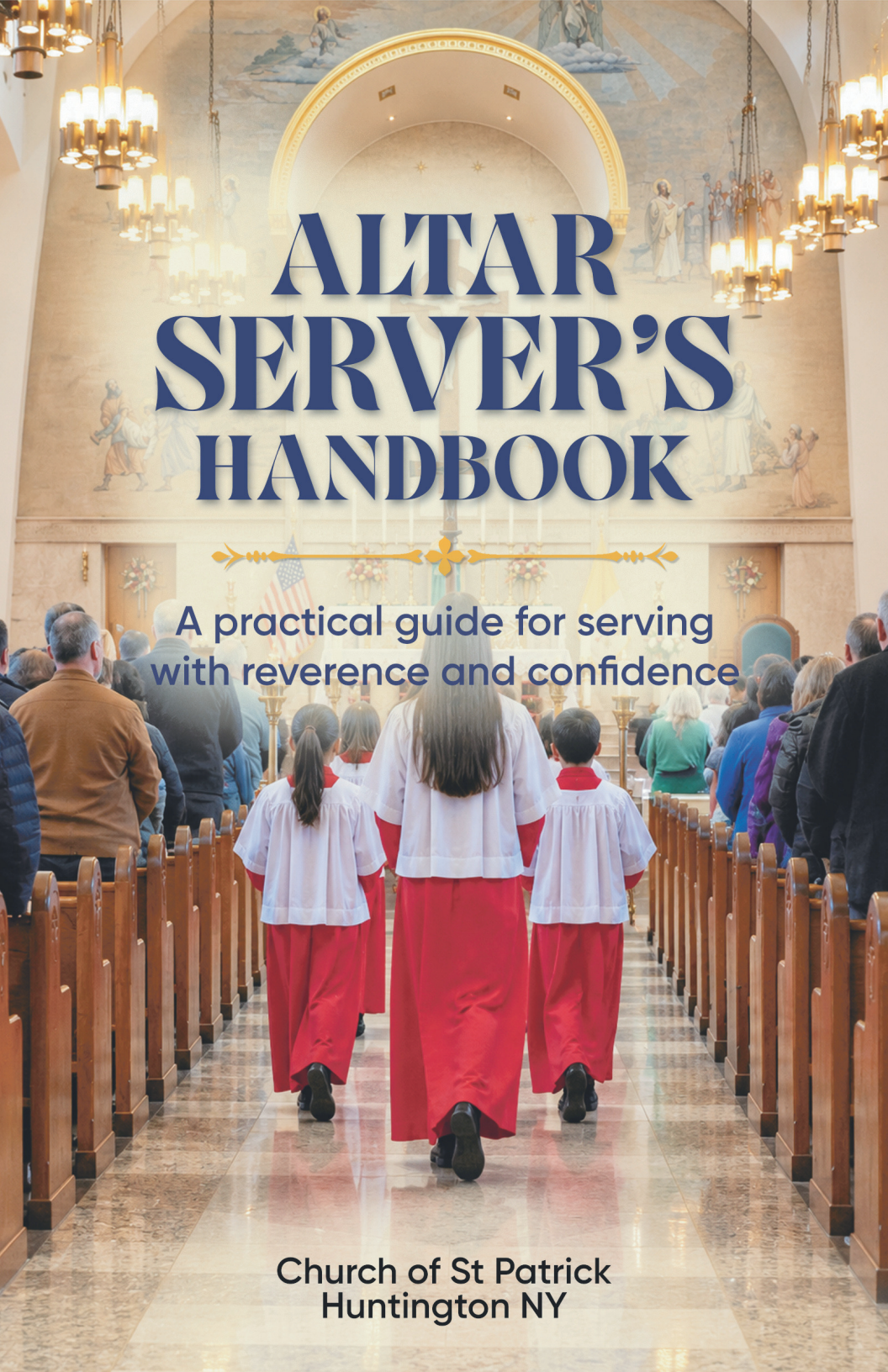

ALTAR
SERVER'S
HANDBOOK
A practical guide for serving
with reverence and confidence
Church of St Patrick
Huntington NY

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From Our Pastor, Msgr. Camp

Dear Altar Servers,

Your ministry as an Altar Server is a very important one in the Parish Community. I thank you for volunteering your time and talent. Your assistance at the Altar of God is a privilege and a serious commitment. Please take what you do very seriously and do not take for granted how great of an experience you will have.

