

Altar Server Handbook  
Saint Bonaventure Church

## Basic Definitions

Altar Server – Lay person under 18 who assists the Priest and Deacon during Mass.

Crucifer – Altar server who carries the Processional Cross.

Thurifer – Altar server who is responsible for the Thurible and Incense Boat.

Lector – Lay person who proclaims the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> reading during Mass.

Eucharistic Minister – Lay person who helps distribute Communion.

Thurible – Small pot on a chain used to hold charcoal and incense.

Incense Boat – small, covered bowl that holds powdered incense, also contains a small spoon.

Missal – Large red book that contains the prayers the Priest uses during Mass.

Lectionary – The books that contains the readings for Sunday and weekday Masses.

Book of the Gospels – Book that contains the Gospels for Sunday Masses and Solemnities.

Our English Book has a metal cover; our Spanish Book a red one.

Corporal – Square white cloth that is placed on the center of the Altar during the Preparation of the Altar.

Purificator – Rectangular, folded white cloth used to wipe the chalice.

Chalice – Cup used to hold the wine/Blood of Christ.

Paten – Small plate, with or without raised sides, used to hold the bread / Body of Christ during Mass.

Ciborium – Covered container used to hold the Body of Christ when placed in the Tabernacle.

Cruet – Small glass pitcher used to hold the water the Priest/Deacon mixes with wine and uses to clean the vessels after Communion.

Monstrance – Large, sunburst shaped container used to hold the Blessed Sacrament during Exposition and Benediction.

Luna – Small, circular glass container containing the Blessed Sacrament. It is placed in the center of the Monstrance for Exposition and Benediction.

Chapel Bells – Small set of hand-held bells used at special services.

Flagon – Glass pitcher used to hold wine

Alb – White garment worn by ministers who serve at the altar (priest, deacon, altar servers).

Cincture – Rope or cord tied around the waist, over the Alb.

Stole – A long, thin, rectangular piece of cloth worn around the neck by a Priest or across the chest by Deacon.

Chasuble – Circular garment the priest wears over his alb and stole.

Crosier – Curved staff carried by a Bishop during processions and at other times during the Mass. It represents a shepherd's crook.

Miter – Special peaked hat worn by a bishop during processions and at various points during liturgical services.

Humeral Veil – Long, wide, rectangular piece of cloth worn over the shoulders by a priest when carrying the Blessed Sacrament in procession or when giving a blessing with a monstrance.

Cope – Cape-like garment worn by a priest or deacon during certain liturgical celebrations

and processions.

Blessed Sacrament – the Body and/or Blood of Christ, what bread and wine become through the Eucharistic Prayer.

Tabernacle – Secure cabinet used to store the Body of Christ. In our Church it is gold and located directly behind the Altar.

Baptismal Font – A stand with a deep metal bowl, located near the main doors of the Church and used during Baptisms.

Paschal Candle – Large, white candle that is blessed every year at the Easter Vigil. During the Easter Season it is lit at all major liturgical services. During the rest of the year it is used during Baptisms and Funerals. When not in use it is kept near the Baptismal Font.

Sanctuary – The raised section at the front of the Church containing the Altar and other liturgical furniture. This is where most sacraments celebrated.

Altar – Large table in the center of the Sanctuary that is used during the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Ambo – Large podium where the Word of God is read from.

Ambry – Glass cabinet where the Holy Oils are stored.

Creedence Table – Small table at the Ambo side of the Sanctuary where the vessels used at Mass are kept.

## Outline of Mass

### Opening Procession and Rites

Opening Procession  
Sign of the Cross  
Greeting  
Penitential Act  
Gloria (except during Advent and Lent)  
Opening Prayer

### Liturgy of the Word

First Reading  
Responsorial Psalm  
Second Reading  
Gospel Acclamation – usually the Alleluia, except during Lent.  
Gospel  
Homily  
Creed  
Prayers of the Faithful/General Intercessions

## Liturgy of the Eucharist

### Preparation of the Gifts

- Preparation of the Altar
  - Corporal, Chalices, Purificators, and Missal placed on Altar
- Gifts are brought forward
- Initial prayers over the gifts (said quietly by Priest while the Congregation is singing.)
- Lavabo – when the Priest washes his hands.

