



## Our Lady of Perpetual Help Standard Operating Procedures for Altar Servers

*"The celebration of the Holy Mass is as valuable as the death of Jesus on the Cross." (St Thomas)*

*"It would be easier for the world to survive without the sun than to do so without the Holy Mass." (Padre Pio)*

As a ministry within our parish, Altar Servers directly supports providing *"a sense of belonging to all God's people through **prayer, service,** and the sharing of our gifts for the praise and glory of God."* (OLPH Parish Mission Statement)

It is a great privilege to serve at the Altar of our God. Our loving Savior becomes present on the Altar, just as He was at the Last Supper and Calvary. The primary duty of an Altar Server is to assist the priest, as a representative of the people of the parish, in a visible manner, as the mystery of Calvary unfolds on the Altar.

All actions of the server are woven from signs and symbols whose meaning is rooted in the works of creation and in human culture, specified by events in the Old Testament and fully revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Therefore, servers have a solemn responsibility to do their assigned duties with dignity and reverence and in a prescribed form and manner.

Many parishes have Altar Servers start as young as seven years old and some of these continue serving well into their seventies. All people of good faith are welcome and those who think they may desire to sever are encouraged to do so. All that is required is a desire to serve at the Altar of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

What do we do?

1. Assist the priest before Mass (set up of implements, special instructions)
2. During Mass – set up of altar table
3. Carry processional cross, thurifer during special Masses

To be an Altar Server:

1. You must have received First Communion
2. You must attend training sessions and meetings as needed
3. Serve at the Mass that you normally attend

## THREE PHASES

- Pre-mass
- During mass
- Post-mass

## PRE-MASS

- All servers should arrive 15 minutes before mass starts – typically 3 servers per mass (not hard and fast rule)
- TURN OFF ALL CELL PHONES AND LEAVE THEM IN THE SACRISTY!!!!
- Make sure that all server implements are in place (check with Sacristan if anything is missing)
  - Chalice Set
    - Chalice (cup)
    - Purificator (small, rectangular cloth)
    - Pall (white square cardboard)
    - Corporal (large, white cloth, usually two)
  - Water pitcher
  - Finger Bowl
  - Finger Towel
  - Sacramentary (red book)
- Check that candles are lit
- If NOT processing in from Baptismal Font, BUT PROCESSING OUT at the end of mass, make sure Cross is in place in back.
- ASK FATHER if there are any special procedures for that mass (baptism, use of incense, use of sprinkling water, etc.)
- Assign jobs to altar servers (please note assigning rules, \* - *recommended assignments*).
  - Cross Bearer (cannot be Book Bearer)
  - Book Bearer (cannot be Cross Bearer)
  - Chalice (\* if only two servers, Cross Bearer)
  - Gifts (cannot be Water)
  - Water (cannot be Gifts)
  - Finger Bowl (\* if only one server, omit Gifts, combine with Water and Finger Towel. \* if two servers, combine with Finger Towel)
  - Finger Towel (\* if only one server, omit Gifts, combine with Water and Finger Bowl. \* if two servers, combine with Finger Towel)
  - Wipes
  - Trays
    - If only one server, disregard all assignment rules and omit “Gifts”

## MASS

### Overall notes – for all parts of mass

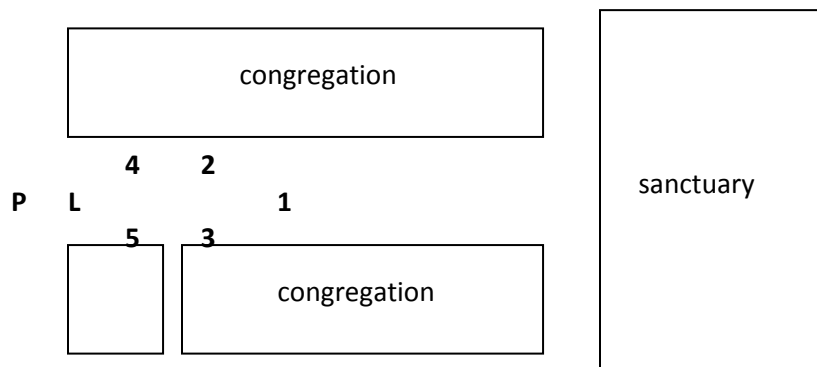
- Eyes on Father **AT ALL TIMES** – Altar Servers are the personal attendants to the priest, so he may ask for something at any point in mass. Be prepared to respond to all of Father’s requests.
- When completing any action towards Father or the Altar Table, **BOW**, then leave.
- When standing or seating and NOT performing any job, **HANDS FOLDED**.
- Be alert – if sacristans or ushers ask you for help during the mass, help them.
- When sitting down or standing up, do so in unison with fellow servers.
- General Terms used in “Mass”
  - Father – the presiding priest and/or deacon
  - Sanctuary – area in the front of the Church designated by wooden steps
  - Altar – large table in the middle of the Sanctuary where Communion is consecrated
  - Sacristy – the room where the Servers and priest put on their garbs
  - Back – refers to the steel table behind the Altar, where all the servers implements will be

