

What do I need to know to serve at the Altar of St. Teresa's?



Serving at the Altar is Important

. . . Not only because you are just “helping the priest” but because you are leading the people in their worship of God. This makes you important too, because how you dress and act as an altar server adds to the dignity of the mass you serve at. When you serve, you become ministers, just like the reader and the person who helps give out communion.

Because mass is important, because serving is important and because you are important, here are some of the rules and guidelines for serving mass at St. Teresa's.

Clothing

The clothing for serving at mass is an alb, which is a white robe that covers your regular clothing. You put the alb on by pulling it over your head like you would a tee shirt. There are different sized albs and the one you wear should be long enough to reach your ankles.

Even though the alb covers your clothes you can still see the bottom of your pants and shoes. For that reason **when you serve, please wear either shorts (in the summer) a skirt, if you are a girl or long pants. Do NOT wear blue jeans.**

Also, please wear dark colored shoes: no sneakers! Also wear a light colored shirt; it can be of any style, but please no patterned shirts or tee shirt There are different sized albs and the one you wear should be long enough to reach your ankles.

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Also, please wear dark colored shoes: no sneakers! Also wear a light colored shirt; it can be of any style, but please no patterned shirts or tee shirts with pictures or slogans on them. The pictures can show through the alb. Even though you might really like a particular music group or think a professional wrestler is cool, most people don't really want to know about it at mass.

Hair and Appearance

You would never show up to a party without looking your best. And of course if you go anywhere important you have to dress up to show respect for the person or place you are visiting! The same goes for the mass: we should give God our best and show respect for mass by looking our best.

Your hands and face should be washed, and if your hair is long enough to be pulled back from your face, it should be.

Note: it has become the custom of young men and women to wear earrings, nose rings, etc. Girls and boys are allowed to wear small earrings (studs). No large earrings, hanging earrings or other rings or piercings are permitted.

Attendance

This is basic to being an altar server. When you commit to being a server, you are saying to the people in the congregation, to

the priests and ultimately to God that you want to serve. If you do not show up, the priest is left standing there without anyone to help him. That means that he has to do your job as well as his.

Please be at mass ten minutes before mass begins. This will give you plenty of time to get dressed, to make sure of what you are doing, and to find out if any thing special is happening at the mass that involves you.

If you cannot be at a particular mass, it is YOUR responsibility to find a replacement. DO this as soon as possible. If it is impossible for you to find a replacement then call Father Baker at 1. 212.233.0233 and let him know.

Father Baker keeps a record of all missed masses. If he begins to notice a pattern of misses he will remove you from serving.

Practicing Your Faith . . .

No one is perfect. That is probably why people who go to mass and pray are called practicing Catholics; we don't always necessarily get it right, but we try to be faithful to God and to the Church.

To be a good server means to practice the Catholic faith; to go to mass NOT ONLY when you serve, but every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation. IT means to take the God you serve on Sunday into the week with you by serving God in other people.

Parents are always the best guides in this, but even if a parent does not

practice his or her faith, to be an altar server you have to. Because when you serve at mass, you don't just serve the priest or the people, you serve God.

What is the Mass?

Jesus was Jewish. That meant that he went every Saturday to the synagogue. On special days he went to the temple in Jerusalem, where the priests offered sacrifices to God. This was part of the agreement or covenant God made with the Jewish people.

Jesus was a teacher, that meant he had followers called disciples. He would eat with them, and often these meals were what we call meals of thanksgiving, where they used bread and wine to give thanks to God for their many blessings. The biggest thanksgiving meal was the Passover meal, where the Jewish people gave thanks to God for saving them from slavery and death in Egypt and making them God's people through the covenant.

On the night before Jesus died, Jesus was eating with his disciples. He said that from now on the meals his disciples would celebrate would give thanks for a NEW covenant God was making with ALL people. The bread and wine would become HIS body and blood, offered in sacrifice to God for everyone.

Very early in the history of the Church, the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed. Soon after, Christians could no

longer worship with other Jews because of their belief in Jesus. Thus they took the synagogue service they knew and added to it the meal that they celebrated with Jesus. That is when the mass was born.

Even today the mass has two parts: the first part, which we get from the synagogue; called the Liturgy of the Word, and second part, which we get from Jesus' thanksgiving meals, called the Liturgy of the Eucharist (Eucharist means "thanksgiving"; Liturgy is a word that means "the people's work").

The furniture in the church helps you to understand the mass. The big table in front of the people is called the altar. When the priest is there, it is the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The place people read from is called the pulpit or ambo. When people are reading there it is the Liturgy of the Word. The big chair is called the presider's chair. Another word for the priest is the presider; the person who presides or watches over the people's work which is the mass.

For Christians the church is not a building; it is the people. Whenever we get together to worship we do not just GO to church we ARE the Church. The most important thing we do is the mass because it MAKES us the Church.

Your service is part of the people's work; it is a basic part of the liturgy; your work is one of the ways God makes us all into the Church.