

ST. JOSEPH'S KEY WEST ALTAR SERVER HANDBOOK

November 2012

Peter 4:10-11

10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. 11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

There are five very important topics included in this Handbook:

1. Altar Servers are expected to reverently bow each time he or she passes in front of the tabernacle where Jesus is present.
2. Altar Server's hands should be folded at chest in a prayerful manner at any time you are not sitting or using them to serve.
3. Altar Servers are expected to know the Vocabulary meanings and pictures.
4. Altar Servers are expected to follow the dress code that has been established.
5. Altar Servers will sign in upon arriving 15 minutes early at Mass. If you are unable to serve at your scheduled mass, it is your responsibility to find a substitute server beforehand.

Please review this handbook with a parent and have both of you sign and return the back page of the handbook. Thank you!

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Altar Server Dress Code

Before the altar server comes to Mass, remember that being an altar server is an HONOR and you should look respectful and clean:

1. **NO FLIP FLOPS** will be allowed. Only sandals with a strap around the back will be acceptable. Your shoes should be clean and not draw any attention..
2. **NO T-SHIRTS** will be allowed, especially those with wording on them. Collared shirts are preferred, but a nice non-collared shirt will be acceptable.
3. **NO SHORTS** will be allowed. Dress pants, skirts or dresses are preferred, but jeans will be acceptable.
4. Make sure hair and appearance are neat. Girls may want to wear their hair back if it is longer. You may want to carry a Kleenex in your pocket.

Before the altar server comes to Mass, you should take care of all your personal needs so that you do not need to leave the sanctuary during Mass (except in the event that you are feeling ill).

Reverent Actions of an Altar Server

Please be reverent to the priest and your fellow servers --If you are unable to attend your scheduled mass, please find a substitute listed on the back of your schedule.

1. **General Participation:** These actions are a very important part of honoring your commitment to be a reverent altar server.

1. The server should be respectful of the Presence of Jesus in the Tabernacle. Remember to reverently bow at the waist each time you pass the tabernacle. Jesus wants us to show our love and respect for Him.
2. The server must say the prayers and sing with the congregation using the Missalette that is provided.
3. The server should be prayerful and pay attention to the Mass parts and the priest instead of observing the congregation.
4. The server should be respectful of your Alb (server robe). Please do not wipe your nose on the sleeve. Use a Kleenex and cover any yawn with your hand. If you need to cough, try to use the back of your hand.

2. **Walking:** The server should walk straight and slowly in a reverent way with your head held high and **hands folded at your chest in a prayerful manner when not using them.**

3. **Genuflecting:** The server should be very respectful of Jesus' presence in the Tabernacle. During the entrance procession at the beginning or the recession at the end of Mass, please genuflect if the priest genuflects or bow if the priest bows. Note: If you are the cross bearer, or are carrying something such as the incense, you should make a Simple Bow instead of genuflecting.

4. **Bowing:** There are 2 types of bows:

- The Simple Bow of the head – nodding of the head. Note: If you are the cross bearer or are carrying something such as the incense, you should make a Simple Bow.
- The Reverent Bow at the waist – complete bending at the waist. **The preferred method is the Reverent Bow at the waist.** Because Jesus is present in the tabernacle, the

server should stop and use the Reverent Bow any time you cross in front of the tabernacle – before, during or after mass.

Examples of when to use a Reverent Bow at waist toward the tabernacle:

- o When getting or returning the processional cross from the sacristy
- o When saying the Nicene Creed “by the power of the Holy Spirit, he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man.”
- o When taking the Missal to the altar after the Prayers of the Faithful
- o When going to or from the credence table area
- o When crossing altar to light or extinguish the candles.
- o Anytime you cross in front of the Tabernacle – before, during or after Mass.

5. **Eyes:** During Mass, always look toward the place where the Mass is happening—the presider’s chair, the ambo, or the altar. When the reader is reading Scripture, you should be looking at and listening to the reader. Your focus should not be on family members or the congregation.

6. **Hands:** Unless you are sitting down or carrying something (like the processional cross, a candle, a cruet), **the server’s hands should be folded at your chest in a prayerful manner.** The server should keep your hands above your waist and not hanging down below your waist. If you are sitting down, your hands should rest nicely in your lap. **Note: The server should not be playing with the cincture (rope belt) or cross.**

7. **Kneeling:** When you kneel, the server’s hands will be folded in the prayerful position in front of your chest above your waist. The server should pay attention to what is happening at the altar with the priest.

