

# Saint Teresa

CATHOLIC CHURCH



## ALTAR SERVERS MASS HANDBOOK

Sponsored by

The Knights of Columbus Fitzgerald Council 833



# KNIGHTS

# OF COLUMBUS

IN SERVICE TO ONE. IN SERVICE TO ALL.

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# SAINT JOHN BERCHMANS

*Saint John Berchman is the patron saint of Altar Servers*

*His feast day is November 26*



John Berchmans was born on March 13, 1599 over 400 years ago. He died on August 13, 1621 at the age of 22. While as a young boy, he wanted to be a priest, and he would serve at five Masses a day in his native country of Belgium.

This son of a shoemaker began studying to be a Jesuit priest at the age of 17. He liked simple devotions like praying before a crucifix and saying the rosary. In school he rose to the top of his class and was sent to the Jesuit College in Rome Italy.

While at college, he won a debate with another college, but the day after his victory, he fell ill and died at the age of 22. By that time, he was already known for his holiness in everyday living.

## **Prayer to Saint John Berchmans**

***“Help me to be an Altar Server, to imitate you in my service at Mass and to imitate you in the way I treat other people. Amen.”***

# **WHAT HAPPENS AT MASS**

## **Many People Prepare for Mass**

The priest prepares the homily. Lectors go over the readings. The sacristans and servers make ready the sanctuary. Ushers assist people in arriving and leaving. Musicians practice the hymns and psalms. The people prepare themselves to come to church, to pray together and to worship God.

## **We Pray Together**

At Mass we join our voices in prayer. We respond “Amen” to the prayers said by the priest. We proclaim our belief in God in the Creed. We recite hymns of praise such as the “Gloria” and the “Our Father.” We pray for the Church, also for those in need, for ourselves and for the entire world.

## **We Listen to God’s Word**

At every Mass we read from the Bible. At Sunday Mass, the priest explains the readings and relates them to our own lives. We listen to God’s Word and receive it into our hearts where it becomes the Living Word of God.

## **The Mass is a Reenactment of the Last Supper**

At Mass we celebrate a very special meal with other members of God’s family. We bring and share gifts of bread and wine. In the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ.

## **The Mass is a Calling Down of the Holy Spirit**

We ask the Holy Spirit to come down upon the gifts of bread and wine to make them holy as the Body and Blood of Christ. We ask the Holy Spirit to descend on ourselves, to join us to these Holy Gifts and to make us holy.

## **The Mass is a Sacrifice**

When we celebrate Mass, we remember that Jesus gave his life for us by being born of Mary, by teaching us and living with us; by dying on the cross for us, and by rising again from the dead. Every time we participate in the Mass, this saving sacrifice becomes real in our lives.

## **The Mass is a Memorial**

At Mass we remember and enter into the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. He forgives our sins and gives us the gift of eternal life. We ‘remember’ that our parents love us, and their love continues in the present. In the same way the action and love of Jesus continues in our lives.

## **The Mass is an Offering of Ourselves**

We offer the Sacred Gifts to God the Father. We pray that the Holy Spirit join us to the Body and Blood of Jesus. When we offer these Sacred Gifts to God, we also offer ourselves, our entire lives: our time, talent, and our treasure.

## **The Mass is the Heart of Worship in the Catholic Church**

We must take the Mass seriously as the Lord knows our true intentions and as with any father or parent, He wants the best for us. By regularly participating in the Mass, we are saying to the Lord, *“Here I am Lord, hear and answer my prayers for I need and love you”*.

# God is Calling You to Serve

*You have been called to become a part of a very special group of ministers*

You were probably asked by a pastor, teacher, or parent to become an altar server, but remember that it was God who called you. He wants you to help your parish in worshipping Him by being a faithful server who will assist the priest(s) at Mass.