### Prayer over the Offerings

#### The Eucharistic Prayer

- Preface
- Holy, Holy or Sanctus
- Epiclesis – when the Priest asks the Holy Spirit to transform bread and wine into Christ's Body and Blood. Signified by the Priest holding his hands over the gifts
  - in some Eucharistic Prayers he also make the Sign of the Cross over the gifts here.
- Institution Narrative – when the Priest recalls the events of the Last Supper.
  - Consecration – when the Priest repeats the words of Christ over the bread and wine and raises them up to show the Congregation.
- Memorial Acclamation
- Anamnesis – a remembrance of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven.
- Oblation – offering of the Body and Blood to God the Father.
- Intercessions – prayers offered for various parts of the Church and its members.
- Concluding Doxology – when the Priest and Deacon raise the Body and Blood.
- Great Amen

#### Communion Rite

- The Lord's Prayer
- The Sign of Peace
- Fraction Rite -- when the Priest breaks the main host into smaller pieces and separates it into the Patens used for distribution to the People.
- Lamb of God – sung by the People while the Priest performs the Fraction Rite
- Presentation of the Body and Blood to the People
- Distribution of Communion
- Prayer after Communion

## Concluding Rites and Procession

Announcements  
Greeting and Blessing  
Dismissal  
Closing Procession

## Responsibilities During Mass

### Sunday Mass with a Deacon (Regular Sunday in Ordinary Time, Advent/Christmas, Lent/Easter)

This set of instructions describes the majority of English Masses and will serve as the standard template for Altar Server's duties during Mass. Spanish Servers are also asked to read through this section as well, as the instructions for Mass without a Deacon presume you have read this section first. When instructions for other types of Masses listed below refer to the the normal way of doing things they are referring to this set of instructions.

### Opening Procession

- Order of Procession
  - Crucifer, other Altar Servers (if present), Lectors/Eucharistic Ministers, Deacon, Priest
- During the Procession
  - the Crucifer leads, walking at a slow pace.
  - The other Altar Servers follow several paces behind with hands folded at their chests.
- On Reaching the Sanctuary (1<sup>st</sup> step leading up the altar)
  - Crucifer
    - the Crucifer stops briefly, then proceeds up and to the left, places the cross in the stand and goes to their place. Please remain standing.
    - If the Crucifer is serving alone, s/he should proceed along the back wall of the Sanctuary and take a place at one of the seats near the Presider's chair.
  - Other Altar Servers(if present)
    - if 1 Altar Server: please go to the right to Position #1 (see Sanctuary Diagram)
      - when the Priest and Deacon reach the Sanctuary, bow with them and proceed directly to your seat near the Presider's Chair. Please remain standing.
    - If 2 Altar Servers: Please go to Positions #1 and #2.
      - as above except AS #2 goes to a chair next to the Crucifer.

## Opening Rites

- The Missal will either be on its stand on Table 1 or on the small podium near the Presider's Chair
- when the Priest says: "Let us pray", AS #1 takes the Missal from the stand and goes to stand in front of the Priest
  - If the Missal is on the small podium, go and stand in front of the priest and wait for him to place the Missal in your hands.
  - Do not worry if you do not know which page the Missal should be open to, the Priest can adjust it if necessary.
  - Please hold the Missal high (you may balance it against your head or chest if necessary) so the Priest can clearly see it.
  - When finished return the Missal to its place and return to your seat.
- When the Opening Prayer is concluded, all Altar Servers should be seated.

## Preparation of the Altar

- At the Conclusion of the General Intercessions – 3 Altar Servers
  - The Deacon will go to remove the Book of the Gospels from the Altar.
  - The Crucifer takes the cross and proceeds down the side aisle to the back of the Church, then goes to stand in the center aisle near the table with the gifts
  - AS #1 takes the Missal (and stand if the Priest is using it) and places it on the corner of the Altar closest to the Presider's Chair, then goes to stand near the Credence Table, facing the Altar.
  - AS #2 goes to the Credence Table and helps the Deacon to bring to the Altar the following items: Corporal, Purificators, and Chalices. When finished join AS #1
  - When the collection is finished the Crucifer will lead the gift-bearers to the Sanctuary, proceed up, place the Cross in its stand, and then go to stand with the other Altar Servers.
  - After the Priest and Deacon receive the gifts and return to the Altar, AS #2 should take the small cruet of water from the Credence Table and present it to the Deacon. Please remain where you are after he takes it from you. After the Deacon is done he will give you both the cruet and the empty flagon of wine to take to the Credence Table.
  - While AS #2 is assisting the Deacon, AS #1 and the Crucifer prepare the Pitcher, Basin, and Towel for the Lavabo. One person should hold the Basin and Pitcher, the other the Towel. Please remain near the Credence Table.
    - After the Priest bows to the Altar, he will come over to you and place his

hands over the Basin. Please pour a small amount of water over his hands, then present him with the Towel. The Priest will dry his hands and return the Towel. He will then make a small bow of the head to both of you, please return the bow in the same manner.

