

Altar Boy Handbook



Our Lady of Pity *Roman Catholic Church*

1616 Richmond Avenue
Staten Island, NY 10314
(718) 761-5421

Qualifications, Training, Dress Code & Scheduling

Welcome! Serving at the Altar has always been considered a great privilege. This handbook will help you to learn the responsibilities, expectations and procedures for being an Altar Boy in our parish.

Altar Boys have a special relationship with the Priests. Your success will depend upon your willingness to embrace the rules in this book. Your parents can assist by knowing as you do what is expected of you in your role as an Altar Boy.

Qualifications

Our Lady of Pity honors a long tradition and practice of having boys serve at the Altar. Any boy who has received his first Holy Communion is eligible to be trained to become an Altar Boy.

Boys serving at the Altar should be of strong moral character, conducting themselves at all times in a manner appropriate to the Mass Server.

The Pastor reserves the right to remove any boy from serving at the Altar if he feels that the boy's conduct is less than excellent.

Training

All boys serving at the Altar in our parish are required to go through a period of training to prepare them to assist at the different liturgical celebrations that take place in church.

Senior Altar Boys will on occasion be asked to refresh their knowledge of serving with some "in service training sessions". These sessions will be determined by the Pastor or the Moderator.

Dress Code

Altar Boys assigned to serve will come to church in black pants, black socks and black shoes. Any color shirt is allowed since it will not be seen. If the shirt has a collar, it should be folded under so as not to be seen. Sneakers are **NEVER** allowed for serving, even black ones. Black dress shoes **ONLY**. Hands, finger nails and face should be clean and hair should be combed neatly. Earrings and other jewelry removed before Mass.



Usually Altar Boys will wear a black cassock and white surplice. Sometimes for special celebrations a red cassock might be used instead of black.

The Altar Boy is responsible to maintain his own cassock and surplice. It should be cleaned and pressed, hung on a hanger with a plastic bag over it.

The cassock should be worn with the bottom coming to the top of the shoe. The server should bring his cassock home after each Mass. Extra cassocks and surplices are in the room next to the Altar. In the event an Altar Boy is attending Mass and sees there are no assigned servers present, he should go and take one of the extra cassocks and surplices and prepare to serve the Mass. Therefore the Altar Boy should **always** come to Mass with black pants, socks and shoes on in the event he is needed to serve.

Above all remember that the Altar is where Jesus becomes present at every Mass, therefore let your appearance and behavior reflect that belief.

Scheduling

The Pastor or the Moderator will prepare schedules assigning servers to particular Masses. This schedule will rotate so that servers will not serve the same Mass each week. Special schedules will be prepared for Feast days, Holy Days, Weddings etc. When your name appears on the schedule, it means you are assigned and expected to be there. If for some reason you cannot be there for a scheduled Mass, it is **your** responsibility to find another server to replace you. The best hope of cooperation from other servers to help you is to be ready to help another Altar Boy when you are asked.

Rules and Procedures

The Altar Boy will arrive for his assigned Mass fifteen (15) minutes prior to that Mass. Once arriving in the sacristy, the server signs in on the attendance sheet. He then gets vested in his cassock and surplice. He then makes certain that the things needed for Mass are ready:

Cruets filled with water and wine should be on the offertory table in the middle of the church.

The finger bowl and towel should be on the side credence table in the sanctuary prepared for the washing of the Priest's hands.

The ciborium filled with the small hosts should be prepared and placed on the offertory table with the cruets. (The Priest will let you know how many ciboria are needed if any).

The candles are to be lit five (5) minutes before Mass begins. Both candles on the Main Altar as well as the two (2) candles next to the Tabernacle.

The Priest's chalice should be prepared with a clean purificator, a large host on the paten and covered with a pall and a chalice veil matching the vestment to be worn by the Priest. Most vestments have a matching chalice veil.

The Altar Missal should be ready for the Priest to read from. He will set the ribbons in their proper place.

