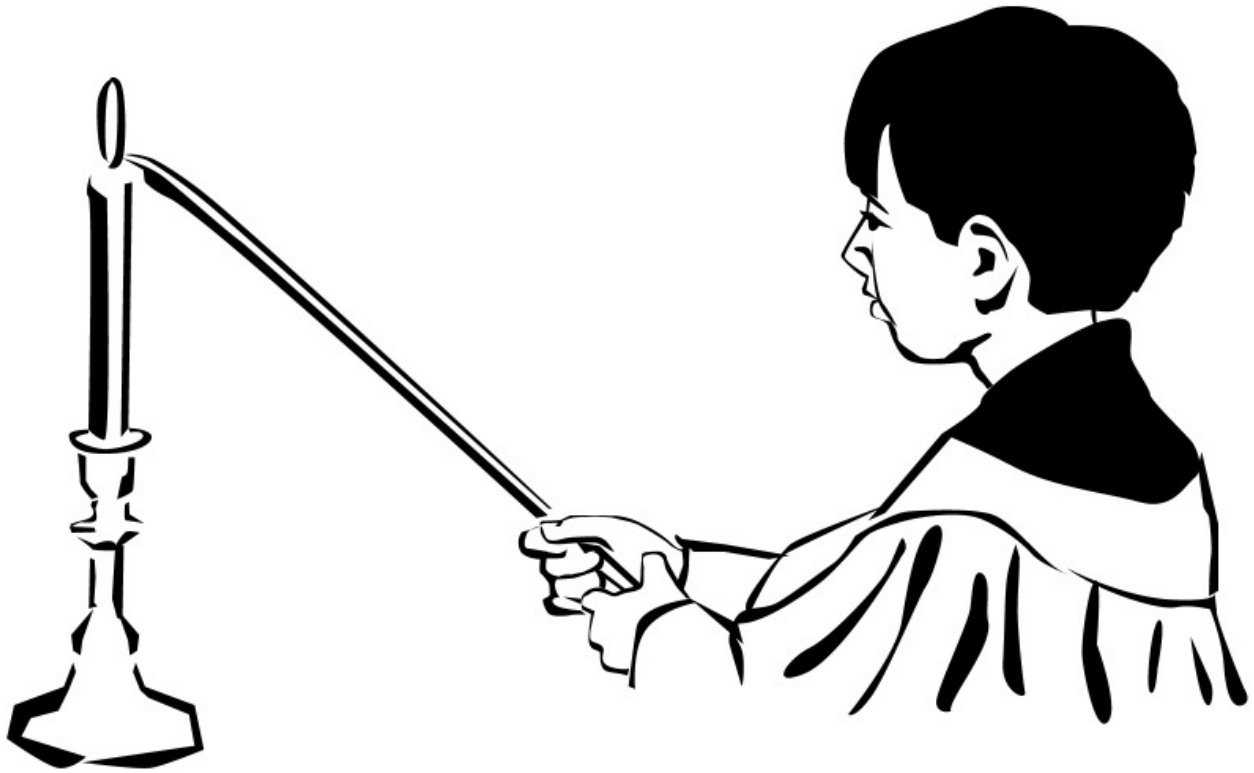


# Serving at the Altar of God

An Instruction for Children and Youth



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

**TODAY'S DATE:** November 13, 2022

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

# Serving at the Altar of God

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## THE COLORS OF THE CHURCH

Color	Meaning	When
Purple	Preparation	Used during Advent to remind us we are preparing to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ (Christmas); used during Lent to remind us we are preparing to celebrate Jesus' death and resurrection (Easter); purple signifies repentance and remembrance
White	Celebration	Used on Christmas, Easter, and other solemnities. Sometimes, the priest will wear a gold chasuble instead of a white one. White signifies purity.
Green	Ordinary Time	Used during the times outside of Advent and Lent; this is the time when we hear about Jesus' ministry here on earth in the Gospels at Mass; green signifies hope.
Red	Pentecost and Feast Days of the Holy Martyrs	Used on Pentecost Sunday (the birth of the Church) to signify the flames or gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit; red also signifies the sacrifice of the Holy Martyrs
Rose	Gaudete (Gow-day-tay) Sunday (the 3rd Sunday of Advent)  Laetare (Lay-tar-ray) Sunday (the 4th Sunday of Lent)	When worn during Advent, the rose color reminds us of the joy we experience as we await the birth of Jesus.  When worn during Lent, the rose color reminds of how we will rejoice when we celebrate the rising of Jesus from the dead on Easter Sunday.