\* - **FOR THE REST OF THIS SOP, SERVERS DESIGNATED WITH SPECIFIC JOBS WILL BE IN ALL CAPS (EX. CROSS, BOOK, etc.)**

### Procession

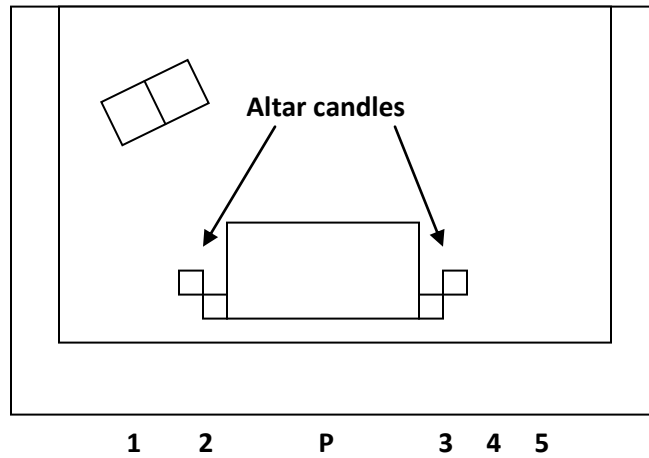
1. Entrance formation – servers lead out...
  - a. If processing from behind the altar, from highest-to-lowest seating position (see “Job Seating” in “Offertory/Presentation of the Gifts”)
  - b. If processing from Baptismal Font, CROSS first, then two servers per row by seating position (see diagram) – distance between each row in procession should be 3 rows-worth (approx. 8ft.)
    1. Cross Bearer
    2. Chalice
    3. Book Bearer
    - 4,5... extra servers
    - L. Lector
    - P. Priest

#### Procession - Entrance Formation



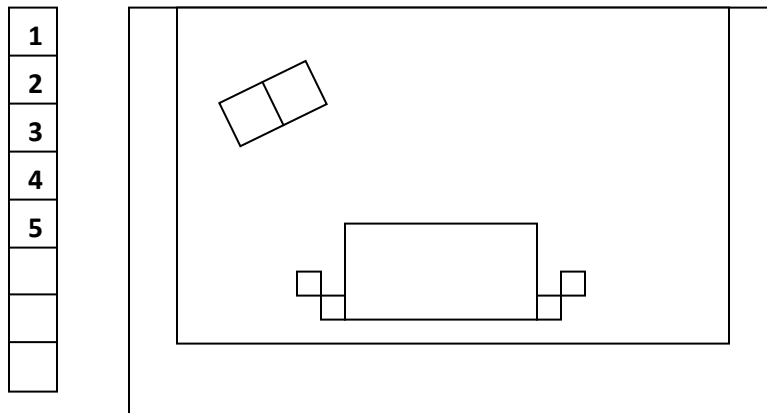
2. At the Sanctuary, CROSS BEARER stands to the furthest left of the Altar. Rest of servers line up according to seating position while not standing directly in front of the Altar (reserved for Father).

**Line-out at Altar, Procession**



- When Father reaches the Altar, all servers bow **IN UNISON** with Father. When Father steps up onto the Sanctuary, servers turn left and head to their seats (CROSS BEARER sets cross behind Altar).

