

GOOD SHEPHERD Altar Server Manual

(September 2014 version)

Section 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

Introduction:

Thank you for offering to help our parish community as an Altar server. This is an outstanding ministry in which you are able to assist the Priest as he celebrates Mass. This manual outlines the actions for each Altar server as the Mass progresses. There are normally three Altar servers (referred to as the Crucifer, AS #1 and AS #2 in this manual) at each mass, but it is important you know the responsibilities of all both positions in case you need to serve by yourself.

Requirements:

An Altar server should have received the sacraments of First Communion and Reconciliation. They should also attend Altar server training so they are familiar with the responsibilities outlined in this manual and to keep abreast of any changes. Servers should conduct themselves in a professional manner.

Dress:

Servers wear albs over their regular clothes. The albs should be approximately ankle length (i.e. about 3-6 inches above the floor). The albs are made from a lightweight material; therefore, it is recommended to **avoid bold stripes or designs that might show through**. Solid colors are fine. Shoes should be neat and clean. **Sneakers and flip-flops are not allowed.**

Posture:

Always sit with your feet flat on the floor and your hands folded in your lap or placed on your knees. You should be relatively still and sit up straight. Avoid fidgeting as it can be distracting to Father and/or people attending Mass.

Before Mass:

Please arrive no later than 15 minutes before mass begins and check in with the Master of Ceremonies (M/C). Put on your alb, sash or cincture (rope-like belt), and cross. The color of your cincture will correspond to the colors of our liturgical seasons. In general: Violet or Dark Purple = Advent and Lent; White = Christmas season & Easter; Red = Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Pentecost; Green = Ordinary Time. The applicable color should be hanging up in the vestment room. If there are multiple colors or you are unsure, you can ask Father. Use the mirror or another server to ensure the alb is straight and tidy. Check to see that everything is setup correctly for mass. Help the MC put out items if needed. Quietly talk with your partner to review roles and guidelines before mass. Ask Father if you are unsure of anything.

The Crucifer or AS #1, will light the candles on the Altar approximately 5 minutes before mass. As you approach the Altar, genuflect in front of the Tabernacle. Only servers who are tall enough to see the wick of the candles should light them. If neither of you are tall enough, simply ask the M/C for assistance. Bow when you pass in front of the Tabernacle. After lighting the Altar candles, bring the crucifix with you as you proceed to the back of the church to wait for Mass to begin.

Prayer before you serve:

The following is a prayer servers may say together or by themselves prior to serving if they would like to do so.

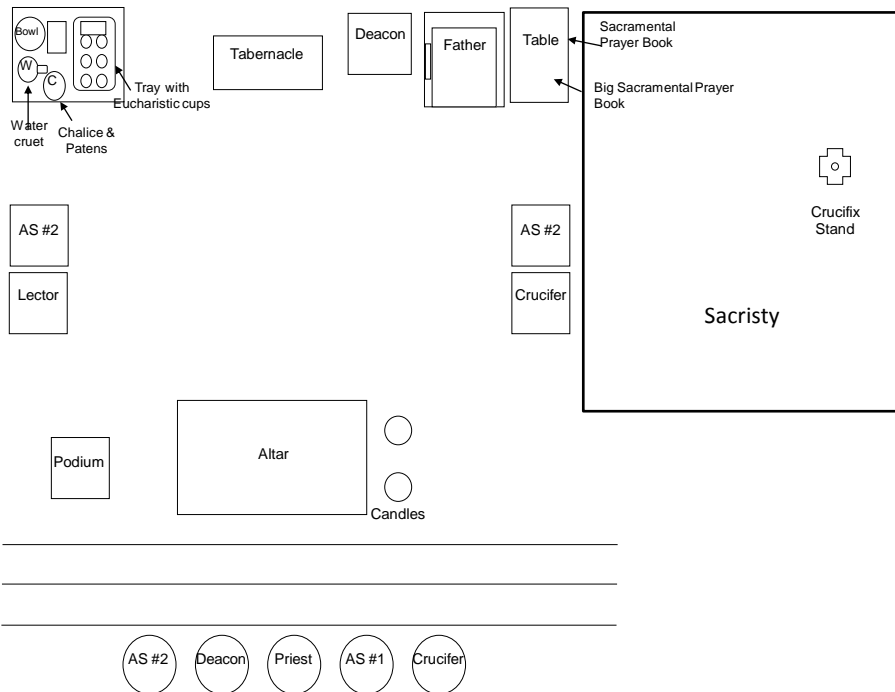
“Heavenly Father, we ask your blessing upon us, that we may serve at your Altar with reverence, attention, and love, in order to draw others to do the same. We ask this through Christ Our Lord. Amen.”

