



**OFFICE FOR DIVINE WORSHIP  
ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA**

**ALTAR SERVER NOTES  
FOR THE RITE OF CONFIRMATION WITHIN MASS**

These notes are for the benefit of the pastor and those who assist him in the training of altar servers for the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy on the occasion of Mass with a Bishop for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Altar servers, whether children or adults, should be reminded of the significance of their role and be well-prepared to carry out their respective duties responsibly and reverently. Therefore, a thorough review of the *Rite of Confirmation within Mass* should be provided for the altar servers. During the actual celebration, a minimum of guidance will be offered by the Master of Ceremonies. Altar servers wear albs during the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy. Chairs should be so arranged in the sanctuary for the servers so that they can easily carry out their duties and participate in the Mass but do not face the congregation.

Eight altar servers in all are needed for the *Rite of Confirmation within Mass*: thurifer, crucifer, two candle bearers/servers, Sacred Chrism bearer, miter and crozier bearer, and book bearer. If eight servers are not available, then the crucifer can also serve as the book bearer and one of the servers can act as the Sacred Chrism bearer.

**DUTIES OF THE ALTAR SERVERS**

**The Thurifer**

- The thurifer approaches the Bishop prior to the procession for the imposition of incense. The thurifer, after the imposition of incense, leads the procession into the church. He carries the thurible and boat with incense. Upon arriving at the foot of the altar, the thurifer makes a reverence with a bow of the head to the altar and then moves to the left side of the sanctuary to the left of the altar. He approaches the altar after the Bishop venerates it. He hands the boat to the deacon, if assisting, or the Master of Ceremonies, and opens the thurible for the imposition of incense. The Bishop imposes incense, if needed, and accepts the thurible through the deacon, if assisting. Meanwhile, the thurifer steps away from the altar as it is incensed by the Bishop. Immediately after the Bishop has incensed the altar, the thurifer moves to receive the thurible and returns the thurible to its stationary position.
- After the period of silence following the Second Reading, or if there is none, after the Responsorial Psalm, the thurifer, if he passes the altar, bows, and approaches the Bishop. He hands the boat to the deacon, if assisting, or the Master of Ceremonies, kneels, and

opens the thurible for the imposition of incense. After this, the thurifer stands and goes to the center of the sanctuary, waiting for candle bearers and the deacon or concelebrant with the *Book of the Gospels*. When all are ready for the Gospel procession, the thurifer leads all to the ambo, and he stands to the right of the deacon or concelebrant for the incensation of the Gospel. At the conclusion of the Gospel, the thurifer leads all back to their places, bowing to the altar as it is passed. He returns the thurible to its stationary position.

- Immediately after the servers present the water and wine at the altar, the thurifer prepares to approach the Bishop with the thurible and incense. He hands the boat to the deacon, if assisting, or the Master of Ceremonies, and opens the thurible for the imposition of incense. The Bishop imposes incense and accepts the thurible through the deacon, if assisting. Meanwhile, the thurifer steps away from the altar as it is incensed by the Bishop. After the incensation of the Bishop, the altar, cross, clergy and congregation, the thurifer moves to receive the thurible and returns the thurible to its stationary position.
- The thurifer, in the absence of a deacon chaplain, may go to the altar step, with the thurible filled with incense, during the *Sanctus*, and kneel. He bows before and after each consecration and incenses the Blessed Sacrament with three single swings of the thurible at the showing of the Body and Blood of the Lord. The thurifer, after first bowing to the altar, returns the thurible to its stationary position after the *Amen*.
- After the dismissal, the thurifer moves to the top of the sanctuary and faces the altar [with the thurible and boat]. All others line up in front of him facing the altar. As the others bow or genuflect, he bows to the altar and leads the procession out of the church.

### **The Crucifer**

- The crucifer leads the procession into the church following the thurifer. Upon arriving at the foot of the altar, the crucifer makes a reverence with a bow of the head to the altar and then takes the cross to its stationary position.
- The crucifer may be assigned the task, if this task is not assigned to the servers, of ringing the bells during the epiclesis and the consecrations.
- After the dismissal, the crucifer moves to the top of the sanctuary and faces the altar [with the thurifer behind him]. All others line up in front of him facing the altar. As the others bow or genuflect, he bows to the altar and follows the thurifer in the procession out of the church.

