

Altar Server Training Handbook



Mission Statement: To help celebrate the Mass by reverently serving at the altar and assisting the clergy.

Altar Server Training Handbook

Liturgical Participation

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

With excerpts from Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents

The celebration of Mass is an act of the whole assembly gathered for worship. This action, lies at “the center of the whole of Christian life” (General Instruction of the Roman Missal [GIRM], no. 16)

Roles in the Liturgy are exercised by lay people who place their time and talent at the service of the liturgical assembly as acolytes (altar servers), lectors, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, cantors, choir members, instrumentalists, leaders of song, and ushers. Others contribute their time and talent to planning and organizing the Liturgy; to keeping the church and the vestments, vessels, and appointments clean and well ordered; or to providing decorations that reflect the spirit of the liturgical feast or season. This variety of offices and roles is desirable and should be maintained.

A wide variety of services needs to be performed, and it is preferable that different individuals exercise those services so that the talents and gifts God has placed within the Christian community are fully used and that these roles of service are not monopolized by a few.

All the baptized need to understand that part of their duty regarding the Liturgy is to accept some responsibility for the Liturgy, to place themselves and their God-given talents at the service of the liturgical community whenever possible.

Not all members of the parish community will have the time, energy, strength, or ability to serve in these roles. However, individuals must be careful not to excuse themselves too easily. What is important is that all understand that the celebration of Liturgy is not just the responsibility of the pastor, although he is delegated by the bishop to oversee the liturgical life of the parish. Pastors need the help of people who are serious about living out their baptismal right and responsibility to worship.

Those who come together for Liturgy do not have the luxury of acting as spectators, waiting for all to be done for them. “Full, conscious, and active participation” in the Liturgy (as commended by the Second Vatican Council) is not only their right but also their duty and their responsibility.

The Liturgy, then, is about the action of God’s own people, each with different offices and roles. When we play our roles in the Liturgy with our bodies, minds, and hearts fully engaged, we make to God a perfect sacrifice of praise.

Altar Server Training Handbook

Table of Contents

Overview	4
ALTAR SERVER'S PRAYER	4
Altar Server Contact Information	4
Qualifications for Becoming an Altar Server	4
ALTAR SERVER RULES.....	5
Altar Server Scheduling.....	5
ALTAR SERVERS STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE REGULAR MASS	6
BEFORE MASS.....	6
ENTRANCE PROCESSION.....	6
GREETING AND LITURGY OF THE WORD	6
LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST	8
EUCHARISTIC PRAYER.....	8
COMMUNION.....	8
CONCLUDING RITE	9
**REMINDERS	9
STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FUNERAL MASS.....	10
BEFORE MASS: (No different)	10
ENTRANCE PROCESSION:.....	10
GREETING AND LITURGY OF THE WORD	10
LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST	11
COMMUNION.....	11
CONCLUDING RITE	12
**REMINDERS	12
GLOSSARY OF TERMS.....	13
MOST SACRED HEART CHURCH LAYOUT	17

Overview

ALTAR SERVER'S PRAYER

Loving Father, Creator of the universe, you call your people to worship, to be with you and each other at Mass. Help me, for you have called me also. Keep me prayerful and alert. Help me to help others in prayer. Thank you for the trust you've placed in me. Keep me true to that trust. I make my prayer in the name of Jesus, who is with us in the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Altar Server Contact Information

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Altar Server Trainer / Coaches

All Masses - Gail Haynes

Qualifications for Becoming an Altar Server

It is a great privilege to serve at the Altar of our God. Accordingly, Servers have a solemn responsibility to do their assigned duties with dignity and reverence.

Our parish has Altar Servers (boys and girls), who are usually 10 years of age and older and are people of good faith and desire to serve at the Altar of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Training is required prior to serving at Mass. Please contact one of the current Altar Servers or the Rectory if you are interested in becoming an Altar Server. You will be contacted by someone regarding the process and to setup training to acquaint you with your role as Altar Server.