8. **Standing:** The server should stand tall without slouching or rocking back and forth. Your hands should be folded in a prayerful position in front of your chest and held above your waist while keeping them away from the cincture.

9. **Sitting:** The server should sit tall without slouching. You may place your hands in your lap while keeping them away from the cincture and cross. The server should respond to the prayers and sing with congregation.

Mass Instructions for Altar Servers

Before the Mass:

10. The servers should arrive 15 minutes before Mass begins. **The servers should sign his or her name on the schedule located on the counter in the room off of the sacristy.** Both servers will put on a server alb (robe) so that it hangs all the way to your ankles. The server will wear a cincture of the color of the season (note priest’s vestment color) which hangs down on the right side. Make sure the cincture is not below your waste, and the alb is on straight, the correct length, and looking neat. Place a cross around your neck.

11. One server is designated to carry the cross (cross bearer), and one server will help with the parts of the Mass.

12. Using the lighter/extinguisher, one server will light the two candles on the altar and the two candles by the tabernacle. The server should reverently bow to the tabernacle when you pass by it as a sign of reverence to Jesus’ Presence in the tabernacle.

13. When the gifts are prepared, take the wine decanter and the ciborium with the hosts to the back of church and place them on the gift table.

The Four Parts of the Mass:

Part I - Introductory Rite:

14. The priest, deacon, lector, and servers proceed to the back of church down the side aisle or by going outside. The cross bearer will carry the cross with the Body of Christ (corpus) facing forward. The cross bearer will lead the Entrance Procession up the center aisle of the church followed by the other server, reader, deacon and priest. Walk slowly and hold the cross straight with both hands. When you arrive at the front step, the cross bearer will proceed over to the left a few steps, and the other server will step to the right to make room for the reader, deacon, and priest. The priest should be centered directly in the middle at the step. Once the other server, reader, deacon and priest are all lined up at the step, they will genuflect or reverently bow from the waist. **Note: If you are the cross bearer or are carrying something like the incense, you should make a Simple Bow.** The cross bearer takes cross to the sacristy and reverently bows to the tabernacle when returning to sit at the server's chair. The other server will go directly to the server's chair.

15. Be alert when the congregation is saying or singing the "Glory to God in the highest" or the "Lord have mercy". After the prayer, when the priest says "Let us pray," a server takes the Missal (which is on the server's chair) to the priest standing at his chair. The server holds the book with both hands directly in front of the priest so that the priest can read the prayers from it while facing the congregation. After this prayer, place the Missal on the table beside the presider's chair and the server will return to the server's chair.

Part II - Liturgy of the Word:

16. Both servers sit down to listen to the readings. The server prays the responses along with the congregation. Next, there will be the homily, and then the servers will stand for the Nicene Creed. **Note:** The servers should use the Reverent Bow when saying the Nicene Creed "by the power of the Holy Spirit, he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man." Then, for the Prayers of the Faithful, a server will hold the colored binder for the priest so the priest can read the prayers to the congregation. After the priest has finished, the server will set the binder on the table by his chair.

17. After the Prayers of the Faithful, while the ushers are proceeding up with the collection basket, **one server** takes the Missal and puts it on the altar to the left of center. The server will stop and reverently bow to the tabernacle and walk around to the front of the altar. The server will take the plastic holder that held the Book of Gospels and walk back around the altar, bow to tabernacle, and place the holder underneath the credence table. From the credence table, the server takes the priest's chalice (with the corporal and purificator), the two communion cups, and the two purificators and set them on the altar. The server then returns to his chair.

Part III - Liturgy of the Eucharist:

Preparation of the Gifts

18. After the Prayers of the Faithful while the ushers are proceeding up with the collection basket, the server that carries the cross (cross bearer) will proceed to the sacristy to get the cross. Make sure to stop and reverently bow in front of the tabernacle. The cross bearer will hold the cross with the corpus facing forward and proceed down the center aisle to meet the gift bearers in the back of church. Turn and face the front of church in preparation for the procession leading the gift bearers.

