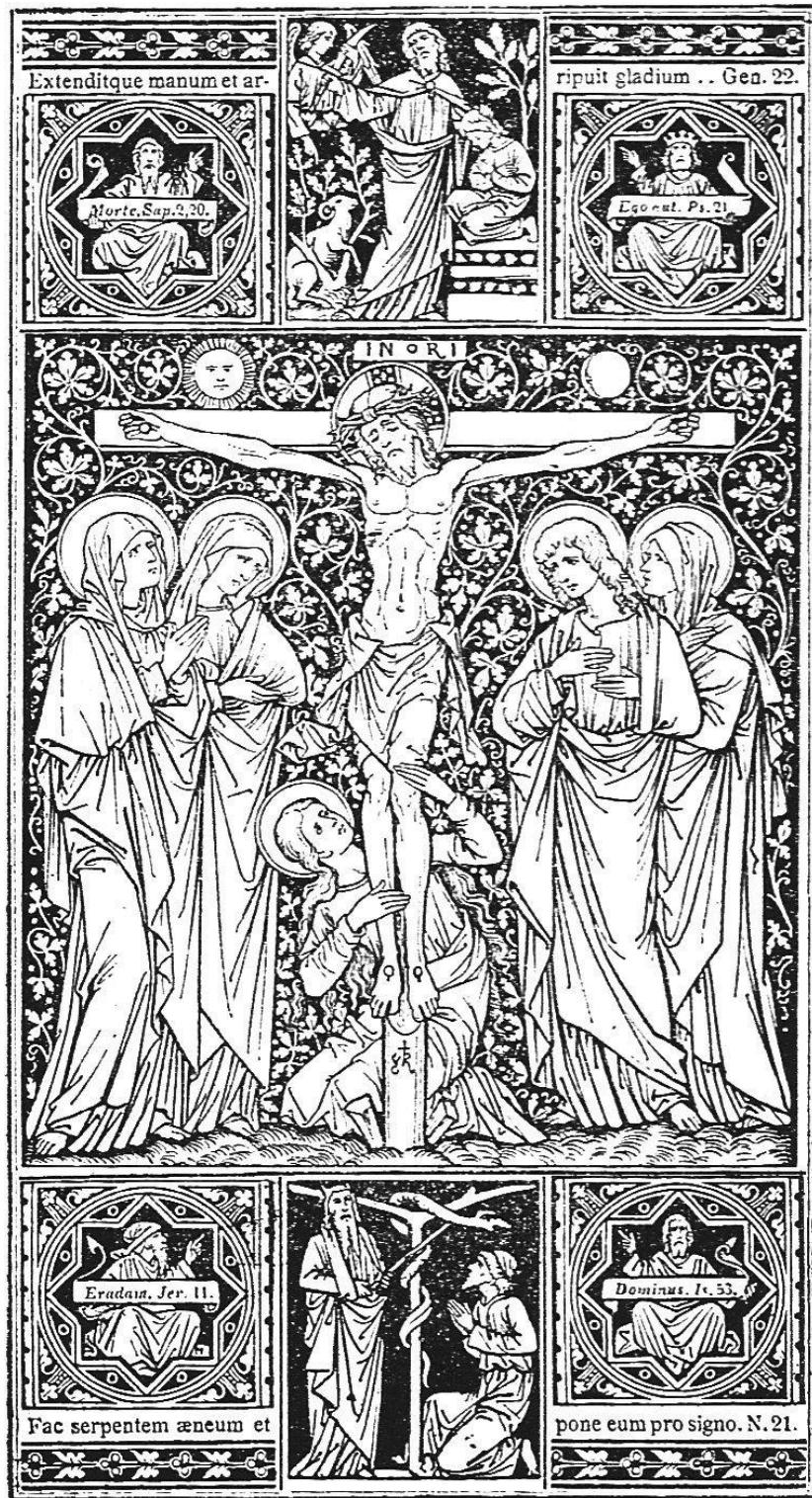


**ACOLYTES' INSTRUCTION BOOK  
FOR ST. IGNATIUS CHURCH  
MAY, 2025**





# ACOLYTES' INSTRUCTION BOOK

## FOR ST. IGNATIUS CHURCH

### MAY, 2025

***PRAISED BE JESUS CHRIST!  
-NOW AND FOREVER!***

#### **ABOUT BEING AN ACOLYTE:**

“Acolyte” (from the Greek word for “follower”) is the classical word for “altar server”, that is, a person who assists the priest in his sacred work, celebrating the Holy Eucharist according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Early in the Church’s history, acolytes were always men. Over time, the decision was made to allow boys and girls to serve. It is a great service to God and the Church to do this work, but it is also a privilege. It really is work, very serious and important work, but it is also interesting and fun. If you serve as an acolyte, we want you to come with a good, prayerful attitude, ready to work quietly and with great care. We want to have a smooth, beautiful ceremony to lead the people in worship. Your efforts make a difference! We are grateful you are willing to serve. Thank you for volunteering!

