Altar Server Manual **Sacred Heart Parish** **Nekoosa, WI**

November 2026

Proper Posture at Mass:

Standing, stand straight and tall with hands folded

Sitting, sit straight and tall with hands folded in your lap or on your thighs

Kneeling, on the kneelers on either side of the tabernacle. Up to two servers per kneeler. If there are more than four servers someone will have to kneel on the floor next to the kneeler.

Preparation for Mass:

- Arrive at least 15 minutes before Mass is to begin.
- Find the proper size Alb (robe) and the cincture (rope) of proper color. Tie the cincture around your waist hanging to your right side.
- Light the candles on the Altar.
- When it is time to go to the back of church one server will take the cross and one will take the basket with the gifts.

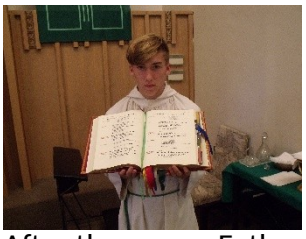
Entrance:

- The servers will line up for the entrance procession. The cross leads the procession with the other servers behind. 2 Servers; † • 3 Servers; † • • 4 Servers; † • • •

- After the Lector announces the opening song, ring the bells on the wall 3 times then walk SLOWLY to the front standing straight with hands folded.
- When you get to the front spread out at the bottom of the stairs with the main server and cross bearer going to the right. Any other servers go to the left.
- Leave a space in the middle for the deacon and the priest.
- When the priest gets to the front and genuflects or bows, all, except the cross bearer, genuflect or bow with him. Pay attention to the priest. If he bows, you bow. If he genuflects, you genuflect.
- Then the main server and cross bearer go to the chairs on the right. Any other servers go to the chairs on the left.

Introductory Rite:

- All servers remain standing.
- After the Gloria, Father will say "Let us pray." The main server will take the Missal from the table and bring it to the deacon, if there, or Father. NOTE: There are certain times of the year when the Gloria isn't used. The easiest thing to remember is that if you hear the words "Let us pray" at the beginning of Mass, the main server should take the book to the deacon, if there, or Father.
- The deacon, if there, will open the book to the correct page. The main server will then step in front of Father holding the book for him.
- Be sure to hold the book high enough (as in the picture) so Father can see it.



- After the prayer Father will close the book and you will take it back to the table.

Liturgy of the Word:

- All servers sit for the first 2 readings and the responsorial psalm.
- When the alleluia is started prior to the Gospel, all servers stand.
- After the Gospel is read all servers sit and listen to the homily.

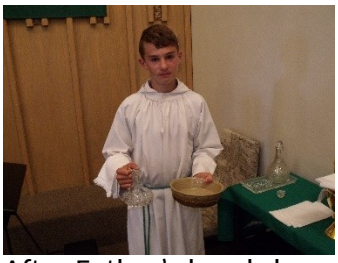
Liturgy of the Eucharist:

- After the homily all stand for the Creed and the Prayers of the Faithful.
- After the Prayers of the Faithful all sit.

There are three scenarios you need to be familiar with based on whether there is a deacon at the Mass and who the priest is. You need to be familiar with each of these scenarios.

Mass with a deacon, no matter who the priest is:

- After the announcements the deacon will go to the altar. The main server will bring the book to him, and then will go to the credence table and bring the chalice(s), then the water (without the stopper), and finally the book stand. After bringing everything to the deacon, the main server will go back and sit down.
- When the ushers are almost done with the collection the cross bearer only will take the cross to the back to lead the gifts forward.
- When Father and the deacon get up to receive the gifts the main server will come down and stand at the deacon's right.
- The main server will be handed the basket containing the offertory gifts. Place the basket on the floor near the altar.
- Then the main server will be handed the decanter of wine and will carry it, following the deacon up to the altar.
- Remove the stopper and hold the decanter until the deacon takes it from you.
- After the deacon is finished with the wine, he will hand the decanter back to you. Put the stopper back in, but don't go anywhere yet! Wait until the deacon hands the water decanter to you, and then take both to the credence table.
- After you take the decanters to the credence table, get ready to wash Father's hands. Only the main server needs to do this.
- If necessary, remove the stopper from the water decanter. Drape the towel over your right arm, hold the bowl in your left hand, and the water in your right.



- After Father's hands have been washed, all servers stand in front of the kneelers.
- After the "Holy, Holy, Holy…" all servers kneel.
- There is a set of bells on the ledge next to each kneeler. Both servers need to be prepared to ring the bells at the proper time.
- When Father says "Take this all of you, and eat of it: for this is my body which will be given up for you" and lifts the host, together both servers ring the bells 3 times.
- When father says "… Do this in memory of me" and lifts the chalice, together both servers ring the bells 3 times.
- Stand in place when it's time for the Our Father. At the sign of peace (if used) shake hands with the deacon and Father.
- After the Lamb of God, kneel.

- When Father turns to distribute communion, stand up to receive communion.
- After all the ministers go down to distribute communion, clear the altar of everything, but leave the corporal in place as well as the lid to the ciborium from the tabernacle. Then return to your chair and sit down. If you're not comfortable clearing the altar, wait until after distribution is done and the deacon or priest will help you clear it. NOTE: The *corporal* is the square cloth on the altar in front of where Father stands.

