

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your willingness to serve! As an Altar Server, you are not only helping the priest and serving God; but, you are also helping your whole Parish community to celebrate the Mass. Acts of service are an important part of Christian life; the act of serving at the Altar is a special gift to your Christian family. At every Mass, the Saints and Angels join us on the Sanctuary to celebrate Mass; Heaven literally touches Earth. As an Altar Server, you help remind us that the whole Christian community (those on Earth *and* in Heaven) participates in the Mass. You also are an example to the community on how to worship during mass.

This manual will provide you with information on how to participate in the Mass as an Altar Server. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask your fellow Altar Servers, or one of the Adults that are helping with the Mass.

At present, there is no schedule for Altar Servers. You are welcomed to serve at *any* mass. While there are specific tasks assigned to three or four servers; there is always room for more servers at the Altar.

Even if you are an 'extra' Server, you are still an important part of the Mass! Being an extra Server is a great way to watch the Mass from 'behind the scenes' and learn about the role of an Altar Server, and become more comfortable with your duties. You can also pray for the priest and the other people during Mass, which is very helpful.

Don't be nervous, and don't be afraid of making mistakes. The most important thing is that you are doing your best and are there to serve God. There are many experienced Altar Servers, and other adults who will help you and answer any questions you may have.



<<< Look for this symbol, to find special tips and information

DEFINITIONS

- **Adult Server:** In the Absence of a Deacon, the Adult Server is responsible for preparing the Altar during Mass. They are also Eucharistic Ministers, and assist the Priest with the distribution of Holy Communion.
- **Alb:** The white robe worn by Senior / Adult / Altar Servers, Acolytes and Deacons.
- **Altar:** The large table at the centre of the Sanctuary, on which the Priest celebrates the Mass.
- **Altar Server:** A specially trained person, who has received their First Communion, who assists the Priest during the celebration of the Holy Mass.
- **Ambo:** The podium from which the readings and Gospel are read.
- **Candle Bearer:** An Altar Server who carries a candle during the procession.

- **Chalice:** Large gold cup containing the wine / blood of Christ, used by the Priest.
- **Ciborium:** The gold dishes which are used to hold the Eucharistic bread / body of Christ.
- **Cincture:** A rope tied around one's waist, to secure an Alb.
- **Credence Table:** Small table at the side of the Sanctuary, used to store the various vessels and items used during the Mass.
- **Cross Bearer:** The Altar Server who carries the cross during the procession.
- **Cruets:** Glass jars containing the wine & water used during the Holy Mass
- **Deacon:** A specially ordained man, with responsibilities similar to that of a Priest; but, with certain limitations (cannot perform all sacraments). He is responsible for managing the incense, preparing the Altar, and assisting the Priest with other tasks during the mass or other celebrations (such as Easter), and is also a Eucharistic Minister who helps the Priest distribute Holy Communion. The Deacon may also read the Gospel, or give the Homily.
- **Homily:** (also called Sermon) A talk given by the Priest or Deacon, after the reading of the Gospel; which, helps the people understand the readings.
- **Incense:** A heavily scented substance, sprinkled on top of the hot charcoal in a Thurible, to produce a heavy, perfumed smoke, which is used in many liturgical celebrations.
- **Incense Boat:** A small dish used to hold extra incense. Typically carried by the Deacon, Acolyte, or an Altar Server.
- **Purificator:** Small towels used to wipe the Chalices.
- **Sanctuary:** The elevated area at the front of the Church, on which the Mass is celebrated. The Altar, Ambo, Priest and Altar Servers all are located in the Sanctuary.
- **Sacramentary:** Also called "The Roman Missal", is the large red book which contains all the prayers and instructions for the Priest on how to celebrate the Mass.
- **Sacristy:** The room where all items used for the Mass are stored, and where the Priest vests before Mass.
- **Senior Server:** An experienced Altar Server, who is specially trained to perform extra duties during the mass and other liturgical celebrations. In the absence of a Deacon, the Senior Server is responsible for managing the incense, preparing the Altar, and

assisting the Priest with other tasks during the mass or other celebrations (such as Easter), and is sometimes a Eucharistic Minister who helps the Priest distribute Holy Communion.

