

**The Catholic Church of St Mary the Virgin**  
(Anglican Use)

Arlington, Texas

Directions for  
all altar servers

*Sets of particular directions for each server position supplement these directions. Neither takes the place of the other. They must be read together and all directions in both are to be followed.*

29 December Anno Domini 2001

Revised 13 February Anno Domini 2003

**Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam**

## **General instructions**

### **Your general preparation**

As you are well aware, it is an immense privilege to serve at liturgical celebrations. At the same time, it should be understood also as a calling, a true vocation, and therefore as a duty for those who are called in this way to service at the altar. A calling is always an integral part of a whole life, and must relate to everything else we do as Catholic Christians. Importantly, we should behave outside the church building in harmony with the work we do inside it. We must avoid scandalizing our fellow parishioners in particular by any behavior unworthy of one privileged to put his feet near the altar that is the center of our Eucharistic celebrations. Above all, each of us must pray, if possible daily, for the grace to serve well, to serve in such a way that it will help us to our own salvation.

It is of course necessary for you to learn the particular movements your assigned position requires. Further, however, you should learn the whole ritual well enough that you can anticipate what ought to happen next, and be alert to help if something unexpected or out of the ordinary happens, whatever your position. This requires that you study to understand the overall structure of the Mass, and what the various parts of it mean and do. Above all, remember always that the celebrant is the one indispensable person, and all of the servers are there for his benefit. Never do anything to distract or inconvenience him, and always be thinking of what he will need next.

Your attention should also be given to the Master of Ceremonies. He is assigned the supervision of all the other servers. Furthermore, because the MC is, as the saying goes, the right hand of the celebrant, almost all of the MC's functions are undertaken in place of the celebrant's doing them himself. By being alert to the needs of the MC, you are, through him, actually still serving the celebrant. Because the MC is so much attached to the celebrant, he should be at his side and so, like the celebrant, should not leave the altar unnecessarily. From the time the MC takes the chalice up after the announcements, until the celebrant has blessed and dismissed the congregation, the MC should not have to come down from the altar, even to the second step, except to take up the offering plates from the ushers, and to administer the cup to the communicants. The rubrics specified here have been worked out to accomplish that, and the other servers should all see to it that it does happen, if some circumstance arises in which the stated rubrics will not reach that goal. Good sense must be used in this, however. Your own function is also important, and must not be neglected.

Finally, you should be keenly aware that with regard to movements and postures most members of the congregation are going to follow the lead of the altar servers. If you surprised the people in the pews with the question "What's supposed to happen next, and what are you supposed to do when it does?", remarkably few of them would be able to make any correct or even coherent response. Some of us have had the experience of mistakenly remaining kneeling when we should stand, or standing when we should kneel, and being horrified to find that the whole congregation copied our mistake. Although your principal function is to assist the celebrant, you must also fulfill a serious responsibility to lead the congregation as they, too, assist at Mass. Mostly, this means that you should study the Mass and your part in it, enough to be able to answer confidently, at any point, the question "What's supposed to happen next, and what are you supposed to do when it does?"

## **Dress**

Dress for service so as to complement the vestments you will wear, which are the cassock (the long black gown) and the cotta (the white overgarment, more commonly called a “surplice” in the Roman church). This means, ideally, black shoes, black socks, and black trousers, and a white collared shirt (not a golf shirt). If not black, then the darker the better. Please avoid, if at all possible, wearing sneakers of any kind. Sandals are not acceptable. If your shirt is not white, then the lighter and less patterned it is, the better. A white golf shirt, if necessary, is better than something with a strong pattern in bright colors.

You may hang up a jacket on the rack, or fold it and put it somewhere out of the way. Do not, however, hang it on the front part of the rack towards the sacristy door, as that part of the rack is reserved absolutely for the use of the celebrant(s).

## **Vesture**

The cassock<sup>1</sup> is supposed to be ankle length, so the bottom hem should be a few inches from the floor. If it is necessary to make a choice, better somewhat too short than too long, because of the danger of tripping. When you genuflect in your cassock, it is best to move the left foot forward and keep the right foot stationary as you kneel. Always genuflect on the right knee. Then when you rise, again keep the right foot stationary and draw back the left. In this way, you are very unlikely to trip up on your cassock by getting it under the foot on which you put your weight when rising. If you do not have room to move your left foot forward, then of course you must move your right back, but then you must be careful in getting up to keep your cassock out of the way of that right foot. This may require you to pull the cassock forward with your hand as you kneel down and as you raise your knee.

In kneeling, the only sensible way to keep the cassock from tripping you when you rise is to grab hold of it and pull it forward away from you as you kneel down. You must aim at kneeling down with the entire bottom hem of the cassock several inches in front of both feet. When you stand, pull the cassock out again, if necessary, to prevent putting either foot on it. A little practice is all that is needed to learn all this and for it to become automatic.

The cotta is worn outside the sacristy only when the liturgy is actually in progress, or the altar party is going to the back of the church so as to start the procession from the back, or is returning to the sacristy after a recessional has ended at the back of the church. Notably, the torch bearers wear only their cassocks when lighting or extinguishing the candles.

