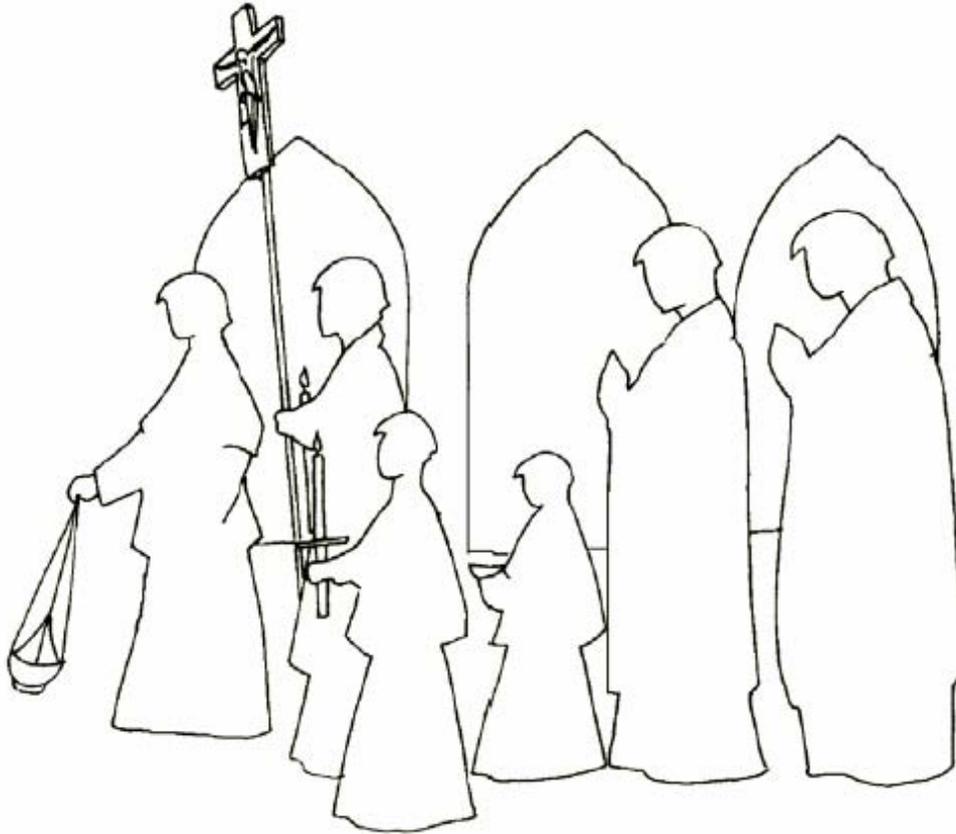


# Altar Server Manual



**St. Michael the Archangel Parish**  
**10 Willow Avenue**  
**Baltimore, MD 21206**  
**410-665-1054**  
**[www.smoverlea.org](http://www.smoverlea.org)**

*Revised February, 2007*

### **Scheduling:**

- All servers are expected to serve the liturgies for which they have been scheduled. In the event that you are unable to serve a particular liturgy it is your responsibility to call someone to take your place. Servers who habitually miss their assigned masses will be removed from the schedule.
- When schedules are available, it is announced at Mass. If you do not pick up your schedule it will be mailed to you.
- You may also access the schedule online by going to [www.smooverlea.org](http://www.smooverlea.org) and clicking "Liturgical Ministry Schedules."

### **Punctuality and Proper Attire:**

- Altar servers should arrive in the sacristy **15** minutes before the liturgy for which you are assigned.
- Sign in and get vested. Select an alb from the server's closet. The alb should come down to your shoes: make sure it is not too long or too short. Remember that your shoes are the one item clothing that will be visible. For that reason, please do not wear tennis shoes or other types of casual footwear. Whatever you wear, be sure that it is neat and clean. Shorts and T-shirts are not appropriate attire when serving.

