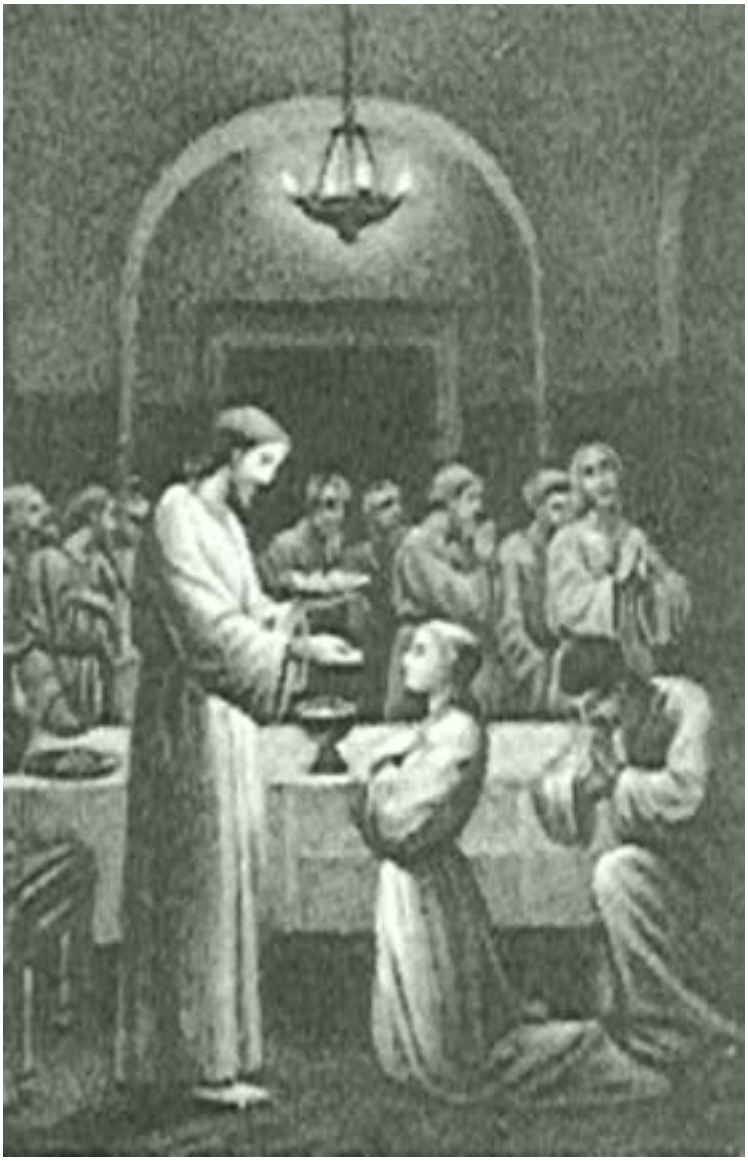
Altar Server Guide



HISTORIC ST. MARY'S CHURCH
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Don Peris
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HISTORIC
St. Mary's Church
FOUNDED 1741

My dear brothers and sisters in service,

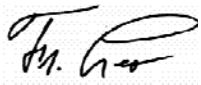
It is a real honor and blessing for me to be able to serve with you, with the support of your family, as we gather to serve Christ at His Holy Altar. With Christ we offer His Word and His precious Body and Blood to the community of His children. We are blessed indeed.

No doubt, the experience and responsibility we share is awesome. Consider it more exciting than meeting our favorite sports star or television personality and indeed more important than anything we do all week or will ever do in our lives. When we gather for Mass we are in the company of God and His angels and saints. Heaven touches earth with Jesus uniting us together in a Holy Communion at His sacrifice and feast of love.

As incredible as this is, be at peace . . . God is with us and will help us! I was touched by Pope John Paul's words to altar servers, included in this booklet. To those of you who will be bearing the candles, Pope John Paul reminds you of Jesus' words in Matthew's Gospel: "You are the light of the world!" Be His light! In bearing the light in procession and at the proclamation of the Gospel, you remind all those gathered in the church how important they are to Jesus' mission. I would add that those of you who carry the cross in procession remind all of us of Jesus' words that we need to embrace and carry our own crosses of love and sacrifice as we mirror Christ's love to the world. You model to those gathered in the church the service and love that all of us are called to give to God.