The cotta should hang somewhat below the waist. Whereas, for safety’s sake, a cassock should, if necessary, be too short rather than too long, the cotta, for appearance’s sake, should, if necessary, be too long rather than too short.

---

<sup>1</sup>It may be of interest to you to know that use of the cassock has been nominally restricted to the clergy since about the eleventh century. The proper liturgical dress of the lay person is the alb, symbolizing our baptism. The use of cassock and cotta by lay altar servers is technically an abuse, although an officially tolerated abuse. This should remind us of how great a privilege is accorded to us by our pastor and our bishop in permitting us to serve at the altar.

You are responsible for returning to the rack, neatly, any garment you take off it. The forward part of the rack is reserved absolutely for the use of the celebrant(s). Put your cassock and cotta back with the others.

### **Movements and postures**

When walking in procession, try not to sway too much from side to side. Swaying can be almost completely eliminated by putting one foot directly in front of the other, but this can be noticeable and therefore distracting to the congregation. Better simply to try to avoid taking unnecessarily wide steps, which accentuate swaying.

Corners should be turned squarely, without making it obvious in a military fashion.

Do not ever walk backwards. At most, you may take one step back. If any more movement is needed, turn around and do it face forward.

During a liturgical celebration, except when you are seated or you are carrying something, your hands should always be folded. The *only* proper way to fold your hands is “steeple style”, which means putting the hands flat together, fingers together, palms together, and the right thumb crossed over the left. The hands should be pointed somewhat upwards, above the horizontal, but below a 45 degree angle.<sup>2</sup> Your arms should be lightly held against your body.

When seated, put your feet flat on the floor, sit up straight, and keep your hands on your knees. Never, ever, sit with crossed legs or knees. Put your hands on your knees so that the tip of your middle finger on each hand is at the top or bottom of your kneecap or somewhere between. Do not fidget and do not amuse yourself by idly letting your eyes wander around. During the sermon you should look straight in front of you and pay attention to the sermon. If you are seated while another liturgical action is going on, perhaps something at the altar rail, turn your eyes and your attention to that action. *Always* be aware of what is going on in the liturgy and anticipate what is going to happen next and what you may have to do to help out. When all servers together are about to be seated or to rise, watch for the signal of the MC.

When you are not moving, you should be still, whether standing or sitting or kneeling. Your movements should always be as deliberate and stately as circumstances allow. Sometimes you must hurry, but try to do so as discreetly as possible. Always bear in mind that you are a tool for the use of the celebrant. It is his work, his words, his actions, and his person that are important. As for any craftsman, it would be best if his tools were actually invisible. Your aim is to be as inconspicuous as possible while yet getting the job done.

### **Reverences**

When another person has taken something from you, or given something to you, or has done some service such as incensing you, or you have done some service to another, bow to that person.

---

<sup>2</sup>This mode of holding the hands is rooted in the medieval ceremony by which a vassal would pledge service and loyalty to his lord. The vassal would kneel in front of his seated lord and offer his hands to be held within his lord’s hands. If you try this, you will see how naturally the hands are joined together and held at the proper angle. The symbolism here, of course, is that you hold your hands in pledge of loyalty and service to our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is also customary for the thurifer and whomever he will incense to bow to each other before the incensing, but bows are not ordinarily exchanged before giving and receiving some object, such as a cruet. The bow is from the waist, with an inclination of the head of perhaps six inches. If you are facing the other person rather closely, bowing only your head is acceptable.

We also bow at the mention of the sacred Name of Jesus. When the Name is merely said, the head is bowed. When It is sung, the bow is from the waist. A lesser such bow is made at the mention of the name of Mary.<sup>3</sup>

We bow also at the following times:

1. In the Gloria, at the words “we worship you” and at the words “receive our prayer”.
2. Towards the end of the creed, at the words “he is worshiped and glorified”.
3. At the doxology or ascription of praise, “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.” (This is not usually encountered in most celebrations of the Mass.)

A deeper bow is made during the creed, when we proclaim our belief in the incarnation. (At Christmas, we genuflect.)

At St Mary the Virgin we continue the ancient custom of the universal Church of genuflecting at the versicle “And the Word was made flesh” and its responsory, “And dwelt among us” during the solemn chanting of the Angelus after the Sunday parish Mass.

We sign ourselves with the cross at the following times:

1. When the celebrant begins the liturgy with the words “Blessed be God ...”, or in Eastertide with “Alleluia, Christ is risen”, or in Lent with “Bless the Lord ...”, or with the words “In the Name of the Father ...”.
2. At the absolution after the Confiteor (“May almighty God have mercy on us ...”).
3. At the announcement of the Gospel, as the celebrant (or deacon) says or sings “The holy Gospel of our Lord ...”. An alternative, at this time only, to the usual “large” signing with the cross (head, shoulders, breast) is to use the right thumb to sign the forehead, the lips, and the heart.
4. At any mention of the faithful departed, particularly: at the end of the creed (at the words “the resurrection of the dead”); at the last of the invocations in the prayers of the faithful; and in the Eucharistic prayer after the consecration (the exact wording, of course, varies with the particular prayer used by the celebrant).
5. At the benedictus (“Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord”).
6. At the holy Communion, when the celebrant says “The Gifts of God for the people of God”.
7. When the celebrant imparts his blessing at the end of Mass.
8. During the prayer by which the celebrant concludes the Angelus, when the “cross and passion” of our Lord are mentioned in those words.
9. Most of us have the pious practice of signing ourselves with the cross immediately before communicating in the sacred Body and Blood, and immediately after. This is, however, a private matter, as it is *your* communion, and is therefore not mandatory.

