

The Ministry of Altar Server



*“Whoever serves me must follow me,
and where I am, there also will my
servant be. The Father will honor
whoever serves me.”*

(John 12:26)

ALTAR SERVERS' PRAYER #1

Loving Father, Creator of the universe,
You call your people to worship,
To be with you and one another at Mass.
I thank you for having called me to assist others in their
prayer to you.
May I be worthy of the trust placed in me
And through my example and service
Bring others closer to you.

I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, who is Lord forever and
ever. Amen.

ALTAR SERVERS' PRAYER #2

Dear Lord Jesus,

Thank you for calling me to serve you at your Holy Altar
during the celebration of the Eucharist.

I know that the priest takes your place when, together with
your people, and in the name of the Church, he makes
present again your Passion, Death, and Resurrection.

Help me to carry out my role in this memorial of the Last
Supper with dignity and precision and with full interior
participation.

Let me so remain united with you on earth that I may one
day share your glory in heaven.

Amen.

NEW DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICES

This distribution pertains to those servers who are knowledgeable about all the roles. Younger servers may only be comfortable with one element. When older servers fail to appear it leaves them in a difficult situation. Please be faithful.

One Server – He or she carries the processional cross at the beginning and at the end of Mass. He omits his or her participation in the offertory procession so as to better assist the priest at the altar. If required, he is also the server of the Book.

Two Servers – One server carries the processional cross at the beginning, the offertory and at the end of Mass. The other server assists by taking the cruet of wine from the priest at the offertory. Both servers will assist the priest at the altar. If required, the server without the cross is the server of the book.

Three Servers – One server carries the processional cross at the beginning, the offertory and at the end of Mass. If required, he is also the server of the Book. Two servers carry the processional candles at the beginning, at the Gospel proclamation and at the end. The servers with the candles are the servers who will assist at the altar.

Four Servers – One server carries the processional cross at the beginning, the offertory and at the end of Mass. Two servers carry the processional candles at the beginning, at the Gospel proclamation and at the end. The fourth server is the server of the Book, holding the Roman Missal or folder for the priest at the opening rites and prayer, the Creed and bidding prayers and at the prayer after communion.

A Message to Parents and Older Teens

First, on behalf of all the people who worship at Holy Family Parish, I want to thank our young people for answering God's call to serve at the altar. Second, I must extend my appreciation to their parents who earnestly and courageously struggle daily with both the secular and the sacred demands upon families. Along with feeding, clothing, sheltering and seeking a good education for your children— you are also concerned about their souls— wanting them to know the Lord and his Church through the Sunday Eucharist, parish religious formation and Christian service. Please, never compromise the latter, no matter how many demands the world makes upon you. Do everything you can to instill the gift of saving faith. I pray that as these young people serve, they will have an ever deepening appreciation of the Mass as a re-presentation of our Lord's sacrifice on Calvary. Remind them by your own witness of the great mystery, that the risen Jesus has made himself our saving food— the bread of eternal life. Turning to the Teens and young adults, you are special sentinels for Christ. There is nothing childish about faith or serving at the altar. When so many have fallen away, you especially can become beacons for the Lord, leading friends and family through the darkness and back to the light of Christ. The oftentimes hectic atmosphere that permeates life places a strain on finding time for prayerful reflection. This is true, even for priests. Nevertheless, priests and others who work with servers should seriously monitor the spiritual lives of those in their charge. If young people are having doubts about their faith, are anxious about growing up, and are feeling the clash between their Christian values and those of the world around them— then the adults and clergy involved with their service should be approachable and helpful. The priest who can forgive sins needs to make it clear that he is

always available to them for the sacrament of reconciliation. We would not want a young man or woman to serve the Mass while troubled in conscience about some recent sin. We are all sinners and the young people who serve need to know that their priests will not think less of them for not being perfect; indeed, we should make it clear that repentance fills the priestly heart with deep joy and induces us to think all the better about them. The priest and deacon should have no reservation about praying with the servers before or after Mass. Repeated gatherings for practice and recreation (although well chaperoned and supervised) are to be encouraged and should always include the component of prayer.