- With two Altar Servers
  - The Crucifer should proceed as above.
  - AS #1 should move the Missal to the Altar as above and then prepare to take the cruet of water to the Deacon when he returns with the wine (follow above instructions for AS #2). Afterwards, assist the Crucifer with the Lavabo.
- With 1 Altar Server
  - The Crucifer should take the Missal (and stand if used) to the Altar as above, then take the Processional Cross and proceed as above until returning to the Altar, then assist the Deacon with the water cruet as above. For the Lavabo, please drape the towel over one arm and proceed as above.

#### During the Eucharistic Prayer

- all Altar Servers should remain standing near the Creedence Table with hands folded at the chest until the conclusion of the *Holy, Holy*. At this point, please kneel on the top step of the sanctuary when the rest of the Congregation kneels. Please remain kneeling, with hands folded, until the *Great Amen* and then stand with the Congregation.

#### Communion

- All Altar Servers should remain standing during the preparations for Communion, even when the rest of the congregation kneels.
- At the Sign of Peace the Priest and Deacon will come to you to offer Peace, please return it and then offer the Peace to each other as well.
- The Priest and Deacon will bring the Body and Blood of Christ to you to receive. If you do not want to receive from the Cup, you should still say Amen when the Deacon says, "The Blood of Christ." You may then shake your head to decline to receive.
- When the Priest and Deacon go to distribute communion:
  - AS #1 should remove the Missal (and stand if used) from the Altar and return them to their place by the Presider's Chair (either Table #1 or the small podium). S/he may then be seated
  - The Crucifer and AS #2 should return to their seats and be seated.
- When the Priest goes to return the Ciborium to the Tabernacle:
  - All Altar Servers should stand and face the Tabernacle. When the Priest has placed the Ciborium inside, he will genuflect (kneel on one knee), at this point all Altar Servers should bow to the Tabernacle and then be seated.

## Closing Rites and Procession

- When the Deacon returns to his chair after communion, the Priest will stand and say: “Let us Pray.” All stand.
  - At this point AS #1 should bring him the Missal as at the beginning of Mass for the Prayer after Communion.
  
- When the Prayer is finished, the priest will give the announcements and then Mass concludes with the final greeting, blessing, and dismissal.
  - At some Masses a special blessing is used at this point, especially during the special seasons of the year (Lent, Easter, Advent, and Christmas). If notified that this will take place, AS #1 should be ready to bring the Missal back to the Priest for the blessing.
  
- When the closing hymn begins:
  - The Crucifer will take the Processional Cross and go stand in the center aisle (about the 3<sup>rd</sup> pew from the front) and face the Altar. The other Altar Servers will follow behind her/him and stand abreast at the first pew, also facing the Altar.
  - The Priest and Deacon will first go to kiss the Altar and then come down from the Sanctuary, face the Altar, and bow. When they turn to process out all Altar Servers should turn clockwise and lead the procession to the back of the Church.
  - After the Priest and Deacon reach the back of the Church you may return to the Sacristy.



## Sunday Mass without a Deacon

Mass without a Deacon is largely the same as a Mass with a Deacon with only a few minor changes, which are noted here.

Opening Procession – No changes from normal procedure.

Preparation of the Altar – The major change here is that one of the Altar Servers will need to set up the Altar, as described below.