19. The cross bearer will lead the procession of the gift bearers up the center aisle holding the cross high with the corpus facing front. Make sure to walk slowly and reverently. The gift bearers will follow. The server that is sitting should be alert to when the cross bearer and gift bearers are processing up with the gifts, and the priest stands up from his chair. When the priest or deacon goes to the center aisle step to receive the gifts, the server will go to stand next to him. Once the cross bearer reaches the front step, the cross bearer will step to the left side and allow the priest or deacon to receive the gifts from the gift bearers. After the gift bearers reverently bow, the cross bearer will return the cross to the sacristy and proceed to the credence table. **Note: If you are the cross bearer, make a Simple Bow while carrying the cross.**

20. While receiving the gifts, the priest will give the collection basket to the server standing next to him. The server will wait until the priest or deacon is ready to move. The server will take the collection basket and place it in front of the altar far enough back so it will not be stepped on. After the server places the collection basket by the altar, you will return to the priest to carry to gifts to credence table and meet the other server.

21. One server takes the stopper off of the water cruet and takes the water cruet to stand at the side of the altar. Make sure to hold the water cruet so the handle is facing the priest or deacon so he can easily take it from you. The server returns to the credence table with the water cruet.

22. The servers are now preparing for the priest's washing of hands. One server takes the stopper off of the water cruet and holds cruet handle in one hand and the bowl in other hand. The other server picks up the towel and unfolds it. To show reverence, both servers go to the side of the altar. Both servers stay at the side of the altar until the priest has finished washing his hands. When the priest has finished, both servers return the water cruet, bowl and towel to the credence table. It is important that both servers stay together during this part to show reverence. **Note: If there is only one server at the Mass, unfold the towel and put it over your least used arm. With your good hand, hold the water cruet and pick up the finger bowl with your towel arm.** Each server will go to each side of the altar for the Eucharistic Prayer. The server that passes the tabernacle will stop and reverently bow.

Communion Rite:

23. At the Sign of Peace, exchange peace with the priest, deacon, and the other server. Then both servers will stand to the right of the altar. The Ministers of Communion will bring the Eucharist and the Precious Blood to you. After you have received the Body and Blood of Christ, you will reverently bow to tabernacle and return to the server chairs. The servers can say a prayer of Thanksgiving and use the Missalette to sing with the congregation.

24. After Communion has been distributed to the congregation, both servers stand to the right of the tabernacle. One server brings the water cruet to the priest or deacon who will hold a communion cup for you to pour water into. When the priest is finished purifying the vessels, he will place the vessels on the side of the altar. The servers will take the purified vessels and place them on the credence table.

25. The priest or deacon will place the Missal on the altar or hand it to one of the servers. Both servers will reverently bow to the tabernacle, and return to the server's chairs with the Missal.

Part IV - Concluding Rite:

26. After completing the Communion Rite, the priest will sit silently for a time of Thanksgiving. When the priest stands up and says "Let us pray," one server will take the Missal to him for the Prayer after Communion. The server will stand directly in front of the priest holding the Missal with both hands so the priest can face the congregation. When finished with the prayer, return the Missal to the server's chair.

27. After the final blessing, the server (cross bearer) goes to sacristy to get the processional cross, stopping to reverently bow when passing the tabernacle. The recessional song begins while the cross bearer waits in the sacristy until the priest and deacon go down to the front step in the center aisle. The priest should be centered directly in the middle at the step. The deacon and the reader will be on the same side of the priest closest to the ambo. The cross bearer will be on the far left and the other server will go to the far right and stand on the floor in front of the first step. Once all are in a line, the priest, deacon, reader and other server will genuflect or bow. **Note: If you are the cross bearer, you should make a Simple Bow while carrying the cross.** Slowly proceed down the center aisle to the back of church. After the Recessional song is over, the cross bearer will return the cross to the sacristy using a side aisle.

After Mass:

28. One server will extinguish the candles with the candle extinguisher. **Do not blow out the candles since wax can be spread to the altar cloth.** Remember to reverently bow to the tabernacle when passing by.

29. One server will empty the finger bowl that has water in it in preparation for the next Mass.

30. Both servers will hang up your alb, cincture and cross. **Make sure to hang the alb on the correct hanger for size purposes** and place the cincture and cross neatly back in place.

31. Both servers will go to the sacristy to meet the priest or deacon for further instructions. If no further instructions are necessary, the servers are free to go.

