

## **TERMS AND DEFINITIONS FOR ALTAR SERVERS**

### **PLEASE READ AND LEARN AT HOME – REVISED DECEMBER 2011**

When you serve Mass, you will use things with names that you may not know. These four pages contain information that you will need to know before you complete the training program. Why? Because you will need to talk about what you are doing with other altar servers, and with the priest and deacon. Learn as much as you can before classes begin. Don't be surprised if some things confuse you. You will be shown everything during the first class, but you must still study the list at home. There are no tests, but you will be drilled during the classes and will need to show that you know and understand what is on these pages. You should know and be able to repeat all of the names marked "\*\*\*\*" at our first class. Ask someone at home to help you. Drilling works!

#### **SERVERS AND THE MASS**

To make learning easier for servers, we will talk about four parts of the Mass: Introduction, Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Eucharist, and Conclusion. Remember these four parts. You should know when we are at these places in the Mass and be able to say something about what the servers are doing during these parts. Don't try to memorize everything.

The Introduction is the beginning of the Mass and is done at the presider's chair. It includes the Entrance Procession, the "Lord have mercy" and the Opening Prayer. Server #1 holds the binder for the presider during the Introduction.

During the Liturgy of the Word, we hear three readings from the Bible and the homily. These are done from the Ambo (lectern). When the presider returns to his chair, we also profess our faith (the Profession of Faith) and present our needs to God (the General Intercessions). Server #1 holds the binder for the presider for the last parts.

\*\*\* Homily: Servers beginning classes need to be able to describe to the instructor what and when the homily is in their own words, and to identify the homily to the instructor if he/she is sitting next to the new server. To say "at the homily, the priest speaks to the people about the readings" is enough! The new server beginning classes should be able to follow the sequence from homily to the Profession of Faith to the General Intercessions.

\*\*\* Magic Moment: This is a name that ONLY our altar servers use. I made it up because it is funny but helps us remember. The correct name is PREPARATION. It is the time of the Mass when the ushers collect the money and the lector reads the announcements. It is really an intermission in the Mass when everything stops. All altar servers MUST know when this is. So we ask you to know when it is coming by looking at what happens before the Preparation or Magic Moment. Look again at what is said on this page about the Liturgy of the Word. We finish the three readings and the homily. The presider returns to his chair and we do the Profession of Faith and the General Intercessions. Then server #1 returns to his chair and "Magic Moment" begins! All servers do something at this time and you will learn about it in class. We can save a lot of class time if you know all about "Magic Moment" before we begin the classes. Learn it!!! Ask a parent or older brother/sister for help learning this.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist takes place at the altar. It begins with the Offertory Procession (procession with the gifts). A server leads the procession. Two servers carry the gifts to the altar and the presider or deacon prepares the bread and wine. Servers assist the presider in washing his hands. The Eucharistic Prayer is the long prayer read by the presider at the altar. Everyone recites the Our Father and then offers one another the Sign of Peace. During Communion, members of the congregation receive the Eucharist.

\*\*\* Offertory Procession: Servers beginning classes need to be able to describe to the instructor what the offertory procession is (bringing the gifts to the altar), who they remember seeing in the procession, and to identify this procession when it is happening. Watch this very carefully at one Mass before beginning serving classes. You will be a super server student if you can remember what the servers are doing just before the Offertory Procession.

The Conclusion is also done from the chairs. At this time the presider, servers and people finish the Mass. It includes the Concluding Prayer, Final Blessing, the Dismissal, and the Closing Procession. Again a server holds the binder for the presider.

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## THE CHURCH YEAR AND CHURCH COLORS

The church year is different than the calendar year. It does not begin on January 1. The church year begins with the first Sunday in Advent, which is near the beginning of December. There are special seasons during the church year, such as Advent, Lent, and Easter. There are special feast days like Passion Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, and Christmas. The rest of the church year is called "ordinary time". You need not memorize feasts and seasons, but you should understand enough to talk with the instructor about it.

Vestments worn by priests and deacons, cinctures worn by servers during the Mass, and church decorations will be red, white, green or purple. Purple (or blue) is used during the seasons of Advent and Lent. Red is used on some special occasions. White is used at Christmas, at Easter and at other special occasions. Green is the normal or "ordinary" color worn during the rest of the year.

The serving schedule gives the name of every Sunday or Holy Day and the cincture color that will be used. The schedule is available for all altar servers to download from the internet. A copy is also posted on the altar servers' bulletin board.

