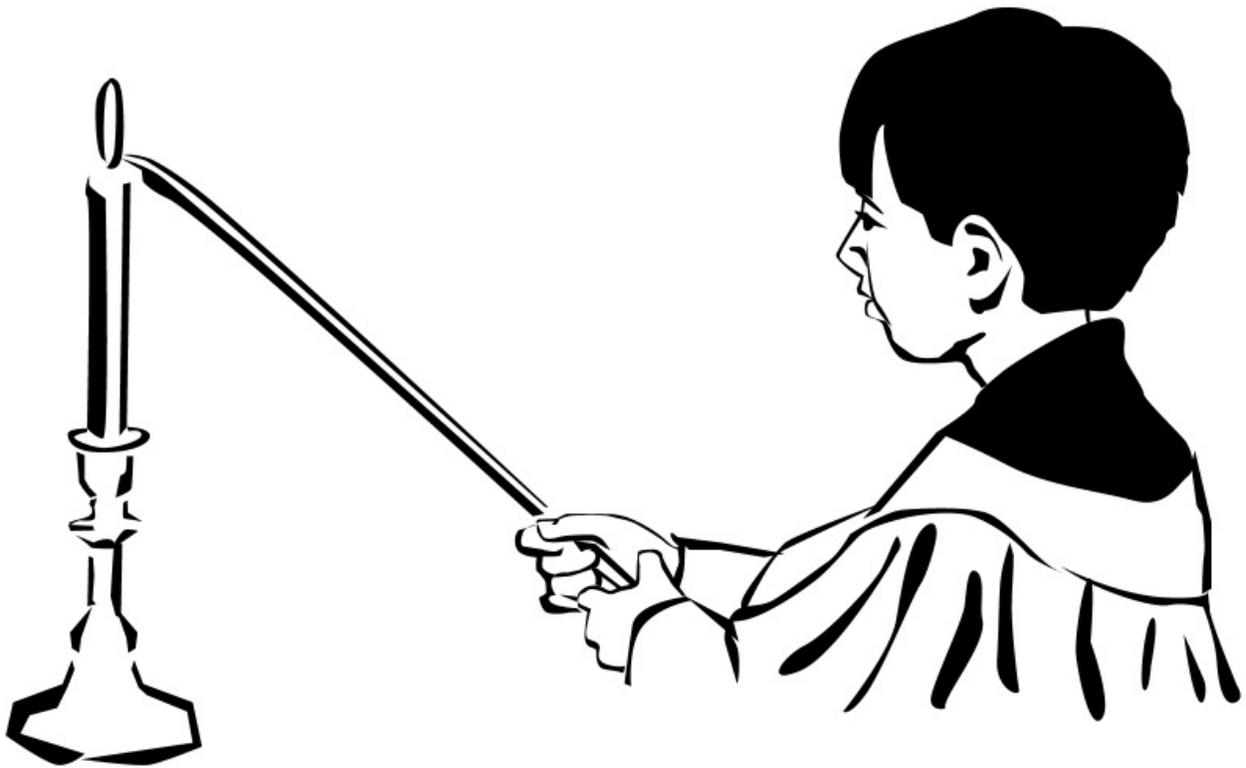


Serving at the Altar of God

An Instruction for Children and Youth



YOUR NAME: _____

TODAY'S DATE: October 2, 2022

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

Serving at the Altar of God

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Lesson 1

What is an Altar Server?

An altar server is one who assists the priest at Mass in bringing the Real Presence of Jesus to the people. It's a very important ministry within the Church, as it supports the priest and the people in the proper worship due God. Altar servers must follow the example set by Jesus, Who placed Himself at the service of all men and women, and ultimately sacrificed His life for us.

The word **ministry** comes from the Latin word "ministrare" (min-is-strar-ay) which means "to serve". Serving at the holy altar of God is a sacred ministry which is a very important part of the Mass.

Altar servers are role models and reflections of Jesus' love for us not just at Mass, but in their everyday lives as well, by being generous, loving, and committed to serving their families, their friends, and members of the parish.

Who can be an Altar Server?

Any boy or girl who has received their First Holy Communion can serve at the altar of God after receiving proper instruction and being invited to join the parish's **Altar Server Guild**.

Even adults can serve in the capacity of altar server. Most adults at our parish who serve at the altar were altar servers as children. Some adults have recently learned to serve in this ministry at Saint Vincent de Paul!

What do Altar Servers Do?

The altar server has several responsibilities before and after to make sure that the Mass goes smoothly and reverently. Some of those responsibilities include:

- Lighting the candles at the altar before Mass
- Ringing the altar bells at the **epiclesis** and **consecration**
- Before Mass, ensuring all articles necessary for Mass are on the **credence table**
- Leading processions
- Assisting the priest with his prayers (opening prayer, the **lavabo**, closing prayer)
- Extinguishing the altar candles after Mass
- Assisting in returning used sacred vessels to the sacristy after Mass

Why be an Altar Server?

Only you can answer that question for yourself by discerning the call through prayer. However, young people usually choose to serve in this ministry because of their love for God and His church, and possibly a desire to serve the Church when they are older either as a priest, as a member of a religious order, or as a lay employee or volunteer.

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Lesson 2 - Parts of the Church

- The **narthex** (gathering space) is where the faithful enter the church. At Saint Vincent de Paul, we normally refer to this space as the **gathering space**. This is where the priest and altar servers gather before processing into the church together, and where they meet again after processing out of the church.
- The **Altar Server Room** is where you will obtain your **alb** and **cincture**, and then **vest** for Mass. You may leave your coat or backpack here. Be mindful that other ministers (such as **lectors** and **ushers**) also use this room by keeping it as neat as possible.
- The **sacristy** is where the celebrants of the Mass (priest, bishop, deacon) keep their vestments and vest for Mass (**cassock, alb, chasuble, dalmatic, cincture, stole**). They pray in preparation for saying Mass while they vest. This is a room where everyone must show reverence, just as we would in the church. It is not a room for casual gatherings.

Also kept in the sacristy are:

- The **sacred vessels** (**paten, ciborium, chalice, cruets**) and other articles used for Mass are kept here. This is a room where you must show reverence, just as you would in the church.
 - The **sacred linens** for the altar (**pall, purificators, manuterges, corporal**) are kept and maintained in this room by the **Altar & Rosary Society**. These special linens are not to be used for any reason other than for use at the altar.
 - The **sacrarium** is a special sink (not in the washroom) which is used for purifying and washing the sacred vessels and linens. It drains directly into the ground, not the town's sewer system like the sinks at our homes. The reason is if there are any remnants of the Body or Blood of Jesus on them, those remnants return to the earth which Jesus blessed by His human presence over 2,000 years ago. Do not ever use this sink to wash your hands or any other items!
- The **nave** is the part of the church where the people of God worship during the Mass. They sit in **pews** and kneel on **kneelers** during the Mass.
 - The **sanctuary** contains the **tabernacle, sanctuary candle, altar, altar cloth, altar candles, altar bells, presider's chairs, ambo, and credence table**. This is the most holy part of the church, as it's where the most holy sacrifice of the Mass is celebrated. It is an extreme privilege for a **lay person** to stand in the sanctuary (or, "on the altar").
 - The **crossing** is where the people come to receive the Holy Eucharist at Mass. It is also where the priest and liturgical ministers meet after processing into the church, and where they meet before processing out of the church after Mass.

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Can you name the parts of our church that you see in this picture?



What liturgical ministers can you identify in this picture?