CLOTHING:

- **SHOES** – dress shoes should be worn.
- **HAIR** – Hair should be neat and trimmed, appropriate for boys and girls, tied back so that it is not in their face.
- **JEWELRY** – Do not wear anything that will make noise and/or will be distracting.
- **VESTMENTS** - Cassock and Surplice

Altar Server Training Handbook

ALTAR SERVER RULES

1. Attend Altar Sever Training Classes.
2. Serve at every Mass that you scheduled for, or make arrangements to have someone cover the Mass by using the on-line scheduler.
3. Arrive at least 15 minutes before Mass starts to get dressed and make sure that everything is prepared.
4. Make sure the candles are lit and bread, wine, water, towels, bowl, prayer book, and any other sacramentals are in their proper place.
5. Perform the duties assigned during the Mass in a respectful manner.
6. Maintain a prayerful posture during all times. Sing and pray!
7. Be attentive and respond immediately when the priest asks for help.
8. After Mass, return to the Sacristy and help set up for the next Mass.
9. Make sure that your cassock and surplice are returned the way you found them and hung up properly.

Altar Server Scheduling

All Liturgical Ministers are scheduled using the Ministry Scheduler Pro application. When you sign-up and are trained to become Altar Server, you will be given access to Ministry Scheduler Pro, which will allow you to:

- Enter Contact Information (Phone Number, Email)
- Enter Mass Preference Times
- Enter Can't Serve Dates (for quarterly scheduling)
- View Masses you are scheduled (with the opportunity of requesting subs if you are unable to attend a mass you are schedule)
- View opportunities to substitute for other ministers that are unable to attend their upcoming service or sign-up for other opportunities to serve (i.e. Holy Days of Obligation)
- Schedule reminders for when you are assigned to be an Altar Server

You will receive links to videos and documentation on how to use Ministry Scheduler Pro once you are trained. Additionally, software for your phone is available to allow you perform many of the above-mentioned tasks on your phone.

Quarterly, you will be emailed asking you to update your contact information, mass preference times, and can't serve dates in preparation for running the next schedule. Please pay attention to those emails and target dates as once that end date has passed for updating your information, the only way to change your schedule is to request a sub.

If you don't have access to email or uncomfortable using the on-line system, please contact your minister leader to make them aware so arrangements can be made to contact you regarding scheduling issues.

ALTAR SERVERS STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE REGULAR MASS

BEFORE MASS

1. Arrive and be dressed 15 minutes before the Mass begins. Make sure the cassock is the RIGHT SIZE (the bottom should be just above the tops of your shoes.)
2. Check to make sure that everything is set up for the Mass. (If there is a visiting priest, talk to him to see if you need to do anything differently for him.)
3. Gather in the back of Church by the Cross and candles. (If they are not there, get them there.) Light your candles when the lector begins to speak.

ENTRANCE PROCESSION

1. After the greeting, the altar servers will line up in the following order:
 - a. ALTAR SERVER #1-Cross-Bearer.
 - b. ALTAR SERVERS #2 and #3 (Candle bearers).
 - i. If there is only one server, the person will carry in the cross.
 - ii. If there are only two servers, then only candles will be used.
 - iii. If there are three or more servers then two servers will be candle bearers, and will line up next to each other behind the cross bearer.
2. Once the cantor has begun to sing, the altar servers will begin to process in. WALK SLOWLY. DO NOT RUN DOWN THE AISLE.
 - a. The Cross-Bearer will bow and put the Cross in its place by going to the right.
 - b. The candle bearers will pause and bow with the priest and/or deacon and then walk after the priest and/or deacon and place candles on the left and right of the altar in stands. They will take one step closer to the back of the altar and bow to the altar as the priest and/or deacon reverence the altar.
3. The Cross Bearer will then go to their chair and stand and sing and pray.
4. The candle bearers will then go to their chairs standing and singing and praying. If there is no deacon, both candle bearers will sit on either side of the priest. If there IS a deacon, then the candle bearer on the right side of the altar will sit next to the priest and the candle bearer on the left side of the altar will sit by the cross bearer. The servers next to the priest will be responsible for the Sacramentary for prayers.

GREETING AND LITURGY OF THE WORD

1. The priest begins the mass with the Sign of the Cross and an introduction and welcoming people to the Mass.
2. Penitential Rite-the priest asks us to recall our sins and ask God for forgiveness, we then respond with the "Lord Have Mercy, Christ Have Mercy, Lord Have Mercy".
3. The Gloria will then be recited or sung.
4. After the Gloria, the priest will say, "Let us pray..." which is the cue for the server with the Sacramentary to bring the book over for the priest to read the opening prayer. Stand in front of and just to the left side of the priest so the priest can be seen and prayer heard.
5. After the priest is done with the prayer, the server will close the book and place it on the table. Everyone will be seated to listen to the readings and join in the psalm.
6. The priest/deacon will proclaim the Gospel and give his Homily.
7. After the Homily, the priest/deacon will go back to their seat, then ALL stand for the Profession of Faith. Everyone recites the Creed.