## **Before Mass – Servers assist by:**

- Wearing appropriate attire; surplice, cassock, and dress shoes
- Lighting the altar candles while praying silently:
  - *“Glory be the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit”*
  - *Some candles are battery operated and require using the remote*
- Filling the water and wine cruets
- Filling the ciborium/ciboria with hosts
- Placing the “gifts” on the gift table or credence table
- Being silent and reverent when in the sacristy
- Washing your hands in hot soapy water for 20 seconds

## **During Mass – Servers assist by:**

- Holding the book for opening and closing prayers for weekday Masses
- Carrying the water and wine brought up during Offertory
- Ringing the bells during the Eucharistic Prayer
  - One (*ring-ring*) for the Epiclesis (*Invoking the Holy Spirit*)
  - Three (*ring-ring-rings*) for the **Precious Blood**
  - Three (*ring-ring-rings*) for the **Sacred Host**
- Being a “Prayer Leader” by saying the prayers to lead the congregation.
- Holding a paten for communion as you **follow the priest** as he distributes.
- Being a “Song Leader” by joining in singing along with the congregation.

*A server is there to help the celebrant as he offers up the Sacrifice of the Mass.  
It is a server’s job to be of service while being “invisible” and not be a distraction on the altar.*

# THE ORDER OF THE MASS

*In the Roman Rite, the Mass is made up of two principal parts:  
The Liturgy of the Word and The Liturgy of the Eucharist.  
It begins with the Introductory Rites and ends with the Concluding Rites.*

## **Introductory Rites**

- Entrance
- Greeting
- Penitential Act
- Glory to God
- Collect

## **Liturgy of the Word**

- First Reading
- Responsorial Psalm
- Second Reading (on Sundays and Solemnities)
- Gospel Acclamation
- Gospel
- Homily
- Profession of Faith (on Sundays, Solemnities, and special occasions)
- Universal Prayer

## **Liturgy of the Eucharist**

- Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar
- Prayer over the Offerings
- Eucharistic Prayer
  - Preface
  - Holy, Holy, Holy
  - First half of prayer, including Consecration
  - Mystery of Faith
  - Second half of prayer, ending with the Doxology
- The Lord's Prayer
- Sign of Peace
- Lamb of God
- Communion
- Prayer after Communion

## **Concluding Rites**

- Optional announcements
- Greeting and Blessing
- Dismissal

# ACTS OF REVERENCE

1. **POSTURE** – Is an important action during Mass and there are several forms of posture:  
A. *Posture that is an action, B. Posture that is not an action, C. Posture that is a sign of respect*
2. **FOLDED HANDS** – Hands folded and pointing upwards with your thumbs crossed. When not in use, hands should be folded. When sitting, place the palms of your hands flat against your legs.
3. **SIGN OF THE CROSS** – This is the symbol of Christian belief, and therefore it should be done respectfully and with purpose. *“In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”*
4. **SMALL SIGN OF THE CROSS** – This is made at the announcement of the Gospel. Using the thumb of your right hand, trace the Sign of the Cross on your forehead, your lips, and your heart. Say the prayer, *“May the Word of the Lord be on my mind, on my lips, and in my heart.”*
5. **GENUFLECTION** – A genuflection is made by going down on one knee. A genuflection is made when passing in front of the tabernacle before or after Mass. If there is a tabernacle in the sanctuary and the doors are closed, then Jesus is present, so a genuflection is required.
6. **BOWS OF THE HEAD** – Bows are made when the three Divine Persons are named together, at the name of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and whenever the server approaches or leaves the priest who is the celebrant.
7. **BOWS OF THE BODY** – A bow of the body is made before the altar even if the Blessed Sacrament is not present because this is where the sacrifice takes place in which the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ.
8. **WALKING** – Walking should be slow and smooth with hands folded pointing upwards and thumbs crossed. A five-foot distance should be kept between you and the ministers in front of you.
9. **SILENCE** – During the Mass, except for when reciting responses, you should be silent. Silence is a form of respect and talking should be kept to a minimum.
10. **SITTING AND STANDING** – You should sit straight with hands folded or on your knees and keep a good posture with few movements.
11. **ARRIVAL TIME** – Arrive at least 15 minutes before the beginning of Mass to allow enough time to prepare for Mass and to assist the priest.
12. **EYES** – Your eyes should be focused on the altar and ready to assist the priest. Remember that in addition to serving God during Mass, you are serving the priest as he offers up the sacrifice.

