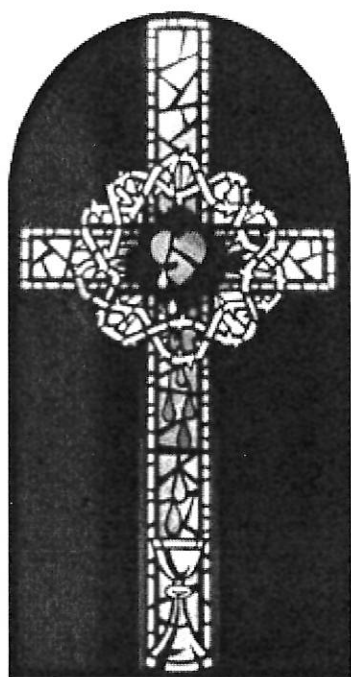


# Precious Blood Parish Altar Server Handbook



*The goal of this booklet is to provide instruction to **Altar Server Coordinators, Parents, Priests, and Servers** for serving Mass both at school and in the parish.*

**Bold Terms** are Liturgical Objects or Parts of the Mass that are important for identification. Servers are encouraged to review the study sheet with pictures and definitions.

Principles for serving are taken from the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (Available online at [uscgb.org](http://uscgb.org)) and in consultation with the pastor.

### **General Principles**

Servers are asked to arrive 10 minutes before Mass and to be vested in the provided white **alb**, with a **cincture** that matches the **liturgical color** of the day [represented by the color of the vestment the priest is wearing]. Once vested, servers are asked to sign in [if scheduled], or check-in with the priest so that it is clear that the server is present.

Male servers are asked to wear black dress shoes and dark-colored slacks, while female servers are asked to wear flat, close-toed shoes.

Unless they are carrying something, servers maintain a posture of **folded hands** - i.e. hands flat together in front of the server's chest with thumbs crossed - when standing or moving in the sanctuary.

Unless they are holding something, servers keep their hands folded in the lap or place one hand on each leg while sitting.

When carrying something that only requires one hand [for example a cruet] servers place their free hand on their chest.

In general, and when possible, servers should try to do actions together [for example bowing together toward the priest after presenting the Water and Wine Cruets or waiting to sit down for the readings].

Outside of the Mass [i.e. before and after Mass] the focal point of the Sanctuary is the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle. Servers should genuflect when crossing in front of the Tabernacle. If the server is carrying something in his/her hands, then the server bows instead of genuflecting.

During the Mass, the focal point of the Sanctuary is the Altar of Sacrifice. Servers bow to the Altar in reverence anytime they move across its central point [for example getting a torch at the gospel procession].

Servers are asked not to stack the server patens on top of each other [either when carrying them or placing them on the Altar/Credence Table] as the gold surface scratches easily.

### Server Ranking

Servers are divided into two groups: Junior Servers and Senior Servers. To advance from the Junior to Senior level, a server must have reached their 10th Birthday, have attended two Altar serving training sessions and pass an exam.

Senior Servers wear a gold cincture and are asked to help guide/prompt junior servers before and during the Mass.

#### The exam includes:

1. Knowing the congregational responses for the Mass.
2. Being able to identify the following: Altar, Ambo, Presider's Chair, Credence Table, Sanctuary, Tabernacle, Chalice, Missal, Water Cruet, Wine Cruet, Pall, Purificator, Priest's Paten, Server's Paten, Corporal, Finger Towel, Lavabo Bowl, Ciborium, Alb, Cincture, Processional Cross, Torch, Thurible and Boat.
3. Being able to demonstrate the following: a server's posture for standing, sitting and carrying something; correct use of a server's paten for communion, an explanation of when a bow versus a genuflection is appropriate.

## Serving Instructions

### Daily Mass

Altar servers are asked to wait prior to the beginning of Mass at the back of the Church, or at the predetermined place where the entrance procession will begin.

When the priest indicates that the entrance procession will begin, servers process toward the sanctuary [or place where Mass will be celebrated] with **folded hands**. At the bottom step of the sanctuary [or the entrance the area where Mass will be celebrated] the servers spread out to form a line, leaving a space in the center for the priest. When the priest arrives, the servers genuflect with the priest [or bow if there is no tabernacle in the sanctuary] and proceed to their places for the beginning of Mass [see GIRM 274].

At the end of the **Penitential Rite** [this is signaled by the phrase 'let us pray'] the server designated to hold the **Missal** will bring it to the priest, holding it with two hands against their shoulder. The server continues to hold the book in front of the priest until the prayer

has ended and the people have responded “Amen.” The server then returns with the book to his/her seat for the Readings.

The Servers remain seated for the Readings and the Responsorial Psalm with hands on their lap. Servers stand for the Gospel. When the Priest or Deacon approaches the **Ambo**, Servers turn and face the **Ambo** for the proclamation of the Gospel. After the Gospel, the Servers are seated for the homily. After the homily, the Servers stand for the **Intercessions**.