Thank you for serving our parish and God. May God bless you!

Vocabulary for Altar Servers

Alb: White robe worn by servers.

Altar: An elevated place, like a table, on which the Holy Mass is offered.

Ambo / Lectern: The stand where the Sacred Scriptures are read during the Holy Mass.

Ambry: Cabinet where the holy oils are stored

Book of Gospels: Red book that is carried by the deacon or reader in the entrance procession and placed on the altar. The priest or deacon carries this to the ambo during the Alleluia and then reads the Gospel from it.

Candle lighter / Extinguisher: A long slender pole that has a wax taper on one side at the tip which is used to light candles. On the top of the other is a cup shape that is used to extinguish a candle by snuffing it out.

Chalice: The sacred vessel that the priest uses to hold the Blood of Christ during Mass.

Ciborium: The sacred vessel that holds the Body of Christ during Mass.

Cincture: The cord worn around waist, the color of the liturgical season, hanging to the right side.

Communion Cups: The sacred cups used by the Ministers of Communion to distribute the Blood of Christ to the people at Communion.

Corporal: A square, white cloth, placed in the center of the altar on which the ciborium and chalice are placed during Mass.

Credence Table: The table that holds items needed for the celebration of Mass.

Cruet: Small, glass pitcher that holds water or wine for Mass.

Finger Bowl: A bowl used at the time of priest's washing of hands.

Finger Towel: A towel used by the priest to dry his fingers after he has washed his hands.

Flagon / Wine Decanter: The pitcher that is used to hold the wine that will be consecrated at Mass for Communion.

Lectionary: The book that contains the Scripture Readings for Mass.

Missal: The book that contains the prayers for the Mass.

Presider's Chair: A chair in which the priest resides.

Processional Cross: The cross used to lead a procession. The cross is mounted on a pole to be held high and straight with the Body of Christ (corpus) facing forward.

Purificator: The small, white cloth used by the priest and the Ministers of Communion to wipe the communion cups during Communion and to purify the sacred vessels after communion.

Pyx: A pocket watch-shaped case in which Communion, used for sick calls, is carried.

Sacrarium: Sacristy sink with a drain directly into the earth for the fitting disposal of water used for some sacred purpose.

Sacristy: The room where the sacred vessels and vestments are kept.

Sanctuary: The large area in the front center of the church where the altar is located.

Sanctuary Furnishings:

Altar	Ambry	Credence Table
Tabernacle	Baptismal Font	Easter/Paschal Candle
Presider's Chair	Vigil/Votive Lights	Ambo/Lectern
Sanctuary Light		

Sanctuary Light: Red candle showing the presence of Christ in the Tabernacle.

Tabernacle: A sacred housing in the sanctuary where the Body of Christ is kept.

Vocabulary For Special Liturgical Uses:

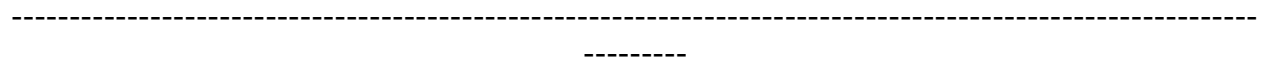
Aspergillum / Holy Water Sprinkler: A brush or ball with a short handle used by the priest to sprinkle the people or articles to be blessed. It is kept in a glass or metal bucket that holds the holy water.

Boat: A small metal container which holds the incense to be put into the thurible/censor. It has a cover and comes with a small spoon.

Lunette: A round circle of glass or small metal clip used to hold the host to be placed in the monstrance.

Monstrance: The ornate vessel used to hold the Blessed Sacrament for Benediction and Eucharistic Adoration.

Thurible / Censor: The metal container extended from a chain in which charcoal and incense are burned for liturgical ceremonies like Benediction or special occasions.



PLEASE RETURN THIS PAGE

I, (please print) _____, have read the SJKW Altar Server Handbook with a parent and understand the book to the best of my abilities. I understand the guidelines and will abide by them to the best of my abilities. I promise to serve God in an honorable and reverent way as an altar server for our Parish. I will do my best to serve at my scheduled Mass or find a substitute if I am unable to do so.

Date: _____

Altar Server(s) Signature: _____

Parent(s) Signature:
