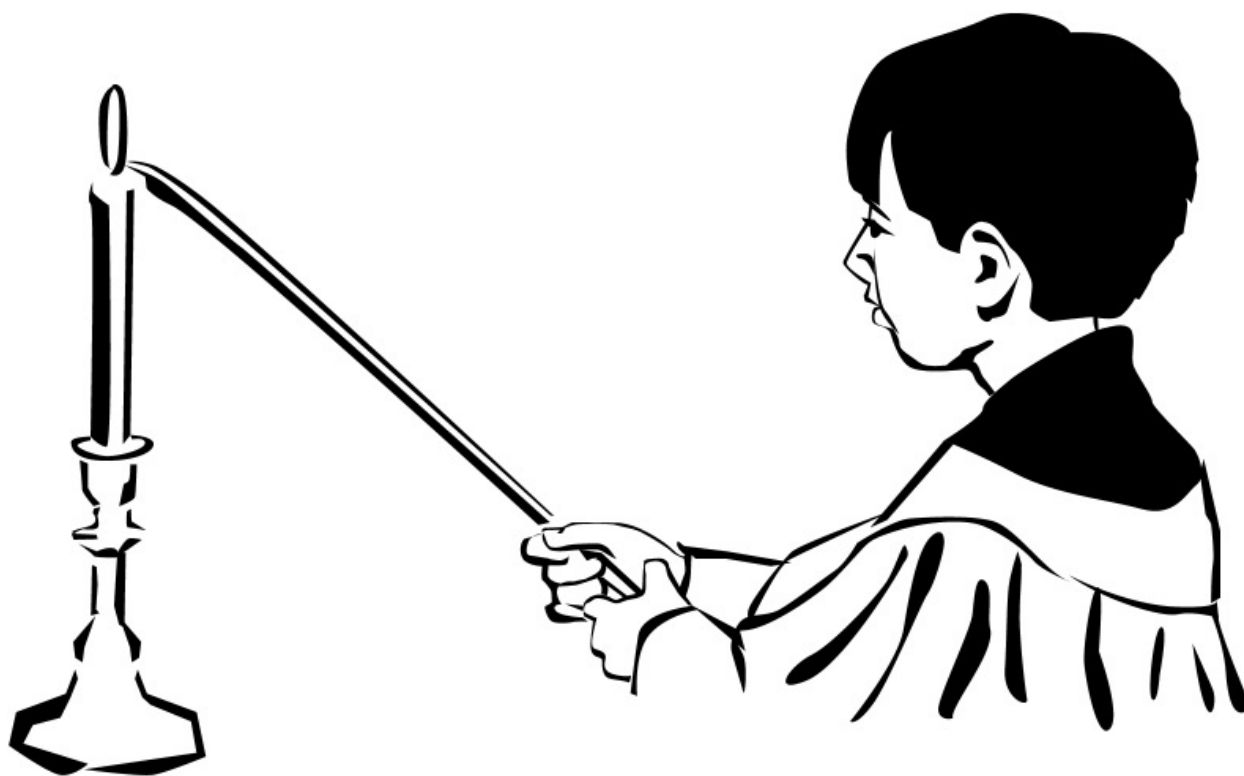


# Serving at the Altar of God

An Instruction for Children and Youth



YOUR NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

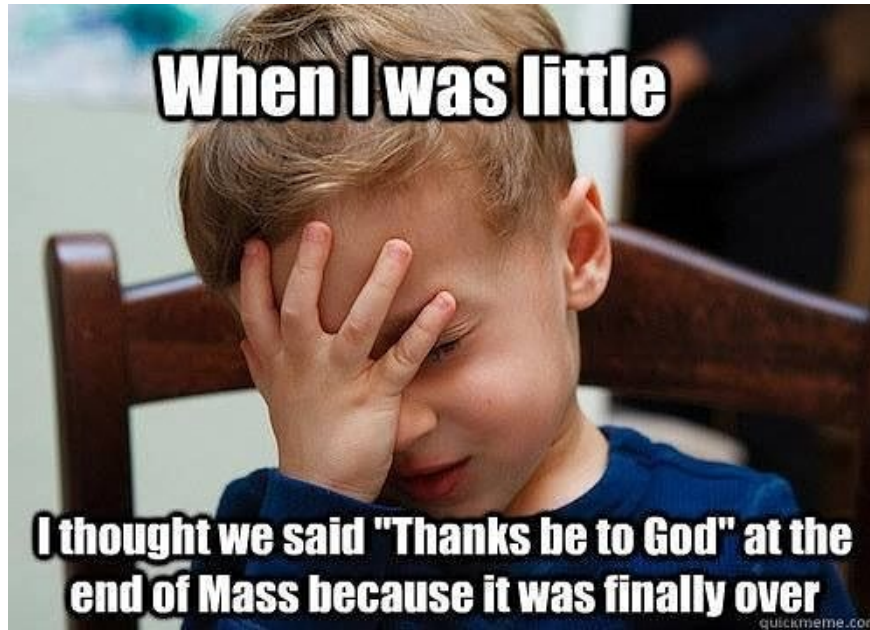
TODAY'S DATE: January 15, 2023

PACKET NO. 4

Saint Vincent de Paul Catholic Church Religious Education Program  
*Berkeley Springs, West Virginia*

# Serving at the Altar of God

An Instruction for Children and Youth - Saint Vincent de Paul Catholic Church Religious Education Program



The last time we met, you learned about **The Liturgy of the Word** - when we hear the lector proclaim the Word of God from the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible, and when the priest proclaims the holy Gospel as written by either Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. You also learned about the most important part of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass - the **Liturgy of the Eucharist** - the busiest part of the Mass for altar servers. Now, how does the Mass end? What do the altar servers do at the end of Mass?

## LESSON 4, PART III: The Concluding Rite (the end of Mass)

At the end of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the priest may sit in the **presider's chair** for a few moments of **sacred silence**. When he does, the **congregation** also sits in silence. The altar servers are also to be seated once their duties at the altar are completed.

- The priest will then stand and fold his hands in prayer. When he says, "Let us pray,"
  - The congregation and the altar servers stand.
  - The assigned altar server brings the **missal** from its stand to the priest, making sure to bow at the altar as he or she passes.
  - The priest then prays aloud the Prayer After Communion. At the end of that prayer, the congregation and altar servers respond "Amen" and the altar server holding the missal returns it to its stand, remembering to bow to the altar as he or she passes.
  - The priest then asks the congregation to be seated to listen to announcements. The altar servers also sit down at this time. This begins the **Concluding Rite**.

# Serving at the Altar of God

An Instruction for Children and Youth - Saint Vincent de Paul Catholic Church Religious Education Program

- At the end of the **announcements**, the priest will then stand and say, “The Lord be with you.” The congregation and the altar servers also stand and respond, “And with your spirit.”
- The priest will extend his hands and pray out loud,

*“May Almighty God bless you,*

*the Father, and the Son, ✝ and the Holy Spirit.”*

- The congregation and the altar servers make the Sign of the Cross ( ✝ ) as the priest gives this blessing. The congregation and altar servers also respond, “Amen.” (Candle bearers may be excused from this gesture; however, they must also respond “Amen” with the congregation.)

*SIDE NOTE: Instead of the simple blessing mentioned above, sometimes the priest will give a **solemn blessing**, such as on special holy days or occasions such as a baptism, wedding, or funeral. He may begin a solemn blessing with the words, “Bow your heads for the blessing.” Altar servers should always be alert and not yet be in motion before the end of a solemn blessing! You want the graces from the blessing too, right?*

- After the congregation and the altar servers say the “Amen,” the priest continues with one of the following **prayers of dismissal**:
  - “Go forth, the Mass is ended.”
  - “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.”
  - “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.”
  - “Go in peace.”
- The congregation and the altar servers respond, “Thanks be to God.” As the **cantor** announces the **recessional hymn**:
  - The **cross bearer** retrieves the **processional cross**, proceeds to the center aisle between the first two pews, then stands facing the altar while holding the processional cross slightly above the floor. Do not rest the cross on the floor!
  - The candle bearers retrieve the candles and go to stand directly in front of the cross bearer facing the altar.
  - The **lector and EM** proceed to the **crossing area** and stand in front of the candle bearers facing the altar, leaving room for the priest.

*SIDE NOTE: Why do we say, “Thanks be to God” at the end of every Mass? What does it mean when we say that? Well, some may think it means, “Boy, I’m glad that’s over with. Now I can go about my day and forget about God.” That’s not what it means at all!*

*Let’s go back to the Liturgy of the Word. We say “Thanks be to God” after the first and second readings, and we say “Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ” after listening to the Gospel. When we respond at those times, we are thanking God for speaking to us, giving us His wisdom and love through His words in scripture. We are also saying that we believe what God says, as He cannot lie or mislead us (like the evil one does).*

# Serving at the Altar of God

An Instruction for Children and Youth - Saint Vincent de Paul Catholic Church Religious Education Program

When we say “Thanks be to God” at the end of Mass, we are acknowledging our Christian responsibility as missionaries to go out into the world and proclaim Christ to everyone we meet through our actions, words, and deeds. Just as Jesus sent forth the apostles into the world, He sends us forth through the words of the priest to tell the whole world that Jesus loves us all.

- The priest then kisses the altar, leaves the **sanctuary**, and stands facing the altar in the center of the crossing area. The cross bearer, candle bearers, lector, and EM wait and bow with the priest to the altar. After bowing, the cross bearer raises the processional cross high. Everyone in the procession turns to slowly process down the main aisle through the **nave** of the church to the **narthex**.

**SIDE NOTE:** Ack! Why does the priest kiss the altar?

There are two times when the priest kisses the altar: first, when he ascends to the sanctuary at the beginning of the Mass, and again as he leaves the sanctuary at the end of Mass. This beautiful gesture signifies the priest's love and respect for the miracle which is performed on the holy altar - the commemoration of Jesus' dying on the cross for our sins. The altar, in a way, symbolizes Calvary, the place near Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified. We also bow to the altar for this same reason.

**SIDE NOTE TO THIS SIDE NOTE:** Always remember that **NOTHING is to be placed upon the altar that is not used at Mass!** Only the sacred vessels and altar cloths can be put on the altar, and nothing else! The altar is a very, very holy structure in the church which must be revered and respected at all times. It is **NOT** just any old table!

The order of the procession when leaving the church is the same as when you came in:

1. The Cross Bearer goes out first, then
  2. The Candle Bearers, then
  3. The Lector, then
  4. The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (or “EM”), and last out is
  5. The Priest
- Once the priest reaches the narthex, all **liturgical ministers** and altar servers join him in a prayer of thanksgiving. After this brief prayer, the altar servers will:
    - Return the processional cross and candles to their proper places
    - Receive further instructions from the priest and/or **sacristan** on
      - Blowing out the altar candles
      - Returning the **sacred vessels** (**chalice, pall, purificators**, and **patens**) to the **sacristy**
      - Any other duties needed to secure the altar and other materials used at Mass
    - Return to the altar server room to reverently hang up **surplices, cassocks**, or **albs** and **cinctures**, and retrieve personal items such as coats, jackets, purses, etc.
    - Before leaving the church, ensure the altar server room is left neat and orderly for the next Mass

Altar servers are always to be **reverent** and on their best behavior while in the church building. There is to be **no running, horseplay, or loud talking at any time anywhere in the church building.**

Remember, you just assisted in the greatest miracle on earth which is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass! Share your joy with your family and friends when you leave the church to go home.

