

# *Saint Francis Xavier Parish*

## *Altar Server Guide*

### **An Altar Server's Prayer**

Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for calling me to serve you at your Holy Altar. During the celebration of the Eucharist I know that the priest takes your place when, together with your people and in the name of the Church, he makes present again your passion, death and Resurrection. Help me to carry out my role with prayerful dignity and participation in this memorial of the Last Supper. Let me remain close to you on earth that one day I may share in your glory. Amen!

### **Welcome!**

As an altar server, you are one of the liturgical ministers of our parish. Liturgical ministers have special tasks to perform during liturgies, especially during the celebration of the Eucharist. The altar server is very important in helping God's people worship in the best possible way. Servers exercise a genuine liturgical ministry. They must have a deep sense of the spirit of the liturgy. Serving is not for everyone. It is a call from God to a special ministry in the church. As a server, you are a liturgical minister with an important role during Mass. It is your privilege to assist the priest at the altar. This means that there is a certain way that is appropriate to behave. You should for the entire mass add to the reverence through your behavior and knowledge of what to do, and how to do it properly.

For questions or concerns please contact,

Jerry Angus 801-280-1303

Email- [j.angus@comcast.net](mailto:j.angus@comcast.net)

**Remember that you are an example to the congregation on how you should act during Mass; you need to fully participate in all aspects of Mass. This includes singing and saying the prayers, etc. with the congregation.**  
**Parents, please go through this with your children.**

## **Before Mass**

Arrive **at least** 15 minutes before Mass. Be sure to dress properly for serving. We share the Eucharist celebration in the presence of Jesus. Your best Sunday dress is appropriate. Dress shoes (preferably black or brown) should be worn; this includes girls, no sandals. **Never wear athletic shoes, flip flops, etc.** Do not wear shorts. Servers should wear an appropriate sized cassock (red or black robe), which should come to the top of your shoes. The yoke (white garment that goes over the top) should go to or past your waist. The first server who is dressed should light the two candles at the altar and the two candles at the tabernacle. Five minutes before Mass starts, two servers should get the processional candles and the MC gets the cross, and then **gathers quietly and reverently in the sacristy.**

## **THE ORDER OF THE MASS**

### **The beginning of mass**

Just before mass is to begin, **the altar servers should wait reverently at the rear of the church**, ready for the procession. The procession begins after the first verse and refrain of the entrance song. The cross bearer goes first with the candle bearers following. **The candle bearers should stay one step behind the cross** (never in front) and on each side. **The cross bearer sets the pace for the procession.** You should walk at a slightly slower pace than normal. Try to stay at the same pace during the entire procession. It is the candle bearer's responsibility to keep up with the cross bearer. After the candle bearers place the candles at the altar they are to walk to their seats at the left of altar and **sit down together.** After the cross bearer has placed the cross on the stand they are to go to their seat to left of the altar.

### **Greeting and Sign of the Cross**

The priest will begin by making the Sign of the Cross along with the whole assembly.

### **Penitential Rite**

The priest invites the assembly to reflect on their sins and then leads the congregation in penitential prayers which are followed by "Lord have mercy"..."Christ have mercy"...

### **The Gloria**

The Gloria (Glory to God in the highest....) is sung or recited. At the end of the opening prayer, the people and all altar servers respond, Amen.

### **The Liturgy of the Word**

The focus of the action now shifts to the ambo. The altar server's attention shifts with the action. Look at the lector. Be attentive to the readings.

### **First Reading**

The lector begins with "A reading from the book of..." At the end of the reading, the lector says "The word of the Lord". The altar servers respond aloud, "Thanks be to God".

### **Responsorial Psalm**

The cantor will lead the people in the responsorial psalm by reciting or singing the response after which the altar servers respond appropriately with the psalm response with the congregation.

## **Second Reading**

The lector begins and ends as with the first reading. The altar servers respond aloud with the congregation, "Thanks be to God".

## **Gospel Acclamation (Alleluia)**

a. Gospel Acclamation (Alleluia) – When the choir begins to sing the Alleluia and the music starts, the two servers that brought in the candles should go and get their candles and stand side by side, in line with the left side of the altar (if you were looking at it from the pews), facing the North side of the church where the sacristy is (room where we get dressed). Stand down the step on the same level as the pews and not the altar. Remain standing reverently until the priest or deacon picks up The Gospel (gold covered book) from the altar, as soon as he picks it up, the two candle bearers walk side by side reverently to the ambo. Once at the ambo, one candle bearer needs to stand on each side facing the Gospel. **Hold the candles a foot away from the Ambo and never rest them on the sides of it.**

b. The priest or deacon will read the Gospel and then end with "The Gospel of the Lord". And everyone responds with "Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ". Once everyone has responded, walk back to the altar the same way you came and put the candles back on their stand. Both candle bearers should walk back to the bench together and sit at the same time.

