

# Altar Servers' Handbook

Revised 9/27/2010



### **An Altar Server's Prayer**

O God, You have graciously called me to serve You at Your altar. Grant me the graces that I need to serve You faithfully and with my whole heart. Grant too that while serving You, may I follow the example of St. Tarcisius, who died protecting the Eucharist, and walk the same path that led him to Heaven.

St. Tarcisius, pray for me and for all servers.

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### **An Altar Server's Promise**

I understand that serving Mass is an honor, and that Servers are Liturgical Ministers of ICD Parish. I understand that this is a serious commitment, and I promise to:

- Be at every Mass that I am scheduled to serve, or to find a substitute.
- Be an example to the people of the parish in my participation at Mass, listening to the prayers and readings, making the responses, singing along and not talking needlessly during Mass.
- Be an example to the people of the parish in the way I live my life.
- Show due respect to the holy things I will handle as a server, especially the cross, candles, vessels, books, and vestments.
- Follow the instructions of the priest and deacon during Mass.

If you have any questions do not hesitate to contact:

Sandi Shymanski \* ICD Server Coordinator \* 636-240-2329

Or

Fr. Nick Winker \* [frnick.winker@icdparish.org](mailto:frnick.winker@icdparish.org) \* 636-561-6611 ex. 516

Dear Altar Server,

The parish priests would like to thank you for your commitment to serve Mass here at ICD. Altar servers are an important part of the celebration of Mass and an important part of the life of our parish. You will assist in the celebration of Mass and be an example to the people of the parish. Your presence will make our celebration more a fitting celebration.

When the president or a king goes someplace he is accompanied by soldiers to protect him and to show that he is important. As altar servers you will be the honor guard for the King of Kings. You are not just carrying a cross or candles but showing honor to God and letting others know how important He is.

We hope and pray that not only does your service honor God and help the people of the parish to pray but that it brings you closer to God. It is a great honor to be so close to Jesus in the Mass and to help lead His people in worship. At the altar you will carry the sacred vessels which will hold the Body and Blood of Christ. What a privilege to be so physically close to God! This is something that we as priests know very well.

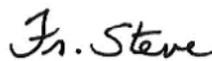
For many Catholics through the centuries, being an altar server was the first time they really dedicated themselves to God. Many priests and even saints found their vocation while serving at the altar. We hope that in making the sacrifices and showing the discipline required to be an altar server you will truly encounter our Lord Jesus.

While you may have heard the invitation to be a server from a parent, a teacher, a priest, or a friend, it is really God who has called you to be an altar server. We hope you cherish this gift as much as we did, and continue to serve for many years.

In Christ,



Msgr. Ted



Fr. Steve



Fr. Nick

## Prayer in the Sacristy before Mass

O great High-Priest, Jesus,  
not only did you offer yourself as the perfect sacrifice for me,  
but you give me your body to eat and blood to drink.  
I ask, by that awesome love that you have for me,  
that I may come to this mystery  
with the reverence and honor you deserve.  
Make me, through your grace,  
always to believe and understand, to think and to speak,  
of this great Mystery,  
in a way that pleases you and is good for my soul.  
Grant me to approach this Mass with a clean heart and a pure mind.

I come sick to the doctor of life,  
unclean to the fountain of mercy,  
blind to the radiance of eternal light,  
and poor and needy to the Lord of heaven and earth.  
Guide me as I serve You today at the Altar.  
Help me to give you all that I am.  
If I happen to make an error, may it be a lesson so my service will be  
perfect tomorrow.  
Amen.

## Altar Server's Prayer before Mass

Open my mouth, O Lord, to bless your Holy Name.  
Cleanse my heart from all evil and distracting thoughts.  
Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will  
that I may serve more worthily at your holy altar.

O Mary, Mother of Christ the High Priest,  
obtain for me the most important grace  
of knowing my vocation in life.  
Grant me a true spirit of faith and humble obedience  
so that I may ever behold the priest as a representative of God  
and willingly follow him  
in the Way, the Truth, and the Life of Christ.  
Amen.