### **The Candle Bearers/Servers**

- The candle bearers/servers serve the Mass. They carry lit candles as they follow slightly behind the crucifer both into and out of church. Upon arriving at the foot of the altar, the candle bearers make a reverence with a bow of the head to the altar and then take their candles to their stationary position.
- At the conclusion of the Second Reading, or if there is none, after the Responsorial Psalm, the candle bearers retrieve their lit candles and stand in front of the altar with room between them for the deacon [or concelebrant]. As the deacon [or concelebrant] moves from the altar to process, the candle bearers turn and follow the thurifer to the ambo. The candle bearers stand on each side of the ambo, facing the deacon [or concelebrant]. While the deacon returns the *Book of the Gospels* to the Bishop, the candle bearers take their candles to their stationary position.

- Toward the conclusion of the anointing with Sacred Chrism, the servers prepare to wash the Bishop's hands. In addition to the ewer and basin, the servers bring to the Bishop lemon [bread] and a towel. The Bishop may wash his hands at the center of the sanctuary or his chair. After, the servers return all of the items to the credence table. The servers or the sacristan cleans the ewer and basin for the *Preparation of the Altar and the Gifts*.
- During the *Preparation of the Altar and the Gifts*, the servers may assist with preparing the altar, receiving the gifts from the Bishop, presenting the water and wine, assisting with the washing of the Bishop's hands.
- After the Bishop finishes with the distribution of Holy Communion, the servers prepare to wash his hands with the ewer, basin and towel. They move to the Bishop after the Blessed Sacrament has been reserved. After this, the servers return the items to the credence table.
- After the dismissal, the candle bearers move to the top of the sanctuary and face the altar [with the crucifer and thurifer behind them]. All others line up in front of them facing the altar. As the others bow or genuflect, they bow to the altar and follow the crucifer in the procession out of the church.

### **The Sacred Chrism Bearer**

- The Sacred Chrism bearer carries the holy oil in the procession immediately behind the crucifer and candle bearers/servers. Upon arriving at the foot of the altar, the Sacred Chrism bearer makes a reverence with a bow of the head to the altar and then takes the holy oil to the credence table.
- He brings the Sacred Chrism to the deacon (or to the pastor if there is no deacon) who in turn presents it to the Bishop for the anointing. For the anointing with Sacred Chrism, as the Bishop moves to the front of the sanctuary to confirm, the Sacred Chrism bearer stands to the left of the Bishop and holds the sacred vessel. At the conclusion of the anointing, the Sacred Chrism bearer returns it to the credence table.
- After the dismissal, the Sacred Chrism bearer moves to the top of the sanctuary and faces the altar [with the thurifer and crucifer behind him]. All others line up in front of him facing the altar. As the others bow or genuflect, he bows to the altar and follows the crucifer in the procession out of the church with the Sacred Chrism in hand.

### **The Miter and Crozier Bearers (Insignia Bearers)**

- The miter and crozier bearers (insignia bearers) carry the miter and crozier when they are not worn by the Bishop. In the procession into and out of the church, they walk behind the [deacon chaplains or] Bishop. Upon arriving in the sanctuary, the Master of Ceremonies takes the miter and crozier from the Bishop and gives the miter to the miter bearer and the crozier to the crozier bearer. Whenever the miter and crozier bearers have the insignia in their hands, they wrap them in the vimps they are wearing over their albs. As the Bishop makes his reverence (genuflection/bow), the miter and crozier bearers do the same.
- The miter and crozier bearers remain in place near the Bishop and follow the directions of the Master of Ceremonies. As a general rule, the Bishop removes the miter whenever he leads the faithful in prayer and during the Gospel, otherwise he wears it. Also, as a general rule, the Bishop has the crozier for the processions, during the Gospel, parts of the *Rite of Confirmation*, and the Blessing.

- After the dismissal, the miter and crozier bearers remain to the side of the Bishop at the foot of the altar. As the others bow or genuflect, they genuflect/bow and follow behind the [deacon chaplains or] Bishop.

### **The Book Bearer**

- The book bearer processes behind the miter and crozier bearers into and out of the church. He only carries the book in the entrance procession and not out of the church. Upon arriving in the sanctuary, the book bearer bows/genuflects along with the miter and crozier bearers.
- The book bearer remains in place, like the miter and crozier bearers, near the Bishop and follows the directions of the Master of Ceremonies. As a general rule, the book bearer holds the book for the Bishop during the *Introductory Rites*, the *Prayer of the Faithful*, the *Rite of Confirmation* and for the *Concluding Rites*.
- After the dismissal, the book bearer, like the miter and crozier bearers, remains to the side of the Bishop at the foot of the altar. As the others bow or genuflect, he genuflects/bows and follows behind the miter and crozier bearers.

### **The Order of Procession**

Thurifer

Crucifer

Candle Bearers/Servers

Sacred Chrism Bearer

Priests in choir

Deacon with the *Book of the Gospels*

Concelebrants

Bishop

Deacon Chaplains

Miter and Crozier Bearers

Book Bearer