

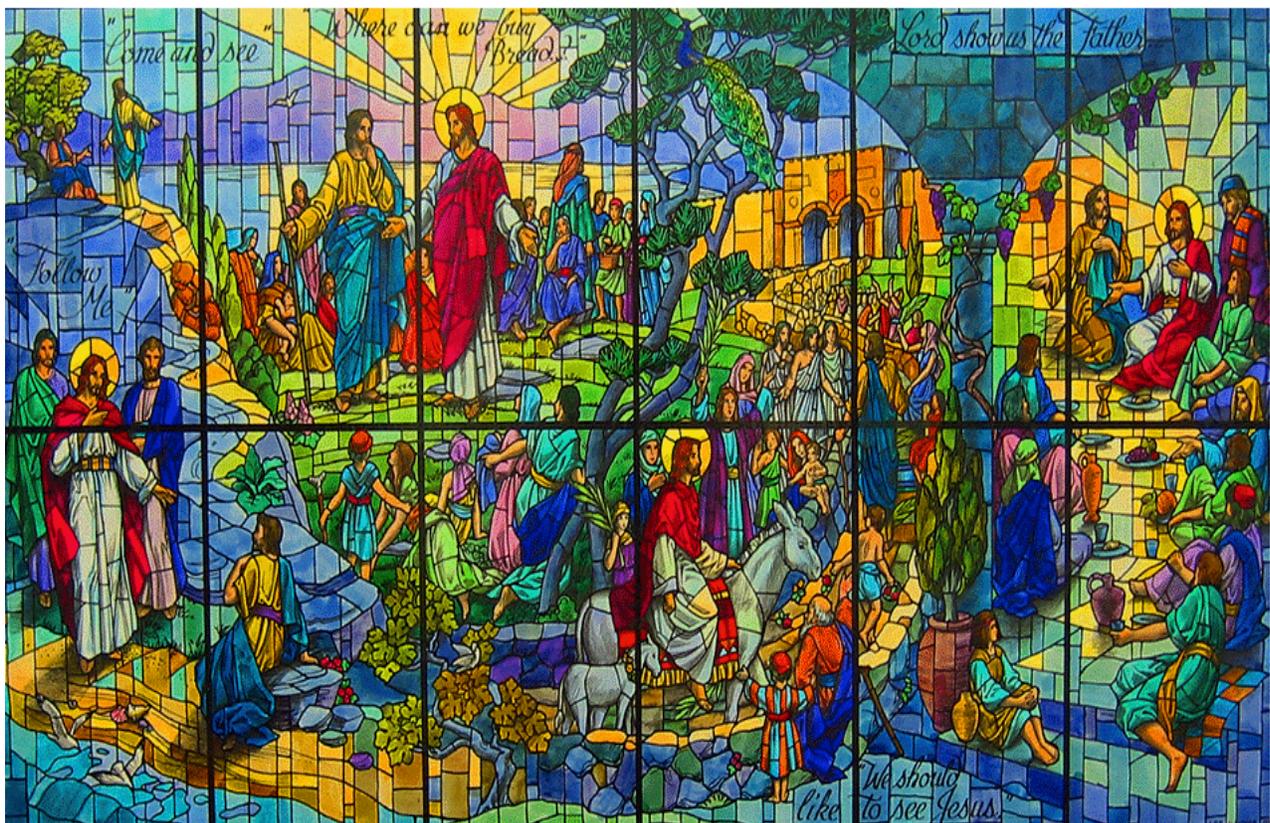
HANDBOOK FOR ALTAR SERVERS

"Whoever would be great among you must be your servant"

(Matthew 20:26)

"I would give my life for a single ceremony of the Church."

(Saint Teresa of Avila)



Saint Philip the Apostle Catholic Church

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I. Dress Guidelines

(The following guidelines have been promulgated by the Diocese of Arlington)

Altar Servers must receive appropriate instruction on maintaining proper decorum when serving Mass and other liturgical functions, as well as proper attire.