---

<sup>3</sup>This is in recognition of her exalted status as the mother of God, but particularly in our parish church because she is its patroness.

At the *Agnus Dei* (“Lamb of God ...”) immemorial custom prescribes striking the breast with the closed right hand three times as we make the triple invocation. Likewise, the breast is struck once at the *Domine, non sum dignus* (“Lord, I am not worthy ...”).

Remember that a torch bearer while carrying a torch, or the crucifer while carrying the cross, never crosses himself, or genuflects, or bows (except for a minor bow of the head), and does not kneel except that the torch bearers kneel on the altar step during the Eucharistic prayer.

During the communion, the MC and the cup bearer while bearing the chalices, and the paten bearer while bearing the communion paten, are carrying or must be presumed to be carrying God Himself. They do not then genuflect or bow or kneel to anyone or for any occurrence, until they have put those vessels back on the altar.

One who has just received holy Communion is bearing in his or her body the Divinity of Christ and should not, therefore, genuflect when leaving the altar rail or going back into the pew. However, a minister who is about to distribute the sacred Species is expected, before doing so, to confess the real Presence in the Species he is about to distribute. This is done by a genuflection. Therefore, when the MC (or the cup bearer) goes to the altar to take up a chalice, he first genuflects at the altar before touching the sacred vessel, even if he has just received Communion. If in doing this it is necessary to steady oneself by putting a hand on the altar, it is put on the altar cloth. One must never touch the outspread corporal. It is there to catch stray bits of the Body of Christ, must be presumed to have done so, and it would be a sacrilege to touch them.

The general rule in the Anglican Use is that we genuflect to greet the Sacrament in the tabernacle when we first enter the sanctuary, and in farewell when we depart it. Should we pass in front of the tabernacle between those genuflections, we “ask leave” of the enthroned Sacrament to do so by a moderately deep bow. Should you pass in front of the celebrant when he is seated (and thus “enthroned”), you should likewise “ask leave” by bowing to him.

## **The ritual of the solemn sung Mass**

### **In the sacristy before Mass**

All should arrive not later than fifteen minutes before the scheduled time for Mass. Each person should vest immediately upon arrival, in cassock and cotta, except the torch bearers, who must be in cassocks only when they light the candles. If it is necessary to leave the sacristy before the procession to the altar, only the cassock, not the cotta, should be worn.

As soon as he arrives, the thurifer should inspect the condition of the thurible and, if necessary, wipe the rims of the bowl and the cover with alcohol on a paper towel, to remove any build-up of gum that might cause the cover to stick to the bowl. From five to ten minutes before the start of Mass, the thurifer should light the coals for the thurible and see to it that the boat is filled with incense.

Four or five minutes before Mass, the torch bearers should light the altar candles, vested only in cassocks.

The celebrant usually leads the servers in a short prayer as the tower bells are ringing just before Mass. When the last peal has sounded, the MC opens the door to the altar just a few inches and rings the entrance bell twice. The Thurifer immediately opens the aisle door and begins the procession.

## **The procession to the altar**

The order of procession is:

- Thurifer, with the boat boy to his left
- Torch bearers
- Crucifer
- Master of Ceremonies
- Celebrant

The thurifer leads the procession straight out of the sacristy, turns left to pass in front of the first pew, then left at the center of the church and then into the sanctuary. The pace should be stately, and each person should follow about four or five feet in back of the person in front of him.

## **At the foot of the altar**

The thurifer positions himself facing the altar on the pavement (the pavement is the floor level just inside the altar rail) right at the first step of the predilla (the “foot of the altar”), to the left of center, allowing just enough room so that he will be immediately to the left of the celebrant, but not crowding him, when the celebrant enters and comes to the center. The boat boy stands immediately to the left of the thurifer. The torch bearers go right and left as they enter the sanctuary, and go to stand on the pavement, in line with the thurifer, and positioned in line with the ends of the table of the altar. The crucifer does not line up with the rest of the altar party, but takes the cross up the altar steps and puts it in its holder. He turns to face the tabernacle and genuflects in reverence. Rising, he goes down from the altar and stands to the right of his seat, in front of the sacristy door and as close as possible to his seat (which is then to his left). Upon entering the sanctuary, the MC goes up to the altar to deposit on it the Evangeliary, or Book of the Gospels. He then descends to stand to the right of center, in line with the rest of the party. The celebrant follows and stands at the center.

