

Altar Servers' Manual

July 5, 2009



Saint James Church
718 Franklin Street
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15221

An altar server helps the priest and Eucharistic Ministers during mass. The role of the altar server is important to the celebration of the mass and is done prayerfully.

Any boy or girl, who has completed second grade, can be an altar server.

Before Mass

The altar servers should arrive 15 minutes prior to the start of the mass in which he or she is to serve. For example, Jane is to serve at the 11:30 Sunday mass. She should be at the church by 11:15.

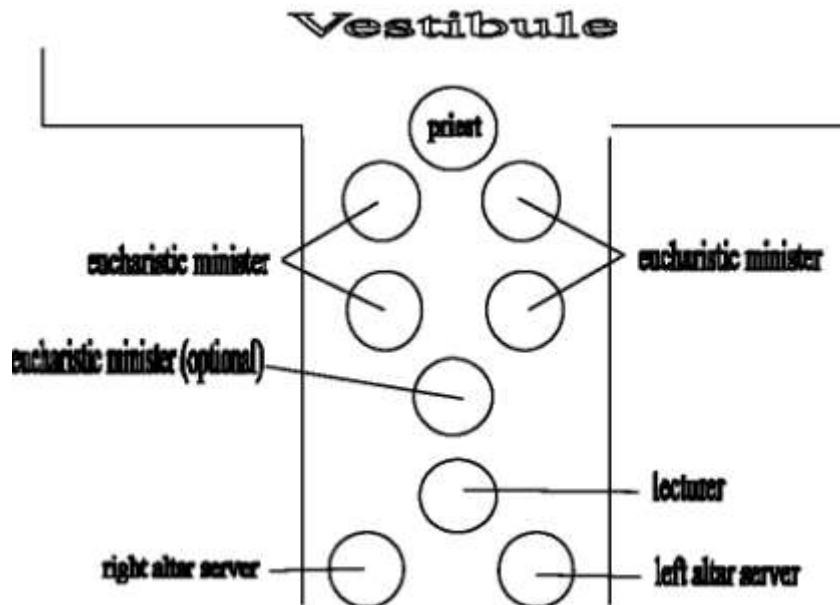
The server goes to the Sacristy and robe. Take time to select a robe that covers to the top of your ankles and fits well. Before leaving the gowning area check your neatness in the mirror provided.

The server should also check that the lectern candle and the tabernacle candles have been lit. If not, light them. Also, the servers need to decide who is going to be on the right and the left side of the altar.

Five minutes before mass go to the vestibule in the rear of the church. After a prayer is said, all the ministers go to the center aisle and take their places for the entrance procession to start mass.

Processional

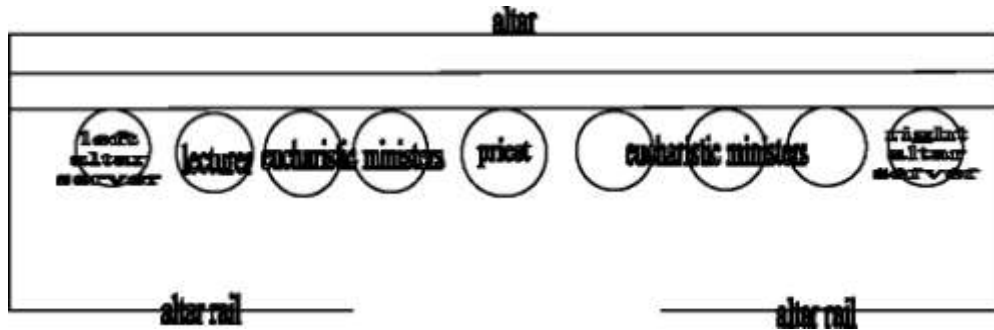
The order of the processional is as follows:



The altar servers should walk slowly up the aisle. Unless you are carrying a candle, processional cross or other equipment for the priest, the server is to have a hymnal and join in the entrance hymn. At certain times of the year, the procession will stop at the break in the pews. If that is the case, the altar servers will be told prior to the start of the procession.

Once the procession reaches the altar rail, the left side of the procession bears off to the left, while the right side bears off to the right. The procession lines up in front of the altar as follows,

facing the altar:



When the priest bows, the entire procession bows. Each individual proceeds to their seats and stand.

