

# Manual

for Altar Servers



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## Welcome!

You are now a member of a very special group of people in our parish! You are a Saint Elizabeth Altar Server. As a server, you are one of the liturgical ministers of our parish. Liturgical ministers have special tasks to perform during liturgies, especially during the Eucharist (Mass), which is the central worship we do as God's family.

As a server, you are serving in several different ways:

1. You are serving your parish family by helping everyone to worship and celebrate in the best way possible.
2. You are serving God through your worship and prayer.
3. You are serving the priest by helping him preside over the liturgy.

## The Eucharist

The most important liturgy of our church is the Eucharist, commonly known as the Mass. It is important to our parish family in much the same way as meals in your home are important to your family there. The meals your family shares at home not only keep you alive and healthy, they also give you a chance to be together and strengthen your family ties.

The Eucharist is the special family of God's family. **The Eucharist:**

1. Puts us in touch with Jesus' death and resurrection, which happened 2,000 years ago, and which makes it possible for us to live forever as God's family.
2. Is a special form of prayer that gives worship and praise to God.
3. Brings us closer both to God and to one another, and helps us to serve one another's needs all the time.



It is helpful to think of our celebration of the Eucharist (the Mass) as having two main parts. They are:

1. **The Liturgy of the Word:** where readings from the Bible are read and explained.
2. **The Liturgy of the Eucharist:** where we give thanks to God for all He has done for us through Jesus by recalling Jesus' death and resurrection and sharing the bread and wine which have become the Body and Blood of Christ.

There are also introductory rites that take place before the Liturgy of the Word and concluding rites after the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Other liturgical ministers serve at liturgical celebrations. For example, you might see any or all of the following at a celebration of the Eucharist:

1. Deacon
2. Lector (Reader)
3. Leader of Song (Cantor)
4. Special Ministers of the Eucharist
5. Ushers (Greeters)

## This Server's Manual

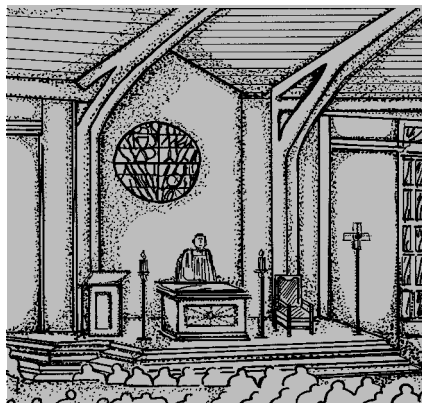
This manual is intended to assist you, the server, in your ministry. The following pages will show you through definitions, pictures, and descriptions, all the names, places, and procedures that are a part of our worship at Saint Elizabeth Parish. Please try to familiarize yourself with this information which will help in your becoming a good server.

## 2. NAMES AND PLACES

Listed below are the names and descriptions of the areas and items that are used in the liturgy. You should know them so that you are able to use them properly and are able to understand what other ministers are talking about when these things are referred to. You should, of course, treat all the areas and items used for worship with special respect and care.

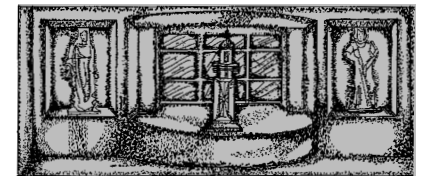
### Areas of the Church

The **Sanctuary** is the area in the center of the church where the **presider's chair**, the **ambo**, and the **altar** are located. In Saint Elizabeth Church, the sanctuary is slightly higher than the rest of the church (three small steps higher).

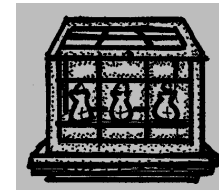


The **Sacristy** is the room where the priest vests (gets dressed) and prepares for Mass and where all supplies for liturgy are kept. At Saint Elizabeth, the servers have a separate area where their vestments are stored and where they may vest (get dressed) and prepare for Mass. This area is located in Room 110.

The **Blessed Sacrament Chapel** is the area for prayer and meditation where the tabernacle is located.



The **Reconciliation Rooms** are located in the far corners of the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. These are the rooms where the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance) is celebrated.

