



Our Lady of the Lake Altar Server  
Welcome and Guide  
2016-17



Dear Altar Server:

Welcome to an over 150-year old tradition of serving the Holy Mass at Our Lady of the Lake Church. Your service at the altar helps the entire congregation to focus on the solemnity of the Mass, and you to grow in holiness. In fact, each time you serve, you are living out our motto – Holiness through Service (Sancti Per Ministerium). Altar serving is a privilege, and your service teaches others to give of themselves.

Each server is assigned to a team of at least 3, but usually 4-5 servers. You will serve with this team for the entire year. An older, returning server will be your team captain, who is responsible for helping the Deacon or Liturgical Coordinator assign server positions at each Mass, and making sure that everyone on the team gets a chance to perform the different positions. The team captain also helps to keep everything organized and makes sure that all servers re-hang and leave their albs in good order.

Please keep the following in mind as you serve. Arrive at least 15-20 minutes before Mass begins. Wear clothing that does not distract (bright colors show through the alb), and avoid tennis shoes or sandals. Avoid behavior that distracts the congregation. Keep your hands in prayer position when you are not carrying something. Move deliberately but do not rush. Stay focused on the priest or altar. Treat the albs with care and keep the alb cabinet neat by hanging yours. Speak to the priest, deacon, lector, liturgical coordinator, team captain and other servers with respect. Review the attached liturgical terms and definitions so that you know the names of various items used in the liturgy.

In a few weeks, the 2016-17 weekend Mass server schedule for all altar servers will be circulated. Please post it somewhere convenient or transfer the dates to your calendar. If something prevents you from serving on a weekend, it is your responsibility to find a replacement and let your team captain know.

During the year, you will receive a few written reflections on various aspects of being an altar server. Two reflections from last year are attached. Please take the time to read and think about these during the year.

You are part of a select group, and like your alb at Mass, your red and white t-shirts set you apart when you are away from church. Wear both proudly. You are in my prayers as you grow in holiness through service.

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Altar Server Coordinator  
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## Reflections on Serving #1

*Our Lady of the Lake Roman Catholic Church  
Altar Server Ministry*

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Your actions as an altar server go far beyond simply assisting the priest and deacon. You also actually help to lead those gathered in worship. You do that in many ways, and one of the most significant is the procession. You are not just a part of the procession, walking in or out with the priest and deacon while the choir sings. Stop and think about the procession for a moment. An altar server holds the cross high and is the *first* person to process up the aisle. The other altar servers follow with candles, lighting the way, or with hands properly held, pointing heavenward. All the altar servers come first in the procession. That's not an accident. It is intentional. Why are you first?

Well remember, Jesus instructed that to enter the kingdom of Heaven, we must all become like little children. When children, as altar servers, lead the people of God into the great sacrifice of the Mass, they remind those gathered to become little and to put God first. Your holy posture, the cross and the candles call everyone to recognize and respect the holiness of the Mass, the most perfect form of prayer. In everyday life, being first is often something born out of competition, and it is usually all about the individual. But at Mass, being first in the procession is not about you individually. Your actions focus others not on you, but on the solemnity and sacredness of the Mass. What an incredible privilege!

That privilege doesn't end after the entrance procession. You again lead the procession when the gifts are brought up to the Altar just before the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Our gifts of bread and wine are the centerpiece of our Eucharistic celebration, where we become one with God in the consecrated Eucharist. How fitting that children lead the congregation to our uniquely Catholic encounter with Jesus on the altar.

Finally, at the end of Mass, when we are directed to go forth and share the good news with the world, altar servers once again lead us in that important mission by being first in the closing procession. United as the Body of Christ on earth, you lead us, cross first, with the candles symbolizing the fire of the Holy Spirit that will give us strength, complete with a visual reminder to become like children.

The next time you serve, remember the significance of the altar server's role in the procession. Let it be a call to reverence and holiness for you too so that your participation in the Mass will make you a stronger member of the Body of Christ on earth.