Greeting and Initial Prayers

Following the greeting, the priest begins the penitential rite. When the priest says “let us call to mind our sins”, the right altar server gets the binder from the binder table and stands in front of the priest, facing the priest. The priest will open the binder and the right altar server holds the binder as the priest reads from it. At the concluding “Amen”, the server returns the binder to the binder table and stands in front of his or her seat.

Shortly thereafter, the priest will say “Let us pray”. The right altar server gets the red book from its table and stands in front of the priest, facing the priest. The priest will open the book and the right altar server will hold the book as the priest reads from it. At the concluding “Amen”, the server returns the book to the book table and sits in his or her seat.

Liturgy of the Word and Homily

During this part of the mass, the altar server should sit quietly and listen to the readings and the Homily. The altar server should not leave his or her seat during this part or any part of the mass unless requested to do so or it is an emergency.

If a special ceremony is to be done after the Homily, the altar servers will be told about it prior to the start of mass. During any ceremony, the altar server should follow the instructions of the priest and/or Eucharistic Ministers.

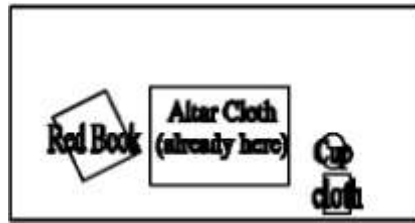
General Intercessions

At the end of the general intercessions, the priest will direct the congregation to pray for peace and everyone turns to the peace candle. At the conclusion of the prayer the right altar server gets the binder from the binder table and stands in front of the priest, facing the priest. The priest will open the binder and the right altar server holds the binder as the priest reads from it. At the conclusion, the server returns the binder to the binder table.

Offertory

The right altar server then takes the red book from the red book table and places it on the altar. He or she then retrieves a cup with a cloth and places it on the altar. The placement is as follows:

Congregation



The right altar server should return to his or her seat.

The left altar server gets the candle lighter and lights the wick from the lectern candle. Then, he or she lights the altar candles. A Eucharistic Minister usually will help with this task. Following this, he or she should put out the candle lighter and lectern candle. If the lectern candle is the Easter candle, he or she does not put it out. The left altar server returns the candle lighter to its stand and returns to his or her seat.

When the priest rises to receive the offertory gifts, both altar servers rise and follow the priest and stand next to the priest.

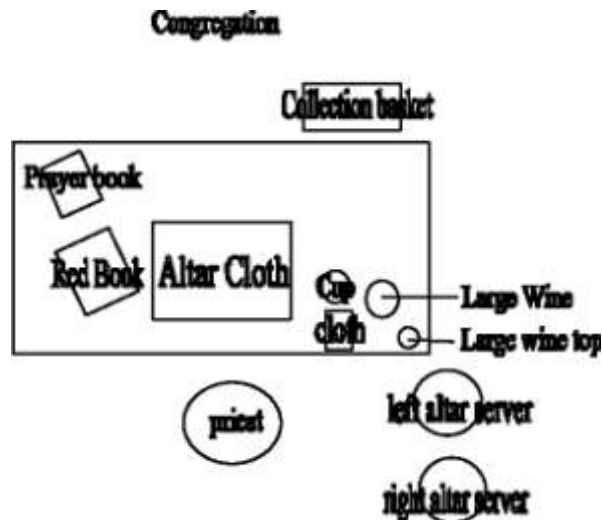
After the priest says a prayer over the gifts, he will give the right altar server the prayer book. The prayer book is placed on the altar. The right altar server returns to the priest.

The priest, then, will give the left altar server the collection basket, which is placed in front of the altar. The left altar server returns to the priest.

The priest will give the right altar server the food collection basket. The basket is placed in front on the altar. The right server returns to the priest.

The priest will hand the small water and wine cruets to the left altar server and the big wine decanter to the right altar server. Both servers follow the priest back to the altar.

