

Saint Elizabeth Roman Catholic Church Upper Uwchlan Township, PA

NOTES FOR ALTAR SERVERS: MARCH, 2008

INTRODUCTION:

Thank you for your willingness to be an altar server for Saint Elizabeth Church. You have accepted a very important responsibility, for assisting at the altar is an essential service to our parish community. May your altar service strengthen your faith commitment to God and to the Church!

- 1) Because of your position up front where everyone else can see you during Mass, your actions and behavior must provide a good example for others, especially for the younger children at Mass. By the way you walk in procession, participate actively in the responses, handle the liturgical vessels, and even how you act while standing, sitting or kneeling— all these communicate to others a spirit of reverence and respect for the Sacred Liturgy we celebrate together.
- 2) All altar servers are expected to know and participate aloud in the prayers and hymns used at Mass. Servers also need to be familiar with the proper names of each of the items used at Mass, such as the priest's vestments (alb, stole and chasuble), the lectionary and sacramentary, the chalice and paten, ciborium and tabernacle, lavabo bowl and hand towel, credence table, parts of the Mass, etc.
- 3) Ordinarily four servers will be scheduled for each Mass. White albs and cinctures are provided in the vesting parlor for our servers to wear. Remember that you are expected to wear appropriate clothes and shoes underneath the server's alb whenever you are assisting at the altar. Boys are expected to wear a collared dress shirt or polo shirt (not T-shirts), long pants (not shorts nor jeans), and regular or dress shoes (not sneakers); girls are expected to wear a dress, dress slacks and top, or a skirt & blouse (not T-shirts, nor sleeveless tops; not shorts nor jeans) and regular or dress shoes (not flip flops nor sneakers). How you look and present yourself expresses your faith and your respect.

GUIDELINES FOR SERVING MASS AT SAINT ELIZABETH CHURCH

Whenever you are assigned to serve Mass at Saint Elizabeth Church, please follow these basic directions; if you are not sure of any part of your responsibilities, please ask the sacristan or the priest-celebrant for help.

PREPARATION:

- 1) The schedule of liturgical ministers is posted on the bulletin board mounted on the wall directly across the hallway from the main robing sacristy (between the narthex and the daily Mass chapel). Please arrive at church at least **fifteen minutes before Mass**, sign in on the posted schedule and then check in with the sacristan or the priest-celebrant to make known that you are present and ready to help prepare for Mass. Make sure that the wine and hosts are ready on the offertory table, that the lavabo bowl and water carafe are ready on the credence table, and that enough chairs are in place

for seating the servers. Make sure each server is clear about his/her specific responsibilities

- 2) About five minutes before Mass, one acolyte goes to the altar to light the candles on either side of the altar, while the other acolyte lights the two processional candles in the robing sacristy. Candle lighters are kept in the work sacristy behind the altar and also in the robing sacristy.

INTRODUCTORY RITE AND LITURGY OF THE WORD:

- 1) The entrance procession will start in front of the baptistry in the center of the narthex; the cross-bearer leads the procession (carrying the cross), two other servers (acolytes) walk side by side carrying lighted candles, and the fourth server (the book-bearer) follows, all walking in front of the other liturgical ministers (readers, deacon and priest).
- 2) When the entrance hymn begins, all process *slowly* into the nave and up the center aisle; when the servers reach the steps in front of the altar, the cross-bearer and one acolyte move to the right and the other acolyte and the book-bearer move to the left, allowing room for the priest (± the deacon) to stand between them. The positions across the front steps are as follows:
 Book-bearer Acolyte Priest (±Deacon) Acolyte Cross-bearer Readers
- 3) When the other liturgical ministers (priest, readers and book-bearer) turn toward the tabernacle and *genuflect on the right knee*, the cross-bearer and acolytes do not genuflect but make a *reverential bow* toward the tabernacle (since ministers don't genuflect whenever they are carrying anything in procession). The acolytes and cross-bearer go up the steps on the right side, pass the altar and continue behind the reredos wall to place the candles & cross in their proper stands. Then the three of them take their positions standing in front of the seats provided for servers in the sanctuary. The book-bearer goes directly to his/her seat and stands in place.
- 4) When the entrance hymn is over, the book-bearer picks up the sacramentary from the table next to his/her chair and awaits direction from the priest-celebrant for bringing the sacramentary to the celebrant's chair. The server holds the book upright in two hands, opening to the appropriate page for the Introductory Rites. At the end of the Opening Prayer, the book-bearer returns the sacramentary to the table and takes his/her seat. When Baptism is being celebrated within Mass, the book-bearer should check with the celebrant about when to bring the sacramentary to the chair.
- 5) The Liturgy of the Word then follows as usual. All the servers are expected to join in the responsorial psalm, other responses, the Creed and the General Intercessions.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST:

- 1) After the collection is taken up, the priest goes to stand at the bottom of the steps in front of the altar to receive the offertory gifts; the two acolytes come forward and stand on the priest's right side to assist in receiving the gifts.
- 2) Meanwhile, the book-bearer carries the closed sacramentary to the altar and places it on the front left side corner of the altar. The book-bearer then goes down the steps to stand on the priest's left side to await the presentation of the gifts.