Altar Server Training Handbook

8. The priest will begin the Prayers of the Faithful, and then lector or deacon will read the petitions of the church (Everyone responds "Lord, hear our prayer"). After the petitions, the congregation will sit down.

Altar Server Training Handbook

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

1. OFFERTORY COLLECTION-As the ushers walk forward with the baskets to collect money
 - a. The Cross Bearer will begin to set the altar with the chalices, cloths, and water cruet.
 - b. The Candle Bearers will go to the ushers coming up the side aisles and get the baskets from them and begin to take up the collection in the side transepts of the church. The server with the Sacramentary places it on the altar before they go to assist the ushers. Eventually these 2 servers will be in the back of church to lead the procession forward (when the ushers are ready to do so.)
 - c. The priest will then get up and go to the bottom of the steps to receive the gifts.
 - i. The servers will go up and stand on top and receive the gifts from the priest. They will bring them to the altar and give them to the deacon OR wait for the priest and give them to him if there is no deacon.
 - ii. The servers who were the candle bearers will get the bowl and towel and be ready to wash the hands of the priest. After washing his hands, they will place the bowl and towel and the water cruet back on the table.
 - iii. All three servers will then be by the kneelers and stand and be ready for the HOLY HOLY to be sung and for the Eucharistic Prayer.

EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

1. All kneel and the priest begins the Eucharistic Prayer.
 - a. One of the servers (decide before Mass begins) will RING THE BELL. The priest will extend his hands over the bread and the chalices...and the server will ring the bells for 3 seconds.
 - b. The priest will pick up the host, to be consecrated, and say "...this is my body which will be given up for you." The priest will raise the Body of Christ and the server will again ring the bells for 3 seconds.
 - c. The priest will pick up the chalice and say, "...do this in memory of me." The priest will raise the chalice and the server will again ring the bells for 3 seconds. Once complete the bells will be placed back on the pillow, and moved under the book table.
2. The priest will then proclaim the mystery of faith, which will be sung or recited.
3. The priest will finish the prayer by chanting or reciting, "Through Him, with Him, and in Him..." and the Great Amen will be sung or recited.
4. Then all STAND for the Our Father and the Sign of Peace.
5. All servers go to the back of the altar, facing out to the congregation.

COMMUNION

1. The Lamb of God will either be sung or recited. Then KNEEL in place.
2. The congregation will kneel, while the servers and Eucharistic ministers will be lined up to receive communion. Please STAND.
3. The priest and deacon will distribute the Body and Blood of Christ
 - a. Once the altar server has received both, they will go back to their seats. When the priest is done distributing communion, he will return tabernacle. All servers are to STAND and FACE THE TABERNACLE. When the priest closes the tabernacle and bows, all the servers also BOW and then be seated.

Altar Server Training Handbook

CONCLUDING RITE

1. The priest will then stand and say "Let us pray." The server with the Sacramentary brings the book for the priest to read the closing prayer. Again, stand in front of the priest and just to his left side.
2. Then there will be given any announcements.
3. The priest will then conclude the mass with the Sign of the Cross
4. The final song will begin.
 - a. The Cross Bearer gets the cross and goes out to the middle aisle to wait for the other ministers.
 - b. The other servers get the candles and wait for the priest and/or deacon to leave the altar. They then stand at the bottom of the last step, leaving enough space for the priest and deacon.
5. The priest and deacon come to the bottom of the steps.
6. The priest will then bow and turn (The servers all bow at the same time as the priest and turn around and process to the back of church.)
7. When the servers reach the doors, they go to the left and place the cross and candles safely back in their holders for the next Mass.
8. The servers then go to the server sacristy to gently hang up their cassocks and surplices.
9. *AFTER THE 11:30 AM MASS ONLY....Please return the cross and candles back up beside the altar and by the candle stands in the sanctuary (instead of leaving in the back of Church.)*

****REMINDERS**

1. When you are standing or sitting keep your hands folded. You are being an example of prayer to the rest of the people.
2. PAY ATTENTION, especially to the priest, you never know when they may ask for something.
3. If you need to use the restroom or get a tissue, use the restrooms near the server sacristy and go through Fr. Dowling Hall.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FUNERAL MASS