Section 2: ORDER OF MASS

Introductory Rites:

The entrance procession typically begins at the start of the 2nd verse of the opening hymn (or when Father tells you to begin). The order of the procession is: The Crucifer, AS #1, AS #2, the Deacon, and then the Priest. Try to keep a distance of about two pews between you and the person in front of you as you slowly walk to the Altar. As you approach the Altar, The Crucifer will move to the far right side of the center of the Altar, AS #1 will move to the left of the Crucifer and AS #2 will move to the far left side of the Altar. The Deacon will be on the left side of the center of the Altar. Father will be positioned at the center of the Altar. When Father genuflects AS #1 & 2 will also genuflect. If Father bows, AS #1 & 2 will bow. The Crucifer will always simply bow his/her head, do not bow the crucifix. As you proceed up the steps, AS #2 will go up to the left of the Altar and AS #1 will go to the right. The Crucifer will place the crucifix inside the sacristy (the stand is just inside the door) and then move to his/her seat. AS #1 & 2 will simply walk over and stand in front of his/her seat. Remain standing while the opening hymn is completed and Mass begins. Generally, when the congregation is standing, you stand; when they are sitting, you sit; when they are kneeling, you kneel.

After the Gloria, (or after the Kyrie during Lent or Advent), when the priest picks up the red sacramental prayer book, AS #1 will move into a position in front of Father and hold the book for him for the opening prayer. Be sure to keep the pages flat, with your fingers out of the text and do not move about while the priest is reading. After the prayer, Father will give you the book to return to the table, or take the book and return it holder on the side of his chair. AS #1 will return to his/her seat and sit down for the readings.



Movement to seats at beginning of Mass

Liturgy of the Word:

Readings

First Reading (Hebrew Scripture/Old Testament) – SIT

Responsorial Psalm(s) - SIT

Second Reading (Christian Scripture/New Testament) - SIT

Gospel Acclamation (Alleluia) - STAND

Homily - SIT

Reciting of the Creed - STAND

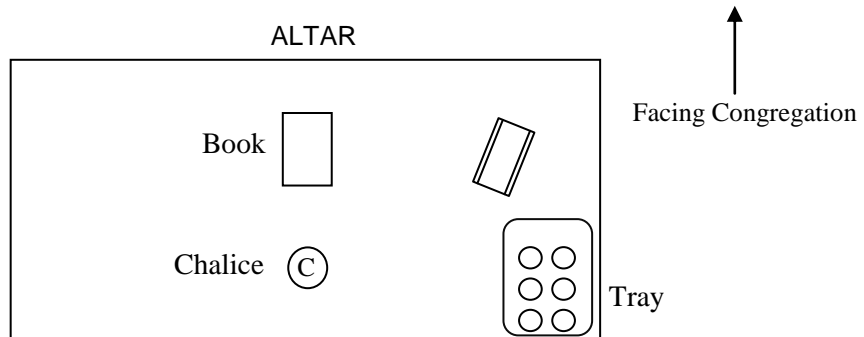
Prayers of the Faithful (Intentions) – STAND

During the readings, the servers should sit or stand when appropriate. The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful.

Liturgy of the Eucharist:

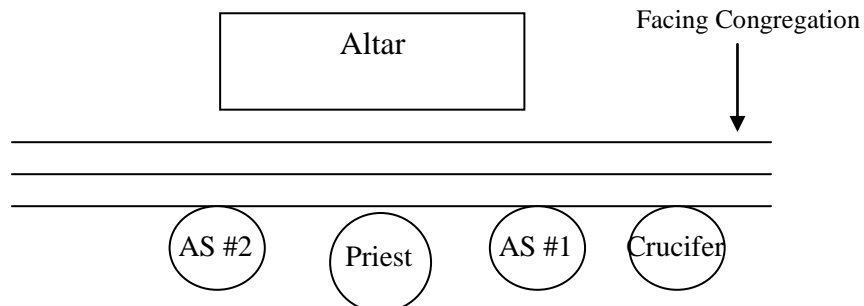
1. Preparation of Gifts (offertory hymn begins & collection baskets passed)

When the ushers begin the collection, the Crucifer will place the Big Sacramental book on the center of the Altar and then proceed to the back of the church and wait to lead the offertory procession. As soon as the Crucifer moves to the back of the church, AS #1 will place the chalice on the middle rear portion of the Altar. AS #2 will then place the tray with the Eucharistic cups on the rear right corner of the Altar. AS #1 & 2 will then return to his/her seat and wait for Father to proceed down to receive the gifts and will join him.



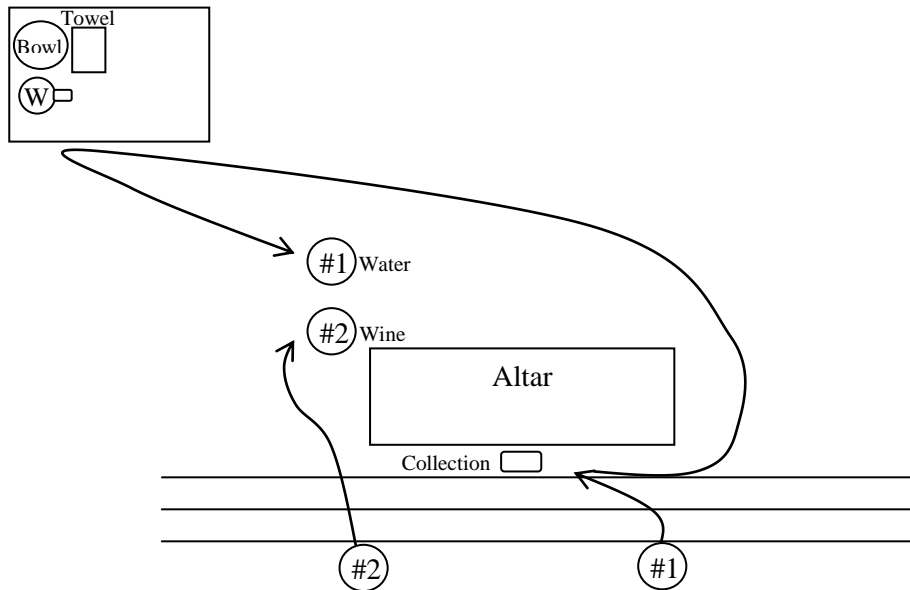
Locations for the chalice, sacramental prayer book, and tray with Eucharistic cups on the Altar

When Father starts to move around the Altar to receive the gifts, AS #1 and 2 will also move down the steps and position him/herself on Father's right (basically the same spot you were during the initial procession). The Crucifer leads the offertory procession and will move up to Father's far left and assist with receiving the gifts. The diagram below shows the positions.



There are three items that will be brought up with the offertory procession (in order, they are: collection, wine, and then bread). Father will hand the collection to AS #1 and the wine to the Deacon (if present), or to AS #2. He will carry the bread up to the Altar himself.