The right altar server places wine decanter on the altar next to the cup and removes the top, placing it beside the holder on the altar. At this point the altar looks like this:



The right altar server takes one of the small cruets from the left altar server. Both servers

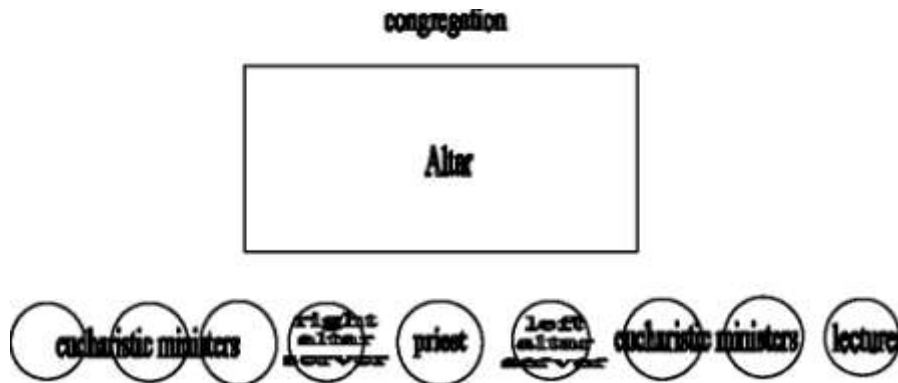
remove the tops from the cruets and hold them with the handles facing the priest.

Once the priest uses the cruets, both altar servers put the tops back on the cruets and the left altar server gets the decanter's top from the altar. The servers take the cruets and decanter top to the vessel table and place it on the table.

The left altar server gets the bowl and towel and the right altar server gets the water pitcher from the vessel table. Both return to the altar and stand by the priest. The priest will place his hands over the bowl and the right altar server will pour water on his hands until the priest raises his hands away from the bowl. The left altar server will hand the towel to the priest. Once the priest dries his hands, the altar servers return the pitcher, towel and bowl to the vessel table and return to their seats.

Lord's Prayer and Sign of Peace

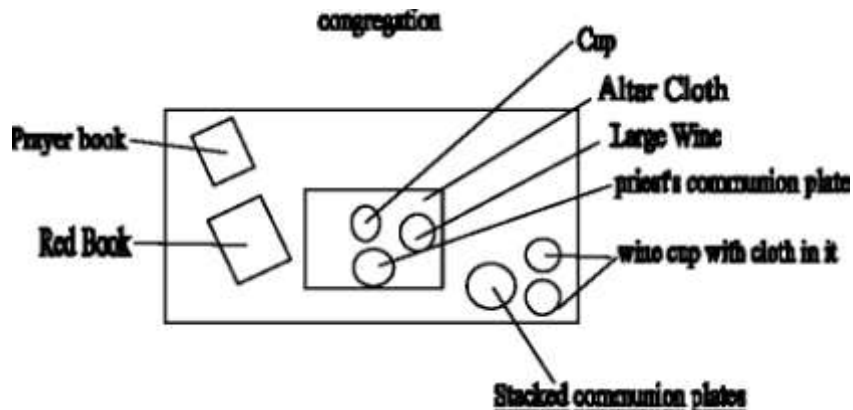
At the Great Amen following the Eucharistic Prayer, all raise and stand beside the priest as follows, facing the altar:



All join hands for the Lord's Prayer. At the sign of peace, the altar servers exchange the sign of peace with the other people on the altar

Communion

Following the sign of peace, the left altar server gets the two cups with cloths from the vessel table and places them on the altar. The right altar server gets one plate, if four Eucharistic Ministers, and two plates, if there are five Ministers, from the vessel table and place them on the altar. The altar should look like this:



The altar servers return to the place that they were standing during the sign of peace.

When a Eucharistic Minister hands an altar server the wine decanter, he or she should return it to the vessel table. He or she should return to place that he or she was standing during the sign of peace. The altar servers should prepare to receive communion.

The priest will hand out communion. The servers should wait until the priest eats his communion before eating theirs.

