

HOW MANY SERVERS ARE NECESSARY AT MASS?

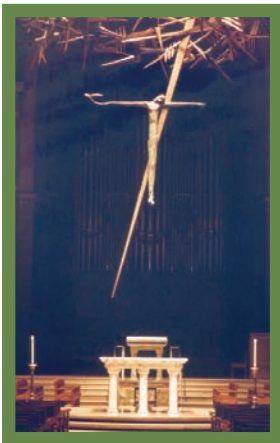
Since the role of server is integral to the normal celebration of Mass, there should be at least one altar server to assist the priest. On Sundays and more important feasts, there should be two or more altar servers to carry out the various functions entrusted to these ministers.

WHERE DO THE ALTAR SERVERS SIT?

Altar servers should sit in a place from which they can easily assist the priest and deacon. The place next to the priest is reserved for the deacon. (GIRM #310)

IS THERE A SPECIAL RITE FOR BLESSING ALTAR SERVERS?

Before altar servers exercise their ministry, they should be blessed using the ritual “Order for the Blessing of Altar Servers, Sacristans, Musicians and Ushers” found in the *Book of Blessings*, #1847-1870. This blessing is normally given by the pastor.



WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO PREPARE ALTAR SERVERS?

Serve God with Gladness: A Manual for Servers published by Liturgy Training Publications is an excellent workbook for training elementary age servers. The *Ministry of Servers* published by The Liturgical Press is also a helpful resource. A video entitled *Training the Mass Server* is also available from the same publisher. The Prayer, Worship and Evangelization Office has other resources as well as presenters available for the formation and training of altar servers.

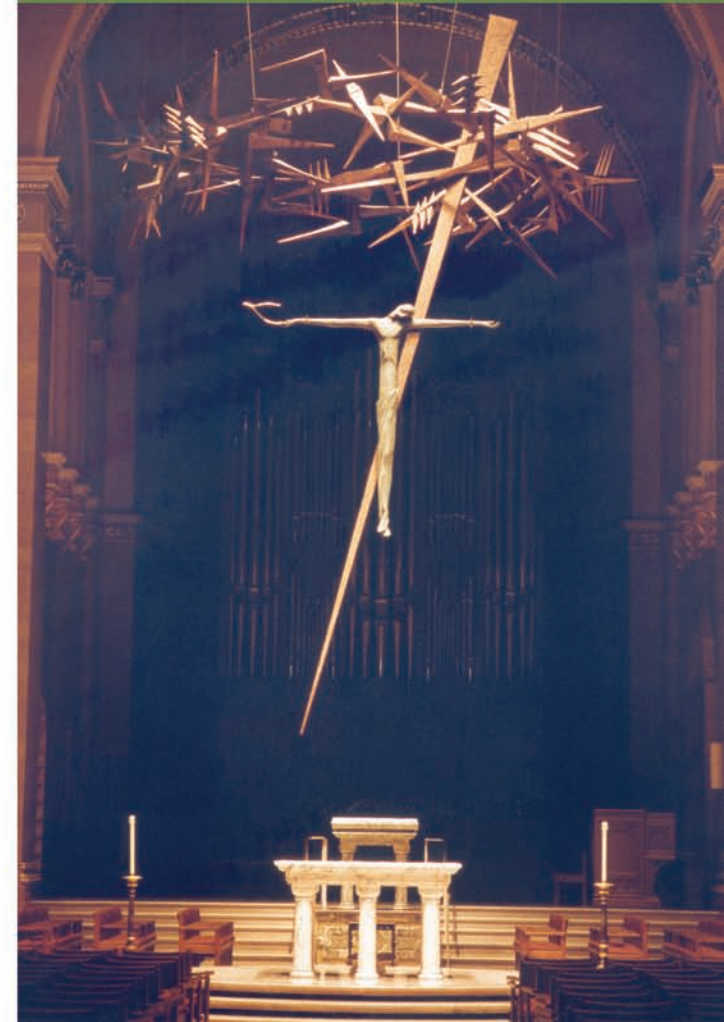
*For more information or
with any questions, please contact:*

Office for Prayer, Worship, and Evangelization
Archdiocese of Milwaukee
3501 South Lake Drive
Milwaukee, WI 53207

414-769-3349
800-769-9373 (x349)
(Within the 10 county Archdiocese)

oremus@archmil.org
www.archmil.org

THE MINISTRY OF ALTAR SERVERS QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



ARCHDIOCESE  OF MILWAUKEE

OFFICE FOR PRAYER, WORSHIP, AND EVANGELIZATION

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Assistance at the altar by servers represents a long liturgical tradition. These servers enhance the quality of celebration for the whole gathered assembly by taking part in processions and by ensuring that all items required for the celebration are available at the appropriate moments (Introduction to the Order of Mass, #22).

It is important that [servers] have an enthusiasm for public prayer. The server is not someone who performs a function or two and then settles back to observe the rest. [Servers] listen, sing and pray with the entire assembly. G. Thomas Ryan

The above paragraphs highlight the ministry of the altar server. The Vatican Council expressed the importance of having a number of ministers, in addition to the priest, for the fullest celebration of the liturgy. In the spirit of the ongoing renewal that liturgy requires, we present this series of Questions and Answers regarding the role of the altar server.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE ALTAR SERVERS AT MASS?

Altar Servers are lay men and women, girls and boys, who are designated to assist the priest and the deacon at Mass. Ordinarily, they are responsible for the cross, the candles, the incense and the censer. They hold the book for the priest at the chair, they assist the priest during the preparation of the gifts, and they wash the hands of the priest. In general, they assist the priest and deacon when necessary. (General Instruction of the Roman Missal — GIRM #100)

Altar Servers participate not only in their distinctive ministerial functions but also together with the worshiping Assembly by singing, listening, responding and through their posture and gestures.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN “INSTITUTED ACOLYTES” AND “ALTAR SERVERS”?

In the Roman Catholic Church, “institution” to the ministry of acolyte is reserved to lay men, usually those preparing for Holy Orders. Most parishes do not have “instituted acolytes” but “altar servers.” The diocesan bishop may permit the liturgical functions of the “instituted acolyte” – except that of distributing holy communion – to be carried out by “altar servers.”

WHO MAY BE ALTAR SERVERS?

Altar servers are baptized Catholics, women and men, boys and girls, who are mature enough to understand and carry out their liturgical functions. They should have received their first Holy Communion and normally receive the Eucharist whenever they participate in the liturgy.

WHAT SHOULD THIS FORMATION LOOK LIKE?

It should be technical and spiritual. Altar servers need to know the individual parts of the Mass and their specific meaning, the various objects used in the liturgy and their proper names, and the differing functions of the altar server during Mass and other liturgical celebrations, e.g., baptisms, funerals, weddings, morning prayer or evening prayer, and other devotions. They need to understand their functions as a generous service to God and God's people. Finally, they should be prepared to exercise their functions with reverence and proper decorum. This formation and training should continue throughout the period of service.

WHAT IS APPROPRIATE ATTIRE FOR ALTAR SERVERS?

In the dioceses of the United States of America, altar servers and other lay ministers may wear the alb, cassock and surplice, or other suitable vesture or other appropriate or dignified clothing. All servers should wear the same liturgical vesture. (GIRM #119, 339)