**SANCTI PER  
MINISTERIUM**



## Reflections on Serving #2

*Our Lady of the Lake Roman Catholic Church  
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Altar servers do many things as part of serving the Holy Mass. Holding the cross. Helping to set and clear the altar. Handling candles. Holding the book for the priest to read. Participating in the procession. All of these tasks are important. But one of the things you do during Mass stands out from all the others – ringing the bells.

Ringling the bells doesn't fit into that typical "assistance" category that applies to most altar server actions. Instead, it is an action initiated by the altar server that marks the most significant moments of the Mass. Imagine that! Something critically important is specifically entrusted to you. You are therefore an integral part of each of those significant moments.

The first time an altar server rings the bells is when the priest places his hands over the gifts of bread and wine and calls down the Holy Spirit to make them into Christ's body and blood. God, in the form of the Holy Spirit, is present on the altar and the bells signal to all in attendance the sacred and extraordinary nature of that moment. The single ring of the bells at that point engages another of our senses – hearing – drawing us ever closer to God.

The second and third times the bells are rung are just after the priest, in the person of Christ, speaks the words that Christ himself spoke at the Last Supper – this is my body; this is my blood. The bread and wine become Christ's body and blood as those words are spoken, and the altar server uses three short rings to rivet our attention to the priest's "showing" of the Body and Blood of Christ to all present. Just after this, the priest briefly kneels, acknowledging the sacred miracle that has just occurred. We are simultaneously solemn, yet filled with joy that we have the Eucharist.

What could be more important than being the person whose job is to remind everyone else about the supernatural miracle of the Mass, the gift of the Eucharist? The bells ring out the bold headline "this is no casual event!" The sound they make is the "joyful noise" the faithful are to make to the Lord. *PSALM 98:4.*

The bells used in Mass were historically called "Sanctus", or "Holy" bells because they point us to the sacred. The next time you ring the bells at Mass, focus on the significance of what is happening on the altar and why ringing them at the right time, and for the right number of rings, is important. And let the "holy" bells, and their joyous sound, call you to holiness.

And by the way, you're not just the next person to ring the bells. You continue in a long line of servants at the altar who have rung the bells at Catholic Masses all over the world for nearly 1,000 years, when bells were first added to the celebration of the Mass. Just one more way you are part of a long-standing, holy tradition.

**SANCTI PER  
MINISTERIUM**



## Reflections on Serving #3

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Serving is about giving of ourselves. Every act of service makes us less focused on “me” and more on who we are serving. It also opens our eyes to see how God uses our gifts. As an altar server, God uses your gifts of discipline and reverence to glorify his Son in the miracle of the Mass. In that way, you serve Him. Your service at the altar also makes you an essential part of the Eucharistic invitation extended to all those attending Mass. In that way, you serve the congregation. A double dose of service and giving!

What do we do when we receive someone’s gift? We give thanks! In keeping with our Thanksgiving celebration this week, there is no better time than now to give thanks. On behalf of all Our Lady of the Lake’s parishioners, a heartfelt thanks to you for serving at the altar!

While you gather with family for Thanksgiving this week, here’s something else to think about. Did you know that the first Thanksgiving really happened about 56 years *before* the Pilgrims’ celebration that we’ve all learned about? That’s right. On September 8, 1565, Native Americans and Spanish settlers held a feast in St. Augustine, Florida to celebrate Spain’s claiming of the land. A Spanish ship’s cannons were ceremoniously fired. Trumpets sounded. And the feast that followed included something very Catholic. You see, a Catholic priest, Fr. Francisco Lopez, was chaplain on that ship and presented a crucifix to the Spanish ship’s captain, Don Pedro Menendez. Together with the settlers and the Timucuan Indians, part of their feast was the celebration of the Holy Mass in gratitude to God.

It’s actually very fitting for the Mass to be part of a Thanksgiving celebration because apart from the holiday, the Mass is always about thanksgiving. That’s right. In Greek, the word Eucharist means “thanksgiving.” The Eucharist is both an action and sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Father, a blessing by which we express our gratitude to God for all that he gives us. *Catechism, 1328; 1360.*

So this Thanksgiving, while you are with family and loved ones, pause to remember that just like on our Thanksgiving holiday, we gather at every Mass as a family, one united in Christ, joyful to be together, celebrating! As an altar server, you have the special privilege of helping to make that celebration beautiful, joyous and meaningful. And now you know that it wouldn’t be odd at all if someone greeted you with a “happy thanksgiving” the next time you serve at Mass.