At the end of the **Intercessions**, the Servers help prepare the **Altar**, by bringing the **Missal**, the Priest’s **Paten** and **Chalice** [and any additional Chalices], and the **Ciborium** [if present] from the **Credence Table**. Servers place them on the side of the Altar closest to the Credence Table and then bow to the Altar before returning to the Credence Table. After the Altar is prepared and the Priest has begun to offer the bread, two servers together bring forward the **Water and Wine Cruets** and stand on the carpet [slightly toward the Ambo side] to present them to the priest. The Servers approach the Altar after the priest has offered the Paten [with the prayer “Blessed are you Lord God of all creation...”] and place it back on the Altar. The **Wine Cruet** is presented first, then the **Water Cruet**. The servers then bow together to the priest and then return to the **Credence Table**. After the priest has offered the **Chalice** [with the prayer “Blessed are you Lord God of all creation...”] and placed it back on the Altar, the servers approach the Altar with the **Water Cruet, Lavabo Bowl** and **Finger Towel** [approaching the Altar close enough to stand on the carpet, slightly to the Ambo side]. First, the server carrying the **Water Cruet** and **Lavabo Bowl** pours water over the priest’s hands, and then the server carrying the Towel offers it to the priest. After the priest has dried his fingers both servers bow to the priest and then return to the Credence Table to replace the items. Then the servers return to their places. Servers sit, stand, and kneel with the congregation for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Servers kneel after the **Sanctus** [“Holy, Holy, Holy...”] and remain kneeling until the end of the **Second Elevation** [“Through Him, with Him and in Him...”]. After the response from the Congregation [“Amen”], the Servers stand and remain in their places until the Sign of Peace. At the **Sign of Peace**, the servers remain in the **Sanctuary** and exchange the Sign of Peace with the other ministers close to them.

After exchanging the sign of peace, one server goes to the **Credence Table** to retrieve the **Communion Patens**, and returning to the other servers, he distributes them as needed.

At the end of the **Angus Dei** [“Lamb of God...”] the servers kneel on the carpet behind the Ambo and remain kneeling until after the Priest has consumed the Precious Blood from the **Chalice**. Then the servers stand to receive Communion but remain at their place on the lower level and wait for the priest to come to them to distribute Communion [this is to ensure room for the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion who are entering the Sanctuary at this time]. After receiving Communion, the servers with **Communion Patens** assist in the distribution of Communion. After the distribution of Communion, the servers place the **Communion Patens** on the **Altar** for the priest to purify.

After Communion, one server approaches the Altar to receive the Communion Patens from the priest. At the same time, another server brings the Water Cruet to the priest to purify the Sacred Vessels. The servers then help to clear the Altar and carry the Sacred Vessels back to the Credence Table [after they have been purified] as the priest places them on the edge of the Altar. One server removes the **Missal** and places it on the chair of the server who is designated to hold it.

After the Altar has been cleared, the priest returns to his Chair. When the priest stands up and says, “let us pray”, the server designated to carry the Missal brings it over and stands in front of the priest [holding it with two hands and against his/her shoulder]. After the Post-Communion Prayer has concluded and the congregation has responded “Amen” the server returns with the Missal to his/her place for the final blessing.

After the final blessing the servers remain in their places until the priest begins to move toward the Altar. When the priest has begun moving, all the servers form a line at the step [or entrance] of the Sanctuary, leaving a space in the middle for the priest. All servers genuflect with the priest [or bow if there is no tabernacle] and then process to the back of the Church in the same arrangement as the entrance procession.

In the Sacristy, the servers pause and wait for the priest to reach them. Then all face the Crucifix and the priest says: “*Prosit*” [May it (the Mass) be for your benefit]. The servers respond: “*Pro omnibus et singulis*” (pronounced pro om-nee-boos et sing-oo-lees) [“For all and for each”].

After Mass servers help the priest or sacristan bring the Sacred Vessels into the Sacristy and extinguish the candles. Servers hang up their albs and cinctures in the designated places in the Server Sacristy.

### **Sunday Mass**

On Sundays and Solemnities, the entrance procession includes one server carrying the processional cross [server 1], with one server carrying a lit candle on each side [servers 2 & 3]. At the entrance to the sanctuary, all three servers move to the left side of the aisle, standing together in front of the Ambo. The priest and deacon will approach the step in the center of the aisle and genuflect before entering the sanctuary. The servers carrying the cross and candles bow when the priest genuflects [servers carrying items bow instead of genuflecting]. After bowing, the servers wait for the priest and deacon to enter the sanctuary first [so as not to collide with the priest or deacon], then the server carrying the Cross places it in its stand in the Sanctuary and the servers carrying candles place them in their stands on each side of the Altar. The servers then go to their places for the beginning of Mass. The torch bearer who has to cross the front of the altar to return to their seat, bows to the altar when crossing its central point.