In particular, servers must be instructed to exercise good judgment with regard to clothing that may be visible outside of their vesture (alb), so as to avoid items (including but not limited to ostentatious or excessive jewelry, bright colors, glitter or spangles, athletic or other inappropriate footwear, etc.) that might be distracting to the faithful or otherwise detract from the dignity of the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Tattoos and or piercings, other than ears, should be discouraged and if present should be covered to the greatest extent possible.

To be more specific in regards to attire here at St. Philip Church:

MALE SERVERS

- ✠ T-shirts may be worn under the alb as long as they do not have any logo or art work that may show through the alb and be visible to the faithful.
- ✠ Piercings are highly discouraged but one ear piercing is allowed if discreet.
- ✠ Tattoos are discouraged and should be appropriately covered. They should not be visible to the faithful.
- ✠ Male servers are to wear black/brown dress shoes with dark socks that rise to mid calf.
- ✠ Flip-flops or athletic shoes of any kind are not allowed.

FEMALE SERVERS

- ✠ Modest clothing should be worn to maintain the dignity of the celebration of the Eucharist. Please keep in mind that what you wear underneath the alb is clearly visible to the faithful. Blouses or T-Shirts should have no log or art work that may be visible to the faithful.
- ✠ Piercings (up to two in each ear) are allowed. All other piercings are discouraged.
- ✠ Tattoos are discouraged and should be appropriately covered. They should not be visible to the faithful.
- ✠ Female servers are to wear casual dress shoes. Flip-flops or Athletic Shoes of any kind or not allowed.
- ✠ Female servers should arrange their hair so it does not obscure their faces, or interfere with their ability to serve.

II. Conduct

- ‡ Servers should perform their duties with reverence and understanding and should give their entire attention to the proceedings of the Mass. They are to take part in the Mass as fully as possible, by paying careful attention to everything that is being said or done, and by joining in the prayers, responses and hymns.
- ‡ Servers should make the required responses accurately, distinctly, in a moderate tone of voice and at a moderate pace.
- ‡ Servers are not to engage in conversation with other servers beyond what is necessary to carry out their duties. They are not to communicate with anyone outside the *sanctuary*.
- ‡ The movements of the servers are to be calm, serious, reverent and as noiseless as possible. They are to walk erect and at a moderate pace. Servers should move together and stay together when they are moving as a group (e.g. when bringing the *cruets* of wine and water to the priest).
- ‡ When standing or moving about the church and *sanctuary*, servers (unless they are carrying something) should hold their hands joined in front of the chest, the palms together, as though in prayer. When only one hand is occupied, the other, usually the left, should be laid flat on the chest and never left hanging at the side. A server's hands are never to be in his/her pockets.
- ‡ When seated, servers should sit up straight and put their hands on their knees or lap.
- ‡ In making the sign of the cross at the beginning and end of the Mass, in making the three small crosses at the beginning of the Gospel and in *bowing* or *genuflecting* at the words “by the power of the Holy Spirit, He was born of the Virgin Mary and became man” in the Creed, servers should follow the movements of the priest.

III. Preparation for the Mass

- ‡ Servers must be vested and ready at least *fifteen minutes* before the scheduled start of the Mass.
- ‡ Servers are urged to spend time in prayer before and after Mass. Prayers for servers are included in this Handbook.
- ‡ At least ten, minutes before the start of Mass the servers should light the candles in the *sanctuary*. The servers should have helped the priest, deacon or *sacristan* to ensure the requisites for the Mass are present:
 - A. The *credence table* should contain the following:
 1. The *chalice*;
 2. The *Corporal*;
 3. The *paten* with *host*;
 4. The *purificator*;
 5. The *pall*;
 6. The *chalice veil*, if used;
 7. The *ciborium (ciboria)* with *hosts*;

8. The *cruet* containing water;
 9. The *bowl* and *water* for washing the priest's hands;
 10. The *finger towel* for the priest;
 11. The *holy water bucket* and *aspergillum*, if needed.
- B. To the right of the *presider's chair*:
1. The binder containing the pulpit announcements;
 2. The binder containing the event specific blessing, if used.
- C. On the chair to the left of the *presider's chair*:
- The large *Sacramentary*.
- D. On the table near the entrance to the church:
1. The *flagon* with wine;
 2. The *ciborium* with *hosts*;
 3. Other items as needed.

