

# Altar Server Ministry \* St. Paul Church, Norwalk, OH 2018-19

## I. Introduction

*Liturgy* - "In the Christian tradition, the word 'liturgy' means the participation of the People of God in 'the work of God.' Through the liturgy, Christ, our redeemer and high priest, continues the work of our redemption in, with, and through his Church." (Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), # 1069) Christ completed the work of redemption principally in the "paschal mystery" - his passion and death, resurrection from the dead, and glorious ascension. (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (CSL), # 5)

*Paschal Mystery* - By Baptism, we are implanted in the "paschal mystery" of Christ: we die with him, are buried with him, and rise with him. From the day of Pentecost onward, the Church (the people of God) has never failed to come together to celebrate the "paschal mystery" whereby we continually make Christ's "work" of salvation present in the world. (CSL, #6)

*Assembly and Ministry of the Assembly* - God calls us to gather together to participate in the "work" of liturgy by celebrating the "paschal mystery" as a community or "assembly." The "assembly" is Christ's presence in the world. We call the assembly, the "Body of Christ." Everyone in the assembly is engaged in "ministry" or service to everybody else. The ministry of the assembly involves four sacramental actions: gathering, listening, responding, and going forth. Every member of the assembly accomplishes these actions by fully, consciously, and actively participating in the liturgy. (The Ministry of the Altar Server (MAS), p. 3)

*Liturgical Ministers* - From the assembly, God calls and gifts some people who will minister to the gathered assembly in a more specific way. Some of the specific ministries are: the presider of the assembly, altar servers, lectors, music ministers, art and environment ministers, ushers and hosts, Eucharistic ministers, . . . These liturgical ministers serve the assembly and one another. (MAS, pp. 13-15)

*Altar Server Ministry* - One of the specific ministries mentioned above is "altar servers." We now focus our attention on this ministry. Both youth and adult altar servers are called and gifted by God to engage in this very important ministry, which involves helping the priest serve the people in the assembly. Altar servers help the liturgy flow more smoothly, making it a more prayerful experience for the assembly. One way servers do this is by being good examples of prayer, song, and attentive reverence. (MAS, pp. 3-4)

## II. Altar Server Ministry at St. Paul, Norwalk

### A. Leadership – The Altar Server Ministry Team

1. Team positions:
  - a. Chairperson(s) – lay parishioners of St. Paul Church
  - b. Associate pastor of St. Paul Church
  - c. Other team members as need dictates (Lit. Comm. rep; server parents)
2. Qualifications:
  - a. Open to on-going liturgical formation
  - b. Committed to personal spiritual growth
  - c. Concern for the common good of the parish
  - d. Good organizational, leadership, and communication skills
  - e. Committed to Vatican II liturgical reform
3. Term: 1 year, renewable.
4. Responsible to: Director of Liturgy and Music (Pastoral Staff Position)
5. Duties:
  - a. Regular meetings scheduled by leadership team members
  - b. Communication among various groups:
    - Among leadership team members
    - With altar servers and parents of minor children: (update data base, reminders, affirmation, feedback, etc.)
    - With priests and Director of Liturgy and Music (Pastoral Staff positions)
    - With PSR director, Hispanic ministry director, NCS personnel
    - With parish Administrative Asst. in charge of scheduler
    - With parishioners (on-going education and information about altar server ministry)
  - c. Communication – methods:
    - Texts and emails to servers – simultaneously communicating with parents of minor children per diocesan guidelines.
    - Parish bulletins, inserts, newsletters
    - Friday Flyers, PSR communication, communications in Spanish
    - Website, Bulletin Board in Church hallway
  - d. Design, implement, evaluate, and revise as needed:
    - Altar Server Handbook and Video
    - Initial Formation Process for NEW altar servers and their families
    - On-going Formation Process for ALL altar servers and their families (Minimum: 1 formational gathering per year)
    - Recognition for altar servers (i.e. Commissioning, Summer event, Recognition for advanced training)
    - Record-keeping system to record trainings that servers have completed.
    - Regular evaluation of all components of the altar server ministry

## B. Altar Servers

### 1. Adult Server Qualifications:

Adults, men or women, who exercise the ministry of server should be fully initiated, active members of the community and of sufficient competency and temperament to undertake this ministry with grace, respect, and discretion.

### 2. Youth Server Qualifications:

- a. Young persons, boys or girls, who exercise the ministry of server, should be mature enough to understand their responsibilities, to carry them out well, and to adhere to a spirit of reverence. They should have already received Holy Communion for the first time. (USCCB Guidelines for Altar Servers, # 3)

No distinction should be made between the functions carried out in the sanctuary by men and boys and those carried out by women and girls. Every effort should be made to include both males and females in this ministry and not to exclude either gender. (USCCB Guidelines for Altar Servers, # 2)

- b. Altar Servers should understand the purpose of the Altar Server Ministry:
  - To help the priest serve the people in the assembly
  - To help the liturgy flow more smoothly
  - To help make the liturgy a prayerful experience for the assembly
  - To be good examples of prayer, song, and attentive reverence.

- c. The minimum age for youth altar servers will be the fifth grade.

### 3. Vesture:

Altar servers will wear a white alb since it is a reminder of the baptismal garment.

### 4. Training - Overview:

"Servers should receive proper formation before they begin to function. The formation should include instruction on the Mass and its parts 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. Servers should also receive appropriate guidance on maintaining proper decorum and attire when serving Mass and other functions." (USCCB Guidelines for Altar Servers, #4)

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Approved by Msgr Ken Morman, Pastor of St. Paul Church, Norwalk, on November 1, 2018.