



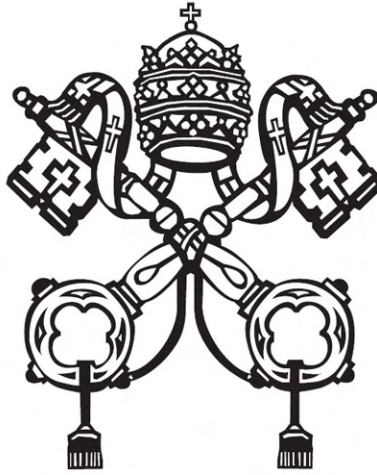
ALTAR SERVER GUILD

MANUAL

A Resource for Parochial Use
In the Formation of Altar Servers
From the Archdiocese of Atlanta

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ALTAR SERVER GUILD
SAINT CUNEGUNDA CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Chaplain's & Coordinator's
GUIDE FOR THE ALTAR SERVER GUILD

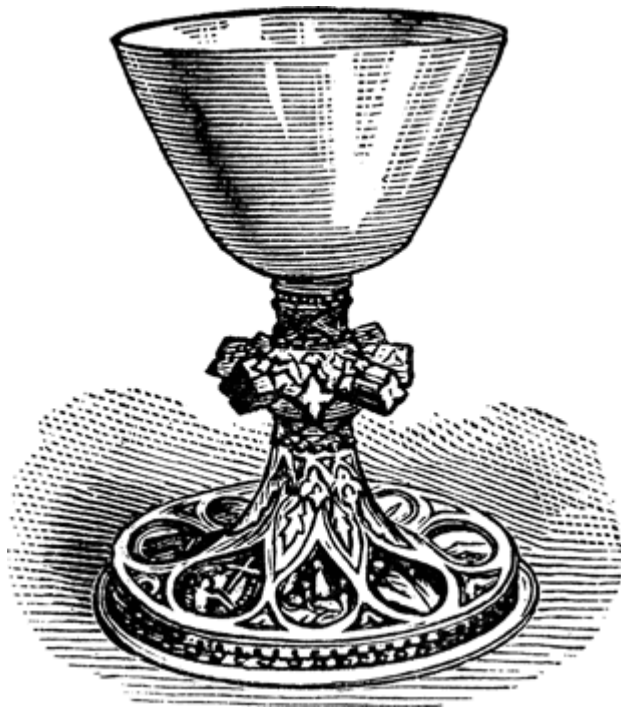
This is a guide that puts forth some ideas that parishes in the Archdiocese may choose to use in order to better their programs for Altar Server Formation. It is only a suggestion, and it is offered here in hopes that some (or all) of this may help each parish improve the training and formation of these future leaders in the Catholic Church who serve at God's altar.

Forming an Altar Server Guild

Your parish can just have Servers, but it would be better if there were a parochial program for the Altar Servers, to distinguish them, and to keep their interest. What follows are some thoughts on forming a parochial Altar Server Guild in your parish. Your pastor may choose to use some of these ideas in forming a program in your parish.

- The Altar Server Guild should be more than just showing up and serving
 - It should have a CHAPLAIN (priest or deacon)
 - There should be a COORDINATOR who does the scheduling (a lay person or the chaplain)
 - There should be a VESTRYMAN (lay person who volunteers to keep vestments clean and in order)
 - The Altar Servers (members of the Altar Server Guild) are assigned ranks (each with specific uniforms)
 - NOVICE SERVERS are just starting out
 - A simple cassock might be worn for first five times of serving, as these beginners shadow and learn
 - SKILLED SERVERS know the ropes
 - A cassock and simple surplice might be worn by these young people who are still in elementary school
 - MASTER SERVERS are the more mature servers
 - A cassock and short surplice with a bit of lace might distinguish this rank
 - This begins with seventh grade
 - SERVER ELITES are handpicked leaders among leaders
 - A cassock and longer surplice with lace, and perhaps a bit of embroidery (like a cross) might set these servers apart.

- All Server Elites are in high school, they are chosen and challenged by the chaplain, and they have agreed to serve until they graduate
- Uniforms and names of ranks can obviously vary from parish to parish
 - Some parishes have their servers in albs
 - Some parishes use different colored cassocks to distinguish ranks
- It might also be a good idea for the Altar Server Guilds of smaller parishes that are near to one another to come together from time to time.
- Also, it is important to integrate the various communities within the parish (the servers at the Spanish Mass should made to be feel that they are a part of the whole parish).



Server Qualifications

Altar Servers should be baptized Catholics, who have received their first Holy Communion. They should be individuals who strive to live a moral and faithful life, and they should be persons who avail themselves regularly of the sacrament of reconciliation. They should be able bodied individuals, capable of ascending steps and carrying precious vessels, and they should have no visible tattoos. Obviously, these are guidelines and parishes are free to set further qualifications as well.

Suggested guidelines are as follows:

- Servers should be mature enough to understand their responsibilities, and carry them out with appropriate reverence.
- They should receive Holy Communion in the masses they serve, so they should go to regular confession.
- They should be well instructed in what they are called to do, including proper decorum and attire.
- They should be able to respond appropriately to the parts of the mass, as well as the chants of the liturgy.
- Please note that there is an Order for the Blessing of Altar Servers in “The Book of Blessings”

Get to Know Your Servers

If you don't know their names, you will look to be disinterested in their lives. Therefore, at the various Training Sessions, or even in the first weeks of school, make sure you have a volunteer to take pictures of each Server, so that each year a small photo album can be made up with the names of the Servers included with their picture. The Servers will enjoy looking back at these from time to time, to see their growth, but it will be very helpful to the Chaplain, the Coordinator, and the clergy of the parish to get to know names. Each year, the new or current photo album could be placed in the sacristy to help the clergy get to know the young people.

Have a Link on the Parish Website

Our young people are very comfortable checking schedules and looking for information on the website. Therefore some thought should be given to the Altar Server Guild in the electronic format of your parochial website. Nevertheless, it is very important to keep our youth safe, so personal information should be kept to a minimum.



Make a Calendar

Planning is crucial to success, and young people will respond well to those who are well prepared (for by this way, the parish shows it is truly committed to the altar servers and to the liturgy). Being prepared requires having a calendar. What follows are some things for the Chaplain and Coordinator to get on either the parish's calendar, or on their own personal calendars.

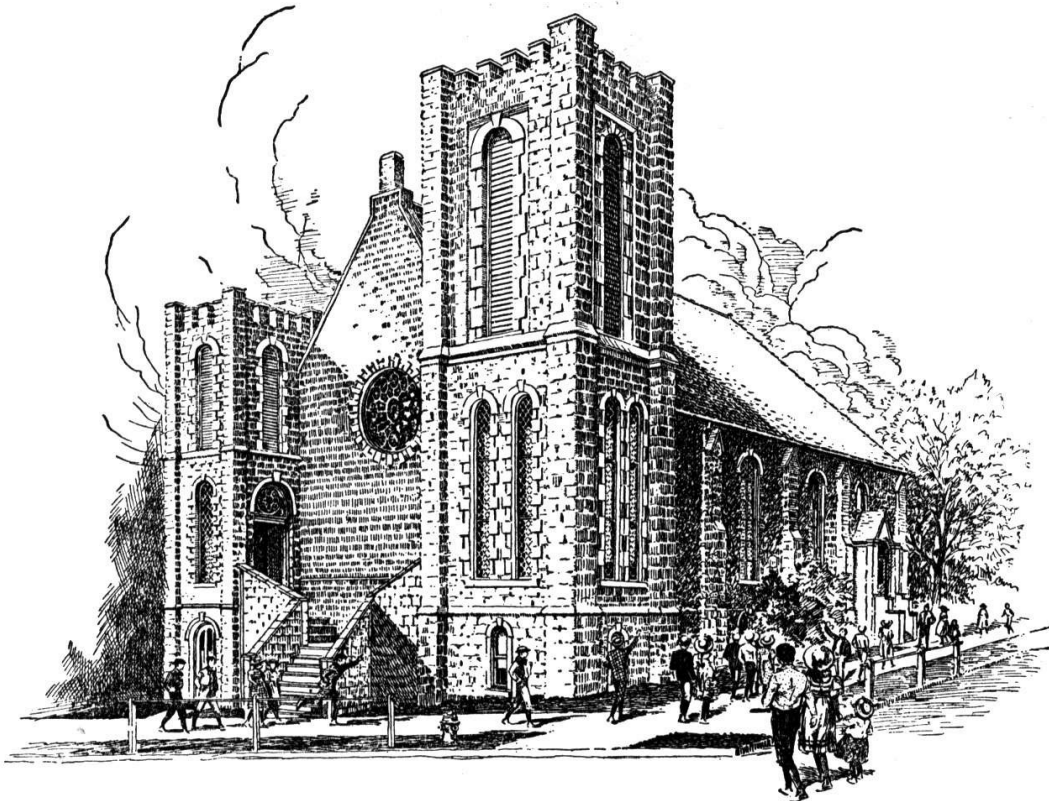
- Each year, certain events should be scheduled into the parish calendar
 - THE FALL TRAINING SESSION for the Altar Server's Guild
 - This is the place to induct and train new recruits
 - This is a time to reinforce skills
 - Pray midday prayer
 - The Winter Connection
 - The Chaplain should send each Altar Server a Christmas card with a prayer card
 - The Altar Server Guild ANNUAL WINTER RETREAT
 - Have a sit down lunch wherein the servers are served
 - Pray midday prayer
 - After the meal, have a game or two
 - Then have a pep talk by the chaplain that promotes conversion
 - Secondly, this could be a time to reinforce skills
 - See a movie
 - The Summer Event (offer one thing each summer as a reward)
 - Baseball game?
 - White water rafting?
 - Let the Knights of Columbus help here

A Philosophy for Formation of Altar Servers

When working with young people, it is important to have a consistent philosophy of their formation, and a pedagogy which constantly reinforces this philosophy. What follows are some ideas gleaned from some of our parishes which may be useful in your work.

- These ideas should be stressed in literature and whenever one trains altar servers
- Altar Serving is Formation for Christian Leadership
 - Altar Servers *lead by serving*
 - Altar Servers are being trained to be leaders in the Church
 - Priests, sisters, and lay leaders will emerge from the ranks of Altar Servers
 - Even now, Senior Servers must assume leadership roles in teaching younger Altar Servers (both in the training sessions, and on the altar)
 - Altar Servers should be exemplary among their peers
 - Prayer life is important
 - Moral life is important
 - Altar Servers help others to pray, and demonstrate the importance of offering fitting worship to the People of God
 - Don't be a distraction in the sanctuary
 - Reflect the Holy Mysteries
 - Altar Servers must be taught piety and prayer
 - Assign Altar Servers a chaplain (priest or deacon)
 - Always pray with Servers before and after a mass
 - Have a Bulletin Board for Servers near where they vest
 - Place for communication and catechesis
 - Place of schedule and sign in sheets
- Expect Excellence from all Servers

- Like sports, serving at the altar requires the mastering of skills
- Young people respond well to being challenged to grow
- Altar Servers must be expected to meet obligations
- First Rule: Be Responsible!
 - Altar Servers should be on time and on schedule
 - Altar Servers should sign in when they serve, & get a replacement when there is a conflict
- Consistency and continuity are crucial for good liturgy
 - Keep servers until they graduate from high school
 - In order to keep them, they must be challenged
 - Being in proper uniform is important
 - Hold the Servers to standards



SAINT CUNEGUNDA CATHOLIC CHURCH

Pulling Together Some Resources

What follows are examples of books and other resources that are available for the training of Altar Servers. Some of these could be included in the initial training session of Servers who have just begun. They may also be useful for the Chaplain or Coordinator of the Altar Server Guild

- Some books for Servers & Trainers
 - “Called to Serve: A Guidebook for Altar Servers” was copyrighted in 1981 by Our Sunday Visitor, and we are aware of a current edition that was last revised in 1993. We have found this book for less than three dollars each, and while it looks a little dated, the photographs inside indicate racial or gender diversity amongst servers. The Altar Servers are all shown wearing albs.
 - “The Acolyte Today” was copyrighted in 1980 by Franklin X. McCormick, and we are aware of a current edition that was last revised in 1992. This small red book has more or less everything necessary, but the photographs inside are a dated, and indicate no racial or gender diversity amongst servers. We have found this book at about seven dollars. The Altar Servers are all shown wearing cassocks and surplices.
 - “The Complete Training Course for Altar Guilds” by B. Don Taylor (from Morehouse Publishing, copyright 1993) may be of some use in the training of Servers. This is not so much appropriate for the Servers, but rather for their trainers. This was created for the Episcopal Church, but some of the ideas therein may be of use to the Chaplain or Coordinator. We found a copy at about twenty dollars.
 - “Ceremonies of the Modern Roman Rite” by Monsignor (now Bishop) Peter J. Elliott is very helpful as a tool for Chaplains or Coordinators. It is available through Ignatius Press.