# Serving at the Altar of God

An Instruction for Children and Youth - Saint Vincent de Paul Catholic Church Religious Education Program

## LESSON 6, PART I: *The Vestments of the Priest*

### PRAYERS DURING PRIESTLY VESTING AND THE MEANING OF VESTMENTS

As the priest prepares to dress himself in the sacred garments for Mass, it has been a long-standing tradition in the Church that he recites the following prayers:

#### Washing of hands

*Give virtue to my hands, O Lord, that being cleansed from all stain I might serve you with purity of mind and body.*

- 1 **AMICE** – a rectangular neck cloth which serves to protect the valuable chasuble and stole, but is used only if the alb does not cover the ordinary clothing at the neck.

#### Prayer

*Place, O Lord, the helmet of salvation upon my head, to repel the assaults of the devil.*

- 2 **ALB** – a long white garment worn by the priest to represent the new and immaculate vestment that has been received through baptism.

#### Prayer

*Cleanse me, O Lord, and purify my heart, that washed in the Blood of the Lamb I may attain everlasting joy.*

- 3 **CINCTURE** – a cord used as a belt to tighten the alb symbolizing the virtue of chastity and continence, and is the same color as the chasuble.

#### Prayer

*Gird me, O Lord, with the cincture of purity and quench in me the fire of concupiscence, that the virtue of continence and chastity may remain in me.*

- 4 **STOLE** – a long narrow band, several inches wide and about 80 inches long (and of the same color as the chasuble) which is worn as a sign that the priest is serving in his official liturgical role.

#### Prayer

*Return to me, O Lord, the stole of immortality, which I have lost in the sin of my first parent; and although I, unworthy, approach Thy sacred mystery, grant to me, nevertheless, everlasting joy.*

- 5 **CHASUBLE** – the final vestment of the priest that is worn over all the others and symbolizes the virtue of charity and the yoke of unselfish love.

#### Prayer

*O Lord, who hast said, My yoke is easy and My burden light; grant that I may be able so to bear it, that I may obtain Thy grace. Amen.*



Illustration by Nathan Runda

The above

image is borrowed from SimplyCatholic.com

**Never disturb the priest while he is prayerfully vesting for Mass** unless it is a true emergency and no one else is available to help you. Hold your questions for when he finishes.

# Serving at the Altar of God

An Instruction for Children and Youth - Saint Vincent de Paul Catholic Church Religious Education Program

## LESSON 6, PART II: Altar Server Vestments

CURRENT:



NEW:



**Altar servers at St. Vincent de Paul will begin to wear new vestments at Mass within the next few months!**

Yes! At this time, new altar server **vestments** are being purchased for use at our parish. We are very grateful to our **benefactor** for donating the money needed to replace our current vestments! Please pray in thanksgiving for the generosity of this **parishioner**.

Until our new vestments arrive sometime this coming spring, you will wear the **alb** and **cincture**:

- The white altar server's **alb**, just like the priest's, reminds us of our baptism, when original sin is removed from our soul and we are made pure and holy in the sight of God.
- The **cincture** (pronounced "sink-chur"), also worn by the priest, is worn around the waist like a belt and tied in a knot. The cincture is a symbol of the altar server's state of **purity** and **chastity**. The cincture the altar server wears is to be the same color as the **chasuble** the priest wears at Mass. If the correct liturgical color is not available, then wear a white cincture.

The new vestments are called

- **Cassock** (pronounced cass-sick): a black robe worn over street clothes. Priests sometimes wear cassocks as an outward sign of their priestly ministry that sets them apart from lay persons when worn outside of the Mass. When worn by altar servers, the cassock is a reminder that they are set apart from the people while serving at the holy altar of God.
- **Surplice** (pronounced sur-pliss): a loose-fitting white garment worn over a cassock. The color white is a symbol of purity.

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL CATHOLIC CHURCH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM - Berkeley Springs, WV



# Serving at the Altar of God

An Instruction for Children and Youth - Saint Vincent de Paul Catholic Church Religious Education Program

Some funny memes to make you smile: Go ahead and share them with your family and friends!