For each Mass, remember to prepare yourself for serving at the Altar of God. Practice the responses for the prayers at Mass. Remember to pray each day for your ministry as an Altar Server.

No matter what Mass or Liturgy you are serving, it is important that you pay attention, check with the Priest for any special instructions, and remember that you are in the Sanctuary, the holy place where Christ is present in the Tabernacle. No matter if it is a weekday Mass, a Sunday Mass, a wedding, or a funeral, your ministry as an Altar Server is there to assist the Celebrant and serve as a part of the Parish Community.

Again, I thank you for your willingness to serve and be present to the Parish.

Sincerely,
Rev. Msgr. Steven R. Camp
Pastor



It is a Divine Call

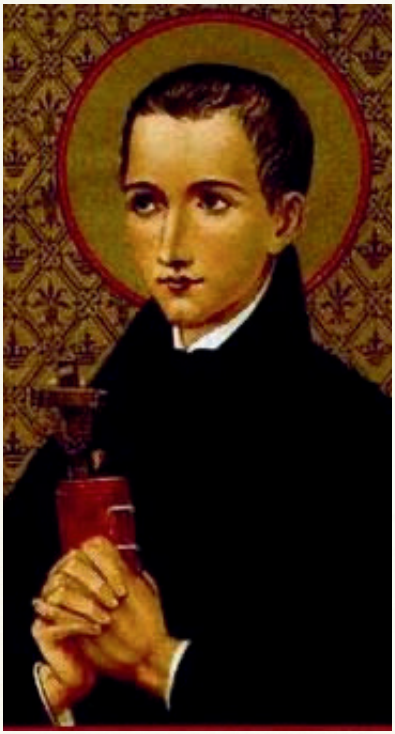


Welcome, dear children. Thank you for being part of this sacred and beautiful ministry of the Altar! When you step into the Sanctuary, remember that your service is not merely a set of tasks to perform, but a true divine calling from God Himself. Just as the Lord called Samuel by name in the temple, He has gently called each of you to assist at His holy Altar, allowing you to draw close to Jesus and help your parish community pray with reverence and joy.

This ministry has a rich and inspiring history. From the earliest days of Christianity, young acolytes and servers assisted the clergy during times of great trial in the Roman catacombs, courageously carrying the Holy Eucharist and tending to the sacred mysteries. When you serve at the Altar, you proudly step into that ancient tradition and follow in the footsteps of many young saints who discovered that serving at the Altar is one of the greatest privileges on earth.

Patron Saint

Saint John Berchmans



Early Life and Background:

Born in Diest, Belgium, on March 13, 1599, John was the son of a shoemaker. From his earliest years, he was known for his bright, joyful disposition; his kind and affectionate nature made him a favorite among his friends.

Deep Piety and Devotion:

Even as a young boy of seven, John distinguished himself by his deep piety. He would rise early in the morning to serve two or three Masses with the greatest fervor and dedication. He loved simple devotions such as praying before a Crucifix, saying the Rosary, and making pilgrimages while meditating or reciting prayers.

Religious Life and Legacy:

Feeling a clear call to religious life, he entered the Jesuit novitiate at age 17 and later traveled on foot to the Roman College in Italy to continue his studies. He was widely known for his scholastic debate and extraordinary holiness in everyday life. He passed away at the young age of 22 on August 13, 1621, after falling ill. His life teaches how holiness can be achieved by doing ordinary things with extraordinary love. He was canonized by Pope Leo XIII in 1888, and his feast day is November 26.



The Theology of the Holy Eucharist

The Perpetual Sacrifice of the Cross: At the Last Supper, Christ instituted the Sacrifice of His Body and Blood to perpetuate the Sacrifice of the Cross throughout the ages until He returns. This memorial is entrusted to the Church, His Bride, to remember His Passion, Death, and Resurrection.

The Action of Christ and the Church: The Mass is primarily the action of Christ Himself, with the priest acting in *persona Christi* (in the person of Christ). At the same time, it is an action of the whole People of God, where the faithful join their offering to Christ's sacrifice.