- With 3 Altar Servers
  - The roles of Crucifer and Altar Server #1 remain unchanged.
  - Altar Server #2 will be responsible for setting the Altar as follows
    - Bring from the Credence Table the Corporal, Purificators, and Chalices and place them on the Plastic sheet at the side of the Altar. You will need to make several trips. Please carry the items over individually, DO NOT bring the tray.
    - Then, unfold the Corporal in the center of the Altar so that the red cross in the center is facing in the right direction.
    - When the Priest goes to the front of the Altar to receive the gifts, go and stand behind him and to his right.
      - The Priest will first receive the flagon of wine and turn and hand it to you.
      - Remain where you are until he receives the bread.
    - When the Priest returns to the Altar go around the other side, place the flagon of wine on the plastic sheet, and go retrieve the cruet of water and continue as normal.
- With 2 Altar Servers
  - The role of Crucifer proceeds as normal.
  - Altar Server #1 moves the Missal (and stand) to the Altar as normal and then follows the instructions for Altar Server #2 from the preceding set.
- 1 Altar Server
  - The Crucifer moves the Missal to the Altar, sets up the Altar according to the preceding 2 sets of instructions, then takes the Processional Cross and goes to the rear of the Church to lead the gifts forward as normal.
  - The Priest will take the Bread and Wine to the Altar by himself.
  - After putting the Cross in its stand, go and retrieve the water cruet and continue as at Sunday Mass with a Deacon.

## Communion

- 3 Altar Servers
  - Altar Server #1 should return the Missal as normal.
  - When the Priest returns to the Altar after distributing Communion, he will place

- any remaining pieces of the Body of Christ in the Ciborium and then return it to the Tabernacle.
- All Altar Servers should be prepared to stand and bow as at Sunday Mass with a Deacon.
  - When the priest returns to the Altar, Altar Server #2 should bring him the cruet of water to purify the vessels. Remain at the side of the Altar.
  - When the priest is finished he will place the vessels, cruet, and linens on the plastic sheet, Altar Server #2 should then take them back to the Credence table and return to their seat.
- 2 Altar Servers
    - As in the preceding set of instructions, except the Crucifer performs the functions of Altar Server #2.
  - 1 Altar Server
    - Return the Missal as normal and then return to the other side of the Sanctuary and take a seat near the Cross Stand.
    - When the Priest returns follow the preceding instructions for Altar Server #2.
    - After you have finished clearing the Altar, return to your seat near the Presider.

## Mass for a Feast or Solemnity with a Deacon

This set of instructions describes Masses celebrated with special solemnity, such as Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, when incense, processional candles, and chapel bells may be used. These Masses will normally have 4 Altar Servers assigned to the following roles:

Crucifer, Thurifer, 2 Candle-Bearers (Altar Server's #1 & 2)

### Opening Procession

- Order of Procession
  - Thurifer, Crucifer flanked by 2 candles, Lectors/Eucharistic Ministers, Deacon(s), con-celebrating Priest(s), Presiding Priest
  - Immediately prior to the start of the Procession the Thurifer will bring the Thurible and Incense Boat to the Presider.
    - The Presider will place incense on the charcoal and make the sign of the cross over it, then return to the Boat to the Thurifer.
- During the Procession
  - The procession proceeds with the Thurifer leading, followed by the Cross and Candles several paces behind.
- On Reaching the Sanctuary
  - The Thurifer will pause for a moment then proceed up and to the right to Position #3 (see the Sanctuary Diagram), facing the Altar.
  - The Crucifer and Candle-Bearers will pause at the base of the Altar and then proceed together up and to the left.
    - Cross and Candles will be placed in their respective stands
    - The Crucifer and 1 Candle-Bearer (Altar Server #2) will remain at that side of the Sanctuary, while the other Candle-Bearer (Altar Server #1) will proceed along the wall to a seat near the Presider's Chair.
  - When the Priest and Deacon reach the Sanctuary they will pause, bow, and then proceed up to kiss the Altar.
  - After kissing the Altar the Presider will turn to the Thurifer, who will bring him the Thurible and Incense Boat
    - The Presider will add more incense, if necessary, and then take the Thurible. The Thurifer will return to Position #3.
    - The Presider will proceed to incense the Cross on the back wall and then circle the Altar. If the Paschal Candle or the icon of a saint is present those will be incensed as well. When finished the Priest will return the Thurible to the Thurifer.
    - The Thurifer will take the Thurible and Boat to their stand in the Sacristy, then return to the Altar and take a seat near the Presider's Chair.

## Opening Rites

- No change here from normal practice.
- Altar Server #1 should be ready to hold the Missal at the Opening Prayer.