- “Ceremonies of the Liturgical Year” by Monsignor (now Bishop) Peter J. Elliott is also very useful for the more complicated ceremonies.
- Some documents that the Chaplain or Coordinator may need to be familiar with are as follows:
 - *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* is a must for the Coordinator or Chaplain, but it might also be given to Senior Servers (especially if they are called upon to act as a Master of Ceremonies)
 - *Altar Servers – More Than “Helpers of the Parish Priests”* by John Paul II
 - *Guidelines for Altar Servers* from the USCCB
- Some Helpful Websites?



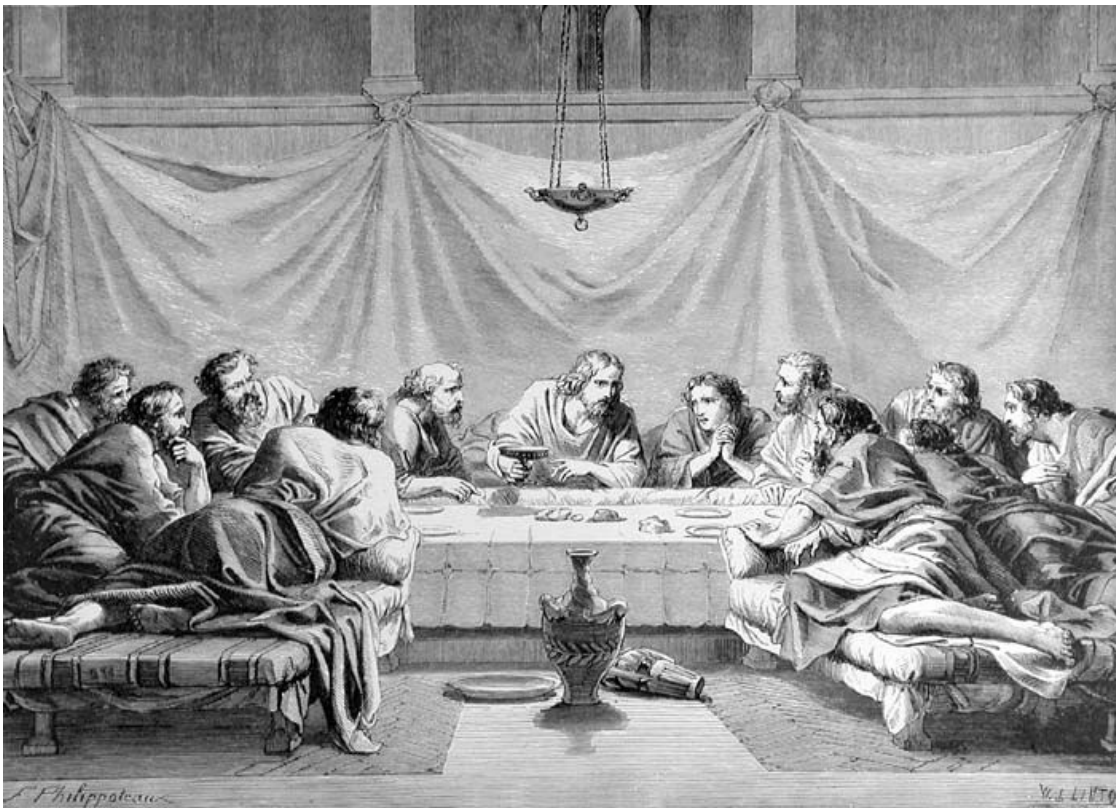
Servant of God Frank Parater
as an Altar Server in Saint Patrick Church
in Richmond, Virginia

PAROCHIAL POSTINGS:

Making a Good Impression
In the Presentation of the Faith,
& in the Formation of Catholic Leaders

Possible Prayers That May be of Use

It is important to teach piety and prayer to our Altar Servers. If all they learn is skill, and their spiritual lives are not enriched, then we have not done our job. These are prayers being used in some of our parishes already. Other prayers may also exist, and be just a fine. We offer these only as options. If they are posted in the sacristy or narthex, the clergy can pray with their servers before and after Mass.



ALTAR SERVERS GUILD

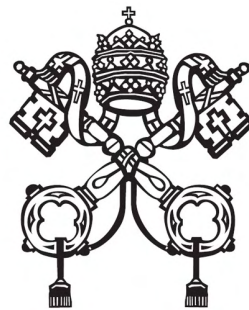
PREPARATION PRAYER / PRAYER BEFORE SERVING

Father in Heaven, your Son, Jesus Christ, showed his love for you by serving his need brothers and sisters. I now ask you to give me your help as I serve you and your people. Open my mouth to praise you in word and song. Open my ears to hear your word.

Open my hands to do your work well. Take from my heart all evil and distracting thoughts. Help me to know what I should do, and do it well. Help me to serve reverently at your holy altar, and so give you praise and glory, now and forever. Amen.

THANKSGIVING PRAYER / PRAYER AFTER SERVING

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the eternal High Priest. You lead all your saints in heaven and your people on earth in praising God, our Father. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for letting me come before you altar, so that, with your help, I can praise my Father in heaven as his server. Help me to find joy in serving at your altar. Help me to find gladness in knowing and doing your will in all things. Glory to you, Lord Jesus, and to the Father and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.



ALTAR SERVER GUILD
SAINT CUNEGUNDA CATHOLIC CHURCH

Some Samples for Postings

These are just some examples of platitudes and prayers that could be posted on the bulletin board near where the Servers vest. Whatever goes on the bulletin board should look graphically appealing to young people, while also helping them to grow in their Catholic identity. The bulletin board should not become stagnant, and holy cards or newspaper clippings that would be of interest might also be posted there. These suggestions might each be a different sign:



ALTAR SERVER RANK
NOVICE SERVER

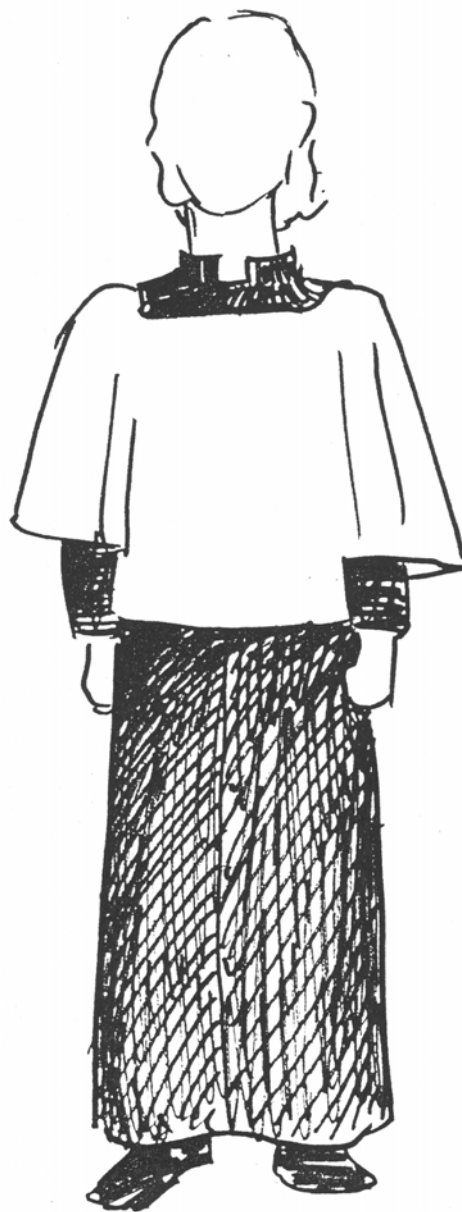
Novice Servers wear cassocks (without surplices) for the first five times they serve the Mass



Please note that this is only *one* way to rank your servers,
and that we are *not* dictating how the parishes may distinguish their ranks,
but only depicting how one parish in the Archdiocese does this.

ALTAR SERVER RANK
SKILLED SERVER

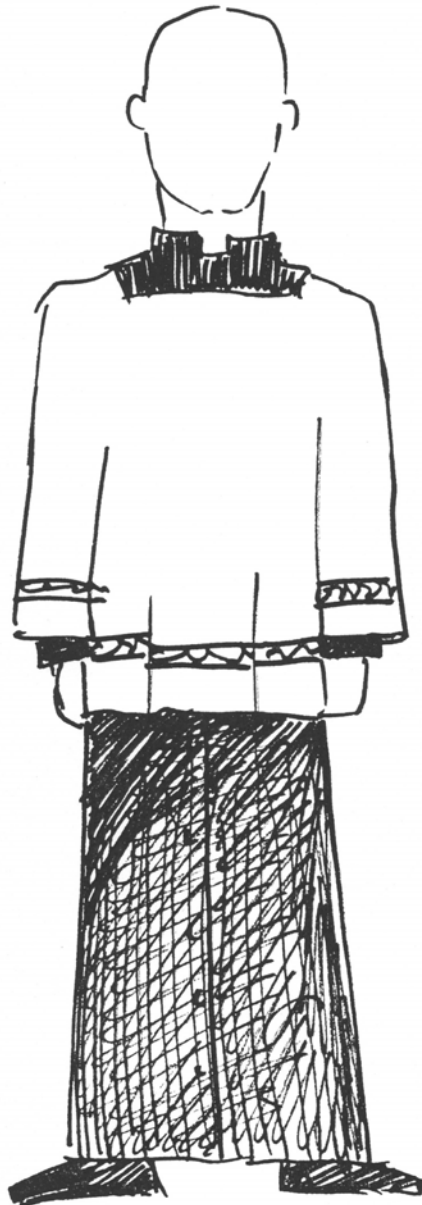
Skilled Servers wear cassocks with a plain surplice.



Please note that this is only *one* way to rank your servers, and that we are *not* dictating how the parishes may distinguish their ranks, but only depicting how one parish in the Archdiocese does this.

ALTAR SERVER RANK
MASTER SERVER

Master Servers have served at least two years, and are in the seventh grade and beyond.
They wear cassocks with a short lace surplice.