The Real Presence of Christ: Christ is truly and substantially present most uniquely and continuously under the Eucharistic species of the consecrated bread and wine. He is also present in the Eucharistic celebration in multiple ways: in the person of the Priest, in His word (Scripture), and in the gathered assembly.

Source and Summit of Christian Life: The celebration of the Eucharist is the center of the entire Christian life for both the universal and local Church. It draws the faithful into active, conscious, and full participation, nourishing them with God's word and transforming them into one body through Holy Communion.

Rules and General Conduct



1. **Punctuality:**
   Enter through the Sacristy door; do not walk through the Sanctuary. Arrive at the church at least 15 minutes before Mass begins to sign in, vest properly, and check for any special instructions. You are expected to spend time in the second sacristy; do not go to the Priest's Sacristy unless needed.

2. **Eucharistic Fast:**
   Observe the 1-hour fast before receiving Holy Communion (this includes chewing gum, hard candies/lozenges, and any beverage other than water).

3. **Dress Code:**
   Wear your proper liturgical vestments (cassock and surplice) over clothing and dress shoes. You are responsible for placing the vestments in the closets according to size.

4. **Footwear:**
   Black sneakers or dress shoes are acceptable. Colored sneakers are not allowed.

5. **Dignity and Demeanor:**
   Maintain absolute silence and reverence in the Sanctuary. Avoid running or whispering. Move slowly, deliberately, and with grace—think "royalty"—and approach the Altar with awe.

6. **Active Participation:**
   Audibly say or sing all prayers, responses, and hymns with the congregation. Be aware and present in the celebration of the Liturgy.

Altar Server Scheduling

Altar Servers will be scheduled for weekend Masses on a monthly basis.

Timeline for Scheduling

20th of each month: all active Altar Servers will receive an email with a Google Form. In the Google Form, enter your child's availability for the following MONTH.

25th of each month: the Google Form will close at 6:00 p.m. No additional schedule requests will be accepted after that time.

28th of each month: all active Altar Servers will receive a calendar with their assignments for weekend masses for the month.

Scheduling for Holy Days, Weddings and Funerals

Additional emails will be sent regarding the scheduling of weddings, funerals, and Holy Days.

Tracking Attendance

An attendance book is kept in the Sacristy, which should be signed each time you serve. **Servers are required to serve 12 Masses per year** (School Masses do not count towards the requirement).

For children in 7th or 8th grade who need community service hours, one Mass counts as one hour. Please keep track of the dates you serve; we will confirm these dates with the attendance book and sign off on your hours needed for Confirmation.

Gestures & Postures



Folded Hands (Prayer Posture)

Fingers and thumbs together, right thumb over left thumb, resting against your chest when standing or walking. When sitting, keep palms flat on your knees.

Bow of the Head

Made at the names of Jesus or Mary, or when bowing to the priest after completing a task.





Profound Bow of the Body

Bending at the waist toward the Altar (the place of sacrifice) or during the Creed at the words ‘and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate…’

Gestures & Postures





Genuflection

Touching the right knee completely to the floor while keeping your back and head straight. Done whenever passing in front of the Tabernacle containing the Blessed Sacrament.



Making the Sign of the Cross

Done respectfully and intentionally with the right hand: touching forehead, chest/sternum, left shoulder, and right shoulder.

Order of the Mass & Server Procedures

I. Introductory Rites







Before Mass: Arrive 15 minutes early, sign in, vest, and light candles.

Entrance Procession: Process in order (Cross-bearer first, candle-bearers/servers next, followed by lector, deacon, and priest) with folded hands.

The Crucifers and candle bearers do NOT genuflect but do a simple bow.

Greeting & Penitential Act: Upon reaching the sanctuary, bow/genuflect, go to your seats, and stand for the Introductory Rites, Penitential Act, and Gloria.

Opening Prayer (Collect): When the priest says 'Let us pray,' the server assigned to hold the book will walk across the sanctuary to the Chair and hold the book.

Geneflect before the Tabernacle.

II. Liturgy of the Word



Scripture Readings
Sit attentively for the First Reading, Responsorial Psalm, and Second Reading.



The Gospel: Stand for the Alleluia, make the small Sign of the Cross, and face the pulpit as the Gospel is proclaimed. The candle-bearers should each carry a candle and stand on either side of the pulpit.
******** *If only one altar server is serving, do not carry a candle.****



Homily & Creed: Sit for the homily, then stand to recite the Profession of Faith (Creed) and the Prayers of the Faithful.
Bend at the waist toward the Altar during the Creed at the words "and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate..."

