

**St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church
&
All Saints Catholic School**



Altar Serving Guide

Norman, Oklahoma

Preparation Before Mass:

- † Arrive 15-20 minutes before Mass
- † Make sure the Basin of Water is on the Credence Table.
- † Make sure the “Book for Use at the Chair” and the bells are located where you will be sitting.
- † Light the candles on the Altar and the torches next to the Tabernacle 15 minutes before Mass.
- † Assign the following duties to the Altar Servers:
 - Carrying the crucifix
 - Carrying the torches (2 people)
 - Carrying the thurible (Only at Sunday 9am Mass)
 - Holding the “Book for Use at the Chair” for the priest
- Duties during the Preparation of the Gifts:
 - Receiving the gifts (1 server at All School Masses and 3 servers at Weekend Masses)
 - Holding the Sacramentary and Book Stand
 - Holding the Basin of Water
 - Ringing the Bells during the Consecration of the Eucharist

Ten minutes before Mass

After the altar serving duties have been assigned, servers should all walk to the Tabernacle, bow at the same time, and then retrieve the crucifix and the torches. Proceed to the back of the church for the procession.

- ✠ **Remember to be quiet, reverent, fold hands in prayer** if you are not holding anything, and remember that everything you do before, during, and after the Mass is a prayer. Therefore, as an altar server, you want to blend into the background and not cause distractions.
- ✠ When all (or most) of the altar servers are walking together, you need to be in formation. The formation is as follows:
 - ✠ Crucifix Bearer leads the group (If using incense, the Thurible Bearer leads)
 - ✠ Torch Bearers follow five feet behind the Crucifix Bearer. The Torch Bearers should also stay even with each other. It looks sloppy if one Torch Bearer is two feet behind the other Torch Bearer.
 - ✠ If there are additional altar servers, they should follow in pairs, five feet behind the Torch Bearers.

Example:

	Incense	
	Crucifix	
Torch Bearer		Torch Bearer
Additional Server		Additional Server

During the Mass

Liturgy of the Word

- ✠ Process into the Church by walking down the center aisle, going to the right of the Altar steps, and place the crucifix and torches in the stands near the Tabernacle. **All altar servers then line up and bow at the same time** toward the Tabernacle. Remember that the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ are contained within the Tabernacle. It is the most important part of the Church and should always be respected by bowing or genuflecting.
- ✠ After bowing, servers should move to the front pew and join the congregation in the opening song.
- ✠ The server that will hold the book for the priest should be ready. Don't be nervous if the order of the Opening Prayer is a little different. When the priest is ready for the Book he will say, "Let us Pray" and then will pause. At this point, the server with the book needs to stand in front of the priest with the book open. After the Opening Prayer is complete, the priest will close the book and the server will return to the pew.
- ✠ After the Opening Prayer, the Liturgy continues with the First Reading, Psalm, Second Reading (Weekend Masses only), Gospel Reading, Homily, and Prayers of the Faithful. The altar servers participate with the congregation and do not have any special duties during the Liturgy of Word
- ✠ If incense is being used at the Mass, a server will need to retrieve the thurible and incense boat at the beginning of the Second Reading. When the Alleluia begins, take the thurible to the priest. He will add more incense to the thurible. Then, take the thurible to the deacon at the Ambo for him to incense the Gospel. After the deacon is done with the thurible, take it back outside and return to your seat.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

- ✠ After the Prayers of the Faithful, the priest will sit down and pause. He is waiting for the people bringing gifts to line up near the Baptismal Font.

Preparation of the Gifts

Instructions for St. Mark's Weekend Masses

- ✠ When the deacon stands up, all servers should stand. Here is a breakdown of what each altar server should do after they stand up.
- ✠ Altar Servers receiving the collection baskets:
 - ✠ Three servers will need to position themselves at the steps of the altar facing the left aisle, center aisle, and the right aisle. On the way to their place at the steps of the altar, one server (normally the server moving to the center aisle) needs to move the Sacramentary with the Stand from the Credence Table to the Altar, and then proceed to receive the collection baskets at the center aisle. After all three servers have received the collection baskets, place the baskets at the foot of the Altar and then either return to their seats or continue with their responsibilities during this point in Mass. One Altar Server should stand behind the Altar next to the server carrying the Basin of Water in order to receive the cruet of water from the deacon.
- ✠ Altar Server responsible for the Thurible (Incense) (Only Sundays at 9am)
 - ✠ Retrieve the thurible and the incense boat and bring them to the priest. After the priest takes the thurible, line up next to the other servers behind the Altar. After the priest is through with the thurible, he (or the deacon) will return it to you. Return the thurible to its place outside.

- ✠ Altar Server holding the Basin of Water
 - ✠ The Basin of Water and the Finger Towel are located on the Credence Table. Simply place the towel on your right forearm, and pick up the Basin of Water with both hands. Be careful not to spill the water while walking. Stand behind the Altar and wait for the priest to wash his hands. After he has washed his hands, carefully walk back and place the Basin of Water and the Towel on the Credence Table and return to your seat.

Instructions for ASCS All School Masses

- ✠ When the priest stands up, all servers should stand. Here is a breakdown of what each altar server should do after they stand up.
- ✠ Altar Server receiving the gifts with the priest
 - ✠ Walk with the other two servers around the back of the Altar. As they move to the preparation table, you should stand next to the priest. The priest will hand you two small pitchers, called cruets. One will hold the unconsecrated wine and the other will be filled with water. While still holding the cruets, line up with the other two servers behind the Altar. When the priest is ready for the cruets, he will take them from you, use them, and then will return them to you. Remain standing behind the Altar until the priest has finished washing his hands in the Basin of Water. Place the cruets on the Credence Table and then return to your seat
- ✠ Altar Server holding the Sacramentary with Stand
 - ✠ Walk with the other two servers around the back of the Altar. The Sacramentary with stand are located on the Credence Table. Simply take the

Sacramentary with stand and stand behind the Altar until the priest takes it from you. Remain standing behind the Altar until the priest has finished washing his hands in the Basin of Water and then return to your seat.