BEFORE MASS: (No different)

1. Arrive and be dressed 15 minutes before the Mass begins. Make sure the cassock is the **RIGHT SIZE** (the bottom should be just above the tops of your shoes.)
2. Check to make sure that everything is set up for the Mass. (If there is a visiting priest, talk to him to see if you need to do anything differently for him.)
3. Gather in the back of Church. You will use Cross and **Holy Water and the Pall (white cloth)**.
Note that the candles are lit and left in the front of the church

ENTRANCE PROCESSION:

1. After the greeting, the altar servers will line up in the following order:
 - a. ALTAR SERVER #1-Cross-Bearer.
 - b. ALTAR SERVERS #2 and #3 (**Holy Water and Pall**).
2. Wait for the signal from the priest. **He will get the Holy Water and Pall from you.** When the priest says it is time, begin to process in. **WALK SLOWLY. DO NOT RUN DOWN THE AISLE.**
 - a. The Cross-Bearer will bow and put the Cross in its place by going to the right.
 - b. The other servers will bow to the altar as the priest and/or deacon reverence the altar.
3. The Cross Bearer will then go to their chair and stand and sing and pray.
4. The other servers will then go to their chairs standing and singing and praying. If there is no deacon, both servers will sit on either side of the priest. If there **IS** a deacon, then the server on the right side of the altar will sit next to the priest and the server on the left side of the altar will sit by the cross bearer. The servers next to the priest will be responsible for the Sacramentary for prayers.

GREETING AND LITURGY OF THE WORD

1. The priest begins the mass with the Sign of the Cross and an introduction and welcoming people to the Mass.
2. Penitential Rite-the priest asks us to recall our sins and ask God for forgiveness, we then respond with the "Lord Have Mercy, Christ Have Mercy, Lord Have Mercy".
3. The priest will say, "Let us pray..." which is the cue for the server with the Sacramentary to bring the book over for the priest to read the opening prayer. Stand in front of and just to the left side of the priest so the priest can be seen and prayer heard.
4. After the priest is done with the prayer, the server will close the book and place it on the table. Everyone will be seated to listen to the readings and join in the psalm.
5. The priest/deacon will proclaim the Gospel and give his Homily.
6. After the Homily, the priest/deacon will go back to their seat, then **ALL** stand for the Prayers of the Faithful, and then the lector or deacon will read the petitions of the church (Everyone responds "Lord, hear our prayer"). After the petitions, the congregation will sit down.

Altar Server Training Handbook

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

1. OFFERTORY (No baskets are passed.)

- a. The Cross Bearer will begin to set the altar with the chalices, cloths, and water cruet.
- b. The priest will get up and go to the bottom of the steps to receive the gifts.
 - i. The servers will go up and stand on top and receive the gifts from the priest. They will bring them to the altar and give them to the deacon OR wait for the priest and give them to him if there is no deacon.
 - ii. The servers will get the bowl and towel and be ready to wash the hands of the priest. After washing his hands, they will place the bowl and towel and the water cruet back on the table.
 - iii. All three servers will then go by the kneelers and stand and be ready for the HOLY HOLY to be sung and for the Eucharistic Prayer.

EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

1. All kneel and the priest begins the Eucharistic Prayer.
 - d. One of the servers (decide before Mass begins) will RING THE BELL. The priest will extend his hands over the bread and the chalices...and the server will ring the bells for 3 seconds.
 - e. The priest will pick up the host, to be consecrated, and say "...this is my body which will be given up for you." The priest will raise the Body of Christ and the server will again ring the bells for 3 seconds.
 - f. The priest will pick up the chalice and say, "...do this in memory of me." The priest will raise the chalice and the server will again ring the bells for 3 seconds. Once complete the bells will be placed back on the pillow, and moved under the table.
2. The priest will then proclaim the mystery of faith, which will be sung or recited.
3. The priest will finish the prayer by chanting or reciting, "Through Him, with Him, and in Him..." and the Great Amen will be sung or recited.
4. Then all STAND for the Our Father and the Sign of Peace.
5. All servers go to the back of the altar, facing out to the congregation.