III. Liturgy of the Eucharist



Preparation of the Altar:
Help bring the Roman Missal/book stand, chalice, and ciboria to the Altar. Do not place the cruets on the Altar; rather, hold them in your hand.





Presentation of the Gifts:
Meet the priest at the front of the Sanctuary to receive the bread and the wine cruet from the gift bearers. You should not accept the gifts, the gifts are accepted only by priest.



III. Liturgy of the Eucharist

Washing of the Hands (Lavabo): Present the water pitcher, bowl, and finger towel to the priest as he washes his hands, then bow together.





When the thurible (censer) is used during liturgical celebrations, two altar servers will approach the priest. The priest then places incense into the thurible and blesses it with the sign of the cross before the incensing takes place.

Eucharistic Prayer: Kneel following the Holy, Holy, Holy (Sanctus). Ring the bells once during the Epiclesis (when the priest places his hands over the gifts) and three times at each elevation of the Host and Chalice. Stand after the Great Amen (after the priest says/sings "Through Him and with Him and in Him…").



IV. Concluding Rites



1 Prayer after Communion:
When the priest says, “Let us pray,” the server assigned to hold the book walks across the sanctuary to the priest’s chair and holds the book.



2 While crossing, he/she will genuflect towards the Tabernacle.



3 Blessing & Dismissal:
Stand for the final blessing and dismissal.



4 Recessional:
Retrieve the cross and candles, line up at the foot of the sanctuary, bow/genuflect with the priest, and process out in an orderly fashion.



5 After Mass:
Extinguish candles properly, return all sacred vessels and books to the Sacristy, and hang up vestments.

***** Please hang your vestments neatly and in the correct size category.*****

Glossary of Sacred Objects and Vestments

Objects & Furniture



Altar

The special table used for the Sacrifice of the Mass.



Ambo (Pulpit/Lectern)

The stand from which the Scripture readings and homily are proclaimed.



Aspergillum

The "tool" used by the priest to bless people with holy water.



Aspersorium

The bucket holding holy water.



Boat

The small metal container that holds incense before it is placed in the thurible.



Credence Table

The small side table in the Sanctuary used to hold sacred vessels, books, and cruets.



Crucifix / Processional Cross

A cross featuring the body of Christ (corpus), carried in processions and placed of honor in the Sanctuary.



Cruets

Small glass or metal pitchers holding the water and wine used during Mass.



Thurible (Censer)

The metal container suspended on chains used to burn charcoal and incense for solemn liturgies.

Glossary of Sacred Objects and Vestments

Vessels



Chalice

The sacred cup used to hold the wine that becomes the Precious Blood of Christ.



Ciborium

A cup-like metal container with a lid used to hold the Sacred Hosts (the Body of Christ).



Paten

A small plate used to hold the host, or the handle-plate held by servers during Holy Communion.

Vestments & Linens



Alb

A long white robe worn by priests, deacons and servers, symbolizing baptismal purity.



Cassock

A long black (or red) robe worn by servers and clerics.



Surplice

A white cloth garment worn over the cassock.



Cincture

A rope-like belt used to tie the alb at the waist.



Chasuble

The outer poncho-style vestment worn by the priest celebrating Mass; the color corresponds with the liturgical season.



