

Acolyte

Torch Bearer Candle Bearer

A long time ago, the church decided that priests should be assisted by specially trained persons when Christians gathered to worship. Not long after that came acolytes—persons trained to carry the cross and candles and incense in procession and to assist the worship leaders during the service. The word acolyte means “follower” or “attendant” and specifically applies to one who carries a torch or candle in processions. It is also commonly interchanged with server.

Basic description and duties

The acolyte (torch bearer/candle bearer) is a server who carries a candle or a torch. The variety of responsibilities assigned this server make for a true challenge. Acolytes serve in the following capacities:

1. Lighting the altar candles before the service
2. Walking in line on either side of the crucifer at the entrance and retiring processions
3. Walking in line with the book bearer at the Gospel processions
4. Standing and kneeling outside the communion rail, facing the altar, from the Great Thanksgiving until the Invitation
5. Assisting communicants at steps
6. Preceding the bearer of the reserved Sacrament in procession to the aumbry.

All Souls Parish normally uses a second pair of torches in processions. These acolytes follow the ministers' cross in the entry and retiring processions. They also stand/kneel at the communion rail during the Mass and assist the communicants.

Equipment and definitions

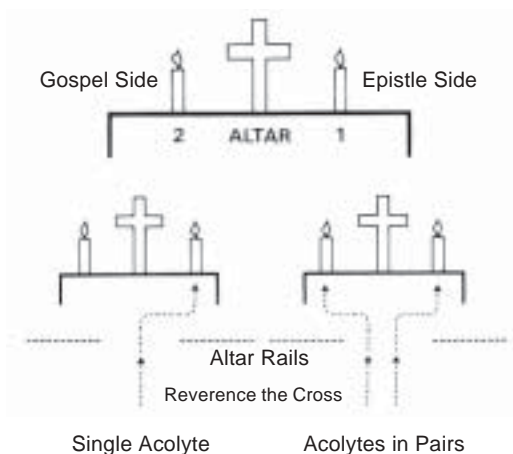
- Lucifer—the candle lighter incorporating the taper and extinguisher bell
- Taper—the wick
- Pole torch—a candle holder mounted on a long pole without an attached stand or base
- Stand or base torch—a shorter candle holder with a base, as the type on the altar

Lighting Candles

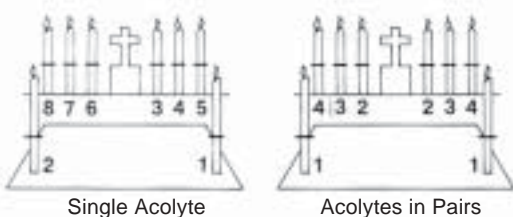
Always vest before lighting the candles. However, the cotta should not be worn over the cassock for this duty. Why? Servers should be as “inconspicuous” as possible during this act of preparation.

There is a specified manner for lighting candles, but don't be intimidated. There are a couple of memory devices to help you remember the sequence:

1. The Gospel candle (on the left or Gospel side of the altar) never stands alone.

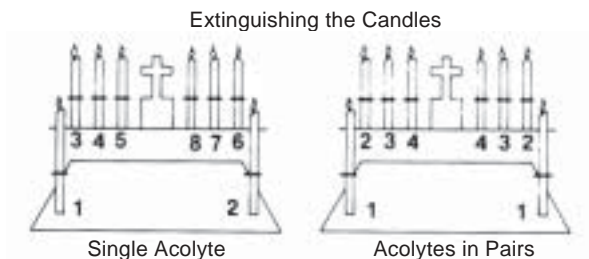


2. Lighting the candles is like drawing open the drapes before a party: light from the inside out.*



3. Extinguishing is like drawing the drapes on the scene: extinguish from the outside in.*

*(Simile courtesy of John Williford.)



Preparation:

- Make sure the taper (wick) in the lucifer (candle-lighter) is long enough.
- Light the taper in the sacristy before going to the altar, *except during the 50 days of Easter when the taper should be lighted from the Paschal Candle. If this candle is not al-*

ready lighted, it should be lighted first. The acolyte(s) should then proceed to the altar, reverencing at the entrance to the sanctuary.

Carrying the Lucifer

- Hold this candlelighter and extinguisher with both hands.
- Hold it with the bell down.
- With another acolyte, hold the lucifers with the bells on the same side and try to match the angle they fall across the upper body and the height at which they are held.