# MINISTERS AT MASS

## *To Minister Means To Serve*

1. **PRIEST (CELEBRANT)** – The ordained man who presides over the Mass or service.
2. **CON-CELEBRANT** – A priest that helps serve at a Mass or service.
3. **ALTAR SERVERS** – Young people who assist the priest with the celebration of the Mass. They also help lead the congregation in prayer.
4. **LECTOR** – The person who reads the first two readings and sometimes the Responsorial Psalm. They also read the petitions and make any announcements.
5. **SACRISTAN** – The person who usually makes sure that everything is in its proper place around the altar and that we have all items needed for Mass.
6. **EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER OF COMMUNION** – The person (s) who assists in distributing Communion to the elderly and the homebound.
7. **MASTER of CEREMONIES** – The person who is responsible for orchestrating the pomp and circumstance at the special Masses i.e., Holy Week, Christmas etc....

### PRAYER BEFORE SERVING

I am Your servant Lord,  
and I come to serve You now  
at the Altar.

Help me to keep  
my mind fixed on You,  
to perform all my duties well  
and to thank You always  
for the gifts of Your son, Jesus.

Amen.

### PRAYER AFTER SERVING

Bless O Lord,  
our hearts and minds,  
and grant that as we leave Your  
house,  
we may continue to be aware of  
Your presence,  
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.



# ALTAR SERVER POSTURES



Single Genuflection



Double Genuflection



Head Bow



Waist Bow



Bowing before incensing



Beginning of a double swing



End of a double swing



Single swing



Bowing after incensing



Censor Swinging



Proper Dress



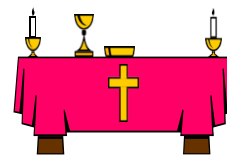
Proper Sitting



Holding Humeral Veil

# ALTAR SERVER VOCABULARY

1. **ALTAR of SACRIFICE** – An altar used for the sacrifice during Mass.



2. **ALTAR of REPOSE** – An altar in the sanctuary that has the tabernacle on it.



3. **AMBO** – The stand where the readings and homily take place.



4. **ASPERGILLUM** – The holy water sprinkler.



5. **BELLS** – Rung at the Consecration, with the exception of Holy Thursday when the wood clapper is used.



6. **CHALICE** – The cup that holds the wine which is consecrated at Mass.



7. **CIBORIUM** – A large cup-like container usually with a cover, it is used to hold hosts.



8. **CORPORAL** – The linen cloth spread on the altar.  
The chalice and ciborium are placed on it.



9. **CREDENCE TABLE** – The table near the altar where wine, water, chalice and ciborium are kept until needed.

10. **CRUETS** – Small pitchers that hold the water and wine used at Mass.



11. **FINGER TOWEL** – Cloth that is used to dry the priest's hands during Mass.



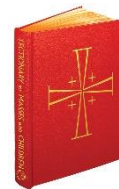
**12. HOST** – Unleavened bread used for the Eucharist. It is usually in the form of a round wafer. (Unleavened bread does not have the yeast to make it soft and thick.)



**13. HUMERAL VEIL** – A vestment resembling a shawl worn over the shoulders and arms, allowing one to hold an object for ceremonial purposes without directly touching it.



**14. LECTIONARY** – The book from which scriptures are read at Mass.



**15. MONSTRANCE** – An open or transparent receptacle in which the Consecrated Host is exposed for veneration.



**16. PATEN** – A plate, typically made of gold or silver, used for holding the bread during the Eucharist and used by servers during communion.



**17. PURIFICATOR** – A linen cloth used for wiping the chalice.



**18. ROMAN MISSAL** – A large book that contains all of the prayers the priest uses during Mass.



**19. SACRARIUM** – A sink or basin with a cover and a special pipe and drain that empty directly into the earth.



**20. TAPER and SNUFFER** – A pole-like instrument with a tube at one side on the top with a wick for lighting the candles; The other side of the top is a cup for putting out the flame on the candles.



**21. INCENSE BOAT** – A metal container that holds incense which is used during Masses at special times of the year.



**22. THURIBLE** – Also called a **censer**, is a metal container extended from a chain in which charcoal and incense are burned for liturgical ceremonies.

