

# Immaculate Conception Church

## ALTAR SERVER MANUAL

Being an altar server means **serving God and his people at Mass**. That is what makes serving Mass worth doing, and worth doing well. That is what makes good servers want to do their best.

Servers are **ministers**, just like the lectors and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. The name “server” clearly points out what you do at Mass: serve God and his people by helping the priest and congregation. By helping the priest and people carry sacred vessels and sacred objects and carry out special actions at Mass.

At Mass, your actions and appearance should show that you love God and his people. It should be clear to all who see you that you think serving is worth doing, and worth doing well. You should try to be the best server you can be.

The following information will help you in your ministry as an altar server. It doesn't cover every single thing that happens in church, but deals with the basics. It is good to remember to always **be alert** and **pay attention** to the priests and deacons so that you can help them whenever necessary. And remember please refrain from any extra movement or talking.

### **BEFORE MASS:**

- show up for assigned Mass or get a substitute
- arrive at least 15 minutes before Mass begins
- for boys wear shoes and not slippers. for girls wear sandals and not high heels
- hands should be clean, hair clean and neatly combed. For girls hair should be tied back.
- find a robe that fits you well.
- tie the cord so it does not come loose or hang on the ground. The liturgical color of the cord is listed in the ordo.
- check with the priest for any special instructions
- light the candle about 10 minutes before Mass begins. If you need help lighting the Easter Candle when it is used, please ask.
- make sure the Roman Missal and binder is on the Presiders table and other sacred items are on the credence table.
- Decide what tasks each server will have (carrying the cross, holding the book, etc.)

## **DURING MASS**

### Entrance Procession:

- Go to the doors of the church for the entrance procession.
- Begin walking down the aisle as soon as the Gathering Song has begun or when the priest tells you to go. Walk at a medium pace. Cross bearer leads accompanied by two candle bearers (except if incense is used, then incense leads (swinging & smoking)). When you reach the front, cross bearer does not bow but moves into the Sanctuary area and places the Processional Cross in the stand, carefully. The other servers carrying candles likewise proceeds to Credence Table and place candles on Credence Table. (If there are not enough servers to carry cross and two candles then omit candles in entrance procession but be sure the candles are on the Credence Table before start of Mass with a lighter nearby.) The Censer Bearer or Thurifer (if incense is used) goes to place the priest pointed out before Mass.

### Opening Prayer:

After the introductory parts of the Mass, the priest will say, ***“Let us pray.”*** This is the sign for the server to walk to the front of the priest with the Roman Missal and hold it open for the priest to read the opening prayer (usually it is the green ribbon, but check with priest or deacon before the beginning of the Mass). When the priest has finished the opening prayer, close the Roman Missal and place it on the Presiders table then return to your seat.

### Preparation of Gifts:

When everyone sits down after the General Intercessions, the servers help to set the altar. (If there is no deacon) One server goes to the altar and reverently bows removes the Gospel Book stand from the altar and bring it to the credence table. One server brings the sacred vessels individually: first bring the chalice then go back for the cups. Then bring the Roman Missal and give it to the priest or deacon who will set up the altar.

- When the altar has been set, the priest (and deacon) and the servers go to the front to receive the gifts. The priest first receives the large bowl (ciboria) or bowls with bread then gives it to the server. The pitcher(s) of wine are then received and handed to the server(s) (and deacon). Finally, the priest moves back to the altar. The collection is placed on the floor in front of the altar by the ushers. The pitcher(s) of wine is placed on the tabernacle side of altar then the server will get the water

and wait. After the priest or deacon pours the wine into the chalice and cups he will give the empty pitcher(s) to you and one of the servers should bring forth the pitcher of water. The Priest/Deacon will then pour a small amount of water into the chalice. He will give the water pitcher back to you to return to the credence table. (Always remember to hand the pitcher(s) to the Priest/Deacon with handles facing him so he may grab the handles. To help you do this be sure one hand is under the pitcher to secure it in the exchange of hands on the handle.)

- One server takes the Lavabo bowl and pitcher of water and the other server takes the towel. Both servers go to the altar so the priest can wash his hands. **NOTE:** Both servers go up to the side of the altar – the priest should not have to walk across the sanctuary to get to you.
- **NOTE:** If there is only one server, that server waits at the altar for the pitcher of water and empty wine pitcher and then returns them to the credence table. The server carries the Lavabo bowl and pitcher of water and places the towel over one arm for the washing of the priest's hands.

Kneel during the Eucharistic Prayer: After all sing the Holy, Holy, Holy, the people kneel down. Servers should kneel on the sanctuary steps. When the people stand, servers stand and return to their place.

#### Communion:

- After the Sign of Peace, one server removes the Roman Missal from the altar (or the priest or deacon may hand it to you.) When the priest or deacon finish distributing the Eucharist into bowls (ciboria), the large bowl is handed to a server who returns it to the credence table. The servers stand up to receive communion.
- When communion is completed, assist the priest or deacon in the clearing of the altar. When the Blessed Sacrament is removed from the altar the priest will fold the corporal and place it on the pall and hand it to a server who places them on the credence table. ***(If the Blessed Sacrament is still reserved on the altar for the sending to the sick do not remove it or the corporal since only the priest or deacon will do this.)*** Once the Blessed Sacrament is removed the priest or deacon may hand the corporal to a server. Be alert and ready to assist as needed.

### Closing Prayer and Recession:

- After the period of silent prayer after communion the priest will stand or signal to you that he is ready. Then bring the Roman Missal to him for the Post Communion Prayer. At some Masses, the priest will also use the Roman Missal for the final blessing. He may tell you this before Mass, or, he may just ask you to stand to the side for a moment during the announcements.
- When the closing song **begins**, the cross bearer takes the cross and moves by the baptism font and turns to face the altar. The candle bearers accompany the cross bearer and likewise turns to face the altar. The lectors will come to stand next to you when they see the priest begin to move to the altar. Then the deacon and priest will come down and turn to face the altar. When the priest extends his hands all bow, then all then turn and the servers begin the procession down the aisle, cross bearer first, (unless incense is used and then the Thurifer takes the lead).

### **AFTER MASS**

- Return the cross to its stand (or leave in the vestry)
- Extinguish the candles.
- Remove robes and cords and hang them up properly.

### **BAPTISMS DURING MASS**

- When baptisms take place at Mass, the servers assist the priest or deacon as requested. Check with the priest or deacon before Mass to see how he wants you to help at the baptism.

## INCENSE DURING MASS

- On special feasts and celebrations, incense may be used at Mass. Usually, one server handles the incense. The priest is always the one to place the incense on the burning coals. The server goes to the priest, hands the incense boat to the priest (or deacon) and opens the thurible (pot) and holds it up so the priest doesn't have to bend over to reach it. After the priest places incense into the pot, the server closes it and either hands it to the priest or deacon or carries it to where the priest or deacon will use it. When not in use, the censer and boat are placed on the special stand at the back of the sanctuary near the Credence table area.

Incense can be used at these times during Mass:

- Entrance procession
- Incensing of altar at beginning of Mass
- Incensing of Gospel Book before the gospel
- Incensing gifts, altar, and people at the Preparation of Gifts
- During the elevation at the consecration of the Mass
- Recession at end of Mass

**Thank you for your ministry as Altar Server here at Immaculate Conception Church; your service is greatly appreciated!**