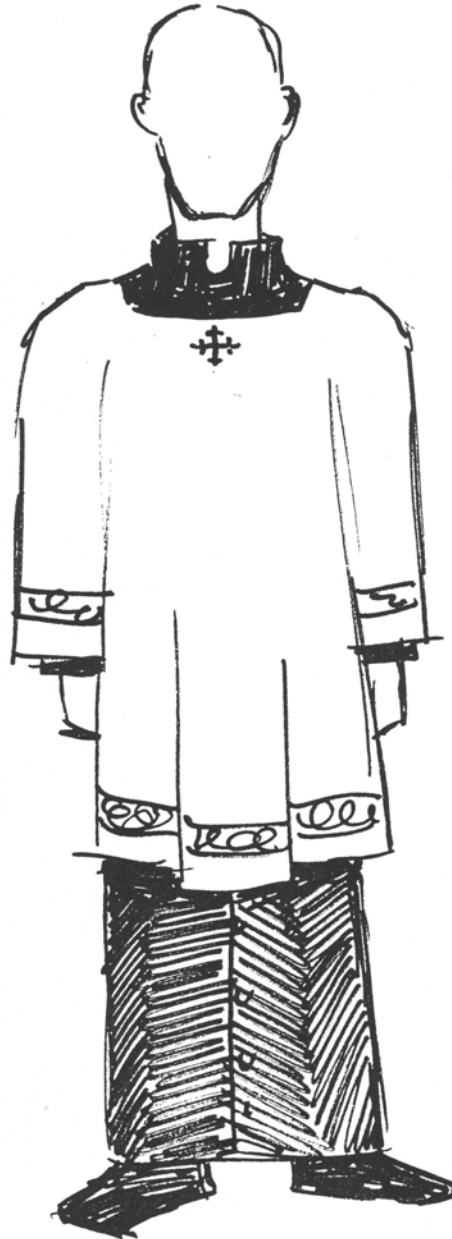


Please note that this is only *one* way to rank your servers,
and that we are *not* dictating how the parishes may distinguish their ranks,
but only depicting how one parish in the Archdiocese does this.

ALTAR SERVER RANK

SERVER ELITE

Server Elite wear cassocks with a longer lace surplice.
Advancement into the rank is by invitation only.



Please note that this is only *one* way to rank your servers,
and that we are *not* dictating how the parishes may distinguish their ranks,
but only depicting how one parish in the Archdiocese does this.

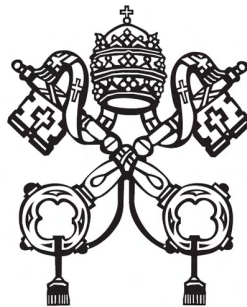
ALTAR SERVERS GUILD

Searliness is

next to **S**odliness

Cassocks and Surplices have been arranged in size order.
Please return them neatly to the place where you found them
(in proper size order).

The next Altar Server thanks you in advance.
Several extra hangers are in the closet for your winter coats.



ALTAR SERVER GUILD
SAINT CUNEGUNDA CATHOLIC CHURCH

Altar Server Guild

You Must Sign In



ALTAR SERVERS GUILD

DRESS CODE:

Dark (preferably black) shoes.

No sandals, high heels or platform shoes.

No loud jewelry or visible high collars.

Ladies, kindly pull back long hair.

Gentlemen, your trousers should be dark.

The First Rule in Serving is to
BE RESPONSIBLE.

Responsibility implies being here
when you are scheduled.
If you're unable to be here as scheduled,
then you are responsible
to find a substitute.



ALTAR SERVER GUILD
SAINT CUNEGUNDA CATHOLIC CHURCH



*Remember, O Lord,
the Assembly of our Ancestors
and Teachers of the True Faith,
who have kept your truth safe,
and have borne sufferings
on behalf of your Church.
Grant us to preserve their truth
on our lips, to follow in their steps,
and to walk with innocence and simplicity
in your just ways.
Amen.*

A prayer petition of the Maronite Liturgy

FALL TRAINING:

Teaching Decorum and Piety
Through Service at God's Altar

SERVE THE LORD WITH GLADNESS:

BE AN ALTAR SERVER AT ST. CUNEGUNDA'S!

All those who wish to serve at the altar of Our Lord must come to the Fall Training Session to be held on Sunday, September 15th, from 1-6 p.m. in the Family Center. We'll serve pizza, so you must let us know to expect you by filling out this form. Simply drop this completed form into the collection plate by September 8th. Those who come to this event will be eligible to make the Autumn Schedule. Come with a pillow (for the movie), and we'll need to see your parents for the first ten minutes, but then, you can send them home. You must have completed third grade, and have made your first Holy Communion in order to serve. Yes, I'll be at the Altar Server Guild Fall Training Session on Sunday, September 15th, from 1-6 p.m.

ALTAR SERVERS, MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

The Fall Training Session for all Altar Servers will be September 15th from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. in the Parish Hall. All those who intend to serve in the upcoming year will need to attend. A parent will need to stay for the first ten minutes or so, in order to assist us with scheduling. All Altar Servers must be responsible and reliable, they must have completed the third grade, and they must have already received their first Holy Communion. You must register to attend, so fill out the form included in this bulletin, and drop it into the collection plate today!

Vesting Posting:

ATTENTION ALL ALTAR SERVERS!

All Altar Servers, new and old, are expected to make the Fall Training Session on Sunday, September 15th, so mark your calendars. You'll need to register so we know to expect you (otherwise, no pizza for you), so get your registrations in by the end of Sunday, September 8th.

MEMO TO THE WOMEN'S GUILD:

First let me say thank you for agreeing to help out with the Altar Servers Fall Training Session. I see the Women's Guild helping out in two ways: 1) There should be tables set up near the kitchen in the Family Center, decorated with colorful paper and plastic products. There should be some tables set up for signing in, which should also have tablecloths. I could see taking the theme of "Autumn" as this is the Fall Training Session. Another theme might be simply bright primary colors. There should be colorful tablecloths, napkins, plates, desert plates, forks and cups. This meal will be served buffet style, with pizza being served, with carbonated drinks. We'll need pizza, sodas, and ice. There should also be a desert table, with a chocolate cake perhaps. This meal should be served approximately around 1:15 on Sunday, the 15th of September. We should also have name tags so the Servers can get to know each other. If someone could help by getting their names down on them, and please include with their first and last names the words "Miss" or "Mr." I'd also like to have their prayer cards set at table as table markers if possible. 2) After the training session (to be held in the Church), the Servers will return for a movie around 3:30 p.m.. Now there could be stations set up with red tablecloths, and with a red cooler, and red and white Coca-Cola paper cups, and red and white striped paper bags filled with popcorn. As to the number of people, we'll have a better idea of this after September 8th, which is the deadline for signing up. We should have an actual number then. Thanks again ladies!!!

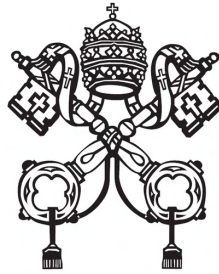
MEMO TO THE FACILITIES MANAGEMENT:

Please set the Parish Hall up for the Fall Training Session on September 15th. There should be three zones: the north end (convenient to the kitchen) for the dining area, with enough tables to seat all our servers. The south end can be set up for the movie. In between, we need area for at least one good game (like dodge ball). We also need to have the church for the training of the Altar Servers, with the lights up and climate control. Please do not schedule any baptisms that afternoon.

MEMO TO ALL DEACONS, PRIESTS AND VOLUNTEERS INVOLVED WITH THE FALL TRAINING SESSION:

Dear Deacons, Priest and Volunteers involved with the Fall Training Session on September 15th: Here is how we see the basic training breaking down. We'll divide it into various Training Stations, and each of you will help with one of these, along with a Senior Server or two, who will volunteer to help as well. The following indicates the schedule of the day, the schedule for the training session it self, and who will be responsible for what. Our thoughts are we will do what we did last year, and after lunch, reassemble in the church, and pray together Midday Prayer (it is easy enough to make up these worship aids), and the Chaplain could preach a homily (or more likely a Pep Talk) within this context. Thereafter, there will begin the Training Session in earnest. Deacon Smith, if you would be kind enough to bless the food, and offer our thanksgiving after the meal, as well as be in charge of the Altar Station. Deacon Lopez, if you would kindly take the Sacristy Station. As Chaplain, I'll lead Midday Prayer, offer the homily, do the first part of the Training Session in the common assembly, and take the Altar Station.

A Letter for the Altar Server Guild Training Packet:



ALTAR SERVER GUILD
SAINT CUNEGUNDA CATHOLIC CHURCH

Dear Server,

Thank you for choosing to serve the Lord and his Church at the altar here at Saint Cunegunda's. Your efforts in this ministry will greatly enrich our liturgy here, where we seek to offer worthy and fitting praise to our God, for whom only our best will do. Being an Altar Server means taking responsibility, and we commend you in advance for your maturity, and for your willingness to be a leader of God's people. Enclosed you will find three documents for your review and use. The first is an Information for Scheduling Form, which we would ask you to fill out immediately (with the help of your parents if necessary) so that our Coordinator, Mr. So-and-so, can build the schedules for the upcoming season. This document provides details regarding mass preferences. It should be filled out, and turned in at the Fall Training Session. The second is an Altar Servers Manual, which I would ask you to review, so as to become familiar with the responsibilities of serving at God's altar. The Third is a Message from the Holy Father to Altar Servers. I know you will find this message from the pope both uplifting as well as challenging. In closing, I would add that we will all make mistakes (even the priests), but our Lord looks deep into our hearts, and sees how much we want to please Him. And so, I ask you to take courage, and to strive to serve God with all that you do and are, and know that the Lord always smiles upon our best efforts. May the Lord stay with you throughout your lives, just as you remain steadfast to him.

In faith,

Father

Your Pastor.

Sample Server Elite Letter:



ALTAR SERVER GUILD
SAINT CUNEGUNDA CATHOLIC CHURCH

Dear Altar Server:

This letter is to invite you to become a SERVER ELITE. While the SEVER ELITE is a new category here at Saint Cunegunda Parish, other parishes have had SERVER ELITES for years. The SERVER ELITE is a kind of “crack team.” They represent our best prepared and most experienced of Servers, and they are called upon to be real leaders. SERVER ELITES will be the first choice for serving large parish holy days and big events, especially when the Archbishop comes to the parish. To become a Server Elite, who must promise to server at the Altar up until your graduation from high school. If you are willing to make this promise, and take on the responsibility of SERVER ELITE, places respond as soon as possible. If you have any questions, call me at 770-555-4040 (ext. 404). I am excited about the possibilities of our future here at Saint Cunegunda’s, and about your continued place of leadership in the Church.

In faith,

Deacon

Altar Server Guild Chaplain.

YES I would be honored to be a SERVER ELITE at Saint Cunegunda Catholic Church, and I understand that I will have to serve at least until I graduate from high school.

Name _____.

Address _____.

Email Address _____.

Phone Number _____.

WINTER RETREAT:

Reinforcing Skills, While Encouraging
Prayer and Commitment to the Faith

MEMO REGARDING THE WINTER RETREAT:

Dear Clergy: We wish to recognize three Altar Servers who have been in some way either outstanding or exemplary. These “awards” should ideally go to the more senior servers, and they need to be individuals who have demonstrated leadership skills, and who represent the faith well by their service and by their lives. Of the Altar Servers you know and work with, please nominate three, and indicate why.

MEMO TO FACILITIES MANAGEMENT:

Please set the Parish Hall up for the Altar Servers Winter Retreat on February 23rd. There should be three zones: the north end (convenient to the kitchen) for the dining area, with enough tables to seat all our servers. The south end can be set up for the movie. In between, we need area for at least one good game (like dodge ball). We also need to have the church for the training of the Altar Servers, with the lights up and climate control. Please do not schedule any baptisms that afternoon.

MEMO TO THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS:

Please consider helping the Altar Server Guild again this year at their Winter Retreat. We'll give It will be on February 23rd from 1:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. We feel certain there are some vocations in the group, and I would like for the parish to come together and really support these people, and let them know they are important. It may also be a way to recruit some of our seniors into the Knights. I would especially like your help with printing prayer cards. Like last year, I want the server's name on the card, in the following format: "In gratitude to MR. JOSEPH PETERS for your service at the altar of the Lord." We should pick a holy card that the kids will find "cool," and it should include a bit of scripture: "Put on the Armor of God, so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil (Ephesians 6:11)," or "Whosoever speaks, let it be with the words of God; whosoever serves, let it be with the strength of God, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen (I Peter 4:11)." At the bottom, we should also include "St. Cunegunda's Parish" and the current year.

