

# Ministry of Altar Server



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Diocese of Gaylord

## **ALTAR SERVER'S PRAYER**

Loving Father, Creator of the universe, you call your people to worship, to be with you and each other at Mass. Help me, for you have called me also. Keep me prayerful and alert. Help me to help others in prayer. Help me remember that as I serve the priest, I am also serving you. Thank you for the trust you've placed in me. Keep me true to that trust. I make my prayer in Jesus' name, who is with us in the Holy Spirit. Amen.



*“Through Baptism we put on Christ and become members of his Body. We are initiated into the Christian community and called to a holiness of life in the world befitting disciples of Jesus. But through all three Sacraments of Initiation we are called to something more: to embrace Christ’s mission of salvation.*

*Baptism initiates all into the one priesthood of Christ, giving each of the baptized, in different ways, a share in his priestly, prophetic, and kingly work. And so every one of the baptized, confirmed in faith through the gifts of God’s Spirit according to his or her calling, is incorporated into the fullness of Christ’s mission to celebrate, proclaim and serve the reign of God.”*

(Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord, USCCB, 2005)

Dear Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord,

As Bishop of the Diocese of Gaylord, I take this opportunity to thank you for fulfilling a much needed liturgical role for your faith community. It is a blessing for me to be able to work side-by-side with liturgical ministers who so generously desire to serve the Lord and His people.

I encourage you to continue growing in your formation and your knowledge of the Eucharist. Participate in every opportunity presented to deepen your understanding of the ministry to which you have been called. Search out the avenues that will lead you even closer to the Lord through the Eucharist.

As you collaborate with the Church’s ordained ministers, may you be energized each and every time you gather in community and may you effectively reach out to those who thirst for the living God. Know that you will be in my prayers as you serve the Church and that you can count on my blessings always.

I whole-heartedly believe that the entire Diocese of Gaylord is enriched by your service as a liturgical minister. May Christ, the Bread of Life and the Cup of Eternal Salvation, reward you for your dedicated service.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Bernard A. Hebda  
Bishop of Gaylord

## Theology of Lay Liturgical Ministry

*“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his won, so that you may announce the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (1 Peter 2:9)*

All liturgical ministers are, first and foremost, members of the Body of Christ. Through their baptism they are the “holy people and royal priesthood whose right and privilege it is to participate in the ministry of Christ. How the lay faithful exercise this ministry in the world varies, but the fullest and more fundamental expression of it has always been “conscious, active and fruitful participation in the mystery of the Eucharist”. (General Instruction of the Roman Missal-GIRM, Introduction #5)

The celebration of the Eucharist is the “action of the whole Church” (GIRM #5). “The faithful, moreover should not refuse to serve the People of God gladly whenever they are asked to perform some particular ministry or function in the celebration” (GIRM #97). Some of the faithful are called to serve God’s people in a more particular way through one of the many liturgical ministries that have flourished in the Church since the Second Vatican Council. This diversity of roles, functions and ministries enriches our celebrations and assists us in our prayer. Serving in one of these ministries is both an honor and a responsibility, and those who commit to it need nurturing and support.

If at any time you feel as if you cannot fulfill what is required of you, talk to your parish leader and he or she will help you in your tasks.

**Parents must be in full support of a child in this ministry and may be required to sign an agreement with the parish if asked to be sure that the support needed will be forthcoming.**

What the server can expect from the Parish/Cluster church:

- Opportunities for formation and training required
- Continued discernment in this choice of ministry
- Timely schedules for when to serve
- If certain vesture is required, the parish will provide it seeing that it is in good repair and a size acceptable to the person expected to wear it

As a server, you may be required to wear certain vestments at times. Treat them respectfully before, during and after having worn them.

If you notice they are soiled or need to be cleaned, be sure to notify someone at the parish as to their being repaired or cleaned.

In the Diocese of Gaylord, both males and females may serve in this ministry. Depending on the pastor, this ministry can be open to male and female, young and old, and even families— parents and children—could be allowed to serve together as long as all other criteria is met. However, the law of the Church leaves the final selection of male and/or female servers up to the celebrating priest for that Mass.

This handbook has been prepared to help you grow in a deeper understanding and love of the liturgy, your ministry and ultimately the Lord whom we all serve.

The ministry of *Altar Server* is important in the Church. It is the Altar Server's responsibility to assist the Celebrant during liturgy. An altar server who performs his/her responsibilities with knowledge and prayerfulness helps to facilitate the prayerfulness of the assembly.

***As a minister of the Church, your daily life should reflect the attitudes of a follower of Christ.***



## **Qualifications:**

The person who serves in this ministry is to be a fully initiated Roman Catholic in good standing who practices his or her faith at all times and mature enough to carry out the duties assigned. He or she must also be able to steadily hold the large books while prayers are being proclaimed by the celebrant.

Be mature enough to be prayerful and be willing to continue to grow in their spiritual formation and if a child, have the full support of parents in fulfilling the duties called for.

A server must respond, audibly, to all parts of the Mass that are proper to the assembly. He/she is the one who always responds to dialogue prayers with the celebrant.

Be able to fully participate in Liturgy: attentive to the Word of God, the sharing of Holy Communion, and in the mission of the Church, while being attentive to when needed by the celebrant.

Be willing to receive proper formation before beginning to function as an altar server. A server should know the parts of the Mass and their meaning, the various objects used in the liturgy (their names and use), and the various functions of the server during the Mass and other liturgical celebrations.

Be willing, along with parents if necessary, to receive proper formation before beginning to function as an altar server.

Be able to maintain a prayerful posture throughout the Mass, and dress appropriately: Clean clothes, tucked in shirt, dress of modest length, clean shoes, combed hair, and practice good hygiene.

## **Duties:**

Check the Altar Server schedule ahead of time to make sure of when you are scheduled to serve.

Arrive for Mass early and check in to see if there are any additional duties in which you may need to assist.

If you are unable to serve at a mass in which you are scheduled, following parish policies, be sure to find a replacement or notify the person in charge as soon as possible so that another may serve in your place.

Have the candles lit and the processional cross ready before Mass begins if that is one of your duties.

Pay attention and be alert to the actions and needs of the Celebrant. Always be attentive to his needs throughout the entire celebration.

Always be respectful of the Altar, Celebrant, other Liturgical Ministers and the Assembly.

Respond to the prayers and dialogues of the priest along with the congregation. Join in singing the hymns and other chants of the liturgy.