

# Altar Serving Guidelines

## St. Rose of Lima Parish

The purpose of this guide is to maintain a level of consistency for those people serving on the altar on all Sunday and Holy Day Masses held at St. Rose of Lima. These guidelines have been produced based on feedback from both the Pastor and Parochial Vicar assigned to the Parish.

1. The ideal number of altar servers for a “normal” Saturday Vigil or Sunday Mass is 3. One will primarily serve as the cross-bearer and book-holder for the celebrant. The other two will serve as candle-bearers, assist in setting up the altar at the offertory, and ringing the bells at the epiclesis and elevation during the Eucharistic prayer.

If there are fewer than three servers at a weekend Mass, there will ALWAYS be a cross-bearer and there will be no candle-bearers. A second server will process behind the cross-bearer with hands folded and be responsible for setting the altar and ringing the bells.

2. Servers will wear the red cassock and white surplice. Cassocks should hang to about the top of the ankles. If that means that the sleeves are too long & covering the hands, than a shorter cassock can be worn. It’s better to have a shorter cassock than to create a trip or drop hazard by it being too long. The surplice should be large enough to go past the server’s waist as long as the white on the sleeves doesn’t extend beyond the red of the cassock at the wrists.

Each cassock has a number written in black marker on the tag on the back of the neck. Please mark down the number that you use on the server schedule for that Mass. Remember that you may need to use a differently numbered cassock or surplice each time you serve; you may have grown a little bit since the last time you served. Marking down the numbers that you’ve worn will help the Ladies Society know when specific items need to be cleaned.

3. The cross-bearer/book-bearer needs to be ready at 4 different times during the Mass.

a. At the end of the “Gloria” – present the Missal to Father for him to offer the Opening Prayer (Collect).

b. At the end of the Profession of Faith (the Creed) – present the 3-ring binder to Father for him to open the General Intercessions. Stay in place through the intercessions until Father concludes the prayers & the congregation sits down.

c. After Communion – present the Missal to Father for him to offer the Prayer After Communion.

d. At the end of Mass, when Father leaves the chair to go to the altar, get the processional cross and wait in the center aisle for Father to genuflect; turn & walk respectfully back up the aisle to the sacristy.

4. The candle-bearers need to be ready at the Gospel Acclamation (Alleluia). When the music starts, they should get their candles & proceed to stand behind the corners of the altar. The Priest or Deacon will pick up the Book of the Gospels. When he backs away from the altar with the book elevated, both candle-bearers need to process immediately to the sides of the Ambo and face each other until the Gospel reading is finished and the Book has been revered and closed. Then, put the candles back in their stands and have a seat for the homily.

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After the General Intercessions are finished, the Offertory will begin. Do not sit down. The priest or deacon may assist you, but if they don't, the following steps need to be completed.

- a. The Missal (on its stand) needs to be placed just left of center on the altar
- b. All the chalices need to be placed on the altar, as well as the purificators that should be sitting in front of them on the credence table.
- c. Any ciboria that **HAVE HOSTS IN THEM** need to be placed on the altar.
- d. One (1) water cruet needs to be placed on the altar.

After the offertory is complete & the gifts have been prepared on the altar, 1 candle-bearer needs to present the pitcher & bowl to Father to wash his hands; this is called the Lavabo. Be ready before he's ready. The other candle-bearer needs to have the finger-towel unfolded and ready for Father to dry his hands. You should be close enough that water can't drip from his hands to the floor. Water on the tile floor makes things very slippery. After his hands have been washed and dried, return the pitcher, bowl, and towel to the credence table.

5. After the Holy Holy Holy (Sanctus) has been sung, 1 of the candle-bearers needs to have the bells ready to be rung. When Father calls down the Holy Spirit (Epiclesis) by placing his hands above the bread and wine, ring the bells one (1) time.

When Father elevates the consecrated host, ring the bells once, when he lowers it to the altar, ring it a second time, and ring it a third time as he is genuflecting. Try to keep the timing between the sets of rings as even as possible.

When Father elevates the chalice, ring the bells once, when he lowers it to the altar, ring it a second time, and ring it a third time as he is genuflecting. Try to keep the timing between the sets of rings as even as possible.

6. After you've given the Sign of Peace, any empty ciboria on the credence table need to get put onto the altar.

7. After everyone has gone down to distribute communion, remove the Missal and its stand from the altar and put it back on the small table that it was on at the beginning of Mass.

Be prepared to assist in removing items from the altar **IF** the priest and/or Deacon asks you to help. Remain standing until the priest sits after communion is over and the altar is clear.

8. At the end of Mass, when Father leaves the chair to go to the altar, get the processional cross (or your candle) and wait in the center aisle for Father to genuflect; then turn & walk respectfully back up the aisle to the sacristy.

9. Put your cassock and surplice back on the same hangars that you got them from and hang them in the proper place in the cabinet. **PLEASE MAKE SURE TO MARK THE NUMBER OF THE CASSOCK THAT YOU WORE FOR THIS MASS ON THE SERVER SCHEDULE NEXT TO YOUR NAME.**