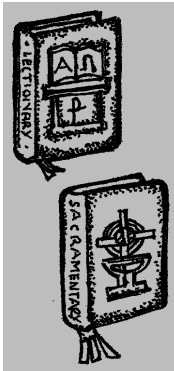


The **Ambry** is the place where the Holy Oils are kept. The ambry at Saint Elizabeth is on the wall near the baptismal font. There are three Holy Oils stored there: The Oil of Catechumens, the Sacred Chrism, and the Oil of the Sick.

The **Gathering Space** is the area just outside the church where people can assemble before Mass begins (like a lobby).

## Special Books

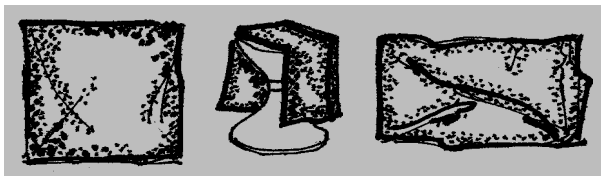
The **Lectionary** is the large book containing the readings from the Bible that are proclaimed at all Masses. It is used by the lector and by the priest. Sometimes a separate Book of the Gospels is also used.



The **Sacramentary** is a book containing all of the prayers the priest says during Mass. There are two Sacramentaries used at Saint Elizabeth: a small one is used for prayers prayed by the priest at his chair, and this sacramentary is held by an altar server, a large one is used for prayers said at the altar, and this sacramentary is placed on the altar (and removed from the altar) by the altar server. This large sacramentary is kept on the credence table.

A binder with the **General Intercessions** is also used at Masses, this is held by the altar server for the priest at the appropriate time.

The small sacramentary and the binder with the general intercessions is kept on a chair next to the Altar Servers.



## Special Linen

The **Corporal** is a white cloth that is spread upon the altar during Mass. The chalice and paten are placed on the corporal. The chalice is placed on the right top corner of the corporal. The paten is placed in the center of the corporal. The sacramentary is placed in the top left corner of the corporal.

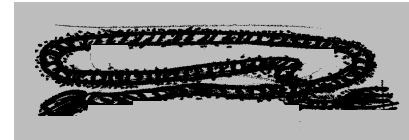
A **Purificator** is a white cloth (similar to a napkin) which is used to wipe the rim of the chalice after drinking from it.

6 A **Towel** is used by the priest to dry his hands after the hand washing.

## Special Clothing

The **Alb** is a long white robe worn by the priest, the deacon, and the altar servers. The alb is a reminder of our baptism.

The **Cincture** is a rope or cord worn around the waist (like a belt) over the alb.

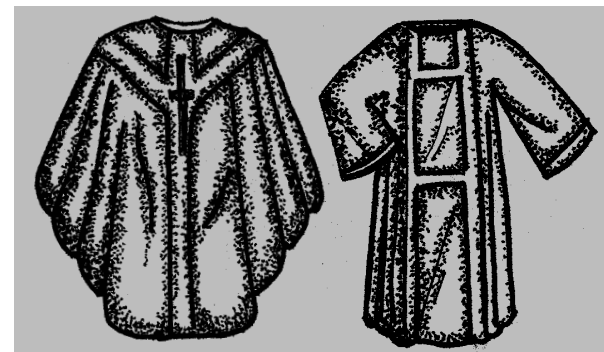


The **Stole** is a long, narrow band of cloth that looks like a scarf. A priest wears the stole draped over his shoulders and hanging down in front; a deacon wears a stole draped over one shoulder and diagonally across his chest. Stoles may be white, green, red, purple, or gold.



The **Chasuble** is the outer garment worn by the priest at Mass. It usually matches the color of the stole.

The **Dalmatic** is the outer garment worn by the deacon. It too usually matches the color of the stole.





### Special Vessels

The **Chalice** is the cup that holds the wine for Holy Communion.