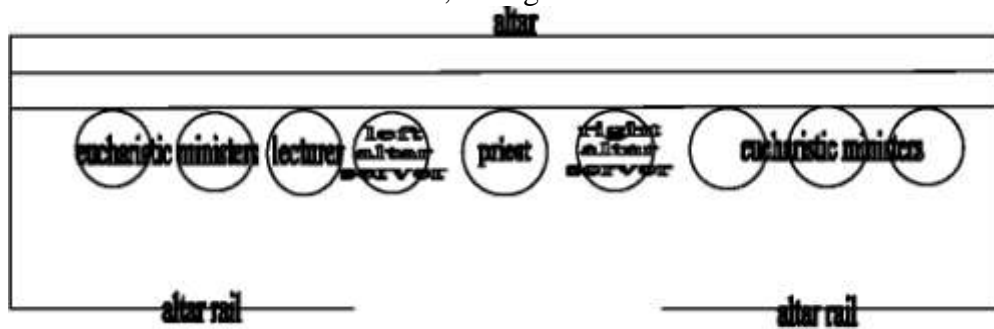
When the Eucharistic Ministers and priest leave the altar to distribute communion, the left altar takes the wine decanter and its top from the vessel table and takes it to the sacristy. The right altar server takes the cup and top to the priest's communion plate from the altar and takes it to the sacristy. The right altar server then takes the red book and returns it to the red book table. The left altar server takes the prayer book and puts it on the binder table. Both altar servers return to their seats.

Prayer after Communion

Following communion the remaining people will return to their seats. Following the announcements, the priest will stand and say "Let us prayer". The right altar server gets the red book from its table and stands in front of the priest, facing the priest. The priest will open the book and the right altar server will hold the book as the priest reads from it. At the concluding "Amen", the server returns the book to the book table and sits in his or her seat. This should be done quietly and respectfully so as not to distract others receiving communion. Both altar servers return to their seats and pray quietly until mass resumes.

Dismissal

As the final song is started, the priest will proceed down the steps. The rest will line up as follows, facing the altar:



The priest will hand the prayer book to the right altar server.

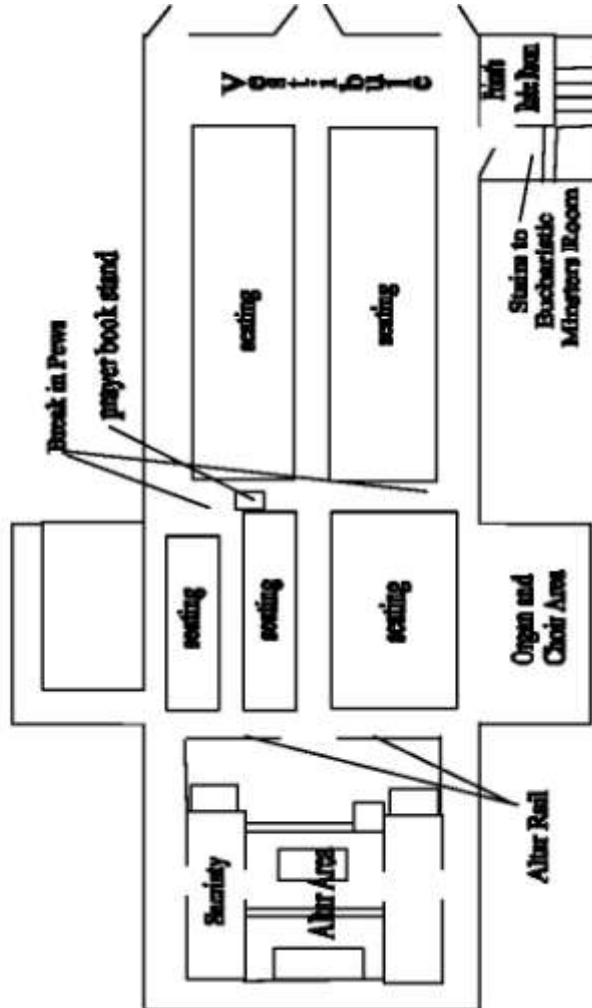
When the priest bows, the entire procession bows. The altar servers then turn and walk slowly up the aisle singing the closing hymn. The remaining people will follow the servers. As the altar servers reach the break in the pews, the right altar server will place the prayer book on the prayer book stand and rejoin the procession up the aisle.

After Mass

Following the conclusion of mass, the altar servers should return to the sacristy. The servers need to put out all the altar and tabernacle candles. The perpetual light candle is NOT put out.

The altar servers take off their robes and hang them neatly in the closet before leaving the sacristy.

Interior of Saint James Church



Altar Area of Saint James Church

