

# Gospel Book

*Book Bearer*

*The reading of the Gospel is the high point of the liturgy of the Word. The Old Testament, comprises scriptures that anticipate the Gospel, then the Epistle, in which we hear teaching about the Gospel; then the Gospel itself, where we see Our Lord directly, and hear his own words. The Gospel reading may be surrounded with rather elaborate ceremonial. A small procession moves from the altar to a designated point down the center aisle. Here we see enacted the idea of the Lord Himself speaking His words to His gathered people from their very midst.*

## ***Basic description and duties***

The book bearer serves four important functions in the liturgical celebration:

1. Carrying the Gospel book in the entrance procession.
2. Holding the book for the deacon or priest at the proclamation of the Gospel.
3. Serving as a chalice at Holy Communion.
4. Extinguishing the altar candles at the end of the service.

## ***The Entrance Procession***

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- The Gospel book is marked with a ribbon marker for the reading of the day.
- In the entrance procession, the book bearer stands behind the second cross and acolytes.
- Walk into the sanctuary to place the Gospel book on the Gospel side of the altar, taking care to place it so that it can be grasped “right side up” for the reader.

## ***Carrying the Book***

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- The Gospel book should be carried in front of you, arms slightly extended, grasped by the lower corners. The top of the book should be slightly inclined toward the bearer.
- Unless the bearer is a member of the ordained clergy, the book should not be carried above the head.

## ***The Gospel Procession***

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- Enter the sanctuary and get the book at the beginning of the Alleluia Tract.
- Approach the sanctuary entrance and reverence the altar.
- Enter the sanctuary, pick up the book, and stand next to the Gospel side of the altar.
- The acolytes will stand on either side of the entrance; stand between them.

- Signal the turn in unison; signal on which foot and when to start, then process down the chancel and center aisle in line with the acolytes.
- The thurifer will stand aside one or two pews in front of the second structural column; proceed with the torches past the thurifer to the second structural column, following a couple of paces behind the crucifer.
- Turn to face the altar; you will be facing the deacon or priest (the reader).
- Hold the book for the reader.
- The reader will open the book, elevate, and return to you.
- Hold the book steady during the proclamation.
- After the proclamation, stand to the Gospel side of the aisle to allow the crucifer to pass.
- Assume position between the torches and walk back to the sanctuary entrance following the crucifer; place the book on the Gospel side of the altar.
- Return to the choir for the homily.

### *The Offertory and Great Thanksgiving*

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- At the beginning of the offertory, proceed to the sanctuary entrance with the second cross; reverence the altar together.
- Enter the sanctuary and take a seat on the Gospel side.
- Stand at the presentation hymn.
- Take the large alms basin; after the oblationers have presented the elements, go to the center of the Sanctuary entrance and present the alms basin to the ushers to receive the offering basins.
- Turn to face to celebrant for the blessing.
- Place the alms basin on the radiator and return to the Gospel sedilia, standing.
- After the thurifer has censed the priest, (s)he will face you and bow; return this bow and that of the thurifer after you are censed.
- Kneel at the conclusion of the Sanctus, remaining so during the consecration.
- The celebrant will usually administer Holy Communion to you during the Agnus Dei.
- After the Invitation, approach the altar to receive the chalice from the celebrant.
- Administer the chalice to communicants on the Gospel side, reciting the words of the following prayer:

*“The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ’s Blood was shed for thee, and be thankful.”*

If the communicant is holding the wafer for communion “intinction”, you may say:

*“The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.”*

- See specific notes below on administering the chalice.
- You may be asked to accompany the priest in serving nonambulatory communicants.
- You may also be asked to consume some of the remaining consecrated elements. This is done facing away from the congregation.
- At the conclusion of Holy Communion, the celebrant will place the reserved Sacrament on the Gospel side of the altar veiled by a linen cloth.

*Note: Should the priest not place the reserved Sacrament on the altar, either cross in front of the altar (remember to genuflect) and take the reserved Sacrament from the credence table or signal (unobtrusively) to the other server to bring it to you.*

- Genuflect before taking the Sacrament from the altar.
- Preceded by an acolyte, carry the Sacrament to the aumbry; the acolyte will open the door to the aumbry and close the same.
- After genuflection, return to the sanctuary for the post communion prayer and the blessing, reverencing the altar at the sanctuary entrance.
- At the first notes of the hymn, leave the sanctuary in company with the ministers’ cross acolyte, reverencing the altar together.
- Walk slowly to the sacristy, remove your cotta, and get the lucifer to extinguish the candles.
- See notes concerning extinguishing candles.

### ***Administering the Chalice***

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- Grasp the chalice by the neck in your right hand.
- Place the linen cloth (the purificator) over the fingers of the left hand. Keep the purificator folded neatly over the fingers, not held in a wad—this is not a dish cloth!
- After each communicant receives the chalice, rotate it slightly to bring present a new section of the rim to the next communicant, simultaneously wiping the rim with the purificator. Make sure to wipe the inside of the rim as well.
- Administering the chalice can be awkward and takes some practice; take care to avoid hitting the communicant’s teeth, sloshing the wine, etc. Be sure to hold the chalice low enough for the communicant to see the wine in order to dip the wafer. Some may offer the wafer in the palm of their hand for you to dip in the wine and then place in their mouth.

- The communicant's arms may be held in the form of the Saint Andrew's cross as a sign they are not receiving the chalice.

*Note: Some child communicants may take the Sacrament in the bread only. If in doubt, ask the accompanying adult before offering the chalice.*

## *Extinguishing Candles*

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- After the celebrant and other members of the sanctuary party have left the enclosure, approach the sanctuary entrance and reverence the altar.
- Using the lucifer extinguish the altar candles—Gospel side first, then Epistle. (*Remember the Gospel candle never stands alone. See illustrations in the Acolytes pamphlet.*) When doing this, the purpose is not to drown the candles in their own wax. Therefore, do not plunge the bell over the candle until it touches the metal follower of the candle, this may push the wick into the wax and make it difficult for the next person to light the candle. Lower the bell just enough to restrict oxygen to the candle.
- Reverence the altar and walk around to the retable to extinguish the Gospel side candles, from the outside in (*remember John Williford's comment on drawing the drapes closed at the end of the celebration*).
- Return to the front of the altar, reverence, and walk around to the Epistle side of the retable; extinguish the candles from the outside in as before.
- Go to the front of the altar and reverence; proceed to the sacristy to hang up the lucifer and remove your cotta.
- Return to the sanctuary to help remove items from the altar and credence shelf.

## *Contents of A Handbook for Servers*

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