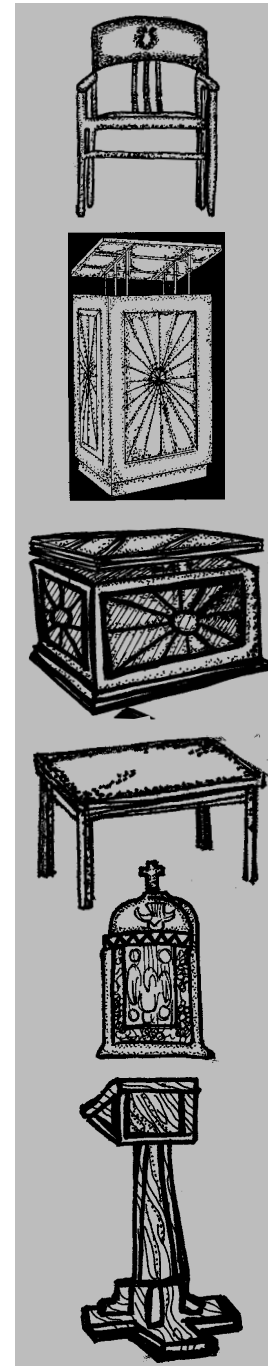
The **Paten** is a plate that holds the bread for Holy Communion.

A **Ciborium**, (plural=Ciboria) is a special container that looks like a round gold box that is used to hold the bread (hosts) for Holy Communion. It has a lid or a cover. Ciboria that hold consecrated hosts are stored in the tabernacle.

**Cruets** are little vessels that contain the water and wine at Mass.

A **Lavabo Bowl** is a bowl over which the priest washes his hands during Mass (water drips into this bowl).

A **Flagon** is a pitcher that contains the wine that will be consecrated during the Eucharist.



### Special Furniture

The **Presider's Chair** is the chair on the right side of the sanctuary that the priest uses to sit on when he presides (leads) at Mass during the Liturgy of the Word and the concluding prayers of the Mass.

The **Ambo** is the stand at which the Word of God is read from the lectionary. The homily is usually delivered from the ambo also.

The **Altar** is the holy table from which the priest presides over the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The **Credence Table** is the side table near the sanctuary where items are kept when they are needed for Mass but are not currently being used.

The **Tabernacle** is the large, decorated box or safe in which the consecrated Eucharistic Bread is kept. It is located in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel.

The **Baptismal Font** is the large pool at the entrance to the church where baptisms take place.



The **Lectern** is the stand on the side of the sanctuary near the organ and piano from which the Leader of Song sings.

## Other Items

The **Censer**, or **Thurible**, is a metal container on a chain in which incense is burned on a piece of charcoal.

The **Incense Boat** (sometimes just called the Boat) is the container that holds the unburned incense. A spoon is used to scoop the incense from the boat into the thurible.

**Incense** is a mixture of leaves, bark, and other natural materials which, when burned, produces a sweet-smelling smoke. The smoke rises and represents our prayers rising to God.

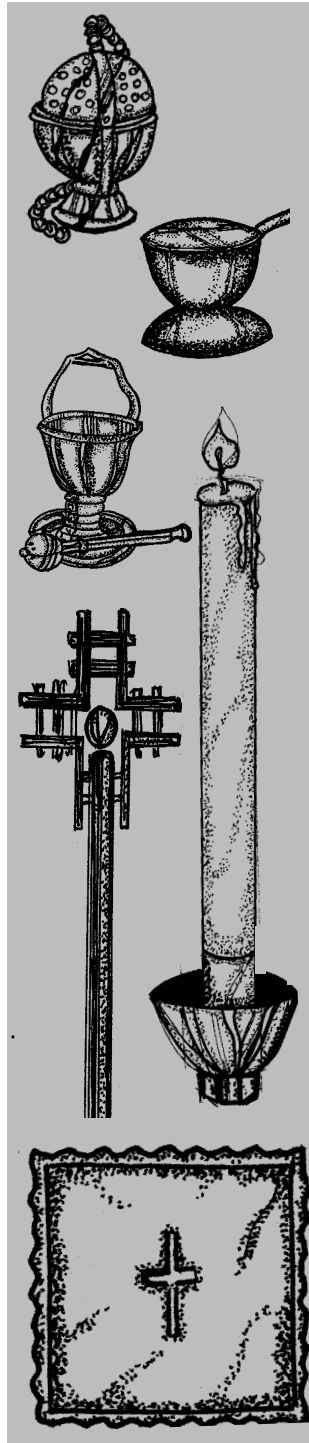
The **Holy Water Bucket** is the container used to hold holy water.

