



Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish

Sacristans Standard Operating Procedures

“For these sacristans, that the preparations they make for the celebration of the liturgy may remind us to prepare our hearts for worship...”(Book of Blessings, 1853). This petition from the Book of Blessings captures the essence of the work of sacristans. But there are concerns emitting from the work of sacristans in preparing the church for worship that need emphasis and therefore attention to be implemented properly.

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is designed as a guide for sacristans to better execute and fulfill their ministerial duties within the sacristy. As Jesus said to his disciples, “He will show you a room upstairs, already furnished. Make preparations for us there” (Luke 22:12). These same words echo the calling of sacristans, as Jesus called his disciples, to prepare the room for the feast.

QUALITIES & REQUIREMENTS OF A SACRISTAN

1. Must be a fully initiated (21 years old and above) Catholic in good standing with the Catholic Church and a registered member of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish.
2. Has a basic knowledgeable and experience of liturgical rites (*e.g., the Mass; Communion Service; Eucharistic Adoration; Baptism; Funerals; Reconciliation Service; Matrimony, etc.*) and is aware of the demands of the liturgical position.
3. Understands how to use the ecclesiastical region’s published ORDO (Order of Prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours and Celebration of the Eucharist).
4. Willing to work within the various religious traditions and cultures in the parish.
5. Able to work, serve as liaison, and communicate well with others involved in: (a) liturgical planning and (b) liturgical practice.
6. Is a “team member” and a “team player”.
7. Is well committed to be formally commissioned in this ministry, ideally during a Sunday Mass, utilizing a blessing taken from the Book of Blessings (*Chapter 62, Order for the Blessing of Altar Servers, Sacristans, Musicians, and Ushers*). All Sacristans must renew their commitment to the ministry every 2 years.
8. Able and willing to learn about liturgical principles and to put those principles into practice.
9. Self-motivated and possesses ability to follow-through.
10. Able to work on Sundays and is flexible (*during the year, as needed, like Holy Week; Reconciliation Services; etc.*)
11. Is able to find spiritual nourishment and enrichment within the ministry.
12. Attends monthly or quarterly meetings/trainings as required by Liturgy Committee or the Pastor/Parish Administrator of Our Lady of Perpetual Help church.

LITURGICAL AREAS & FURNITURES

1. **SANCTUARY** – the sanctuary is the elevated front area of the church with the altar in the middle, and the ambo by its side. The sanctuary is considered a sacred space that only the Clergy and designated ministers are allowed on it. Anyone who is not of liturgical status or assignment must not approach it (i.e., photographers, etc.)
2. **ALTAR** – the altar is the sacred table within the sanctuary of the church. This sacred table is where the bread and wine, which is offered during mass, is consecrated and becomes the Real Presence of Christ, the Most Holy Body and Precious Blood of Christ.

The ancient practice of bowing to the altar as we pass before the altar should be retained to honor this sign of Christ in our midst. (*The Sacristy Manual, 45*)