MEMO TO THE COORDINATOR:

Please help me think of an exercise or game or two we can play between Midday Prayer and the Movie. It is winter, so it should work inside, and we'll have various age groups, so it has to work with all ages. If we have four games, we may get to two or three of them. It may have to do with the theme of this year's Winter Retreat. Something that has to do with teamwork or leadership would work. It must be fun, and tire out the kids, so they're ready to relax with the film.

MEMO

TO ALL DEACONS, PRIESTS AND VOLUNTEERS
INVOLVED
WITH THE ALTAR SERVER GUILD ANNUAL WINTER
RETREAT:

Our thoughts are we will do what we did last year, and after lunch, reassemble in the church, and pray together Midday Prayer (it is easy enough to make up these worship aids), and the Chaplain could preach a homily (or more likely a Pep Talk) within this context. We might then encourage our Servers who are going to promise to become Server Elites to make their pledge. We might also take some time while we're in the church to clean up some things with their serving by reinforcing things. If you have any thing you see that you'd like us to address, please let me know. Deacon Jones, if you would be kind enough to take care of the refectory prayers by blessing the food, and offering our thanksgiving after the meal. As Chaplain, I will lead Midday Prayer, but if Deacon Lopez would kindly give a brief homily before the Server Elites make the pledge, that would be great. Thanks men for keeping Sunday, February 23rd (from 1:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.) on your schedules!

A COMMITMENT TO SERVE:

The Server Elite Commitment is made at the Annual Winter Retreat. The Servers to be raised in rank are called forth, and the Chaplain receives their promise, and invests them with their rank's surplice, after which time the servers applaud:

I promise before the altar of God that I will do all within my power to remain true to Christ and his Church for the rest of my life. I acknowledge that I am chosen by the Lord to be an example of fidelity to all those around me, and to be a leader within the Church. I promise that I will continue to serve at the altar at least until I graduate from high school. This I promise before the sacred altar, where I am honored to serve, and where I offer my prayer in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

After this, the Awards Ceremony can begin, wherein the three Servers chosen for their outstanding leadership are awarded. These should not be first, second or third places, but three prizes in equal merit and value. The prizes could be the same each year: a standard (or crucifix), a shield (or Archdiocesan Coat of Arms), or a banner (Papal Flag) might work. These are all symbols of being a guardian of the Faith, which these Servers are, as leaders in their parish. Thereafter, we'll close with midday prayer, and return to the family center.

THE WINTER RETREAT:

Dear Altar Server:

Please mark your calendars so that you will make the Altar Server Guild Winter Retreat. This will include a Lunch wherein we will recognize your great service to our parish. This year it will be on Sunday, February 23rd, from 1:00 p.m. until 5:30 p.m. I request that you please fill out the information below, and then return this from when next you attend or serve mass, by either dropping it into the collection plate, or handing it in to me.

In Faith,

DEACON

Altar Server Guild Chaplain

- Yes, I will attend the recognition and retreat day on February 23rd.
- No, I am unable to attend the recognition and retreat day.

Name: _____.

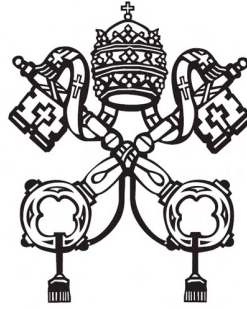
Email: _____.

Phone: _____.

Emergency Contact Sunday Phone Number: _____.

Please return these forms to us by January 13th. P.S. If you are coming, don't forget a pillow for the movie.

Vesting Posting:



ALTAR SERVER GUILD
SAINT CUNEGUNDA CATHOLIC CHURCH

ATTENTION ALL ALTAR SERVERS!

Plan to come to the Annual Altar Server Guild Winter Retreat, which will take place in the Parish Family Center on Sunday, February 23rd, between 1:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.

Please take one of the forms below, fill it out, and drop it into the collection plate, so we can know that you are coming.

ALTAR SERVERS WINTER RETREAT

- Yes, I will attend the recognition and retreat day on February 23rd.
- No, I am unable to attend the recognition and retreat day.

Name: _____.

Email: _____.

Phone: _____.

Emergency Contact Sunday Phone Number: _____.

Please return these forms to us by January 13th. P.S. If you are coming, don't forget a pillow for the movie.

MEMO TO THE WOMEN'S GUILD:

First let me say thank you for agreeing to help out with the Altar Servers Winter Retreat. I see the Women's Guild helping out in two ways: 1) There should be tables set up near the kitchen in the Family Center, decorated maroon tablecloths and dark purple paper napkins, black plastic plates, and dark plastic cutlery. I could see the center decorations as being flowers (but please, nothing too feminine, nor too high to hinder table conversation). I would ask that the menu be one appreciated by our Servers, but not "childish." The idea is that we are treating them as adults here, so I would rather have a more mature meal. We will obviously need a desert as well. We should also have name tags so the Servers can get to know each other. If someone could help by getting their names down on them, and please include with their first and last names the words "Miss" or "Mr." 2) Another idea would be to let the Women's Guild actually serve the Servers, so that this feels like a special meal. This is a kind of reward to these Servers for all they do for us, and we'll actually give out awards to special Servers, so the more special we can make the meal, the better. As Catholics, we have need to instill the strong cultural values of coming to the table to our youth, so much can be learned around tables about human dignity, and about the importance of coming together for a shared meal. As we strive to instill good habits in our Servers at the Altar, so let us also strive to communicate good habits at our dining tables. Be creative, and thanks again! Like in the Fall Training Session, this meal should be served approximately around 1:15 on Sunday, the 23rd of February, and likewise, the Servers will probably see a movie around 3:30 p.m., so we could have stations for Cokes and popcorn as we did in the autumn. Thanks again ladies!!!

SERVERS IN SUMMER:

Rewarding Faithfulness
and Encouraging Vocations

Memo to the Knights of Columbus:

Dear Knight of Columbus: I'd like to take all the Servers who want to go to the Cathedral of Christ the King for the Archdiocesan priesthood ordinations. If I could get your help with coordinating that trip, it would be great. I have no idea how many will come this year, but I would like to ask them. What do you think?

In faith,

Deacon

Altar Server Guild Chaplain ✝

Altar Server Guild Pilgrimage:

Praying for our Priests: This year Saint Cunegunda's will offer the Altar Servers an opportunity to go to a priesthood ordination at the Cathedral of Christ the King. This is a great way for us to pray in the Mother church of our Archdiocese, and to support vocations. This optional field trip, sponsored by the Knights of Columbus, will take place on Saturday, June 7th. We'll meet at the parish bright and early at 8:00 a.m., have a sausage biscuit, and leave for the Cathedral. After the ordination, we'll find a restaurant for lunch on the way home. If you're interested, please fill out the form, and return to me (just drop your responses into the collection plates no later than Sunday, May 25th):

Name _____.

Home Phone Number _____.

Emergency Contact and Number _____.

Parent's Signature (for those under 16) _____.

Memo to the Knights of Columbus:

Dear Knights of Columbus: Thanks again for helping take our Altar Servers out for a Braves Game. Let me know how I can help you in this, and what the date is you are proposing.

In faith,

Deacon

Altar Server Guild Chaplain †

Altar Server Guild Summer Event:

This year Saint Cunegunda's will offer the Altar Servers an opportunity to go to a Braves Game. It is one way we say thanks to our Servers. The game will be August 15th, and we'll leave the parish at 11:00 a.m., and return after the game (don't worry, parents, it is a day game). If you're interested, and able to come, please fill out the form, and return to me (just drop your responses into the collection plates no later than Sunday, June 1st):

Name _____.

Home Phone Number _____.

Emergency Contact and Number _____.

Parent's Signature (for those under 16) _____.

MATERIALS FOR TRAINING:

A Collection of Possible Handouts

HANDOUT ON THE TRAINING OF ALTAR SERVERS:

- The history and explanation of the ministry of the Acolyte
- The institution of the Acolyte
- The official duties of the Altar Server
- Dividing the servers into groups according to the number of training stations

SERVING THE MASS HERE AT SAINT CUNEGUNDA'S

- The Server facilitates the community in their worship
- Appropriate attire (that which is decorous) / dress code
- Be vested and in the sacristy 15 minutes prior to the liturgy
- Servers provide various functions: thurifer, crucifer, torch bearers, book bearer
- Always show deference to the M.C.
- Genuflecting & bowing (not with things in our hands)
- Posture: standing erect, sitting with good posture, holding our hands
- Opening Incensations (with a deacon & without)
- Where to sit & where to kneel
- Holding the Book for the celebrant
- Gospel Processions & Incensations
- Preparation of the altar (with and without a deacon or concelebrant)
- Knowing the terms:
 1. Chalice & paten, chalice veil & burse, corporal & purificator, pall & cruets, lavabo pitcher, bowl & towel, ciborium, thurible & boat, etc
- Receiving the gifts
- Offertory Incensations (with and without a deacon)
- Lavabo: please note there is no bow in the novus ordo
- Consecratory Incensations (with and without a deacon)
- The Sacring Bells or Sanctus Bells or the Tower Bells (at epiclesis & at elevations)
- Sign of Peace
- Distribution of Holy Communion
- Recession to the Sacristy
- Helping the sacristan
- Making a Thanksgiving after mass

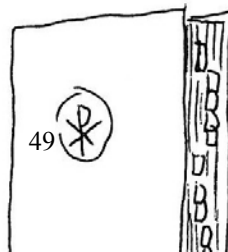
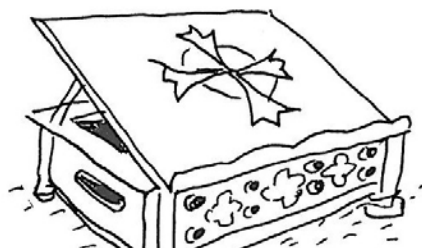
In some parishes, the altar servers wear a CASSOCK (often in black, but sometimes in red) & a SURPLICE (which is the white garment worn over the cassock). Sometimes the colors of the cassock or the types of surplices indicate the level of experience of the server. In other parishes the altar servers might wear an ALB & CINCTURE. The word alb means “white”, and it represents our baptismal garment. The cincture is the rope belt which can be worn with the alb. Again, in some parishes, the type of cincture may indicate the level of experience of the altar server. With both the cassock and the alb, servers should wear dark shoes and dark socks (or stockings). If the legs of the trousers show, they too should be dark. Especially if an alb is worn, strong designs or printed tops should be avoided, as sometimes the garment is seen through the alb. High collars should also be avoided. High heels, flip flops and sneakers are not appropriate. Long hair should be pulled back away from any candle flames.

