few inches above the tops of your shoes (but not too short).
3. Either light or confirm they are lit, the candles in the Sanctuary (lighter is in the corner draw). Sometimes, this may have already been done by the Eucharistic Minister of Holy Communion set-up person but, always good to check.
4. Light the two processional candles (only if three or more servers are present).
5. Determine who will be cross-bearer, who will be candle-bearers, and who will be holding Missal and seasonal binder for Priest at his chair.
6. Say the opening prayer with the Priest, Deacon, and other servers before heading out to line up in the Narthex.

Narthex and Processional

1. Incenser - (leads and walks down the middle of the aisle - only if incense is used at Mass).
2. Cross-bearer (middle – no bow at the Altar). Place cross in stand behind presider's chair.
3. Candle-bearers (two rows behind the cross-bearer on the left and right sides – only head bow at the Altar; proceed to the top of the Sanctuary and place the candles in the holders at the front of the Sanctuary. Exit down the steps by the Ambo and take your place in the pew.
4. Shadow (two rows behind candle-bearers down the middle of aisle – profound bow at the Altar. Take your place in the pew.
5. Hands **ALWAYS** in the prayer position if you are not carrying something.

During Mass

1. Stand, sit, and kneel as the assembly does. When standing or kneeling, hands are in the prayer position.
2. After the Gloria – The Priest will say “Let us pray...”
 - a. An altar server will bring the Roman Missal to the Priest (it is a big book that is dark red in color and has ribbons).
 - b. When the Priest finishes the prayer and closes the Missal, that is when you will sit down.
3. After the homily, an altar server will bring up the seasonal (colored) binder to the Priest.
 - a. This binder contains the Creed and the Intercessions (also known as the Prayers of the Faithful).
 - b. The Priest will pray the Creed and the beginning of the Prayers of the Faithful from the binder.
 - c. As the prayers are read by the Deacon (or Reader), remain in front of the Priest with the binder open.
 - d. Once the Priest gives the final prayer, the altar server will return to their seat with the binder.
4. Immediately following the Prayers of the Faithful, the server(s) sets the altar.
 - a. Bring up the deep brown trays (2) located on the credence table, located next to the choir loft. These trays hold the ciboria (8 total). They should be placed on the Corporal on the north side of the altar.
 - b. Bring up the deep brown tray (1) located on the credence table which holds the Chalices. It should be placed on the Corporal on the south side of the altar.
 - c. Additionally, bring up the Priest’s chalice and water cruet. You can remove the cruet top before bringing it to

the altar if it is on the cruet. The top can be left at the credence table.

- d. Bring up the Roman Missal and stand. Place it on the left-side of the altar and not in the middle where the Corporal will be placed. The Priest/Deacon will move it to its correct position once the rest of the Altar is set up. The Missal can be found on the table behind the Priest's chair.
 - e. Lastly, bring the glass tray which holds one-to-many Pyxes and place on the altar.
 - f. The Deacon will prepare the altar once all vessels and the Missal have been brought forward.
5. For the offertory, the following steps are taken:
- a. After the altar is set and the offertory is nearing the end, i.e., the collection baskets are starting to come back to the font, the cross-bearer goes back to the Baptismal font where the gifts for the offertory are located.
 - b. Once the collection is completed, the bread and wine are given to a family for the offertory procession. The cross-bearer leads the procession to the front of the altar where the Priest and Deacon are standing.
 - c. The cross-bearer proceeds to the left of the Priest and Deacon and places the cross in the cross stand behind the presider's chair.
 - d. While the Priest and Deacon go back to the altar, two servers should place themselves at the bottom of the stairs to the side of the altar. The Deacon will hand the ciborium and wine server to one server. The other should be holding the bowl and lavabo towel. The towel should be draped over your arm.