3. **PRESIDERS CHAIR** – this is where the Main Celebrant or the Priest who is leading or presiding at the mass sits. Right next to the presiders chair is the deacon’s chair which is located on the right of the presider’s chair. If there are 2 or more deacons serving at the mass, than another chair is placed on each side of the presider’s chair or additional chairs provided.
4. **AMBO** – the ambo is where the Word of God is proclaimed. During funerals or other functions outside of mass, the ambo should not be used to make any announcements or teachings outside of mass. Another suitable lectern or podium should be setup for anything outside of mass to be used.
5. **CREDESCENCE TABLE** – the credence table is located near the sanctuary but more on the side of the altar. The credence table is where the chalice, purificator, pall, corporal and cruets for the water and bowl is stationed at.
6. **GIFTS OR OFFERTORY TABLE** – this table is located inside the church near the entrance door. This is where the unconsecrated wine and bread is put at in preparation to be brought up during the Offertory or Preparations of Gifts.
7. **BAPTISMAL FONT** – the baptismal font is located at the entrance of the church slightly at the right side. This is where baptisms occur for those who will be initiated at Easter Vigil or baptized during scheduled days.
8. **PASCHAL CANDLE** – also known as the Easter Candle is one of the most important sacramental of the Church. The Paschal Candle is a reminder of our death from sin and rise in the resurrection of Christ. The Paschal Candle is blessed and lit at Easter Vigil. The Paschal Candle is placed at the sanctuary near the ambo during the Easter Season. When the Easter Season ends on Pentecost Sunday, the Paschal Candle is then moved near the baptismal font during the rest of the liturgical year. The Paschal Candle is also used during funerals when it is brought to the front of the sanctuary and baptisms outside of Easter at the baptismal font. The Paschal Candle does not need to be lit outside of the Easter Season, except on those times when it is liturgically needed.
9. **OTHER SYMBOLS** – there are other symbols or sacramental used by the Church during their liturgies or mass. These sacramental will be used according to the time of the Liturgical Calendar. For example, in Advent the “advent wreath” will be used on the Sunday’s and days before Christmas. The palms are used during Palm Sunday and ashes during Ash Wednesday. Sacramentals are to be used as required by the liturgy or as they may enhance liturgical celebrations.

PRE-MASS PREPARATIONS

1. Arrives at the church at least an hour before mass start.
2. Checks the ORDO for details of the Liturgy of the Day.
3. Checks and makes sure the Presiders binder and the 2 lectors binders are prepared.
 1. The Presiders Binder is usually of the same color according to the Liturgical Season (*e.g. GREEN for Ordinary Time, WHITE – for Easter and Christmas season, PURPLE – Lent/Advent*).
4. Checks and makes sure that all necessary Liturgical Books are there and they are marked according to the liturgy celebrated. Use the ORDO for guidance in finding the pages of the books.
 1. Book of the Gospel
 2. Lectionary
 3. Other Liturgical Books according to the Rite being celebrated at mass. (*i.e baptisms, funerals, etc.*)
5. Readies or lays out the Priests Vestments necessary for the celebration.
 1. Vestments according to the liturgical season or the Mass celebrated.
6. Makes sure that appropriate numbers of chalice and patens for the Body and Blood of Christ are available for mass.
7. Cleans and dries all vessels (chalice and patens) if necessary for use at the mass.
8. Prepares the main chalice for mass.
 1. In preparing the main chalice follow these simple guideline:
 1. Main chalice should be the BEST chalice from the extra chalice.
 2. Place a purificator on the chalice first.
 3. Then a pall and then the corporal on top.
9. The extra chalices are to be placed on a tray with extra palls or purificators (*if not enough palls for these chalices, purificators may be used*).
10. Checks and prepares the appropriate number of patens for the Mass.
11. Prepares water cruet and places them on the credence table.
 1. 1 water cruet with potable water for the chalice
 2. 1 water cruet with regular tap water for the washing of hands.
12. Prepare basin with a hand towel for the washing of hands at Mass.
 1. Depending on the liturgy of the day, extra basins and hand towels might be required for the Priest/Deacon to wash his hands.
 1. For anointing, water basin with a lemon wedge would be sufficient.
 2. For the distribution of ashes, a water basin with soap would be sufficient.
13. Checks tabernacle to see if there is a good amount of reserved consecrated Hosts there. The amount of unconsecrated bread and wine for the Offertory is to be determined by the number of people attending the Mass and the amount of reserved consecrated hosts.

14. Prepares enough bread and wine, as determined above.
15. Lights the altar candles and Paschal Candle if during Easter Season, at least 20 minutes before Mass starts.
16. Checks with the Team Leader of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) if there is enough EMHC for the distribution of Holy Communion at the Mass.
17. If incense is to be used, fills the incense boat with incense, places charcoal in the thurible, and lights the charcoal approximately 10 minutes prior to the start of the procession; places the stand or pedestal for the thurible and incense boat in the desired location.