# ALTAR SERVER PROCEDURES

## Before Mass Begins

1. Arrive 15 minutes before Mass begins wearing dress pants and black socks.
2. Get dressed in a cassock and surplice and put on black dress shoes.
3. Wash your hands for 20 seconds using hot soapy water.
4. Light all the wax altar candles with a taper. As you light each candle, say this prayer.  
***“Glory be the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit”***
5. Take the gifts to the table in the back of the church.
6. Say the prayers with Father located on the closet door.

## Introductory Rite

1. As you process from the back of the church toward the altar, keep about three pews between you and the other ministers.
2. The cross-bearer and the candle-bearers meet in front of the altar (on the stoop) and bow heads together.
3. If there are fewer than 3 altar servers, then the processional candles will not be used.
4. Take your seat next to the presider’s chair, head server on the right side.
5. Stand with the Roman Missal, at the end of the Gloria when you will hear the congregation singing, ***“For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord...”***, but before the priest says, ***“Let us pray,”*** the book server should be holding the Roman Missal in place in front of him. Return the book when the priest motions to you.

## Liturgy of the Word

1. Listen carefully to the readings and the Gospel as they are read aloud.
2. Recite the Profession of Faith using the Roman Missal.

## Liturgy of the Eucharist

1. After the lector finishes the petitions, the servers will be seated when the priest sits.
2. At offertory servers come down with the priest to receive the gifts of water and wine.
3. The priest will receive the cruets and give them to the servers to carry.
4. The servers will proceed to the credence table and remove the stoppers.

5. The lead server will take the wine cruet, the other server takes the water cruet.
6. Immediately proceed to the altar and stand by the edge of it to be in waiting.
7. The wine cruet server should be closest to the altar and the water server on the outside.
8. Have the cruet handles facing the priest, wine will be offered first and then the water.
9. After the priest finishes with the water and wine the servers should bow together facing him. He will face you and bow also.
10. The two servers will turn together toward each other and return to the credence table.
11. After the priest is finished, return to the credence table to get the finger bowl and towel.
12. If there is to be incense, it is used between the water and wine and washing of hands.
13. Immediately proceed to the altar with the water, finger bowl and finger towel.
14. After the priest finishes washing and drying his hands, altar servers should bow together facing him. He will face you and bow also.
15. Return these items to the credence table and stand at the server's kneeling pads.
16. Now is the time to kneel for the Eucharistic Prayer and for the bell ringing.
17. As the priest is consuming the Blessed Sacrament get your communion paten.
18. Stand behind him to prepare to receive the Blessed Sacrament.
19. During the distribution of Holy Communion, **follow the priest** as he distributes.
20. Return to the altar for the purification of the patens; one server holds both patens.
21. The second server immediately brings the water cruet for purification of the vessels.

### **Concluding Rite**

1. Father will be seated after all vessels have been removed from the altar.
2. Then he will stand for the Prayer after Communion. As soon as he stands, the book server should be holding the Roman Missal in place in front of Father.
3. After the lector announces the recessional hymn, the cross-bearer will get the processional cross as the other two altar servers get the processional candles.
4. Altar servers meet on the stoop with the cross-bearer in the center and bow.
5. Father will move from the back of the altar and come down to the stoop.
6. After a short while, Father will genuflect, and the altar servers will genuflect also.
7. Then lead Father into side sacristy or to the back of the church.
8. Say the "After Mass" prayers then clear the altar of liturgical items.
9. Return your surplices, cassocks, and shoes to their proper places.

**DO NOT leave them on the floor!**

# VESTMENTS

1. **VESTMENTS** – Any of the garments worn by the priest or by the ministers who assist him.



2. **ALB** – A long white vestment used by priests and acolytes.



3. **STOLE** – A long thin vestment of the same color and style as the chasuble. It is worn over the alb.

4. **CINCTURE** – Cord used to fasten the alb at the waist.



5. **CHASUBLE** – A sleeveless outer vestment that is slipped over the head and covers the stole and alb. Its color varies according to the feast of the day.