Once all these things are prepared, the Altar Boy will sit in the sacristy in SILENCE waiting for the signal from the Priest to begin. Remember the sacristy is the place where the Priest prepares to offer the Mass. Speak only when the Priest asks you a question. The church, including the sacristy and the altar are never the place to fool around.



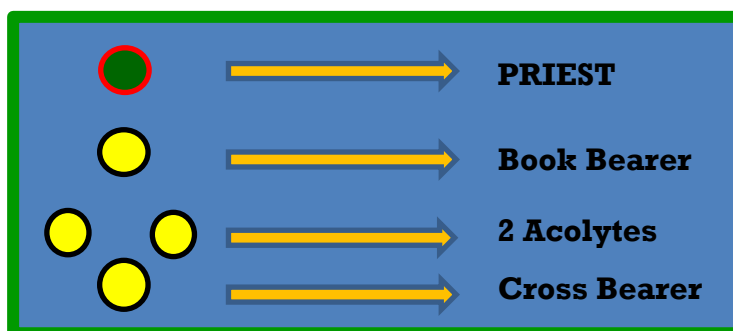
Sit in SILENCE like this

Order of Procession

Most times there will be more than two servers assigned to each Sunday Mass. If so, the tallest of the servers will be the Crucifer (Cross Bearer). The other two servers will be Acolytes and if there is a fourth server, he will be the Book Bearer. When only three servers are assigned, one of the Acolytes will carry the book.

The procession forms in the vestibule of the church in the following order:

1. Cross Bearer
2. 2 Acolytes walking side by side, not one in front of the other
3. Book Bearer if present in the center behind the Acolytes
4. The Celebrant (Priest) of the Mass



When the procession begins, The Cross Bearer leading the procession walks slowly up the center aisle in the middle. When he gets to the front of the Altar at the bottom of the first step, he bows his head slightly and goes directly to place the cross in its stand and then goes to his seat. (HE DOES NOT WAIT FOR THE OTHER SERVERS OR THE PRIEST).

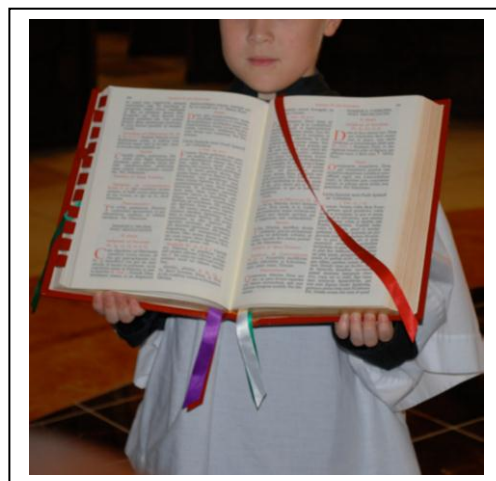
The Acolytes approach the front of the Altar together, they stop and bow TOGETHER and they go to the left, directly to their seats.

The Book Bearer reaches the bottom step; he bows slightly and then goes to his seat.

The Priest comes in last. He bows to the Altar and then goes up around it to kiss the Altar.

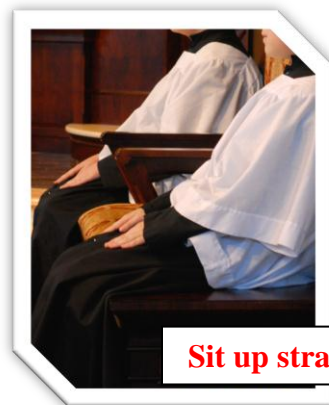
The only time the servers wait for the Priest is if there are only two servers and neither one is carrying the cross. In that case they reach the bottom step and split up left and right allowing room for the Priest to come and stand between them. They then bow or genuflect with the Priest. They then go directly to their place on the left side.

