

# Serving Mass at St. John Neumann

The ministry of Altar Servers requires dedication, attentiveness to detail and appropriate reverence for the sacred articles and solemnity of the Liturgy. Servers are encouraged to be familiar with the basic doctrines and teachings of the Church, especially those pertaining to the Sacred Liturgy. An excellent source of information for us all is the [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#).

Please remember that the ministry of Altar Server is not reserved, or fulfilled, solely by serving at one scheduled Sunday Mass. Altar Servers may be asked to assist and serve at weddings, funerals and other parish liturgies, especially during summer and school breaks. You may also be called upon as a substitute, or to serve at additional liturgies during such times as Christmas and Easter. Please be aware of the parish calendar and bulletin. These documents will tell you when Masses are being offered. The Altar Server schedule can be located by the side entrance of the gathering space or via the Parish web site: (<http://www.saintjohnsunbury.org/schedules/>). Please be aware that you will need to find a replacement in the event you are not able to fulfill your scheduled Altar Server obligation for a particular Mass.

As an Altar Server at St. John Neumann, you will be expected to arrive no less than 15 minutes before the start of the Mass for which you are scheduled. Being able to perform your "Before Mass" duties without hurrying is a very important part of your role as Altar Server. You will be highly visible to the parishioners and, as such, you will be expected to move about in a reverent and graceful manner at all times. Remember that looking your best is an outward sign of respect for God and your fellow parishioners. Volunteering to assist your parish at both social gatherings and sacred liturgies is always a positive sign of your dedication and spirit of 'servant-hood'. May God bless you for accepting His call to this ministry.

This handbook will be helpful in preparing you for the duties involved in this ministry. It will also be useful should you need to refresh your memory after the training session.

## **Remember these things at all times:**

- *Genuflect to the Tabernacle* when you first enter the Sanctuary. One knee should touch the floor when you genuflect. You will not need to genuflect any other time during the Mass. Once you leave the Sanctuary after Mass and then return to clean up, you should bow your head before re-entering the Sanctuary.
- When in procession, *bow your head* in respect when the priest reveres the Altar. Do not genuflect.
- When walking to and from the back of the Church and Sanctuary, always use the ***side aisles***.
- "*Prayer hands*" should be used during the Processional, when prayers are being offered during Mass, and for the Recessional. Position your hands together in front at chest height.
- Your movements and actions should always be graceful and reflect your reverence for God and our community worship. If you don't know where to go next, stand still until Father, the Deacon, or one of the other servers gives you directions.
- Walk together.
- Sit down together.
- If you don't know what to do, stand still. Either Father or one of the other servers will tell you what to do. Review your notes before and after Mass until you have learned/memorized how to serve.

## **I. What to do before Mass:**

When you arrive at the Church, sign in at the podium by the Neumann Room. Place your coat in the Ministers' Closet and choose cassock (black robe) that will hang at about ankle length. Then choose a surplice (white top) that is the same size as the cassock. Make sure to straighten your shirt, collar and comb your hair, if needed. Select one of the scapulars (cross necklace) and place it around your neck. Make sure your server vestments and scapular are hanging straight, not twisted.

**Make sure all items needed for Mass are available and in their proper place:** The following list outlines the items needed and their location.

- ✓ The offertory gifts (the large silver bowl with hosts and wine cruet) should be on the table in the back of Church, near the baptismal fountain.
- ✓ The Lavabo dish, Lavabo towel and water cruet should be on the wooden shelf located just outside the Sacristy door.
- ✓ The Chalice, Purificator and Pall should be on the Credence table.
- ✓ Make sure the Corporal is on the Altar and unfolded.
- ✓ The Sacramentary (red book) should be on the wooden self outside of the Sacristy door. The smaller brown Sacramentary should be located at the servers' bench.
- ✓ The bells should be on the floor in front of the Lectern.
- ✓ Place a Missal under the servers' bench (one for each server)

**If anything is missing, notify the Priest, Deacon or MC.**

### **Light the candles (15 minutes prior to Mass start)**

- ✓ Light the candle lighter wick in the Sacristy. The wick should stick out about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch. You should carry the candle lighter with the wick held upward and protect the flame with one hand while you are walking on the Altar. If the wick burns short, slide it out a little.
- ✓ Light the candles at the Tabernacle first. **Be sure to bow when you move from one side of the Tabernacle to the other side and be sure to go in front of the Tabernacle not behind it.** Then go to the Altar and light the candles. Make sure to stand in front of the Altar with your back to the congregation when lighting the Altar candles. Light the Easter candle last (if the Easter Season).
- ✓ Blow out the candle lighter wick immediately after the last candle is lit. Please **DO NOT** pull the wick back into the lighter because the hot wax will cool and plug the opening.
- ✓ Return the candle lighter to its place in the Sacristy.

## When it is time for Mass to begin:

Meet the priest and other servers at the Baptismal fountain at the back of Church. Position yourself as follows:

Cross-bearer (in front)  
Candle-bearer number one      Candle-bearer number two  
MC  
Lector  
Deacon  
Priest

## II. The Mass

### 1. Processional

Wait for the priest's signal to begin. The Cross-bearer will precede the two servers carrying the Tabernacle candles. The Candle-bearers walk side-by-side. Upon reaching the Sanctuary, bow your heads in reverence when the priest genuflects in front of the Altar.