AS #1 will place the collection in front of the Altar and then walk around (behind the Altar) to get the water cruet. AS #1 will remove the stopper and then stand next to AS #2 near the right rear corner of the Altar. AS #2 will carry the wine up and hand it to the deacon/priest when they are ready for it. Or place it on the Altar and uncap it. The deacon/priest will hand the unused portion back to AS #2. At this time, AS #3 will hand the water cruet to the deacon/priest so they can add a few drops to the wine. Both servers will wait until the deacon/priest hands the water cruet back to AS #1. Both servers will bow and then return to the credence table together. See diagram below for further illustration.



Once at the table, AS #1 will hand the water cruet to AS #2 and AS #2 will also pick up the bowl. AS #1 will pick up the small hand towel. Both servers will then proceed immediately back to the Altar to wash Father's hands (standing in same positions as shown above - except AS #1 will have the towel and AS #2 will have the water and bowl). Hold the cruet in your palm, not by the handle. When Father turns toward you, AS #2 will pour some water over his hands, while holding the bowl underneath them. AS #1 will hand the towel to Father so he can dry his hands. After Father returns the towel to AS #1, both servers will bow again. AS #1 will drape the towel over AS #2's arm and return directly to his/her seat (not back to the credence table). AS #2 will return the water cruet, bowl and towel to the credence table and then return to his/her seat. Once back at their seats, the Altar servers will sit down (or remain standing if the congregation is already standing).

2. Eucharistic Prayers:

At the beginning of the "Holy, holy, holy" all servers will take a couple steps forward (so they are approximately aligned with the edges of the Altar. During the Eucharistic Prayers, all servers will simply stand / kneel when the congregation does so. The Crucifer will ring the bells at the appropriate time:

3 Elevations – 1 minor - Imposition of the Hands

2 major – Elevation of the host

Elevation of the chalice

Ring the bells until presider begins to lower his hands

At the start of the Our Father, all servers will move to Father's (and Deacon if present) side, and extend their hands during the Our Father. When the Our Father is complete, the servers will move back to their original positions (aligned with the edges of the Altar).

Once the sign of peace begins among the congregation, The Crucifer will return the book to the table on the side of the priest's chair and AS #2 will return the tray to the credence table (if not already done). The servers can then walk down and shake hands with their families during the sign of peace. However, don't spend too much time as you need to be back up on the Altar by the time the extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist (EXOs) are there.

3. Communion Rite:

The servers will receive communion at the same time as EXOs. After receiving communion, return to your chair and stand. **You may kneel to say a prayer if you prefer.**

After the congregation has received communion, the EXOs will return the empty cups to the tray on the credence table. Father will return any unused hosts to the Tabernacle, close the Tabernacle, and then move over to the table to wash out the items used during communion (he may not do this now). Since the water is already there, you simply sit down when the congregation sits (when the tabernacle is closed). AS #2, be prepared to assist with drying the items if/when Father asks.

Concluding Rite:

When Father picks up the red sacramental prayer book, AS #1 will step forward to hold the book for him. After the prayer is complete, Father will return the book to AS#1 to be placed on the table. AS #1 will return to his/her seat to listen to the announcements.

When the congregation stands for the recessional song, the Crucifer will retrieve the crucifix from the sacristy and remain at the entrance of the sacristy until Father initiates movement to begin the recessional. The servers follow the same path they took (in the opposite direction) as they took during the processional. The servers, the Deacon, (if present) and Father will move to the bottom of the steps and face the Altar. When Father initiates, everyone will genuflect, the Crucifer will simply bow. Then the Crucifer will lead the recessional, followed by AS #1 & 2 (side by side), the Deacon, (if present) and then Father.

After Mass:

After the recessional, wait at the back of the church for most of the congregation to clear. The Crucifer will return the crucifix to the stand, and will extinguish the candles on the Altar with the snuffer. Be careful not to crush the tops of the candles. Do not blow the candles out as this can cause wax to get spread on the carpet. All servers should then scan the pews for left over bulletins, or any personal items that someone may have left behind. If something of value is left; a cell phone or jewelry, give them directly to Father or Deacon. Put all other left items in the "lost and found" area of the airlock. Return to the Vestry and place your cross, sash or cincture where they belong. Hang the alb neatly in the correct location according to size. Remember to snap the alb when you hang it up and if something was spilled on the alb during mass, please contact Al or Kelli Allard via email (aallard994@hotmail.com) or by phone (910) 867-7514. Hang the alb to the far right of all the albs so it is easy for them to identify when they pick it up to get it cleaned.

