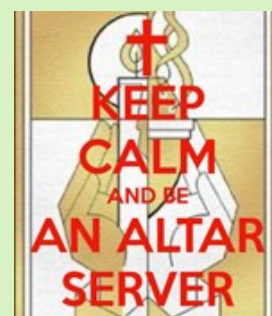


St. Stephen the Martyr Catholic Church
Lilburn, Georgia



Guide for Altar Servers



May 2023

Welcome!

As an Altar Server, you are a member of a very special group of young people called to lead by serving. You will help others to pray, and to demonstrate the importance of offering fitting worship to the People of God. You will have special tasks to perform during liturgies, especially during the celebration of the Eucharist (the Mass), and on occasion, Funerals and Weddings. The Altar Server is very important in helping God's people worship in the best possible way.

An Altar Server's Prayer / Prayer Before Serving

Father in Heaven, your Son, Jesus Christ, showed his love for you by serving his need brothers and sisters. I now ask you to give me your help as I serve you and your people. Open my mouth to praise you in word and song. Open my ears to hear your word. Open my hands to do your work well.

Take from my heart all evil and distracting thoughts. Help me to know what I should do, and do it well. Help me to serve reverently at your holy altar, and so give you praise and glory, now and forever. Amen.

Introduction

Servers exercise a genuine liturgical ministry. They ought therefore to discharge their office with the sincere piety and decorum demanded by their ministry and rightly expected of them by God's people. They must have a deep sense of the spirit of the liturgy and be trained to perform their functions in a correct and orderly manner.

Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy 29

Serving is not for everyone. As a Server, you are a Liturgical Minister with an important role during the Mass or other liturgical services, such as Funerals, Weddings, Stations of the Cross or Benediction. It is a privilege for you to assist the priest at the Altar. This means that there is a certain way to behave that is appropriate. Remember that you are always part of the congregation even if you are sitting in a different place than they are.

A good server not only serves the Sunday Mass, but also makes themselves available for other services. There may come a time when you no longer feel that serving is appropriate for you. When this happens, please advise the Deacon in charge of Altar Servers, as a courtesy.

Requirements for Altar Server Candidates

- They must be in the 4th grade or higher and have made their first Eucharist.
- A strong desire to serve at the Altar of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ
- Attend Mass each Sunday, go to confession regularly.
- Be an active member of the St. Stephen the Martyr parish community and believe in the teachings of The Holy Catholic Church.
- Know how to genuflect properly and how to make the Sign of the Cross.
- Know how to receive Holy Communion in one of the approved manners.
- Be willing to pray aloud and make appropriate responses during the Mass.
- Wear appropriate clothing to church for serving even if not scheduled - as you might be needed as a substitute.
- Make sure that your shoes and clothing are clean and appropriate for Mass.
- Be punctual, meaning being at church at least 15 minutes before Mass starts.
- Stay alert and attentive during Mass to serve the priest.
- No chitchatting while serving. Chewing gum is NOT PERMITTED in Church.
- Be able to work together as a team.
- Show absolute reverence at the Altar in your total demeanor.
- Take direction from Clergy or MC for the Mass that you are serving.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ALTAR SERVERS

Training

Training is required before you are eligible to serve. You will receive appropriate training to get you started. During the training you will learn some basic information about the Catholic Church and the Mass. You will also learn how to carry out specific tasks while serving at the Altar. After you have progressed satisfactorily in training, you will be assigned to serve for several times with an experienced server.

Posture

Posture is how you are using and positioning the parts of your body at a particular time. A server has to carry out a number of different actions at Mass, and so there are a number of different postures.

Walking

We do a lot of walking everyday and sometimes we get sloppy as we do it. Always walk with your back straight and your head held high. When you process in and out of Mass, stay centered in the aisle and keep your eyes straight ahead.

Kneeling

When you kneel, your body should be upright and your hands should be in front of your chest, well above your waist.

Genuflecting

When you genuflect, keep your hands in front of your chest while you go down on your right knee. Keep your body straight. Be sure that your alb is not going to trip you on the way down or up.

Bowing

When you bow to someone or something during the Mass, it should be a smooth forward inclining of your head and shoulders.

When you bow to the Altar, bow deeply at the waist and bring yourself slowly to our full height. When you bow to the Priest, bow your head slowly and gracefully.