Much has changed in my lifetime and during my priesthood. Back in 1994 we were authorized to have young girls join our boys in service to the altar. There was a great deal of debate because altar boys were often seen as prime candidates for priestly vocations. As a young priest I treated the boys to ball games and talked about serving over pizza parties. The older boys took pride in their service, admittedly sometimes not simply to please God but to impress young girls watching from the congregation. The introduction of girls ended this boys' club and radically changed the dynamics. In my reflection on the qualities which would be proper to the girls who would serve at Mass, my thoughts turned to Mary and her service in the Jewish temple. One of the Jewish priests told her, "My daughter, you will assist at the exercises of divine praise and song in honor of the Lord with all reverence and devotion, and always pray to the Most High for the necessities of his holy temple and of his people, and for the coming of the Messiah." She was only a young child and remained on her knees. She listened to his words and then asked for his blessing. We are told that she

distinguished herself and came to understand all the mysteries and ceremonies of the temple. “She never failed in any ceremony or duty, no matter how small. She was most eager for humiliation and most submissive (humble)” (*City of God* by Mary of Agreda).

As servants and handmaids, our young men and women together work around the altar just as all of us must labor together in the world to please God and to better the lives of others. Just as we would hope that our young men might be inspired to consider a vocation to the priesthood; it is desired that our young ladies might give some thought toward a calling to the religious life as either a sister or a nun. However, whatever they decide, we hope that they will maintain their primary calling as Christian disciples. — *Father Joe Jenkins*

POLICY FOR ALTAR SERVERS

1. Cardinal Wuerl has reaffirmed the Archdiocesan policy extending back to 1994 that permits the inclusion of girls as servers alongside the boys during Masses and other liturgical services of his jurisdiction. (So as to avoid confusion, the saintly Pope John Paul II “solemnly” defined that the Church did not have the authority to ordain women.)

2. Servers are to undergo careful planning and training to ensure necessary decorum and the right of the faithful to a prayerful, well-executed liturgy. It should include instruction on the Mass and its parts, the meaning of the parts of the Mass, the names and usage of the various objects used in the liturgy and how to perform the various functions of the server during the Mass and other liturgical celebrations.

3. Things which distract from the liturgy should be minimized or eliminated. This may include such articles as jewelry and non-dress shoes. Care should be given that cosmetics and perfumes are reduced to those needed for good hygiene.

4. The specific functions of servers include:

ACTIVITY OR MOVEMENT

- Carrying the cross;
- Carrying the processional candles;
- Holding the Roman Missal for the priest celebrant when he is not at the altar;
- Carrying the incense and censer;
- Presenting the bread, wine, and water to the priest during the preparation of the gifts;
- Assisting the priest when he receives the gifts;
- Washing the hands of the priest
- And generally aiding the priest at the altar.

VERBAL RESPONSES

- Servers respond to the prayers and dialogues of the priest along with the congregation. They also join in singing hymns and other chants of the liturgy.

AVAILABILITY

- Servers no longer sit directly beside the priest when he is at his chair or cathedra.
- Servers should be seated in a place from which they can easily assist the priest celebrant and deacon.

NO CONFUSION OF ROLES

- Servers do not stand at the altar or function in any roles proper to a deacon.
- Servers may neither distribute Holy Communion nor purify the sacred vessels.
- Men and women who have been mandated to serve as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should not ordinarily function in both roles (serving) at the same liturgy.

COMMISSIONING

- The *Order for the Blessing of Altar Servers* may be used to renew their commitment annually.

5. The vestiture for servers at Holy Family is as such: younger boys wear a red Cassock and white Surplice, older boys wear a black Cassock and white Surplice, and girls wear a white Alb with a V-neck stole or Yoke of the color that matches the celebration of the day or season. A Cincture goes around the waist.

6. Servers must be mature enough to understand their responsibilities and to carry them out well and with appropriate reverence. Since they will be accepted from the fourth grade on, they must already have received first penance and communion. The server shares with the priest the obligation of edifying God's people. He or she must be circumspect to avoid saying or doing anything that would bring shame upon himself/herself, the church, and his/her ministry. When not scheduled to serve, it is expected that he/she will still attend and participate at the Sunday Mass in accordance with the precepts of the Church.

