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Patron Saint of Altar Boys

Saint John Berchmans

This young saint of the Society of Jesus was born in Flanders, the oldest of five children. He grew up in an atmosphere of political turmoil caused by a religious war between the Catholic and Protestant sections of the Netherlands. He studied at the Gymnasium at Diest and worked as a servant in the household of Canon John Froymont at Malines in order to continue his studies.

In 1615, the Jesuits opened a college at Malines, and St. John Berchmans was one of the first to enter. He was an energetic student and was a leader among the students. In 1616, he entered the Jesuit novitiate at Malines and came under the influence of Father Antoine Sucquet. The young Berchmans developed a strong and deep spirituality based on the loving practice of fidelity. St. Aloysius of Gonzaga was his spiritual model, and he was influenced as well by the example of the Jesuit English martyrs.

It was his realistic appreciation for the value of ordinary things, a characteristic of the Flemish mystical tradition, that constituted his holiness. He was affable, kind, and endowed with an outgoing personality that endeared him to everyone. In 1618, he was sent to Rome to study philosophy and was an exceptional student. He requested after ordination to become a chaplain in the army, hoping to be martyred on the battlefield.

In the summer of 1619, the intense heat of Rome started to affect his health and he began progressively to get weaker. The doctors could not determine what was wrong, and for two years he was continually sick, requiring medical care, and as the summer of 1621 came, it was clear that he would not last long. He died peacefully on August 13, 1621, and numerous miracles were attributed to him at the time of his funeral.

He was beatified by Pope Pius IX in 1865 and canonized by Pope Leo XIII in 1888.

Source: The One Year Book of Saints by Rev. Clifford Stevens, which was published by Our Sunday Visitor and is now out of print. This text was excerpted from an electronic copy published at EWTN.com.
Qualifications, Training, Scheduling & Dress Code

Welcome! Serving Father at the Altar is a great privilege and this handbook will help you learn the responsibilities, expectations and procedures.

The Altar Boys have a special relationship with and work for our priests, but the pastor has assigned an Altar Boy coordinator to work with you on training, scheduling and enforcing the rules. If you or your parents have any questions please let the coordinator know.

Qualifications

Holy Trinity parish is honoring the long tradition and practice of having boys serve our priests at the Altar, and any boy who has received his First Holy Communion is eligible to be trained to become an Altar server.

Your parents should visit the Altar Boy section of the Holy Trinity website for information on training and being added to the schedule. They may e-mail any questions to the Altar Boy coordinator at AltarBoys@HolyTrinityParish.net.

Our parish is blessed to have both the Ordinary and Extraordinary Forms of the Latin Rite of the Church. The Ordinary Form is often known as the Novus Ordo and may be celebrated in Latin or English. This is the Mass that most of you are familiar with and at which you will typically serve.

The Extraordinary Form is often called the Traditional Latin, or Tridentine, Mass and is celebrated only in Latin.

Training

All boys wishing to serve at Holy Trinity will typically begin training in the Ordinary Form and then, with the permission of the priest who says the Extraordinary Form, may begin training to serve this Mass.

As Pope Benedict has noted, our Latin Rite has two forms and it would be a blessing for our parish to have as many boys as interested learn to reverently serve both the Ordinary and Extraordinary Forms.

Training for the Ordinary Form is held periodically throughout the year, but eligible boys wishing to serve may begin right away after studying this handbook and registering with the Altar Boy coordinator.

Scheduling

All altar boys may serve at any regular weekday or weekend Mass they wish.

In general, only older boys (Knights of the Altar) are actually scheduled to serve particular Ordinary Form Masses. (Exceptions to this generous serving policy are for weddings, funerals and other special Masses which only scheduled boys may serve).
Dress Code

Altar Boys from the time they receive Holy Communion through 8th grade wear the traditional black cassock and white surplice.

The more experienced boys in 9th grade and above wear the red cassock and white surplice and are known as Knights of the Altar, or just Knights. The Knights are responsible for training the younger boys, assigning duties at Mass, and instructing the boys after Mass on any mistakes made.

Boys should wear dark dress- or Dockers-style pants with dark socks and brown or black (preferred) shoes.

Absolutely no jeans, shorts, sneakers, flip flops, etc.

If you are not dressed appropriately for serving, do not vest.

Boys wearing collared shirts must fold the collar down while serving so that it does not extend above the cassock—it looks sloppy at best and when wearing white shirts it often appears as a Roman collar.

Remember, you are in the Sanctuary when Christ is made present on the Altar.