6. **CASSOCK** – A full-length garment of a single color worn by some clergy, members of church choirs, acolytes, and servers.

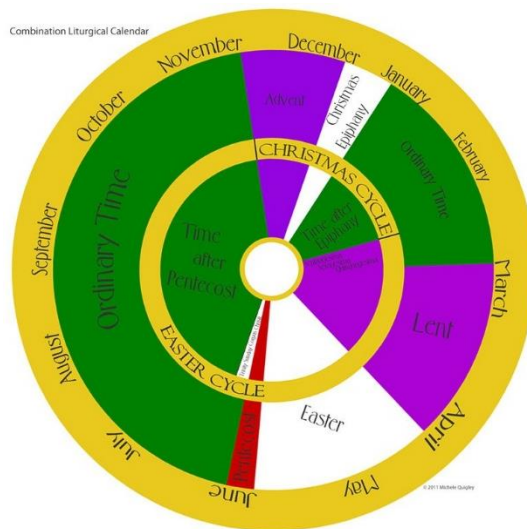


7. **SURPLICE** – A loose white linen vestment worn over a cassock by clergy, acolytes, and servers.



# COLORS OF VESTMENTS

The Liturgical Calendar will help you to understand the color of the celebrant's chasuble.



**WHITE**

White expresses purity, joy, glory; It is used for feasts of Mary and the saints who were not martyrs. It is also worn during the Mass of the Resurrection and for funeral Masses.

*White represents the cleansing of our sins.*

**RED**

**Red** symbolizes the fire of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. During the Lord's Passion. *Red represents the blood of Christ shed on the cross and on certain feast days it represents the blood of those apostles and martyrs.*

**VIOLET**

**Violet** expresses penance, sorrow and is a sign of waiting and anticipation; It is used during the Season of Advent as a sign of waiting and during Lent as a sign of penance and reconciliation.

*Violet represents the crown of thorns that was placed on Jesus' head.*

**GREEN**

Green expresses hope and trust; It is used during Ordinary Time of the Church. Ordinary time is the longest time on the calendar.

*Green represents the new life that we have in Jesus.*

**ROSE**

**Rose** expresses joy; It is used in place of violet` on the Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday). It is also used on the fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday) to show that we are on our way to Easter joy.

*Rose represents an expression of our joy of Christ's coming.*

**GOLD**

**Gold** expresses honor and praise, it symbolizes royalty and can replace all colors at any time and used in certain very important Solemnities.

*Gold represents God's perfect light.*

## **ALTAR SERVERS 10 COMMANDMENTS**

1. **Thou shall be punctual and arrive 15 minutes prior to the start of Mass.**
2. **Thou shall dress appropriately.**
  - a. *Show up in a dress shirt, dress pants with black socks and dress shoes.*
  - b. *Dress shoes - (**NO** gym shoes, athletic shoes, or sandals).*
  - c. *Select a proper fitting cassock and surplice.*
  - d. *Have hair and face clean and neat.*
3. **Thou shall sign in prior to Mass in the logbook.**
4. **Thou shall be of service to the priest and other servers.**
  - a. *Ask the priest what you can do to help.*
  - b. *Assist the newer servers with their duties.*
  - c. *Come up to fill any open spots if Mass has already started.*
5. **Thou shall show reverence by kneeling, genuflecting, sitting, and standing properly.**
6. **Thou shall check the credence table prior to Mass to make sure items are in place.**
  - a. *The water and wine cruets*
  - b. *The finger towel and bowl*
7. **Thou shall ensure that all the altar candles are lit.**
8. **Thou shall do my post Mass duties.**
  - a. *Carefully extinguish the altar candles with the snuffer.*
  - b. *Refill the water and wine cruets to the handle.*
  - c. *Pour out the finger bowl into the sacrarium (located in the sacristy).*
  - d. *Hang up my cassock and surplice also put away my shoes.*
9. **Thou shall take my assigned Masses as an opportunity to be closer to God.**
10. **Thou shall know the "Order of the Mass" and my role in it.**
  - a. *Introductory Rites*
  - b. *Liturgy of the Word*
  - c. *Liturgy of the Eucharist*
  - d. *Concluding Rites*