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Last week you learned about the **Introductory Rites**, or, the beginning of the Mass. You were shown and practiced how to process into church with the processional cross and candles, where to stand before the altar after processing in, bowing with the priest, where and how to sit, and then bringing the Missal to the priest at the **collect** and returning it to its stand when he finishes praying. After everyone sits down, what happens next?

## LESSON 4, PART II:

- **The Liturgy of the Word**
  
- **The Liturgy of the Eucharist**
  - **Offertory**
  - **Communion Rite**

### The Liturgy of the Word

After the **collect**, everyone sits down - even the altar servers. This begins the second part of the Mass called **The Liturgy of the Word**. Altar servers remain seated during this part of the Mass with their hands on their laps and participate just the same as if they were in the pews with their families.

- *The First Reading*
  - At the beginning of **The Liturgy of the Word**, the **lector** reads a passage from the **Old Testament** of the Bible from the **ambo**. You'll hear the lector announce, "A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah," for example. He or she will then read the passage to us. At the end of the passage, the lector says, "The Word of the Lord," and we all respond, "Thanks be to God" because we're grateful to hear what God has to say to us at Mass.
  
- *The Responsorial Psalm*
  - Next, the cantor sings verses from the *Book of Psalms* (which also is in the **Old Testament** of the Bible). We all respond to each verse in song, reflecting on what the Psalm means to us. (Listen carefully to the cantor for the response or, before Mass, look in the **hymnal** so you'll know what the response is ahead of time!)
  
- *The Second Reading*
  - After the Psalm, the **lector** again goes to the **ambo** and reads a passage from the **New Testament** of the Bible. You'll hear the lector announce, "A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Romans" for example. He or she will then read this passage to us. At the end of the passage, the lector again says, "The Word of the Lord," and we all respond, "Thanks be to God" because we are grateful to hear what God has to say to us at Mass.

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- *The Holy Gospel*
  - Next is the focal point of The Liturgy of the Word, when the priest proclaims the **Holy Gospel** during which everyone stands (we stand because we are going to hear the actual words said by Jesus Himself when He was on earth). While the priest is proceeding from the presider's chair to the **ambo**, the cantor leads the congregation through the **Alleluia** (or *Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ* during Lent). When the priest reaches the **ambo** and says, "A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Saint John" for example, after which we all say "Glory to You, O Lord." When we say this out loud, we make a small sign of the cross with our right hand on our forehead, lips, and over our heart. We do this to remind us that the Word of God is always to be on our minds, on our lips, and in our hearts. (While you do this gesture, you can also pray to yourself, "May God's Word always be on my mind, on my lips, and in my heart.") After the Holy Gospel is proclaimed, the priest says, "The Gospel of the Lord." We all respond, "Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ." Then everyone sits while the priest gives his **homily**. During his homily, the priest ties together the messages we heard in the readings and the Gospel which helps us understand and reflect on what God says to us at Mass.

*SIDE NOTE: Why is it called The Liturgy of the Word? What does that mean?*

*During this part of the Mass, we listen to readings from the Holy Bible. All the writings in the Bible were inspired by God. God told the prophets (such as Isaiah and Ezekiel in the Old Testament) what to say, and so they wrote His words down. Other writings included in the Bible were discovered by the Church throughout the ages and deemed to be so special that only God could have inspired the writers. But when Jesus became man and walked upon the earth, He spoke directly to his disciples and the apostles. His followers actually heard the voice of Jesus and wrote down His words! Because of this, we call Jesus "The Word."*

The priest will conclude his homily and then sit for a short while so we can reflect on all we just heard. He then stands and invites all of us to stand with him and pray the **Creed**.

After the Creed, we all remain standing for the **Universal Prayer** (also called the **Prayer of the Faithful**) which is read by the lector. After each prayer, we respond, "Lord, hear our prayer." At the end of the Universal Prayer, everyone in the congregation is seated. The altar servers begin to prepare for the next part of the Mass...

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## The Liturgy of the Eucharist

### *The Offertory:*

The **organist** begins to play the Offertory Hymn, during which the altar servers help prepare the altar for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass - the Eucharist. This is the busiest part of the Mass for altar servers - always be alert!

The altar servers will place the **corporal**, the **purificator**, the **chalice**, the **pall**, and the **Missal** on the altar. These items are located on the **credence table**.

Once the altar is prepared and the priest sees that the gifts are ready to be brought to him by the Offertory Procession, the priest will walk to the front of the altar to meet the Offertory Procession. An altar server will go and stand with the priest in front of the altar to help him receive the offertory gifts of bread and wine from the Offertory Procession. (Any other altar servers stand in front of their seats.)