Dress accordingly.
Serving in a Dignified and Reverent Manner

Parents and boys must understand that serving at Mass is a great privilege that demands that the Altar Boy display model behavior, manners and most especially reverence.

While it should be readily apparent to even the most casual observer that Holy Trinity’s nearly 150 Altar Boys “have a lot of fun,” there is a proper time for camaraderie and relaxed behavior, and a proper time for prayerful silence, diligence and attentiveness.

From the moment you vest in your cassock and surplice to the moment you hang them back up, you should put on your “game face.” This means you should harness your energy and enthusiasm and direct it toward serving the priest—who himself is serving in persona Christi—in the type of dignified manner that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass deserves.

You should ask yourself how you would behave if you were helping your principal or your grandparent. Now, ask yourself how you should behave when you are serving Mass—where Christ is made present on the Altar.

Remember, when you are an Altar Boy you are closer to the Tabernacle than anyone except Father and the Deacon… and Jesus is right there!

It cannot be stressed enough that if you are going to be an Altar Boy you will need to act in a very reverent and dignified manner. In other words, you should act just as Father acts.

Does Father whisper to his friends during Mass? Does Father joke around during Mass? Does Father stretch and yawn? Does Father run in the Church? Does Father swing his legs when sitting in his chair? Does Father look around the Church during Mass? Does Father only say part of a prayer and then stop? Does Father day dream during Mass? Of course not!

You get the idea, right? And you know what? If you do these kinds of things EVERYONE in the Church knows, because EVERYONE can see you.

Do not be a distraction to people who are at Mass to honor and give thanks to God.

The privilege of serving will be taken away from you if you do.
Rules for Altar Boys
to Learn, Remember and Follow

- When you are serving Mass you must audibly say, chant or sing the appropriate prayers and responses in a reverent manner.

- There is to be absolute silence in the Sanctuary and Sacristy unless you have a pressing question to ask either a Knight or Father.

- If you cannot pay attention or refrain from goofing off, please do not serve that day.

- You should not be in the Sacristy during Mass unless you have a particular job that needs to be done at that very moment.

- There should never be any horseplay in the Church building. Period.

- There is no reason for there ever to be more than three boys around the Credence Table at any time.

- You must be dressed appropriately to serve. No exceptions.

- Remember, you are obligated to keep the Eucharistic fast—which precludes chewing gum.

- There are one or two Knights assigned to lead the boys each Mass. They are in charge! Do not argue with them or other boys about jobs at Mass. In the event that there is not a Knight assigned, the oldest and/or most experienced boy at the Mass is in charge.

- Any Altar Boy who criticizes the way another boy serves or in any way acts uncharitably toward a fellow server risks having his privileges to serve taken away. It is the Knight’s job to correct any mistakes, not yours. If you have a concern with the way another boy is serving privately talk to the Knight, Father or the Altar Boy coordinator after Mass. There will be zero tolerance about violations of this rule.
Prayers for Altar Boys
Before and After Serving Mass

Vesting Prayer (to be said while vesting before Mass)

For the Cassock:
Dominus, pars hereditatis meae et calicis mei, tu es qui restitues hereditatem meam.

O Lord, the portion of my inheritance and my Chalice, You are He who will restore my inheritance.

For the Surplice:
Indue me, Domine, novum hominem, qui secundum Deum creatus est in iustitia et sanctitate veritatis. Amen.

Invest me, O Lord, as a new man, who was created by God in justice and the holiness of truth. Amen.

Altar Server’s Prayer Before Serving Holy 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 be willing follow him in the Way, the Truth, and the Life of Christ. Amen.

Prayer to St. Tarcisius (Patron of Altar Boys)

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 wholeheartedly.
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.

Source: St. Michael’s Parish, Bowie, Md.
**Altar Server’s Prayer of Thanksgiving After Serving Holy Mass***

O Lord, Jesus Christ, Eternal High Priest, I thank Thee for the privilege of having served at the holy Altar of Thy sacrifice.

Now, as I put aside the garments of that service, I ask that I may at all times think of Thee, and always act accordingly, as a privileged Altar server.

May I ever seek Thee and find Thee; may I always follow Thee; may Thy priestly spirit be my guide, and Thy service of love be my example.

May Thy Holy Name always be on my lips, and to Thy praise and glory may every work of mine be done.

Ever ready in Thy service, may I always know and do Thy Holy Will in all things.

May I remain pure and blameless and be found worthy to be Thy servant, and by Thy grace may I persevere to the end. Amen.

**Prayer for Vocations***

O Lord Jesus Christ, Who didst take to Thyself a Body and Soul like ours to teach us the glory of self-sacrifice and service, mercifully deign to instill in other hearts the desire to dedicate their lives to thee.