When the priest and deacon begin to climb the sanctuary steps toward the altar, the 2 candle-bearers move to the left and place their candles on the Tabernacle, ***then walk behind the priest's and deacon's chairs*** to take their place at the servers' bench. (**Do not walk behind the Tabernacle**) The Cross-bearer will move right and sets the cross in its stand back by the Credence table then takes his/her place at the servers' bench.

Deacon	Priest	Deacon	MC	Book bearer	Cross bearer	Bell ringer
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The Celebrant and deacon will then proceed to reverence the Altar and take their places.

### 2. Opening Prayer

Towards the end of the Gloria (which is usually sung: *You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen*), the **Book-Bearer** will open the brown Sacramentary book to the **first** bookmark and proceed over to the priest. Face the priest, holding the brown Sacramentary at neck height. When the priest is finished with the prayer, he will close the book then you return to your seat and place the brown Sacramentary next to you.

- Make sure you hold the book so the Priest can read comfortably.

### 3. Readings

During the first and second readings, either follow along in your missal or listen attentively to the lector, with your eyes on the lector. Join in the response to the Responsorial psalm (which is usually sung). Stand when the priest stands and sings the "Alleluia". Remain standing during the Gospel reading, and either follow along in the missal or keep your eyes on the priest/deacon.

### 4. Homily

Sit in the seats on the servers' bench. Listen attentively to the priest/deacon. There should be no talking. Look toward the priest/deacon as he speaks.

## 5. Profession of Faith

Servers should stand straight at the bench, hands folded with reverence. Recite the "Apostles' Creed". Don't forget to **make a profound bow** when the verse: *"Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary..."* is recited. Just before the conclusion of the Creed ("we believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church..." signal) the **Book-Bearer** will open the brown Sacramentary to the **second** bookmark and proceed to the Priest, again, holding the book at chest height. All servers should respond to the "General Intercessions" with the congregation. After the Profession of Faith the Book Bearer will return to be with the other Altar Servers. Remain standing and proceed to prepare the Altar.

## 6. Offertory

Father will remain seated in his chair. The ushers will begin the collection. The music ministers will begin to sing the Offertory song.

### **At this time, servers need to prepare the Altar for the Eucharistic Celebration and Communion**

When the priest or deacon approaches the Altar, all 3 servers move together to prepare the Altar.

- ✓ The **Book Bearer** will get the red Sacramentary from the wooden Credence shelf and place it on the Altar, in the middle above the Corporal.
- ✓ The **Bell Ringer** will get the priest's Chalice and Purificator from the Credence shelf. Place the Chalice on the Altar on right side of the Corporal. Place the Purificator next to the Chalice.
- ✓ The **Bell Ringer** will get the water cruet from the shelf, remove the stopper and place it on the Altar next to the Chalice.
- ✓ The **Cross Bearer** will get the tray of wine cups from the Credence table. Be sure to remove the towel before you take the tray to the Altar and place them on the far right side of the Altar, near the chalice.
- ✓ Return to your seat and remain standing until all servers are back at the Servers bench
- ✓ All together: sit

## 7. Preparation of the Gifts

**When the priest and/or deacon stands**, the **Bell Ringer** and the **Cross Bearer** go with the priest to receive the gifts. They move together down the left side of the Altar. Remain on the bottom step even if the priest steps down. The priest will hand the offertory gifts to the servers. The book bearer will remain seated until the gifts are returned to the Altar.

- ✓ Wine: Approach the Altar from the left. Place the wine cruet on the right side of the Altar, next to the chalice. Remove the stopper and put it on the Credence shelf.
- ✓ Hosts: Approach the Altar from the right. Place the silver bowl with the hosts in the center of the Corporal.

For the ritual cleansing: Immediately after placing the gifts on the Altar, go to the Credence shelf. All 3 servers will participate in this activity. The **Bell Ringer will hold the Lavabo dish and towel**, with the towel unfolded and draped across his/her arm. The other two servers will stand to his/her right and are responsible for the water & wine. The priest or the deacon will hand the water and wine cruets to the servers. The **Cross Bearer will take the water cruet** and the **Book Bearer will take the wine cruet**. The servers will wait for the priest to turn in order to cleanse his hands. Servers will be standing side-by-side with the water cruet to the right of the Lavabo and towel. *If incense is being used, be sure to leave enough space between you and the Altar so the priest can move freely to bless the altar.*

When the priest holds his hands over the Lavabo dish, pour water over his fingers. The priest will use the Lavabo towel to dry his hands, and then will replace it on the server's arm. Take the water cruet, Lavabo dish and Lavabo towel, and the wine cruet to the Credence shelf. Refold the towel and place it next to the dish (not in it).

All servers return to the bench and remain standing.

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All servers will remain standing at the servers' bench during the "Prayer over the Gifts" and the "Preface" (Lord be with You).