Thank you for choosing to serve Christ . . . here at St. Mary's and in your daily lives. May Christ bring you joy as He draws you ever closer to Himself!

In Christ's Peace,



Rev Leo M. Goodman III
Pastor

Dear Altar Servers,

On behalf of the family of St. Mary's, I would like to thank you for becoming an Altar Server. By giving of yourself and your time, you have an opportunity to serve God at His Altar, Father Leo, and the parish. It is a great honor and privilege to be an Altar Server. I am confident that your desire to serve, coupled with God's grace, will accomplish many great things. Your ministry of service will be an important part of each Mass.

At St. Mary's we have three Altar Servers at every Mass. They are:

Bell Ringer (grades 5, 6, 7)
Book Bearer (grades 6, 7, 8,)
Cross Bearer (grades 9, 10, 11, 12)

At a number of the Masses throughout the year we also have a Thurifer and Boat Bearer. These are the boys and girls who take care of the incense. When the Bishop says Mass here at St. Mary's we also have two servers to take care of the Bishop's staff (crosier) and his hat (mitre). So many ways to serve!

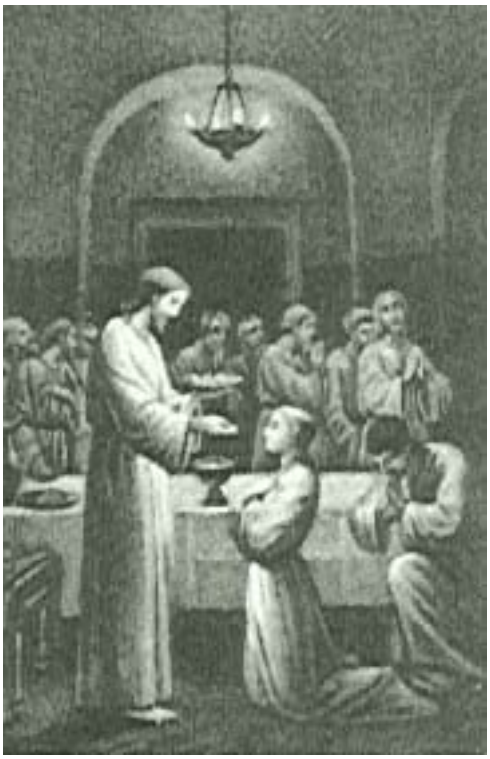
When you arrive at church, please go to the Sacristy where you will find the altar server closet. The white vestments you will wear are kept here. The white robes that the servers wear are called albs. Along with the alb you will also wear a cincture, which is a braided rope that ties at the waist, and a crucifix. Father Leo will present you with your very own crucifix at your first Mass. You are a minister and are now dressed like one! We do not wear sneakers, flip-flops, crocs, jeans, sweats, shorts or graphic T shirts. We dress respectfully, because we are coming to the Lord's Feast. Because we have a good many servers you will be asked to serve approximately every other month. If you cannot serve your scheduled Mass, please e-mail me or the other servers to find a substitute. You will be responsible for finding a substitute, but I am here to help you as well. If you are at a Mass and there is a shortage of servers, please volunteer to serve.

While each server has specific duties, all of the servers help one another just as the Extraordinary Ministers do. Father Leo will also help and guide you. When you serve, you will find that the Holy Spirit helps you to be calm and to perform your duties with reverence, without haste, and with peace. So, as Father Leo says, "Be at peace." You are serving the Lord and it is my prayer that through this ministry you will draw even closer to God and His son, Jesus. Thank you again for choosing to serve!