*SIDE NOTE: People from the congregation take the bread and wine to be used at the altar for consecration to the priest; this is called the **offertory procession**. These gifts from the people signify an offering to God in thanksgiving for His goodness and mercy. The priest prays over these gifts, asking for God to consider them good and holy, worthy and acceptable as a sacrifice.*

- An usher will give the money basket to the priest. The priest will pray over the offerings and return it to the usher. The usher will then place the basket at the side of the altar. The altar server does not assist at this time.
- Then the bread and wine are offered to the priest. The priest will give the wine to the altar server, then take the bread with him to the altar and begin to pray. The altar server takes the wine and stands near the credence table (remove the stopper from the cruet and place it on the credence table). Another altar server comes to the credence table and takes the water cruet in his or her hands. Both altar servers stand and wait at the credence table while the priest offers the bread. Be sure that the handles of the cruets are facing away from you - this will make it easier for you to hand off the cruets to the priest.
  - When the altar servers holding the water and wine see that the priest has finished offering the bread to God, they walk to the side of the altar.
    - The priest will take the wine and pour it into the chalice and return the cruet to the altar server.
    - The priest will then take the water and pour a few drops into the chalice and return the cruet to the altar server.
    - Both altar servers then bow to the priest, and then walk over to place the cruets back on the credence table.

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- After the priest finishes offering the wine, the altar servers bring a cruet of water and a manuterge (small towel) to the priest for the **lavabo** (the manuterge is placed over the altar server's left arm). The altar server holding the cruet of water pours the water over the priest's hands as he prays, "Wash me, O Lord, from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin." The other altar server hands the priest the manuterge so he can dry his hands. The priest will place the manuterge back on the altar server's left arm. After the lavabo is complete, the altar servers return the cruet and manuterge to the credence table.
- The altar servers then go to kneel at the altar and prepare to ring the **altar bells** for the **epiclesis** and the **consecration**.

*SIDE NOTE: The lavabo is a symbolic gesture of the priest during which he asks God for mercy on him for his sins. According to Jewish custom in biblical times, washing one's hands was a way of becoming clean and pure before a meal. The Mass is essentially a meal at the table of God (the holy altar). The priest asks God for mercy from his sins so he is worthy to perform the eucharistic miracle of consecrating the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.*

After the offertory prayers are finished and while the congregation is still seated, the priest then begins to pray the **Eucharistic Prayers**. This is the holiest and most sublime part of the Mass. This is when a miracle occurs! This is when the priest consecrates the bread into the actual Body of Christ, and the wine into the actual Blood of Christ. At the Consecration is when Jesus becomes truly present to us in what looks like bread and wine. All Catholics must believe that the bread and wine which is consecrated by the priest at Mass is truly the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus becomes perfectly present to us, just as if He were standing in the church with us! The bread and wine that we see are not just symbols! Read Chapter 6 of St. John's Gospel in the Bible (also known as the *Bread of Life* Discourse). Jesus says, "This is my Body." He didn't say, "This is *kinda like* My Body"!

*SIDE NOTE: When Jesus gave us His Body and Blood at the Last Supper (on Holy Thursday) before He was crucified, because He was God, He knew that we would not want to eat and drink actual flesh and blood. No! Jesus loved us so much that He made sure we would find His Body and Blood pleasing to take into our bodies; so He presented Himself to us at the Last Supper by veiling His presence in the forms of bread and wine. Throughout the ages and to this day, bread and wine are food items which prevent hunger and thirst. Jesus never wants us to hunger and thirst for Him; receive His nourishing Presence at Holy Communion every week.*

*The Eucharistic Prayer:*

**Altar servers must be very focused on what the priest is doing and saying at the altar during the Eucharistic Prayer.**

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After the lavabo, the congregation stands and the priest prays, "Pray brethren that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the Almighty Father. Everyone (even altar servers) responds, "May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of His name, for our good and the good of all His holy Church."

The priest will then pray a prayer over the offerings; at the end of his prayer we all say, "Amen."

Then this exchange occurs:

Priest: "The Lord be with you." Everyone responds, "And with your spirit."

Priest: "Lift up your hearts." Everyone responds, "We lift them up to the Lord."

Priest: "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God." Everyone responds, "It is right and just."

The priest continues with the Preface, and then everyone joins in with "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord...". After the Holy Holy Holy (The Sanctus), everyone kneels in the pews. The altar servers kneel in the sanctuary. One altar server prepares to ring the altar bells.

*The Epiclesis:*

This is the first time the altar bells are rung at Mass. The altar server closely watches the priest for when he places his hands over the chalice and paten (the gifts) on the altar. When the priest does this, the altar bells are rung once, and then placed back on the sanctuary step.