‡ A few minutes before the start of Mass, the servers should join the priest in the vestibule of the church and take their positions for the procession. This is a good time for a short prayer or meditation before the Mass actually begins.

IV. The Mass

‡ In general the procession to the *sanctuary* is in the following order:

1. Altar servers
2. Lector (book bearer)
3. Priest and deacon

There will be various configurations of the procession depending upon the specific celebration or sacrament being conferred such as Confirmation, etc.

‡ If there is a *thurifer* (incense bearer) and a *boat bearer*, they should walk in front of the *crucifer* (cross bearer). *Acolytes* (candle bearers) walk to either side of the *crucifer*. If there is no *thurifer*, the *crucifer* should be at the front and center of the procession. Servers not carrying anything follow the *crucifer*, walking side by side.

‡ Upon entering, moving about and leaving the *sanctuary*, certain reverences are to be made to the *Blessed Sacrament* reserved in the *Tabernacle*, and to the *Altar*.

1. Upon first entering the Church or leaving it for the last time, servers should *genuflect* toward the *Blessed Sacrament* reserved in the *Tabernacle*.
2. Upon entering the *sanctuary* during the procession, those carrying something in their hands – for example, the *thurifer*, *boat bearer*, *crucifer* and *acolytes* – are to pause before the *Altar* with the priest and bow their heads toward it, place their items in the *sanctuary* and then proceed to their seats.
3. When crossing the *sanctuary* from one side to the other, servers are to pause before the *Altar* and make a *profound bow* toward it.
4. Before departing the *sanctuary*, after lining up with the priest, servers are to *genuflect* with the priest, turn and exit down the center aisle.



In general, the functions carried out by servers during the Mass are:

1. to lead the procession to the *sanctuary*;
2. to hold the *Sacramentary* for the priest during the opening prayer (the server should be prepared for this action before the priest says, "Let us pray");
3. to sit down and stand up at the same time as the priest;
4. after interacting with the priest at the Altar, or, after removing something from the Altar, to take one step backwards and bow, either to the priest or to the Altar, as an act of reverence;
5. when there is no deacon, to bring the *chalice* and *paten* with the *purificator*, *pall* and *chalice veil* (if used), extra *ciboria* and the *Sacramentary* to the Altar after the prayers of the faithful are completed and the collection has started;
6. to assist the priest and deacon in bringing items to the Altar after the procession with the *gifts*;
7. to bring the *cruets* of water and wine to the priest;
8. to ring the bell at the *epiclesis*, and at the elevation of the Host and the elevation of the chalice;
9. to hold the paten while the people receive Holy Communion;
10. (at the 10:00 am Mass) to bring the tray containing the pyxes to the Altar at the Sign of Peace;
11. to bring the small pitcher of water, the bowl and the *finger towel* to the priest so that he may wash his hands;
12. to remove sacred vessels and the *Sacramentary* from the Altar following the purification after Holy Communion;
13. to hold the *Sacramentary* for the priest during the closing prayer (the server should be prepared for this action before the priest says, "Let us pray");
14. to hand the binder containing the pulpit announcements to the priest after the closing prayer;
15. to lead the procession away from the *sanctuary*.
16. to bow to the crucifix, along with the priest and deacon, at the end of the procession in the *vestibule*.