## Serving on Sundays

- Make sure you know when you are scheduled to serve! If you can not be there find someone with whom to trade .
- Even if you are not scheduled be at Sunday Mass and ready to serve, ask if there is a need for servers.
- Dress appropriately. No t-shirts, no slip on sandals, clean tennis shoes or dress shoes.



- Be there 15 minutes before Mass, if you are late someone may take your place!
- Sign in at the information desk.
- Go to the sacristy.

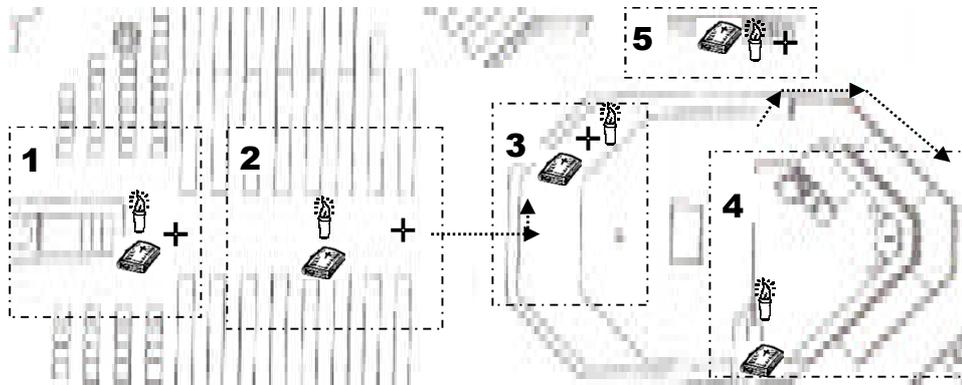


- Wash your hands.
- Get *vested*, dressed, in an alb and cincture.



- Determine who will take the cross, the candles, and the book
- Make sure the candles and cross are in the sacristy.
- Make sure the bells and kneeling pad are in place.
- See if there are any special notes or instructions posted or from the priest.
- Prepare yourself quietly for Mass.
- Light the candles shortly before Mass
- After the priest leads a prayer then go into the Church with cross and candles

## The Entrance Procession



- 1**  Cross bearer leads the procession, lining up in front of the offertory table.

 Book bearer and candle lighter each carry candles in the procession.
- 2**  When instructed by the priest or deacon the cross bearer walks slowly towards the altar.

 Other two follow about six feet behind.
- 3** On reaching the altar the cross bearer goes up to the first step, turns left and then stops

 The other two go on either side of him.

 All bow when the priest does.
- 4**  After bowing, the candle bearers go behind the president's chair..

 The cross bearer carefully places the cross in its stand near the tabernacle.

 The other two place their candles in their stands next to the ambo.
- 5**  The servers then go behind the president's chair to their chairs

## Introductory Rites

- All continue standing
-  Father says: *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*
-  All make the sign of the cross and say: *Amen*
-  The servers keep their hands folded nicely and make all the responses.
- The Mass continues with the Penitential Rite



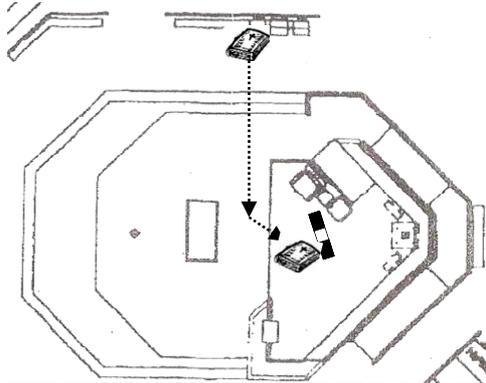
Fold your hands when you are not carrying anything

Next the is Gloria. (“*Glory to God in the Highest...*”)



The book is brought up after the Gloria is finished.

On weekdays or on Sundays when father is wearing purple we do not sing or say the Gloria so the book is brought up after the Penitential Rite. The book is carried resting against one’s chest with the front facing outward. The book bearer goes up and stands in front of the priest and a little to his side, turning the book so that the priest can open it.. The priest will say *Let us pray*, and open the book. The book is held open with hands at the bottom and the top of the book against one’s chest. At the end of the prayer the server or the priest closes the book and returns reverently to his or her seat.