The celebrant takes off his biretta and genuflects. The MC, the thurifer, and the boat boy genuflect with him. [At the time of this writing, Father Hawkins is unable to genuflect and instead greets the Sacrament in the tabernacle with a deep bow. This must not be taken as a reason for anyone else to bow. All others genuflect, no matter what the celebrant does.] The torch bearers do not genuflect, because it is awkward and perhaps dangerous to do so while carrying the torches. They should merely bow their heads when the celebrant genuflects. Nor will the crucifer genuflect with the rest of the altar party, as he will genuflect to the Sacrament after he has put the cross in its holder in back of the altar.

Rising, the celebrant hands his biretta to the MC and goes up to the altar to kiss it. The MC immediately takes the biretta to the sacristy and then returns to his place in front of the altar.

## **The preparatory incensings**

As the celebrant comes down from the altar, the thurifer turns to him with the thurible, opens it, and holds it up at a convenient height so that the celebrant can spoon incense into it without having to bend over. The boat boy at the same time steps up on the first step and stands with his back to the altar, opens the boat and holds it up at a convenient height for the celebrant, pointing it directly

toward the celebrant. When the celebrant has finished putting incense on the coals and replaced the spoon in the boat, the boat boy closes the boat and returns to his place to the left of the thurifer. The thurifer does not move until the celebrant has blessed the incense. Then he closes the thurible, hands it to the celebrant, and turns to face the altar. The celebrant mounts the predilla steps and incenses the altar. When he comes down, he hands the thurible back to the thurifer. The thurifer stands with it, facing the altar. The celebrant and the MC then bow to the altar and go right on the pavement. The MC goes all the way to the wall and turns right around, allowing the celebrant to pass in front of him and so to his chair. The MC follows to his own chair to the left of the celebrant's. The celebrant turns at his chair to face the thurifer, who is still standing in his place in front of the altar. The thurifer at the same moment turns to face the celebrant. They bow to each other and the thurifer then incenses the celebrant. They again bow to each other. Then all who are still in front of the altar (thurifer, boat boy, and torch bearers) turn to the left and go to their places. Torch bearer one goes to the sacristy door and turns there to put his torch in its holder, until the thurifer and the boat boy pass by, then stands in front of his bench seat. Torch bearer two simply puts his torch in its holder and stands in front of his seat. The crucifer, who has been standing in front of the sacristy door, moves to stand in front of his bench seat as soon as the boat boy and the thurifer have passed in front of him. The thurifer and the boat boy put the thurible and the boat on the stand and then go to stand in front of their seats.

At this point, everyone is standing in front of his own proper seat. On the north (sacristy) side, the bench towards the front is for the torch bearers. Torch bearer one, the first to reach that side, sits to the left, torch bearer two to the right, next to the pulpit. The bench immediately on the other side of the sacristy door is for the crucifer, who is next to the door, and the thurifer. The boat boy has his own seat next to the thurifer. On the other side, the celebrant takes the sedilla, the large cushioned chair. The MC sits immediately to his left.

### **The introductory rites**

The celebrant gives the greeting ("Blessed be God ...") while signing himself with the cross. The celebrant reads the introit, and then begins the penitential rite with the invitation "Let us confess ...". At its conclusion, the choir chants the Kyrie and sings the Gloria. The celebrant may begin either or both of these chants. The celebrant chants the collect and all then sit for the readings. The celebrant sits when he will, and no one may sit until he is seated. All others sit down at the same moment that the MC sits.

### **The readings and the gospel procession**

A copy of the service bulletin should be at each server's place. Each may follow the readings in the bulletin, and all should join the congregation in singing the response. As the cantor is finishing the last verse of the responsorial psalm, the MC stands and goes to the ambo while the response is sung by the congregation for the last time. The MC then reads the second lesson. Having concluded the reading, the MC turns right around, walks directly towards the back of the church, and turns around when he is just beyond the celebrant (who is still seated). He waits there to assist, if necessary, with preparation of the thurible. As soon as the incense is on the coals, he goes up to the

altar to take up the Evangeliary. The MC carries the book in front of him, front cover forward, and goes to his place on the pavement at the foot of the altar.

As soon as the MC has concluded the reading and the congregation has made the response “Thanks be to God”, all the other servers rise. The torch bearers take up their torches. Torch bearer one and the crucifer stand in front of the sacristy door until the thurifer and the boat boy have passed in front of them. The thurifer takes up the thurible and the boat boy takes up the boat and they go over to the celebrant in his chair. They go along the pavement, skirting the first step of the predilla, pause for an instant only to bow to the Sacrament in the tabernacle as they pass before it, then mount the first step after passing in front of the ambo, and go up to the celebrant. The thurifer opens the thurible and the boat boy opens the boat, and they hold these at a convenient height for the celebrant (who is still seated) to put more incense on the coals. Again, the celebrant blesses the incense before the thurifer closes the thurible. The thurifer and the boat boy then retrace their steps until they are on the pavement in front of the altar at the same places they held when they first entered the sanctuary. In doing so, they pass in back of torch bearer two.

As soon as the thurifer and the boat boy have passed in front of them on their way to the other side of the sanctuary, the torch bearers go to their places in front of the predilla with their torches, taking up the positions they had when they first came in.