- **Tabernacle:** Large golden box at the rear of the Sanctuary, where Jesus resides. Excess consecrated hosts from previous masses are stored here, as well as the special Large host that is used during adoration. The body of Christ is always stored in the Tabernacle, so that it is always present in the Church.
- **Thurible:** Where incense is burned; carried by the Deacon or Senior Server.

PREPARATION

Dress

- You should dress nicely and modestly for mass. You are serving God, and are also setting an example for others in the Parish community. If you do not own dress clothes, or cannot afford to purchase dress clothes, please dress as nicely as you are able, and come as you are. Try to stick with solid colours, and avoid bold colours or patterns. Albs will tend to show the colours or patterns you are wearing underneath.
 - o Boys:
 - Black dress pants, Dockers, or other dress / casual dress pants
 - Tucked in dress or casual dress shirt (white or light coloured)
 - Black dress / casual dress shoes (bold coloured shoes, skate shoes, snow boots or sandals should be avoided)
 - o Girls:
 - Dress pants, long skirts (below the knees) dresses
 - Blouses, shirts or dresses should cover the shoulders
 - Dress or casual dress shoes (bold coloured shoes, skate shoes, snow boots, sandals or heels should be avoided)



These clothing guidelines are also great for when you are attending *any* Mass.

Arrival & Getting Ready



When you first arrive at Church, bless yourself with some holy water, and then **genuflect towards the Tabernacle**. It is customary to only genuflect when entering or leaving the Church; for the remainder of the time, any time you cross the Tabernacle, you should pause and bow (or genuflect if you choose).

- Arrive at least 15min before Holy Mass
 - o Rosary is typically said 30mins before mass, so you can come earlier and pray the rosary if you like
- Choose an Alb that is sized to come down to your ankles
 - o Any longer and you will trip, any shorter and it looks like a dress
 - o Shorter Albs are on your left, longer Albs are on your right
 - o If you find an Alb with a broken zipper, snap, or tear, please give it to one of the adults in the Sacristy, and show them the problem. They will set it aside so it gets fixed.
- Tie your cincture around your waist, with the knot on your left side
 - o See *Fig. 1*
- Lastly, make sure to wear a cross
 - o Tuck the string *under* your hood (if your Alb has one)
- Make sure the candles at the Altar are lit, also light the processional candles
- Wait by the Sacristy, until Mass



Time before Mass should be used for quiet reflection and prayer, asking for God's grace and blessing, to prepare oneself to actively participate in the Holy Mass.