Never walk and bow at the same time: stop before bowing.

Note: Any time you are holding or carrying anything (a Book, the Processional Cross or a Candle) you do not genuflect and may bow (only a bow of the head).

Standing

Always stand up straight with both feet firmly on the floor six to eight inches apart. This will give you balance and comfort at the same time. Don't lean against the furniture or against the walls.

Sitting

Sit down on your chair carefully and gracefully (wait for the Priest to sit).

If more than one Altar Server is serving, the servers should wait until all of you are standing in front of your chairs, then everyone should sit down simultaneously.

Once you are seated, sit tall and don't slouch. Place your hands on your lap or flat on your thighs in a relaxed manner. Feet should be flat on the floor.

Hands

Unless you are sitting down or carrying something (like a candle); your hands should be kept joined in front of your chest; palm to palm, fingers pointing upward, with your thumbs interlocked. Keep your hands high up on your chest.

If you are carrying something in one hand, hold the other hand flat on your chest.

Sign of the Cross

The Sign of the Cross done at the beginning of Mass and at the final blessing is made by placing one hand over your heart, and with the other hand trace a cross from the top of your forehead to just below the breast bone then from the left shoulder to the right shoulder. This symbolizes our belief in the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Small Sign of the Three Crosses

When the announcement of the Gospel has been made, use the thumb and trace a small sign of the cross first on the forehead, next on the lips, then over the heart.

This symbolizes the Word of God being made present in your mind, on your lips, and in your heart.

Eyes

During Mass always look toward the place where the action is: the celebrant's chair, the Ambo, or the Altar.

When a lector is reading the scriptures, you should be looking at the lector.

When you are talking to someone, you expect that person to look at you - the same is true at Mass.

Never look at the people in the congregation, rather look just above their heads.

If there is a Master of Ceremonies (MC), keep an eye on him.

They might want you to do something at any time.

Note: Generally MC's are only on hand at special Masses such as Confirmation or other Masses when the Bishop is present.

General Appearance

Know what you are to do while serving, and when you are to do it.

Never fidget. Always do things smoothly. Do not allow yourself to be distracted.

Mistakes

When you make a mistake (and we all do) never get flustered.

Everyone makes an occasional mistake - Priests, Deacons, Lectors, and Altar servers. However, to keep the sacred liturgy flowing smoothly, it is often best to continue along as though whatever happened was deliberate - don't quickly reverse direction or get flustered.

This will merely call attention to the mistake.

Smoothly and quietly take the next opportunity to set things right (sometimes it is even best to let the Priest or Deacon take care of the chore you forgot).

Get into the habit of keeping an eye on the action at the altar.

That will help make you aware if the Priest or Deacon are trying to get your attention to take care of something you may have forgotten or some unexpected special task.

Before Mass

(See photos illustrations in Appendix)

Be sure to be dressed properly for serving Mass. Dress – Alb, Cincture, and Cross.

Light candles at main Altar, Ambo, and Tabernacle Altar. (see photo).

Two Servers get the processional candles from the sanctuary. This is to be done about 5-10 minutes before Mass. Gather in the narthex and be ready for the Priest to start Mass.

Remember to be reverent, alert to what the Priest needs, and fold hands when not holding something.

THE ORDER OF THE MASS

Before Mass

Just before Mass is to begin, the Altar Servers should wait prayerfully in the Narthex, just outside of the Clergy Vestry to gather for prayer before Mass. After prayer, the Altar Servers will line up in the back aisle, just inside the glass doors in the correct order to be ready for the procession.

Processional Entrance

Waiting for the beginning of the second verse of the Entrance Hymn.... The Cross Bearer goes first with the Candle Bearers following. The Candle Bearers should stay 6 - 7 feet behind the Cross Bearer and the Candle Bearers are to stay in line with each other.

The Cross Bearer goes directly up the steps of the Sanctuary and places the cross in the Stand. The Candle Bearers walk up and stand to the left-side and right-side of the aisle next to the first pews. . The priest will come up to the steps and genuflect. All should bow their heads slightly when the Priest genuflects. Extra server(s) are to genuflect with the Priest.

The Priest goes up the steps and reverences the Altar. The Candle Bearers go up the steps near the Ambo and place the candle on the stands; then go to their chairs.