The **Sprinkler** (or **Aspergill**) is used to spray holy water over the people during a blessing or a sprinkling rite.

The **Pascal Candle**, or **Easter Candle**, is the large candle that is located near the baptismal font.

The **Processional Cross** is the large cross that is carried in by a server at the beginning of Mass and is carried out at the end of Mass.

The **Funeral Pall** is a large decorated cloth that covers the casket during a Funeral Mass.



## Liturgical Season and Colors

**Advent** is the period of four weeks of preparation prior to Christmas. **Violet or purple** is the color for this season.

The **Christmas Season** begins on Christmas Eve and continues until the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. **White or gold** is the color for this season.

**Lent** is the forty-day period before Easter. **Violet or purple** is the color for this season.

**Easter** is the great fifty-day season beginning with the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday night and continuing until the feast of Pentecost. **White or gold** is the color for Easter, and **red** is the color for **Pentecost**.

**Ordinary Time** means that no particular season or feast is being celebrated. **Green** is the color for ordinary time.

**Red** is also used on **Good Friday**, at **Confirmation**, and on the **feasts and memorials of martyrs**.

At St. Elizabeth Altar Servers wear cintures (ropes) in colors to match the Liturgical Seasons. For weddings they wear white.

### 3. PROCEDURES FOR SERVING

#### Gestures and Postures

During the celebration, when you are not performing specific tasks, you will be sitting or standing. Everything you do as a server, no matter how ordinary it may seem, should be done carefully and reverently, because everything is a part of the worship you are giving to God.

**Hands:** Be sure you have a firm grip on whatever you are carrying. If one or both hands are free, they should be kept in front of you, clasped together at waist level. If you are carrying something in one hand, the other hand should be held flat against your body, at waist level.

**Eyes:** Always look where the action is, for example, at the altar, ambo, presider's chair, or the direction in which you are walking. You should not be gazing aimlessly around the church, looking at different things and people during Mass.

**Standing:** Always stand up straight with both feet firmly on the floor; do not slouch. Do not lean on one leg or on anything else.

**Sitting:** Sit up straight and keep your knees together. Do not cross your legs or tap your feet. Feet should never be swinging! Hands should rest flat on your lap if you are not holding on to something while you are sitting.

**Bowing:** Make a respectful and deep bow at the waist. It should be a smooth motion, and not a jerky or quick bobbing.

**Walking:** Take your time and move deliberately and with dignity. Walking in church is never a race and should never be hurried. When servers walk together, they should always remain together, side-by-side, walking at the same pace.

**Carrying the Processional Cross:** When you carry the processional cross, carry it straight and with the image of Christ facing forward (if there is one on the cross). When you are carrying the cross, **YOU DO NOT BOW TO THE ALTAR** as the priest and other ministers do.



#### General Norms for Serving

1. You are performing your ministry so that our worship at liturgy can be more prayerful and meaningful. You should never be a distraction in any way to other people. During Mass and other liturgies, you must pay attention, participate in the prayers and singing, and be prayerful and reverent. There is absolutely never to be any fooling around, joking around, or any other behavior that would be distracting or disrespectful. If for some reason it is necessary to say something to your partner (for example, to ask a necessary question or to clarify what you should be doing), do so as quietly and simply as possible. This should not be an extended conversation. Aside from these limited cases of necessity, there should never be any talking between the servers.

2. The liturgical clothing for servers to wear is the alb. The alb is to be worn whenever you serve. Be sure that you are wearing an alb that fits you properly (one that is neither too short nor too long). Take good care of the albs since other servers will have to wear them. Always hang them up properly. A cincture (rope) should also be worn, although this is not absolutely necessary. When wearing a cincture it is tied on your left side.

3. Even though you will be wearing an alb over your street clothes, appropriate clothing should still be worn. This means you may wear dresses, skirts, slacks, shirts. Shoes may be of any color, although brown or black are preferred.