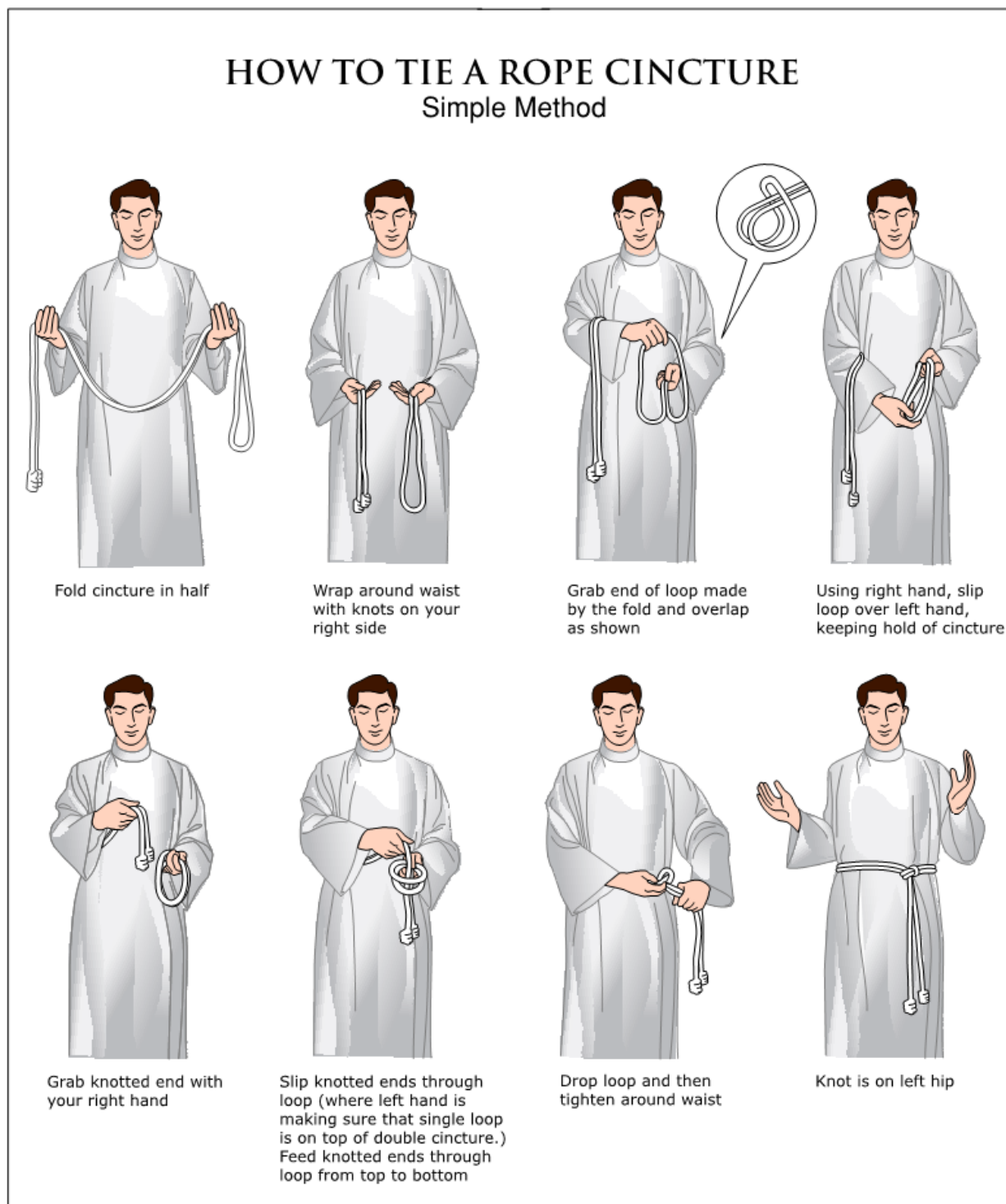


Fig. 1 – How to Tie a Cincture, Simple Method

ENTRANCE PROCESSION

Preparation

- Just before the Holy Mass begins, the Priest will say a prayer with the Altar Servers and Ministers
- Then line up in formation (See fig. 2), and begin the procession once the music starts



If people are just coming in the front door, give them a moment to make their way into the Church before starting the procession.

