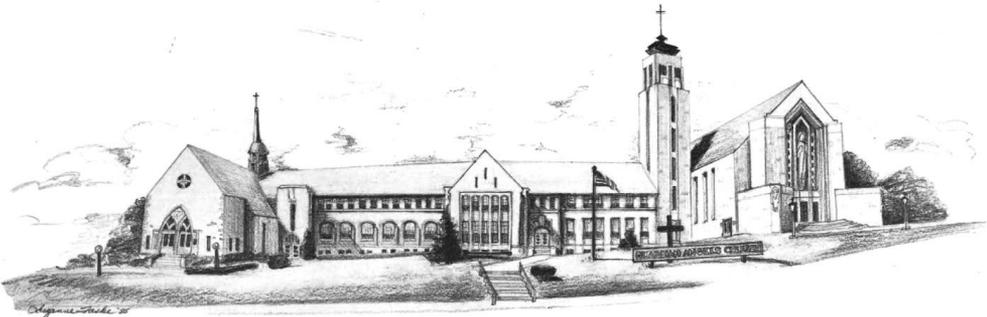


Handbook

for the Ministry of Altar Server

Guardian Angels Parish

Belonging to:



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INTRODUCTION

Seated at the right hand of the Father and pouring out the Holy Spirit on his Body which is the Church, Christ now acts through the sacraments he instituted to communicate his grace. The sacraments are perceptible signs (words and actions) accessible to our human nature. By the action of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit they make present efficaciously the grace that they signify.

- Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 1084

In the earthly liturgy we share in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, Minister of the sanctuary and of the true Tabernacle....

- CCC 1090

To be a server means you are taking a very special role in the prayer of the Church. You are called to serve and assist at Mass and other liturgical functions. This is both an honor and a privilege and should not be taken on lightly. Our hope is that through your service you will help our Church pray well.

Being a server is not always easy. In fact, sometimes it will be difficult, especially when you have to make choices between serving and other activities. It will require you to have more knowledge and understanding about the liturgy than many other people will have. This means you will need to study and be attentive to what happens during the various liturgies.

Each ministry is an opportunity to get closer to God. Your commitment to this ministry is a great blessing for you and for all of Guardian Angels Parish. Thank you for volunteering, and know that our Church is better because of your participation.

This handbook has been developed as a training guide and a reference book. You will need to be familiar with everything in it. Use it as often as you need to and keep it so you can look at it during your years in this ministry. When your training period is completed, you will be expected to know the material in this handbook and demonstrate that knowledge to the server coordinators before you begin this ministry.

Prayer Before Serving Mass

Heavenly Father,

As I prepare to assist You at Your altar, I declare my faith in You.

At this Mass, keep me from distractions. Let me remember that in assisting the priest I am assisting Jesus in offering You the merits of His Passion.

I thank You for allowing me the opportunity to give my service to You.

At this Mass, I join with your priest in offering You the sacred Body and Blood of my Savior, Jesus Christ, your Son.

May my sharing the Divine Food in Holy Communion bring me eternal salvation.

Amen.

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

Servers are expected to:

- be in the sacristy and vested 15 minutes prior to Mass.
- wear appropriate attire: long dress pants (or skirt for girls), dress shoes, and a preferably neutral shirt.
- wear the appropriate size alb or cassock for serving—which will change as they grow. Albs or cassocks should reach the tops of the server's shoes when standing up straight.
- be reverent and prayerful in the Church before, during, and after Mass and, as much as possible, in the sacristy.
- genuflect when passing the tabernacle and bow when passing the altar outside of Mass—every time!
- be helpful and respectful towards others.
- maintain proper posture during Mass (*standing*: straight, with hands folded at chest and pointing upward; *sitting*: straight with feet still on the floor and hands still on one's lap; *kneeling*: hands folded at chest and pointing upwards). Servers should strive to be completely still when not engaged in a particular task.
- remain absolutely quiet and attentive to the Mass unless it is necessary to ask a question or give instruction to another server.
- participate fully, consciously, and actually in the liturgy (singing, responding, etc., but above all striving to truly pray the Mass).
- synchronize their actions—walking side-by-side, bowing together, holding candles at equal heights, kneeling at the same time, etc.
- perform everything at a dignified pace—not running or seeming hurried, even if something is done late
- check with the priest or MC before the Mass to see if there will be anything unusual about the Mass.
- find a substitute and inform the server coordinator of the substitution if they are unable to make it to an assignment.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

When school is delayed or canceled because of bad weather servers are not expected to report for the 7:30 morning Mass or the Grade level mass scheduled at 8:15 am. You will not be marked absent and this 'no show' will not count against you.

