

Understanding the Mass Altar Servers

Each week, we are explaining the different parts of the Mass - what is in the church, what we use in the Mass, and why (and how) we celebrate Mass the way we do.

*Today our topic is **Altar Servers**.*

Often the first people you will see in the entrance procession are the **Altar Servers**. The words "server" and "servant" really mean the same thing. The altar server is one who is at the service of other people.



The role of altar servers follows the example of Jesus Himself, because Jesus showed his apostles (and us) that He had come to be a servant when he washed the apostles' feet before the Last Supper.

Altar servers serve the priest by assisting in the celebration of the Mass, bringing and holding such things as books, water jug and towel, plates and dishes. They lead the entrance and concluding processions with the cross and candles. They escort the deacon (or priest) to the ambo and stand at his side while he proclaims the Gospel reading. They accompany the procession with the gifts and look after the thurible, prepare it for the priest or deacon, and they may incense the congregation and other ministers.

Altar servers also serve all the people in the church by helping the priest to lead them in prayer and by sharing their example of dignity and prayerfulness. Prayer is not only words - by carrying out all the actions of the Mass, altar servers (and us!) are praying not only with our lips but with our whole bodies.

In England, the patron saint of altar servers is Saint Stephen, who lived in the earliest days of the Church. He was a friend of the Apostles, and the first martyr (the first person to die for their faith in Jesus). Our altar servers are members of The Guild of St Stephen.

This week, we invite you to pray together as a family:

Dear Jesus, You gave Saint Stephen a deep love for others. He shows us what real serving is all about - working for other people, and living for them. This week, we pray for our family, our parish and especially for those who serve You as altar servers. Help us all to love You as much as Saint Stephen did. We ask this in Your name. Amen.