Additional Comments:

This manual outlines the responsibilities for a typical mass. During special masses like Christmas, Easter, baptisms, etc., Altar servers may have some additional duties. These can include things such as: carrying the incense; carrying the cross and/or candles; carrying the holy water during rites of blessing and sprinkling; ringing the bells at the appropriate times. Father will discuss any special requirements with the servers before mass, if applicable.

Do not be worried about making mistakes. Everybody makes mistakes when learning. If you are uncertain about something, you can discretely look at your fellow server, the Deacon, or Father for guidance.

It is a tremendous privilege and honor to serve at Mass and many graces are received. Being so close to the Altar should help you to focus at Mass. Do not miss the opportunity to pray at Mass, to thank Jesus for what you've been given and to ask him for help with all your needs.

Section 3: TERMINOLOGY

The Sanctuary is the raised area in the front of the church. This is a very holy and special area because this is where the sacrifice of the Mass is offered and where the word of God is read. It should be approached with great respect.

The following articles are located in the sanctuary.

Altar - The Altar looks like a big tall table. The Altar represents two parts of the same mystery, the table on which a sacrifice is offered and the table which Jesus celebrated the Last Supper.

Altar Stone - A small flat stone containing the relics of two canonized martyrs or saints. The stone, consecrated by the bishop, is placed in a carved out area on the Altar. The hosts and chalice are placed on the stone during the sacrifice of the Mass. The custom of the stone and putting relics in the stone reminds us of the early church when the Mass was offered in the catacombs. These early Altars were simply a stone placed over the tomb of a martyr.

Altar Candles - There are two candles located on the side of the Altar. These candles symbolize the triumph of light over darkness (good over evil).

Follower – candle cap

Tabernacle - The Tabernacle is like a safe, made of metal and sometimes covered inside and out with wood, the doors to the tabernacle lock with a key. The tabernacle is used to keep consecrated hosts (the body of Jesus) that were not distributed during communion.

Sanctuary Lamp - A single candle in its own stand, or it may be mounted on a wall. It is always located next to the tabernacle. When the candle is burning it signifies that Jesus is present in the tabernacle in the form of consecrated hosts.

Credence Table - A small table with a shelf, located to the right of the Altar, used to hold the linens, chalice, cups, bowl, cruet and sacramentary.

Lectern (Ambo/pulpit) - A stand that holds the Lectionary, the book that contains the first and second readings. The Lector, or reader, stands at the Lectern. The priest also uses the Lectern to read the Gospel.

Baptismal Font - A very large looking bowl on a stand, the cover has a cross on top. Used during baptism.

Paschal Candle - A very large candle that represents the light of Christ. Used during special celebration (Easter Candle).

Mary's Altar or Side Altar - Located to the left of the main Altar. This Altar is in honor of Our Blessed Mother.

Ambre – place where Holy Oils sit

Sacred Oils – Oil of Catechumens (Labeled OC), Oleo Infirmato (Sacrament for the Blessing of the Sick-Labeled OI), and Sacred Chrism oil (consecrated and used in Baptism and Confirmation-Labeled SC)

Chairs - There are five chairs in the sanctuary. Behind the Altar, the priest sits in the chair to the right, called the Presider chair, which is raised up on a small platform so everyone can see him. The chair on the left is the Deacon's chair. Beside the Altar to the right are two Altar server chairs, and on the left are two chairs, one for the Lector and one for the 3rd Altar Server.