The Priest goes to his chair and begins the Mass. The Book Bearer or the Acolyte who will hold the book should have it ready as soon as the Priest signals. Sometimes the Priest will want the book from the very beginning of Mass; otherwise the server waits until the Priest signals or says "LET US PRAY". The server then walks in front of the Altar, reaches the center, bows to the Altar and then proceeds to the Priest. Once the Priest finishes the Opening Prayer, he will close the book. The server steps back and bows slightly to the Priest. He then returns the same way, in front of the Altar, stopping in the center to bow and then going back to his place.



Hold the Book like this

The servers will then be seated during the Liturgy of the Word. When servers are seated, they sit up straight, with their feet on the floor and their hands placed flat on their lap. They should be looking straight ahead and not looking around the church.



Sit up straight like this

When the servers are standing still or walking, their hands are to be folded together with the right thumb crossed over the left. The tips of the fingers should be facing up and the hands should be against the chest. This is the **ONLY** way the hands are held when the server is standing or walking without something in them. (No hands in pockets or arms folded).



Position of hands when not holding anything



Position of hands when one hand is carrying something

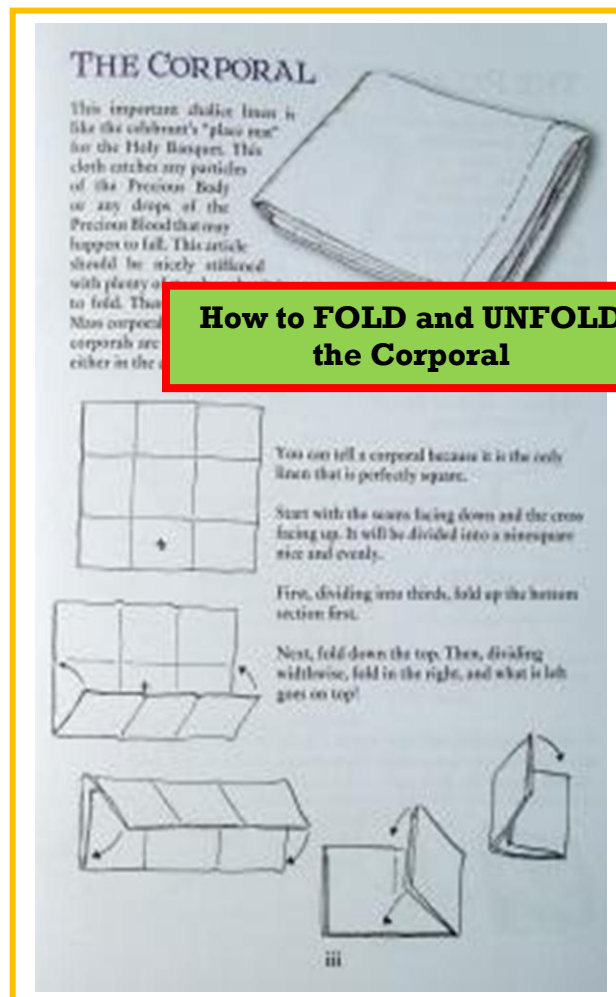
When everyone stands for the proclamation of the Gospel, the servers wherever they are turn and face the Priest or Deacon reading the Gospel. This is a sign of our attentiveness for the words of Jesus when they are proclaimed at Mass.

The servers are seated during the homily and are careful not to move around so as not to be a distraction to others.

Other than during the reading of the Gospel, the servers when standing at their places do not face the people, but rather face straight ahead toward the Altar.

The completion of the Prayer of The Faithful by the Priest, Deacon or Lector marks the conclusion of The Liturgy of The Word.

The people then sit down and The Liturgy of The Eucharist begins with the Offertory. At this point the Book Bearer if there is one or the Acolytes bring to the Altar the Missal on the Missal Stand. It is placed on the Altar to the left slightly angled toward where the Priest will be standing. One Acolyte will take the Corporal which is folded at the right corner of the Altar and opens it in the center with the cross closest to where the priest is standing. The other server brings the chalice from the shelf in the Pulpit to the Altar. The Deacon takes the chalice veil off and folds it, handing it to the server who places it back on the shelf in the pulpit. If there is no Deacon, the server removes the veil himself. Remember, when bringing something or taking something from the Priest or Deacon, the server always bows slightly before walking away.