Greeting and Sign of the Cross

The Priest will begin by making the Sign of the Cross along with the whole assembly; all of the Altar Servers join in making the Sign of the Cross and responding with the Amen.

Penitential Rite .

The Priest invites the assembly to reflect on their sins and then the Priest or Deacon leads the congregation in penitential prayers - Altar servers are to join in the responses.

The Gloria

The Gloria (Glory to God in the Highest) is sung or recited on Sundays, solemnities, and feast days except during the season of Advent or Lent when it is omitted.

Opening Prayer

During the Mass when standing, turn slightly toward the Altar. The Book Bearer brings the Roman Missal (red book) to the Priest (when these words are heard, "Let us Pray") by holding it in both arms right side up so that the Priest can read it.

At the end of the Opening Prayer, the response is Amen.... Place the book on the stand and return to your chair.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

The focus of the action now shifts to the Ambo. The Altar Servers' attention shifts with the action. Look at the Lector, if you are opposite the Ambo but if you are on the same side, turn your head slightly toward the Altar and be attentive to the reading.

First Reading

The Lector begins with "A reading from the book of . " At the end of the reading, the Lector says "The Word of the Lord". The Altar Servers respond, "Thanks be to God".

Responsorial Psalm

The Cantor or Lector will lead the people in the Responsorial Psalm by reciting or singing the response after which the Altar Servers respond appropriately with the Psalm Response with the congregation.

Second Reading

When there is a second reading (Sundays and solemnities), the Lector begins and ends as with the first reading. The Altar Servers respond aloud with the congregation, "Thanks be to God".

(Note: if the lector forgets to put the step up, the Altar server may do so).

Gospel Acclamation (Alleluia)

Except during Lent, the Gospel Acclamation is the singing of the Alleluia. (During Lent a different acclamation will be sung). All Altar Servers stand and sing the Alleluia with the congregation.

The Gospel Proclamation

The Deacon or Priest will begin by saying "The Lord be with you."

All Altar Servers respond aloud with the congregation, "And also with you".

Then the Deacon or Priest will say "A reading from the holy Gospel according to . "

When the Deacon or Priest traces the small Sign of the Cross on his forehead, lips, and heart, all Altar Servers do the same thing.

The Gospel ends with "The Gospel of the Lord," to which all Altar Servers respond aloud, "Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ."

The Homily

A homily or teaching on the sacred scripture will be given, during which the Altar Servers are to pay close attention to the Homilist and are not to fidget or begin looking around. The Altar Servers are to remain still, quiet, and pay attention to what the Homilist has to say.

The Profession of Faith (the Creed)

After the homily, there will be a brief period of silence while everyone meditates on the message given by the homilist. Then the Priest will stand and all Altar Servers will stand. When the Priest begins reciting the Creed, all Altar Servers will recite the Creed aloud with the Priest and congregation.

The Prayer of the Faithful (General Intercessions)

The prayer of the faithful is the collection of prayers read from the Presider's book for the intentions of the Church, public authorities, the sick, the local community and the dead. Each petition will end by the Altar Servers and the congregation responding aloud, "Lord, hear our prayer."

At the conclusion of the General Intercessions, the congregation is seated and the Altar Servers prepare for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Offertory

Immediately after the Prayer of the Faithful, the Altar Server responsible for the book brings the Roman Missal and hands it to the Priest or Deacon or places it on the Altar (only if told to do so).

All servers are to go to the credence table and bring the chalice first and hand them to the Priest or Deacon. Then go back to the credence table and bring the ciboria with hosts and pyxes (if any).

Preparation of the Gifts (Option 1 – WITH Offertory Procession)

One of the servers will then carry the processional cross to the back of the church, where they will wait to lead the gift bearers down the aisle. The other Altar Servers will return to their chairs to wait for the Priest to get up to receive the gifts.

The Servers will now focus on the Priest and on the people, who bring offerings of Bread and Wine to the Altar. When the Priest stands up, this is your signal to go to the foot of the steps to receive the gifts ... standing next to the Priest and Deacon.

The Priest will hand you certain gifts – cruet of wine, ciboria with host, or pyx.

If you have the ciboria with hosts or a pyx, take it directly up to the Altar and hand it to the Deacon or Priest. Servers with cruets are to go to the Credence table, remove the stopper from the cruets, turn the handles towards the Priest and proceed with the water and wine cruets to the Altar. (See photos illustrations in Appendix).