Give us **Priests** to stand before Thy Altar and to preach the word of Thy Gospel;

**Brothers** to assist the priests and to reproduce in themselves Thy humility;

**Sisters** to teach the young and nurse the sick, and to minister Thy charity to all;

**Lay People** to imitate Thee in their homes and families. Amen.

*Source: Knights of the Altar Handbook, which is in the public domain and available at SanctaMissa.org.*

**Prayer for Priests**

Lord Jesus, we your people pray to You for our priests. You have given them to us for OUR needs. We pray for them in THEIR needs.

We know that You have made them priests in the likeness of your own priesthood. You have consecrated them, set them aside, annointed them, filled them with the Holy Spirit, appointed them to teach, to preach, to minister, to console, to forgive, and to feed us with Your Body and Blood.

Yet we know, too, that they are one with us and share our human weaknesses. We know too that they are tempted to sin and discouragement as are we, needing to be ministered to, as do we, to be consoled and forgiven, as do we. Indeed, we thank You for choosing them from among us, so that they understand us as we understand them, suffer with us and rejoice with us, worry with us and trust with us, share our beings, our lives, our faith.

We ask that You give them this day the gift You gave Your chosen ones on the way to Emmaus: Your presence in their hearts, Your holiness in their souls, Your joy in their spirits. And let them see You face to face in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread.

We pray to You, O Lord, through Mary the mother of all priests, for Your priests and for ours. Amen.  *Source: John Cardinal O’Connor as published at EWTN.com*
Posture and Gestures When Serving

Folding of hands in prayer
Fingers and thumbs together, palm on palm, right thumb over left thumb with hands resting on chest.

Making a large sign of the Cross
Place left hand on your sternum, place fingers of right hand on forehead, then just above the left hand, then the left shoulder, then the right, and finally return your hand to the folded position. (Your palm should always remain facing your body.)

Making a small sign of the Cross
Fingers together, use thumb to make the sign of the cross, keeping the palm of your hand open and facing you.

Position of hands when holding something
Place free hand on sternum, with your thumb apart from your fingers facing up toward your chin.

Striking your breast
Place your left hand on your sternum as above and lightly tap your chest with your right hand held in a slightly cupped manner.

Giving and receiving
When you give something to Father, try to use your right hand. When you receive something from Father, try to use your left hand. (Remember to place your free hand on your sternum.)

Lining up before Mass
Line up in this order: Thurifer (if any), Cross Bearer, Boat, shortest to tallest Altar Boys, Knights.

Position of hands during procession
Folded in prayer.
Position when kneeling
Back straight, head held up, hands folded in prayer.

Bowing your head
At the name of Jesus or Mary you make a bow with your head.

Bowing to Father after completing a task for him
After you complete a task for Father, you should reverently make a simple bow to him with your head and shoulders. Wait for Father to initiate the bow.

Reverencing the Altar
After you complete a task at the Altar, you should make a profound bow to the Altar by bending at your waist.

NOTE: Bowing is not a race. Carefully and purposefully execute a bow. If you are completing a task with another server, bow together.

Turning
When turning you should do so slowly. When there are two Altar Boys turning together, you should always turn in toward each other.

SERVING TIP: Never do two things at once, i.e. bowing and turning. Do each separately and deliberately.

Genuflecting to the Tabernacle
When you cross in front of the Tabernacle you should stop and genuflect by bringing your right knee down to the floor close to your left foot. Remember to keep your back and head straight! Note: when Jesus is being adored on the Altar you should go down on both knees and make a profound bow. TIP: If you are completing a task at the Altar and then bow to Father or reverence the Altar, you do not also have to genuflect to the Tabernacle.

Sitting
Sit with feet flat on floor, back straight and palms down flat, resting on your legs.
Serving at a Sunday Mass in the Ordinary Form

NOTE: Incense – see section on Serving at a Mass in the Ordinary Form with Incense.

MASS BEGINS

Procession
Line up in this order: Thurifer (if any), Cross Bearer, Boat, shortest to tallest Altar Boys, Knights. When you arrive at the front line up even along the bottom and wait for Father – all genuflect with Father – except Cross Bearer (who should perform a simple bow) – then go to your assigned seat.

Book
If you have the Sacramentary, you hold it for the priest unless he is using the wooden book stand. You stand when Father stands, you sit when he sits. Anticipate when Father will say “Let us pray” and have the book ready for him. If you need to leave the chair to do another job during Mass you should ideally turn left and go behind the chairs, passing (and genuflecting toward) the Tabernacle. If for some reason you must pass in front of Father you should stop and make a simple bow to him before proceeding.