COMMUNION

1. The Lamb of God will either be sung or recited. Then KNEEL in place.
2. The congregation will kneel, while the servers and Eucharistic ministers will be lined up to receive communion. Please STAND.
3. **At communion time, LIGHT THE INCENSE. This can be done by all 3 servers. When you know it is lit and going well, go back to your seats.**
4. The priest and deacon will distribute the Body and Blood of Christ
 - b. Once the altar server has received both, they will go back to their seats. When the priest is done distributing communion, he will return to the tabernacle. All servers are to STAND and FACE THE TABERNACLE. When the priest closes the tabernacle and bows, all the servers also BOW and then be seated.

Altar Server Training Handbook

CONCLUDING RITE

1. The priest will then stand and say "Let us pray." The server with the Sacramentary brings the book for the priest to read the closing prayer. Again, stand in front of the priest and just to his left. **The server who had the Pall (white cloth) will now have the incense. Bring it out to your place as the prayer is being said.**
2. Then the priest (and deacon) will go to the front steps.
 - a. **The Cross Bearer gets the cross and goes out to the middle aisle at the far end of the casket. Face the cross to the casket.**
 - b. **The other servers get the holy water and incense and join the priest and/or deacon at the steps to the altar.**
3. The priest and deacon will say prayers and use the incense and/or holy water.
4. At the end of the prayers, the priest will then process to the back of church. The cross turns and leads and all others follow. **IF the priest wants you to take the cross to the back door of church please remember to LOWER IT to make it go through the door. If not, the servers may stop as they reach the doors, GO TO THE LEFT and bring the cross back to the altar and the incense back to the sacristy to dispose of properly. YOU WILL BE SHOWN THIS!**
5. Remember to gently hang up your cassocks and surplices.

**REMINDERS

1. When you are standing or sitting keep your hands folded. You are being an example of prayer to the rest of the people.
2. PAY ATTENTION, especially to the priest, you never know when they may ask for something.
3. If you need to use the restroom or get a tissue, use the restrooms near the server sacristy and go through Fr. Dowling Hall.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Altar – The table in the sanctuary at which the bread and wine are prepared and transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ.

Ambo (Lectern/Pulpit) – The platform where the readings and homily take place.

Baptismal Font – A stand with a basin or pool containing water in the area of church where Baptism takes place.

Bells – Rung during the consecration of the Mass.

Book of Gospels – The book which contains the Gospel readings.

Chalice – The metal cup (either gold or silver) used to hold the wine that will be consecrated and distributed to the assembly at Mass.

Ciborium – A metal container with a lid used to store consecrated hosts in the tabernacle.

Communion Cups – Goblets used for distribution of Holy Communion.

Corporal – The large, square white cloth which is placed on the altar underneath the chalice and platen.

Credence Table – The table located to the left of the Altar, used to hold the purificators, chalices, and other items needed for the celebration of Mass.

Cruets – Water and wine containers.

Finger Bowl and Towel – Used for the rite before Eucharistic prayer.

Flagon (Pitcher) – The pitcher used to hold the wine which will become the Blood of Christ during the consecration.

Gift Table – The table in the back of the center aisle where the bread and wine are placed before Mass begins.

Lectionary – The book which contains the Scripture readings.

Nave – area where the gathered faithful sit during Mass

Pall – A piece of cardboard or plastic which is covered by linen and used to cover the chalice.

Paschal Candle – The tall candle which is blessed and used during the Easter season, baptisms, and funerals.

Pews – The bench-like seats in the main body of the Church.

Presider's Chair (Celebrant Chair) – The chair in which the priest sits.

Processional Cross/ Crucifix – The cross carried in and out of the Mass.

Altar Server Training Handbook

Purificator – A long narrow piece of folded linen cloth, which sometimes has a small cross sewn on. It is used by the priest and Eucharistic Minister to wipe the chalice after a person takes a drink from it.

Pyx – The small metal container which is used to hold consecrated host(s) when visiting the sick or homebound.

Sacramentary – The book of prayers and instructions used by the priest during the liturgy.

Sacristy – The room next to the Sanctuary where the priests, altar servers, and other ministers prepare for the Mass. There are two sacristies at Most Sacred Heart Parish; the Priests located on the south side of the **Vestibule/ Narthex** and the Servers sacristy located through the door and to the right of the south transept.

Sanctuary – The raised area in the front of the church. It is considered a holy and special area because this is where the sacrifice of the Mass is offered and where the word of God is read. It should be approached with great respect.