### **Before the Liturgy Begins:**

- When you are vested, please sit on the bench in the sacristy. Assist the sacristan with any duties as needed. When the celebrant leaves for the church, please accompany him. Get hymnals for the priest and deacon. Wait quietly in the gathering space. When the liturgy begins, lead the procession. *(Exception: If cross and candles are used, the servers walk in front of the celebrant(s). If incense is used, the thurifer – server carrying the censor – leads the procession before all others.)*

### **Processional:**

- ***With Cross and Candles:***
  - The **Crucifer** (crossbearer), if present, leads the procession. Walk slowly down the center aisle. Stop and pause in front of the altar, then turn to the left and proceed to put the cross in the area behind the St. Michael statue.
  - **Servers 1 & 2** follow behind the crucifer slowly down the main aisle. Do not follow too closely. Pause at the front of the altar, then proceed to place the processional candles in their stands, and stand at your seats.
- ***Without Cross and Candles:***
  - **Servers 1 & 2** lead the processional. Stop in front of the altar, wait for the celebrant and all genuflect to the tabernacle together in front of the altar. Go to your seat. Remain standing at your place.
- ***Masses Without Music:***
  - **Servers 1 & 2** lead the procession from the sacristy to the front of the altar. Allow space for the celebrant & deacon. Genuflect together and go to your seat.

### **Seating Assignments:**

- **Crucifer:** Holy Family side. *(If there is incense, ambo side with cross propped against wall inside the double doors.)*
- **Server 1:** St. Michael side.
- **Server 2:** Holy Family side.

***Introductory Rites:***

- **Server #1** holds the Missal for the celebrant when he indicates. (Usually when he says "Let us pray.") Stand directly in front of the celebrant – not at an angle.

***Liturgy of the Word:***

- Be seated and listen attentively to the readings.
- If there is a *Solemn Gospel Procession (with candles and/or incense)* **Servers 1 & 2** take their candles and stand in front of the altar, facing the crucifix. The deacon or celebrant will take the Gospel Book with the two servers leading the procession to the ambo.
- After the gospel reading, go to the front of the altar with the candles, bow, and return the candles to their stands. Be seated.
- All stand during the reading of the gospel, Profession of Faith (Creed), and General Intercessions (Prayer of the Faithful).

***Announcements:***

- After the announcements, the **Crucifer** takes the processional cross and proceeds to the back of church (down the center aisle) and prepares to lead the procession of the bread, wine, and offering.

***Preparation of the Altar (following the announcements):***

- **Server 1:** Places the chalice w/purificator to the right of the central corporal and any ciboria containing bread on the right corporal and places the Missal on the bookstand to the left of the corporal.
- **Server 2:** Places the communion cups w/purificators on the left corporal.
- 

***Preparation of the Gifts:***

- The **Crucifer** leads the procession of the gifts in the same way as the entrance procession. After placing the cross back in its place, return to your seat.
- **Servers 1 & 2** accompany the celebrant or deacon to the center aisle to receive the gifts of bread and wine.
- One server will be handed the bread, the other the wine.
- When the celebrant begins to turn, both **Servers 1 & 2** go to the St. Michael side of the altar. **Server 1** places the bread on the corporal in the center of the altar. **Server 2** takes the wine the niche, and the stopper is removed.
- **Server 1** brings the water cruet to the altar and **Server 2** brings the wine cruet (stopper removed) to the altar and wait for the priest or deacon to mix the water with the wine. **Server 2** receives the empty wine flagon after the celebrant or deacon pours the wine into the communion cups. Both return to the niche.
- **Server 1** keeps the water cruet and picks up the lavabo bowl. **Server 2** places the wine cruet in the niche and picks up the towel. (*If there is incense wait off to the side until the celebrant has completed incensing the altar.*)
- **Servers 1 & 2** come to the side of the altar. **Server 1** takes the water cruet and pours the water over the celebrant's hands. **Server 2** hands him the finger towel to dry his hands. When finished, return the items to the table and return to your places. Never walk between the altar and tabernacle during Mass. To cross the sanctuary, walk to the front of the altar, stop and bow, and proceed to the other side.

***Liturgy of the Eucharist:***

- During this part of the liturgy, stand or kneel with the rest of the assembly. Keep your hands folded and be reverent.
- Be sure to pull up your alb before kneeling so that it doesn't get torn or become uncomfortable. Kneel on the step, not the floor.

***Communion Rite:***

- During the Sign of Peace the Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist will come forward. Allow them room by moving closer to the back wall of the sanctuary.
- When receiving communion, step forward to the step. Be sure to bow before receiving the Body and the Blood of the Christ.
- During the distribution of communion, the altar is cleared. **Server 1** takes the chalice. **Server 2** takes the Missal w/bookstand.
- Return to your seats and pray quietly and join in singing the communion song.