Your first and greatest responsibility when serving Father at Mass is to reverently pray. This includes audibly saying or singing every prayer or response. Every one. Every time.

OFFERTORY and LAVABO

Cross Bearer and Escorts
During the Prayers of the Faithful the Cross Bearer will go with the 2 Escort Altar Boys (if available), slowly holding the Cross low at face or chest level along the side aisles (past the statue of the Blessed Mother, past St. Therese, past the crying room, etc.) to either the back of the Church for the vigil, 8:30 or 10:30 Masses or the middle of the Church for the 7:00 or 5:00 Mass. When Father is ready you will walk slowly to Father and then move off to the left (or if you are also receiving the gifts wait there next to Father).
Dressing the Altar

During the Prayers of the Faithful the two Altar Boys who are dressing the Altar will go to work. The first will take the Chalice and the second will take the book and stand. For the Chalice, pick it up by the stem with the right hand and put the left hand on top of the Burse. Hold it tight as the Paten is simply resting on the Chalice. Place the Chalice on the right side of the Altar with the opening in the Burse facing the Tabernacle. The book and stand should be placed on the left side of the Altar. Both boys should reverence the Altar together when done and then turn in toward each other to return to the Credence Table area.

Offertory Gifts

If you are receiving the Offertory gifts from Father you will go to the front of the Altar when he goes (or you will be there already if you were also the Escort). One boy stands on each side and waits for Father to give him either the wine or the Ciborium. The boy with the wine will go back to the Credence Table and give it to a Knight. The boy with the Ciborium will take it to the Altar and place it next to the Chalice. Be sure to hold the Ciborium by the sides and bottom. Please do not put your fingers on the top, it will leave fingerprints. When finished, reverence the Altar with a profound bow.

Serving the Mass

After the Offertory, Father will remove the Burse and veil from the Chalice, unfold the corporal and say a prayer with the Paten and large host. At this point two boys take the water and wine to the Altar. (See the gray box below for how to approach the Altar and where to stand.) Hold the cruet in your right hand by the bottom with the handle out and put your left hand on your sternum. The boy with the wine goes on the right, next to the Altar, the boy with the water goes on the left. Receive the cruets back from Father with your left hand by holding the bottom. Both boys make a simple bow to Father together, and slowly turn to go back to the Credence Table.
Lavabo

Two boys now bring the Lavabo Bowl / pitcher of water and towel to Father. The boy with the towel should put his hands in the regular prayerful position and the Knight will rest the towel over them. The thumbs should be used to hold the towel securely. (see picture)  Next, approach the Altar with the boy with the bowl and pitcher standing on the right, next to the Altar, and the boy with the towel standing on the left. (Approach the Altar the same way you did above when serving the Mass.) When Father comes over he will put his hands over the bowl and the boy with the pitcher will slowly pour a little water on Father’s hands. Father will then dry his hands and you will both bow together to Father and then turn to return to the Credence Table.

CONSECRATION

Torches

During the Offertory the boys who will be Torch Bearers [Note: ideally there will be 6 Torch Bearers, 3 on each side of the Bells, but if there are not enough boys at a particular Mass you may use only 4 or 2.] go to the Sacristy to get their torches. The Thurifer (if any) and half of the Torch Bearers will go out the Baptismal Font door. The boy with the Bells and the other half of the Torch Bearers will go down the ramp. At the Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy), the boys will come out and kneel on the first stair, placing their torches on the second stair. After the Great Amen the Torch Bearers stand and return the torches to the stand in the Sacristy.

SERVING TIP:
It is important that the Torch Bearers hold the torches at approximately the same height. A rule of thumb is to have the two tallest boys at the front of each line and to then hold your torch at the same height as the boy in front of you. The Bells and Thurifer are stationed in the middle.

SACRISTY RULES: During Mass there are two times when no more than six boys must be in the Sacristy to light the torches. Ordinarily there is no other reason to be in there. NO OTHER BOYS ARE ALLOWED IN THE SACRISTY DURING MASS. When you are in the Sacristy for a legitimate reason you must remain silent. If you do not have a job to do, you should be praying. Boys waiting to process out will remain in the pews and then line up next to the Torch Bearers and Father at the foot of the Altar.
Bells

One ring when Father places both hands over the Chalice; three rings when Father elevates the Sacred Host; three rings when he elevates the Chalice with the Precious Blood; and one ring when Father drinks the Precious Blood. (Note: this final ring is done after you have moved from the middle, so immediately go up the ramp and move to the kneeler next to the Credence Table.