As soon as the thurifer and the boat boy have passed in front of him, the crucifer goes up to the back of the altar. He first reverences the Sacrament by bowing (not genuflecting) towards the tabernacle. He then takes up the cross and goes down to the pavement, then walks along in front of the server benches to get to the front of the altar. He stands to the left of torch bearer one, facing the altar.

The celebrant comes to the center and bows in prayer while standing on the first step of the predilla. He then turns to face the congregation. At the same time, all the servers likewise turn around, turning in each case towards the center. The thurifer and the boat boy then lead the procession forward, in the same order as the entrance procession. The thurifer and the boat boy stop just short of the first pew. The torch bearers pass on either side of them and turn facing each other at the head of the first pew. The instant the torch bearers have passed him, the thurifer steps back and to his right, the boat boy keeping at his left, so that they end up in line with the torch bearer on that side (the north, or pulpit side), the thurifer being immediately to the torch bearer’s left. The crucifer and the MC proceed along until the crucifer is about a yard and a half beyond the torch bearers, and the MC is just beyond them. The crucifer and the MC then both turn around at the same time and in the same direction (to their right), exactly in the center of the aisle, and face the altar. The book, when held up by the MC to be read by the celebrant, should end up exactly between the torches. The MC opens the book to the gospel (marked by the ribbon) and holds it with the top against his upper chest and one hand under each side.

### **The gospel and the return to the sanctuary**

The celebrant then greets the congregation (“The Lord be with you ...”) and announces the Gospel while signing the first letter of the Gospel with his right thumb. He takes the thurible from the thurifer and incenses the book. The celebrant hands the thurible back to the thurifer.

Having chanted the Gospel, the celebrant concludes by announcing “The Gospel of the Lord.” As the congregation makes its response, he takes hold of the book and kisses the first word of the

Gospel he has just proclaimed. The MC should assist by bringing the book off his chest and towards the celebrant. He then receives it back from the celebrant and immediately closes it. The celebrant then steps back and to his right, so as to line up to the side of the boat boy. The party then returns to the sanctuary as promptly as possible. The MC goes first, turning right at the foot of the altar, passing beyond the ambo, and going back to put the book on the low table to the right of the celebrant's chair. He then goes to stand at his own chair. The crucifer follows the MC and goes to the left at the foot of the altar, to put the cross in its holder just as he did in first entering. Having replaced the cross, he turns and bows towards the tabernacle and then goes to stand beside his seat, in front of the sacristy door. The torch bearers follow the crucifer. Torch bearer two waits facing his bench until the celebrant has passed by him and is going up to the pulpit. He then replaces the torch in its holder and stands in front of his seat. Torch bearer one replaces his torch immediately in its holder, then stands in front of the sacristy door, beside the crucifer.

The thurifer does not return immediately to the sanctuary. After the torch bearers have departed, the thurifer wheels left so that he ends up on the other side of the celebrant, facing the pulpit. The boat boy at all times stays at the thurifer's left side, so he begins and ends this particular movement standing between the thurifer and the celebrant. The celebrant then returns to the sanctuary, passing in back of the boat boy and the thurifer.

The celebrant goes up to the pulpit and turns to his left to face the thurifer. They bow to each other and the thurifer incenses the celebrant. They again bow to each other. The thurifer and the boat boy turn and go into the sanctuary. They pause to bow together at the foot of the altar, then continue back to put the thurible and the boat on the stand and return to their seats. As soon as they have passed the sacristy door, the crucifer and torch bearer one return to stand in front of their seats. As soon as these two are in place, the MC sits and all other servers except the thurifer and the boat boy sit at the same time. The MC need not wait for the thurifer and the boat boy to return to their places.

### **The Creed, blessings, and announcements**

When the sermoner has finished, he turns and comes down from the pulpit. As he is coming to the center of the sanctuary, the MC stands and all others stand at the same time. The MC takes up the celebrant's prayer book and hands it to the celebrant as he passes to his chair. The celebrant then intones the Nicene Creed. The prayers of the faithful follow. Usually at a Sunday Mass there are some anniversary blessings. If there are, all servers kneel on the first step of the predilla, as close to their seats as possible, while the blessings are given. The MC necessarily kneels on the second step. When those who have received blessings get up from the altar rail, all servers retreat to their seats and sit while the celebrant makes the weekly announcements.

As soon as the Creed is ended, the thurifer and the boat boy take up the thurible and the boat and go to the sacristy to refresh the coals and refill the boat. As they do this, the crucifer should step to the side of his seat and open the sacristy door for the convenience of the thurifer. Should he be standing at his seat when the thurifer exits from the sacristy, he should quickly step back beside his seat to allow the thurifer and the boat boy to pass easily back to the stand. The thurifer and the boat boy will go back to the sacristy before the Creed if the thurifer judges that extra time is needed to light new coals.

## **The offertory: the gifts are taken to the altar**

When the announcements are concluded, all the servers stand. The celebrant turns and hands his prayer book to the MC, who puts it on the stand next to the small Missal. The celebrant then goes up to the altar to prepare for the offertory. The MC goes to the credence table on his side of the altar and takes up the chalice that is there and carries it up to the celebrant. At the altar, the celebrant may point to the spot where he wants the chalice placed. It is to the right of the corporal. The MC then steps in back of the celebrant, bows in reverence towards the tabernacle, then turns to his left and stands on the top step of the altar facing the servers' bench.