4. Be sure your hands and face are clean and your hair is neatly combed. Please do not wear cologne or perfume which is very heavy as these scents often remain in the fabric. Girls should be careful not to get any makeup on the albs. Girls should wear their hair pulled back off their faces.

5. Always arrive 15-20 minutes before the starting time of the liturgy. Be sure to sign in on the “sign-in” sheet which is posted in Room 110. It is a good idea to check in with the priest and ministers to let them know you are there.

6. Upon arriving, give a general check to be sure that everything is in place for the liturgy, e.g., candles are lit, cross is where it should be; all books, vessels, and other items needed by servers are available and in their proper place. You may check with the sacristan (Mr. Vasta) to see if he needs any assistance in setting up for liturgy.

7. Prior to entering Church, gather with the other ministers to pray before Mass.

8. As an altar server, you are generously giving of your time and serving your parish through this ministry. You do not get paid for this service. However, at certain times, you may receive a tip (e.g. at a wedding). Please accept this as a token of appreciation, expressing your thanks to the person. Keep in mind, however, that the tip is always optional, and of course, not the reason you are there. All servers are expected to attend all meetings. If for some reason you are unable to attend the meeting, you are asked to contact one of the moderators to let them know. Servers will also get together for social events from time to time (e.g. pizza dinners) and of course all servers are invited to attend these events.

9. The serving schedule will be printed and distributed on a regular basis. It will be distributed at server meetings or mailed to you. **IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO CHECK YOUR ASSIGNMENTS, NOTE THEM ON YOUR CALENDAR, AND SAFEGUARD THE SCHEDULE.**

**IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO FULFILL YOUR ASSIGNMENT, YOU ARE TO FIND A REPLACEMENT. THIS IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY!** (You have been given a roster with names and phone numbers for this very purpose.) If you are still unable to find a replacement, at the very least, call the other two servers to let them know they will be serving with only two. Also call Mrs. Hoffman to let her know.

11. When you are attending a Mass for which you are not scheduled to serve, always check to see if the servers have arrived. If one or both are missing, you should be prepared to step in and take their place. We should never have the occasion where there is no one serving and available servers are sitting in the assembly.

### **Procedure for Serving Sunday Mass**

1. Three servers are assigned for every Sunday Mass.

2. One server is the cross bearer, meaning he or she carries the processional cross in and out. This is usually the tallest of the three. The other server is the book bearer, meaning that she or he holds the small sacramentary for the priest for the opening and closing prayers. The third server will hold the binder containing the general intercessions for the priest. Should there be less than three servers, both servers cover all functions.

3. The cross bearer leads the procession from the rear of the church near the baptismal font across the back wall, up the center aisle to the sanctuary. The other servers are directly behind the cross bearer standing side by side.

4. The cross bearer pauses in front of the altar, but without bowing, and proceeds up into the sanctuary and places the cross in its stand facing the congregation. The other two servers pause, then bow together then walk to their seats. The cross bearer goes directly to his or her chair and remains standing along with the other servers.

5. The book bearer brings the small sacramentary to the priest after the priest gives the invitation “Let us pray.” (Follow the priest’s instructions if he wishes you to bring the sacramentary to him before this for any reason.) The sacramentary should be held steady, without shaking or movement, at an angle and position comfortable for the priest to read the prayer.

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6. After the opening prayer, the book bearer returns to his or her seat with the sacramentary.

7. All servers participate in the Liturgy of the Word with the rest of the assembly, by responding, singing, sitting and standing as everyone else does.

8. Toward the end of the Profession of Faith (Nicene Creed), one server should bring the binder containing the General Intercessions (also called the Prayer of the Faithful) to the priest. When you hear the words “We believe in one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church” you should bring up the binder. (This binder will match the season color, i.e., green, red, white, or purple.) The server will hold the binder open for the priest while he reads the opening prayer. While the petitions are being read by the deacon or lector, you may close the book and stand to the side of the priest. After the petitions are read, reopen the binder to allow the priest to read the closing prayer, then return to your seat.

9. After the ushers have begun taking up the collection, (when they get to the second row) the servers prepare the altar. All servers should move together and at the same time.