If you are scheduled to serve a funeral later in day or an evening wedding on the day of a school closing we would hope that you would try to make it to the church.

Having said this, **do not risk an accident coming to the church!** Other arrangements can be made if servers cannot make a scheduled funeral or wedding. **Please call the rectory at (513) 231-7440 and let them know you cannot come for the funeral or wedding (do not call for 7:30 a.m. Mass).**

DISCIPLINE

It is the general expectation that all servers will strive to correct their mistakes as they gain experience. It is also the expectation that, if a server believes they are not cut out for the ministry, they will inform the office so that they can be taken off the schedule. That said, all servers should keep in mind the following:

Misbehaving in any way during the liturgy is unacceptable. This includes talking, laughing, or being any type of a distraction. Such behavior will be considered sufficient reason for the server to be removed from the server list. Clear disregard for any of the general expectations (see p.3) will also be considered sufficient reason for the server to be removed. If a server is removed from the list, the office will send a notification of this. It is then up to the server to contact the Religious Education office if they wish to be reinstated.

Servers are required either to show up for their assignments or to get a substitute. It is understandable that someone might oversleep or forget on some occasion, therefore, **all servers will be allowed two unexcused misses**. If a server misses more assignments than this, they will be notified and removed from the server list. The server must then contact the Religious Education office in order to be put back on the list.

SERVER TRAINING

Two trainings will be offered in the year. An initial training will always be offered in the Fall for those who are in 5th grade. An advanced training will also be offered for servers who have become comfortable with serving in ordinary circumstances. This training will typically be taken in 6th grade, though it can be taken in other years as well. The advanced training will open more opportunities for serving (such as crucifer, thurifer, etc.). In order to take the advanced training, a server must pass an assessment during a particular Mass in which they serve.* Once this assessment is complete, it should be turned in to the Religious Education office, and the server will be allowed to attend the advanced server training.

When serving solemnities and some feasts, servers will be expected to come to special training sessions for these Masses.

Initial training:

Beginner servers will learn to serve weekday Masses and basic roles at Sunday Masses. General expectations will be discussed.

Advanced training:

A quick recap of previous training will be followed by training for thurifers, crucifers, and funeral servers. This training may also include corrections of any general areas of concern among current servers.

**You must ask the sacristan to assess you at a Mass of your choice. They will have a checklist with the general expectations for servers. Once this is filled in, they will sign the form and give it to you to turn in to the Religious Education office. See page 3 for this list of expectations. It is generally required for you to meet all expectations. Individual assessments, however, will be looked at case-by-case.*

HEAD SERVERS

Each year, a number of servers are chosen from the 8th grade group to act as head servers—acting as leaders in and examples of the ministry. Head servers are chosen at the end of May of each year. Qualifications are as follows:

1. Excellence in the ministry: showing reverence, knowledge, respect.
2. An ability to train, guide, and correct other servers.
3. Availability during Holy Week, Easter, and Christmas liturgies for the year.
4. No more than three missed assignments previously.

Head servers who do not live up to these expectations may be dismissed.

SERVER OF THE YEAR

Each year, one or more 8th grade servers receive the recognition of *Server of the Year*. The qualifications are as follows:

1. Punctuality and no missed assignments that year.
2. Substituting for others and volunteering for special liturgies (funerals, etc.).
3. Obvious reverence and maturity.
4. Attentiveness to detail and ability to respond to unexpected situations.

HIGH SCHOOL SERVERS

High school students are welcome to continue serving. They should ask to stay on the list if they wish to do so. It will be assumed that high school students will serve Sundays and solemnities, but they may also ask to be put on the weekday schedule.