## **The Homily**

A homily or teaching on the Sacred Scripture will be given, during which the altar servers are to pay close attention to the homilist, and should not fidget, play with their cincture or begin looking around. The altar servers should remain still, quiet, and pay attention to what the homilist has to say.

## **The Profession of Faith (The Creed)**

After the homily, there will be a brief period of silence while everyone reflects on the message given by the homilist. Then the priest will stand and all altar servers will stand along with the congregation. The priest will then begin reciting The Creed (I believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, etc.).

## **The Prayer of the Faithful (General Intercessions)**

The Prayer of the Faithful is the collection of prayers read from the priest and the lector who is at the ambo. Each petition will end by the altar servers and the congregation responding aloud, "Lord hear our prayer". At the conclusion of the General Intercessions, after the lector or deacon has finished the petitions, the priest will say a prayer. All will respond with "Amen".

## THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

### **Offertory**

Immediately after The Prayers of the Faithful and everybody is seated and the offertory song begins. When the music starts the one server will get the cross and walk to the back of the church, where the table with the gifts (bread and wine) are. When the offerings are ready an usher will tell the cross bearer to start processing forward and when the Priest and Deacon are at the front of the altar. Walk at the same pace you originally processed in and put the cross back on its stand. At the same time when the cross bearer starts walking to the back of the church, the priest, or deacon will walk to the altar. The other altar server with the MC's help need to walk to the credence table and bring three things to the altar and hand them to the person setting the altar or set them on the corner of the altar. The three things are the following:

**1. The Priest chalice** with the cloth on top. **2. The Sacramentary book** (the big red book.) if it is not on the altar. **3. The cruets** (small glass bottles of water.) Never carry more than one thing at a time, make two or three trips if needed. After the cross bearer returns with the gifts and puts the cross on its stand, both **servers then go to the credence table and get the bowl, pitcher of water and towel.** Walking together, go to the altar and wait for the priest to wash his hands. After he is done put the items back on the credence table. Both servers return to their seats.

### **Eucharistic prayer**

The priest then begins with the preface and then will enter the congregation into the "Holy, Holy", which will be sung or recited. The congregation along with the altar servers will kneel and the priest will continue with the Eucharist prayer by recalling The Last Supper. The server by the bells needs to get ready to ring them.

**The bells are rung three different times and each time you ring the Bells you ring them three times.**

Twist your wrist with the bells once, wait on second, ring them again, wait one second, ring them for a third time. Think of it all in three's, the Bells are rung three different times, three rings each time for a total of three seconds. Ring them loudly so people in the back can hear.

**First ring.** When Father raises his hands over the Altar and says "May the Holy Spirit come over these gifts". Ring the Bells when he starts saying "May the Holy Spirit etc..."

**a. Second ring.** When Father picks up the Host and says "Take this all of you and eat it; this is my body which will be given up for you". **Father will raise the Body of Christ above his head, then ring the Bells.**

**b. Third ring.** Father will kneel and then pick up the Chalice and say, "...take this and drink from it, this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven, do this in memory of me". **Father will raise the chalice above his head, then ring the bells.**

Father will then proclaim The Mystery of Faith, which will be sung or recited. Father will then finish up the prayer by remembering the Saints, all those who departed before us and then chant, "Through him, with him, and in Him, etc..." Amen will be sung or recited then the congregation along with the servers will stand, hold out their hands and recite The Our Father. The priest will then ask the congregation to share with each other a sign of peace. After you share the sign of peace go to the credence table to get the 3 or 5 chalices and bring them to the altar then line up to and wait to receive communion.

### **Communion**

The extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (EM) will come up to the altar and all will stand in a semicircle. **As soon as you receive Holy Communion return to your seats together in an attitude of prayer.**

### **After Communion**

As soon as Communion is done the deacon or Priest will return to the altar to begin clearing it. When the priest or deacon comes to the altar after communion, both **servers should stand and wait by the altar so they can return items to the credence table when they are handed to them. Both servers need to keep returning to the altar until all items are cleared.** Once everything is put away you all can return to your seats.