10. Servers go to the credence table. The cross bearer takes the corporal, the next server takes the large sacramentary, the next takes the chalice and the purificator. The server with the corporal walks in the middle and places the corporal reverently in the middle of the altar. After the corporal is in place the server on the left places the sacramentary to the left of the corporal and the server on the right places the chalice and purificator to the right of the corporal.

11. The server on the right and the server on the left proceed around the side of the altar, down the steps, meet in the middle and continue down the aisle to the fourth pew from the rear to await the offertory procession. The third server returns to his seat and sits down.

12. One of the ushers will give the signal to proceed up the aisle to the priest (and deacon) who will be waiting in the center aisle in front of the altar.

## 12 A. Serving Family Liturgy

When serving at Family Liturgy only two servers will set the altar. One will place the corporal on the altar, the other will place the sacramentary (big book). The two servers will then walk together down the center aisle and wait at the fourth pew from the rear, facing one another on either side of the aisle. The servers will wait here while the families dress the altar and return. The servers continue waiting until the collection is finished and it is time to bring up the hosts and wine. The Altar servers then lead the procession up to the altar and serve the rest of Mass as usual. Someone from Family Liturgy will tell you when to start the procession.

13. Upon arriving up front, the servers split to stand on either side of the priest (and deacon). The servers may be handed the large bowl and/or ciboria containing the hosts, and the flagon containing the wine. If so, they are to bring these to the altar. The ciboria are placed in the middle of the corporal. The wine is placed next to the chalice.

14. All servers proceed to the credence table and one server takes the water cruet and returns to the altar where the priest will pour a little water into the wine and return the cruet to the server. The server remains at the altar.

15. The remaining servers proceed up to the altar with the bowl and towel. The server with the bowl will always be in the middle with the cruet to one side and the towel on the other.

16. All servers return to the credence table, place all articles on the table and return to their seats and sit down.

**Special note:** If incense is being used, it is used before this handwashing. One server takes the thurible and another takes the boat. Both go to the priest, who would incense the gifts and possibly the altar. The priest would then return the incense to the servers, who would return them to the credence table. Servers would continue with the handwashing.

17. The servers continue to participate in the Liturgy of the Eucharist along with the rest of the assembly, by responding, singing, standing and sitting with everyone else. Note: when the assembly kneels, the servers may be seated, since they are in the front row without kneelers.

18. The servers receive Holy Communion when the priest comes down in front of the altar in the center aisle to distribute communion to the liturgical ministers. The servers receive after the liturgical ministers. They should be prepared to offer assistance of any kind to the priest, deacon, or special minister of the Eucharist if they are requested to do so.

19. After receiving communion, the servers return immediately to their seats.

20. When the Ministers have combined the remaining Eucharist into one or two ciboria and have left the sanctuary, the servers should clear the altar. Any or all of the following items might have to be cleared from the altar and brought to the credence table:

- a. empty bowls or ciboria
- b. the empty flagon of wine
- c. the large sacramentary
- d. the corporal, which should be folded and returned to the credence table.

21. The servers will have to be aware of clearing the altar of whatever might be on it, remembering to always move together and with prayerful reverence.

22. After communion, the book bearer brings the small sacramentary to the priest after the invitation “Let us pray.” The server should again hold the sacramentary properly.

23. After the final blessing, either at the beginning of or during the closing song, the priest will move to the front of the altar and down the steps. When he begins to move, the cross bearer should take the processional cross and then move to the center aisle near the front pew. The other servers should proceed directly in front of the cross bearer.

24. When the priest bows to the altar, all servers bow with the exception of the cross bearer. After the bow, all ministers will turn and the cross bearer will lead the procession out. The procession will move down the center aisle toward the back wall, then turn right toward the baptismal font and out one of the doors into the gathering space.

25. The servers should return the cross to its proper place and carefully take off their albs and **HANG THEM UP!** They are never to be left on the floor, on the chair or on a table. Cintures should also be hung with the alb.

26. After you have taken off the alb, check with the sacristan, priest, or deacon to see if there is some special cleaning up, rearranging, or setting up for the next Mass for which they need your assistance. If there is no need for your help, you are free to go.