Peace,

Don Peris
Liturgy Coordinator
dperis@verizon.net

Altar Server's Prayers



BEFORE MASS

Open my mouth, O Lord, to bless Your Holy Name.
Cleanse my heart from all evil and distracting thoughts.
Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will that I may serve more worthily at Your Holy Altar.
O Mary, Mother of Christ the High Priest, obtain for me the most important grace of knowing my vocation in life.
Grant me a true spirit of faith and humble obedience so that I may ever behold the priest as a representative of God and be willing to follow him in the Way, the Truth, and the Life of Christ.
Amen.

AFTER MASS

Lord Jesus, thank You for the opportunity to serve You during the Holy Mass.
In Your Sacred Presence, my heart is filled with joy and peace.
May Your Spirit always guide me so I may grow in Your love by the grace of the Heavenly Father.
Amen.

More Than "Helpers of the Parish Priest"

Words about altar servers from Pope John Paul II . . .

Your commitment to the altar is not only a duty, but a great honor, a genuine holy service. In connection with this service, I wish to propose some reflections to you.

The altar server's clothing is very special. It recalls the garment that each one puts on when he is welcomed by Jesus Christ in the community. I am referring to the baptismal gown, whose profound meaning Saint Paul clarifies: *For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ* (Galatians 3:27).

Even if you, dear altar servers, can no longer fit into your baptismal gown, you have put on [the clothing] of altar servers. Yes, baptism is the point of departure of your "authentic liturgical service," which places you next to your bishops, priests and deacons. The altar server occupies a privileged place in the liturgical celebration. He who serves at Mass presents himself to a community. He experiences firsthand that Jesus Christ is present and active in every liturgical act. Jesus is present when the community comes together to pray and render praise to God. Jesus is present in the Word of Sacred Scripture. Jesus is present above all in the Eucharist under the signs of bread and wine. He acts through the priest who, in the person of Christ, celebrates the Holy Mass and administers the sacraments.

Therefore, in the liturgy, you are much more than simple "helpers of the parish priest." Above all, you are servers of Jesus Christ, of the eternal High Priest. Thus, you, altar servers, are called in particular to be young friends of Jesus. Be determined to go deeper and to cultivate this friendship with Him. You will discover that in Jesus you have found a true friend for life.

The altar server often has a candlestick in his hand. How can one not think of that which Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount: "You are the light of the world."(Matthew 5:14) Your service cannot be limited to the inside of a church. It must shine in everyday life: in school, in the family, and in different realms of society. Because whoever wishes to serve Jesus Christ inside a church must be His witness everywhere.

Dear young people! Your contemporaries wait for the real "light of the world." (see John 1:9) Do not hold your candlestick only inside a church, but carry the light of the Gospel to all those who are in darkness and are living through a difficult time in their life.

I have spoken of friendship with Jesus. How happy I would be if something more sprang from this friendship! How beautiful it would be if some of you were to discover a vocation to the priesthood! Jesus Christ has urgent need of youths who will be at His disposition with generosity and no reservations. Moreover, might not the Lord also call one or two of you girls to embrace the consecrated life to serve the Church and the brothers and sisters? Even for those who wish to be united in marriage, the service of altar servers teaches that a real union must always include readiness for reciprocal and free service.

Pope John Paul II (2001)

Information Sheet
for Saint Mary's Altar Servers

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

Date of birth: _____

School: _____ Grade: _____

Religious Education: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Mass Preference: ☐ 5:30 p.m. ☐ 8:30 a.m. ☐ 11:00 a.m.

Parents' Names: _____

Acknowledgement/Permission

I/We, parents or guardian of _____ have read the altar server duties and will do my/our part in helping to support this ministry and my child. I/we understand what is required of my child and the responsibility that he or she has accepted by participating in this ministry.

_____	_____
Signature	Signature
_____	_____
Date	Date

Altar Server Duties

Arrive at church 15 minutes before the scheduled Mass, dressed for worship. (no jeans, sneakers, sweats, flip-flops, etc.).

Sign in by circling your name on the schedule, which may be found on the bulletin board hung on the altar server closet door. In the altar server's closet, find an alb that fits you. Remember to wear your cross and cincture!