### **The Recessional**

Immediately after the dismissal (“The Mass is ended, go in peace”) the recessional hymn will begin. After the first verse and refrain of the song, the MC should get the cross and walk down the step, stand between the first pews and wait for the candle bearers. Candle bearers should get their candles at the same time then stand next to the cross in the same way as they proceeded in. The cross bearer again sets the pace for the recession, **as soon as the candle bearers are next to the cross, the cross bearer should start walking.**

### **After Mass**

Wait for the priest to get to the back of the church. After he blesses you, return to the sacristy until the closing song is finished, then return the candles and cross back to their stands and extinguish all the candles. Treat your cassocks with respect and hang them up neatly. Whenever you are in the church, regardless if mass has begun or ended, you should remain reverent. Do not run, make noise or distract people.

## Reminders

### Walking

We do a lot of walking every day and sometimes we get sloppy as we do it. Always walk with your back straight and your head held high. When you process in and out of mass, stay centered in the aisle, and keep your eyes straight ahead. Never run.

### Bowing

When you bow to someone or something during the mass, it should be a smooth forward inclining of your head and shoulders. When you bow to the altar (which symbolizes Jesus), bow deeply at the waist and bring yourself slowly to full height. Never walk and bow at the same time. Always stop before bowing. Any time you are holding or carrying anything (a book, the processional cross or candles) you do not bow.

### Kneeling

When you kneel, your body should be upright and your hands should be together in front of your chest, well above your waist. Do not bounce your feet around, you should remain completely still.

### Standing

Always stand up straight with both feet firmly on the floor. Don't lean against the furniture or against the walls. **Always hold your hands joined together in front of you if you are not holding something.**

### Sitting

Sit down on your bench carefully and gracefully. If more than one altar server is serving, the servers should wait until all of you are standing in front of your bench, then everyone should sit down together. Once you are seated, sit tall and don't slouch. Feet should be flat on the floor. **Your hands should be joined together in your lap.** You should remain still and reverent. Any fidgeting or playing around you do is very irreverent and distracting to the congregation.

### Hands

Unless you are carrying something (like a candle), your hands should be kept joined in front of you. Other than making the sign of the cross, you should make no other hand gestures. Never raise your hands or hold them up.

### Eyes

**During Mass always look toward the place where the action is:** the celebrant's chair, the ambo, or the altar. When a lector is reading the Scriptures, you should be looking at the lector. When you are talking to someone, you expect that person to look at you-the same is true at mass. **Never stare at people in the congregation, it is very distracting.** If there is a master of ceremonies (MC), keep an eye on them, the deacon or priest. They might want you to do something at any time.

### General Appearance

You should be clean and well groomed, hair combed, etc. Learn when and how to properly perform your duties. It is your responsibility to make sure you know. Never fidget. Always do things smoothly. Do not allow you to be distracted or distract others. **Be still** when sitting or standing.

## Mistakes

When you make a mistake try not to get flustered. Everyone makes an occasional mistake- priest, deacons, lectors and altar servers. However, to keep the Sacred Liturgy flowing smoothly, it is often best to continue along as though whatever happened was deliberate- don't quickly reverse direction or get flustered. This will merely call attention to the mistake. Smoothly and quietly take the next opportunity to set things right. **Get into the habit of keeping an eye on the action.** That will help make you aware if the priest, deacon or MC is trying to get your attention to take care of something you may have forgotten or some unexpected task.

**Miscellaneous:**

**Always pay attention!! Always be reverent and respectful!!** You are in the presence of God and are serving him, his church and his people. You are an example to the congregation on how you should act in mass. Do not fidget or distract from the mass in any way.

**If you can't make it when you are scheduled, it is your responsibility to get a substitute.**

You should check the church web page for the schedule every two months, it is posted by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the second month.

In the sacristy will always be current with any changes made after the original schedule was printed. If you accidentally do not receive a schedule, it is your responsibility to make sure you get one. "Not having a schedule" is not an excuse for not showing up when you are supposed to. Please make sure you have a current schedule. If at any time you no longer wish to altar serve please let us know, rather than just not showing up. **Please do not be absent without getting a replacement.** To get a replacement you need to look at your schedule with the names and phone numbers of other servers at your mass time and call them to ask if they can fill in. Please notify us if you switch with someone so we can update the schedule. All training material and the current schedule can be found at [www.sfxkearns.org](http://www.sfxkearns.org)

For all questions, concerns, scheduling & notifications regarding altar serving, please send an email to [sfx@q.com](mailto:sfx@q.com) or call 801-280-1303.