COMMUNION

Patens

After the Great Amen the Altar Boys who will have Patens during Communion should line up on the ramp. During the Agnus Dei (Lamb of God), the Altar Boys, one at a time, come out to get their Patens and towel from the Knight and immediately line up along the back edge of the rug near the Tabernacle. After the Agnus Dei the Altar Boys kneel. The Paten should be held with one hand by the handle, making sure to keep the plate straight and level. The towel should be held against your sternum by your other hand with your palm out straight (see picture). Father will come over to give you Communion.

During Communion you should stand on Father’s left side at a 90 degree angle to him. As each communicant approaches Father or the Deacon (or the Extraordinary Minister of Communion) you place the Paten under the person’s chin or hands depending on how they are receiving.

It is critical that you pay attention during Communion and do not let any hosts or particles fall to the ground—these are the Body and Blood of Jesus. After Communion go to the right side of the Altar and wait with the Extraordinary Minister (if any) to hand your Paten to Father who will purify it with the purificator. Immediately move to the other side of the altar and wait there with your hands folded in prayer for Father to hand your Paten back to you. Receive the Paten with your left hand, placing your right over your sternum, make a simple bow to Father and then take the Paten and towel back to the Knight at the Credence Table.

SERVING TIP: What to do if a Sacred Host is dropped?

If a Sacred Host drops during Communion, Father or the Deacon (or the Extraordinary Minister) will pick it up and you should immediately put the white towel you have over the area. After Communion tell a Knight. The Knight will ask Father if he will clean the area or if the Knight may. The area is cleaned using a small amount of water from the Lavabo Pitcher and the Lavabo Towel. The Towel should then be placed in the Lavabo Bowl and placed on the Credence Table. After Mass the Altar Boys should take the bowl and towel to the Sacristy for the Sacristan to properly launder, dispose of the excess water and particles in the Sacrarium and purify the Lavabo Bowl.
**Receiving Communion**

If you do not have a Paten during Communion, while Father is giving Communion to the boys with the Patens you should immediately move from your pews and line up in front of the first pew in the middle, waiting for Father to give you Communion.

**Clean Up**

During Communion one Altar Boy will close the book if it is not already closed and take it and the stand back to the Credence Table. After Communion (and after all of the Patens have been returned to the Credence Table) Father will need the water cruet. One boy will bring that to the Altar and when Father presents the Ciborium / Chalice the boy will pour a little water until Father indicates to stop by raising the Ciborium / Chalice. Make a simple bow to Father when finished. The Knights will send boys over to the Altar to take the Ciboria and Chalice to the Credence Table. The boy who will take the Chalice should take care to firmly grab the stem of the Chalice with his right hand and firmly place his left on top of the Burse. Note: it is important to firmly hold the Burse on the Chalice because the Communion Paten is resting on top of the Chalice underneath the Veil.

**MASS ENDS**

**Recessional**

During clean up, but not before, the boys who will be Torch Bearers at the end of Mass will go to the Sacristy to light the torches and then line up either along the ramp or by the Baptismal Font. All other boys without a clean-up job should make their thanksgiving in the pews.

After the Ite Missa Est (Mass is ended…) process out to the front along the bottom step, leaving just enough room in the middle for Father (and the Deacon if he is there). The Cross Bearer will line up directly behind Father. All except the Cross Bearer (who will make a simple bow) will genuflect. The Cross Bearer will lead the procession (or Thurifer, if any), followed by the Torch Bearers and remaining Altar Boys.

**Clean up after Mass**

After Mass the Cross Bearer should return the Processional Cross to the stand and the Torch Bearers likewise. They should extinguish the candles and then help the Sacristan clear the Credence Table.

**Returning to the Altar Boy Room**

After clean up you will return to the Altar Boy room. You must neatly hang up your cassock and surplice! The last boy should not leave until the room is clean.

*If you are not responsible enough to hang up your cassock and surplice you are not responsible enough to serve Father at Mass.*
Serving at Weekday, Funeral or Wedding Masses in the Ordinary Form

Weekday Masses
The only major difference for serving at a weekday Mass is that you typically enter from the Sacristy, there are no torches and the bells are rung from the side chair.

Serving at a Funeral Mass in the Ordinary Form
Three Altar Boys are typically needed for Funeral Masses. Stipends of $10 are usually, but not always (as in the case of House of Mercy Funerals), offered to the boys serving, however, only boys scheduled in advance will receive a stipend (if any). Please Note: Funerals are solemn events for the family and friends of the deceased. It is critical that your behavior and demeanor reflect the seriousness of the Mass.