7. It is recommended that servers come at least fifteen minutes prior to liturgies, insuring that they get vested, receive any particular instructions, assist in the preparation, and spend a few moments in prayer. Similarly, they should remain after Mass to clean up and to reflect for a few minutes upon the great mystery in which they have participated.

8. Hopefully, every young person who is called to serve the priest may sense more or less intensely the desire for a religious vocation: for the girls this means the possibility of a life as a sister or nun; for the boys it means considering being a brother or a priest. Everything must be done to encourage a vocation and any misdirection in this regard is to be vigorously corrected.

What is an Altar Server?

Here at Holy Family this is a person age eight and older who feels called to serve the church by assisting the priest at Mass. It is a ministry and should be something that you truly feel called to do. It is not just volunteer service, as there are many other ways to serve your church and community. A minister is something more. The dictionary defines a minister as a person ordained or commissioned for service in a Christian church. Altar servers are commissioned (given authority to carry out certain tasks) to help serve the priest and the parish.

Appearance

As a minister, you are a visible presence of Christ's love to his people here on earth as you serve his church. Try to imagine what the church would think if the priest came to Mass in sandals and a tee-shirt, with his hair uncombed and looking "frumpy." The focus would shift from the message he is trying

to share to being distracted by how he looks. We encourage you to view your appearance in a similar way.

- No flip-flops, sandals or sneakers. Boys should wear dress shoes and girls should wear low-heeled dress shoes that cover the entire foot (no open toed shoes).
- Earrings are permitted, but they should be post or stud style (no hoops)
- Hairstyles should be neat.
- Makeup, if worn, should be minimal.

Punctuality

If it is getting late and it looks as if you are not coming, the priest or deacon will reckon you are a “no show” and will seek a replacement. You should not put them into this situation. Remember, this is your commitment. If you cannot make your assigned time, it is your responsibility to find a replacement.

The Schedule

Server schedules are planned three months in advance. If you know of dates that you are unable to serve, please contact the Schedule Coordinator (contact info given separately). If you lose your schedule, you may find a copy posted on the website www.holyfamilywoodmore.org.

Altar Server Responsibilities

Servers will have distinct roles while serving the Mass. Training for each position will occur quarterly. Servers will be advanced in their position at the discretion of the pastor; this is based on proficiency in their role. Servers should respond audibly during the Mass at all proper times (i.e., the prayers, Creed, responsorial psalm, etc.).

If you are not sure of something it is better to ask before Mass begins!

Dressing for Mass

Please dress in the choir loft and only then go to the sacristy. The number of yokes for girls is limited, so do not take them home. Kept in a drawer of the sacristy, return them neatly after Mass. Do not leave vestments over chairs or on the floor!

Getting Ready for Mass

Please sign in the white book, located in the sacristy. This lets us know that you served at your assigned Mass or “subbed” for someone else.

Check water and wine cruets, filling them if needed. Bring the wine cruet to the back of church for the offertory procession. Place the water cruet on the side credence table. The priest or deacon may also have you place the ciborium with hosts on the back gifts table, too.

Light the candles on altar. Bring the processional cross to the sacristy for the processional.

ALTAR SERVER ROLES

Crucifer – carries the processional cross or crucifix for the procession, offertory and recessional.

Book Bearer – holds the Roman Missal at various points in the liturgy while the priest stands at his chair: the opening rites and prayer, the profession of faith and the prayers of the faithful, and the prayer after communion. A notebook may be substituted, especially for the bidding prayers.

Candle Bearer or Acolytes – carries the processional candles during the processional, leads the priest or deacon to the ambo or pulpit for the Gospel proclamation and carries them for the recessional.

Servers of the Mass – assist the celebrant in setting up the altar, washing of the priest's hands, ringing the bells at the elevation of the consecrated host and chalice, and clearing the vessels from the altar.

PROCESSION

Crucifer will carry the processional cross or crucifix and walk in the front of the procession.

Candle Bearers walk behind the Crucifer (side by side).

Servers of the Mass will walk behind the Crucifer and Candle Bearers.