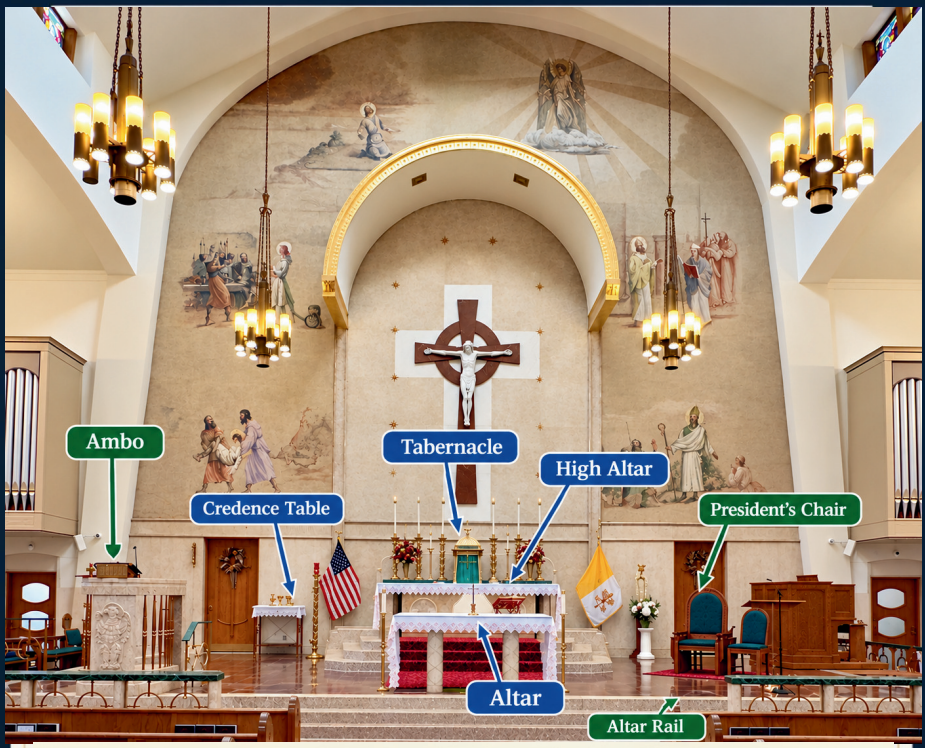
Stole

A long band of cloth worn by priests (around the neck) and deacons (over one shoulder), symbolizing sacred authority.

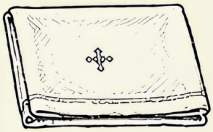


Corporal

A square white linen cloth spread on the center of the Altar on which the chalice and paten are placed.



Vestments & Linens (continued)



Purificator

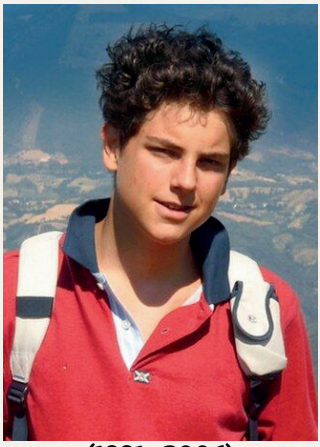
A small white cloth used to wipe and purify the chalice.



Finger Towel & Lavabo Bowl

Used by the priest to wash and dry his hands during the preparation of the gifts.

Saint Carlo Acutis



(1991–2006)

Carlo was born in London in 1991 and grew up in Milan, Italy. Even though his parents weren't very religious, Carlo fell in love with God when he was just a little boy. He would pick wildflowers to leave for statues of Mary and ask his mom tons of questions about faith.

What he loved to do

⚽ Play soccer with his friends (he wasn't great at it, but he loved the fun!)
🎮 Play video games like Pokémon and Super Mario on his PlayStation
🐕 Hang out with his pets — he had two cats, four dogs, and lots of goldfish
🎷 Teach himself to play the saxophone
🍫 Enjoy Nutella and ice cream

What made him special

Carlo was a total computer genius. By age 9, he was reading college-level programming books and teaching himself how to code. When he was 14, he built a website that collected over 150 stories of Eucharistic miracles from around the world — it's still used today!

He also went to Mass every single day, prayed the Rosary, and at just 12 years old started teaching younger kids about their faith. He helped homeless people by bringing them hot meals and stood up for classmates who got bullied.

Carlo passed away in 2006 at age 15, but his message is simple: you can be a saint even as a kid who plays video games and loves his pets. He's now called the patron saint of the internet!

Prayer for the Altar Servers

Before Mass

Heavenly Father, as I prepare to assist You at Your altar, I declare my faith in You. At this Mass, keep me from distractions. Let me remember that in assisting the priest, I am assisting Jesus in offering You the merits of His passion and death. Amen

After Mass

Lord Jesus, thank you for the opportunity to serve You during the Holy Mass. In Your Sacred Presence, my heart is filled with joy and peace. May your Spirit always guide me so I may grow in your love by the grace of the Heavenly Father. Amen

Church of St. Patrick
Huntington NY
https://stpathuntington.org
altarserver@stpathunt.org