



*Welcome  
to the Catholic Parish  
of the Wairarapa*



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

## **GUIDELINES FOR SACRISTAN**

## THE MINISTRY

The term 'sacristan' originates from the Latin word 'sacrarium', which refers to a sacred space or the place where sacred items are kept. The role of sacristan began to be used in the early centuries of Christianity when the Church was establishing its liturgical practices and required individuals to care for the sacred vessels, vestments and the church's altars.

Historically, sacristans were responsible for preparing the altar and the liturgical items for Mass and ensuring that everything was in order for the celebration of the sacraments.

As the liturgies developed, the sacristan's duties became more defined, including the safeguarding of sacred artifacts and the maintenance of the church's sacred space.

The 4th century saw the rise of more formalised structures within the Church, and the sacristan became a recognised office, often appointed by the bishop or the parish priest.

In the medieval period, sacristans played a significant role not only in parishes but also in monasteries and cathedrals. They were entrusted with greater responsibilities, including overseeing the altar servers and coordinating the liturgical celebrations, reflecting a growing complexity in liturgical life.

Today, the sacristan continues to serve a vital role in the life of the Church. Their responsibilities may include setting up for Mass and other liturgical celebrations, maintaining the sacred vessels and vestments, and sometimes assisting in the training of altar servers.

The sacristan's ministry is essential in fostering a spirit of reverence and facilitating the worship of the community, ultimately ensuring that every liturgical celebration is conducted with dignity and grace.

In this way, the ministry of the sacristan has developed, yet it remains anchored in service to God and the Church, echoing the early Church's commitment to ensuring a sacred environment for worship.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

### BEFORE MASS

- Come an hour early before a Mass, liturgy or celebration.
- The key to the church is kept in a lock box in the left side of the church.
  - The code to the lockbox is \_\_\_\_\_.
  - After opening the church main door, please return the key *immediately* to the lockbox.
- Put on the lights and heaters (especially during winter and cold months).
  - The switches are on the right side of the entrance vestibule before you enter the glass doors.
- During winter months, the heaters at the back wall (next to the toilet door and kitchen door) should also be switched on.
  - There are two switches that need to be flicked on in each of the wall heaters.
- Turn on the power points for the sound system. They are on the organ side and the icon of the Divine Mercy side.
- Proceed to the sacristy.
  - The key to the sacristy is kept on top of the tabernacle on the left-back side.
  - After opening the sacristy, please return the key *immediately*.

## **MASS PREPARATION (SACRISTY AND SANCTUARY)**

- Place bells beside front seat and be ready to advise the altar server when they arrive.
- Remove the cover of the altar and place it on the shelf under the credence table.
- Take the tabernacle key from the sacristy cupboard and check the tabernacle for consecrated hosts.
- Leave the tabernacle key on the credence table.
- Spread a corporal out on top of the credence table.
- Ensure that there is corporal on the middle of the altar.
- Take the wooden communion plate from the cupboard and put on it one big host and small hosts.
  - If there are more than 50 consecrated hosts in the tabernacle, put 50 hosts on the wooden communion plate.
  - If there are fewer than 50 consecrated hosts in the tabernacle, put 100 hosts on the wooden communion plate.
- Put the wooden communion plate on the offertory table at the back of the Church.
- Take two chalices from the cupboard in sacristy and place them on the credence table.
  - Make sure that the chalices are covered with palls.
- Take two purificators from the top drawer of the small plastic chest of drawers and place them on the altar.
- Take one white flannel from the second drawer of the small plastic chest of drawers and place it on the credence table.
- Take the cruets from the cupboard above the sacrarium (sink) and fill each with water and wine up to the mark.