**Server Seating Arrangement, by Jobs**



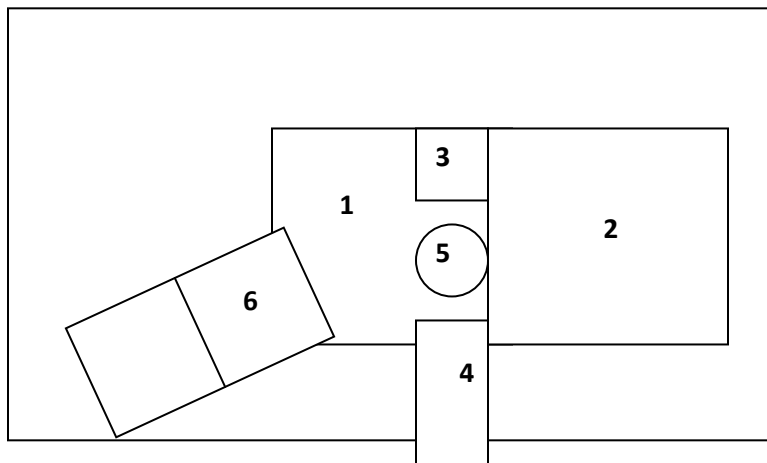
**Opening/Liturgy of the Word**

- When Father says "Let Us Pray" OR gives a visual cue, BOOK approaches Father with the Sacramentary at chest-height with cover facing out.
- When BOOK reaches Father, Father will open the Sacramentary and adjust its height and BOOK's position. BOOK holds book open for the duration of the prayer.
  - If BOOK is shorter than Father, BOOK holds the Sacramentary with one hand under each side of the book and BOOK stands directly in front of Father.
  - If BOOK is taller than Father, BOOK stands to one-side of Father with arm outstretched to support the Sacramentary, one arm supporting its back/spine, the other arm's hand underneath holding it steady.
- As Father says the prayer, his arms will be open. At the end of the prayer, when Father folds his hands and says "We ask this through...": BOOK closes the Sacramentary, bows to Father, then returns to his/her seat.

## Offertory/Preparation of the Gifts (REMEMBER overall notes)

1. After mass intentions (“We pray to the lord.” “Lord, hear our prayer.”), CHALICE and BOOK prepare Altar for Communion.
  - a. BOOK places the Sacramentary on the lower-left corner of the Altar, face-up, closed.
  - b. CHALICE brings chalice set to Altar
    - hold chalice set as such: left hand around the chalice stem, below the bowl-portion; right hand on top holding down rest of set
    - CHALICE places set on furthest right of altar. Disassemble from top to bottom in this fashion (see diagram below)
      1. Corporal/1<sup>st</sup> corporal (1)– open fully and lay directly in middle of Altar, with cross-embroider closest to you
      2. 2<sup>nd</sup> corporal (2)– open fully and lay on right side in line with 1<sup>st</sup> corporal, slightly overlapping
      3. pall (3)– top-right corner of 1<sup>st</sup> corporal
      4. purificator (4) – folded in half, near bottom of altar, in line with pall
      5. chalice (5)– on the right-middle of 1<sup>st</sup> corporal, below pall
      6. open Sacramentary (6)to assigned ribbon, place on the left of 1<sup>st</sup> corporal, near the bottom, slightly-angled.

Final Layout of Prepared Altar



2. After Ushers collect money from the congregation, gift bearers will approach the Altar from the Baptismal Font, Father will approach in front of the altar.
  - a. When gift bearers reach halfway down the aisle, WATER goes to back and gets water pitcher and re-emerges.
  - b. GIFTS walks to meet father and take wine from him. GIFTS then places wine on 1st corporal, near upper edge next to pall.
3. As Father rounds the altar, WATER goes to meet father, standing approximately 3ft. from him at his right side. At the same time, FINGER BOWL and FINGER TOWEL go to back and retrieve implements and re-emerge.
4. WATER presents water pitcher to father, handle-facing-away. Father will then pour water into the wine and return pitcher to WATER. At that point, FINGER BOWL and FINGER TOWEL approach and line up side-by-side,

FINGER BOWL to the left of WATER, FINGER TOWEL to the left of FINGER BOWL. FINGER BOWL and FINGER TOWEL will hold their respective implements with both hands.

- a. Combined: FINGER BOWL and FINGER TOWEL – hold finger bowl with right hand, and finger towel with left hand.
  - b. Combined: WATER, FINGER BOWL, and FINGER TOWEL – water pitcher in right hand, finger bowl in left hand, and finger towel draped over left wrist/forearm
5. After Father bows and places his hands above the finger bowl, WATER will pour water over Father's hands. FINGER TOWEL presents finger towel for Father to dry his hands.
6. When Father RETURNS THE FINGER TOWEL, all bow in unison, then return to back to return implements. FINGER BOWL goes to the Sacristy sink, dumps the water down the drain, then places the bowl in the drying rack. All return to seats. No more jobs until after "Our Father" prayer.
7. After "Our Father", servers go to Father to shake hands.
- a. At the end of "Our Father", WIPES goes to back to prepare a hand wipe for father (remove the towelette from the wrapper, and fold in half twice, place on the napkin)
  - b. BOOK retrieves Sacramentary from Altar and returns it to his/her seat.
  - c. WIPES emerges with wipe in cloth and gives it to Father – WAIT for Father to return the wipe, bow, then throw it away in the Sacristy trash

### COMMUNION

Note: Pay attention to Father and Eucharistic Ministers during Communion – they may signal for help.

