

# **Guidelines for Coordinators of Altar Servers and Altar Servers**

Diocese of San Bernardino • Office of Worship  
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1. Servers may be men and women, boys and girls.
2. No distinction should be made between the functions carried out in the sanctuary by men and boys and those carried out by women and girls. The term "altar boys" should be replaced with "altar servers".
3. The term "server" should be used for those who carry out the functions of the instituted acolyte. Such persons may carry out all the functions listed in no. 100 (with the exception of the distribution of Holy Communion) and nos. 187 - 190 and no. 193 of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal.
4. Servers must be baptized, Roman Catholic, and actively practicing their Catholic faith.
5. Servers must have received the sacrament of Holy Communion and normally receive the Eucharist whenever they participate in the liturgy.
6. Servers should be currently participating in a process of faith formation.
7. Servers should be mature enough to understand their responsibilities and to carry them out well and with appropriate reverence.
8. Servers should receive proper formation before they begin to serve at Mass. The formation should include instruction on the Mass and its parts and their meaning, the various objects used in the liturgy (their names and use), and the various functions of the server during the Mass and other liturgical celebrations. They should also receive instruction on the various parts of the Church (their names and use). Servers should receive appropriate guidance from the parish or the pastor / pastoral coordinator on maintaining proper decorum and attire when serving Mass and other functions.
9. Since the role of server is integral to the normal celebration of the Mass, at least one server should assist the priest. On Sundays and other more important occasions, two or more servers should be assigned to carry out the various functions normally entrusted to these ministers.
10. Servers should wear a white alb while serving during the Mass. Other normally appropriate vesture for altar servers (cassock and surplis) is also acceptable. All servers wear the same liturgical vesture.

11. Servers should arrive at an appropriate time before the beginning of the Mass to assist with the set up and preparation.
12. Servers carry the cross, the processional candles, hold the Roman Missal for the presider when he is not at the altar, carry the thurible and boat, present the bread, wine, and water to the priest during the preparation of the gifts or assist him when he receives the gifts from the people, wash the hands of the priest, assist the priest celebrant and deacon as necessary. If incense is used and a deacon is not present, they also incense the priest and the assembly.
13. Servers should be active and full participants in the celebration with the understanding that they are first and foremost members of the assembly. The server expresses this by singing, praying and keeping silence along with the rest of the assembly.
  14. Servers should be seated in a place from which they can easily assist the priest celebrant and deacon. The place next to the priest is reserved for the deacon(s).
  15. Servers may not serve in any other ministry during a Mass when they are serving as an altar server.
  16. Servers should assist with the clean up after the Mass.
  17. The Order for the Blessing of Altar Servers, Sacristans, Musicians, and Ushers (Book of Blessings, nos. 1847-1870) may be used before altar servers first begin to function in this ministry.
  18. All minor altar servers (under age 18) must participate in safe environment training offered by the Office of Catechetical Ministry. All adult altar servers (age 18 and older) and coordinators must participate in Virtus Training offered by the Office of Child and Youth Protection.
  19. All adults are responsible for the general supervision of minor altar servers. At least two adults who are background-checked and safe environment-trained (altar server coordinators, readers, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, masters of ceremonies, sacristans, music ministers, deacons, priests, etc.) must be present when altar servers who are minors are present and they must understand that they are fulfilling this supervisory responsibility.