- Place the water cruet on the credence table.
- Place the wine cruet on the offertory table at the back of the church.
- If receiving only one species, the cruet should be filled a quarter full of wine.
- Fill one of the chalices to one third full of wine.
- Take the missal from the sacristy cupboard and place it on the credence table.
- Take the missal companion from the sacristy cupboard and place it on the small table beside the presider's chair.
- Take the lectionary from the sacristy cupboard, open it at the correct page and place it on the ambo ready for the readings.
- Take a copy of the Introduction and Prayers of the Faithful and place them on the lectern next to the musicians.
- If there are pyxes for communion to the sick, make sure that they are filled with the correct number of hosts and place them on the altar on top of the corporal.
- Light the candles 10 minutes before Mass.

### **THE OFFERTORY TABLE** (at the back of the church)

- Set up the offertory table with:
  - Two corporals:
    - one is to be spread on the table where bread and wine are placed; and
    - the other is to cover the communion plate and cruet.
  - The wooden communion plate of hosts with its own cover.

- The wooden communion plate should have a big host and small hosts (50-100 pieces).
  - The number depends on how many consecrated hosts are in the tabernacle.
- The cruet should have wine at the level marked on the cruet.
- If there is to be no offertory procession, place the items above on the credence table.
- If there are to be two children altar servers, place the two altar candles and lighter (for Sunday and school Masses only).
- Put the Book of the Gospels on the shelf under the table.
  - Make sure that the Book of the Gospel marker is at the correct page.
  - See Ordo for readings.
- If there is to be an altar server, make sure that the processional cross is in the foyer.
- Place newsletters on the table in the foyer.
  - They are usually stored at the sacristy.

## **MASS ORGANISATION**

- Check with the priest whether anything unusual is happening at this Mass.
- Ensure that the names of each of the Ministers to the Sick are on each pyx and its case.
- If there is a visiting priest celebrating Mass, check whether they wish to use the ciborium to distribute Holy Communion.
- Ensure all rostered ministers are present and that they know they are on duty – advise them of anything out of the

ordinary. Make a list of rostered ministers, which you can carry for reference:

- extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC);
  - lectors;
  - altar servers;
  - collectors;
  - gift bearers.
- Ensure the Greeters are in position half an hour before Mass starts.
  - Ensure all lectors, EMHC and altar servers are gathered in the foyer with the priests for preparatory prayer five minutes before Mass starts.
  - Ensure all altar servers and EMHCs are aware that only sacred vessels are placed on any corporal.
  - Ensure all EMHC know their designated positions.

### **OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Finish setting up 25 minutes before the start of Mass.
- Be in the foyer to greet parishioners until the designated greeter(s) arrive.
- Observe the arrival of undesignated ministers (for standing duties if needed).
- Five minutes before Mass, put your replacement ministers on stand-by and give them any information they need.

### **AFTER MASS**

- Put the collection money into a bank bag and put it inside the first drawer.
- Check if altar cloth, credence tablecloth, corporals etc also need washing.

- Put everything back to where they were taken from and close the chalice cupboard.
- Turn off the sound system.
- Turn off the heaters, if used.
- Take the corporal off the altar and replace them with the altar cover – if there are no scheduled Masses for the next day.
- Put the big crucifix on the altar on top of the cover facing the pews.
- Check that the tabernacle is locked, and the key is put away hanging on the hook on the inside of the chalice cupboard door.
- Lock sacristy if the priest has finished.
- Collect up any newsletters and other materials left in pews.
- Check all enclosed spaces (flower room, confessional, toilets, kitchen etc) to ensure no people present, lights and power switches are off, windows shut etc.
- Ensure all church windows are shut and outer doors are locked.
- Turn off all lights.
- Check that the toys are tidied away.
- Check everything has been turned off and put away in the kitchen
- Exit, go home and put your feet up.



## **REFER ALSO TO THIS GUIDE FOR OTHER MASSES AND LITURGIES**

- Weekday Masses
- Special Masses
- School Mass
- Seasonal Masses and Liturgies e.g.:
  - Stations of the Cross
  - Good Friday Veneration of the Cross
  - Communal Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Baptisms
- Weddings?
- Funerals