Meanwhile, the torch bearers, as soon as they stand up, walk on the pavement to the center of the sanctuary. They bow towards the tabernacle then turn around, turning towards each other as they do so. They advance to the edge of the pavement and wait for the gifts to be brought to them. The oblationers come up to them and bow to them, as the torch bearers also bow to the oblationers. The torch bearers take the cruets, the ciborium, and the attendance slip from the oblationers. Torch bearers and oblationers again bow to each other. The torch bearers then turn right and walk along the pavement, turning right again to go towards the credence table.

When he stands after the announcements, the crucifer steps back to his right, beside his seat and in front of the sacristy door. The thurifer, when he stands, turns to his right and faces forward. Only the boat boy remains standing at his seat.

The torch bearer with the ciborium (who ordinarily follows the other torch bearer) turns as he comes along the pavement and then goes up the first two steps of the predilla so as to be directly facing the MC. The MC takes the ciborium and the attendance slip from the torch bearer and they bow to each other. The torch bearer then turns and retreats to stand in front of his seat. The MC takes the ciborium and attendance slip to the celebrant, placing the ciborium on the altar to the left of the corporal and discreetly showing the attendance slip to the celebrant.

The torch bearer with the cruets walks directly up to the thurifer. The thurifer extracts the stoppers from the cruets. The thurifer and torch bearer bow to each other. The thurifer puts the stoppers on the credence table, leaving room for the cruets to be set down later. He now looks up to see, if he can, whether the celebrant has asked the MC for the box of hosts, also on the credence table. If he sees that the box is needed, he takes it up and goes up to the second step to give it to the MC, unopened. They bow to each other and the thurifer waits there until the MC returns with the box. The thurifer takes it from him, they bow to each other, and the thurifer replaces the box on the credence table. When he has replaced the box on the table, or the stoppers, if the box was not needed, the thurifer takes up the thurible and the boat boy takes up the boat.

When the stoppers of the cruets have been pulled out, the torch bearer bearing the cruets turns around, walks back a step or two and turns left so as to be facing directly to the celebrant and the MC. When the MC comes over towards him, the torch bearer goes up two steps to meet the MC. The crucifer now goes to stand on the first step, next to the credence table. The MC takes the cruets from the torch bearer, they bow to each other, and the torch bearer returns to his place in front of his seat.

Having bowed to the torch bearer, the MC turns and carries the cruets towards the celebrant. He stands one step away until the celebrant takes hold of the first chalice and starts to turn towards him. The MC immediately steps forward and offers the wine cruet to the celebrant. As soon as the celebrant takes it, the MC passes the water cruet to his right hand and places the palm of his left

hand on his breast. Having dispensed sufficient wine, the celebrant holds the wine cruet out to the MC, who takes it with his left hand and immediately offers the water cruet to the celebrant with his other hand. As soon as the celebrant takes the water cruet, the MC switches the wine cruet to his right hand and places his left palm on his breast. When the celebrant has put the requisite drop or two of water in the chalice, he hands the cruet back to the MC, who takes it in his left hand. The celebrant places this chalice on the corporal and takes up the second chalice. This is filled in the same way. When the water cruet is returned to the MC the second time, he and the celebrant bow to each other. The MC turns around and goes to the edge of the top step. The crucifer steps up to the second step and takes the cruets from the MC. They bow to each other and the crucifer sets the cruets on the credence table. The crucifer replaces the stopper in the wine cruet only and then returns to stand beside his seat.

### **The offertory continues: the incensings and the collection**

Meanwhile, when the torch bearers have given the gifts to the MC, they then go together to put the bridge into the middle part of the altar rail. They go to the bridge, which will be on the pavement, just behind the altar rail, on the pulpit side. They take it up, one on each end, and fit it into the center portion of the altar rail. Having gotten it securely in place, they turn towards the tabernacle and bow, then return to stand in front of their seats.

The thurifer and the boat boy, having taken up the thurible and the boat, wait until the crucifer has put the cruets back on the credence table and returned to stand by his seat. They then walk up and stand on the second step of the predilla, facing directly towards the celebrant.

The celebrant offers the wine by raising the chalice. As soon as he replaces it on the corporal, the thurifer and the boat boy go up to the celebrant. The thurifer opens the thurible and the boat boy opens the boat, and they hold these things, again, at a convenient height for the celebrant to spoon on the incense. The thurifer waits for the celebrant to bless the incense, then closes the thurible and hands it to the celebrant. The thurifer and the boat boy turn around and go one step down from the altar (they must not walk backwards), then turn around to face the altar while the celebrant incenses it.