### The Liturgy of the Word



During the Liturgy of the Word everyone listens attentively to the Word of God.

### The Liturgy of the Eucharist



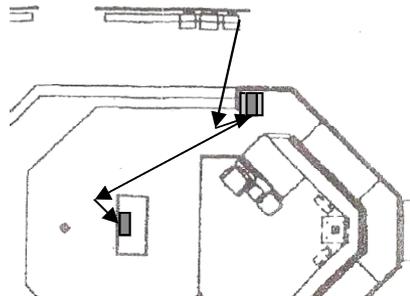
After the General Intercessions the people sit down.



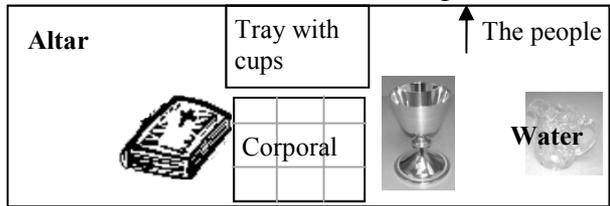
The cross bearer stands and goes to the table at the top of the ramp. He or she takes the tray of filled cups and places them on the front of the altar. If there are two trays he or she makes two trips.



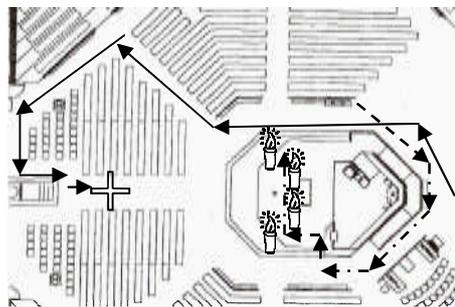
The book bearer brings the Sacramentary up to the altar. The Sacramentary goes on the left side of the altar. Then the book bearer goes back to the credence table, taking the Gospel book stand with them if it is there, it needs to be lifted directly off the altar.



 The book bearer then brings the priest's chalice and the corporal to the altar. If there is no deacon the server unfolds the corporal in the middle of the altar. Do not flip the corporal over, but unfold it from the top. The chalice is placed on the right side of the altar, next to but not on the corporal. The book bearer returns to the credence to get the water and places it on the right side of the altar. If there are any stacking ciboria they are brought to the altar.

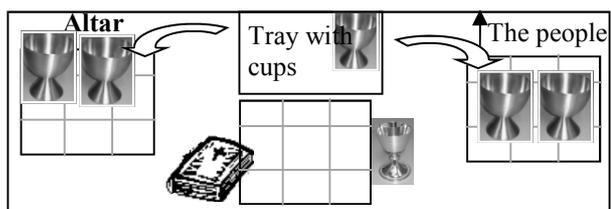


 At the same time the candle lighter goes back behind the altar to the credence table to get the candle lighter. Continue going around behind the altar and up to the ambo to light the candle lighter and light the candles around the altar, returning the lighter to the credence table when they are finished.



 The cross bearer gets the cross and goes to the back, using the side aisle, and waits standing about three feet in front of gifts table in front of the baptismal font.

 When the book bearer or candle lighter finish their tasks, they help the deacon finish setting the altar. The cups and purificators from the tray(s) go on corporals laid on the sides of the altar, divided evenly on either side. Move the chalices by the base and do not touch the inside of the cup. One of these servers returns the empty tray(s) to the credence table. If Father has not gone down to receive the gifts, they return to their seats.



 Father goes down in front of the altar to receive the gifts.

 If the candle lighter or book bearer are not doing anything else they come down with father and wait for the gifts to be brought up.

 When the cross bearer sees the priest arrive at the bottom of the steps he or she leads the gift bearers up to the altar stepping to the side upon reaching the altar.

■ After the gifts have been given to the priest he will hand them to the deacon and the servers.

☞ Then all turn and bow to the altar. Some priests might not turn and bow to the altar, just follow their lead.