***Post-Communion:***

- **Server 2** brings the Missal to the celebrant when he says "*Let us pray.*" Let the celebrant open the book and hold it for him. When he is finished close the book and return to your place. Stand for the Blessing and Dismissal. (If there is a Solemn Blessing, the celebrant will need to have the Missal for that as well.)

***Recessional (with cross and candles):***

- When the closing hymn begins, the **Crucifer** should get the processional cross and line up at the edge of the sanctuary step on the floor level (center aisle), facing the altar, with **Servers 1 & 2** on either side.
- After the celebrant genuflects, all servers turn and process out: **Crucifer** first, followed by **Servers 1 & 2** (allow some space). When you reach the gathering space you are free to return to the sacristy. Carefully put the cross and candles back, hang up your alb, and then leave.

***Recessional (without cross and candles):***

- **Servers 1 & 2** wait for the celebrant to kiss the altar and move to the front of the altar on the floor level (center aisle). When he does so, genuflect together. **Servers 1 & 2** lead the procession to the back of church.
- When you reach the gathering space you are free to return to the sacristy. Carefully put the cross and candles back, hang up your alb, and then leave.

## The Mass

You may or may not know that there are many different parts to the Mass. As Altar servers, there are different responsibilities during each part of the Mass. Please familiarize yourself with the parts of the Mass.

<b>Introductory Rites</b>	Gathering Hymn Greeting Penitential Rite Gloria Opening Prayer
<b>Liturgy of the Word</b>	First Reading (Old Testament) Responsorial Psalm Second Reading (New Testament/Epistle) Gospel Acclamation (Procession) Gospel Reading Homily Creed / Profession of Faith General Intercessions / Prayer of the Faithful Announcements
<b>Liturgy of the Eucharist</b>	Preparation of the Altar & Gifts Eucharistic Prayer
<b>Communion Rite</b>	Lord's Prayer Sign of Peace Communion Prayer After Communion
<b>Concluding Rite</b>	Blessing & Dismissal Recessional Hymn

## Putting Our Best Foot Forward

**Posture:** Posture is how you are using the parts of your body at a particular time. A server has to carry out a number of different actions at mass, and so there are a number of different postures.

**Walking:** We do a lot of walking everyday and sometimes we get sloppy as we do it. Always walk with your back straight and your head held high.

**Bowing:** When you bow to someone or something at mass, it should be a smooth forward inclining of your head and shoulders. When you bow to the altar, bow deeply at the waist and bring yourself slowly to your full height. When you bow to the priest, bow your head slowly and gracefully. Never walk and bow at the same time: stop before bowing.

**Genuflecting:** When you genuflect, keep your hands in front of your chest while you go down on your right knee. Keep your body straight. Do not wobble back and forth, or you may look like a newborn lamb trying to walk. Be sure that your alb is not going to trip you on the way down or up.

Vestments are forms of clothing worn by various people during the Mass.

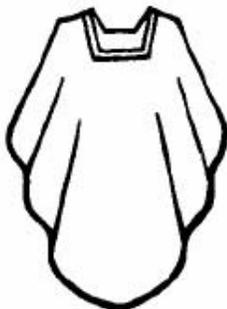


Alb

### Priest



Cincture



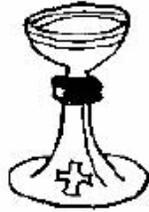
Chasuble



Stole



Amice



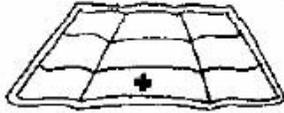
### Chalice

The cup that contains the precious Blood of Christ.



### Ciborium

A container that holds the body of Christ.



### Corporal

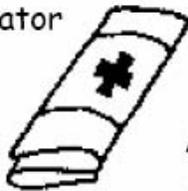
It is a square of white cloth, on which the chalice and paten are placed during the Mass, to catch particles of the Blessed Sacrament,

### Lavabo Cloth



A cloth that is used to dry the hands of the priest after he washes them during Mass.

### Purificator



A cloth that is used to wipe the chalice each time it is used.

## Altar Server's Dictionary

**Alb:** A long linen tunic, worn since the four century. The name comes from the Latin word, 'albus', meaning white, worn by ordained ministers as well as altar servers.

**Altar:** The tablee on which the Eucharist is celebrated.

**Ambo:** Also called the Pulpit. This is where the readers (Lectors), Deacon , and Priest proclaim the word of God to the people.