Bell Ringer:

1. Take your candle and go to the back of the church. Father will pray with you and all of the ministers before Mass. Then get ready to process up the aisle.

2. When the opening hymn has begun, process up the aisle, following the cross bearer and side by side with the other candle bearer.

3. When the cross bearer reaches the front, move to the left of the cross bearer and all three of you bow your heads to the altar.

4. Put your candle in the stand and go to the center of the altar and bow towards the altar with the book bearer, proceed to your chair and stand with hands folded over your heart until Father reaches his chair.

5. Make the sign of the cross with the priest.

6. After the opening prayer, sit down along with the book bearer (at the same time).

7. When everyone stands for the Gospel, bow together with the book bearer and toward the altar, get your candle and stand facing each other on the corner of the rug.

8. Father or the Deacon will then come and get the Gospel book from the altar. He will lift it up and then turn towards his right and wait. At this sign, wait for the bell ringer and walk slowly and reverently together to the ambo/pulpit. Stand in front of the pulpit and face the book bearer.

9. After the Gospel, place your candle back in the stand and bow together with the book bearer to the altar. Go to your chair and sit down at the same time as the book bearer.

10. After the Homily, when Father stands, take the binder from the stool and stand on the step below Father and in front of him. Father will open the book. Hold the book until the Prayers of the Faithful are finished or until Father closes the book.

11. At the offertory, when Father goes down to receive the gifts, bow together with the book bearer to the altar. Then go and help Father receive the gifts. After Father gives you the

gifts, stand at the side of the altar with the gifts until Father takes them from you and then bow to Father.

12. From the credence table get the towel and move to the side of the altar with the cross bearer to wash Father's hands. Bow to Father together with the cross bearer.

13. Stand in front of the kneeler until the end of the Holy, Holy.

14. KNEEL. During the Eucharistic Prayer ring the bells as follows:

    a. When Father extends his hands over the gifts and says:

       "Let your Spirit come upon these gifts to make them holy, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ."

       (RING FOR A SHORT TIME – COUNT SLOWLY TO TWO)

    b. After Father says *"Do this in memory of me"* and while he raises the host:

       (RING UNTIL HE LOWERS THE HOST)

    c. After Father says *"Do this in memory of me"* and while he raises the chalice:

       (RING UNTIL HE LOWERS THE CHALICE)

15. At the Our Father, stand and move to the side of altar with the cross bearer and face Father, not the congregation. Do not cross the altar at the Sign of Peace; stay on your side.

16. When Father drinks from the chalice, ring the bells for the last time (count slowly to two).

17. Receive Communion, and then kneel until the Eucharistic Ministers distribute the Sacrament to everyone in the sanctuary. After they leave the altar, proceed with the book bearer to the altar, bow and go to your chair.

18. Stand when Father stands. Immediately after Father says "Go in peace," meet the book bearer and bow together to the altar. Take your candle and go into the center aisle and stand facing the altar with the cross bearer behind you.

19. Bow your head when Father genuflects and follow the cross bearer in the recessional.

20. After Mass, hang your alb and cincture in the closet with care.

BOOK BEARER:

1. Make sure the Sacramentary (red book) is on the stool by your chair. If it is not, ask a Eucharistic Minister or Father for the book.

2. Take your candle and go to the back of the church. Father will pray with you and all of the ministers before Mass. Then get ready to process up the aisle.

3. When the opening hymn has begun, process up the aisle, following the cross bearer side by side with the other candle bearer.

4. When the cross bearer reaches the front, move to the right of the cross bearer and all three of you bow your heads to the altar.

5. Put your candle in the stand and go to the center of the altar and bow towards the altar with the bell ringer. Proceed to your chair and stand with hands folded over your heart until Father reaches his chair.

6. Make the sign of the cross with the priest.

7. When Father says "Let Us Pray," take the Sacramentary from the stool and stand on the step below Father, in front of him. Father will open the Sacramentary and place it in your hands for you to hold.

8. After the opening prayer, sit down along with the bell ringer (at the same time).

9. When everyone stands for the Gospel, bow together with the bell ringer and to the altar, get your candle and stand facing each other on the corner of the rug.