☞ The cross bearer takes the cross back to its stand and returns to his or her chair.

☞ The book bearer and candle lighter take the bread and wine up to altar. Placing them on the right side of the altar or handing them to the priest or deacon. Be very careful carrying the flagon of wine it can be very heavy.

☞ The book bearer and candle lighter get the lavabo dish and towel from the credence table and come up to the right edge of the altar for the priest to wash his hands. One holds the bowl and the other takes the water from the side of the altar, the other hold the towel. When Father places his hands over the bowl pour water over them, not too much but not too little. The other server offers the towel to Father and receives it back from him. The deacon or priest also hands the servers the empty flagon. Both then put the towel, bowl, water and flagon back on the credence table. They then return to their seats.

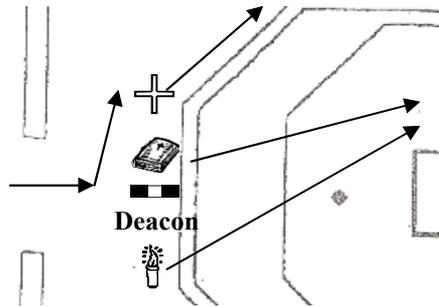
☞ At the beginning of the *sanctus*, “Holy ,Holy, Holy,” all three servers go and stand in front of the kneelers. The cross bearer stands in front of the bells. When the hymn is over all the servers kneel on the kneeling pad.

☞ During the Eucharistic prayer when the priest places his hands over the gifts and when he raises the body of Christ, the cross bearer rings the bells, by shaking them back and forth until the priests put the host down. The same is repeated for the chalice.

☞ The servers are the first to receive communion on that side.

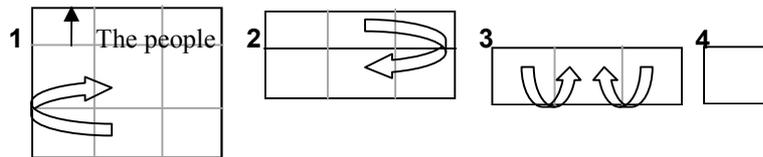
☞ The cross bearer sits after receiving communion

☞ During communion the book bearer brings the book back to his or her seat and holds it on his or her lap.

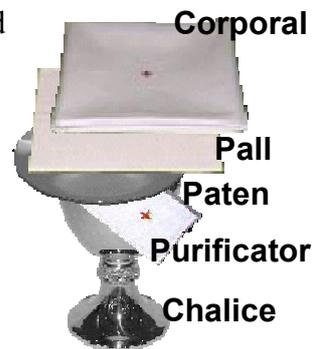


☪ During communion the candle lighter goes up to the altar and moves the chalice to the side of the corporal, if it is still there .

The candle lighter then folds the corporal. First the bottom is folded in towards the center. Then the top is folded down towards the center. Finally the two sides are folded into the middle.



☪ The candle bearer then takes the corporal and all the vessels on the altar back to the credence table. They usually can all be carried back at the same time. What is present is stacked over the chalice in this order, first purificator, then the paten, then the pall, then finally the corporal. Most often only the chalice, purificator, and corporal will be there. This stack is carried by placing one hand on the chalice and one hand on top of the corporal. Sometimes you will only have the corporal to take back, then it should be carried flat in both hands.

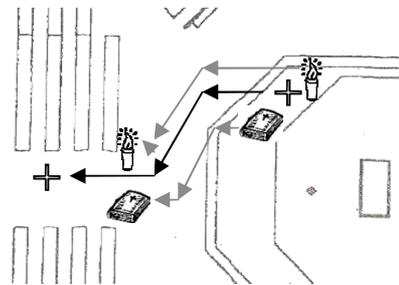


■ ■ After communion the priest stands and says “Let us pray.”

☪ The book bearer bring the book up to the priest as before. Sometimes the priest will signal for the book bearer to stay after the end of the prayer for a solemn blessing.

✚ At the end of Mass the cross bearer gets the cross from its stand and stands to the side on the first step as at the beginning of Mass.