Preparation of the Gifts (Option 2 - WITHOUT Offertory Procession)

The Servers will go back to the credence table for the cruets of water and wine.

The Servers now remove the stoppers from the cruets, turn the handles towards the Priest and proceed with the water and wine cruets to the Altar. (See photos illustrations in Appendix).

Washing of the Hands

After the Priest or the Deacon completes taking the water and the wine, return with the cruets to the Credence table, replace the stoppers and get the bowl, towel, and water pitcher and return back to the Altar for the washing of the Priest's hands. The servers then return to their chairs.

Prayer over the Offerings/Preface

Eucharistic Prayer (Consecration)

At the end of the "Holy, Holy, Holy" the Altar Servers kneel in unison.

Fold your hands and kneel up straight. Hands should be kept palms together with fingers pointed up in an attitude of prayer. Eyes (and minds) are focused on the action at the Altar. The bell ringer Altar Server must be ready to ring the bells once when the Priest puts his hands over the gifts and asks the Holy Spirit to change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.

The bell ringer again rings the bells three times when the Priest raises the Body of Christ and then again when the Priest raises the cup with the Blood of Christ.

The Altar Servers remain kneeling until the "Our Father" then stand up gracefully with hands folded as usual. The Our Father is recited aloud by all the Altar Servers.

Please stay in place.

Sign of Peace

The Altar Servers may exchange the Sign of Peace with Servers next to them.

The Servers should remain standing until the Lamb of God, when they kneel along with the congregation.

Communion

The Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion will come up to the Altar (as soon as the Priest finishes receiving Holy Communion) and stand on either side of the altar.

At this point, please come to the Center of the aisle and wait for the Priest to bring you Holy Communion. You may receive under both species (the Body and the Blood of Christ). Go back to your chairs and pray.

After Communion

The Book Bearer will remove the Roman Missal (red book) from the Altar back to the stand. As soon as The Priest gets back to the Altar, he will want the water to rinse/purify the Chalice so be alert to get him the water cruet when he needs it. The priest or Deacon will hand the server the Chalice/Pall/Corporal and the Altar server will receive it and take it to the credence table.

Concluding Rites (Closing Prayer)

After a moment of silence, the Priest will stand and say "Let us Pray". The Book Bearer will bring the Roman Missal to the Priest to hold the book for the Prayer after Communion, after which the Altar server returns to their chair.

The Recessional

Immediately after the dismissal "Go in Peace, Glorifying the Lord by your life" (or similar) the Recessional Hymn will begin.

The Priest will move to the Altar and reverence it with a kiss which is the signal for the recessional. The Cross Bearer gets the cross and proceeds down the steps, about 15 feet down to the center of the aisle.

The Candle Bearers get the candles, go directly down the steps to the Center of the Aisle just in front of the Cross Bearer (facing the Altar).

When the Priest genuflects, give a head bow and then turn to process out. The Cross Bearer will go first and the Candle Bearers will follow. Keep 6 - 7 feet behind the Cross Bearer and stay aligned with the other Candle Bearer. Proceed into the Narthex of the Church and wait for the Priest.

All altar servers, acolytes, deacons and other ministers gather facing the crucifix of the processional cross and offer a Prayer of Thanksgiving to God. (*"Let us praise the Lord, and give him Thanks"* or similar).

After Mass

Return the Processional Candles and the Cross back to their respective stands. Extinguish all candles. Return albs, cinctures, and crosses to the Altar servers Vesting room. Take Jesus with you to the world!

Notes: Remember, if you can't make it when you are scheduled, it is your responsibility to get a substitute.

Objects, Places and Names

Here is an alphabetical listing of the names, places and things that Altar Servers should know. Please familiarize these with these terms and know how to identify the objects.

ALB - The long white garment worn by Priests, Deacons and Altar Servers

ALTAR - The holy table upon which the Priest offers the sacrifice of the Mass

AMBO - (Also called a lectern or pulpit) The stand from which the Word of God is proclaimed during the Readings of sacred scripture

ALTAR CLOTH - The white cloth covering the Altar

ASSEMBLY - The assembly is sometimes called the People of God, the Church or the Congregation. It is everyone seated in the Church who have assembled for worship.