ITEMS ON THE CREDENCE TABLE

1. On tray #1:
 - a. Main chalice with purificator, pall and corporal.
 - b. Extra patens for distribution of Holy Communion.
2. On tray #2:
 - a. Extra chalices (number of extra chalices will vary depending on the liturgy celebrated or the number of the Faithful attending mass).
 - b. Palls for the extra chalices and/or extra purificators.
3. Other items on the credence table:
 - a. Water basin (empty) for washing of hands
 - b. Hand towel for the washing of hands
 - c. Water cruet for washing of hands and chalice.
4. Additional items:
 - a. Depending on the liturgy celebrated other necessary items may be placed on the credence table.
 - b. Examples: extra basins for washing of hands, other liturgical books, boat for the incense, etc.

Additional Notes:

1. If a Master of Ceremonies (MC) is present at the Mass especially with the Mass where the Bishop is the celebrant, the Sacristan is to work closely with the Master of Ceremony to guide the MC in the actions and placements of liturgical items as practiced at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church.
2. The Master of Ceremonies is there to guide and makes sure of the proper execution of procedures for the smooth celebration of the liturgy as a whole. It is the duty of the sacristan to coordinate and be open to instructions from the MC while the celebration is on going, even the possibility of the changing of duties of the sacristan, as may be contained in the section "Actions in Mass".

PREPARATIONS FOR OTHER LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS

- 1) For Adoration:
 - a) Prepares the humeral veil and cope for the priest/deacon.
 - b) Prepares the monstrance for the exposition
 - c) Prepares the necessary liturgical books/binders for Adoration.

- d) Prepares the thurible, incense boat with incense.
- e) Prepares the bells.
- f) Make sure the tabernacle key is available for the deacon/priest to open the tabernacle.

2) For Weddings:

- a) Prepares holy water for the blessing of the rings.
- b) If only one couple, the kneelers in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel could be used for the nuptial blessing.
- c) Checks and makes sure the Wedding Certificate is available from the Parish Office for the Priest/Deacon to sign.

3) For Funerals:

- a) If outside the Easter Season, sets up the Paschal Candle, at the foot of the sanctuary to the right side of the sanctuary.
- b) Prepares holy water for the blessing of the casket.
- c) Prepares the funeral veil, Book of the Gospel, crucifix, and bouquet of flower for the Christian symbols during the liturgy.
- d) Also prepares sufficient bread and wine according to the number of people attending the Mass.

ACTIONS DURING THE MASS

When the Mass starts the Sacristan should be seated at the back of the altar servers to assist if needed during the liturgy. If sufficient number of ministers is in attendance at the Mass then the Sacristan plays a support role to those ministers present.

1. Preparation of Gifts/Offertory:

- i. After the Christian Faithful has presented the offering of bread and wine, the sacristan may assist in getting the cruet from the priest/deacon after the priest/deacon has poured the wine into the chalice(s). The sacristan, however, would ONLY assist if there is no sufficient number of ministers serving at the mass. If the altar servers can do this, then the sacristan leaves this task to the altar servers.

This action or task is stated in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 110*, “If at a Mass with the people only one minister is present, that minister may exercise several different functions.”

2. Holy Communion:

- i. Right after The Lord’s Prayer, the Sacristan, if the absence of the deacon, will go to the tabernacle and retrieve the ciborium with the reserved consecrated Hosts.
- ii. During the Lamb of God, the sacristan takes the ciborium with the reserved consecrated Hosts from the tabernacle, and processing to the altar using the middle aisle, will then places the ciborium on the altar for the priest to distribute into the extra patens.
- iii. The sacristan does NOT stay by the side of the altar nor help distribute the consecrated Hosts in the patens for this is reserved to the priest/deacon.
- iv. In giving Holy Communion to the elderly or disabled attending Mass, the sacristan can add an extra paten during the time when the others patens are brought up to the altar. This

paten may be of different shape to distinguish it from the other patens, which is handed to the sacristan by the priest or deacon.