- 3) The cross-bearer takes the chalice, purificator (small white cloth) and corporal (large white cloth) to the altar, where the deacon will prepare the altar. If there is no deacon, the cross-bearer unfolds the corporal and places it flat in the center of the altar, leaving the chalice and purificator to the front right side corner of the altar. The cross-bearer places the sacramentary on top of the corporal in the front center of the altar, opens it to the offertory prayers, and then returns to his/her seat. If there are additional gifts being presented, the cross-bearer may need to join the other servers at the foot of the steps with the priest to receive the gifts.
- 4) The priest accepts all the gifts from the representatives of the congregation and hands them one-at-a-time to the servers. One acolyte receives the large ciborium of hosts from the priest, the other acolyte receives the carafe of wine and the book-bearer receives the collection basket. Once all the gifts have been received, all three servers together go up the steps toward the altar. The book-bearer takes the collection basket to the counter behind the reredos wall and then returns to his/her seat. The acolyte holding the carafe of wine goes to the side of the altar closest to the credence table and stands there. The acolyte carrying the large ciborium of hosts hands it to the deacon (or priest) who will place it on the right side of the corporal on the altar.
- 5) After leaving the large ciborium at the altar, this acolyte goes to the credence table, picks up the water cruet and returns to the altar to stand beside the acolyte holding the carafe of wine. After the priest or deacon pours the wine and water into the chalice, both acolytes return together to the credence table, put down the wine carafe and water cruet, and then bring the lavabo bowl (partly filled with water) and towel to the priest for the washing of the hands. They then return these items to the credence table and go to stand in front of their seats.
- 6) All four servers remain at their places for the *Eucharistic Prayer*, standing, kneeling or sitting together with the congregation. The cross-bearer is responsible to ring the bell at three points: when the priest extends his hands downward over the gifts on the altar, and when the host and chalice are held up after the words of consecration.
- 7) While the *Lamb of God* is being sung, the two acolytes bring the small (empty) ciboria from the credence table to the right side of the altar and return to their places. The book-bearer goes to the altar, picks up the sacramentary and returns it to the table beside his/her chair. After the priest has given Holy Communion to the deacon and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, the four servers stand up behind their chairs to receive Holy Communion from one of the ministers.
- 8) In receiving Holy Communion, each altar server should bow his or her head before the Blessed Sacrament and then respond "Amen" to the words of the minister ("The Body of Christ"). The communicant then either opens one's mouth or extends both hands, one atop the other, to receive the Sacred Host from the minister, reverently places the Sacred Host in his/her mouth and consumes the Sacred Host. The altar servers kneel and join in singing the hymn while Holy Communion is being distributed.
- 9) When the Blessed Sacrament has been returned to the tabernacle, all four servers help to carry the empty vessels from the altar to the work sacristy counter behind the reredos wall, and then return to their seats. The cross-bearer re-lights the two processional candles before returning to his/her seat.

CONCLUDING RITES:

- 1) After the meditation period and any announcements, the book-bearer brings the sacramentary to the priest at the chair and holds the book upright in two hands; the priest will open the sacramentary to the appropriate pages for the Closing Prayer and the Final Blessing. Then the book-bearer returns the sacramentary to the table.
- 2) After the blessing and dismissal, the cross-bearer takes up the processional cross, the acolytes pick up the processional candles, and all four servers line up at the bottom of the steps in front of the altar, leaving space between them for the priest (± deacon). The readers will stand in the same place as before, directly in front of the ambo railing.
- 3) When the liturgical ministers (priest, deacon, readers and book-bearer) turn toward the tabernacle and *genuflect on the right knee*, the cross-bearer and acolytes do not genuflect but make a *reverential bow* toward the tabernacle. All turn around and the cross-bearer leads the procession back down the center aisle; the two acolytes and the book-bearer follow the cross-bearer, walking in front of the readers back through the narthex to the robing sacristy. The acolytes should carefully extinguish their candles as soon as they pass the baptistry and place the candles in the stand in the sacristy.
- 4) After Mass one acolyte returns to the altar to extinguish the altar candles. All servers neatly hang up their albs and cinctures in the vesting parlor before leaving church.

Thank you once again for your stewardship of service to Saint Elizabeth Church!