Servers listen for the cue "Holy, holy, holy..." (usually sung) All servers proceed together, with hands folded, to the Altar steps where the kneeling cushions are placed (in front of the Lectern). Stand and sing the "Holy, holy, holy", then kneel. The **Bell-Ringer** should be on the right end, nearest the bells. *When the MC is present, the MC will be on the right end, then the Bell Ringer, the Cross Bearer and the Book Bearer.*

#### Ring the bells:

The bells are rung 2 times:

1. At the elevation of the Consecrated Body
2. At the elevation of the Precious Blood

Begin ringing the bells when the Consecrated Body/Precious Blood are elevated above the priest's head. Use a side-to-side motion to ring the bells *gently and constantly* until the Consecrated Body/Precious Blood is laid on the Altar. The bells should be laid down on the floor after each time the bell is rung.

Continue to kneel at the Altar until the priest has completed the "Through Him, with Him, In Him..." and the "Great Amen". Servers will stand and pray the "Our Father" with the congregation. Servers' arms should be outstretched, with palms of hands facing upward.

### **8. Sign of Peace:**

All servers will participate in the sign of peace. Servers will offer each other the sign of peace. Before greeting the priest/deacon, put your kneeler back on the second step in front of the Lectern and then proceed to the Altar to greet the priest. After the sign of peace, the **Book Bearer will get the empty bowls** from the Credence table for the Consecrated Body. Place the bowls on the left side of the Altar (lay them out, do not stack them unless the deacon or priest tells you to leave them stacked). Then take your place at the back of the Sanctuary (on the edge of the carpet near to the servers' bench) to receive Communion.

### **9. Lamb of God:**

During the Lamb of God, the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion will come up from the congregation. The priest will begin to distribute the Consecrated Body and the Precious Blood. Before receiving Communion, bow your head before receiving both the Body of Christ and the Blood of Christ. If for some reason you do not receive either the Body or Blood, bow your head in reverence when they are presented to you.

After receiving Communion, (and after the Ministers of Holy Communion have taken their places) return to the servers' bench and wait while the Communion Rite continues. You may sit or kneel.

Once the Ministers of Holy Communion have left the altar, the **Book Bearer** will remove the red Sacramentary from the Altar. Place the Sacramentary on the shelf and bring back the water cruet (**without the stopper**) and place it next to the Chalice. The Chalice and the large silver bowl remain on the Altar.

### **10. After Communion:**

The Ministers of Holy Communion will return the cups and bowls to the Altar. If there are any unconsumed hosts, the MC or Deacon will return the Ciborium to the Tabernacle.

Once the Priest is finished purifying the dishes, **all servers** should approach the Altar and remove the empty dishes. **Don't wait for the priest to motion for you; be ready to remove everything from the Altar.** Place the dishes and the tray with the cups on the Credence table. The Chalice will be placed on the Credence shelf. Double check to make sure the Altar is cleared and the Corporal is folded.

## 11. Silent Prayer:

After Communion is finished, the Priest will return to his chair for silent prayer. All servers should be seated on the servers' bench and participate in silent prayer.

## 12. Concluding Rite

Closing Prayer –when the priest says, “let us pray” the **Book-Bearer** will open the brown Sacramentary to the **first** bookmark and proceed to the Priest, again, holding the book at chest height. The other servers stand at the bench. When the final prayer has concluded, the Book bearer will place the Sacramentary back at the servers' bench.

Announcements – Servers remain standing during the announcements.

Recessional – The music ministers will lead the Recessional Song.

When the priest and deacon move to reverence the altar, the servers will move into their places for the recessional. **Remember to walk behind the priest and deacon chairs, not in front of them and Do Not go behind the Tabernacle.**

**Cross-Bearer** retrieves the cross from its stand. Candle-bearers retrieve the candles from the Tabernacle. Candle-Bearers stand at the base of the Altar, on the right side. The **Cross-Bearer** stands at the base of the Altar on the left side. Servers turn and face the Altar. When the priest genuflects, the servers will bow their head toward the altar. When the priest starts to turn, the servers also turn and move in front of the Priest and Deacon – **Cross-Bearer in front**, followed by the 2 Candle-Bearers.

When you have passed into the Gathering Area, turn right and go into the Vestment Room. Extinguish the candles and leave them in the Vestment Room. Allow most of the congregation to leave Church before beginning your after-Mass duties.

## **III. After Mass Duties**

Altar Servers are responsible for extinguishing all candles using the Candle torch lighter. Check to make sure that there is a Minister of Holy Communion present to clean the Altar dishes. If not, take the dishes from the Credence table to the Sacristy and notify the priest.

**Note:** Servers are not responsible for cleaning the dishes; Ministers of Holy Communion take care of that.

- ✓ When your after-Mass duties are completed, remove your Mass garments (cassock, surplice and scapular) and return them neatly to the Ministers' Closet. Please hang the garments neatly on the hangers.
- ✓ Tell the priest “good-bye”.

### **In case of an emergency:**

If you need to use the restroom because you are ill –

Tell another server or Father.

Exit through the sacristy.

If you are dizzy or nauseous, get another server to go with you.