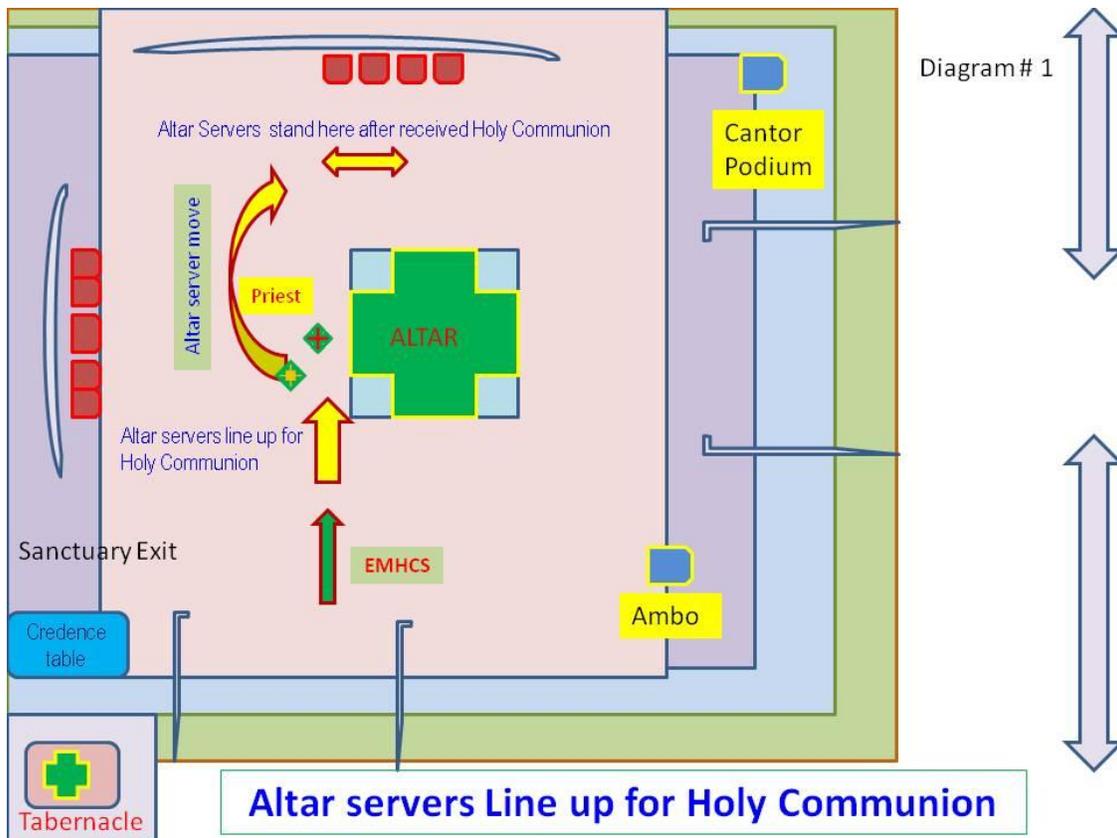
The specific roles of the servers are as follows:

- A. The *crucifer*
 1. Carries the *processional cross*;
 2. Assists with the *cruets* of water and wine, as necessary.
- B. The *acolyte*

1. Carries a candle (only if two *acolytes* are present);
 2. Assists with the *cruets* of water and wine as necessary;
 3. Carries the *holy water bucket* for the priest as necessary.
- C. The *book bearer*
1. Holds the *Sacramentary* for the priest and deacon and places and removes it from the *Altar* as needed;
 2. Assists the priest in washing his hands.
- D. The *thurifer*
1. Prepares the incense for the Mass;
 2. Carries the incense in the processions (entrance, Gospel, departure);
 3. Brings the incense to the priest for the preparation of the *gifts*;
 4. Incenses the elevated *host* and *chalice*.
- E. The *boat bearer*
1. Carries the *boat* containing grains of incense and the spoon;
 2. Accompanies and assists the *thurifer*;
 3. Gives the *boat* to the priest or deacon as necessary.