Servers that continue into high school will be preferred for solemnities and other special occasions. They should be familiar enough with serving that they can instruct other servers before or during the Mass. From time to time, they may be called upon to serve as MC's on feast days and solemnities.

On top of the normal expectations for servers, it is also expected that servers who continue into high school will commit themselves to daily prayer for vocational discernment. This need be nothing more than a short, personal exclamation to God (for example: *Lord, show me your will in my life and give me the courage and the openness to follow it*).

STRUCTURE OF THE MASS

In the following outline those elements which occur only on Sundays or major feasts are in italic.

Entrance Rite

Procession

Sign of the Cross and Greeting

Introductory Comments

Penitential Rite or Blessing of Water

Gloria

Opening Prayer

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading

Responsorial Psalm

Second Reading

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel

Homily

Profession of Faith

General Intercessions

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Preparation of altar/gifts

Prayer over the gifts

Eucharistic Prayer

Communion Rite

Lord's Prayer

Sign of Peace

Breaking of the Bread

Reception of Communion

Prayer after Communion

Concluding Rite

Announcements

Final Blessing

Recession

Servers need to anticipate the next part of the Mass and be ready to do their job for that part of the mass. It is a very good idea to memorize the above outline and to know what the servers do at each part of the Mass.

ITEMS NEEDED FOR MASS

Servers are responsible for making sure these items are in place before each Mass. Even if a coordinator has set them out, servers are expected to double check.

Chalice, extra chalices, and purificators (one for each chalice).

Main paten with hosts and extra patens.

Pitcher of wine.

Cruet of water, bowl, and hand towel.

Tabernacle key in the tabernacle.

Lectionary and Missal.

Hymnals for servers.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR SERVING

When do servers bow and genuflect?

Servers genuflect when walking in front of the tabernacle outside of Mass. For instance, a server always genuflects in front of the tabernacle on the way to the sacristy. A genuflection is also made to the Blessed Sacrament when it is exposed on the altar in the monstrance.

Servers bow at the waist to the altar outside of Mass whenever passing by it. A bow is also made at the beginning and end of the Mass, as well as when leaving the sanctuary while serving. Servers carrying anything do not need to bow.

What is the order of a procession?

Servers always lead the procession. The following is a standard order and should be adjusted according to who is in the procession:

Thurifer
 Cross
 Acolytes
 Book
 Reader with the Lectionary
 Deacon
 Priest

At the end of Mass, the reader does not recess.

What is proper posture at Mass?

Servers who are not holding anything should always have hands folded at the chest and pointed upward—to include when they kneel at the altar. They should always be attentive, still, and calm. Eyes should be on what's happening and on the priest—if the priest should need a server, he should be able to get their attention immediately.

DUTIES BEFORE AND AFTER MASS

Before Mass begins servers need to do the following:

1. Sign the attendance sheet.
2. Make sure all the items needed for Mass are in their places (See p. 7).
3. Check with the priest to see if something different is happening at Mass that day.
4. Make sure the candles are lit.

After Mass:

1. Help bring the items on the credence table into the sacristy.
2. Make sure the Lectionary and Missal are returned if no more Masses that day.
3. Extinguish the candles at the altar.
4. Neatly hang the albs in the servers' wardrobe, making sure to hang them in the proper section according to size, and buttoning them so they don't fall down.
5. Return cinctures to the hooks and close the cupboard doors.
6. Check with the sacristan or Father to see if they need any other assistance.

HOW TO SERVE A WEEKDAY MASS

Entrance Procession and Opening Rites

- Process to the tabernacle and genuflect, process to the foot of the sanctuary and bow, then immediately move to seats.
- As the penitential rite is ending (as Father says *Lord have mercy* the second time), be ready with the Missal—bring it up as Father says *Let us pray* and return it to the credence table when the prayer is done. [If serving alone, leave Missal on the altar]

Liturgy of the Word

Preparation of the Altar and Gifts

- Immediately after the Intercessions, bring the Missal and the main chalice to the altar.*
- Next bring the gifts (wine and bread on main paten) and the extra chalices.*
- Finally, bring the water cruet and bowl as well as the finger towel. Father will add water to the wine, then later wash his hands. Make sure to return with the empty wine pitcher.