Sincerely,

Jerry Angus

Saint Francis Xavier Parish

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## **Glossary of Terms**

**Reverence-** The virtue that inclines a person to show honor and respect. A feeling of profound awe, respect and love.

**Genuflection** - The bending of the knee as an act of reverence. Customary, when passing before the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. Entering the pew for divine worship and during certain ceremonies to the cross.

**Sacramentary-** contains the priest's texts for celebrating the Eucharist throughout the year. The big red book the Priest reads from at the Altar.

**ProceSSIONAL cross** - A crucifix mounted on a staff, carried in mass & solemn services at the head of a procession of the clergy.

**Processional candles** -Candles carried in mass and solemn services at the head of a procession of the clergy.

**Cross Bearer**- Server who is responsible for the processional cross.

**Candle Bearer**- Servers who are responsible for the processional candles.

**Book Bearer**- Server who is responsible for holding the book of prayers for the priest or deacon. This is usually the deacon.

**Cassock**- Long red or black garment worn at mass.

**Yoke**- White waist length garment worn over a cassock

**Celebrants chair**- The chair that the priest or bishop who offers Mass sits at.

**Altar**- The table on which the sacrifice of the Mass is offered.

**Ambo**- The podium from which the gospel, homily and prayers are read.

**Credence Table** - A small table or shelf in the wall at back of the church. Placed on it is usually the chalice, host, cruet, hand washing bowl, towel, etc.

**Homilist**- A person who delivers a sermon or informal talk on some part of the sacred scriptures, usually the priest or deacon. It aims to explain the literal meaning of the scripture and develop a practical application for the moral or spiritual life.

**Offertory or the Gifts**- That part of the Mass in which the unconsecrated bread and wine are offered to God.

**Chalice**-The cup shaped vessel or goblet used at Mass to contain the precious blood of Christ.

**Host**- A round bread wafer used for consecration, to symbolize the body of Christ.

**Cruet**- A small glass bottle of water.

**Flagon** - A decorative vessel, usually a gold pitcher or glass used for holding the sacred wine that will be consecrated and become the blood of Christ.

**Chant**- Speaking a prayer in vocal melody.

**Tabernacle-** A dwelling place for the divine presence of Jesus. Usually an ornately gold cupboard or boxlike cabinet, where the Body of Jesus (Consecrated Host) is kept and revered.

**Paschal Candle-** The largest candle in the worship space. A new paschal candle is blessed and lit every year at Easter, and is used throughout the Paschal season and then throughout the year on special occasions, such as baptisms and funerals.

**Paschal or Easter Season-** Is the period of fifty days from Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday.

**Ciborium-** A covered container used to hold the body of Christ (consecrated small Hosts.) It is stored in the tabernacle.

**Paten-** A saucer like dish of the same material as the chalice. On it rests the host to be consecrated. It usually sets on top of the chalice before Mass.

**Pyx-** A small round container. It is used to bring consecrated hosts to the sick.

**Thurible-** A vented Vessel on a chain in which incense is burned.

**Aspergill-**A small brush or instrument used for sprinkling holy water during the liturgical services.

**Corporal-** A square white linen cloth on which the host and chalice are placed during Mass on the altar.

**Purificator-** A linen napkin used to wipe the chalice after communion.

**Pall-** A stiff square of cardboard covered with linen, spread over the top of the host at Mass.

**Altar Veil-** A decorative covering for the altar

**Chasuble-** A sleeveless outer garment worn by a priest at Mass. It is worn over all other vestments and is made of silk, velvet, or other rich material usually decorated with symbols. The color of the chasuble corresponds to the color indicated on the liturgical calendar.

**Sacristy-** A room for keeping vestments (such as the cassock and yoke) and other church furnishings, sacred vessels, altar linens, etc. The sacristy is also where the priest and liturgical ministers dress in vestments and prepare before the service.

**Sacrarium**- Located in the sacristy is a special wash basin, called a sacrarium, in which the drain flows directly into the ground to prevent sacred items such as the Body and Blood of Christ from being washed into the sewers. The sacrarium is used to wash vessels used during Holy Communion.

**Vestment**- Special garments worn by the clergy, in conformity with church regulations, at the celebration of the Mass, administration of the sacraments, in procession, when giving blessings, and in general whenever exercising their official priestly duties.

**Vessel**- The utensils and receptacles used in liturgical celebrations.

**Procession**- The solemn entry of the priest, deacon and liturgical ministers from the entrance of the church, to the altar at the beginning of Mass.

**Recession**- The exit of the priest, deacon and other liturgical ministers from the altar to the entrance of the church, at the conclusion of Mass.