Mass without a deacon, Fr. John is celebrating Mass:

- After the announcements Fr. John will go to the altar. Normally, the altar will be set before Mass. If the altar is set, the main server will only need to bring the book to him. If the altar is not already set, the main server will bring the book and then go to the credence table and bring the chalice(s), then the water (without the stopper), and finally the book stand. After bringing everything to Fr. John, the main server will go back and sit down.
- When the ushers are almost done with the collection the cross bearer only will take the cross to the back to lead the gifts forward.
- When Father gets up to receive the gifts the main server will come down and stand at his right.
- The main server will be handed the basket containing the offertory gifts. Place the basket on the floor near the altar.
- The main server will be handed the decanter of wine and will carry it to the left side of the altar.
- Remove the stopper and hold the decanter until Father takes it from you.
- After Father is finished with the wine, he will hand the decanter back to you. Put the stopper back in, but don't go anywhere yet! Wait until he hands the water decanter to you, and then take both to the credence table.
- After you take the decanters to the credence table, get ready to wash Father's hands. Only the main server needs to do this.
- If necessary, remove the stopper from the water decanter. Drape the towel over your right arm, hold the bowl in your left hand, and the water in your right.

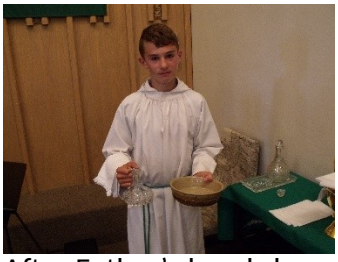
- After Father's hands have been washed, all servers stand in front of the kneelers.
- After the "Holy, Holy, Holy…" all servers kneel.

- There is a set of bells on the ledge next to each kneeler. Both servers need to be prepared to ring the bells at the proper time.
- When Father says “Take this all of you, and eat of it: for this is my body which will be given up for you” and lifts the host, together both servers ring the bells 3 times.
- When father says “… Do this in memory of me” and lifts the chalice, together both servers ring the bells 3 times.
- Stand in place when it’s time for the Our Father. At the sign of peace (if used) shake hands with Father.
- After the Lamb of God, kneel.
- When Father turns to give out communion, stand up to receive communion.
- Do not clear off the altar during communion.
- When Father returns to the altar after communion, the main server will go to the credence table.
- Father will take the remaining Eucharist and place it in the tabernacle. When he returns to the altar, take the cruet of water to the altar.
- Father will have you pour a little water into the chalice so he can purify it. When he is done with the water, take the cruet back to the credence table.
- If the communion song is still playing, the main server will take the book from the altar, return it to the table, and sit down. If the song is done, the main server will take the book from the altar and bring it to Father as described in the Concluding Rite below.

Mass with a deacon, a different priest is celebrating Mass:

- At the beginning of the offertory hymn, the priest will go to the altar. The main server will bring the book to him, and then will go to the credence table and bring the chalice(s), then the water (without the stopper), and finally the book stand. After bringing everything to the priest, the main server will go back and sit down.
- When the ushers are almost done with the collection the cross bearer only will take the cross to the back to lead the gifts forward.
- When Father gets up to receive the gifts the main server will come down and stand at his right.
- The main server will be handed the decanter of wine and will carry it to the left side of the altar.
- Remove the stopper and hold the decanter until Father takes it from you.
- After Father is finished with the wine, he will hand the decanter back to you. Put the stopper back in, but don’t go anywhere yet! Wait until he hands the water decanter to you, and then take both to the credence table.
- After you take the decanters to the credence table, get ready to wash Father’s hands. Only the main server needs to do this.

- If necessary, remove the stopper from the water decanter. Drape the towel over your right arm, hold the bowl in your left hand, and the water in your right.



- After Father's hands have been washed, all servers stand in front of the kneelers.
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- Stand in place when it's time for the Our Father. At the sign of peace (if used) shake hands with Father.
- After the Lamb of God, kneel.
- When Father turns to give out communion, stand up to receive communion.
- <u>Do not clear off the altar during communion</u>.
- When Father returns to the altar after communion, the main server will go to the credence table.
- Father will take the remaining Eucharist and place it in the tabernacle. When he returns to the altar, take the cruet of water to the altar.
- Father will purify the chalice at the altar. When he is done with the water, take the cruet back to the credence table, and then return to the altar and help Father clear it, taking things to the credence table as Father gives them to you.
- After everything is taken to the credence table, the main server will take the book off the altar, place it on its table, and sit down.

<u>Concluding Rite:</u>

- After the communion song is done and Father stands, the main server brings the Missal to him. NOTE: Father will NOT say "Let us pray." The main server needs to pay attention! When Father stands, bring him the book.
- When Father is done, he will close the book and you will take it back to the table.
- When Father and the deacon (if present) go to the altar to kiss it, the cross bearer will take the cross and all the servers will come down the stairs and stand facing the altar,

like at the beginning of Mass. Be sure to leave room in the middle for the deacon (if present) and Father.

- All, except the cross bearer, genuflect or bow when Father does.
- We all turn and process out the same way we came in.
- When we get to the back, Father and the deacon will probably hand their hymnals to one of the servers who will take them back up front and put them at the appropriate chair.
- Put out the candles.

Conclusion:

We at Sacred Heart would like to thank you for your service to Jesus and his church! Serving at Mass is very important, and it is also important that you know what to do and when to do it. Please know these procedures well so that you can do your job correctly without being told. When you serve well and know what you are doing, it helps the Mass go smoothly. If you are unconfident or fidgety, it can distract from the Mass. There is no need to be nervous, though. Just pay attention and you will do fine. Make sure you watch the schedule so you know when you are scheduled to serve. If you cannot make it when you are scheduled, please find a replacement. Please take your responsibility seriously by showing up on time and paying attention so that you can follow any last-minute directions. God bless you all!