- e. When the Priest is ready for the handwashing, the Deacon will advise you to move to the top of the altar where you will wash the Priest's hands, using the water cruet which is on the altar.
 - f. Once the Priest is done and has placed the towel back on your arm, bow, turn, and return the vessels to the credence table.
 - g. Return to your pew.
6. For the Eucharistic Prayer, the altar servers kneel.
- a. At the Epiclesis, the Priest will place his hands over the offerings, calling down the Holy Spirit; the Deacon will also kneel; ring the bells once for 2 seconds.
 - b. After the Priest says, "This is my Body...", ring the bells three times as the Priest raises the Host.
 - c. After the Priest says, "This is my Blood...", ring the bells three times as the Priest raises the Chalice.
7. During the Lamb of God, Servers are to move from their pew and line up in the designated area to receive Holy Communion (see diagram in the Appendix). The Priest will bring them the Precious Body and then a Cup Minister will bring them the Precious Blood. If you choose to not receive the Precious Blood, you can return to your seat after receiving the Precious Body.
8. After receiving Holy Communion, one altar server should bring the water cruet to the altar for the Priest and Deacon to use. Place it on the altar, above the corporal. They should also remove the tray which held the Chalices and return it to the credence table.
9. After Holy Communion, when the Priest/Deacon leaves the altar, clear the altar of the trays, chalice, and water cruet,

placing them back on the credence table. The Roman Missal should also be removed from the altar and returned to the table behind the Priest's chair.

10. When the Priest goes to the front of the altar with the glass tray, one server should go with him to retrieve the tray. Once retrieved, go immediately and place it on the Credence Table.

Dismissal

1. After a moment of silence after Communion, when the Priest rises from his chair and says, "Let us pray," an altar server will bring the Roman Missal to the Priest.
2. For some Masses throughout the year, there will be a Solemn Blessing. If there is, the Priest will have you remain in front of him while he says that prayer.
3. Once all the prayers are completed, the Priest will give the final blessing. While he is doing that, return to your pew, and leave the Missal there.
4. When the Priest and Deacon go to reverence the Altar after the final blessing, bring the cross to the front of the Altar for processing out of the church. Go five pews back and turn around to face the altar.
5. Candle-bearers should retrieve the candles from the stands on the Sanctuary and then line up two rows in front of cross-bearer. If there are more than three servers, the cross-bearer needs to recognize that and stand further than five pews away so the others can line up accordingly.
6. When the Priest and Deacon genuflect/bow to the altar and turn to face the door, the cross-bearer should turn

and lead the procession out to the right side of the Baptismal font all the way to the Sacristy.

After Mass

1. The altar servers return to the Sacristy, placing the processional cross and candles in their rightful place.
2. The altar servers say the After Mass Prayer.
3. The altar servers hang up their cassocks and surplices. Please leave them neatly in the closet, ready for the next Mass.
4. After the 5:30 PM Mass on Saturday, the 11 AM Mass on Sunday, and the 5:30 PM Mass on Sunday, the altar servers are to make sure the candles in the church are extinguished.
 - a. After the 7:30 AM Mass and the 9 AM Mass, the servers **DO NOT have to extinguish the candles.**

Glossary of Terms

The Church Building

Aisles – the passageway between the rows of pews or chairs in the main body of the church which allow the people to enter and leave the worship area.

Baptistry – the area where Baptisms are celebrated.

Reconciliation Room/Confessional – the room or place where the Sacrament of Reconciliation takes place.

Narthex - the area between the outside doors of the church and the

interior doors into the worship area.

Nave/Worship Area – the main body of the church where the people of God gather for worship.

Sacristy – the room used by the ministers to prepare for the celebration of the liturgy and the place where the vestments, vessels and other things used in the liturgy are stored.

Sanctuary – the area of the nave around the altar.

Furniture

Altar – One of two principal areas of focus during the Mass. The table of the Lord to which God's people are called to give praise and thanks to God. It is where the gifts of bread and wine are offered and become the Body and Blood of Christ.

Ambo – One of two principal areas of focus during the Mass, that place from which the Word of God is proclaimed.

Chair – the presidential chair for the Presider/Priest at liturgy; symbolizes the teaching authority of Christ entrusted to the church.

Credence table – the table near the sanctuary on which are placed the things needed for the celebration.

Tabernacle – the locked container in which the Eucharistic bread is reserved after the celebration of the Mass.

Vestments

Alb – floor-length, white garment with sleeves worn by those who minister at the altar. Symbolizes Christ and the royal dignity received in baptism.