Lighting the Candles (Single Acolyte)

- Light the altar candles first - the Epistle candle first (right side as you face the altar); then the Gospel candle (left as you face the altar).
- Bow again at the center and walk behind the altar to light the re-table candles.
- Begin with the Epistle (right) side and light from the center out.
- Return to the center and reverence again.
- Go to the Gospel side and light from the center out.
- Return to the center, reverence the altar, and return to the sacristy.

Lighting Candles in Pairs

- The procedure is essentially the same; after reverencing the altar together, each takes a side and lights the candles in tandem. Remember that the Epistle altar candle should be lighted just before the Gospel candle. *The Gospel candle never stands alone.*
- The acolytes should reverence the altar at the center before lighting the re-table and before proceeding to the sacristy.

Carrying Torches

- Torch bearers are always in pairs.
- Base torches should be grasped with one hand around the neck and one supporting the base to ensure a steady grasp.
- When standing still and carrying a pole torch, you may rest it on the floor to keep it steady.
- Both acolytes should grasp and rest torches in the same manner.

The Entrance Procession

- Torches should always be lighted prior to the procession—make sure the candle wicks are in good shape so they don't extinguish spontaneously!
- Walk in line on either side of the crucifer; the crucifer will set the pace.
- Always carry the torches at the same level—if acolytes are of different heights adjust the position of the torches so they are at the same level.

- Pause briefly with the crucifer at the sanctuary entrance; on the crucifer's signal, turn left.
- Proceed at a dignified pace and place the torches in the stands outside the chancel area.
- Return to the choir pews and stand for the remainder of the procession.

The Gospel Procession

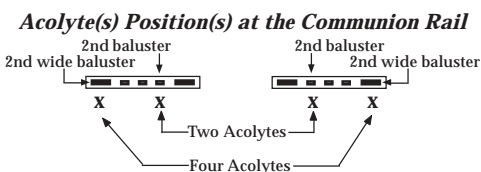
This procession is an exception to the general rule that the torches accompany the crucifer. In this procession, you will walk in line on either side of the bearer of the Gospel book.

- Begin your preparations as soon as the Psalm ends so that you are standing in front of the Tiffany window during the Epistle.
- The order of the procession is as follows: thurifer, crucifer, book bearer with acolytes, deacon or priest.
- Stand on either side of the book bearer facing the altar.
- Turn to face the congregation in tandem with the bearer; always turn toward the center.
- Walk with the book to the place of proclamation.
- When you reach the place of proclamation, stand on either side of the book facing your partner; you may rest pole torches on the floor.
- After the proclamation, walk with the book to the Sanctuary entrance; the bearer will enter the sanctuary to place the Gospel on the altar; acolytes will turn left in tandem, place the torches in the stands, and return to the choir pews for the homily.

Note: Acolytes may optionally accompany the crucifer at the Offertory procession.

The Great Thanksgiving

At the beginning of the Great Thanksgiving, the pair(s) of acolytes will take their torches and stand outside the communion rail, facing the altar, one (or two) on each side; remain standing through the preface to the end of the Sanctus.



- The Epistle side acolyte(s) should hold the(ir) torch(es) in the left hand.
- The Gospel side acolyte(s) should hold the(ir) torch(es) in the right hand.
- Torches should rest on the communion rail cushions but held up straight. Torches may touch the rail for stability.

At the conclusion of the Sanctus (“Hosanna in the highest”) the acolytes will kneel in their positions with torches held upright, remaining in that position until the Invitation. The free hand should be:

- held flat against the mid-chest; or
- rested flat on the communion rail. (For consistency sake, please all do the same thing.)

After the Invitation, the acolytes:

- return their torches to the stands;
- proceed to the communion rail to receive Holy Communion; and
- take up appropriate positions at steps to assist the communicants if necessary.

The Aumbry Procession

An acolyte will precede the bearer of the Blessed Sacrament to the aumbry in the St. Mary Chapel.

- Open the door and close it for the bearer.
- After both genuflect, return to the choir.

All acolytes return to the Choir for the Post Communion Prayer and the Blessing (except for book and ministers’ cross acolytes).

The Retiring Procession

- As in the entrance procession, acolytes walk in line on either side of the crucifer.
- Prepare for the procession at the first notes of the hymn.
- The acolytes will precede and follow the crucifer to the sanctuary entrance.
- At the crucifer’s signal, all will turn in unison and begin the procession.
- The second pair of torches will follow the second cross.

The retiring procession normally proceeds up the Epistle side aisle; one torch should precede the cross and one follow in single file due to space limitations.

Extinguishing Candles

This duty is normally assigned to the server designated as the book bearer. It will be discussed under that server’s responsibilities.



Contents of A Handbook for Servers

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