Deviations from Sunday Mass Procedures (see instructions in Altar Boy room for more):
• Incense is used for most funerals, but ask Father before Mass when he will use it.
• The Altar Boy who will carry the Incense Boat during the procession helps Father with the Asperges (for sprinkling) at the front of the Church.
• Process from the entrance with the priest, casket & family, Thurifer in front.
• Crucifer and escorts are used during the Offertory from the middle.
• No torches are used, but if there will be incense at the Consecration the Thurifer and Altar Boy with the Bells should kneel in front of the Altar. (Bells from the side if no incense.)

Funeral or Wedding Masses are not the time to “try a new job.”
For example, if you have never done incense or bells before, don’t try them for the first time at one of these Masses!

Serving at a Wedding Mass in the Ordinary Form
Two Altar Boys are typically needed for Wedding Masses. Stipends of $10 are usually offered to the boys serving, however, only boys scheduled in advance will receive a stipend (if any).

Deviations from Sunday Mass Procedures (see instructions in Altar Boy room for more):
• Light the Candelabra on either side of the Altar, as well as the six Altar Candles, no sooner then five minutes before the scheduled start time of the wedding.
• Process with Father/Deacon and groomsmen from the Sacristy.
• Crucifer and one escort is used during the Offertory from the middle.
• Assist Father/Deacon with handling the Asperges during the blessing of the rings.
• At the end of the wedding assist the Sacristan in putting away kneelers / cleaning up.

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Serving at a Mass with Incense in the Ordinary Form

**Before Mass**

About 10 minutes before Mass add three pieces of charcoal (kept in the tall cabinet to the left of the sink in the Sacristy). Light.

NOTE: You should put an extra two piece of charcoal and the lighter on the table just inside the Sacristy door in case you need to add more during the Mass.

**Procession and Incensing the Altar**

About two minutes before Mass add incense (two or three good-sized spoonfuls), making sure to place it on the burning coals.

The Thurifer (the boy carrying the Thurible) walks in front of the Cross Bearer at the head of the procession. The Thurible should swing freely in your left hand. The incense Boat Bearer follows the Cross Bearer.

The Thurifer and boy with the Boat should stand to the right of where Father will stand / genuflect when they get to the Altar.

After genuflecting with Father, the Thurifer and Boat Bearer should go immediately to the right side of the Altar. After Father kisses the Altar he will come over and the Thurifer should lift the top of the Thurible and at the same time the lid on the Boat should be opened. Father will take the spoon from the Boat and add some incense to the Thurible. He will then incense the Altar.

When Father is finished he will hand the Thurible back to the Thurifer and the Thurifer and Boat Bearer should bow to Father and then put the Thurible and Boat on the stand. The top should be open when the Thurible is on the stand.

**Incensing the Gospel**

At the end of the Responsorial Psalm the two boys return to the stand. When Father leaves his chair to reverence the Altar on the way to the Ambo to read the Gospel the boys should move to the Ambo (going between the Tabernacle and the Altar–don’t forget to stop in the middle and genuflect).

Stand a couple of feet back from the Ambo. Just like when he incensed the Altar, Father will add some incense to the Thurible and then incense the Gospel. After he is finished, return the Thurible and Boat to the stand.
Incensing the Gifts, Altar, Priest and People

During the Offertory the boys should go back to the stand and check to make sure that there is enough charcoal in the Thurible. Add more and re-light if necessary. Be at the Altar when Father pours the wine and water. He will incense the Chalice, Paten and Altar.

When Father returns the Thurible to you, you incense Father (one, two swings). If the Deacon is present turn and incense him (one, two swings).

After you incense Father (or the Deacon) the two boys move to the second step in front of the Altar. The Boat Bearer will signal to the people to stand. The Thurifer will incense the people (one, two swings).

After finished incensing the people, go back to the stand. The Boat Bearer can return to his seat. The Thurifer will stand next to the stand with his hands folded in prayer to wait to lead the Torch Bearers to the middle for the Consecration.

Incense at the Consecration

If using both incense and Bells, after the Sanctus the Thurifer will put one or two spoonfuls of incense in the thurible if necessary and enter from the Baptismal Font side, the Bells will enter as usual from the ramp. The Thurifer and Bells will be next to each other in the middle.

Unlike the Bells, the incense is only used at the elevation of the Blessed Sacrament (3 x one, two, three swings) and the elevation of the Precious Blood ( 3 x one, two, three swings).