ASPERGILLUM - An aspergillum is the metal sprinkler used to sprinkle holy water

BAPTISMAL FONT - Hold water and used for administering the Sacrament of Baptism

BENEDICTION - Benediction (which means Blessing) is used to refer to a special worship service when the Blessed Sacrament (The Body of Christ) is placed in a Monstrance that the Priest or Deacon blesses the people with the Blessed Sacrament during the Benediction service.

BLESSED SACRAMENT - This is another term used for the consecrated bread which has become the sacramental Body of Christ

BOAT - The Boat is a vessel used to carry the grains of incense before the incense is placed in the Thurible

BOOK OF THE GOSPELS The large Decorative book which contains the readings from the Holy Gospels to be proclaimed at Mass

BOOK STAND A wooden stand to hold the Roman Missal on the Altar

CANTOR - The Cantor is the minister who leads the singing and who sings the Psalm responses

CHALICE - The large gold or silver cup that is used by the Priest that holds the wine to be consecrated and become the Blood of Christ

CHASUBLE - The large outer garment worn by a Priest - usually green, purple, white, or red depending on the liturgical season

CINCTURE - The long cord or rope sometimes worn around the waist over the Alb

CIBORIUM - A Ciborium is a special sacred vessel used to hold consecrated hosts. Some of them are fitted with tight fitting covers. The consecrated hosts that are unconsumed at the end of Mass, are placed in Ciboria (the plural of Ciborium) and then placed in the Tabernacle

CORPORAL The linen cloth, folded to appear square, that has a cross at the center of the lower edge (some have the cross in the center). The sacred vessels, containing the offerings that are to be consecrated into the Body and Blood of Christ, are placed on the corporal. Important Note: Consequently, since fragments of the Body of our Lord may still be present, it is always treated with special care.

CREDENCE TABLE - A Credence Table is a small table used for holding the sacred vessels that will be used during the Mass.

CRUET - A Cruet is a small, crystal bottle with a stopper used for water or wine.

FOOT OF THE ALTAR - The foot of the Altar refers to the floor at the bottom step of the Altar platform or Sanctuary

GATHERING SPACE (NARTHEX) - The area before entering through the glass-paneled doors into the Nave of the Church

HAND WASHING TOWEL - The hand washing towels (also referred to as finger towels) are made from terry- cloth and are used by the Priest to dry his hands after the ritual washing during Mass. Notice that the terry-cloth, or towel material, is quite different in appearance from the linen used for Corporals and Purificators.

HOLY OILS - The Holy Oils are displayed on the wall near the Baptismal Font. They are the Oil of Catechumens, Oil of Sacred Chrism and the Oil of the Infirm (Sick). These oils are special oils that are blessed by the Bishop at the Chrism Mass each year. The oils are then used throughout the year for Baptisms, Confirmation, Ordination of Priests and Deacons, Consecration of churches and the Anointing of the Sick.

HOST - The flat unleavened bread which will be consecrated and become the Body of Christ.

LECTIONARY - The book containing the readings from sacred scripture that are proclaimed from the Ambo by the Lectors during Mass.

LUNETTE - A special holder for the consecrated host that has round glass covers to permit viewing of the Eucharist. The Lunette can then be fitted into a Monstrance for exposition during Benediction or into the Custodia, a metal receptacle designed to hold the Lunette, which is then reserved in the Tabernacle.

MONSTRANCE - A tall gold-plated or silver vessel used to expose the Blessed Sacrament during Benediction or Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. It has a circular clear glass window-door behind which the Lunette is inserted holding the Blessed Sacrament. Often it is designed with what appears to be simulated sun rays radiating from its center.

NAVE - The Nave is the main body of the Church building where the assembly is seated.

PASCHAL CANDLE - The Paschal Candle (sometimes referred to as the Christ Candle) is the very tall decorated candle that generally stands by the Baptismal Font. It is lit during Baptisms, Funeral Masses and Masses during the Easter Season.

PATEN - The small shallow round plate or bowl shaped plate, on which the Priest's Host is placed upon.

PALL - The small, stiff linen square which the Priests will sometimes use to cover the Chalice

PURIFICATOR - The small linen cloth with a cross sometimes at the center which the Priest or Deacon uses to clean the Chalice - these are folded into a long rectangle shape to avoid confusion with Corporals, which are folded as squares.