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## CHURCH PLACES, PEOPLE AND THINGS

Altar: The table where the Mass is celebrated. Servers bow or genuflect in front of it.

Easter Candle: A large candle placed in a tall holder near the altar. If you ever have to light the Easter Candle, you will need help from an usher.

Presider: The person who leads the ceremony. This will always be a priest at Mass. It could be a priest or deacon at other times.

Presider's Chair, Deacon's Chair and Server's Chairs: These chairs are used during Mass. The presider's and deacon's chairs are located behind and to the right of the altar. The server's chairs are in the first row of chairs facing the altar.

Processional Cross: This is the crucifix on a stand behind the altar. It is carried by a server during the entrance procession at Mass and during Stations of the Cross.

Sacristy: The room where the priest and deacon get ready for Mass.

Working Sacristy: The room near the rest rooms where the linens are stored and where the Eucharistic Ministers work.

Server's Changing Room: Server's vestments are stored in the server's changing room, which is located to your right as you enter the church. A bulletin board in the changing room will contain information of interest to servers.

Tabernacle: The place where the Eucharist is kept during the week. It is located behind the altar. The tabernacle is treated with great reverence by everyone.

Censer: Incense is burned in the censer. The censer contains a piece of burning charcoal. The grains of incense are stored in a small covered container called a boat. The censer and boat are kept in the sacristy. A server will carry the censer and boat in the procession on special occasions.

Sign of the Cross: Using the right hand, the server touches forehead, chest, left shoulder, and right shoulder. All servers should already be able to make the sign of the cross. New servers should know this before beginning classes.

\*\*\* Genuflection: Briefly touch the right knee to the floor. You genuflect in front of the tabernacle when entering and leaving the church. New servers should know how to genuflect before beginning classes and will be taught when to genuflect.

Bow: Bend at the waist.

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## VESTMENTS WORN BY SERVERS

\*\*\* Alb: This is the white robe worn by servers during the Mass. It has sleeves like a coat and it reaches the feet. They are made in different sizes. Server's albs are kept in the changing room just to your right as you enter the church.

\*\*\* Cincture: This is a rope fastened around the waist over the alb. The cincture comes in the four church colors. The proper color to be used for any Mass will be printed on the servers' Mass schedule.

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BOOK USED BY SERVERS is called a Binder which is exactly that – a loose-leaf notebook used at our parish for most of the prayers. It should be on the server's chair and is held by a server during Mass.

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ITEMS ON THE GIFT TABLE BEFORE MASS -- These items are carried up in the offertory procession and given to the servers to place on the altar. Eucharistic ministers will place these items on the gift table.

Pitcher: A glass pitcher used during Mass to consecrate enough wine for all people to receive the Blood of Christ.

Hosts: The bread used for Mass. The presider uses one large host during the Eucharistic Prayer. The hosts will in a large glass bowl or plate.

ITEMS ON THE SHELF BEFORE MASS -- (The shelf is the left corner behind the altar.)

\*\*\* Chalice: The cup used by the priest when he consecrates the wine into the Blood of Christ. Most often we use a crystal glass. Some churches use chalices made of silver or gold. Servers will not have to place the chalice on the shelf, but will use it when setting the altar. Make sure it is there.

\*\*\* Cruet: This is a small pitcher containing water. It is needed by the priest or deacon to prepare the chalice during Mass and for washing the priest's hands. Make sure it is filled with water from the working sacristy and put on the shelf before Mass.

\*\*\* Finger Bowl and Finger Towel: The bowl is used to catch the water poured over the priest's hands. The small white finger towel is used by the priest to dry his hands. The finger bowl is stored in the drying rack next to the special sink in the working sacristy. Make sure they are out before Mass.

\*\*\* Corporal: This is the large white cloth with a cross on it. It usually measures about 20 inches from one side to the other. It is placed over the center of the altar where the priest stands, like the place mat on your dining room table. We use a special (very large!) corporal which covers half the altar. Servers may please the smaller corporal on the altar during Mass but never put the larger corporal on the altar. The gifts are placed on the corporal. We will talk more about the corporal.

\*\*\* Purificator: This is smaller white cloth with a cross on it. It is placed on the altar like the napkin on your dining room table. It is used to wipe the chalice. Several purificators are placed on the altar by the server during the collection.

Roman Missal or just the Missal: This is the large book with the red cover containing all of the prayers used by the priest at Mass. This book is kept on the shelf behind the altar and is placed on the altar during the Mass.