**Amice:** An oblong, white cloth with two tapes which the priest sometimes wears around his shoulders, underneath the alb.

**Boat:** The container inside which the incense is kept.

**Book of the Gospels:** Contains all the Gospel readings for the Church's year. It is brought to the Ambo during the Gospel acclamation. It may be carried into church as part of the entrance procession on the altar before the celebration begins.

**Celebrant's Chair:** The chair on which the presiding priest sits.

**Censer:** The container inside which charcoal is burned, it is suspended from chains and is also swung during parts of the service. This contains the burning charcoal on to which grains of incense are placed. Incense has been used since early times to honor people and things. For this reason during our worship we incense the people and priest, the altar, the Book of Gospels and the Blessed Sacrament.

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**Chalice:** The cup that contains the precious Blood of Christ.

**Chasuble:** The word literally means 'little house'. Worn at Mass, it covers all the other vestments and its color changes according to the season of the Church's year. This was originally a coat; it now symbolizes the garment of Christ who is the true celebrant of every Eucharist.

**Ciborium:** A container that holds the Body of Christ.

**Cincture:** A rope belt that is tied around the waist.

**Confessional / Reconciliation Room:** Here we meet with the priest to confess our sins and, through the Sacrament of Reconciliation or Penance, receive God's forgiveness in the prayer of absolution.

**Cope:** A large, full-length cape, held by a clasp at the front, worn for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and on other solemn occasions.

**Corporal:** Its name comes from the Latin word 'corpus' meaning a 'body'. It is a square of white cloth, on which the chalice and paten are placed during the Mass, to catch particles of the Blessed Sacrament, should any fall from the vessels. The corporal is placed on the altar either before Mass begins. In some churches it is placed on the altar during the preparation of the gifts.

**Credence table:** The little wooden side table or side shelf on which all the things that are necessary for the Mass are placed.

**Crucifix:** A cross on which is the figure of Jesus.

**Cruet:** Small vessel that contains water or wine for the Mass.

**Dalmatic:** A sleeved top garment worn by a deacon.

**Font:** This is a pool or vessel of water in which people are baptized. It reminds us of our baptism, when we were washed clean of sin and became a member of God's family.

**Flagon:** Large vessel that holds the wine that is carried in the offertory procession.

**Host:** The consecrated Body of Christ.

**Humeral veil:** A long rectangular garment, held by a clasp at the front, worn by a priest or deacon when carrying a Ciborium or Monstrance containing the Blessed Sacrament.

**Incense:** A substance that gives off clouds of sweet smelling smoke when sprinkled onto burning charcoal.

**Incense Boat:** So called because it is usually shaped like a boat, it contains the incense, which will be burned in the thurible.

**Lavabo Bowl and Towel:** At the preparation of the gifts the priest washes his hands to signify the cleansing of the sins of those gathered and to prepare himself for what he is about to do.

**Lectern:** The stand from which the cantor leads the congregation in song.

**Lectionary:** A book containing all the scripture readings for Mass. It is placed on the lectern before Mass begins.

**Missal:** A book that the priest uses at his chair and at the altar. It can also be called the sacramentary.

**Paten:** A plate from which Holy Communion is distributed.

**Processional Candles:** These two candles are carried behind the processional cross in the entrance procession. They are placed behind the altar servers' seating to be available for the solemn Gospel Procession.

**Processional Cross:** This is carried into church at the head of a procession, as a sign of our faith, and is the basic symbol of Christianity. It reminds us that Jesus died for us.

**Purificator:** A cloth that is used to wipe the chalice each time it is used.

**Pyx:** A small metal container, used to take Holy Communion to the sick and housebound.

**Sacristy:** The room where the ministers prepare themselves for the service.

**Sanctuary:** Sacred part of the church where the Altar, ambo and celebrant's chair are located.

**Sanctuary Lamp:** The lamp that is kept burning in the sanctuary to show that the Blessed Sacrament is present.

**Stations of the Cross:** These depict, in fourteen stages, the journey of Jesus to Calvary, his crucifixion on the cross and his laying in the tomb.

**Stole:** This important vestment, worn around the neck, shows that the priest is celebrating one of the Sacraments. It also shows that the priest has the duty to preach the Word of God. (It is also worn by the deacon.)