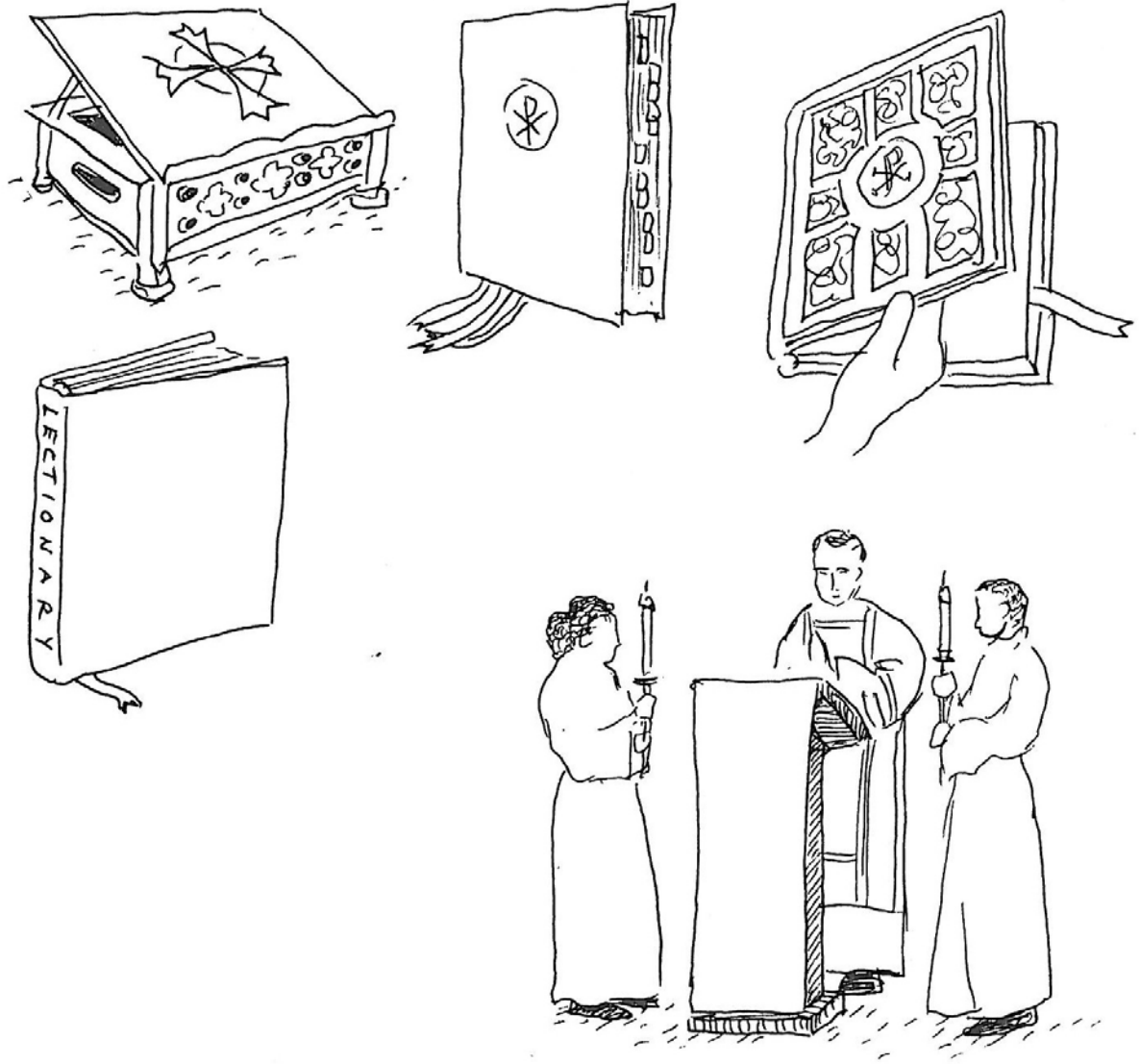




The ASPERSORIUM
and ASPERGILLUM

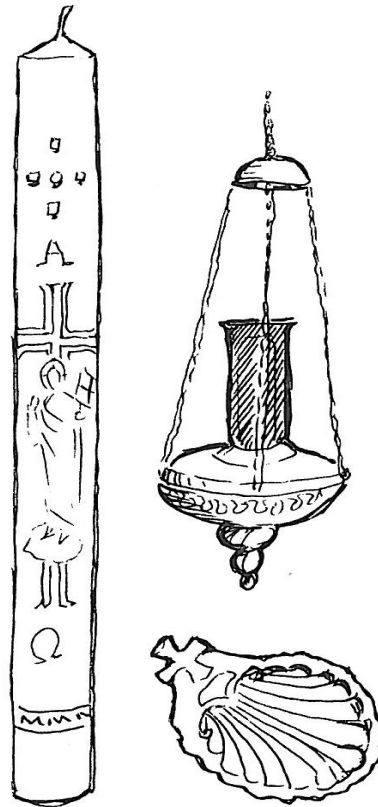
The ASPERSORIUM (sometimes called a SITULA) is the bucket for Holy Water that is carried during the sprinkling rite, which sometimes takes the place of the penitential rite. The ASPERGILLUM is a short handled wand like device that has a perforated top, which holds within it a sponge. This is used also in the sprinkling rite. Some parishes will use other means to sprinkle the people of God with holy water (like a branch representing hyssop). The aspersorium and the aspergillum are used somewhat infrequently in most parishes, but there are days or seasons where the bishop or priest will want to employ them.

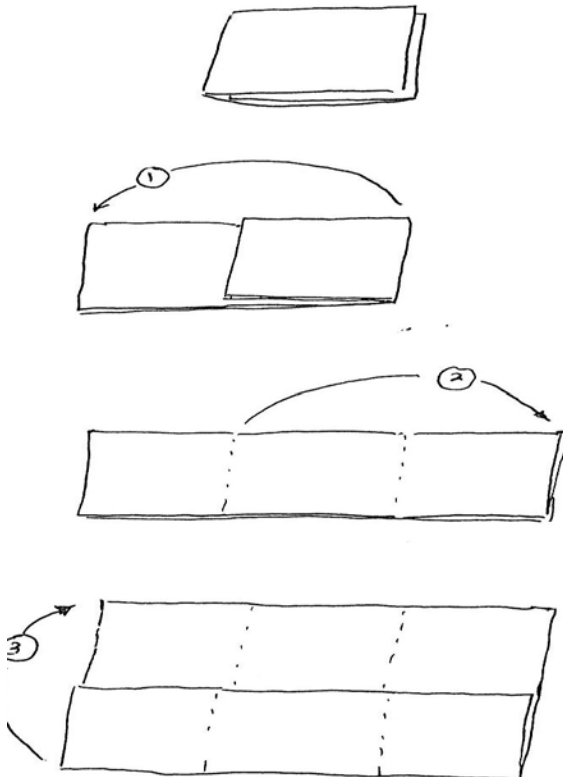




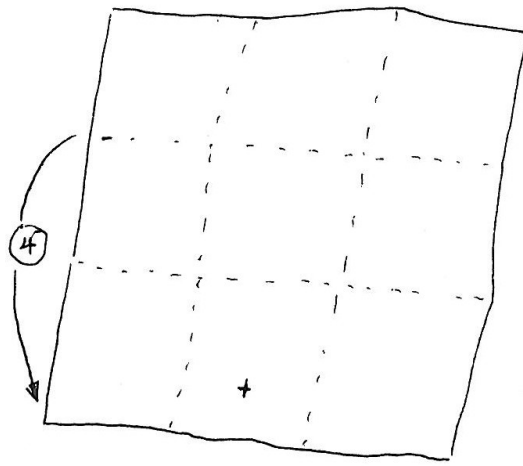
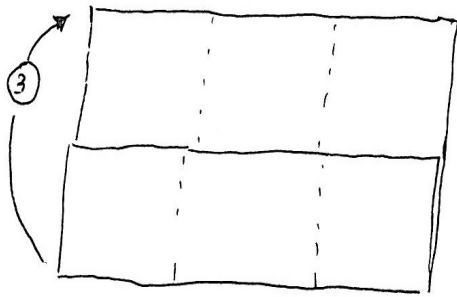
Some bishops or priests will use a **MISSAL STAND** for the book on the altar, and most priests have a preference where the missal is placed. The **SACRAMENTARY** is the book of prayers (including the Eucharistic Prayers) this is used throughout the mass by the priest. The **LECTIONARY** is the book of lessons or readings from the Old Testament and the New Testament, and it is used by the lectors. The **EVANGELIARY** (or the **BOOK OF THE GOSPELS**) is sometimes carried by the deacon (or when there is no deacon, by a lector) in the procession of the mass and placed upon the altar. There is then another procession from the altar to the **AMBO** when it is time for the deacon or priest to proclaim the Gospel. The Ambo is the place from which the readings or proclaimed. If a bishop is presiding over the Mass, then the Evangeliary will be brought to him to reverence after the proclamation of the Gospel.

By virtue of our baptism, we are called to worship the Lord. THE PASCHAL CANDLE is a great sign of our Christian baptism, as it always burns near the baptismal font whenever someone is baptized. Sometimes the priest or deacon may use a small SEASHELL whenever he pours the water. The SANCTUARY LIGHT should always burn near the Tabernacle, so remind us of the Lord's constant sacramental presence in our midst. The CRUCIFER is the altar server who carries the PROCESSIONAL CROSS, who often walks between two CANDLE BEARERS. Some parishes employ the use of the SACRING BELLS or SANCTUS BELLS THAT are occasionally rung during the Eucharist Prayer at various places.

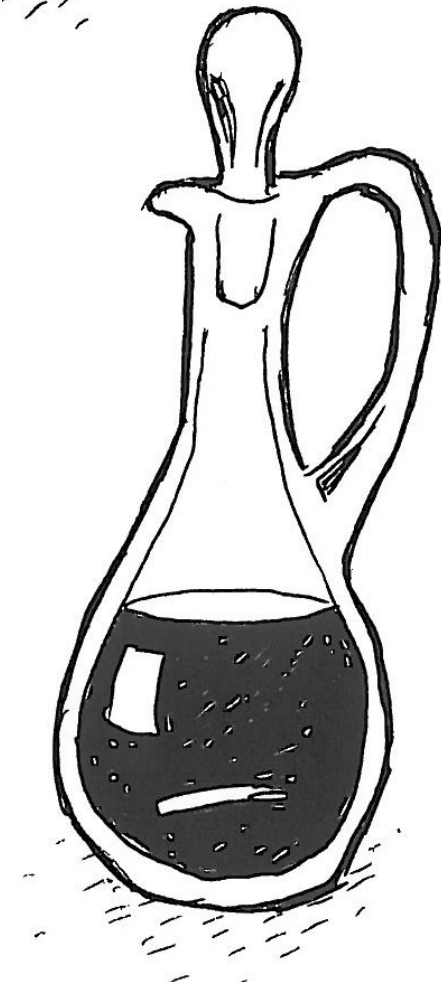
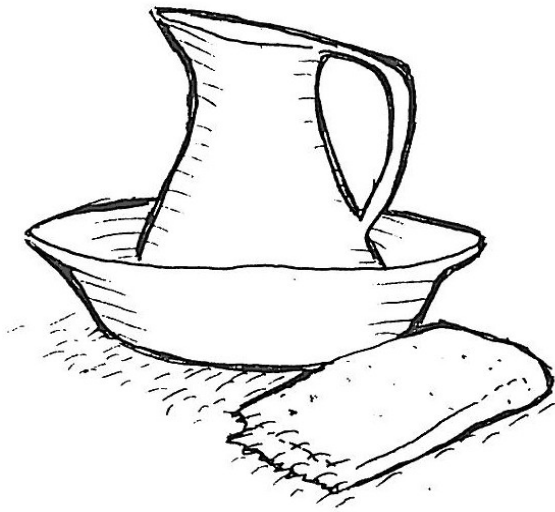




The CORPORAL is a linen cloth folded four times that is always placed beneath the chalice and paten on the altar for the mass. When unfolding the corporal, begin as if you were opening the cover of a book, and open the first panel to the left. Next, open the inside panel to the right. Now open the top fold up, and lastly, open the bottom fold down. When we fold the corporals, we should go in the opposite order: up, down, right & left. Some corporals have a little red crosses on them, and if they are folded and unfolded properly, the little red crosses would be on the bottom. The corporals are there to catch any loose particles of the Blessed Sacrament that may fall to the altar, and corporals are always handled and cleaned with the greatest respect