Crucifer (and Book Bearer) moves to the right and waits for the priest to reverence the tabernacle. All remaining servers divide based on the side they walked in the procession. Servers will bow or genuflect with the priest celebrant toward the tabernacle. Then the **Crucifer** places the Crucifix in its stand. Next he/she returns to his/her seat (behind the celebrant) but remains standing, retrieves the Book of the Chair or Binder and waits. The Book of the Chair should be held until needed by the priest. If this book is not being used, the larger Roman Missal should be placed on the altar. All Servers should be facing the Altar.

Candle Bearers (if present) place the candles to either side of the Ambo or Pulpit. Then they go to their seats on the opposite side of the sanctuary.

Servers of the Mass sit on the right or Ambo or Pulpit side of the sanctuary.

If there are five servers then an extra chair is set out (on one of the sides) behind two servers. (A thurifer would sit on the ambo/pulpit side.)

OPENING RITES

The priest will come forward and reverence the altar with a kiss. He will then proceed to his chair. The **Book Bearer** stands in readiness for the opening prayer. When the priest says, "Let us pray," turn towards him with the book held up in front of you. The priest will open the Book and proceed as mentioned below.*

*Taller servers may hold the book out to the side; those of medium height will hold the book at chin height. For those servers who are short, Father may rest the book on your head (so be prepared).

After the prayer, the **Book Bearer** keeps the Book of the Chair with him/her at the seat.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Candle Bearers as the Gospel Acclamation is sung will take their candles to either side of the front of the altar facing the cross on the wall. They will raise their candles and await the celebrant or deacon who will move to the center between them. Then they will make a simple bow and turn in unison to the right facing the ambo, lectern or pulpit. Next they will walk toward the ambo with one candle in front of the minister and the other behind. The deacon will stop behind the ambo and turn to face the people. The **Candle Bearers** will hold their

candles high and stand on either side of the ambo facing the deacon while he proclaims the Gospel. At the end of the Gospel, they will lower the candles to the floor on either side of the ambo or lectern and return to their seats.

All Servers sit for readings, stand for the Gospel, and sit for the Homily. Please respond after each reading and responsorial. When standing for the Gospel, make sure to face the ambo (lectern or pulpit where the readings are proclaimed). After the homily, the priest will return to his seat. The **Book Bearer** should go to the celebrant with the Book of the Chair. The priest will open the book and again rest the book on your chest, below your chin.

Any time you cross before the altar make a small reverence, usually a simple bow.

OFFERTORY

When the ushers start taking up the collection, the **Crucifer** takes the processional cross from the stand, goes down the side-aisle to the back of church, so as to lead the offertory procession. The usher will let you know when to start up the aisle.

Servers of the Mass will set up the altar. They will carry the chalice w/veil to the altar. Unless it is already on the altar, they remove the corporal from the burse and place the corporal on the altar. The priest's chalice is placed on the center upper-end of the corporal. The priest's paten is placed dead center in the middle of the corporal. The purificator is placed on the right side. If communion is being offered under both species, then the extra chalices and purificators are also brought to the altar. The Roman Missal, unless it is already on the altar, is taken

from the credence table and placed on the altar. Servers then return to their chairs and wait for the gifts to be brought up. When the offertory procession comes forward, the priest and deacon will stand and move to the front of the sanctuary. If there is a deacon then he stands on the priest's right and the servers stand on his left. If there is no deacon then they stand to either side of the priest.

The **Crucifer** (if there are only two servers) puts the processional cross back in the stand and then goes to the credence table to get the cruet of water. Remove the stopper and wait near the credence table.

Please note that the cruets are never to be set down on the altar. They are to be held until needed with handles facing out.

After the gifts are brought forward the **Server of the Mass** is handed the wine cruet, (the priest or deacon will take the host bread) and then the server carries the cruet to the altar; removes top of the wine cruet and waits for the priest to prepare the chalice. The other **Server of the Mass** should stand ready to assist beside him or her with the water cruet. Remember if only one server is present, then remove the tops to the cruets at the credence table and hold a cruet in each hand with the handles facing out. When the chalice has been prepared, both servers will take the cruets back to the credence table and replace their stoppers.