**Tabernacle:** The contained where we keep the Blessed Sacrament.

**Votive candles:** These are burned at shrines and in front of statues to represent the prayers and petitions of those who have prayed there.

## Summary of Responsibilities at Mass

### **Server 1:**

- Carries a candle, if used, in the procession.
- Holds the Missal for the celebrant for the Opening Prayer.
- Carries candle for solemn gospel procession (special occasions).
- During Preparation of the altar, places chalice w/purificator, as well as any ciboria with bread, on the altar and places the Missal, (with bookstand) to the left of the center corporal.
- Accompanies the celebrant or deacon to receive the gifts of bread and wine and place them on the altar.
- If receiving the bread, place it on the central corporal; if wine, take it to the niche and remove the stopper.
- Brings the water to the altar to be mixed with the wine.
- Holds the water and bowl for the handwashing.
- During communion, removes the Missal (w/bookstand) from the altar.
- Holds the Missal for the closing prayer.
- Carries a candle, if used, in the recessional.

### **Server 2:**

- Carries a candle, if used, in the procession.
- Carries candle for solemn gospel procession (special occasions).
- During the Preparation of the Altar, places the communion cups on the altar on the corporal on the left side of the altar.
- Accompanies the celebrant or deacon to receive the gifts of bread and wine.
- If receiving the bread, place it on the central corporal; if wine, take it to the niche and remove the stopper.
- Holds the finger towel for the handwashing.
- During communion, removes the chalice and purificator from the altar.
- Carries a candle, if used, in the recessional.

### **Crucifer:**

- Carries the cross and leads the procession
- At the end of the announcements, carries the cross to the back of church (down the main aisle) and leads the procession of the gifts of bread and wine.
- Carries the cross and leads the recessional at the end of mass.

### **Thurifer: (For masses with incense)**

- Lead the procession and assist with incensing the altar at beginning.
- Prepare incense during second reading. Lead the gospel procession.
- Prepare incense during collection. Incense for altar at preparation of the gifts.
- Kneel before altar at the "Holy Holy."
- Incense the Blessed Sacrament at elevation of consecrated Bread and Wine respectively.
- Return to sacristy at Memorial Acclamation.
- Lead recessional at the end of Mass.

## **ST. TARCISIUS**

Tarcisius was a twelve-year-old acolyte during one of the fierce Roman persecutions of the third century, probably during that of Valerian. Each day, from a secret meeting place in the catacombs where Christians gathered for Mass, a deacon would be sent to the prisons to carry the Eucharist to those Christians condemned to die. At one point, there was no deacon to send and so St. Tarcisius, an acolyte, was sent carrying the "Holy Mysteries" to those in prison.

On the way, he was stopped by boys his own age who were not Christians but knew him as a playmate and lover of games. He was asked to join their games, but this time he refused and the crowd of boys noticed that he was carrying something. Somehow, he was also recognized as a Christian, and the small gang of boys, anxious to view the Christian "Mysteries," became a mob and turned upon Tarcisius with fury. He went down under the blows, and it is believed that a fellow Christian drove off the mob and rescued the young acolyte.

The mangled body of Tarcisius was carried back to the catacombs, but the boy died on the way from his injuries. He was buried in the cemetery of St. Callistus, and his relics are claimed by the church of San Silvestro in Capite.

In the fourth century, Pope St. Damasus wrote a poem about this "boy-martyr of the Eucharist" and says that, like another St. Stephen, he suffered a violent death at the hands of a mob rather than give up the Sacred Body to "raging dogs." His story became well known when Cardinal Wiseman made it a part of his novel *Fabiola*, in which the story of the young acolyte is dramatized and a very moving account given of his martyrdom and death.

Tarcisius, one of the patron saints of altar boys, has always been an example of youthful courage and devotion, and his story was one that was told again and again to urge others to a like heroism in suffering for their faith. In the *Passion of Pope Stephen*, written in the sixth century, Tarcisius is said to be an acolyte of the pope himself and, if so, this explains the great veneration in which he was held and the reason why he was chosen for so difficult a mission.

## Prayer of an Altar Server



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

St. Tarcisius, pray for me and for all servers.

St. Michael's appreciates your service of time and talent. You are a vital part of each liturgy at which you serve. Please keep these notes for future reference. Thank you for all that you do to help our parish community to pray well. If you ever have any concerns please feel free to contact the Parish Office at 410-665-1054