

C) FOR ALTAR SERVERS:

70. Why should the servers **arrive** at the church ten to fifteen minutes **before the Mass starts**?

*The Servers, as well as **all the lay ministers** serving at the Holy Mass, should arrive at the church early enough so that they may have the time to properly prepare. The servers need time to:*

- **wash their hands**;
- **dress with their albs**;
- review their **actions and positions** for the service of the Mass;
- **inform the priest** (or a lay minister in charge) that they have arrived, and find out if there is **anything special** for them to do during the Mass of that day; and
- **recollect** themselves before Mass.⁷⁷

*Arriving early gives servers and ministers the time to **form a unity** to better serve at the liturgy of the Mass.*

71. What is **the signal** given to the cross bearer to start, **or open**, the entrance procession?

*When the **entrance hymn** or **antiphon** begins it is usually the signal to start the entrance procession, but the celebrating **priest** is usually the one who gives the signal when he is ready. Someone may also ring the bell near the sacristy door.*

71a. What is the usual **order** of ministers in the **entrance procession**?

*The procession opens with the **cross bearer** holding the crucifix high and away from his body, with the figure of the crucifix facing forward. If incense is used for the Mass, the cross bearer is preceded by the **thurifer** (censor attendant). The one who opens the procession walks **fairly slowly**, giving the pace to the procession, followed by two altar servers walking side by side, who may act as **candle bearers**; then, the **deacon** or a **reader** follows carrying the **Book of the Gospels** slightly elevated in front of him, often followed by a second reader. In some instances, **extraordinary ministers** may be following, and then **concelebrating priests**. The **celebrating priest** always closes the procession. As they enter the sanctuary, those who are not carrying anything bow in front of the altar before taking their positions, while the others put what they are carrying at the appropriate places.*

72. During the Mass, when does the priest need assistance from the thurifer for incensing?

The thurifer might be needed for incensing during the Entrance Procession, the Veneration of the altar, before the proclamation of the Gospel, after the Offertory, and after the Consecration.^{77a}

77. Preparation of the servers: see proposed prayer after the answer to question 84.

77a. Cf. GIRM [235] 276; Part Three, Liturgy of the Eucharist, Offertory, Incensing.

73. Why is it especially important for the servers and all those present in the sanctuary to have a **recollected attitude** during the Mass? *A recollected attitude for those present in the sanctuary is especially important because they are seen by everyone in the church, and their recollected **attitude influences the assembly** in adopting a reverent attitude during the Mass.*

74. In some parishes, one of the servers is responsible for **holding the Missal** for the priest. How does the server **know when** it is the time to stand and hold the *Missal* for the priest? *Since the priest usually gives him a sign, the server should follow closely what the priest does and says. But as a general rule, whenever the **priest stands at his chair** to speak, it is often to say a liturgical prayer or to give a blessing, and in both instances, he needs the server to come and hold the *Missal* for him. When holding the *Missal*, the server should stand a little to the left side of the priest in order not to block the assembly's view of the priest.*

74a. How do the servers assist the priest when it is time for the **proclamation of the Gospel**? *The thurifer may assist the priest by preparing the thurible during the Gospel Acclamation, and opening the procession to the ambo. He is followed by the two candle bearers and by the priest carrying the Book of the Gospels. The candle bearers come and stand on each side of the ambo, facing one another, and the thurifer assists the priest in incensing the Book of the Gospels at the ambo before the proclamation of the Gospel.^{77b}*

75. How do the servers know when it is **time to start assisting** the priest with their service at the altar for the Sacrifice of the Mass? *The service at the altar begins with the **procession of the gifts**. The servers will know that it is time to start their service, when **after the General Intercessions/Prayer of the Faithful**, the priest gives them the signal by leaving his chair and standing either in front of the sanctuary or at the altar to receive the gifts. Thus, the servers need to follow the priest's actions closely.*

76. What are the **steps** that the servers should follow for the **service at the altar** during the Sacrifice of the Mass?

1. *If members of the **congregation present the gifts** (offerings), the celebrating **priest** walks to the front of the sanctuary **followed by the servers**. As the priest receives the gifts, he hands them to the servers who bring them to the altar.*

77b. Incensing the Book of the Gospels: cf. GIRM [95] 134. See also Part Three, Liturgy of the Word, Gospel.