Sedilia – Presider's Chair (seat) (Cathedra – Bishop's Chair) (Chair of Peter – Pope's Chair)

Lectionary - book containing the Scripture readings for the Mass

Funeral Pall - large cloth that is placed over the casket

Processional Cross - crucifix on pole used in processions

Vesting Sacristy - the room at the rear of the church where vestments and sacred books are kept. It is also the place where the Priests, Deacons and Servers vest for mass

Sacristy - The room off to the side of the Sanctuary. Several items (some of which are listed below) are often stored here.

The chalice, ciborium, paten, cups and pitcher are sacred vessels, or containers, which hold the consecrated body and blood of Jesus. These are holy vessels and should be handled with great care and respect.

Book of the Gospels -The large gold and silver book carried in the opening procession. The Book contains the Gospels.

Sacramentary - The priest's book. It contains all the prayers and directions the priest uses for saying the Mass. It does not contain the Gospels or Epistles. The Epistles are the first and second readings. The Sacramentary is kept in the book rack beside Father's chair when it is not being used.

Chalice - The Chalice reminds us of the cup Jesus used at the Last Supper. Wine will be poured into the Chalice by the priest and will be consecrated into the precious blood of Jesus.

Pall - A small cardboard or plastic square, covered with cloth that is placed on the chalice to protect the wine/blood of Jesus from dust or bugs from falling in.

Ciborium - The Ciborium looks like a large chalice that has a lid with a cross on the top. The Ciborium is kept in the tabernacle and contains the consecrated hosts. The Deacon or one of the Eucharistic Ministers will take the Ciborium from the Tabernacle and place it on the Altar before communion.

Eucharistic Cups – Two to six vessels shaped something like the chalice, used to hold the Blood of Christ. The Eucharistic Ministers use these cups during communion.

Flagon (Pitcher) - The pitcher is used to hold the wine which will become the Blood of Christ during the consecration.

Paten - The Paten is the plate used to hold the hosts which will become the consecrated body of Jesus.

Purificator - The Purificator is a small piece of white linen, marked with a cross in the center, and used by the priest in the celebration of Mass. It is folded in three layers and used by the priest to purify his fingers and the chalice and paten after Holy Communion. The Eucharistic Ministers also use a purificator to clean the cup when offering the Precious Blood during communion.

Corporal - The Corporal is a square piece of linen folded four times, it looks like a napkin with a small cross sewed on it. The word corporal comes from the Latin word "corpus", meaning body. It is called a corporal because the body of Jesus rests on it.

Bowl and Cruet - A small bowl is used to wash the fingers of the priest during Mass. The cruet is a small container that looks like a tiny pitcher. It holds water that is used to pour over the priests fingertips. It is also used when the priests mixes water and wine during the consecration. This is in memory of the blood and water that poured from the side of Jesus when He died on the cross.

Manitur (Small Towel) - The small towel is used by the priest to dry his fingers.

Lavabo Dish - dish used when washing the Presider's hands

Persons in the Mass.

Presider - the priest who is celebrating the Mass

Prespetier – Pope's Private Chapel in St. Peter's Basilica

Deacon - ordained man with specific roles in Mass assisting the priest (at wedding ceremonies can be the presider)

Lector - lay person who proclaims the Scripture readings at Mass

Extraordinary Minister - lay person who helps distribute the Eucharist at Mass

Cantor - lay person who is the song leader at Mass

Usher - lay person who welcomes and collects monetary gifts of the people

Sacristan - lay person who takes care of cleaning linens, vessels, etc.

Assembly - the people who gather for Mass

Acolyte - YOU the altar server (in olden times, this was the person who took care of the candles) It is one of the 4 minor orders and the principle server

Thirofer – person who does the incense

Vestments are what the priest and Altar servers wear during Mass.

Alb - A long white linen robe worn by the priest and Altar servers. There are different styles of albs, but they all cover the body from neck to feet. The alb symbolizes the garment that Jesus wore, and is a symbol of purity of the body and soul of those worthy of assisting at Mass.