Servers of the Mass will pick up a hand towel and proceed with pitcher and lavabo bowl to the altar and wait. One of the **Servers of the Mass** will hold the towel under both thumbs of prayer-folded hands. The other **Server of the Mass** will hold the lavabo dish in the left hand and the Ewer/Pitcher in the

right hand. If there is only one server the towel is placed over the left arm.

After the priest washes his hands, both servers will bow to the priest, turn inwards towards each other and return the items to the credence table and stand in front of the server chairs facing the altar. (Special note: If incense is being used, the hand washing follows the incensing.)

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

When the congregation kneels, servers should kneel on the kneelers. **Servers of the Mass** should have bells nearby. As the priest elevates the Body of Christ, a **Server of the Mass** should ring the bells gently three times. Silence the bells until the priest elevates the Precious Blood. **Servers of the Mass** should again ring the bells three times and then silence them. This allows moments of silent reverence while the Body and Blood are elevated.

COMMUNION RITE

Sign of Peace – Respond to the priest and be prepared to share the handshake (sign of peace) with each other, the priest and the deacon. Remain in the sanctuary.

Lamb of God – Kneel at the end of this prayer. When the Extraordinary Ministers come out and stand beside you, you may either stand or kneel for Holy Communion.

If available, servers should retrieve the communion patens from the credence table. They should each stand beside the priest or deacon, placing the communion paten either below the hands of the person receiving by hand or under the chin of anyone receiving communion by mouth. If the patens are not being

used, then the servers return to their seats. Remain kneeling while the sacrament is being placed in the tabernacle. Cross yourself when the priest or deacon does so. When the priest and deacon begin the purification of the vessels, the **Servers of the Mass** bring the water cruet to the altar for the cleansing of the vessels. **Servers of the Mass** will assist the priest/deacon in the cleansing by pouring the water into the vessels over the celebrant's or deacon's fingers. Then take the cruet back to the credence table. **Servers of the Mass** return to the altar and remove all vessels as they are given to you and bring them to the credence table. The Roman Missal might also be given to you.

CLOSING PRAYER

Book Bearer (and possibly Crucifer) retrieves the Book of the Chair and stands near the celebrant's chair. The priest will open the book, as in the Opening Rites. After the prayer, you may close the book and place it on your chair.

After the Prayer after Communion, the **Crucifer (and possibly Book Bearer)** takes the processional cross from its stand and proceeds to the middle aisle, next to third pews, turns and faces the altar. The priest will reverence the altar. He will go to the bottom step and when all members of the recessional are ready, he will bow or genuflect to the altar (imitate him) and everyone in the recessional will turn around and walk slowly to the back of church. Servers should exit, weather permitting, through the ramp door and return to sacristy. If the weather does not permit, you may walk up the side aisle.

AFTER MASS

Servers need to extinguish the candles on altar, using the snuffer (please do not blow them out as this often spreads wax onto the altar cloth which is difficult to remove). Return to the choir loft to disrobe, and return yokes and the colored cinctures (if borrowed). Then check water, wine cruets and ciboria— fill them if needed.

APPENDIX

Please refer to this section for duties outside Sunday Mass.

Special Celebrations – may have changes to regular server duties. These celebrations include but are not limited to, Masses in Advent, Lent, Holy Week and Sundays of Easter. If you are new to serving any of these celebrations, you should discuss your role with the priest/deacon before the day that you serve.

Stations of the Cross – these are celebrated on Fridays during Lent. Three servers are scheduled. One will carry the crucifix the other servers carry the candles. Servers precede the celebrant to each station.

Incensation – the censor stand will need to be brought from the sacristy and placed next to the credence table. A server will make sure that the ignited charcoal briquette is in the bottom of the censor, prior to Mass. Place censor on the stand.

Sprinkling with Holy Water – a server will hold the Aspersorium (holy water vessel/bucket) as the priest uses the Aspergilla (brush or wand) to dip into the Holy Water and sprinkle items or people to be blessed.