**Mass**-The sacrifice of the Eucharist as the central act of worship of the Catholic Church, from which the faithful are sent to put into practice what they have learned and use the graces they have received

**Liturgy**- A public service, duty, or work. In scripture it refers to the religious duties to be performed by priests. Liturgy is the official public worship of The Church and is thus distinguished from private devotion. It is the special title of the Eucharist, and the administration of the sacraments.

**Eucharist**- The true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, who is really and substantially present under the appearances of bread and wine, in order to offer himself in The Sacrifice of the Mass and to be received as spiritual food in Holy Communion.

**Ministry** - Authorized service of God in the service of others, according to specified norms revealed by Christ and determined by the church.

**Laity**-(Layperson) The body of the faithful, outside of the ranks of the clergy.

**Clergy**- Ordained members of the Holy Roman Catholic Church. They include bishops, priests and deacons. Clergy have received the sacrament of "Holy Orders" They are the formal leadership positions of the Church.

**Priest**- Within the Church are men who are specially ordained as priests to consecrate and offer the Body and Blood of Christ in the Mass. The Apostles were the first ordained priests, when on Holy Thursday, Christ told them to do in his memory what he had just done at the Last Supper. All priests and bishops trace their ordination to the Apostles. Their second essential priestly power, to forgive sins, was conferred by Christ on Easter Sunday, when he told the Apostles, "For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained" (John 20-22, 23).

**Deacon**- An ordained member of the clergy. They assist priests in preaching, the conferral of baptism, performance of marriage, the administration of parishes, and similar duties.

**MC**- Master of Ceremonies. A layperson that assists the Priest, (especially in the absence of a Deacon) during Mass and other Liturgical functions.

**EM**- extraordinary minister of Holy Communion is a layperson formally instituted to administer and distribute Holy Communion during Mass.

**Altar Server** – Serves at the altar during Mass and other liturgical functions. They assist the priest, deacon or MC.

**Lector** – Appointed to read The Word of God in the liturgical assembly.

**Usher**- Welcomes parishioners and especially visitors and helps them find seats if needed. They get the gifts and collection ready for the offertory procession.

**Cantor** -Chief Singer of the church choir, who leads the singing.

**Liturgical Minister**– Laity who work to lead all people to full, active and conscience participation and appreciation of the liturgy.

**Minister** -Title given to a variety of persons in the Catholic Church. Those who administer the sacraments are ministers of the sacramental rites. Persons assisting the celebrant at Mass are ministers, e.g., the Lector, Servers, EM's, etc.

### **10 basic things every Altar Server should have memorized.**

These 10 things happen in order.

1. After the opening song finishes, we will say The Penitential Rite and sing The Gloria, as soon as that finishes the priest will say "let us pray" as soon as The Gloria finishes or you hear "let us pray."
2. Candle bearers, **as soon as the priest stands up after the readings and the music starts, go get your candle and stand in place ready for the priest or deacon to pick up The Gospel** (gold book) off the altar and lead him to the ambo where you stand still until he is done reading. When everyone says "Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ" you can return your candles and sit down.
3. The Creed, just like the beginning, The Creed is not said at school mass.

### **Setting and cleaning the Altar**

4. Candle bearers, at this same time when the music starts **you need to carry THREE things to the altar and hand them to the person setting the altar or set them on the corner.** Please memorize these three things.  
**1. The chalice (cup with white cloth on top) 2. Cruet of water (small glass bottle of water) 3. The Sacramentary (big red book) if not on altar.** Do not carry more than one thing at a time. Make two trips if you need to.
5. Washing of the Priests hands. **As cross bearer gets back and puts the cross on its stand all b o t h servers need to go get the stuff to wash his hands.** One server gets the bowl and can put the towel over their arm and the other one gets the picture of water.
6. Candle bearers, once you put away the things to wash his hands you need to go to your chairs.
7. All servers need to memorize when to ring the bells. If you forget, you need to watch the priest, he will look at you when you need to ring the bells, and you have to pay attention and be ready. You will ring the bells three different times. Each time you ring the bells you ring them three times, LOUDLY.
8. **ALL SERVERS** once communion is over and someone goes to clean up the altar, **all need to stand next to the altar and wait to be handed things to take back to the table. Keep coming back until everything is removed from the altar. The person cleaning up the altar will nod their head when everything is done and all three of you can sit down.**

This guide & additional picture training guides can be found at [www.sfxkearns.org](http://www.sfxkearns.org)