At the beginning of the Gospel Chant ["Alleluia" during Ordinary Time, Christmas, Easter and Advent, and "Praise to your Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory" during Lent]. The two servers who processed in with the candles [servers 2 & 3] go to their respective sides of the Altar and take the candles out of their stands. The server who is picking up the candle on the side farthest from the Ambo bows in the center when crossing in front of the Altar. The servers then remain on each side of the Altar until the priest or deacon has bowed to the Altar and [usually carrying the book of the gospels], begins to process toward the Ambo. Upon reaching the Ambo, the servers stand in front of the Ambo, facing inward and holding the candles at the same height. The servers remain in place until the end of the gospel, when they return the candles to their stands, and then return to their seats [server on the far side bows again when crossing in front of the Altar].

After the Homily, the Creed, and the Intercessions, server 1 takes the Missal to the Altar while servers 2 & 3 help to carry the chalices and ciboria to the Altar. Two servers then follow the priest to the front of the Sanctuary to receive the Offertory gifts, brought up in procession. One server stands on each side of the priest and after receiving the gifts, all ministers turn and bow to the Altar before returning to the other side. Each server places the Offertory gift they are carrying on the edge of the Altar on the same side that they were standing [i.e. the large wine cruet on the Ambo side of the Altar and the ciborium on the choir side of the Altar].

~~While~~ While servers 2 & 3 [~~torch bearers~~] were at the ~~front step~~ ~~to~~ of the Sanctuary with the priest to receive the gifts, server 1 [cross bearer] takes the water cruet and stands waiting to approach the altar. As soon as the servers 2 & 3 have placed the offertory gifts on the altar and moved toward the Credence Table, server 1 immediately approaches the side of the altar, carrying the water cruet and stands waiting. After the priest or deacon has added a small amount of water to the large wine cruet and handed the water cruet back to server 1, the sever bows and ~~immediately then~~ returns to the Credence Table. **If there is no deacon present**, server 1 returns the water cruet to the Credence Table and then immediately returns to the altar to ~~retrieve~~ receive the [now empty] large wine cruet from the priest. When server 1 has returned with the [empty] large wine cruet to the Credence Table, servers 2 and 3, carrying the water cruet, bowl and finger towel, begin to approach the altar from the back, stepping onto the edge of the carpet. The servers assist the priest in washing and drying his hands, bowing and then returning to the Credence Table when they are finished.

**If a deacon is present** ~~at the Mass~~, then as server 1 returns to the Credence Table with the water cruet, servers 2 & 3 immediately approach the altar behind the priest, carrying the water cruet, bowl and finger towel. Servers 2 & 3 stop behind the altar on the carpet and wait to assist the priest in washing his hands. After placing the water cruet on the Credence Table, server 1 returns to the side of the altar to receive the empty large wine cruet from the deacon. If a deacon is present, ~~These~~ these last steps will usually take place simultaneously, so all three servers will be together near the altar [server 1 receiving the empty wine cruet, servers 2 & 3 holding the water cruet, bowl and finger tow] at the end of the offertory. Afterwards, all servers place the liturgical items on the Credence Table and then return to their places.

After the Offertory, the servers return to their places in front of their seats until the beginning of the Consecration. At the end of the Sanctus [Holy, Holy, Holy...] two servers [servers 2 & 3] go to kneel in front of the Altar at the bottom step of the sanctuary. The other servers remain in their places and kneel on the carpet behind the Ambo.

After the Consecration, the servers stand with the congregation and remain in their places until the sign of peace. At the sign of peace, the servers exchange the sign of peace with the **other ministers in the sanctuary [not going out into the congregation]**. After exchanging the sign of peace, the servers go to the Credence Table, retrieve the server's patens for Communion, and return to their places in front of their seats.

At the end of the **Angus Dei** ["Lamb of God..."] the servers kneel on the carpet behind the Ambo and remain kneeling until after the Priest has consumed the Precious Blood from the **Chalice**. Then the servers stand to receive Communion but remain at their place on the lower level and wait for the priest to come to them to distribute Communion [this is to ensure room for the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion who are entering the Sanctuary at this time]. After receiving Communion, the servers with **Communion Patens** assist in the distribution of Communion. After the distribution of Communion, the servers place the **Communion Patens** on the **Altar** for the priest to purify.

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After the Altar has been cleared, the priest returns to his Chair. When the priest stands up and says, "let us pray", the server designated to carry the Missal brings it over and stands in front of the priest [holding it with two hands and against his/her shoulder]. After the Post-Communion Prayer has concluded and the congregation has responded "Amen" the server returns with the Missal to his/her place for the final blessing.

After the final blessing the servers remain in their places until the priest [and deacon] begins to move toward the Altar. Once the priest has left his chair, the servers go to retrieve the Cross and Torches they carried for the entrance procession, and then stand in the same formation at the step to enter the sanctuary [all three servers lined up in front of the Ambo, the cross bearer standing with a torchbearer on each side]. When the priest genuflects, the servers bow and then turn and begin the procession out, with the server carrying the Cross leading and the servers carrying torches walking on each side.

At the back of the Church the servers pause and wait for the priest to reach them. Then all face the Crucifix and the priest says: *Prosit* [May it (the Mass) be for your benefit]. The

servers respond: *Pro omnibus et singulis* (pronounced pro om-nee-boos et sing-oo-lees) [“For all and for each”].