*SIDE NOTE: This is the part of the Mass when the priest invokes the Holy Spirit to come down from heaven and make the gifts holy and acceptable to God. The altar bells are rung one time to signify the presence of the Holy Spirit.*

*The Consecration:*

The altar server watches for when the priest raises the paten with the bread (host) up to God for sacrifice. Before he does so, the priest says the words of Jesus said at the Last Supper: "Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is My Body, which will be given up for you." When the priest raises the paten, the altar server rings the altar bells three times. The priest returns the paten with the consecrated host (which is now the Body of Christ) to the altar.

The priest then picks up the chalice and prays, offering it to God. The altar server listens for the priest to say the words that Jesus said at the Last Supper: "Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of My Blood, the Blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in memory of Me." When the priest lifts up the chalice, the altar server rings the altar bells three times. The

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priest returns to the chalice with the consecrated Blood of Christ to the altar. The altar server places the altar bells back on the sanctuary step.

*SIDE NOTE: At the consecration of the bread and of the wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, the altar bells are rung 3 times in honor of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

Everyone is still kneeling, even altar servers. When the priest concludes the Eucharistic Prayer while raising the consecrated Body and Blood of Jesus to God with, "Through Him, with Him, and in Him..", everyone responds with "Amen" and then stands.

## *The Communion Rite:*

Altar servers stand right where they are at the step of the sanctuary and say the Our Father with the congregation. At the Sign of Peace, altar servers may give a sign of peace to a fellow altar server directly nearby and then continue facing the altar, standing with your hands folded at your chest. If you are the only altar server serving at Mass, then you are to remain facing the altar - focusing on the altar - with hands folded at your chest. Do not turn to give anyone in the congregation a sign of peace. Your job is to focus on the altar!

After the Sign of Peace, we all say the "Lamb of God" (Agnus Dei), and then the congregation and the altar servers kneel.

After we all say, "Lord, I am not worthy to receive You...", the altar servers stand and approach the priest at the altar to receive Holy Communion after the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, and before the lector.

After the altar servers receive Holy Communion, they then retrieve a paten from the credence table; one altar server joins the priest and the other joins the EM before the communion line.

The job of the altar servers at this point is to prevent the Body of Christ from falling out of someone's hands or out of their mouth and dropping to the floor.

- If the communicant is receiving on the tongue, place the paten as close as possible to their chin.
- If the communicant is receiving in the hands, place the paten underneath their hands and keep it there until you are sure they have control of the host.

Should a consecrated host fall to the floor, do not panic. Alert the priest or the EM. Do not pick up the host yourself; allow the priest or the EM to retrieve Our Lord and remedy the situation. Ask the angels to accompany them as they clean and purify the area where Our Lord's precious Body fell. Be attentive to the priest and/or EM and do whatever they may ask you to do to assist.



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*After Holy Communion is Distributed:*

The altar servers return the patens to the altar for purification by the priest.

After the priest purifies the sacred vessels, one of the altar servers takes the water cruet to the priest for him to wash the chalice. After the water is poured into the chalice, the altar server returns the cruet of water to the credence table.

Both altar servers remain near the credence table, watching for when the priest is finished purifying the sacred vessels. Once father is finished, the altar servers return the chalice, the patens, and the ciborium to the credence table. One altar server then retrieves the Missal from the altar and returns it to its proper stand outside of the sanctuary.

Once the altar is cleared, the priest will sit, and so do the altar servers. The congregation also sits. This concludes the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

**OUR NEXT ALTAR SERVER TRAINING (Blue Sunday) will be on Sunday, January 15, 2023.** You will learn about the Concluding Rites of the Mass, and then we will begin some hands-on practice where you will dress in an alb and cincture. Until then, **look over packet nos. 1 and 2, as well as this packet (no. 3).** Tell your parents that all the packets are available online via the Religious Education page of the parish website if you don't have your packets at home: [www.stvincentdepaucatholicchurchbs.com](http://www.stvincentdepaucatholicchurchbs.com)

## **IMPORTANT:**

Remember, **there is no class next week, November 20th.**

When we **return on Sunday, November 27th**, we will have regular catechism instruction (Orange Sunday) instead of altar server training.

Happy Thanksgiving to you and your families. And remember: LET GOD LOVE **YOU!**



**St. John Berchmans** is the patron saint of altar servers. His feast day is coming up soon - November 26th.

Pray to him as you learn to serve at Mass! Ask him to help you discern whether or not you are being called to serve at the altar of God.