- i. Sacristans are NOT to reserve a separate paten in the sacristy for the elderly or disabled. All patens to be used for Holy Communion at that particular Mass must be placed on the altar, as designated earlier.
- v. After the sacristan has placed the ciborium on the altar he/she will venerate the altar with a bow, then the sacristan will then lineup with the EMHC as the last person on the lineup. The sacristan will receive Holy Communion together with the EMHC and the priest/deacon will give the sacristan the paten with Hosts for the disabled. The sacristan may move together with the EMHC to distribute Holy Communion to only the sick and disabled.
- vi. When all who are sick or disabled have received Communion, the sacristan may return to the altar and place his/her paten on the corporal. Do not empty the paten in the ciborium. The sacristan may then move and stand at the first step of the sanctuary next to the choir or the altar servers and attentively observe if the EMHC will need more Hosts for Communion.
- vii. If so, the sacristan will use the paten he/she had and switch it with the EMHC who is out of Hosts. The sacristan may pour the leftover Hosts of the EMHC in the paten the sacristan used and then the sacristan will give that paten to the EMHC. The sacristan will then come to the altar and refill the empty paten from the EMHC with Hosts from the ciborium and use this for another EMHC who will need more or extra Hosts. Sacristan will continue this until the distribution of Holy Communion is over.
 - i. Sacristan is to avoid grabbing the Hosts with their hands and placing it in the paten of the EMHC at the communion line. Sacristan will only do this action with the ciborium at the altar to refill the empty paten for the EMHC, if needed.
- viii. After the distribution of Holy Communion, the sacristan waits by the side of the altar to receive from the priest/deacon the unused consecrated Hosts in a ciborium. Upon receiving this ciborium, the sacristan walks towards the tabernacle, using the middle aisle, to properly repose the Body of Christ.
- ix. The sacred vessels, sacred linens and other items used during the liturgy (i.e. water cruets, wine cruet, etc.) remain on the credence table until the Mass is over.

AFTER MASS

1. After the Mass, the sacristan may solicit the help of EMHC or altar servers to carry the trays and items used during the mass to the sacristy to be cleaned.
2. Sacristan makes sure that all vessels are cleaned, dried and made ready for the next celebration or keeps them in their proper places.
3. Checks and makes sure the altar candles or the Paschal Candle, during Easter Season, is extinguished.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

1. Should a consecrated host fall to the ground, EMHC will retrieve it and place it in the hand that he/she is using to hold communion plate. When finished serving, he/she return the communion plate to the altar and consume the dropped consecrated host.
2. If the dropped consecrated host is not humanly consumable, that consecrated host is to be brought to the sacristy to be placed in a bowl and dissolved with water. When that consecrated host has been completely dissolved, the EMHC or Sacristan may dig a hole on the ground outside the church and pours the dissolved consecrated host into the ground. This is done when the sacristy does not have a sacrarium, a sink with drainage going straight to the ground instead of the sewage system.
3. If the Precious Blood is spilled, EMHC may signal the sacristan and then sacristan will retrieve an extra purificator, spread the purificator and place over the top of the spill. The sacristan may pour little water using the water cruet from the credence table on the purificator and then gently dab the purificator. Do not wipe the purificator all over the floor. Gently dab the purificator making sure to get all drops of the Precious Blood.

These are delicate situations; if it is handled in an efficient manner, it will likely go unnoticed by others.

CONCLUSION

1. The preceding pages may seem be overly detailed to those who have been active in the ministry for many years, but it serves both new and established Sacristans to help create a more standard process. By striving for procedural consistency among Sacristans, the assembly will feel more at ease, enabling them to be free from distractions and enter more deeply into the celebration.
2. At times you will make mistakes in these procedures. What is most important is to maintain an attitude of reverence and worship towards the real presence of Jesus in the Word made flesh of the Eucharist and be warm and hospitable to members of the assembly.