## Liturgy of the Word

- At the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading the Thurifer will return to the Sacristy to ensure that the Thurible and Incense Boat are ready.
- At the Conclusion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading.
  - the Thurifer will wait until the Lector leaves the Altar and then bring the Thurible and Boat to the Presider at his chair.
  - The Priest will impose incense and make the sign of the cross over it before returning the Boat to the Thurifer.
  - The Thurifer will then move to Position #4 and face the Altar
  - After the Deacon receives the blessing from the Priest he will proceed to the Altar and pick up the Book of the Gospels and hold it aloft.
  - When he turns toward the Ambo, the Thurifer should turn and move to Position #5.
  - The Deacon will place the Book on the Ambo, give the greeting (“The Lord be with you.”) and introduction (“A reading from the Holy Gospel...”), then turn and take the Thurible to bless the Book.
  - After the blessing the Deacon will return the Thurible and the Thurifer will remain in place, swinging the Thurible gently back and forth during the reading of the Gospel. When the Gospel is finished, the Thurifer will return the Thurible and Boat to the Sacristy, then return to his/her seat.

## Preparation of the Altar

- The Crucifer and Altar Servers #1 & 2 will proceed as at a normal Mass with a Deacon.
- The Thurifer will go to the Sacristy to ensure the Thurible is ready. It will normally be necessary to add a 2<sup>nd</sup> piece of charcoal to the Thurible at this point.
  - When the Priest and Deacon return to the Altar with the Gifts the Thurifer goes to Position #3.
  - After the Priest says the initial prayers over the bread and wine he will turn to the Thurifer, who will approach. The priest will impose incense as normal and take the Thurible.
  - The Priest will incense the bread and wine, the Wall Cross, the Altar, and the Deacon.
  - The Deacon will incense the Priest and any other ministers on the Altar, then go to incense the Congregation. When finished he will return the Thurible and the

Thurifer will go to the Sacristy and remain there.

## Communion

- At the Sign of Peace the Priest and Deacon will offer the Peace to all Altar Servers and the Thurifer will join the others at the Creedence side of the Sanctuary.
  - Altar Servers should offer the Sign of Peace to one another.
- All will receive the Body and Blood as normal and AS #1 & 2 will assist with the cleanup as usual.