Limited Glossary of Terms

- **Acolyte** – a person who assists the clergy during the Mass and at other rites and celebrations, sometimes narrowly defined as one who processes with candles.
- **Alb** – a white garment worn by priests, deacons, bishops, servers and acolytes.
- **Altar** – a table on which the sacrifice of the Cross is made present in the Eucharist.
- **Altar Cloth** – a linen covering placed over the altar out of reverence for the celebration.
- **Altar Server** – similar to the Acolyte, he or she assists the priests with Catholic rituals and sacraments.
- **Ambry** – a niche or chest where the holy oils are kept.
- **Amice** – a garment worn under the Alb and around the neck to cover the priest's collar or street clothing.
- **Aspergillum** – a wand like vessel or brush used to sprinkle holy water.
- **Aspersorium** – a container that holds holy water for sprinkling.
- **Baptistery or Baptistry** – a place in the church where there is a font for baptism is celebrated.
- **Blessed Sacrament** – another name for the Eucharist or the consecrated Host and Chalice; the real body and blood of Jesus, the risen Christ (humanity and divinity) in the sacrament.
- **Bishop** – the first level of Holy Orders; a successor of the apostles with the fullness of priesthood, carrying out the apostolic mission of the Church.
- **Book of the Chair** – another name for the Roman Missal used at Mass.
- **Book of the Gospel** – a special book containing only the Gospel readings for Mass. This is either carried up during the entrance procession and/or taken from the altar, elevated by the deacon and carried to the ambo/lectern during the Gospel Acclamation.
- **Burse** – a stiff pocket that holds the Corporal.

- **Candle Lighter/Snuffer** – on one side a metal tube with a long wick used to light candles and on the other a cup to extinguish the candles.
- **Candles** – made of at least 51% beeswax they are used at every liturgical service as sign of reverence and festivity.
- **Cantor** – a person who leads the congregation in singing the hymns and the responsorial for Mass.
- **Cassock** – a long ankle length garb worn by clergy and other ministers.
- **Celebrant's Chair/Cathedra** – it is where the priest/celebrant sits during Mass and is a symbol of his authority.
- **Censor/Thurible** – a metal vessel, with a long chain, that holds the lighted charcoal and incense.
- **Chalice** – the metal cup or vessel that holds the wine that will become the Blood of Christ.
- **Chalice Veil** – a covering for the chalice, paten and burse. The color is based upon the feast or liturgical season.
- **Charcoal** – used to light or to ignite the incense used in ritual blessings.
- **Chasuble** – a poncho like vestment worn by the celebrant at Mass. The color is based on the feast or liturgical season (white / violet / green / red / black).
- **Ciborium** – a vessel that holds the host bread that will become the Body of Christ.
- **Cope** – similar to a cape but larger it is worn by the priest in processions and other services.
- **Corporal** – a square shaped white linen cloth that opens up into nine folds. It insures that no crumbs of the Eucharist are left on the altar. The priest consecrates that which is set on the Corporal.
- **Cincture** – a sash or rope that goes around the waist of the Alb. It may sometimes be colored but are often white.
- **Communion Paten** – a small round plate with a handle used by Altar Servers to prevent the Blessed Sacrament from falling to the floor during distribution of Communion.

- **Credence Table** – a small table/counter to hold the vessels, books used at Mass. It is usually to the side of the Altar.
- **Cross** – it is used to remember Christ's sacrifice, often confused with or made interchangeable with a Crucifix.
- **Crucifer** – the server who carries the Processional Cross.
- **Crucifix** – a Cross with a "corpus" (body representing Christ) on it. There are several used at Mass: a Processional Cross or Crucifix, a public Crucifix (on the wall or hanging) and the priest's Crucifix on the Altar itself.
- **Cruet** – a container of metal or glass that is used to hold holy water or sacramental wine.
- **Dalmatic** – similar to the priest's Chasuble, this vestment worn over the Alb is proper to the deacon and has sleeves for his arms.
- **Deacon** – The third level of Holy Orders, it is a man ordained for service in the Church under the authority of the Bishop.
- **Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion** – a person who is commissioned on a temporary and conditional basis to assist the pastor in distributing the Precious Body and Blood of Christ.
- **Ewer** – a small pitcher used to dispense water.
- **Flagon** – a large flask used when consecrating large quantities of sacramental wine; however, all wine must be poured into Chalices prior to consecration.
- **Follower** – a metal or glass ring used at the top of a candle to direct the flame.
- **Host** – the unleavened round wafer of bread that is consecrated at Mass into the Eucharistic Christ.
- **Humeral Veil** – a veil worn to cover the back and shoulders with the ends hanging down in front and fastened by clasp. It is used in solemn ceremonies, processions of the Blessed Sacrament and on Holy Thursday.
- **Intentions Book** – a book containing prayer requests from the people that would not easily be included in the prayer of the faithful.
- **Intinction Bowl** – a bowl containing water to cleanse fingertips after distributing communion.