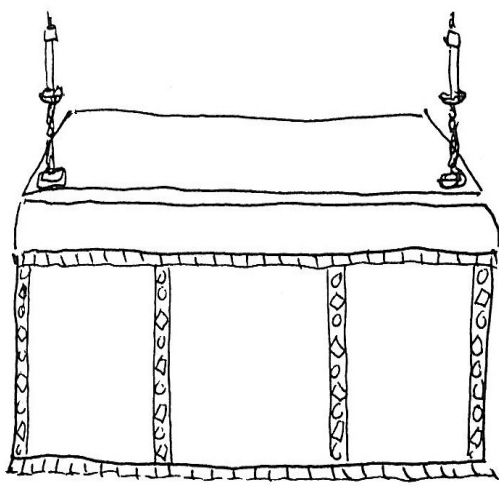
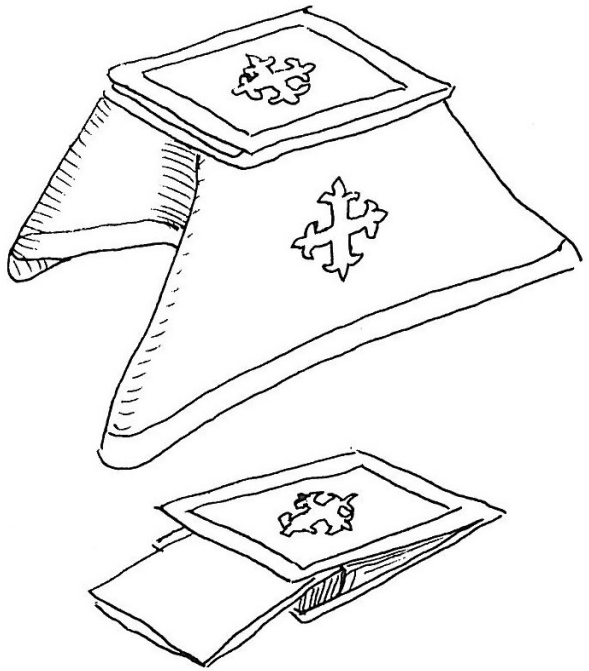


The CHALICE is the cup used to hold the wine that the bishop or priest will consecrate into the Precious Blood. The accompanying and matching plate is called the PATEN which holds the host or hosts that are to be consecrated. The PURIFICATOR is a folded linen cloth used to purify the precious vessels, and it is often placed on top of the chalice, and beneath the paten whenever the chalice and paten are carried together (so as to protect the gold plating or precious metal). The PALL is a square linen covered card that some priests will use to cover the chalice, especially when there may be the danger of fruit flies from the nearby altar flowers.



A small PITCHER & LAVABO BOWL are used for the ablution of the bishop's or priest's hands at the offertory. A TOWEL is carried over with the pitcher and lavabo bowl after the offering of the gifts (and after the incensing of the altar if this is done). The CRUETS are typically small glass containers of the water and wine used in the Mass, but when there is a large gathering of people, a FLAGGON may be used to bring the wine to the altar at the offertory, so as to be poured into various communion cups prior to the Eucharistic Prayer.

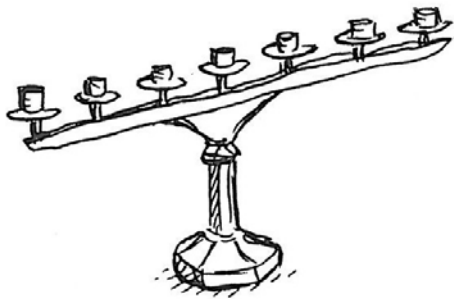
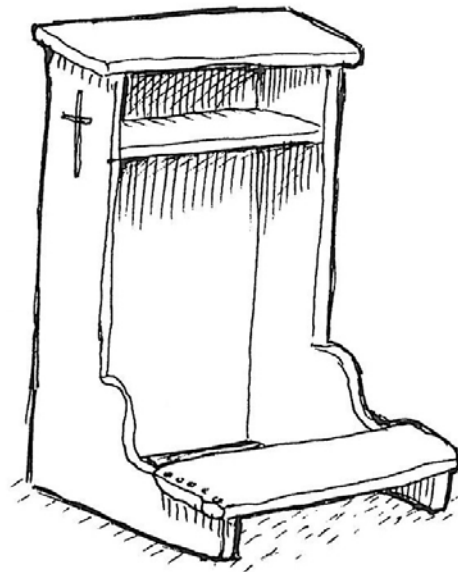
Not every parish uses these, but sometimes the chalice and paten, together with the purificator and the pall are draped with a CHALICE VEIL that frequently matches the liturgical color of the day. On top of the veiled chalice is held the BURSE, which is like a book that folds over and holds within it the folded corporal. The altar should be covered with a white ALTAR CLOTH of linen, but sometimes it is also dressed up with a FRONTAL that matches the color of the liturgical season.



INCENSE was given to the Christ child by the Magi, and its use in the liturgy of the Old Testament and in the Church's liturgy is quiet ancient. While it is used in a variety of ways in our various liturgies, its presence always adds solemnity to the ceremony. The THURIBLE is the incenser that holds within it the coals whereupon the incense is imposed. The thurible can have a variety of designs, some with one chain, and some with multiple chains. The thurible is carried by the THURIFER (who is the server charged with the incense). The incense is carried in a BOAT with a spoon (and again here there are many varieties in its design).



The MONSTRANCE is used to show the Blessed Sacrament at Adoration, and it is used by the priest or deacon to give Benediction usually at the end of a designated period of Adoration. The LUNETTE is often a compact device that encloses the consecrated host, and that fits inside the Monstrance. When in it kept in the Tabernacle, it is sometimes placed in a PYX. The PRIE DIEU is another name for the kneeler. In the tradition, two seven light CANDELABRAS are placed on either side of the Monstrance at times for Adoration.



RESOURCES FOR TRAINING:

Materials for the Instructors
of Altar Servers

GENERAL MATERIALS

PLEASE KEEP IN MIND:

Please Note that this is material used by those who are training the Servers, and not given to the Servers. Obviously, different parishes may not need all of this, but we offer it here as a schema.

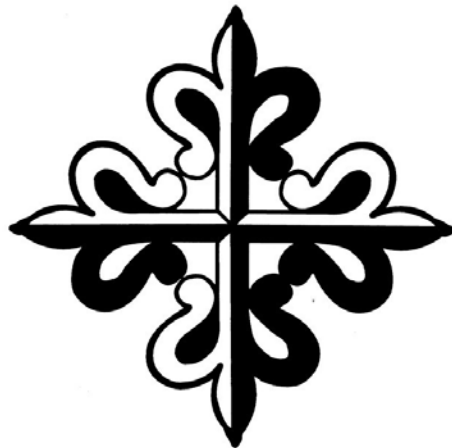
There are always parochial considerations

- Not every parish or community celebrates in the same way
- Not every mass is celebrated in the same way in the same parish
 1. There are always considerations of Progressive Solemnity
 1. Incense, for example is not always used
 2. Ferial masses will not be as solemn as Solemnities
 3. There may be more or fewer or servers (depending upon solemnity)
 4. There may be a deacon, deacons, on concelebrants present
- Not everything that we teach our Servers is in the General Instruction
 1. Reading the G.I.R.M., and other official books is crucial
 2. Nevertheless, tradition plays a strong role in interpreting and filling in what we learn from reading the G.I.R.M.
 3. We can recommend Monsignor Peter J. Elliot's books on helping to fill in the blanks left open by the G.I.R.M.
 1. Ceremonies of the Modern Roman Rite
 2. They are thoroughly modern
 3. They pass on the tradition

TRAINING & PEDAGOGY

DIVIDING THE SERVERS INTO THREE SMALLER GROUPS FACILITATES THEIR TRAINING AT THREE SEPARATE TRAINING STATIONS

Smaller groups make it easier to teach the Servers, and therefore we have found it best to divide the large group into smaller groups, and to have various training sessions. This way all the Servers get a hands-on approach. We would also recommend recruiting your Senior Servers to help at each station. That way, they don't become bored, and you encourage them towards roles of leadership among their peers.



OVERALL DIRECTIONS

facilitated by a chaplain

THINGS TO STRESS IN GENERAL BEFORE THE SERVERS ARE DIVIDED INTO SMALLER GROUPS

- Initial presentation
 1. Cleaning up problems
 2. Introducing new ideas
 3. Stressing responsibility and service

SACRISTY STATION

facilitated by a sacristan

THINGS TO COVER OR REINFORCE AT THE SACRISTY TRAINING STATION

- The Server facilitates the community in their worship
 1. Your task is to not be a distraction, but to disappear
 2. You serve the faithful as they strive to worship
 3. You serve at the Lord's table
- Appropriate attire (that which is decorous) / going through the dress code
 1. Black slacks, black socks and black shoes, and a solid black or white shirt (we can see strong patterns and designs through the alb)
 2. Representing our Christian dignity
 1. A pressed alb or surplice & a general neatness in appearance
 2. Nothing should draw attention to yourself
 3. Avoiding strange hair cuts, indiscrete jewelry or tattoos
- Be vested and in the sacristy 15 minutes prior to the liturgy
- Lighting the candles
 1. Don't use a lighter or match, but the taper lighter
 2. Bow to the altar when approaching and leaving
- Servers provide various functions:
 1. Procession
 1. Thurible is carried by the Thurifer
 2. Processional Cross (standard) is carried by the Crucifer ...
"Lift High The Cross"
 3. The light bearers are the Lucifers ... make connection between liturgical responsibility and responsibility to holiness
 2. Checking the sanctuary and credence table
 3. Books, vessels, linens, bread, wine, water & fire

4. Key in tabernacle?
 5. The thurifer
 1. When will the priest use the incense?
 2. Who will bring the boat?
 3. When and where does the celebrant want to impose incense at the opening procession and the introit thurifications?
 6. The book bearer
 1. Ask the celebrant where he wants the Sacramentary on the altar
 2. Does the priest or deacon needs the Sacramentary for the penitential rite?
 3. Will there be a solemn blessing, necessitating the book after the closing prayer?
- Always show deference to the M.C.
 - Prayers before & after mass (reverencing the cross)
 - Posture: standing erect, sitting with good posture, holding our hands
 1. Our hands can be a distraction for others, but by being attentive to what we're doing with them, we may stay focused on prayer and on our service. Whenever walking or standing, and whenever not otherwise occupied with holding things, the server's hands should usually be placed together, palm to palm, with the right thumb crossing over the left thumb. When seated in the sanctuary, the server's hands should be placed on both knees.
 - Always move together
 1. Servers should think as a team, and they should move together. For example, if they are standing, and the deacon is returning to his seat, they could wait on the deacon to begin to sit down before they sit down with him. Moving as a team requires the servers to be aware of one another, and of the clergy. We don't want one server plopping down in a seat as soon as he or she returns, and another coming later. Remember, think as a team!

- Where to sit for mass & office
- Assisting the sacristan after mass
- Making a thanksgiving after mass

ALTAR STATION

facilitated by a cleric

THINGS TO COVER OR REINFORCE AT THE ALTAR TRAINING STATION

- Understanding the Sanctuary
 1. This is a holy place
 2. Where to sit
- Genuflecting & bowing (not with things in our hands)
 1. Posture
 2. Striking our breast at the Confiteor
 3. Bowing at the Creed
- Genuflecting & bowing (not with things in our hands)
 1. To GENUFLECT is to bend the knee, and this is an act of reverence, an attitude and gesture that shows our piety and respect before our present Lord. In the Bible, the Apostles knelt in prayer, and this falling to our knee is a continuation of the ancient Christian posture of prayer. Technically, when we genuflect, we begin in a standing position, and then move down with a straight back, bending the right knee so that it touches the floor, and then we return to a standing position. Catholics make this action when entering or leaving a church wherever the Blessed Sacrament is reposed. When coming into the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and when departing the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, we always genuflect, and in many of our Catholic parishes, the Blessed Sacrament is reposed within the sanctuary, and so the priest will genuflect at the foot of the sanctuary, before entering through the gates, or ascending the steps. Also, should we pass before the Blessed Sacrament exposed in a monstrance placed upon an altar, we would genuflect. There are two feasts in the year when the faithful genuflect during the recitation of the Nicene Creed (the solemnities of the Annunciation, and Christmas). Also, we genuflect at times during the Stations of the Cross, and as we venerate the cross on Good Friday or at the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. Whenever the altar servers carries the thurible, processional cross, torches or candles, it is common practice for that individual not to genuflect, but to stop in reference while the priest and deacon genuflect upon entering into the sanctuary.