Cincture – the chorded belt tied around the waist and Alb. The knot should be worn over your left thigh.

Vessels, Cloths and Objects

Chalice – the cup used at the celebration of the Mass that holds the wine that becomes the blood of Christ. We also use several chalices to hold the Precious Blood during Holy Communion.

Ciborium – the plate or bowl that holds the bread for the celebration of the Mass. It is also used during Holy Communion for distribution of the Precious Body. It is also used to store the

reserved Eucharist in the Tabernacle. (Ciboria – is more than one ciborium, the plural form).

Corporal – the large square, white linen cloth placed in the center of the altar on which are placed the chalice(s) and ciborium (ciboria) for celebration of the Mass.

Flagon – the bottle or carafe-like vessel used to hold the wine that will be consecrated at Mass for the Communion of the people. It is filled before Mass and brought forward during the procession when the gifts are brought forward.

Lavabo bowl – the basin or bowl used to catch the water poured over the hands of the Presider at the washing of hands at the Mass.

Lavabo Finger towel – the cloth used to dry the hands of the Presider at the washing of hands at the Mass.

Lectionary – the large book containing the scripture readings proclaimed at the celebration of the Mass during the Liturgy of the Word.

Paschal Candle – the large candle blessed at the Easter Vigil as a sign of the risen Christ. It normally stands near the altar for the fifty days of the Easter season. Outside of the Easter season, the Easter candle normally stands near the baptismal font. There is no Easter candle during Lent.

Processional Cross – the cross used in processions.

Purificator – the long and narrow cloth used to wipe the chalice. It normally has a red cross stitched in the center of the cloth.

Pyx – a small container used to carry the consecrated bread from the Mass to the sick at home or in the hospital.

Missal/Sacramentary– the book containing the prayers and text for the celebration of the Mass.

Sacrarium – a special sink, in the Sacristy, where water is used to rinse the sacred vessels used in the Mass; the water goes directly into the ground.

Sanctuary lamp – the lighted candle or lamp that burns continuously near the tabernacle or place of reservation of the Eucharist as a sign that the Blessed Sacrament is reserved.

Sanctus bells – a group of bells connected to one another is rung during Mass to prepare the congregation for Holy Communion. Derive their name from being rung first during the Sanctus [Holy, Holy, Holy Lord...]. They have been rung as part of the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in the Church for more than eight hundred years.

Seasonal book – the book containing the Creed, the Prayers of the Faithful and any announcements. Its color corresponds to the season or feast celebrated. For instance, during the Christmas and Easter seasons, the book is white. During Advent and Lent, the book is purple. During the Ordinary time, the book is green.

Thurible - a metal censer suspended from chains, in which incense is burned during worship services.

Boat – the small container used to hold incense.

Liturgical Calendar – calendar used and placed on the bulletin board in the sacristy to designate the liturgical seasons and the dominant color used during that liturgical season.

Ministers at Mass

Presider – the Priest or Bishop who celebrates the Mass.

Deacon – a minister ordained to serve the presider, proclaims the Gospel, preaches, leads the intercessions, and assists at the altar.

Acolyte - a commissioned minister who is often in training to be a Deacon.

Cantor – a minister who leads the singing as well as sings the verses of the Responsorial Psalm during the Liturgy of the Word.

Reader – a minister who reads the scripture reading from the Lectionary during the Liturgy of the Word.

Music Minister – the minister who organized the music for the Liturgy. Sometimes the music minister plays the organ, piano, guitar, or other instruments and directs the choir.

Usher – a minister who helps welcome people, seat people, direct processions, and collect the gifts of money for the church and for the poor.

Assembly – all the people of God gathered to share together in the celebration of the Mass.

Sacristan – a minister who takes care of all the things used in the Sacristy, and who helps prepare all the things needed for a Liturgical Celebration

Communion Minister – Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are lay people who have been commissioned by their pastor to help the Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion distribute the Body and Blood of Christ to the assembly.



Fr. Anthony Missal Set-up



Fr. Drew and all Other Priests Missal Set-up



EMHC/Altar Server Placement to Receive Holy Communion