Formation

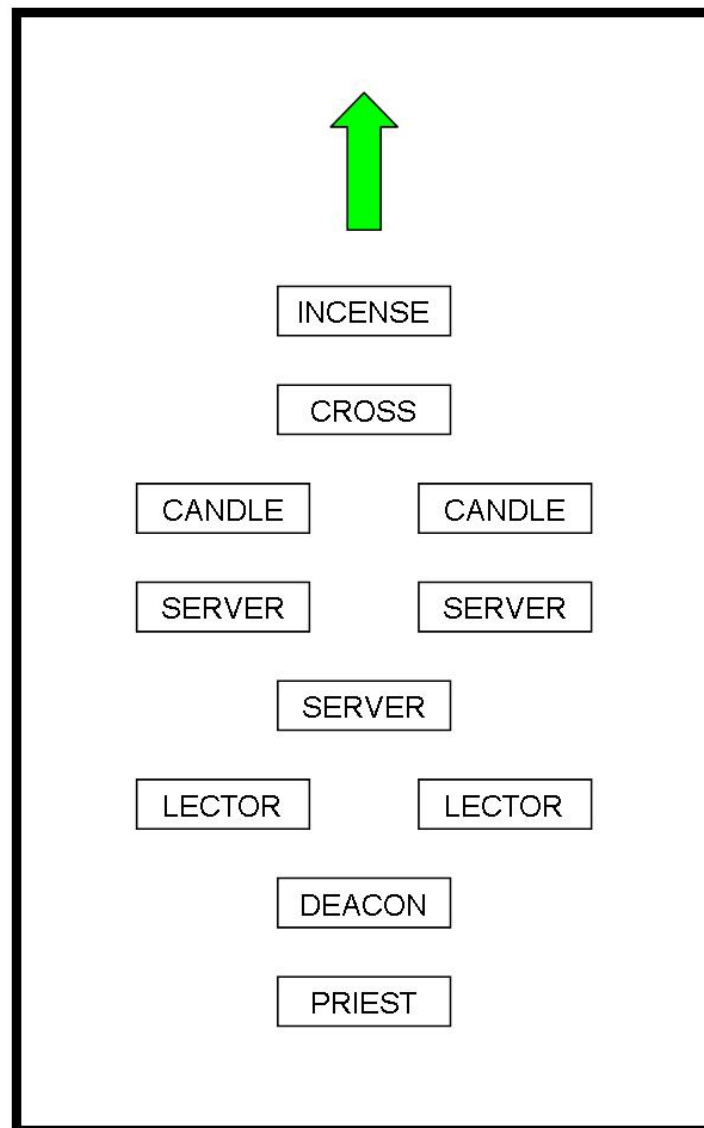


Fig. 2 – Procession Layout

Arrival at the Sanctuary

- Once the procession arrives at the Sanctuary, the Cross Bearer will go to the top of the Stairs
- Candle Bearers will stand on either side of the isle carpet
- Other Altar Servers will line up beside the Candle Bearers
 - o If you are on the left of the procession; line up to your left
 - o If you are on the right of the procession; line up to your right
 - o If you are last and in the centre of the procession; line up to your right
- The Lectors will stand behind the Candle Bearers
- The Priest will stand in the middle of the Candle Bearers
- The Priest will then either genuflect or bow; do what the Priest does



The Cross Bearer should *not* genuflect or bow, because they are carrying the Cross. Candle Bearers should take care while they are genuflecting or bowing, to **not** tip the candles.



When you genuflect, your right knee should touch the ground.



Fig. 3 – Arrival at the Sanctuary

Seating

- After the Priest has bowed / genuflected, Altar Servers will proceed to their seats
 - o Cross Bearer will walk between the Priest's chair and the Altar, and place the Cross in its stand. They will be seated to the left of the Tabernacle, immediately adjacent to the Cross
 - o The Candle Bearers will place the candles in their holders at the Ambo. They will be seated immediately to the right of the Tabernacle
 - o Other Altar Servers will take their respective seats on the left and right of the Sanctuary

- The Senior or Adult Servers will be seated immediately adjacent to the Credence Table.



Only the Cross Bearer will walk between the Priest's chair & the Altar. Other Servers should walk on the extreme left and right of the Sanctuary (so they can walk right up and in front of their chairs).



If you find there are no seats available on your side of the Sanctuary, cross in front of the Tabernacle (pausing to bow), and go to the other side.