#### **IMPORTANT WORDS TO KNOW:**

**Ablutions**—another word for purifying the vessels

**Ablution bowl**-- tiny glass bowl for distributors to wash fingers

**Acolyte**—an altar server

**Alb**—white robe that major ministers and acolytes wear at Mass

**Altar**—the main, high, holy table, where sacrifice is offered

**Altar cloth**—table cloth for altar

**Ambo**—the reading stand for proclaiming Word of God

**Ambry**—the special locked cabinet for holding the Holy Oils

**Aspergillum**—tool for sprinkling Holy Water

**Binder**—a stiff cardboard/plastic folder with metal rings for papers

**Blessed Sacrament**—the Body of Christ (the Eucharist)

**Boat**—special bowl with lid and spoon for incense

**Book**—here at St. I’s, this is what we call the big red missal

**Bowls**—the metal bowls for the body of Christ (aka-ciboria)

**Candle follower**—brass cap for candle to keep wax from dripping

**Candle snuffer**—bell-shaped tool for extinguishing candles

**Cassock**—black robe for priests or monks

**Chalice**—special cup with a separate base for Blood of Christ

**Charcoal**—small black round fuel for burning incense

**Chasuble**—colorful poncho-like vestment worn by priest

**Censer**—metal vessel with chains to hold burning charcoal/incense

**Ciborium**—metal communion bowl; container for the Body of Christ

**Cincture**—the rope belt worn by priests and servers for Mass

**Collect**—another name for the Opening Prayer of Mass

**Consecration**—changing of bread and wine into Christ’s Body and Blood

**Consecration bells**—special bells rung during the Eucharistic Prayer

**Corporal**—smaller cloth on altar for crumbs of the Body of Christ

**Credence table**—table behind priest’s chair with items for Mass

**Creed**—the profession of faith... “I believe in one God, the Father almighty...”

**Crucifer**—server who holds the crucifix attached to a pole

**Cruets**—little pitchers with corks for wine and water

**Doxology**—the acclamation sung by priest alone: “Through Him, with Him...”

**Epiclesis**—the priest’s calling down the Holy Spirit for a sacrament

**Eucharist**—the great thanksgiving of the Church, Mass. The Body of Christ

**Eucharistic Prayer**—prayer of thanksgiving and consecration during Mass

**Gloria**—the ancient hymn of praise before the Opening Prayer (Collect)

**Great Amen**—the Amen sung at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer and doxology

**Holy Oils**—the 3 oils blessed by a bishop during Holy Week for the sacraments

**Holy Water**—water blessed by a priest (or deacon) for Baptism and blessings

**Holy, Holy, Holy**—the ancient acclamation, sung or recited before Euch. Prayer

**Host**—a communion wafer that has become the Body of Christ

**Hymn**—a church song expressing worship, praise, commitment or petition

**Hymnal**—a book of hymns (like the “Breaking Bread” song books)

**Lavabo bowl**—the bowl used to wash the priest’s hands before the Euch. Prayer

**Lectionary**—the big book with Scripture readings for Mass (on the lecturn/ambon)

**Lecturn**—the special bookstand for proclaiming the Scripture readings at Mass

**Liturgy of the Word**—first half of Mass, when we read and explain Word of God

**Liturgy of the Eucharist**—second half of Mass, from preparation of the gifts on

**Luna** (or lunette)—small, round glass vessel for holding Host in the Monstrance

**Monstrance**—the special vessel used for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

**Offertory table**—little table in back of church (by entrance) for bread and wine

**Paten**—flat little gold or silver plate for the priest’s Host

**Pew**—a church bench

**Precious Blood**—the Blood of Christ (in the Chalice at Mass)

**Priest's table**—the little table between the priest/deacon chairs

**Procession**—the little parade of priest and others into church

**Procession of the Gifts**—the little parade of bread and wine for Mass

**Pulpit**—*see lectern*

**Purification**—the special washing of sacred vessels by priest/deacon

**Purificator**—the special white cloth with red cross for chalices

**Pyx**—a small metal communion case for taking Eucharist to the sick

**Recession**—the little parade of priests and others out of church at end

**Roman Missal**—the big red Mass prayer book (lots of ribbons and tabs)