- 1a. If the **servers** are to **present the gifts** of bread and wine, then these would have been set on the credence table before the Mass. **If the priest** is to **prepare the altar**, he stands at the altar while the servers bring the gifts from the credence table. An acolyte or a server may prepare the altar but, only the priest or a deacon may prepare the gifts for the offertory, and **only a priest may offer** the Sacrifice of the Mass to God.⁷⁸
2. One of the servers brings the **chalice** on which sits the **purificator**, the **paten** and the **host**, the **corporal** and the **pall**, while the other server brings the **ciborium** (ciboria) containing communion breads to be consecrated for the communion of the faithful; they present these to the priest at the altar.⁷⁹
3. While the **servers go back to the credence table**, the priest unfolds the corporal on the altar, raises the paten with the Host over the altar, prays in thanksgiving to the Father, and then sets the paten on the corporal.
4. The servers come back to the side of the altar, one carrying the **wine cruet**, and the other the **water cruet**.
5. Always starting with the **wine**, one of the servers hands the cruet to the priest, who pours the wine in the chalice and hands the wine cruet back to the server. The **other server** hands the **water cruet** to the priest, who pours a little water into the wine in the chalice and hands the water cruet back to the server.⁸⁰
6. If **incense** is used at the Offertory, the thurifer then assists the priest in incensing the offerings, the cross, the altar, the priest, and the people.^{80a}
7. The servers then walk back together to the credence table to gather the articles needed for the **washing of the hands** of the priest.
- 7a. One of the servers puts the **hand towel** on his left forearm and takes the **water cruet** with his right hand. The other server takes the **wash plate**/basin. Together they walk back to the side of the altar.

78. "The altar is prepared with corporal, purificator, Missal, and chalice... by the deacon and servers. ..." NCUBK, PART II, no. 36; cf. GIRM [100] 139.

79. Presentation of the Gifts: see illustration at Part Three, Liturgy of the Eucharist, Offertory Rite, Procession of the Gifts; Using the burse and the chalice veil: see Liturgy of the Eucharist, Offertory Rites, Preparation of the Altar.

80. When there is a large assembly or Communion under both species is offered to all, the servers usually receive assistance from a minister to bring the additional chalices, the wine decanter, and ciboria of hosts to the altar.

80a. Incensing at the Offertory: Part Three, Liturgy of the Eucharist, Offertory, Incensing.

8. One of the servers presents the **wash plate** in a manner so that the priest may place his hands over it. The other **server pours** some water on the priest's **fingers**, and then presents the priest with the **hand towel** hanging on his left arm so that the priest may dry his fingers.
9. A little **bow** is then usually exchanged between the priest and the servers. It shows the priest's appreciation for the servers' assistance, and they in turn show due respect for the holiness of the priest's function. It is also an indication for the servers that this part of the altar **service is completed**. The servers go back to the credence table where they **neatly place** the wash plate, the cruet, and the hand towel, and then **take their positions** in the sanctuary, which they will hold until communion.
10. The **next** action of the servers is the **ringing of the bell** at the **consecration** and at each **elevation** (see Question 82).
77. Name the **three sacred vessels** that the servers bring to the altar during the offertory.
*The three sacred vessels that the servers bring to the altar during the offertory are the **ciborium**, the **paten**, and the **chalice**.*
78. What are the **other vessels** that the servers bring to the priest at the altar during the offertory?
*The other vessels brought to the altar by the servers during the offertory are the **cruets** containing the offerings of water and wine, and the **wash plate** for the washing of the hands of the priest. Since these vessels do not come directly in contact with the Body and Blood of Christ, they are not considered to be sacred vessels, but rather **liturgical vessels**.*
79. Name **three sacred linens** that the servers bring to the altar during the offertory.
*The three sacred linens that the servers bring to the altar during the offertory are the **purificator**, the **corporal**, and the **pall**.*
80. What is the name of the **linen** that the server brings to the priest so that he can dry his fingers during the ritual of the **washing of the hands**?
*The linen used by the priest during the ritual of the washing of the hands is called a **hand towel** or manuterge.*

81. Why does the priest **wash his hands** during the offertory?
*The priest washes his hands during the offertory as a **sign of purification** before he offers the sacrifice of the Eucharist.*

82. **How many times** does the server **ring the little bell** during the Mass and at what occasions?