10. Father or the Deacon will then come and get the Gospel book from the altar. He will lift it up and then back up and wait. At this sign, wait for the bell ringer and walk slowly and reverently together to the ambo/pulpit. Stand in front of the pulpit and face the bell ringer.

11. After the Gospel, place your candle back in the stand and bow together with the bell ringer to the altar. Go to your chair and sit down at the same time as the bell ringer.

12. At the offertory, when Father goes down to receive the gifts, take the Sacramentary and place it on the left side of the altar. Bow together with the bell ringer to the altar. Then go and help Father receive the gifts.

13. Father will hand you the collection basket. Take the collection basket and place it on the wooden collection box. If the wooden collection box is not in the sanctuary, please leave the collection basket on one of the white chairs on the Tabernacle side of the sanctuary. NEVER TAKE THE COLLECTION BACK TO THE SACRISTY.

14. Stand in front of the kneeler until the end of the Holy, Holy.

15. Kneel during the Eucharistic Prayer.

16. At the Our Father, stand and move to the side of altar with the cross bearer and face Father, not the congregation. Do not cross the altar at the Sign of Peace; stay on your side.

17. Receive Communion, and then kneel until the Eucharistic Ministers distribute the Sacrament to everyone in the sanctuary. After they leave the altar, proceed with the bell ringer to the altar, bow and go to your chair.

18. When Father stands and says "Let us pray," take the book and again stand on the bottom step in front of Father. He will open the Sacramentary and place the book in your arms for you to hold.

19. Stand when Father stands. Immediately after Father says "Go in peace," meet the bell ringer and bow together to the altar. Take your candle and go into the center aisle and stand facing the altar with the cross bearer behind you.

20. Bow your head when Father genuflects and follow the cross bearer in the recessional.

21. After Mass, hang your alb and cincture in the closet with care.

CROSS BEARER:

1. Make sure the altar server candles are lit.

2. Take the cross to the back of the church.

3. Lead the procession with the candle bearers (if there is incense, that server goes before you).

4. Stop in front of the altar and wait for the candle bearers.

5. Bow your head (together with the candle bearers).

6. Enter the sanctuary on your left side and place the cross in the stand.

7. At the offertory, when the ushers are halfway down the aisle, take the cross and bow, and go to the back of the church. Wait for the gift bearers and lead them to the altar.

8. When you reach the altar, bow your head to Father and put the cross back in the stand.

9. Immediately take the top off the water cruet and take it to Father (make sure the handle is turned towards Father). Father (or the Deacon) will pour some water into the wine and he will give it back to you. Bow and return to the credence table.

10. Get the water pitcher and the bowl. Make sure the bell ringer has the towel. Go back to the edge of the rug with the bell ringer and wash Father's hands. Father will give the empty flagon to the bell ringer. Put it on the credence table. When father finishes washing his hands, bow together with the bell ringer.

11. Kneel next to the bell ringer and make sure the bell ringer rings the bells at the right times.

12. At the Our Father, go with the bell ringer to the side of the altar (just like at the washing of the hands) and face Father (not the congregation).

13. Stay on your side for the Sign of Peace (do not cross the altar to the other side).

14. For communion wait until the other ministers have left the altar. Two ministers will stay in the sanctuary to give the altar servers and lectors communion. Return and kneel to pray. Then sit in your chair.

15. Immediately after Father says "Go in peace," get your cross and move to the center aisle and face the altar.

16. Bow your head when Father genuflects, turn and lead the recessional.

17. After Mass, hang your alb and cincture in the closet with care.

REMINDERS:

Always fold your hands close to your heart.

- Bow your head to Father after each time you do something for him. He will return your bow.
- Please sit up straight in your chair with your hands on your lap.
- Be at peace, move slowly and reverently. Process together, recite the prayers and sing the hymns.
- Always make the Sign of the Cross.
- Please find a replacement if you cannot serve.
- If you forget what to do during the Mass, Father will help you.