**Sacred Linens**—all the special white cloths used for Mass

**Sacristy**—the room where the priest vests and prepares for Mass

**Sanctuary**—the elevated area in church where priest celebrates Mass

**Sanctus**—Latin for “Holy”...another name for the “Holy, Holy, Holy”

**Servers' sacristy**—the room where acolytes vest and prepare for Mass

**Stole**—long, thin vestment that priest/deacon wears for Mass

**Tabernacle**—special metal box for storing the Blessed Sacrament

**Taper**—wax-coated string for lighting candles (in a metal rod)

**Thurible**—another name for censer; vessel for burning incense

**Thurifer**—an acolyte who swings censer in procession/recession

**Torch**—special candle held by acolyte during consecration

**Wafers**—the dry, round pieces of bread for the Eucharist

# Before Mass:

- Arrive 15 minutes early
- Put on your alb (almost touching the top of shoes) and cincture
- Light altar candles
- Light Easter (Paschal) Candle during the whole Easter Season
- Light Easter (Paschal) Candle if it's a funeral Mass
- Make sure (correct) wine pitcher or cruet is filled
- Make sure water cruet is filled
- Begin placing items on credence table (and offertory table)
- Ask priest if Book is ready before taking it out
- Be quiet (whisper if necessary in servers' sacristy)
- Oldest server makes sure everyone knows which jobs
- When priest or deacon say "Line up" stand ready by the door
- At door, turn off light and go when priest says to do so
- Do not go out until priest says "Go".



# Procession:

## For Sunday, Holy Day, and School Mass:

- When priest says “Go”, walk single file **to the back**
- Stand in formation in back until priest gives signal
- Crucifer sets pace, makes sure cross is straight
- Candle bearers walk a half step back on each side
- Candle bearers make sure that candles are even height
- In front of church candle bearers split wide, go to curb
- Crucifer goes to right (sacristy side) candles split to sides
- Candle bearers stand even with frames of tabernacle wall
- Do not bow or genuflect (unless you’re empty-handed)
- Servers stand still until priest and deacon are out of the way
- Servers then walk along curb to far right, then up steps
- Servers put things down in sacristy quickly and quietly
- Servers go to chairs and pray attentively

## For Weekday Mass:

- When priest says “Go” walk single file **toward tabernacle**
- First server goes to far corner of tabernacle steps
- Second server (or only server) goes to corner closer to sacristy
- **Turn toward tabernacle** with toes almost touching curb there
- When priest begins to bow or genuflect, servers genuflect
- After genuflecting, stay in same spot
- Turn toward the people, and bow as priest bows to altar
- After bowing, walk along curb then to your chairs

# Holding the Book:

- Do not mess with ribbons
- Do not move until priest says “Let us pray”
- Pick up Book and walk to front of priest, facing him straight on
- Hold book on center of your body, letting book lean back
- Let priest open book (be ready to support the open book)
- Let priest adjust book (be ready to take little steps)
- Hold still when priest begins prayer
- When priest gets to the closing of prayer, start to move
- **Take one big step back** and walk around priest
- Leave space not to touch priest’s vestment with book
- **DO NOT CLOSE BOOK UNTIL BEHIND PRIEST’S CHAIR!**

**During the Liturgy of the Word**, sit still and listen to the readings and homily. Pray along and sing along with the Responsorial Psalm. You are there to pray, and help to lead the people to pray. You are making a difference! Do it well!

# Preparation of the Gifts:

After the General Intercessions (petitions), **DO NOT SIT!** (Everybody else in church, including the priest, gets to sit down...not you!) **What you do during this part of Mass is the heart of serving Mass.**



“Let us bless the Lord”

## ***Bring items to the altar in this order:***

**The BREAD and the BOOK** (be sure to bring everything that has communion wafers in it: the bowls, pyxes and other containers!)

**The CHALICES** (carry the priest's chalice with your finger on the top, to make sure that the purifier and pall do not fall off!) All the chalices go to the priest's right-hand side of the altar. Then, the procession of the gifts.