Important Note: Since the Purificator will come into contact with the Precious Blood when wiping the communion cups and chalices, it is treated with special care.

SACRISTY, PRIEST'S VESTING - The door to the Priest's Sacristy is located in the gathering space. The Vesting Sacristy is where we keep the special vestments of Priests and Deacons who are ministers of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

SACRISTY, ALTAR SERVER'S – VESTING - The Altar Servers Vesting Area is behind the Sanctuary (on the left) where the special vestments for the Servers are kept and where Servers will vest.

SACRISTY, WORK - The Working Sacristy is the room off to the right of the Sanctuary where all of the sacred vessels, sacred books, un-consecrated bread and wine, and Altar linens are kept for liturgical celebrations.

ROMAN MISSAL - the sacred book used by the Priest that contains all of the prayers of the Mass.

SANCTUARY - The area around the Altar occupied by the raised platform upon which the Altar stands.

STOLE - a long narrow band of material that resembles a shawl and is the sign of authority of the Priest or Deacon. The Priest wears it straight down and the Deacon wears it to one side.

TABERNACLE - The locked gold cabinet on the small table behind the Altar. The Tabernacle is used to reserve consecrated hosts which are the Body of Christ. Because the Tabernacle houses the Blessed Sacrament we pay special reverence to the Tabernacle. A lighted candle (the red vigil lamp) is kept burning near the Tabernacle at all times when the Body of Christ is in the Tabernacle. When we cross in front of the Tabernacle we always bow except during Mass.

THURIBLE - The Thurible is sometimes referred to as an incenser, and is a special vessel suspended from chains in which glowing charcoal is contained. The Priest sprinkles incense from the Boat over the glowing charcoal during liturgies when incense is used.

THANKSGIVING PRAYER / PRAYER AFTER SERVING

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the eternal High Priest. You lead all your saints in heaven and your people on earth in praising God, our Father. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for letting me come before your altar, so that, with your help, I can praise my Father in heaven as his server. Help me to find joy in serving at your altar. Help me to find gladness in knowing and doing your will in all things. Glory to you, Lord Jesus, and to the Father and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Appendix: Illustration Photos



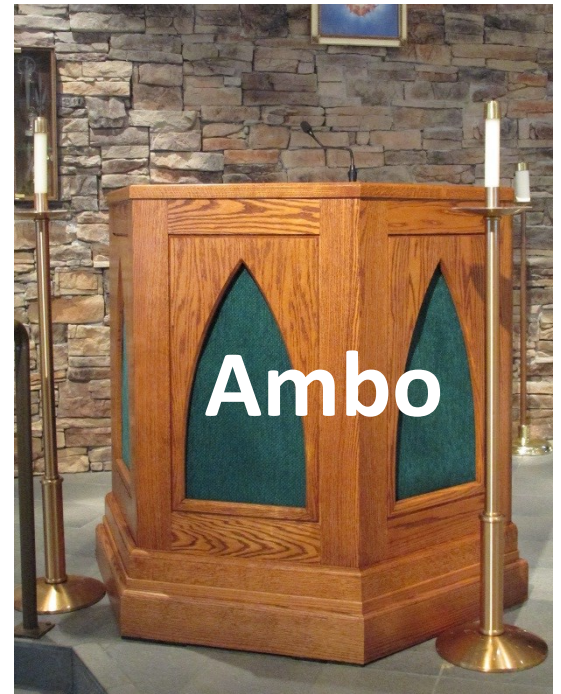
Tray above includes:

Wine and Water Cruets,
2 Ciboria—regular hosts,
Chalice, Lavabo bowl & towel,
Ciboria for Gluten Free Host, Pyx





Offertory Gift Table
Un-consecrated Bread & Wine
(Temporarily not in use)