☪ The other two servers line up on either side of the cross. They both bow when the priest bows



✚ The cross leads the procession out of Church.

☪ The other two servers follow behind the cross.

✚ The cross is placed on its stand in the sacristy

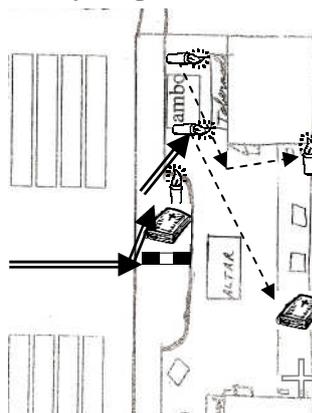
☪ The candle lighter extinguishes the candles in the sanctuary.

☪ ✚ All hang their robes up nicely in the proper place for its size. Before leaving ask the priest or deacon if they need any help.

## Serving in the Chapel

Normally there are two servers in the chapel. On arriving come in the sacristy door on the side of the chapel. Put on an alb and cincture, and then take the candles from of the ambo into the stands by the window in the sacristy. Divide the jobs, one server takes the book, the other lights the candles. Ask the priest or deacon if they need any help

 At the priest's direction both servers take a candle and go to the back of the chapel, usually going outside. They wait in the back of the main aisle until the priest rings the bell or the music begins. They go up the first step go off to the left, wait for the priest and bow with him. They place their candles by the ambo and go to their seats, the book bearer at the priest's left, and the candle lighter at the side chair at the priest's right.



 When the priest says "Let us pray the book bearer holds the book for him.

 After the petitions the candle lighter lights the candles at the altar.

 The book bearer takes the book to the altar placing it left of center, and brings the chalice and corporal, along with the paten and pall if present, from the credence table to the right side of the altar. The water, purificators, and other cups are also brought to the altar.

 When the priest goes down to receive the gifts both servers go down with him and bring anything they are handed back to the priest or deacon.

 The candle bearer takes the empty flagon back to the credence

 Both servers wash the priest's hands. Then at the "Holy, Holy" both servers kneel for the Eucharistic prayer on the second step.

 The candle lighter takes the bells.

 During communion both servers clear the altar, folding the corporal carefully. On Fridays the corporal is left on the altar. They then return to their seats

 When the priest says "let us pray" after communion the book bearer brings up the book.

 At the end of Mass, the servers process out carrying nothing, bowing to the altar with the priest at the beginning of Mass.

Both hang up their albs and offer to help clean up if help is needed.

 If three servers are there the third server carries the cross.



Serving a wedding or funeral requires extra training, which can be taken after serving faithfully for one year.

## Serving a Wedding

- When you arrive, check in with the wedding coordinator and the priest who is celebrating the ceremony. Find if the wedding will take place within or outside the Mass. Each priest will do things a bit differently, so be sure to check with them for specific instructions.
- Put your alb and cincture on and be ready for further instructions. Candles need to be lit 10 minutes prior to the wedding liturgy. Check with the wedding coordinator as to which candles get lit. It is a good idea to do a walk-through in the sanctuary to familiarize oneself with the set-up.
- Typically, servers do not process down the aisle. They usually walk in with the priest from the sacristy (chapel) or the side aisle (church). Bowing takes place before the altar, and unless told otherwise, stand with the priest before the kneelers until after the opening prayer. A server may be asked to take the bride's bouquet and set it out of the way.
- The Liturgy of the Word takes place as normal. During the liturgy, please pay attention to the readings and prayers. Participate where appropriate and please keep a smile on your face.
- Right after the homily, the priest will begin the marriage vows. At this time, servers are to bring to the kneelers the ring tray and the holy water. When the priest is finished with the ring ceremony, return the tray and water to the credence table.
- If Liturgy of the Eucharist is celebrated, servers take on the normal responsibilities. Often, during the sign of peace, server will take several roses to the couple (found on or near the credence table) for them to present to their mothers. Offer the bride and groom the sign of peace and then hand them the flowers.
- After Communion, couples often take a bouquet of flowers to the stature of Mary. Servers typically will give the bouquet to the couple at the kneelers.
- If the server has taken the bride's bouquet at the beginning of liturgy, he/she needs to return it to the bride before she walks down the aisle (after the couple is announce as "Mr. And Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_").
- At the end of the ceremony, after the bow before the altar, servers exit with the priest to the sacristy or down the side aisle.
- Please help the priest and wedding coordinator clean up.