***AT MASSES WITH A PROCESSION OF THE GIFTS (or "offertory procession"), two servers now FOLLOW the priest or deacon down to the floor in the center aisle. The priest or deacon takes the gifts and hands them to you. Then bow with him.***

**The WINE and the WATER** (Ideally, this is done by two servers. Both should stand side by side in a straight line, holding the cruets/pitcher with the handles toward the priest or deacon. Both wait until the water and wine are poured. Then, both turn and leave without bowing.)

**The BOWL, PITCHER AND TOWEL for the washing of the priest's hands. \*** (There is plenty of time to get the hand washing items. Ideally, each of the three servers brings one of them. Don't wait over by the chairs! Come and form a straight line along the "invisible line" by the edge of the altar. Hold the bowl low. Pour the water in a steady, still stream over the priest's fingertips (he may move his hands around). He will pull his fingers away to indicate his is finished. Hold the towel up. If he takes it, let it go. When he hands it back, take it! Then, priest bows and servers bow back to him and leave.)

\*If there is **incense** at the preparation of the gifts, bring the incense and boat first. Come back to **wash the priest's hands AFTER THE INCENSING OF THE GIFTS**. To remember this, think "The priest wants to wash the ashes off his hands."

## **During the Holy, Holy, Holy:**

Sing along. After the first “Hosanna in the highest”, begin walking toward the tabernacle steps, ready to kneel by the bells.

## **During the Eucharistic Prayer:**

Kneel, praying silently. Ring bells once at epiclesis. Ring bells three times at the elevation of the Host, and three times at the elevation of the Chalice.

**The Sign of Peace:** Shake each other’s hands and go to shake priest’s hand.

**Receiving Holy Communion:** Stand in a diagonal straight line.

## **After you receive Holy Communion:**

Servers should kneel on the tabernacle steps, praying, thanking the Lord Jesus for dying and rising for us, and for giving us His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. If your knees hurt, you may stand. After a couple minutes, the oldest server should go to make sure that the end of the credence table that is closest to the sacristy is clear of all items. We need room for the chalices and ciboria that are coming there to be purified.

## **Taking Vessels from the altar to the credence table:**

When the priest returns to the altar after distributing Holy Communion, at least one server should come and stand by the corner of the tabernacle step, ready to carry items from the altar. Other servers should come and do the same. (We no longer purify the Sacred Vessels at the Altar, so **DO NOT BRING WATER.**)

## **Purification of the Sacred Vessels (the chalices and ciboria):**

Be careful to stay out of the way of the lay people bringing up and dropping off their chalices and purifiers on the credence table, and the priest or deacon who comes to purify the gifts. **WHEN THE PRIEST PUTS THE BLESSED SACRAMENT INTO THE TABERNACLE AND CLOSES THE TABERNACLE DOORS, THE SERVERS MAY SIT.**

## The Recession:

When the **SINGING** of the recessional hymn begins, the acolytes walk to the sacristy and pick up the cross and the processional candles. (The candles can be re-lighted after communion, while the vessels are being purified.) **WHEN THE PRIEST BEGINS TO WALK TOWARD THE ALTAR**, the CRUCIFER walks down into the middle aisle and faces the altar, holding the cross high and straight. The candle bearers walk down to floor with their toes by the curb, one on each side, facing the altar. (They should stand even with the two ends of the tabernacle alcove.) When the priest genuflects or bows, all stand still without bowing. When the priest comes up from genuflecting or bowing, he will turn around. The candle bearers turn with him, and begin walking down the center aisle toward the crucifer. When they get close to the crucifer, the crucifer turns and begins walking slowly down the aisle, making sure that the candles bearers are on either side. Speed up when you are halfway down the aisle, and go and stand by the bathroom/ cry room for notes/ thanks from the priest. After the priest is finished speaking, blow out candles and walk single file to sacristy.

## After Mass:

Extinguish candles and put vessels on top of the small refrigerator. Ask if anything else is needed. Remove and hang up albs and cinctures and leave the sacristy, knowing that you worshiped God well and helped others on their way to heaven!

Go and live as good disciples of Jesus Christ!



# **DO'S AND DON'TS**

## **Notes to the Crucifer:**

Sometimes, for big special celebrations, we go outside to go to back of church to begin the procession. **When carrying the cross through doorways, be very careful not to smash the crucifix on the top of the door frame!** If you need to walk through a door, watch out! You may have to lean the cross forward, so that it's horizontal.

The crucifer waits for the priest's signal to go, and **sets the pace, walking slowly** (but not too slowly!).