The Eucharistic Prayer

- At the beginning of the *Sanctus (Holy Holy)*, line up at the bottom step of the sanctuary and kneel all together when the *Sanctus* ends. Servers remain here until after Communion.

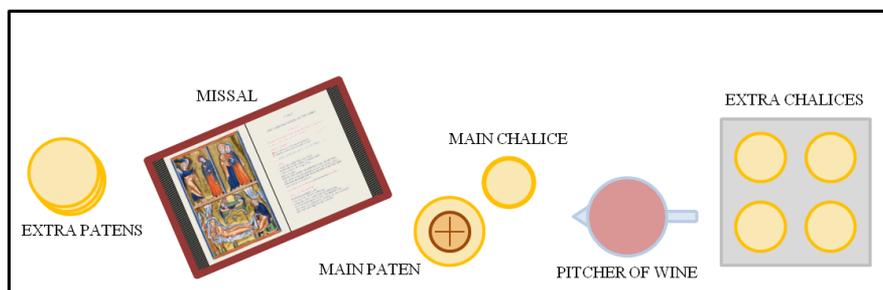
Communion Rite

- As the *Agnus Dei (Lamb of God)* begins, one server brings the extra Communion plates to the altar.
- As Communion begins, stand and line up to receive Communion.
- Immediately after Communion, clear the altar except for the ciborium.
- As Father begins to rise after Communion, bring him the Missal for the closing prayer.

Concluding Rites

- When the priest moves to the bottom of the altar steps, join him. Bow together, turn, and recess out, once again genuflecting at the tabernacle.
- In the sacristy, face the crucifix and bow to it after the priest comes in. The priest may say *Prosit*, to which the response is *omnibus et singulis*, or he may say *Praise be Jesus Christ*, to which the response is *now and forever*.

*altar arrangement:



HOW TO SERVE A SUNDAY MASS

Servers:

Cross [C], Acolytes (2) [A], Book Bearer [B]

Entrance Procession and Opening Rites

All Process in with cross and candles, line up at altar, genuflect with Father, then go to seats.

A's Place candles on credence table.

B As the Gloria ends (when you hear *Holy Spirit*), Bring Missal to Father for the Opening Prayer.

Liturgy of the Word

B At the end of the Creed, as we say *I believe in the Holy Spirit*, bring the petition folder to Father for the General Intercessions.

Preparation of the Altar and Gifts

A's At the end of the Intercessions, bring the Missal and main chalice to the altar, then walk down on either side of the nave to reach the gifts at the back of the church. When the collection is finished, lead the gifts in procession to Father at the front of the altar, move to either side of him, and receive the gifts (collection basket goes beside the altar, bread and wine to Father).

C Bring any extra chalices up to the altar when the Acolytes first go up.

A's After bringing the gifts, bring the cruets, bowl, and finger towel to Father. Make sure to return with the empty wine pitcher after Father has washed his hands.

Eucharistic Prayer

All At the beginning of the *Sanctus*, line up at the bottom step of the sanctuary and kneel all together when the *Sanctus* ends. Remain here until after Communion.

Communion Rite

C As the *Agnus Dei* begins, bring the extra Communion plates to the altar.

All As Communion begins, stand and line up to receive Communion.

A's Immediately after Communion, clear the altar except for the ciborium.

B As Father begins to rise after Communion, bring him the Missal for the closing prayer.

Concluding Rites

All As soon as the final hymn begins, retrieve the candles and crucifix and line up at the bottom step of the sanctuary. After Father joins the line, genuflect, turn, and process out.

FUNERALS

Note: for funerals in which the family sits in the tabernacle section, the servers will have their seats and the credence table moved to the other side (by the organ).

The servers will carry the aspergillum and the cross. The funeral pall will be carried on a pew where the funeral director can get it. When ready, the servers will lead the procession into church, stopping at the casket. The casket will be blessed with the water and the pall will be placed on it. After this is done, the servers resume the procession to the altar, where the ministers bow, then go to their seats.

