

Welcome
to the Catholic Parish
of the Wairarapa



**‘A community living and sharing the Good News of
Jesus Christ.’**

MINISTRY FOR ALTAR SERVERS GUIDELINES



THE MINISTRY

The ministry of altar servers goes back to the early Christian Church. At first, altar servers were often young boys who helped the priest during the religious celebrations, tending to the altar and bringing the items needed for the celebration of the Mass.

By the Middle Ages, the role of altar boys became more formalised. The use of the Latin liturgy and more complex rituals increased the need for altar servers.

Altar servers helped in many ways, including holding the book for the priest, ringing the bells during the Eucharistic Prayer and reverencing the altar with incense. The role was particularly important during the celebration of the Mass where the presence of altar servers contributed to the solemnity and reverence of the liturgy.

The Council of Trent (1545–1563) stressed the need for proper liturgical education and training for altar servers. The role began to include a more structured approach to training so that servers understood their duties and the significance of the liturgy.

In the 20th century, the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) further encouraged laypeople being more fully involved in the liturgy. This led to the acceptance of girls serving at the altar, which broadened the ministry.

Today, altar servers are often young members of the parish, who are trained to assist in liturgical celebrations with dignity and reverence. Their ministry supports the priest and adds to the liturgical celebration. It also is a way for young people to grow in faith and become more engaged in the life of the Church. The ongoing tradition of altar servers helps foster a deeper appreciation for the sacraments and the liturgy among the faithful.

ADULT ALTAR SERVER DUTIES

Before Mass:

- Arrive at least ten minutes before Mass starts.
- Ensure the bells are beside your seat. If they are not next to your seat, collect them from the sacristy.
- Take the processional cross with you to the foyer.
- Join the priest and other ministers for the prayer five minutes before Mass. If you have not arrived by prayer time it may be necessary to replace you.

At the start of Mass:

- At the beginning of the entrance hymn lead the procession into church. Ensure that the priest and ministers are following you.
- Walk slowly and reverently.
- When you reach the altar steps, bow and move to the far right allowing room for the priest and ministers to form a line with you across the front of the altar.
- Bow in union with them.
- Place the cross in its holder on the right side of the Sanctuary.

Immediately after the prayers of intercession:

- Light the altar candles from the lectern candle using the taper under the lectern. (This is done if the candle is not processed in during offertory.)
- Extinguish the lectern candle.
- From the credence table place:
 - the tray of pyxes to the sick at the top centre of the corporal (ensure all the pyxes are open).
 - the two chalices, on either side of the corporal just below the pyx tray.
 - the priest's missal, at the bottom of the corporal; and

- any extra communion bowls, beside the corporal on the right.
- Wait in front of the credence table until the offertory procession approaches.
- Follow the priest to the bottom of the altar steps and stand to his right.
- If he passes you the collection basket place it against the front of the altar.
- He will then pass you the wine cruet and retain the communion bowl himself.
- Wait and bow with him towards the gift bearers.
- Allow the priest to go to the altar first, then take the water cruet from the credence table and stand on the side of the altar furthest from chair, holding the cruet set for him to first take the wine and then the water.
- Return the cruet set on the credence table (but not on the corporal).
- Approach the altar with the bowl of water and the towel draped over your forearm but stand back from the altar until the priest indicates that he is ready to wash his hands.
- Go forward with the water and towel to the priest.
- When the priest has finished washing his hands, replace the bowl and towel on credence table (but not on the corporal).

During the Eucharistic Prayer:

- Ring the bells three times:
 - at the epiclesis (when the priest extends his hands over the bread and wine)
 - at the elevation of the Blessed Sacrament; and
 - at the elevation of the chalice containing the Precious Blood.

At the end of Mass:

- While the priest is giving the pyxes to the ministers of the sick, collect the processional cross and stand at the left of the altar.
- When the priest kisses the altar take up your position facing the altar.
- Turn when the priest turns around and lead the procession to the foyer.

After Mass:

- Return the bells and processional cross to the sacristy.

SCHOOL/CHILDREN ALTAR SERVER DUTIES

Before Mass

- Arrive at least 15 minutes before Mass starts.
- Put on your robes and check what colour cincture to wear. (See the Columban calendar) NOTE: On Saturday night the Sunday colour is worn.
- Decide which altar server (A) will carry the cross in the entrance procession. The other server (B) will carry the cross in the procession at the end of mass.
- Join the ministers in the prayer before mass.

At the start of Mass - the Entrance Procession:

- The cross bearer leads the procession followed by the other altar server.
- They are followed by:
 - the book of the Gospel carried by the Gospel reader or lector and the lector
 - the Eucharistic ministers; and
 - lastly, the priest.

- In front of the altar the cross bearer stands next to the priest on his left; altar server B stands next to the priest on his right.
- Bow when the priest bows.
- Wait for the priest to mount the steps, then place the cross in its stand and go to your seats beside the presidential chair.

After the Prayers of Intercession:

- Altar server B extinguishes the mass candle.
- Altar server B then goes to the back of the church and lights the two altar candles ready for the offertory procession.
- The altar server A:
 - makes sure all pyxes to the sick are open (the pyxes remain on the credence table until after the offertory procession);
 - takes the pyx tray and place it at the top centre of the altar corporal;
 - places the two chalices on the altar corporal, one on either side, just below the pyx tray;
 - places the priest's Missal at the bottom of the corporal;
 - places any extra communion plates beside the corporal, to the side of each chalice;
 - joins altar server B at the back of the church;
 - both altar servers lead the offertory procession, each carrying a lighted candle.

Arrival of Offertory procession:

- Place one candle on each front corner of the altar.
- The altar servers stand one on either side of the priest who hands the plate with the communion bread to one altar server and the cruet set to the other.

- Together with the priest, the altar servers bow to the gift bearers.
- Both altar servers follow the priest to the altar and stand to the side of the altar nearest the presider's chair.
- The altar server carrying the wooden communion plate gives it to the priest, then goes to the credence table, collects the water cruet and stands next to the altar server carrying the wine cruet.
- The priest takes the wine cruet first, then the water cruet, and returns them to the altar servers.
- Both altar servers return the cruets to the credence table (but not on the corporal).
- They collect the bowl of water and the towel.
- When the priest indicates he is ready to wash his hands, they both go to him with the water bowl and the towel.
- When he has finished washing and drying his hands, both altar servers bow and return the water bowl and towel on to the credence table (but not on the corporal).
- Both altar servers return to their seats.

During the Eucharistic Prayer:

- Ring the bells
 - during the epiclesis (priest extending his hands on the bread and wine;
 - when the priest raises the Blessed Sacrament (while it is raised, the altar server, who lit the offertory procession candles, rings the bells for 3 seconds; and
 - when the priest raises the chalice containing the Precious Blood (while it is raised, the same altar server rings the bells for 3 seconds.

At Communion:

- As soon as the Extraordinary Eucharistic Ministers arrive at the altar to receive communion, the altar servers also go to

the altar to receive communion, and then return to their seats.

At the end of Mass:

- Wait for the priest to kiss the altar then one altar server A gets the two altar candles and altar server B gets the cross.
- The priest faces the altar with the Ministers beside him.
- The candle bearer stands immediately behind the Eucharistic Ministers, holding both altar candles.
- The cross bearer stands behind the candle bearer.
- Turn around when the priest turns around and lead the procession out with the cross bearer in front.

After the Procession:

- Blow out the altar candles and return them and the lighter to the sacristy.
- When you get changed make sure that you hang up your robe tidily.