After the Great Amen, process out as usual and return the Thurible to the stand. After Communion you should kneel by the stand.

Recessional

After Father says “The Lord be with You” you should be ready to move to the foot of the Altar one last time. Again, the Thurifer is in front of the Cross Bearer and should let the Thurible swing freely.

After Mass

After Mass return to the Sacristy. Take the Lavabo Pitcher with you out the back door. Dump the charcoal on the dirt right outside the back door. Fully extinguish the charcoal with the water from the pitcher. Use more than one pitcher of water if necessary. It is critical that the Thurible is completely empty and not smoking at all before returning it to the stand.

NOTE: The incense smoke will set off the smoke detectors in the Sacristy, Vesting Sacristy, Altar Boy room, and all hallways! Please be careful not to walk into any of these areas when the Thurible is smoking!

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Prayers All Altar Boy Should Know for Mass

**Lord’s Prayer**

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

**Oratio Domini - Lord’s Prayer**


**Hail Mary**

Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

**Ave Maria**

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum; benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus. Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus, nunc et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.

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**Tips for Latin**

1. Pronounce each vowel carefully.
   - A as in bah; Amen is ah-men.
   - E like ay in bay. Meam is may-ahm (ae and oe sound like plain e; laetificat is lay-tificat.
   - Coelum is chay-lum.
   - I sounds like ee in bee. Laetificat is lay-tee-fee-caht.
   - O sounds like o in got. Confiteor is con-fee-tay-er.
   - U sounds like oo in room. Juventutem is yoo-ven-too-tem.

2. The consonants are much as we use them, except:
   - C, when followed by e or i is pronounced ch as in Child. Caelum is chay-loom
   - G is as in got, except when followed by e or i when it is pronounced j as in just. Affligit is afflée-jeet.
   - H is not pronounced at all, properly. But no-one will worry if you do. Habémus is abáymoos.
   - J is pronounced as an English Y. Justum is yoostoom.
   - R. This letter is usually rolled, but don’t worry if you can’t.
   - GN when they are together, are pronounced like the ne in new. Dignus is dee-nyoos

Hail Holy Queen

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy; our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us. And after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. \((\text{strike breast three times})\) O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.
V. Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God:
R. That we may be made worth of the promises of Christ.

Holy, Holy, Holy

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of power and might, Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt caeli et terra Gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.
Benedictus qui venit in nominee Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.

Lamb of God

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: \((\text{strike breast}^*)\) have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: \((\text{strike breast}^*)\) have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: \((\text{strike breast}^*)\) grant us peace.
*Extraordinary Form only

Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi: \((\text{strike breast}^*)\) miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi: \((\text{strike breast}^*)\) miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi: \((\text{strike breast}^*)\) dona nobis pacem.
*Extraordinary Form only

Confiteor – Ordinary Form

I confess to almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned through my own fault \((\text{strike breast once})\) in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done, and in what I have failed to do; and I ask blessed Mary, ever virgin, all the angels and saints, and you, my brothers and sisters to pray for me to the Lord our God.
Confiteor – Extraordinary Form

I confess to almighty God, to blessed Mary ever virgin, blessed Michael the archangel, blessed John the Baptist, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, and all the saints that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word and deed, (strike breast three times) through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault and I ask blessed Mary ever virgin, blessed Michael the archangel, blessed John the Baptist, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, and all the saints, to pray to the Lord our God for me.

Prayer to Saint Michael

St. Michael, the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, cast into Hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession, was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of Virgins, my Mother: to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Glory Be

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Gloria

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.
Nicene Creed

We believe in God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and all that is seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father.

Through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from Heaven: (Ordinary Form: make a profound bow; Extraordinary Form: genuflect) by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man. (rise)

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered, died, and was buried. On the third day he rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures; he ascended into Heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried.

He descended into Hell; the third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into Heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father almighty. From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Fatima Prayer

Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of thy mercy.
Angelus
V. The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.
R. And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.
   Hail Mary . . .

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.
R. Be it done to me according to thy word.
   Hail Mary . . .

V. And the word was made flesh. (genuflect)
R. And dwelt among us.
   Hail Mary . . .

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.
R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

   Let us pray. Pour forth, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ thy Son was made known by the message of an angel, may by his Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of his Resurrection. Through the same Christ Our Lord.
R. Amen

Regina Caeli
V. Queen of heaven, rejoice! Alleluia.
R. For he whom you did merit to bear. Alleluia.

V. Has risen, as he said. Alleluia.
R. Pray for us to God. Alleluia.

V. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary. Alleluia.
R. For the Lord is truly risen. Alleluia.

