



GUIDELINES FOR ALTAR SERVERS

INTRODUCTION.

The Office for Worship has prepared the following guidelines for Altar Servers. The purpose of the guidelines is to provide some general observations and principles regarding this important ministry of the Church.

The Ministry of Altar Server.

1. GIRM 100. Lay ministers may be deputed to serve at the altar and assist the priest and the deacon; they may carry the cross, the candles, the thurible, the bread, the wine, and the water.
2. GIRM 187. The duties that the acolyte may carry out are of various kinds and several may coincide. Hence, it is desirable that these duties be suitably distributed among several acolytes. If, however, only one acolyte is present, he should perform the more important duties while the rest are to be distributed among several ministers.

---The above is taken from taken from the General Instruction to the Roman Missal (Third Typical Edition)

3. Since the role of Altar Server is integral to the normal celebration of the Mass, at least one Altar Server should assist the priest. On Sundays and other more important occasions, two or more servers should be employed to carry out the various functions normally entrusted to these ministers.

Requirements.

4. Altar servers should be mature enough to understand their responsibilities and to carry them out well and with appropriate reverence. They should have already received Holy Communion for the first time and normally receive the Eucharist whenever they participate in the liturgy.

Formation.

5. Altar servers should receive proper formation before they begin their ministry. The formation should include instruction on the Mass and its parts and their meaning, the various objects used in the liturgy (their names and use), and the various functions of the Altar Server during the Mass and other liturgical celebrations. Altar servers should also receive appropriate guidance on maintaining proper decorum and attire when serving Mass and other functions.

Dress Code.

6. Altar servers may wear an alb or other suitable vesture or other appropriate or dignified clothing. All altar servers should wear the same liturgical vesture.

Function at Liturgical celebrations.

7. No distinction should be made between the functions carried out in the sanctuary by men and boys and those carried out by women and girls. The correct term is "altar servers" and should be used for those who carry out the functions of the instituted acolyte.
8. Altar servers carry the cross, the processional candles, hold the book for the priest celebrant when he is not at the altar, carry the incense and censer, present the bread, wine, and water to the priest during the preparation of the gifts or assist him when he receives the gifts from the people, wash the hands of the priest, assist the priest celebrant and deacon as necessary.
9. Altar servers are to participate in the Mass. They are to respond to the prayers and dialogues of the priest along with the congregation. They also join in singing the hymns and other chants of the liturgy.
10. Altar servers should be seated in a place from which they can easily assist the priest celebrant and deacon. The place next to the priest is normally reserved for the deacon.
11. Altar servers may not distribute Holy Communion unless they have been mandated for this function by the bishop.

Commissioning.

1. The *Order for the Blessing of Altar Servers, Sacristans, Musicians, and Ushers (Book of Blessings*, nos. 1847-1870) may be used before altar servers first begin to function in this ministry.