OPENING

Posture

- The appropriate posture during mass, is to have your hands together 'in prayer'

Opening Prayer

Lord Have Mercy

Gloria

LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading

Psalm

Second Reading

Gospel

- All stand and sing the "Alleluia"
- Candle Bearers proceed to the Ambo and pick up the processional candles, then walk to the front of the Altar and stand at the corners.
- The Priest will stand between the Candle Bearers, and bow to the Tabernacle.
- The Candle Bearers will then process in front of the Ambo, around the back
 - One Candle Bearer leads the Priest
 - One Candle Bearer follows the Priest
 - The leader will end up on the left side of the Ambo (closest to the Altar)
 - The follower will end up on the right side of the Ambo (closest to the wall)
- The Candle Bearers will stand a step back from the candle holders, and continue to hold the candles for the reading of the Gospel (See Fig. 4)
 - The candles should be held, and *not* rested on the stands



Remember: You do not need to make the sign of the cross on your forehead, lips and heart when holding the candles. Candle Bearers should take care while they are genuflecting or bowing, to **not** tip the candles.



Fig. 4 – Holding the candles for the Gospel reading

- Return the candles to their holders and be seated after the reading of the Gospel

OFFERATORY

- Once the ushers have made it about halfway to the back of the Church taking the collection, the Cross Bearer will take the cross and go to the back of the Church
- The Priest will then come and stand on the floor in front of the Sanctuary, to receive the gifts
- Other Altar Servers (not more than four), should also come down with the Priest
- Altar Servers should stand on the last step before the floor
 - o Remember to stand to the side so the Cross Bearer can walk back up to the Sanctuary
- Once the collection is complete, and the ushers are ready to bring the gifts up to the Altar, the Cross Bearer will lead them in procession back to the Sanctuary
- The Cross Bearer will continue up the steps and return the cross to its stand



Remember: The Cross Bearer always walks between the Priest's chair and the Altar.

- The Priest will hand the gifts to the Altar Servers, who will then take them back to the Altar and give them to the Deacon, Senior or Adult Server
 - o The Servers with the Ciborium should go first
 - You will take the lid off of the ciborium and then Deacon or Senior / Adult Server will take the ciborium from you and place it on the Altar
 - You may then take the lid and place it on the credence table

- The Server with the wine will be last
 - Hand the wine to the Deacon or Senior / Adult Server, who will then fill the Chalice
 - They will hand the empty cruet back to you (sometimes they don't use all the wine, and that's okay)
 - You may then go place the cruet on the credence table
- One Altar Server will then take the cruet of water to the Altar to give to the Priest
 - Make sure the handle is facing outward, so the Priest can grab it
 - The Priest will give you back the water cruet, and you will make a slight bow towards him
 - Return the cruet to the credence table
- Two Altar Servers should be set up and ready to take the water cruet, bowl, and towel up immediately after the previous Altar Server (see Fig. 5)
 - One Server takes the water cruet and towel
 - The other server takes the bowl
 - The server with the bowl should be on the right (next to the Altar)
- Proceed to the Altar, and the Priest will hold his hands over the bowl
 - Pour a little water on his finger tips (it doesn't need to be a lot, as he isn't actually washing his hands)
 - Present the towel
 - The priest will dry his hands, return the towel, and you will make a slight bow towards him
- Return the items to the credence table and take your seat



Fig. 5 – Holding the bowl, cruet and towel for the washing of hands

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

Holy Holy Holy

- All kneel after this is sung
- The Cross Bearer will be ringing the bells, and should carefully pull them out from under the chairs

Consecration

- The bells shall be run at the following times
 - o When the Priest holds his hands out and blesses the gifts
 - o When the Priest raises the host and says "...this is My body, which will be given up for You"
 - Ring the bells continually while the host is elevated
 - Give the bells 3 quick chimes
 - 1. When the host is set down
 - 2. When the Priest's knee touches the floor
 - 3. As the Priest stands back up
 - o When the Priest raises the chalice and says "...do this in remembrance of Me."
 - Ring the bells continually while the chalice is elevated
 - Give the bells 3 quick chimes
 - 1. When the chalice is set down
 - 2. When the Priest's knee touches the floor
 - 3. As the Priest stands back up
- All stand
- Ring the bells one more time:
 - o When the Priest elevates the host and chalice at the same time
 - Ring continually until 'The Great Amen' begins to be sung
- Carefully place the bells back under the chair



Ring the bells loud enough so the people can hear them; but, not so loud as to make them distracting. Bells should sound Holy; and, not like a fire alarm.