Arrive 20 minutes before the start of the wedding or funeral, wearing dress shoes and nice pants/skirt, no jeans.

## Serving a Funeral

- When you arrive, check in with the priest and the ICD funeral coordinator (Kathy Prewitt or Mary Jane Smith). Each priest may have slightly different instructions.
- Light the candles at the ambo (candles are not carried in procession). Bring the cross to the sacristy. Divide up jobs. Server #1 is the Cross Bearer and Book Bearer. Server #2 carries the pall (long cloth that covers the casket) and is responsible for lighting candles during the Mass. Server #3 carries the holy water in the beginning and is also responsible for the incense. Servers 2 and 3 are responsible for the offertory duties.
- When the priest gives you the nod, servers exit the sacristy (carrying the cross, pall and holy water) and bow before the altar (chapel) or the walk to the baptismal font (church). If you are in the chapel, servers will walk two-thirds of the way down the aisle and stop. Please stand sideways with your back to the pews. If you are in the Church, cross bearer stands at the end of the wooden cross in the floor by the font (facing the font) and the others stand to the side. The priest will use the holy water first and then the pall.
- When the opening hymn begins, cross and servers lead in, bow at the altar, and go to chairs.
- Mass will proceed in the typical fashion. Please participate in the prayers and songs. The cross bearer needs to remember to get the book to the altar and take the cross to the back to lead the gift procession. Candle bearer has the normal duties. The third server needs to set the altar.
- During the Our Father, server #3 needs to light the charcoal in the thurible (incense burner). Make sure the charcoal is lit before returning to the sanctuary.
- At the end of Mass, following the Closing Prayer, server #1 get the cross and walks to the far end of the casket (facing the altar). Server #2 walks and stands by the Easter candle. Server #3 gets the incense (thurible and incense boat) and walks to the right side of the priest. As the closing hymn begins, the two servers and the priest walk to the other side of the casket by the cross, pause until the casket is turned around, then cross slowly leads the procession out.
- Please help the priest and funeral coordinator clean up.

## Glossary of Terms

### Furnishings:

**Altar** - the place where the Sacrifice of the Mass is offered, the table in the center of the sanctuary.



**Presider's Chair** - the Priest's chair in the sanctuary.



**Ambo** (also known as **Lectern, Pulpit**) - where the Word of God is proclaimed.



**Tabernacle** - the place where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved.



**Offertory table** - table in back of church where the bread and wine are placed.



**Credence table** - table on the main floor behind the sanctuary where vessels for mass are placed when not being used.



**Processional Cross** - cross carried by the server.

**Acolyte Candles** - candles carried in procession.

### Vessels:

**Chalice** - any of the cups that hold the altar wine and the Blood of Christ.



**Paten** - flat metal dish that holds the altar bread and the Body of Christ.



**Cruet** - small glass pitcher in which water or wine is placed.



**Flagon** - larger glass container in which the wine is placed.



**Communion Cup** - smaller chalice used to distribute the precious blood to the people.

**Ciborium** - the metal dish or bowl that holds the altar bread and the Body of Christ



**Censer** (also called a **Thurible**) - metal vessel attached to a chain in which incense is burned.



**Incense Boat** - metal vessel containing the incense.



**Monstrance** - the vessel in which the consecrated host is displayed during Benediction and Eucharistic Adoration.

**Aspergillum** - the device used to sprinkle holy water.



**Linens:**

**Altar cloth** - the cloth covering the altar.

**Corporal** - square linen that sits on the middle of the altar cloth. Nothing is ever to be placed on the Corporal by a server.