*Note: The above steps outline the basic procedure for serving Sunday Mass. Slight changes or variations might be made in the event of a special Mass or celebration. You will be informed of this by the priest before Mass begins. Do not become upset or nervous if you are asked to do something slightly different. Always do the best you can in a prayerful way.*

Certain times of the Church year require special liturgies, for example, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, the Easter Vigil, Confirmation, or other times. If you are asked to serve at a special liturgy that has special procedures, there will always be some kind of instruction before the liturgy, either on that day, or on another day, so that you will know what to do.

Also, do not become upset if you make a mistake! It is not the end of the world. We all make mistakes and chances are the people in the assembly won't even notice you did something wrong. Just simply correct your mistake or do what you were supposed to do again. Do not start to laugh, cry or worry about it. The best thing to do is just forget about it and go on, trying not to make the same mistake again!

Whenever you have a question, **DO NOT HESITATE TO ASK!!!**



## Procedure for Serving a Wedding

1. There are two kinds of wedding liturgies: one is a Mass, the other is a Ceremony. The difference in procedure will be outlined below. Two servers are assigned for a wedding, whether it is a Ceremony or a Mass.
  2. Arrive 15-20 minutes before the scheduled wedding and go to Room 110. Upon arriving, please be sure to sign in, put on alb and white cincture (rope), and report to the sacristy as you will be starting from there. The Priest, Groom and Best Man should also be in attendance.
  3. Check with the priest, deacon and/or sacristan to make sure all preparations are in place and ask if there is anything you can help with.
  4. The priest/deacon will indicate to you when you are ready to begin. At that time, lead the procession into the church from the sacristy, through a row of chairs, turning left at the first aisle you come to. Servers standing side by side, proceed to the front center, in front of the altar. Wait for the priest or deacon to stand between the two of you.
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5. Most likely the opening prayer(s) will come from a special book the priest or deacon will have.

6. Remain standing on either side of priest. He will greet the people. When he goes to his chair you go to your chair. Participate in the Liturgy of the Word with the rest of the assembly, by responding, singing, sitting and standing along with everyone else.

7. After the homily comes the Rite of Marriage, i.e., the marriage vows and exchange of rings.

After the homily, as the Priest or Deacon goes down to stand before the couple, the servers go to the credence table, take the plate with the rings and holy water bucket with sprinkler and stand on the left side of the priest or deacon.

8. After the blessing and exchange of rings, return the holy water and plate to the credence table and sit down.

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9. If it is a ceremony, remain seated. The priest pronounces that they are now man and wife. Wait for the kiss and then go to either side of the priest. You turn and bow to the altar with the priest or deacon, then exit side by side walking down the side aisle, through the chairs and into the sacristy the same way you entered.

10. If it is a Mass, you continue serving with the preparation of the altar (see Procedure for Serving Sunday Mass). The only difference is that after preparing the altar, instead of going all the way down to the back, simply wait in front of the altar for the gifts with the priest.

11. After communion, the prayer will most likely come from the special wedding book used by the priest or deacon.

12. You exit in the same way as for a Ceremony as mentioned in number 9 above (i.e., down the side aisle, through the chairs, and into the sacristy).

13. After the liturgy, check with the priest, deacon, or sacristan to see if your assistance is needed in cleaning up, setting up for the next liturgy, or with anything else. If not, you are free to leave. Remember to properly hang up your alb and cincture.

14. If you receive a tip, please remember to accept this as a token of appreciation, always expressing your thanks to the person. Remember tips are optional! Thank-you is not.

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## Final Points to Remember

1. Please remember that your ministry is important, and many people depend on you to fulfill your responsibilities. The parish needs you as a part of our worship to help things run smoothly and prayerfully. **Please take this responsibility seriously.**

2. Remember that sometimes no matter how well prepared we are, things still go wrong. Should something go wrong or should you make a mistake, stay calm and do not panic. Quick movements lead to tripping and to further mistakes. Just think for a moment, try to correct the problem, and continue on. The priest and the deacon will help you in whatever way they can.

3. Pray to the Lord that you will be a good server, and that through your ministry both you and the people of Saint Elizabeth parish will come to a deeper love of God through Jesus.



## A Server's Prayer

Loving Father, creator of the universe,  
You call your people to worship,  
to be with You and with 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 for ever and ever. Amen