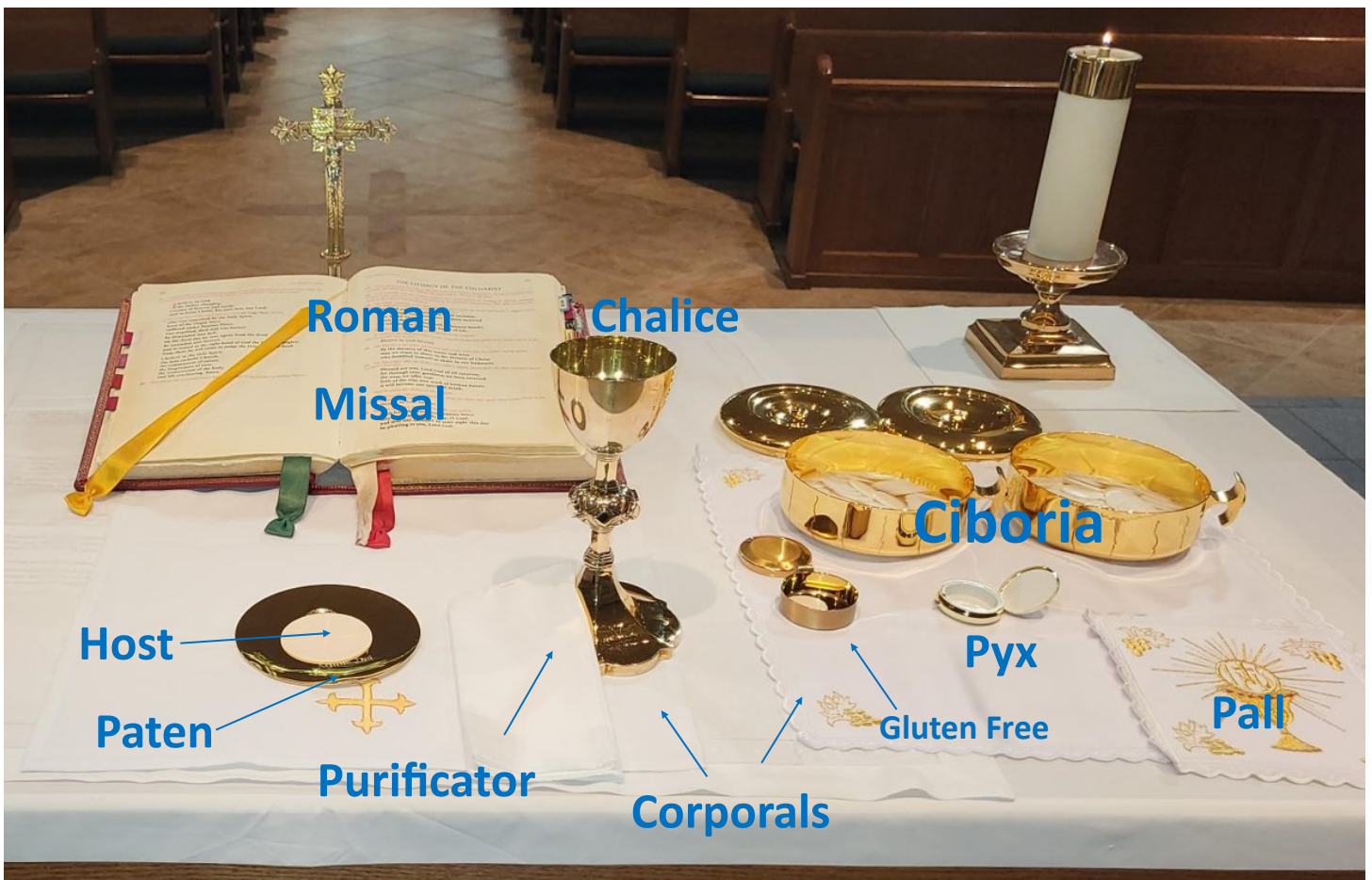
Ambo



Tabernacle



Tabernacle Key



Roman
Missal

Chalice

Ciboria

Host

Paten

Purificator

Corporals

Pyx

Gluten Free

Pall



Use the long Candle Lighters
When lighting the Altar candles.
Always be dressed in your alb
when doing this

When handling the
Chalice/Pall/Corporal
Place one hand on top, and the
other holding the stem



Make sure the tops are
removed from the Water and
Wine Cruets and hold them
with the handles facing toward
the Priest (or Deacon)



Alb Closet

Located in the backroom
behind the Altar
on the lefthand side.

Cinctures & Crosses

Check with Deacon for
appropriate color to wear



Processional Cross

Used at Opening Procession, Gifts
Offertory, and Recessional