The MC, as soon as he has handed the cruets to the crucifer, goes to stand on the top step, on the pulpit side, facing forward, towards the congregation. He watches to see when the ushers have finished handing the collection plates around and are ready to bring them forward. He then goes down the steps to the pavement, turns left, goes to the center, turns to his right and advances right to the altar rail. The ushers come up to him with the plates. He bows to them, they to him, and he takes the plates from them. As he does so, he places one on top of the other and holds them together with both hands. He and the ushers bow again to each other. He turns around and waits until the celebrant turns to him. He then holds up the plates at breast level while the celebrant blesses them. He then lowers them, turns to his left and walks along the pavement to the crucifer. The crucifer takes them from him and they bow to each other. The crucifer puts the collection plates on the second step of the predilla, against the reredos. The crucifer returns to stand beside his seat, in front of the sacristy door.

As soon as the thurifer goes up to the celebrant with the incense and the crucifer has returned to stand beside his seat, the torch bearers go to the credence table and take up the water cruet and the lavabo bowl and the finger towel. The torch bearer on the right takes the cruet, the other takes the

bowl and drapes the finger towel over his left forearm, just behind the wrist. They stand on the first step, in back of the thurifer and the boat boy.

The MC, having given the collection plates to the crucifer, steps up to the second step of the predilla, as far forward as possible, and faces south towards the other side of the church while the celebrant finishes incensing the altar.

When the celebrant has walked around the altar incensing it and comes back to the center, the thurifer and the boat boy go up to him while he is bowing to the altar. He turns and gives the thurible to the thurifer, who steps back just one pace, bows, incenses the celebrant, then bows again. He and the boat boy then go right so as to pass to the celebrant's left as he comes forward for the lavabo. The thurifer goes down to the second step and turns to face the MC. They bow to each other and the thurifer incenses the MC. They bow to each other again. If the MC is not in place, ready to be incensed at this time, he is not incensed at all. The thurifer and the MC simply go on to their next duties. The thurifer then goes down to the center of the pavement, bows to the congregation, incenses the congregation, and bows again. He turns around, bows towards the tabernacle, then turns to his left and walks along the pavement. In front of the servers' bench, he stops and turns right. He waits until the crucifer and the torch bearers are facing him, then they bow to each other, he incenses them, and they bow again. He then walks straight ahead on the pavement to the stand, where he hangs up the thurible and the boat boy replaces the boat. Through all this, the boat boy remains at the left side of the thurifer, bowing with him when he bows.

### **The Lavabo; the preface**

As soon as he has been incensed, the MC goes in back of the altar, bows towards the tabernacle, then picks up the Lectionary together with its stand, on which it is resting. He carries these around to the front of the altar and places them on the altar.

As soon as the thurifer has finished incensing the celebrant and is moving out of the way, the torch bearers take the water, bowl, and towel up to the celebrant. The celebrant holds his fingers over the bowl, and the torch bearer with the water, holding the cruet with two hands, pours one or two tablespoons of water over the celebrant's fingers. The celebrant may signal that enough has been poured by lifting his fingers slightly. He then takes the towel from the arm of the other torch bearer and dries his fingers. He drops the towel over the torch bearer's left forearm and then bows to the servers as they bow to him. They turn back to the credence table and replace the cruet, bowl, and towel. They immediately then turn around to be incensed by the thurifer. Having bowed to the thurifer after the incensing, they walk along *on the first step of the predilla* back to their places in front of their bench, while the thurifer and the boat boy pass them on the pavement.

The MC opens the Lectionary to the white ribbon if the celebrant has not already done so. He then points the text for the celebrant. The celebrant turns to the congregation and exhorts them to prayer with the words "Pray, brethren, ..." When he turns back, the MC points the prayer over the gifts (it is proper to the day). As soon as the celebrant finishes that prayer, the MC turns to the preface for the day and points it for the celebrant.

Nearly every preface ends with a section that begins with the word "Therefore". The servers should all be on the alert for this word as it is the signal for them to start towards the stations they will occupy during the Eucharistic prayer. It does no harm, however, for the MC to turn his head slightly towards them and nod slightly to confirm that it is time to move. Occasionally, the last part

of the preface will not have this word. In such case, the MC must give the head signal when he sees that the celebrant is coming to the end of the preface, that is, within about five lines.

At the word “Therefore” in the preface, torch bearer two stands over to take up his torch. Torch bearer one does the same, standing in front of the sacristy door so that the thurifer and the boat boy can pass easily in front of him. The crucifer likewise moves to the side of his seat and stands in front of the sacristy door. The thurifer takes up the thurible, but the boat boy does not take the boat. The thurifer, the boat boy following, goes along the pavement and to the center at the foot of the altar. As he comes along, torch bearer two precedes him and torch bearer one follows the boat boy. The thurifer stops exactly in the center in front of the altar, the boat boy to his left. The torch bearers should be symmetrically placed on either side, so they line up not on the end of the altar table, but on the sides of the base of the altar. All stand on the pavement facing the altar, waiting for the preface to end and the Sanctus and Benedictus to be chanted in response.

As soon as the thurifer and the boat boy have passed in front of him, the crucifer moves next to the credence table and takes up the bells. He rings them three times as the choir begins the Sanctus with the words “Holy, holy, holy”. As soon as he has rung the bells, the crucifer sets them down.

### **The Eucharistic prayer**

While the Sanctus and Benedictus are sung, the MC turns the pages of the Lectionary to the beginning of the Eucharistic prayer. He points this prayer for the celebrant.