*The server rings the little bell **three times** during the Mass:*

- **once** during the **consecration**; at the invocation of the Holy Spirit, when the priest lays his hands over the offerings; then
- **once** at the **elevation of the Host**; when the priest elevates the Host for adoration; and
- **once** at the **elevation of the Precious Blood**; when the priest elevates the chalice for adoration.

Each time he rings the bell, the server makes three rings: one for the Father, one for the Son, and one for the Holy Spirit.

82a. What other action may be performed by a server during elevation?

*If **incense** is used, the thurifer stands near the altar and incenses the Body and Blood of Christ during their **elevation**.*⁸¹

83. Once the servers have rung the little bell during elevation and incensed the Blessed Sacrament, what will be the servers' **next action** of service, and what should the servers do until then?

*The next action of the servers generally takes place **after the communion** of the faithful. Until then they should keep their position in a recollected attitude, thus inspiring the assembly to do likewise. However, in certain cases the servers might assist the priest during the communion by placing the **Communion-plate** under the chin of the communicants who receive the Host on the tongue.*

84. What is the **name of the ritual** that takes place after the communion, and what are **the actions** of the servers during this ritual?

*The name of the ritual that takes place after the communion is the **purification of the sacred vessels**.*^{81a} *It may take place at the altar or at the credence table. The servers proceed as follows:*

1. *Once the priest is back behind the altar after the communion, **one of the servers** comes to the side of the altar with the **water cruet**.*

81. Cf. GIRM [109] 150; see also Part Three, Liturgy of the Eucharist, The Eucharistic Prayer, Consecration and Elevation.

81a. The purification ritual consists in the priest drinking the remaining Blood of Christ from the chalice, wiping all the remnants of Hosts from empty ciboria into the chalice, purifying his fingers, preparing the ablution, and drinking it. See Part Three, Liturgy of the Eucharist, Communion Rite, After Communion, Purification of the Sacred Vessels.

2. Once the priest has wiped any remnants of Hosts from the empty ciboria into the chalice, the server hands the priest the **water cruet**. The priest puts his fingers over the chalice and pours some water into the chalice; he hands the cruet back to the server who returns with it **to the credence table**. The priest then prepares and drinks the ablution.⁸²
3. **Together** the servers come **back to the altar**. The priest wipes the chalice with the purificator and places the sacred vessels and sacred linens in the same manner that the servers brought them to the altar during the 'procession of the gifts'.⁸³ After **taking all the sacred vessels, linens, and cruets back** to the credence table, and removing the **Sacramentary/Missal** from the altar, the altar is as it was before the Mass started; that is, dressed with the altar cloth, on which sit only the candles and a crucifix.
4. If the servers' seats are next to the priest's chair, as is the case in many parishes, then as the **priest goes back** to his chair, the **servers walk back with him** to their seats. Wherever the servers' seats are, at this time they go back to their places.
5. Then as the priest stands to say the prayer after communion, a server might stand in front of him to hold the **Missal**.
6. Finally, when the time comes to **leave the sanctuary** after the final blessing, the **servers stand with the priest**, one on each side, **and**—except for the cross bearer and the candle bearer—**bow in front of the altar** with the priest before leaving the sanctuary in a procession. The cross bearer leads, followed by the candle bearer, all the other ministers, and the priest; following in the same order in which they came into the sanctuary at the beginning of the Mass. If there is no procession then the servers and ministers **quietly and reverently** go back to the sacristy.

PRAYER FOR SERVERS TO RECITE BEFORE THE MASS

Lord who said: "I am the living bread," You are the One
gathering us here today to celebrate Your love for us.
Thank You for giving me the joy to serve You at the altar.
Grant me to serve with reverence and to respond to
Your friendship every day of my life. Amen.

82. This ablution is composed of the remnants of Hosts from the empty ciboria, the remnants of the Precious Blood, and the water used to rinse the sacred vessel. See Part Three, Liturgy of the Eucharist, Purification of the Sacred Vessels.

83. See illustration, Part Three, Liturgy of the Eucharist, Procession of the Gifts.