**SANCTI PER  
MINISTERIUM**



## Our Lady of the Lake Altar Server Liturgical Terms and Definitions



**Alb** - a full length white vestment worn over the clothes by priests, deacons and altar servers.

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

**Ambo** - elevated pulpit or lectern from which the 1st and 2nd Readings and the Gospel are read.



**Aspersory and Aspergillum** - the Aspersory is a container for holding Holy Water. The Aspergillum is a stick-shaped implement with holes in it to dip into the Aspersory and catch the Holy Water for sprinkling the people and things.



**Boat** - the container which holds incense.

**Book of the Gospels** - the book from which the Priest or Deacon reads the Gospel.

**Bowl/Pitcher** - used for washing the priest's hands during the Preparation of the Gifts (The Offertory)



**Chalice** - the cup-shaped vessel or goblet used at Mass to contain the Precious Blood of Christ. For centuries it was made of precious material; if it was not of gold, the interior of the cup was gold-plated.



**Chasuble** - the outer garment the priest wears whose color corresponds to the liturgical season.



**Corporal** - a square white linen cloth on which the Host and Chalice are placed during Mass. It is also used under the monstrance at Benediction or under the Blessed Sacrament at any time.



**Ciborium (Ciboria)** - a covered container used to hold the consecrated small Hosts.



**Communion Cups** - small gold chalice-looking cups containing the Precious Blood of Jesus used at communion.

**Credence Table** - small table located near the altar that holds sacred vessels and books



**Cruet** - small pitcher-like container used to hold water or unconsecrated wine at Mass.



**Finger Towel** - small white towel used for drying the priest's hands.

**Host** - a victim of sacrifice, and therefore the consecrated Bread of the Eucharist considered as the sacrifice of the Body of Christ. The word also identified the round wafers used for consecration.

**Incense** - aromatic gum or resin in the form of powder or grains that give off a fragrant smoke when they are burned. It is used on solemn occasions



**Lectionary** - the book of Scripture Readings usually from which the Old and New Testament readings are read.



**Monstrance** - the sacred vessel which contains the consecrated Host when exposed or carried in procession.



**Paschal Candle** - a large candle in which five grains of incense have been incased as a symbol of Christ's wounds. It is blessed on Holy Saturday in a special service and is symbolic of the Risen Savior, Light of the World. It is then used in the blessing of baptismal water and remains during the Paschal season in the sanctuary, where it is lighted during liturgical services.



**Processional Cross** - a crucifix mounted on a staff, carried at the head of the procession of the clergy and the beginning and end of Mass, and when the gifts are brought to the altar.



**Processional Candle** – used by the server during the entrance and exit processions, to bring up the gifts, and in front of the priest or deacon during the reading of the gospel.



**Purificator** - a small piece of white linen, marked with a cross, used by the priest in the celebration of Mass. It is folded in three layers and used by the priest to purify his fingers and the chalice after Holy Communion.



**Roman Missal** - the book that sits on the altar containing the prayers the priest uses for Mass.



**Sacramentary** - often referred to as "The Book" contains the prayers used at Mass. This is the book taken up to the priest for him to read from.

**Sacristy** - one or more rooms attached to a church, usually near the altar, where the clergy vest for Mass and where there is storage for sacred vessels, vestments, and other articles needed for liturgical use.

**Sanctuary** - the part of a church containing the altar.



**Stole** - a liturgical vestment composed of a strip of material, several inches wide, and worn around the neck by priests and bishops; at the left shoulder like a sash by deacons, for the celebration of Mass, administration of the sacraments, and ceremonies of the Blessed Sacrament.



**Tabernacle** - a receptacle for the exclusive reservation of the Blessed Sacrament; normally positioned behind the altar.



**Thurible** - the censer or vessel in which incense is burned at liturgical services. It consists of a cup-shaped metal body for holding charcoal and incense, with a separate lid for controlling the smoke and fire, and a chain, or chains, allowing the censer to swing safely without spilling its contents.