- Holding the Book for the celebrant
 1. How do our parish priests like the book to be held?
 2. Keeping our eyes on the priest or deacon
 3. Knowing the book
 4. Keeping the ribbons in place
- Receiving the gifts
 1. being passed the gifts
 2. carrying the gifts to be given to the cleric
- Knowing the terms: (altar)
 1. Chalice & paten, chalice veil & burse, corporal & purificator, pall & cruets, lavabo pitcher, bowl & towel, thurible & boat, etc
- Preparation of the altar (with a deacon or concelebrant)
 2. Assisting the cleric
 3. Not placing things too close to the edge
 4. Introduction to the chalice veil and burse
 5. Introduction to the corporal
 1. opening and closing the corporal with care
 2. the corporal as an indication of intention
 6. Introduction to the chalice and paten
 7. Introduction to the purificator
 1. not for our mouths, but for the vessels
 8. Introduction to the pall
 1. not used always
- Where things go on the altar



(a) The Chalice



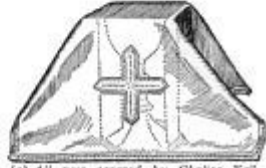
(b) Chalice and Purificator



(c) Chalice, Purificator and Paten with host



(d) Chalice, Purificator, Paten and Pall



(e) All now covered by Chalice Veil—note the different parts under the Veil



(f) The Suras and the Corporal



(g) The Chalice completely covered

- Lavabo:
 1. The lavabo towel is not the purificator
 2. There is no bow
- The Sacring Bells (or Sanctus Bells or Tower Bells)
 1. Three Rings
 2. Epiclesis
 3. Two elevations
- Sign of Peace
 1. Soberly given
 2. The Kiss of Peace
- Recession to the Sacristy or Narthex
 1. Sacristy prayers
 2. Helping the sacristan
 3. Making a Thanksgiving after mass

THURIFICATION STATION

facilitated by a M.C. or cleric

THINGS TO COVER OR REINFORCE AT THE INCENSATION TRAINING STATION

- Opening Incensations (with & without a deacon)
 1. Opening Incensations (with a deacon)
 1. Presenting the thurible
 2. Holding the boat
 3. Passing the thurible on to the deacon
 4. Returning the thurible
 2. Opening Incensations (without a deacon)
 1. Presenting the thurible
 2. Holding the boat
 3. Passing the thurible on to the priest
 4. Accompanying the priest?
 5. Returning the thurible
- Gospel Incensations or Processions (with and without a deacon)
 1. Gospel Incensations (with a deacon)
 1. The celebrant imposes incense
 2. The light bearers move for procession
 3. The procession with the book of the Gospels
 4. The deacon proclaims the Gospel
 5. Returning to our places
 2. Gospel Incensations (without a deacon)
 1. The celebrant imposes incense
 2. The light bearers move for procession
 3. The procession with the book of the Gospels
 4. The concelebrant of celebrant proclaims
 5. Returning to our places

- Offertory Processions & Incensations (with and without a deacon)
 4. Offertory Incensations (with a deacon)
 1. Presenting the thurible
 2. Holding the boat
 3. Passing the thurible on to the deacon
 4. Returning the thurible
 2. Offertory Incensations (without a deacon)
 1. Presenting the thurible
 2. Holding the boat
 3. Passing the thurible on to the priest
 4. Accompanying the priest?
 5. Incensing the priest
 1. Bow
 2. Three ducti (front on)
 3. Bow
 6. Incensing the concelebrants
 1. Bow
 2. Three ducti (straight, left & right)
 3. Bow
 7. Incensing the people
 1. Bow
 2. Three ducti (straight, left & right)
 3. Bow
 8. Returning the thurible
- Consecratory Incensations (with and without a deacon)
 1. Consecratory Incensations (with a deacon)
 1. Moving at the Sanctus
 2. Holding the boat
 3. Passing the thurible on to the deacon
 4. Assisting the Deacon
 5. Returning the thurible at the Agnus Dei
 2. Consecratory Incensations (without a deacon)

1. Moving at the Sanctus
 2. Holding the boat
 3. Three ducti per elevation
 4. Returning the thurible at the Agnus Dei
- Benediction (incensations & humeral veil)

SPIRITUAL AND MOTIVATIONAL RESOURCES:

Materials for encouragement

SOME POSSIBLE SPIRITUAL RESOURCES

When putting together talks or retreats, some of this material may be of use.

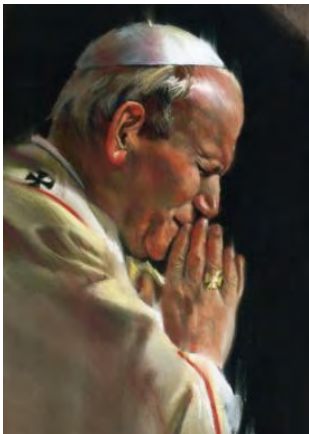
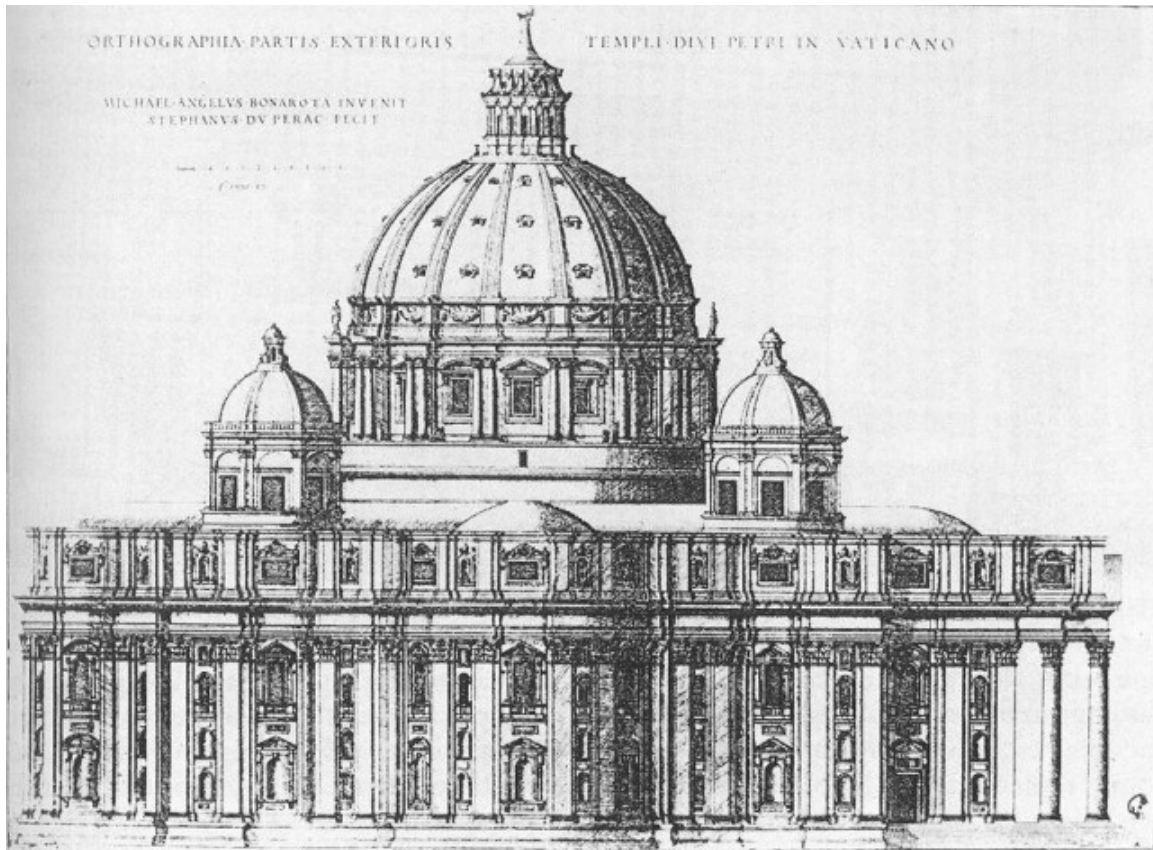


Saint John Berchmans

Saint John Berchmans is **the Patron Saint of Altar Servers**. His feast day is November 26th. He was born in Belgium in 1599. As a boy, he had a very great devotion to Holy Mass and the rosary. At nine years of age, his mother became ill, and John had helped to his mother. For three years he was a student of a parish priest who prepared boys for the priesthood. John entered the Jesuit novitiate in Mechlin and later traveled to Rome on foot to continue his education. During the evening of August 12, 1621, he clasped his rosary, his crucifix and the book of rules, and said, "These are my three treasures; with these I shall gladly die." On August 13 he passed away, his eyes still fixed upon his "treasures." In 1888, Pope Leo XIII canonized him.

Prayer

O God, You inspired St. John Berchmans to strive for perfect charity and so attain Your Kingdom at the end his pilgrimage on earth. Strengthen us through his intercession that we may advance rejoicing in the way of love. Grant, we beseech You, O Lord God, that we Your servants may follow, in Your service, the example of innocence and fidelity by which the angelic St. John Berchmans consecrated to You the flower of his youth. Grant this through Christ Our Lord. *Amen.*



Pope John Paul II to Gathering of Altar Servers

On August 12, 2001, Pope John Paul II addressed the one thousandth audience of his pontificate. The audience was attended by more than 2,000 young men and women altar servers to whom the Holy Father addressed a substantial portion of his remarks.

Dear altar servers! Yesterday you crossed St. Peter's Square in a long procession to be near the basilica's altar of Confession. By so doing, you prolonged in some way the path that the youth of the world began in the Holy Year. The motto of your pilgrimage to the Eternal City, "Toward a New World," is a sign of your willingness to take your Christian vocation seriously.

I greet you affectionately, dear young people, and I am happy that this meeting has taken place. In particular, I thank Auxiliary Bishop Martin Gächter, president of *Coetus Internationalis Ministrantium*, who has spoken such cordial words to me on your behalf. With special joy I address the altar servers of German-speaking countries, who numerically constitute the largest group. It is beautiful that so many young Christians have come from Germany!

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 in Jesus Christ in the community. I am referring to the baptismal gown, whose profound meaning St. 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 (see *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, No. 29).

The altar server occupies a privileged place in the liturgical celebration. The altar server presents himself to a community and 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.

Special catechesis for the

European Pilgrimage of Altar Servers

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Thank you for your welcome! I greet you all with great affection. After an interval, due to my stay in the Aosta Valley, today I am resuming the General Audiences. And I am starting with a truly special Audience, because I have the joy of welcoming the large European Pilgrimage of Altar Servers. Dear boys and girls and young people, welcome! Since most of the Altar Servers who have gathered in this Square today are German-speaking, I will first address them in my mother-tongue.



Dear Altar Servers,

I am pleased that my first Audience after my holiday in the Alps is with you Altar Servers, and I greet each one of you with affection. I thank your Pastor, Auxiliary Bishop Martin Gächter of Basle, for the words with which, as President of *Coetus Internationalis Ministrantium*, he introduced the Audience, and I am grateful for the scarf, thanks to which I am once again an altar boy. In 1935, more than 70 years ago, I began as an altar boy; consequently, it has been a long journey on this path.

I cordially greet Cardinal Christoph Schönborn who celebrated Holy Mass for you yesterday, and the many Bishops and priests who have come from Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Hungary.