Tabernacle – The gold “safe” in which the Blessed Sacrament (Consecrated Host) is stored.

Taper – implement used to light and extinguish candles.

Thurifer – The person who carries the censer and incense boat. The Thurible is the censer and the Boat contains the incense placed by the priest/deacon on the coals in the Thurible.

Vestibule/ Narthex – The back of the Church where the main entrance doors to the Church are located.

Vestments – Vestments are what the priest and altar servers wear during Mass.

- **Alb** – A long white linen robe worn by the priest and altar servers.
- **Cassock**- an ankle length robe that is often black.
- **Cincture** – A cord made of silk or cotton with tassels on the ends. It is used around the waist to secure the alb so that it will not interfere with walking.
- **Stole** – A long strip of cloth worn by the priest around his neck and shoulders.
- **Surplice** – a white linen or cotton over garment that hangs to the knees.
- **Chasuble** – Colored vestment worn only by the priest.
- **Color of Vestments and Altar Cloth: The color of vestments gives expression to the mysteries of our faith and is like a calendar for the church year.**
- **White** – Masses of Easter, Christmas season, Feasts and Memorials of Jesus, Mary, the Angels, Saints who were not martyrs, Weddings, and Funerals, symbolizes Purity, Holiness, Joy, Triumph, and the Resurrection.
- **Red** – Used on Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday), Good Friday, Pentecost, feasts of the Apostles, Evangelists and Martyrs. Red symbolizes the Holy Spirit and the blood of martyrs.
- **Green** – Used during Ordinary time, symbolizing Life, Growth and Hope. **Violet** – Used during Lent and Advent, symbolizing Penance, Atonement and Expiation. **Gold** – More festive than white, which

Altar Server Training Handbook

may be used on more solemn days such as Easter and Christmas, and also symbolizes Joy, Triumph and the Resurrection.

Altar Server Training Handbook

Items Used for Special Celebrations

The Monstrance – The Monstrance looks like a sun burst with a glass center. The back of the Monstrance has a small door. The inside holds a glass container called the Luna. The priest puts a consecrated host in the Luna, and places the Luna in the Monstrance. The Monstrance is then placed on the Altar for Benediction or Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

Incense, Incense Boat, Censer/Thurible - Incense is perfumed grains that are burned during special occasions. An Incense Boat is the container that holds the unburned incense. The Censer/Thurible is a metal container that holds hot coals. It has a top with air vents and a long chain so that it can be carried. Incense is scooped out of the incense boat and sprinkled on the hot coals in the censer. When the incense is burned it makes smoke.

The Aspergillum and Container – the Aspergillum, or sprinkler, usually looks like a ball on a handle. The priest puts the Aspergillum in a container of Holy Water, so that water will get inside the Aspergillum through little holes. The priest then walks through the church and blesses everyone by sprinkling them using the Aspergillum. This is used on special celebrations.

The Ministers at Mass

Priest – Specially ordained men who consecrate and offer the Body and Blood of Jesus at Mass. They forgive sins, perform baptisms, marriages, funerals, run the parish and lead the people closer to God. Their ordination to the priesthood can be traced to the Apostles who were the first priests after Jesus.

Deacon – A Deacon is like a priest in training. He can assist in preaching, perform baptism, marriages, and help run the parish. He does not offer mass or hear confessions.

Altar Servers – A young boy or girl, or an adult who is specially trained to assist the priest at mass.

Eucharistic Minister – A person who is specially conferred by the Bishop to assist the priest in giving communion. They also can bring communion to people who are sick at home or in the hospital.

Lector – The person who reads the Epistles (first and second readings) and the Prayers of the Faithful at mass.

Sacristan – The person whose ministry is the care of the sacristy, sanctuary, vestments, sacred vessels, etc.

Usher/Greeter – Individuals assisting those attending Mass to find appropriate/available setting.

Bishop – A Bishop is higher than a priest, he's like their boss. He has the authority to ordain priests. This authority is given to him by the Pope.

Cardinal – A Cardinal is a high church official ranking next in line to the Pope. He assists and advises the Pope, consecrates Bishops and elects the Pope.

Pope – The Pope is the supreme authority of the Catholic Church. He is sometime called "Pontiff" and "Holy See", and will be the leader of the church until he dies.

MOST SACRED HEART CHURCH LAYOUT