COMMUNION RITE

Our Father



Remember: The proper posture for an Altar Server is with hands folded in prayer. Hands extended, or holding hands, is not proper posture for the faithful during the Our Father prayer.

Sign of Peace

- The Priest will say "Let us share with each other, the sign of peace"
- Step forward to the Priest, who will shake hands with all those on the Sanctuary
- Once the Priest has shaken hands with everyone, you may shake hands with the people next to you
- After shaking hands, step to the side so the space in front of the Tabernacle is clear



If there are many people on the Sanctuary, just shake hands with your immediate neighbours. You will need to make room fairly quickly for the Priest or Deacon to retrieve the hosts reserved in the Tabernacle.

Lamb of God

Invitation to Communion

- The Priest says "Behold the Lamb of God..."
- Bow your head and say "Lord I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof; but, only say the word and my soul shall be healed."
- The Priest will distribute the Body of Christ to all present on the Sanctuary
 - o You should bow your head in reverence, before receiving the Body and Blood of Christ
 - o If you receive on the hand:
 - Place your hands flat, palms up, with your left hand on top of your right hand (opposite if you are left handed)
 - Use the 'under' hand to pick up the Body and place it in your mouth
 - o If you receive on the tongue:
 - Extend your tongue so the Priest can lay the Body on it
- The Priest will give the Blood of Christ to the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
- The Ministers will then offer the Blood to all on the Sanctuary
- If you are not receiving the Blood of Christ, just whisper "no thank you" to the Minister



You do not have to receive the Blood of Christ if you do not wish to. The fullness of Christ is present in *both* the bread and the wine; so if you just receive the bread, you still receive the fullness of Christ.

- After you receive communion, step back to your seat
 - o You may take a few moments to kneel and prayerfully reflect; thanking God for the gift of Jesus' body and blood
- After a brief reflection, return to standing and remain standing for the rest of communion
- Remove the Missal from the Altar and return it to the stand in front of the Priest's chair
- Place the book stand under the Altar

After Communion

- Once all the faithful have received Holy communion, you may sit down
- The Priest or Deacon will place any extra hosts in a ciborium, and place it in the Tabernacle, and then return to the Altar
- Bring the cruet of water to the Priest
 - o Make sure the handle is facing outward so the Priest can grab it
- The Priest will pour a little water in the chalices, give you back the cruet, and you will make a slight bow towards him
- Return the cruet to the credence table
- All items on the credence table can now be taken to the cart parked beside the sanctuary
 - o Ciborium and lids

- Water cruets, bowl, towel
- Chalices (once brought to you by the Deacon or Senior / Adult Server)

Announcements

- You may sit down if there are any announcements

Solemn Blessing

- The Priest will bless the people and then say “The Mass has Ended...”

DISMISSAL

- The Priest will then kiss the Altar
- The Priest will leave the sanctuary first
- Candle Bearers then pick up the candles and stand beside the Priest
- The other Altar Servers may then line up in front of the Sanctuary
- The Cross Bearer will pick up the cross, and stand at the top of the Sanctuary
 - See Fig. 3
- The Priest will then bow or genuflect
- Candle Bearers should turn and face each other
- The Cross Bearer will walk down between the Priest and the Candle Bearer and lead the procession
 - See Fig. 2



Remember: If incense is being used, the Deacon or Senior Server will go *ahead* of the Cross Bearer

- Meet at the sacristy
- Extinguish the candles and return them to their stands
- Return the cross to its stand
- Wait for the Priest, who will say a quick prayer and bless all the people who assisted with the Mass
- Return your vestments to their hangers
- Extinguish the candles at the Altar