- ✠ Altar Server holding the Basin of Water

- ✠ Walk with the other two servers around the back of the Altar. The Basin of Water and the Finger Towel are located on the Credence Table. Simply place the towel on your right forearm, and pick up the Basin of Water with both hands. Be careful not to spill the water while walking. Stand behind the Altar and wait for the priest to wash his hands. After he has washed his hands, carefully walk back and place the Basin of Water and the Towel on the Preparation Table and return to your seat.

After the Preparation of the Gifts

- ✠ After the Preparation of the Gifts, the Eucharistic Prayers begin. The priest will call on the Holy Spirit to bless the gifts so that they may become the Body and Blood of Christ.
- ✠ At this point in the Mass, the altar server that will ring the bells needs to be prepared. The cue to ring the bells is not when the priest lifts the Host or the Chalice. Instead you need to listen to the words and ring them after the prayer is complete. The priest will say:

*On the night he was betrayed,
He took bread and gave you thanks and praise.
He broke the bread,
Gave it to his disciples, and said:
Take this, all of you, and eat it:
This is my body, which will be given up for you. **Ring the Bells now.***

The bells should be rung with one long ring (not three short rings). It is best to keep ringing the bells until the priest lowers the Host or the Chalice. After you stop ringing the bells, let the sound from the bells echo around the room before putting the bells down. Remember, even ringing the bells are a form of prayer!

- ✠ The priest will then continue:

*When supper was ended, he took the cup.
Again he gave you thanks and praise,
Gave the cup to his disciples, and said:
Take this, all of you, 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. **Ring the Bells now.***

- ✠ The Eucharistic Prayers will continue, followed by the Our Father, Exchanging of Peace, and Communion.
- ✠ After receiving Communion, one altar server needs to remove the Large Book and the Stand from the Altar. Another server can remove the chalice if it is empty. However, if there is any Blood of Christ remaining in the chalice, leave it on the altar.
- ✠ After Communion is complete, the priest will stand up and say, "Let us Pray."
- ✠ The altar server with the book will then do the same thing they did with the Opening Prayer. After the blessing, the altar server can return the book to the pew.
- ✠ When the procession music begins, all of the altar servers need to line up in front of the Tabernacle, bow, and then retrieve the crucifix and the torches.
- ✠ It is becoming tradition to pause the procession after the altar servers begin going down the center aisle. The

Crucifix Bearer will turn around towards the Altar and all the other servers will do the same. When the priest walks down the Altar steps and genuflects, then the servers should turn around and proceed down the aisle.

After the Mass

- ✠ Extinguish altar candles and torches
- ✠ Hang vestments carefully on the hangers in the Sacristy
- ✠ Bring everything on the Preparation Table to the Sacristy except for the Large Book and the Stand

Important Terms

The Sanctuary



The **Ambo** is where the Readings, Psalm, and the Gospel are proclaimed during Mass. The **Altar** is in the center and the **Tabernacle** is on the right wall. The Tabernacle and the Altar are the most important objects in the church because at the Altar, ordinary bread and wine is transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ during the Mass. The newly consecrated hosts are then kept in the Tabernacle. When you pass the Altar you should bow and when you pass the Tabernacle, you should genuflect.

The Credence Table



The **Credence Table** is used for preparing the Mass. The Sacramentary and stand are on the left and the Water Basin and Finger Towel are on the right. During the Preparation of the Gifts, a server needs to take the Sacramentary and place it on the Altar (Weekend Masses) or stand behind the altar and wait for the priest to take it (ASCS School Masses). Another server needs retrieve the Water Basin and Finger Towel for the priest to cleanse their hands.

The Thurible

The **incense boat** with a spoon, and the **thurible** are normally kept on the thurible stand behind the Ambo. However, when the incense is lit, the thurible is kept outside until it is needed.

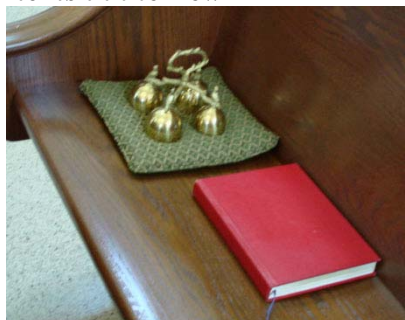


The Preparation of the Gifts



During the Preparation of the Gifts the **Sacramentary** with the stand are placed on the Altar. Next to the Sacramentary are several other items used during the Eucharistic celebration placed on top of the **corporal** (large, white linen cloth). These include a **ciborium** (four ciboria are pictured here where the unconsecrated hosts are carried), the priest's **chalice** (large cup which carries the unconsecrated wine), the **water cruet** (small pitcher of water), to the left of the chalice is **the purificator** (small, white linen cloth used to cleanse the chalice), and to the right of the chalice is the **pall** (white linen card normally kept over the chalice to prevent dust or flies landing in the chalice).

Items in the Pew



In the pew, bells and the “Book for Use at the Chair” are available for the altar servers.

Walking in Formation



In this photo of the center aisle, it is easy to see that there is a center line etched into the marble floor. When processing into or out of the church, each altar server is responsible to stay in formation. The crucifix bearer walks in the middle of the aisle, with the two torch bearers following about five feet back. Each torch bearer walks between the pew and the center line etched in the floor. By staying in these “lanes” it helps the procession remain smooth. All other altar servers also stay in the same “lane” as the torch bearers.