V. Following the Mass

When the priest has gone out to greet the people and the congregation begins to disperse, the servers should return to the *sanctuary* and follow any instructions of the *sacristan* regarding preparations for the next Mass. Only after these duties have been discharged may the servers take off their *albs* and *cinctures* and hang them up in the *sacristy*.



VI. Attendance and Absences

1. It is expected that all servers will serve the Masses or other ceremonies and activities for which they are scheduled.
2. If servers cannot serve when scheduled, they are to find substitutes. The responsibility for fulfilling the obligation remains with the server whose name appears on the schedule if a substitute cannot be found.
3. Absences due to sudden illness are excused, of course, but servers who become ill prior to their scheduled Mass should try to find substitutes if at all possible.
4. Servers who find themselves coughing, sneezing, etc., to the point that their presence would detract from the dignity and prayerfulness of the Mass, even if they are not absent from school or other activities, should consider themselves to be too ill to serve the Mass and are excused.
5. Attendance is expected at any training or other meetings that may be scheduled.

VII. Training Meetings

- ‡ Training meetings and other activities will be held, the dates and times to be schedules by the priest-moderator. Servers are to attend these meetings or make arrangements for individual sessions.
- ‡ The purpose of the training meetings is to encourage, positively and practically, the highest standards of service at the Church's liturgy, and so contribute to the whole community's participation in a more fruitful worship of God.
- ‡ In particular, it is hoped that the training offered will assist servers in carrying out their functions in a reverent and prayerful manner, and help to lead them to a deeper understanding of their particular vocations in life.

VIII. Prayers for Altar Servers

‡ **Prayer of an Altar Server**

O God, You have graciously called me to serve You upon Your altar. Grant me the graces that I need to serve You faithfully and wholeheartedly. Grant too that while serving You, I may follow the example of Saint Tarcisus, who died protecting the Eucharist, and walk the same path that led him to Heaven. Amen.

‡ **Before Mass**

1. Accept Most Holy Trinity, this Sacrifice fulfilled at one time by the Divine Word, and now renewed on this altar by the hands of your priest. I unite myself to the intentions of Jesus Christ, Priest and Victim, that I may be offered entirely for your glory and the salvation of souls. I intend through Jesus Christ, with Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ, to adore you eternal majesty, to thank your immense goodness, to satisfy you offended

justice, and to beseech your mercy for the Church, for my dear ones, for myself, and the person for whom this Mass is offered. Amen.

2. Father in Heaven, give me Your help as I prepare to serve You and Your people at this Mass. Open my mouth, to praise You in word and song. Open my ears, to hear Your Word. Open my hands, to do Your work faithfully. Help me to focus on the task at hand, that I may serve You reverently and so give You praise and glory, now and forever. Amen.
3. Oh Jesus, my King and Lord, by the grace of the heavenly Father and the power of the Holy Spirit, guide me in all righteousness as I serve You today at the Altar so I may always be worthy of Your presence. If I happen to make an error, may it be a lesson so my service will be perfect tomorrow. Jesus, I love You with all my heart. Amen.

✠ **After Mass**

1. Lord Jesus, thank You for the opportunity to serve You during the Holy Mass. In Your Sacred Presence, my heart is filled with joy and peace. May Your Spirit always guide me so I may grow in Your love by the grace of the Heavenly Father. Amen.
2. Lord Jesus, thank You for the opportunity of serving at Your altar. With Your help, I can praise my Father in Heaven with faithful ministry. Help me to always find joy in serving You and our community, and help me to find gladness in knowing and doing Your will in all things. Amen.

✠ **Prayer After Holy Communion**

Lord, Father All-Powerful, and Ever-Living God, I thank You, for even though I am a sinner, Your unprofitable servant, not because of my worth, but in the kindness of Your mercy, You have fed me with the precious Body and Blood of your Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that this Holy Communion may not bring me condemnation and punishment, but forgiveness and salvation. May it be a helmet of faith and a shield of good-will. May it purify me from evil ways, and put an end to my evil passions. May it bring me charity and patience, humility and obedience and growth in the power to do good. May it be a strong defense against all my enemies, visible and invisible, and the perfect calming of all my evil impulses, bodily and spiritual. May it unite me more closely to You, the One True God, and lead me safely through death to everlasting happiness with You.