If there is a Cross Bearer, he will take the cross, walk down to the bottom of the sanctuary, off the steps, in the center, turn facing the Altar, bowing his head slightly and then turning to walk down the aisle to the middle of the church. He turns facing the Altar and waits for the people to pick up the offertory gifts and when ready leads them to the Altar. The Priest with the Acolytes next to him on both sides comes to the front of the Altar awaiting the gifts. When the Cross Bearer arrives in front of the Priest, he bows his head slightly, goes to the right around the Priest and Acolytes and returns the cross to its stand and then goes to his place.

The Priest accepts the gifts from the people. When the server is handed one of the gifts, he turns and carries it either to the Altar if it is a Ciborium, or to the side credence table if it is one of the cruets.

The Acolytes then both go to the credence table, take the cover off the cruets and they each take a cruet in the right hand with the left hand on their chest, they turn together, and walk together to the Priest standing facing him and wait. The cruet handle should be facing the Priest or Deacon. After he hands back to both servers the cruets, they bow to the Priest together, turn together and return to the credence table. Notice all these actions are done TOGETHER.



The Acolytes prepare for the washing of the Priest's hands. One carries the finger towel, opened holding it by the corners. The other takes the water cruet and the finger bowl. They walk together and stand side by side facing the Priest. As the Priest extends his fingers over the finger bowl, the Acolyte pours a small amount of water over his fingers. He remains there until the Priest has dried his fingers with the finger towel and returned it to the Acolyte. They then turn and go back to the credence table together. Once they have put the cruet bowl and towel down, they return to their place.

SPECIAL NOTE

Whenever a server passes in front of the Tabernacle, either in front or behind the Altar, the server stops, faces the Tabernacle and bows. If he is holding something, the bow is a simple bow of the head. If not, the server makes a profound bow from the waste. **THIS RULE APPLIES EVERY TIME YOU PASS THE TABERNACLE.**

KNEELING



Kneel like this



NOT THIS

During the recitation or singing of the Our Father, the servers are to have their hands folded, NOT EXTENDED.

After the Sign of Peace, the servers each take a communion paten from the credence table and stand beside each other facing the Priest. The Priest will come to give Holy Communion to the servers. While holding the paten under their own chin they receive on the tongue.

The idea of using the communion patens is to prevent the sacred host from falling to the ground and to catch any particles of the host that may fall. Therefore, after communion the server should take care to hold the paten straight until the Priest takes it to purify it.



After communion one Acolyte takes the water cruet and goes to the side of the Altar so that the Priest or Deacon can purify the vessels. When the purification is completed, the Acolytes come to the Altar together, one takes the missal stand and book, the other takes the chalice and they

return them to their proper places. After communion the Altar should be cleared.

The servers return to their place. When the Priest stands, the server takes the book, and walks to the front of the Priest for the Closing Prayer. When the Priest concludes the prayer, he closes the book, the server takes one step back, bows and goes to his place.

When the Final Blessing is given, the Cross Bearer takes the cross and proceeds to the center aisle off the Altar steps, he faces the Altar and waits. He goes far enough into the center aisle so that the Acolytes can go and stand side by side in front of him. The Priest after kissing the Altar comes down turns to face the Altar, at this point the servers are lined up behind him. He bows and they bow with him. They all turn together from the right and proceed down the aisle slowly and reverently.

The Cross Bearer leading and the Acolytes walking side by side behind the cross. If there is a Book Bearer he walks behind the Acolytes.

The servers go back to the sacristy returning the cross and book to their proper place. They then go back to the Altar to bring in the cruets, empty ciboria and other things in order to get them ready for the next Mass. **When all these things are completed, they can get unvested to go home.**



Make sure that you hang your robes PROPERLY