**Purificator** - the folded linen used to wipe the rim of the chalice.



**Finger Towel** - towel used by the Priest to dry his hands.

**Pall**– stiff, square, white cover that is placed over the chalice to keep bugs out.

**Cincture**– rope belt worn with an alb.



**Stole**– narrow strip of cloth worn over the alb by priest and deacons. Priests wear the stole over the front and deacons wear it to the side.



**Chasuble**– round outer vestment worn by a priest at Mass.



**Dalmatic**– a rectangular garment worn sometimes by deacons. Dalmatics have sleeves and chasubles do not.

**Books:**

**Book of the Gospels** – the book containing all the Gospels for the Sundays of the Church Year

**Lectionary** - the book containing all the readings for Mass.

**Sacramentary** - the red book containing all the prayers for Mass.



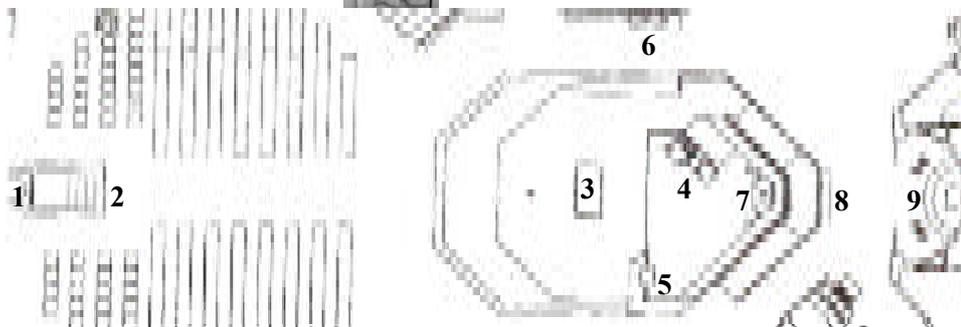
**Vestments**

**Alb**– white ankle length garment worn by altar servers, priests and deacons.



**ICD Church Map Key**

1. **Baptismal Font**
2. **Offertory Table**
3. **Altar**
4. **Presider's chair**
5. **Ambo**
6. **Server's chairs**
7. **Processional Cross Stand**
8. **Credence Table**
9. **Tabernacle**



Your commitment to the altar is not only a duty, but a great honor, a genuine holy service. In connection with this service, I wish to propose some reflections to you.

The altar server's clothing is very special. It recalls the garment that each one puts on when he is welcomed in Jesus Christ in the community. I am referring to the baptismal gown, whose profound meaning Saint Paul clarifies: "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Galatians 3:27).



Even if you, dear altar servers, can no longer fit into your baptismal gown, you have put on [the clothing] of altar servers. Yes, baptism is the point of departure of your "authentic liturgical service," which places you next to your bishops, priests and deacons.

[I]n the liturgy, you are much more than simple "helpers of the parish priest." Above all, you are servers of Jesus Christ, of the eternal High Priest. Thus, you, altar servers, are called in particular to be young friends of Jesus. Be determined to go deeper and to cultivate this friendship with him. You will discover that in Jesus you have found a true friend for life.

The altar server often has a candlestick in his hand. How can one not think of that which Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount: "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). Your service cannot be limited to the inside of a church. It must shine in everyday life: in school, in the family, and in different realms of society. Because, whoever wishes to serve Jesus Christ inside a church must be his witness everywhere.

Dear young people! Your contemporaries wait for the real "light of the world" (see John 1:9). Do not hold your candlestick only inside a church, but carry the light of the Gospel to all those who are in darkness and are living through a difficult time in their life.

I have spoken of friendship with Jesus. How happy I would be if something more sprang from this friendship! How beautiful it would be if some of you were to discover a vocation to the priesthood! Jesus Christ has urgent need of youths who will be at his disposition with generosity and no reservations. Moreover, might not the Lord also call one or two of you girls to embrace the consecrated life to serve the Church and the brothers and sisters? Even for those who wish to be united in marriage, the service of altar servers teaches that a real union must always include readiness for reciprocal and free service.

-Pope John Paul II

General Audience, August 1, 2001, the 1,000th of his pontificate