The Mass continues as usual until after communion. When the priest has finished the prayer after communion, a server brings the thurible and boat to him at the casket. *The sacristan for the funeral will have prepared the incense and placed the thurible on a stand nearby.* The other server gets the cross and stands on the opposite side of the casket from the priest. The priest begins the Final Commendation during which he will use the incense. When the rite is finished, the servers will lead the recession back to the church door and wait as the family and friends follow the casket out.

WEDDINGS

If the wedding takes place at Mass, the procedure is very similar to a Sunday Mass. The only difference will be where the priest might be when he needs the Missal. Being attentive is the most critical thing for serving a wedding.

TORCHES

At certain solemn Masses, torch-bearers will be used to emphasize the importance of the feast being celebrated.

Torch-bearers have a few simple tasks:

- Process in behind the other servers in pairs, lining up just in front of the pews instead of at the foot of the sanctuary.
- Put torches away in the sacristy and sit down in the pew behind the other servers.
- As Father washes his hands after the gifts are blessed, go back and retrieve the torches, then line up on either side of the tabernacle.
- When the *Sanctus* begins, process out around the altar: the first server on each side will go to the front of the altar (Beechmont side), the next two on each side will be along the side of the sanctuary, lined up with the legs of the altar. Kneel and stand with the other servers, processing back to the sacristy only when the Sign of Peace begins.
- After receiving Communion, again go back to the sacristy and stand ready with torches.
- Process out in the same way you processed in.

HOW TO SERVE AS THURIFER

When you are familiar with the actual steps, being thurifer is quite simple. The thurible is needed three times: at the very beginning, at the Gospel, at the preparation of the gifts. Otherwise, it is a matter of processing with the thurible, and perhaps incensing during the Eucharistic Prayer.

Entrance Procession and Opening Rites

- Lead procession to the sanctuary with the thurible and boat, stand on the far left when you get to the base of the sanctuary.
- When Father goes up to the altar, go around to the back of the sanctuary, then climb the steps to meet him behind the altar. Let him charge the thurible and incense the altar. When he turns towards the crucifix, turn with him, bow, wait for him to incense the crucifix, bow again, then turn back towards the altar. When he is done, return the thurible to its stand.

Liturgy of the Word

- At the end of the Responsorial Psalm, retrieve the thurible and boat. When the second reading ends, move up towards the altar. As the Gospel Acclamation begins, go up to Father, who will charge the thurible.
- Move to the middle of the sanctuary, just at the top of the steps, and wait for Father or Deacon to retrieve the book of the Gospels. Afterward, lead the way to the ambo and stand ready behind the ambo. Father or Deacon will incense the book. At the end of the Gospel, return the thurible and boat.
- Add a piece of charcoal to the thurible during the homily.

Preparation of the Altar and Gifts

- As the procession with the gifts begins, retrieve the thurible and boat and stand ready by the credence table. When Father has said the prayer of blessing over the wine (before he washes his hands), move up to the altar. Father will incense the altar as before.

The Eucharistic Prayer

- If there are torch-bearers, remain in the sacristy after the altar is incensed. Taking the thurible only, lead the torch-bearers out as the Sanctus begins, going all the way around to the front of the altar and kneeling at the center. Incense the Eucharist as Father elevates the Host and the Chalice (three sets of three swings each, towards the middle, left, and right). Later, return with the torches.

Communion Rite

- As the closing prayer begins, retrieve the thurible.

Concluding Rites

- Line up with the other servers as before and lead them in the procession out.