I would like to offer you, dear Altar Servers - briefly, since it is hot - a message that can accompany you throughout your life and your service in the Church.

I would therefore like to resume the subject I have been addressing at the Catecheses in recent months. Perhaps some of you know that at the Wednesday General Audiences I am presenting the figures of the Apostles. First came Simon, whom the Lord called Peter, his brother Andrew, then another pair of brothers, St James known as "the Greater", the first martyr among the Apostles, and John the theologian and Evangelist, then James called "the Lesser".

I am planning to continue my presentation of the individual Apostles at the next Audiences, in which the Church, so to speak, becomes personal.

Today, however, we are reflecting on a common subject: on what kind of people the Apostles were.

In short, we might say that they were "friends" of Jesus. This is what he himself called them at the Last Supper, saying to them: "no longer do I call you servants... but... friends" (Jn 15: 15).

They were, and were able to be, apostles and witnesses of Christ because they were close to him. They were united to him by a bond of love, brought to life by the Holy Spirit.

In this perspective, we can understand the theme of your pilgrimage: "*Spiritus vivificat*". It is the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, who gives life. It is he who gives life to your relationship with Jesus, in such a way that it becomes not only exterior: "we know that he existed and that he is present in the Sacrament", but he makes it become an intimate, profound and truly personal friendship which can give meaning to each one of your lives. And since you know him and know him in friendship, you will be able to witness to him and take him to others.

Today, seeing you here before me in St Peter's Square, I think of the Apostles and I hear Jesus' voice saying to you: I do not call you servants but friends; abide in my love and you will bear an abundance of fruit (cf. Jn 15: 9, 16).

I ask you to listen to this voice! Christ did not only say this 2,000 years ago; he is alive and saying it to you now. Listen to his voice with great openness; he has something to say to each one. Perhaps he is saying to some of you: "I want you to serve me in a special way as a priest, thus becoming my witness, being my friend and introducing others into this friendship".

Listen faithfully, therefore, to Jesus' voice. Each person's vocation is different, but Christ wants to make friends with everyone, just as he did with Simon, whom he called Peter, with Andrew, James, John and the other Apostles.

He has given you his word and continues to give it to you, so that you may know the truth, know how things truly are for human beings, and thus, so that you know how one ought to live in the right way, how one ought to face life so that it may become true. Thus, each of you, in your own way, will be able to be his disciples and apostles.

Dear Altar Servers, you are, in fact, already apostles of Jesus! When you take part in the Liturgy by carrying out your altar service, you offer a witness to all. Your absorption, the devotion that wells up from your heart and is expressed in gestures, in song, in the responses: if you do it correctly and not absent-mindedly, then in a certain way your witness is one that moves people.

The Eucharist is the source and summit of the bond of friendship with Jesus. You are very close to Jesus in the Eucharist, and this is the most important sign of his friendship for each one of us. Do not forget it.

This is why I am asking you not to take this gift for granted so that it does not become a sort of habit, knowing how it works and doing it automatically; rather, discover every day anew that something important happens, that the living God is among us and that you can be close to him and help him so that his mystery is celebrated and reaches people.

If you do not give into habit, if you put your innermost self into carrying out your service, then you will truly be his apostles and bear fruits of goodness and service in every context of your life: in the family, at school, in your free time.

Take to one and all that love which you receive in the Liturgy, especially to places where you realize that they lack love, where they do not receive goodness, where they suffer and are lonely.

With the power of the Holy Spirit, try to take Jesus to those very people who are outcast, who are not very popular or have problems. With the power of the Holy Spirit, it is precisely there that you must take Jesus.

In this way, the Bread you see broken upon the altar will be shared and multiplied even more, and you, like the Twelve Apostles, will help Jesus distribute it to the people of today in their different walks of life.

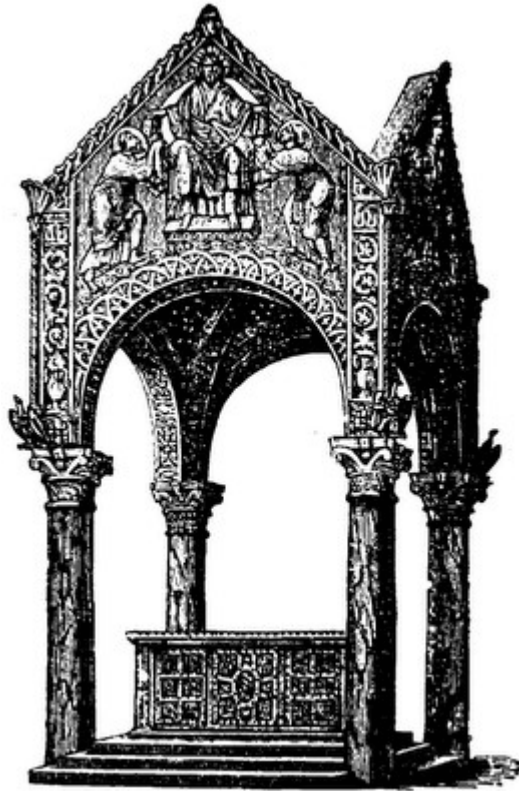
So it is, dear Altar Servers, that my last words to you are: May you always be friends and apostles of Jesus Christ!

August 2, 2006



ON ACOLYTES:

An Appendix



APPENDIX

THIS MATERIAL MAY BE USEFUL FOR THE ONE GIVING A GENERAL PRESENTATION ON THE TRAINING OF THE ALTAR SERVERS

Parts of this may be helpful in your work. In this, we distinguish the word “Acolyte” to mean a man who is actually instituted, but “Altar Server” to mean those who do almost the same work on a parochial level.

The Ministry of Acolyte

- According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, the word *acolyte* indicates one who *follows*, or a companion, and you men may think of yourselves as following after a great many men who have gone before you into the

service of the Church and into paradise, because this ministry is a venerable one in the Catholic Church. In the year 251, Pope Cornelius mentions in a letter to another bishop that there are at that time 42 acolytes in Rome, and the pontiff identifies this state as a ministry.

- For centuries past, the “minor order” of acolyte was considered a state within the clergy, and still today, an instituted acolyte is typically a man who is in training for ordination (the current code of *Canon Law* indicates that deacons must have been acolytes for a period of six months prior to their ordination as deacons).¹
- Nevertheless, with the suppression of the minor orders, we speak of the acolyte as being *instituted* (not *ordained*). Canon Law limits the ministry of acolyte to lay *men*, but admits that lay *persons* may fulfill the *function* of the acolyte by temporary designation.²
- Thus the more common experience of “altar servers” (either male or female) in the parochial setting is the substituted (and yet un-instituted) example of the instituted acolyte

Duties of the Server:

- First and foremost the Server should live a life that is worthy of the calling he or she has received to serve.
- As to those duties primarily related to the mass, the Server’s responsibilities are to aid the deacon and priest. In particular, he or she is to prepare the altar and the sacred vessels.³

Duties of the Server According to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal

- While the General Instruction identifies the alb as the suitable liturgical vesture for the Server, it does not prohibit the traditional cassock and surplice.⁴
- In the procession, the Server may carry the cross.⁵

¹ Canon 1035

² Canon 230

³ G.I.R.M. 98 & Canon 910

⁴ G.I.R.M. 339

⁵ G.I.R.M. 188

- The Server sits in the sanctuary, convenient to the celebrant, as one of the responsibilities of the Server is also to hold open the book for the celebrant when necessary throughout the liturgy.⁶
- The Server is to assist the deacon in preparing the altar,⁷ or in the absence of a deacon (or presumably a concelebrant), the Server may prepare the altar with corporal, vessels, linens and book.⁸ The Servers may also assist the priest in receiving the gifts. The Server should hand the gifts to the celebrant for the priest to place them upon the altar.⁹
- At the offertory, the Server (presuming there is no deacon) will assist the priest in incensing the gifts, altar & cross, and thereafter incense the priest and people.¹⁰
- At communion, the Server should receive communion after the deacon, and from the hands of the celebrating priest, and thereby the Server is present for the distribution of holy communion if needed.¹¹

The Official Institution of Acolytes: For those who are interested in how it works in seminaries.

- In the nomenclature of the Church, we could say that the acolyte is officially referred to as a ministry.¹²
- The Bishop's Ceremonial reminds us that the ministry of acolyte is preserved in the Latin Church, and that this ministry is for the laity, and is no longer to be reserved only for candidates for the sacraments of holy orders.¹³
- The *Bishop's Ceremonial* anticipates that the ministry is to be conferred by the ordinary (typically within mass),¹⁴ and ideally from the cathedra.¹⁵

⁶ G.I.R.M. 189

⁷ G.I.R.M. 178

⁸ G.I.R.M. 190

⁹ G.I.R.M. 140

¹⁰ G.I.R.M. 190

¹¹ G.I.R.M. 162

¹² The Rites, Volume II, Institution of Acolytes, 4

¹³ Ceremonial of Bishops, 790

¹⁴ Ceremonial of Bishops, 792

¹⁵ Ceremonial of Bishops, 793

- The candidates are called by name to stand before the bishop. They are thereafter seated for the homily, which (presuming the homily is read from the ritual) refers to the special role of the acolyte to assist the priests and deacons at mass, and to communicate the faithful (including the sick). The homily of the ritual also exhorts the men to seek to understand on a deeply spiritual level their ministry at the altar, and to show sincere love for the Church.¹⁶
- After the homily, the bishop, normally wearing white,¹⁷ with miter and (when appropriate) crozier,¹⁸ prays over the candidates with outstretched hands.¹⁹ The prayer is a blessing over the men, who have been chosen for this ministry.²⁰
- The bishop then ceremoniously gives the candidate a vessel (paten or chalice, which were once given to the subdeacon in the old rite) with the bread or wine to be consecrated as a sign of their office.²¹ At this point, the bishop exhorts the men to make their lives worthy of their service at the altar of God.²² At the preparation of the gifts the candidate then gives those vessels (with bread or wine) back to the bishop.²³
- The *Bishop's Ceremonial* states that on this special day, the acolytes may receive holy communion under both species,²⁴ and that they should receive immediately after the deacons.²⁵
- The institution of the acolyte is not a sacrament, nor does it leave an indelible mark, but it is a venerable tradition within the Church, and should not be taken without reflection and preparation.

¹⁶ The Rites, Volume II, Institution of Acolytes, 4

¹⁷ Ceremonial of Bishops, 811

¹⁸ Ceremonial of Bishops, 813

¹⁹ Ceremonial of Bishops, 815

²⁰ The Rites, Volume II, Institution of Acolytes, 6

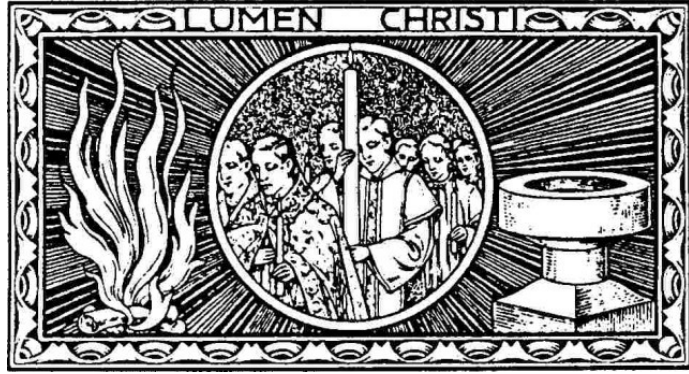
²¹ Ceremonial of Bishops, 816

²² The Rites, Volume II, Institution of Acolytes, 7

²³ Ceremonial of Bishops, 818

²⁴ Ceremonial of Bishops, 819

²⁵ Ceremonial of Bishops, 820





ALTAR SERVER GUILD
SAINT CUNEGUNDA CATHOLIC CHURCH