- **Lavabo Dish** – used to catch water when the priest washes his hands
- **Lectern/Pulpit/Ambo** – a reading stand from which the Word of God is proclaimed.
- **Lectionary** – the official liturgical book that contains the Mass Scripture readings.
- **Lector/Reader** – a person who reads the Word of God, excluding the Gospel. (The Gospel is to be read only by the Deacon or Priest.)
- **Liturgy** – the official public prayer of the Church in which we proclaim and celebrate the mystery of Christ.
- **Modesty** – the virtue by which we express respect for ourselves by the way we dress, act or speak.
- **Monstrance** – a metal vessel (often in the shape of a starburst) on a stand used for holding the Body of Christ for adoration or exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.
- **Pall** – (1) a small hard square covering used over the Chalice to protect its contents; (2) a covering used over a casket at a funeral.
- **Paschal Candle/Easter Candle/Vigil Candle** – it represents the Light of Christ. It is used during all Sundays of Easter, Baptisms and Funerals. A new candle is blessed each year at the Easter Vigil.
- **Paten** – small plate (flat or bowl shaped) vessel used by the priest to hold the Eucharistic Bread that will become the Body of Christ.
- **Prie-dieu** – a kneeler, sometimes a screen is added for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- **Priest** – an ordained clergyman to help with the Bishop’s mission in the Church. On the second level of Holy Orders, the principal work of a priest is the celebration of the sacrifice of the Mass and the absolution of sins in Confession.
- **Purificator** – a linen towel, often with a cross symbol, used in Mass to “catch” any loose fragments of the Host or drops of the Precious Blood.
- **Pyx** – a small vessel used to carry the Body of Christ on Communion calls to the sick or shut-ins.

- **Ritual** – a symbolic action that expresses our deepest beliefs or concerns.
- **Roman Missal** – the book of prayers used by the priest at Mass.
- **Sacrament** – a visible and effective sign, given to us by Christ, through which we share in God’s grace.
- **Sacrarium** – a special drain leading directly to the ground. It is used to wash linens and to purify vessels.
- **Sacrifice** – a gift offered to God by a priest and destroyed in some way to show that it belongs to God alone.
- **Sacristy** – the area of the church where the priest vests for Mass. Often the holy vessels are also stored there.
- **Sanctuary** – the area surrounding the altar but not including the area where the assembly is seated.
- **Sanctuary Lamp/Vigil Light** – a light that is lit to show that Christ is present in the Tabernacle. The candle is usually near or next to the Tabernacle.
- **Surplice** – a short white tunic worn over a cassock, especially by Acolytes and Altar Servers. Along with his Stole, it is the liturgical vestiture over the black clerical Cassock.
- **Stole** – the priest wears the stole around his neck hanging down in front. The deacon wears it over his left shoulder and across the right side where it is fastened. It signifies authority and the colors reflect the feast or liturgical season.
- **Tabernacle** – the ornamental receptacle in the church where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved; from the Latin word for tent.
- **Tabor** – a metal stand that elevates the Monstrance for adoration.
- **Thurifer** – an acolyte or server carrying a censer.
- **Usher** – the person who welcomes people into the church, directs seating into the assembly area, takes up the collection and distributes the bulletins.
- **Votive Candles** – these candles, usually on a stand, are lit as individuals offer up their prayer intentions.



This booklet is prepared as an aid to assist those who volunteer and worship at Holy Family Catholic Parish, Mitchellville, MD. May it make possible a more active lay participation in our faith community.

**12010 Woodmore Road
Mitchellville, MD 20721**

301-249-2266