**Holding the cross in procession:** Hold the cross straight up, with one hand high and one hand low (as in the DO picture below). Do not let the cross pole lean to the side, nor let the cross turn sideways or at an angle. See pictures below.



**DO THIS**



**DO NOT DO THIS**



# **DO'S AND DON'TS**

## **Notes to candle bearers:**

Candle bearers must be **careful never to lean candles** when they are burning (the melted wax can spill out, and you are in danger of catching something on fire). When walking through doorways, a candle bearer should hold the candle in one hand and open and hold the door with the other to let crucifer and priest through.

**Holding the candles in procession:** Hold the candle **straight up and as high as possible without straining** (make sure it is **even with the other candle**, especially if the other candle bearer is taller or shorter). Hold candle with one hand high on the metal candle stick and one under the bottom of the metal candle stick. While processing, make sure you are practically even with the crucifer (**You are carrying the candles to reverence the crucifix, not just to be carrying something!**).

See pictures below.



**DO THIS**



**DO NOT DO THIS**

# **DO'S AND DON'TS**

**Do make sure your alb fits well:**



**Good Fit**



**Too Short!**

# **DO'S AND DON'TS**

**Do hold your hands in a prayerful position (Standing or walking):**



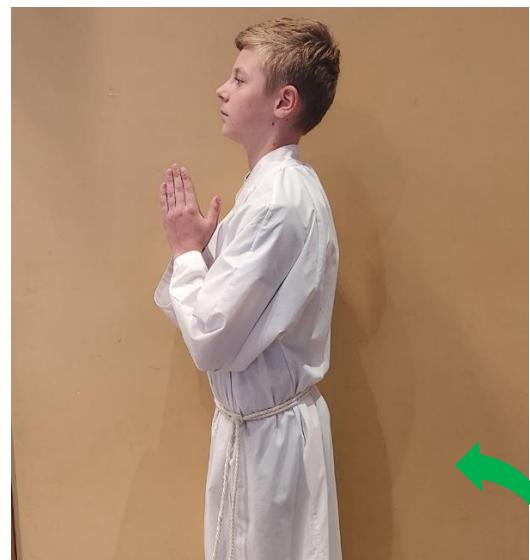
Do not do this:



Do not do this:



Do this



Or do this

# **PROCESSION AND RECESSION:**

## **WHERE TO STAND**

**PROCESSION NOTES:** When the procession arrives up front, to the curb of the sanctuary, the left candle goes to the left (toward the organ), the cross and the right candle go to right (toward the sacristy door). Do not switch places!

When the priest(s)/deacon(s) genuflect or bow to the Blessed Sacrament, you stay still (Do not even bow your head...you are there to only to hold the cross and candles!). However, if you are not carrying anything, then you may genuflect when the priest does.

Do not move until the priest/deacons have started to move up and out of the way, then walk along the curb to the side steps by the servers' sacristy door and go on up to put your cross/candles away. See pictures below.



DO THIS



DO NOT DO THIS

**RECESSION NOTES:** Light your candles after you have received communion and prayed a minute or two. **When the music begins on the organ or piano**, walk toward the servers' sacristy to pick up your cross and candles. **Wait for the SINGING TO BEGIN, then the cross goes down to stand between the two first pews in the middle aisle**, facing the altar (the crucifix also faces the altar). The candles follow the cross down the steps, but they go to their places on the right and the left by the curb, just like at the beginning of Mass.

All stand still until the priest genuflects and turns toward the back of church, then the candles turn with him and begin walking toward the crucifer. When the candles almost get to the crucifer, the crucifer turns and begins walking out of church. He goes slow at first, but then goes faster when he is more than halfway down the aisle (candles keep up with the crucifer!). See pictures below.



DO THIS (2 different angles of the correct way)

# **PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS:**

## **DOING IT RIGHT!**

The **servers should memorize the order to bring things over to the altar.** They should never hang around the chairs, but always come to “invisible line” (from the side edge of the altar back to the tabernacle wall) with whatever they are bringing over.

Servers should stand side by side in a straight row, with their shoulders aligned, whenever they are handing something to or doing something for the priest.

Whatever you are handling, always hold it in a way that is easy and smooth for the priest to take it from you or hand it back to you. **If the priest takes something, let go of it; if he hands something to you, take it!** See pictures below.



**DO THIS**

(handle faces priest)



**NOT THIS** (Do not make it hard for Priest to grab the handle)





**DO THIS (2 different angles)**



**DO THIS**



**NOT THIS**