   Let us pray. O God, who gave joy to the world through the resurrection of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ, grant, we beseech you, that through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, his Mother, we may obtain the joys of everlasting life, through the same Christ our Lord.
R. Amen

Anima Christi
Soul of Christ, sanctify me. Body of Christ, save me. Blood of Christ, inebriate me.
Water from Christ’s side, wash me. Passion of Christ, strengthen me. O good Jesus, hear me.
Within thy wounds, hide me. Suffer me not to be separated from Thee. Against the malignant enemy, defend me.

At the hour of my death, call me, and bid me come unto Thee, that with Thy Saints I may praise Thee forever and ever. Amen.
Serving at a Mass in the Extraordinary Form

Please see the special training handout available on the Altar Boy section of the Holy Trinity website, look for copies in the Altar Boy room or ask the priest who says the Extraordinary Form Masses for a copy.

Other resources for learning the Extraordinary Form are available at SanctaMissa.org.
Additional Responsibilities for Knights

Pre-Mass Checklist
Approximately five minutes before Mass begins you should start lining up the boys for the procession. By this time you should have:

- Assigned jobs for the Mass.
- Made sure that the Altar candles are burning.
- Checked with Father to see if incense will be used.
- Retrieved the Processional Cross from the Sanctuary.

Assignment of Jobs
It is the Knight’s job to assign jobs for the Mass. Because of the large number of boys we have serving at each Mass please make sure to spread the jobs around.

In other words, the same boys should not have the same jobs week after week.

Scheduling
One or two Knights are schedule for each weekend Mass and Father depends on you to be there when scheduled.

It is your responsibility to check the schedule and know when you are serving. If you are unable to serve a particular day you should find a substitute. At a minimum you must let the Altar Boy coordinator know as far in advance as possible. E-mail AltarBoys@HolyTrinityParish.net.

Father cannot afford to have you miss scheduled Masses.

Supervision of Boys during Mass
Knights are responsible for making sure that the younger boys both do their jobs correctly and that their behavior is appropriate. You should quietly and charitably correct any mistakes after Mass. Do not hesitate to let the coordinator assigned to your Mass or the Altar Boy coordinator know if there is a problem that requires further attention.

You should memorize the rules at the front of this handbook, paying particular attention to the prohibition of boys criticizing other boys for how they serve.

Training
Please be aware that although the younger boys go through a formal training session, most of their training is “on the job.” This means that the Knights are charged with introducing and teaching new jobs to the younger boys slowly over time. Some boys are shy so you will have to proactively encourage them to try a new job.
Patron Saint of Altar Boys

Saint Tarcisius

Tarcisius was a twelve-year-old acolyte during one of the fierce Roman persecutions of the third century, probably during that of Valerian. Each day, from a secret meeting place in the catacombs where Christians gathered for Mass, a deacon would be sent to the prisons to carry the Eucharist to those Christians condemned to die. At one point, there was no deacon to send and so St. Tarcisius, an acolyte, was sent carrying the “Holy Mysteries” to those in prison.

On the way, he was stopped by boys his own age who were not Christians but knew him as a playmate and lover of games. He was asked to join their games, but this time he refused and the crowd of boys noticed that he was carrying something. Somehow, he was also recognized as a Christian, and the small gang of boys, anxious to view the Christian “Mysteries,” became a mob and turned upon Tarcisius with fury. He went down under the blows, and it is believed that a fellow Christian drove off the mob and rescued the young acolyte.

The mangled body of Tarcisius was carried back to the catacombs, but the boy died on the way from his injuries. He was buried in the cemetery of St. Callistus, and his relics are claimed by the church of San Silvestro in Capite.

In the fourth century, Pope St. Damasus wrote a poem about this “boy-martyr of the Eucharist” and says that, like another St. Stephen, he suffered a violent death at the hands of a mob rather than give up the Sacred Body to “raging dogs.” His story became well known when Cardinal Wiseman made it a part of his novel Fabiola, in which the story of the young acolyte is dramatized and a very moving account given of his martyrdom and death.

Tarcisius, one of the patron saints of Altar Boys, has always been an example of youthful courage and devotion, and his story was one that was told again and again to urge others to a like heroism in suffering for their faith. In the Passion of Pope Stephen, written in the sixth century, Tarcisius is said to be an acolyte of the pope himself and, if so, this explains the great veneration in which he was held and the reason why he was chosen for so difficult a mission.

Source: The One Year Book of Saints by Rev. Clifford Stevens, which was published by Our Sunday Visitor and is now out of print. This text was excerpted from an electronic copy published at EWTN.com.