Cincture - A cord made of silk or cotton with tassels on the ends. It is used around the waist to secure the alb so that it will not interfere with walking. The cincture reminds us of the cord that was used to tie Jesus to the pillar. It symbolizes binding ourselves against evil and preparing to do good.

Stole - A long strip of cloth worn by the priest around his neck and shoulders. It symbolizes the carrying of the cross.

Chasuble - A very large piece of cloth worn over the alb and stole by the priest. It symbolizes the seamless garment worn by Jesus and it also reminds us of Gods encircling love or us. The color of the chasuble and stole are the same.

Color of Vestments and Altar Cloth

The colors of vestments and the Altar cloth give expression to the mysteries of our faith and correspond to the colors of the liturgical seasons.

White - Masses of Easter, Christmas season, Feasts and Memorials of Jesus, Mary, the Angels, Saints who were not martyrs, Weddings, and Funerals.

Red - Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday), Good Friday, Pentecost, birthday feasts of the Apostles, evangelists and martyrs.

Green - Ordinary time.

Violet or Dark Purple - May be used for Lent and Advent.

Gold - May be used on special days such as Easter and/or Christmas.

Items Used for Special Celebrations

Monstrance - The Monstrance looks like a sun burst with a glass center. The back of the Monstrance has a small door. The inside holds a glass container called the Luna. The priest puts a consecrated host in the Luna, and places the Luna in the Monstrance. The Monstrance is then placed on the Altar for Benediction or Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

Incense, Incense Boat, Censer/Thurible - Incense is perfumed grains that are burned during special occasions. An Incense Boat is the container that holds the unburned incense.

The Censer is a metal container that holds hot coals. It has a top with air vents and a long chain so that it can be carried. Incense is scooped out of the incense boat and sprinkled on the hot coals in the censer. When the incense is burned it makes smoke. Incense symbolizes our prayers ascending to God, it is used as a blessing and it reminds us of the gifts frankincense and myrrh given to baby Jesus by the Magi.

Processional Cross - A Cross on a long handle or stick. It is carried at the front of a procession during special celebrations.

Aspergillum and Container - the Aspergillum, or sprinkler, usually looks like a ball on a handle. The priest puts the Aspergillum in a container of Holy Water, so that water will get inside the Aspergillum through little holes. The priest then walks through the church and blesses everyone by sprinkling them using the Aspergillum. This is used on special celebrations.

Hand Bells - There are usually three bells attached to a single handle. The ringing of the bells let people know that something important is happening. Bells are used during special celebrations.

Who Are They?

Priest - Specially ordained men who consecrate and offer the Body and Blood of Jesus at Mass. They forgive sins, perform baptisms, marriages, funerals, run the parish and lead the people closer to God. Their ordination to the priesthood can be traced to the Apostles who were the first priests after Jesus.

Deacon - A Deacon is like a priest in training. He can assist in preaching, perform baptism, marriages, and help run the parish. He does not offer mass or hear confessions.

Altar Server - A young boy or girl, or an adult who is specially trained to assist the priest at mass.

Eucharistic Minister - A person who is specially conferred by the Bishop to assist the priest in giving communion. There are usually two to eight Eucharistic Ministers assisting at mass, two to six Ministers of the Blood of Christ and one Minister of the Body of Christ. They also can bring communion to people who are sick at home or in the hospital.

Lector - The person who reads the Epistles (first and second readings) and the Prayers of the Faithful (when Deacon is not present) at mass.

Sacristan - The person who takes care of the sacristy. He or she helps the priest keep track of all the church supplies, sets up for mass, takes care of all the vessels, linens, laundry, and cleans the church.

Bishop - A Bishop is higher than a priest, he's like their boss. He has the authority to ordain priests. The Pope gives this authority to him.

Cardinal - A Cardinal is a high church official ranking next in line to the Pope. He assists and advises the Pope, consecrates Bishops and elects the Pope.

Pope - The Pope is the supreme authority of the Catholic Church. He is sometime called "Pontiff" and "Holy See", and will be the leader of the church until he dies.