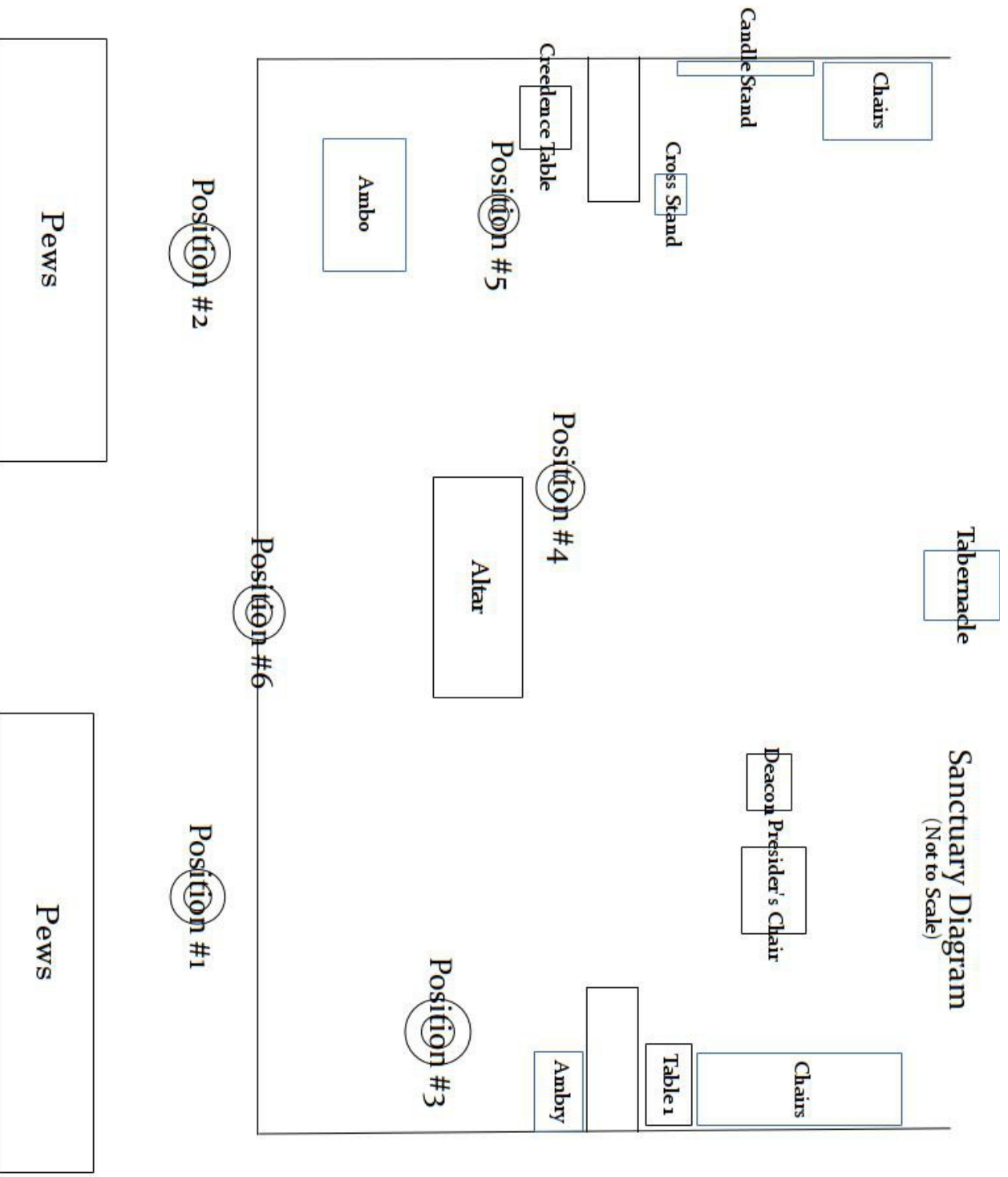
## Closing Rites and Procession

- At the Prayer after Communion
  - AS #1 will bring the Missal to the Priest as usual. When the Prayer is finished s/he will proceed around the back wall of the Sanctuary to the Candle Stand.
  - AS #2 will light two Processional Candles.
- At the beginning of the Closing Hymn
  - All Altar Servers will take their places in the center aisle, facing the Altar.
  - Order of Procession
    - Crucifer, flanked by Candles; Thurifer (without Thurible),  
Lectors/Eucharistic Ministers, Con-celebrating priests, Presider, Deacons
  - As in a regular Mass, after the Priest and Deacon leave the Sanctuary and bow, all turn and process out.

### Mass for a Feast or Solemnity without a Deacon

This Mass is almost exactly the same as with a Deacon, with the following changes:

- At the reading of the Gospel the Thurifer will lead the Priest himself, instead of the Deacon, to the Altar and then Ambo to proclaim the Gospel.
- At the preparation of the gifts, AS #2 will perform the functions the Deacon normally does, as at a Regular Sunday Mass without a Deacon.



Sacristy Doors

## General Guidelines

- Please remember that when you are serving as an Altar Server you represent both yourselves and the Church.
- Dress Appropriately
  - Regular Sunday Masses
    - Do not wear sneakers or athletic shoes.
    - Remember that the albs you wear are thin and clothing underneath will show through.
      - Avoid brightly colored shirts or ones with large decorations.
  - Feast Days and Solemnities
    - Wear dress shoes.
      - Please keep in mind that these Masses are often longer than regular ones, significantly so in the case of the Easter Vigil, so wear comfortable shoes that won't hurt your feet.
      - Nice sandals are acceptable here (the plastic ones you wear at the pool are not).
    - Wear a white shirt, blouse, or dress and nice looking slacks or skirts (NOT jeans or shorts).
- When you are serving Mass and are not holding anything please keep your hands folded over your chest, when standing, or neatly folded in your lap when sitting.
- Do not fidget or adjust your alb or cord excessively.
- When kneeling during the Eucharistic Prayer, keep straight and do not slouch or lean against the back of the Ambo. Keep your hands folded as when standing.
- Please arrive 15 minutes before the start of Mass for Regular Sunday Masses and 25 minutes prior to a Feast or Solemnity in case the Priest or Deacon has any final instructions for you.
- All Servers are expected to fully participate in the Mass. This includes:
  - Taking part in all hymns (when able) and all responses.
  - Servers who are not carrying anything in a procession may carry hymnals.