DICTIONARY

Acolyte	An acolyte is instituted to serve at the altar and to assist the priest and deacon.
Alb	Long white robe which is the basic garment for all liturgical ministers who vest. It signifies our baptismal garment and symbolizes being in a state of grace.
Altar	The table of the Lord and the place where the sacrifice of the cross is made present and offered under sacramental signs. The altar is also a symbol of Christ and it is the focal point of the Mass.
Ambo	The reading stand from which the Scriptures are read and the homily is preached. It is also sometimes called a lectern or pulpit.
Baptistry	The area of the church in which Baptism is administered.
Benediction	A liturgical celebration which culminates in the blessing of the people with the Blessed Sacrament in a monstrance.
Blessed Sacrament	A name used to refer to the Real Presence of Jesus under the appearance of bread and wine after the consecration in the Eucharistic Prayer of the Mass.
Boat	The container for fresh incense. It has a small spoon to put the incense in the thurible.
Book of Gospels	A Lectionary that only contains the Gospel readings for Mass on Sundays and special feasts. It is carried in procession for Mass. Also called the Evangeliary.
Cassock	An ankle-length garment worn by the Catholic clergy and sometimes by altar servers while serving Mass (with a surplice).
Chasuble	The outer vestment worn by the priest for Mass. It is an emblem of charity. The different colors of chasubles signify the different liturgical seasons and feasts.
Ciborium	The container used to reserve the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle (plural: <i>ciboria</i>).
Cincture	The rope-like belt worn with the alb to hold it at the waist. Symbolizes chastity.
Communion Plate	A consecrated plate from which the Body of Christ is distributed.
Cope	A cape worn by clergy for liturgies outside of the Mass.
Corporal	The white cloth placed on top of the altar cloth. On it is placed the bread and wine to be consecrated at Mass.
Credence Table	A small table near the altar where the items for Mass are kept until they are needed. It is near the servers' seats so they have easy access to it.
Cruet	A vessel used to hold the wine or water for the celebration of the Mass.
Dalmatic	The outer vestment worn by the deacon over the alb and stole. It is square cut with sleeves and is made in all the liturgical colors.
Eucharistic Prayer	The prayer said by the priest at Mass during which the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ.
Extraordinary Ministers	People who are asked to administer the Body and Blood of Christ at the Eucharist when the number of ordinary ministers is not sufficient.
Holy Water	Blessed water kept in a large container and in small fonts at the church doors. Sometimes used in the liturgy for blessing. Reminds us of Baptism.

Humeral Veil	A liturgical veil that is worn over the shoulders by a cleric when he carries the Blessed Sacrament in procession or blesses the Faithful with the Blessed Sacrament.
Incense	A mixture of spices which produce a sweet smell and smoke when burned. It is used to symbolize our prayer to God (Psalm 141 says <i>Let our prayers rise like incense, O God</i>).
Lavabo	The bowl into which water is poured over the priest's hands at Mass.
Lectionary	The book of Scripture readings used for the liturgy.
Liturgy	The public official prayer of the Church in union with Christ. Primarily the Mass.
Missal	The ritual book used by the priest and deacon during the Mass.
Monstrance	The large container used for displaying the Blessed Sacrament for adoration.
Nave	The main part of the Church in which the congregation sits; outside of the sanctuary (facing both the altar and tabernacle).
Pall	1. The large white cloth used to cover the casket at funerals. It reminds us of the white robe used for everyone at their baptism to signify the holiness God gives us in baptism. 2. The small linen cloth stiffened with a piece of cardboard, with which the chalice is covered at Mass. It is used to prevent foreign objects from getting into the chalice after consecration.
Paschal Candle	The large candle blessed at the Easter Vigil to symbolize Christ's victory over sin and death through His glorious Resurrection. It is also a symbol of Christ being the light of the world. This special candle is used at all Masses in the Easter season and at Baptisms and funeral liturgies throughout the year.
Paten	Another name for a communion plate. Often it is smaller and only holds a few hosts.
Purificator	The small white linen towel used by the priest and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion for the chalices.
Pyx	A small container used for carrying the Body of Christ to the sick or homebound.
Sacristan	The person who helps prepare all the items needed for Mass.
Sacristy	The place where the ministers prepare for the liturgy.
Sanctuary	The raised area in Church encompassing the altar, ambo, and presider's chair.
Stole	The cloth strip hung around the neck of a priest or deacon. It symbolizes their ordination and role in the community.
Surplice	A liturgical vestment of white linen worn over a cassock. It is hip-length.
Tabernacle	The large container in which the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. The ciborium filled with the consecrated Hosts is placed inside it. A candle is kept burning near it to indicate that the Blessed Sacrament is present.
Thurible	The container in which incense is burned; it is on a chain. Also called a censer.
Transept	The area set crosswise to the nave (seating on either side of the altar).



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