And I pray that You will lead me a sinner, to the banquet where You, with your Son and Holy Spirit are true and perfect light, total fulfillment, everlasting joy, gladness without end, and perfection happiness to Your saints. Grant this through Christ Our Lord. Amen

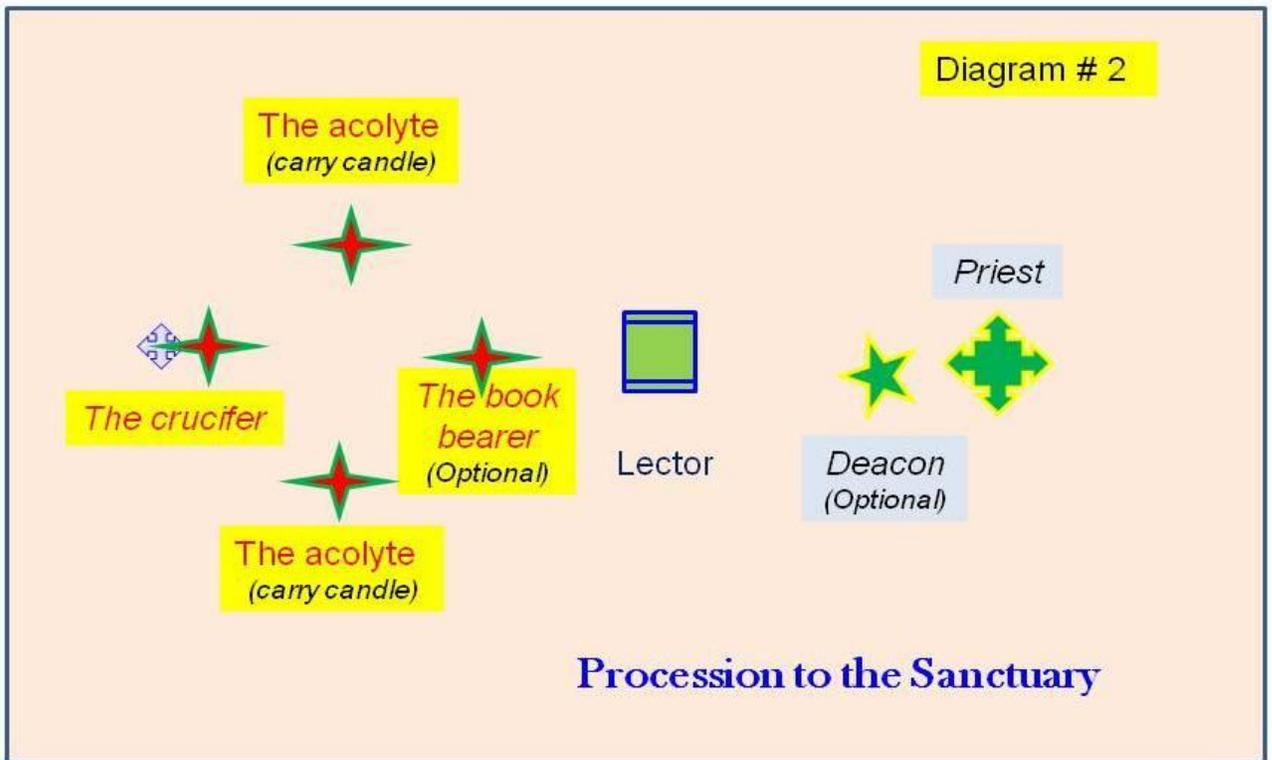


Diagram # 3 Mass with Bishop main Celebrant