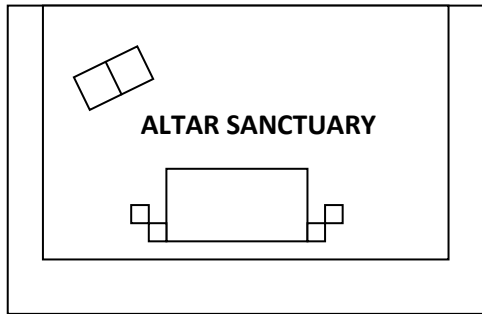
1. Ushers will direct Servers to where and when they will receive communion.
2. After returning to seats...
  - TRAYS goes to the back and places one tray on the altar and one tray on the side table.
  - CHALICE goes to Altar to clean up: take pall and purificator to back.
  - If anything containing the Body of Christ (ciborium/golden bowl or pix/small golden cases) is left on the 1<sup>st</sup> corporal, leave it (fold the corporal later)
  - If the corporal is open, fold it as described and bring it to the back.
    - i. Bottom 3<sup>rd</sup> to middle
    - ii. Top 3<sup>rd</sup> to middle
    - iii. Left 3<sup>rd</sup> to middle
    - iv. Right 3<sup>rd</sup> to middle
    - v. DO NOT lift the corporal off the Altar unless it is fully and properly folded. (The purpose of 1<sup>st</sup> corporal is to catch any crumbs that fall off the Body of Christ)

### END OF MASS

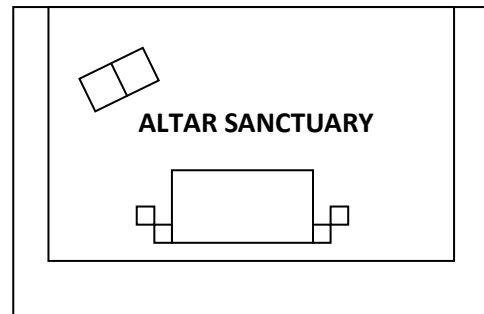
1. After the Body of Christ has been put away, Father sits. BOOK prepares by placing the Sacramentary in his/her lap. When Father says "Let Us Pray", BOOK approaches Father as before (see "Opening/Liturgy of the Word")
2. When Father says the final blessing..."May the Lord bless you and your families, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." ...
  - IF PROCESSING OUT WITH THE CROSS,
    - i. CROSS goes to back and emerges with the cross
    - ii. With cross leading, servers form up in center aisle, according to job seating order

1. two servers per row – if even number of servers (2 or 4), last server stands in middle of aisle in line with CROSS (see diagram)

**Processing out, with 4 servers (even number)**



**Processing out, with 5 servers (odd number)**



2. CROSS (1) only goes as far back as necessary to accommodate all servers
  - iii. Father will then kiss the Altar, and step down to the front of the Sanctuary. When Father bows, ALL SERVERS BOW
  - iv. When Father turns, ALL SERVERS turn in the same direction and exit to Baptismal Font (CROSS returns cross to the back holding room)
- IF NOT PROCESSING OUT WITH THE CROSS
    - i. When Father approaches the Altar to kiss it, Servers line out in front of the Altar in the same formation as the beginning of Mass. (see “Line –out at Altar, Procession”)
    - ii. Father will then kiss the Altar, and step down to the front of the Sanctuary. When Father bows, ALL SERVERS BOW
    - iii. Whichever direction Father turns, all servers turn the same way. Then exit to the back/Sacristy, servers will lead Father back.

**POST-MASS**

- hang up your garments neatly in the Sacristy closet (make sure all Velcro pieces are attached)
- Take candle bell from behind the Sacristy door and use it to extinguish Altar candles (DO NOT blow out candles – USE CANDLE BELL)
- If you do not know when your next scheduled mass is, the Altar Server Schedule is always available on the bulletin board near where the candle bell is stowed/hung.

## GENERAL NOTES

- Before mass, ask Father about special procedures. If implements/procedures not outlined in this SOP are being used for that mass (incense, baptism, etc.), Father will instruct servers on what will happen.
- When in doubt about mass, ask Father first. If Father is not available, ask head Sacristan for that mass.
- The general concept servers should have in mind at all times is REVERENCE.
  - Altar servers are the model by which the congregation follows throughout mass.
  - Be attentive.
  - Actively participate in mass.
  - All attention should be focused on Jesus during mass, so DO NOT do anything that will take the congregation's attention away from the mass. (disruptive behavior, laziness, not paying attention, etc.)