When the Benedictus is ended, all servers except the MC kneel. The torch bearers and the crucifer kneel on the first step. The thurifer and the boat boy go up one step and kneel on the second step. The torch bearers rest the torch poles on the first step, against the riser.

The crucifer must follow the words of the celebrant, and he rings the bells once at the point marked in his Mass booklet. As the celebrant elevates the Sacred Body of Christ, the MC turns to the elevated Sacred Body of Christ and signs himself with the cross. The crucifer rings the bells three times and the thurifer incenses the Body of Christ with three triple swings. The celebrant genuflects immediately after the elevation, and the MC genuflects with him.

As the celebrant rises, the MC rises and points the words of institution for the cup. Again, when the cup bearing the Precious Blood is elevated, the MC turns and signs himself, the bells are rung, and the Precious Blood is incensed. Again, the MC genuflects with the celebrant.

As soon as he rises, the MC points the invitation “Let us proclaim...”. He then points the text as the Eucharistic prayer is continued. The Eucharistic prayer ends with the minor elevation, followed by the singing of the great Amen.

### **Preparations for communion**

As the Amen ends, the MC turns the pages to the communion rite and points the text, beginning with the words “And now, as our Savior taught us ...” and followed by the Lord’s Prayer.

As soon as the great Amen has ended, the other servers all rise. The torch bearers and the thurifer and the boat boy return to the north side. The torches are put in their holders and the thurible hung up. However, the crucifer should stand as far back as possible, facing the other servers, so that the thurifer can hang up the thurible and then retire to stand more or less in front of the crucifer’s seat. The crucifer may offer to take the thurible from the thurifer and hang it up himself. The torch bearers

do not stand in front of their seats, but go to stand next to the thurifer. All are standing on the pavement close to the first step of the predilla, ready to kneel on that step when the time comes. They are now lined up in the following order, beginning from the credence table: crucifer, boat boy, thurifer, torch bearers.

After the Lord's prayer, the celebrant continues with the prayer for peace and may then turn to the congregation and invite them to share some sign of peace. He then turns to the MC and they exchange the "kiss of peace". The celebrant extends his hands forward to grasp the MC's arms lightly. The MC correspondingly extends his hands to grasp the arms of the celebrant. At the same time, they incline their heads slightly towards each other, left to left, and say some appropriate words of greeting ("Peace to you", for example). The other servers exchange greetings with each other. It is only necessary for each person to greet one other person. So as not to distract the congregation, the greetings should not be overly demonstrative, and they should be concluded well before most members of the congregation have finished their greetings.

The celebrant intones the verse beginning "Christ our Passover ...". When the response has been sung, all kneel, except the MC. [N.B.: This is not according to the rubrics of the Anglican Use, which prescribe that all should kneel immediately after the greeting of peace, so as to be kneeling during the verse "Christ our Passover ...". Kneeling after the response to this verse is a local tradition, peculiar to the Church of St Mary the Virgin.]

While the Agnus Dei is sung, or soon thereafter, the celebrant genuflects or bows to the Sacrament on the altar, then goes to the tabernacle to withdraw the ciborium that is there. All eyes should be on the tabernacle as this is done.

When the celebrant turns around and presents the Sacred Body of Christ to the congregation, saying "The Gifts of God ...", all sign themselves with the cross. The MC then retreats a little from the celebrant, while the celebrant prepares privately for his own communion, and in order to allow the crucifer to have a clear view of the celebrant. The crucifer watches for the celebrant to begin to strike his breast. As the celebrant strikes his breast, the crucifer rings the bells once, to signal that those who wish to communicate should come forward. As soon as the celebrant has put down his chalice after communicating in the Precious Blood, the MC steps forward to turn the Missal to the page having the proper prayers for the day, so that the celebrant can read the communion prayer.

### **The communion service**

As soon as the bells are rung to signal everyone to come forward for communion, the servers come up to receive. The paten bearer (ordinarily the crucifer) will kneel on the top step, facing the back of the church, as far to the left as possible. The cup bearer kneels to his right. If the MC is to receive at this Mass, he will kneel rightmost of all. The other servers also kneel on the top step, but facing the side of the altar. The celebrant communicates the Body of Christ to all the servers who wish to receive. The MC meanwhile (if he is not receiving at this Mass) goes to take up the celebrant's chalice. He first genuflects in adoration of the Precious Blood, then takes up the chalice and the purificator that is lying in front of it. He then administers the Precious Blood to the cup bearer and to the paten bearer.

Ordinarily, the MC will have communicated at the earlier Mass. Should this not be so, and should the MC wish to receive communion at this Mass, the celebrant will communicate him in the Precious Blood. The celebrant may also administer the cup to the cup bearer and to the paten bearer. As soon

as the celebrant goes down from the altar to communicate the Body of Christ to the congregation, the MC rises and goes up to the altar to take up the celebrant's chalice.

When the celebrant has given the elements to the altar party, he says the communion prayer and then goes down to begin distributing the Sacred Body to the congregation. The MC by this time will have administered the cup to the cup bearer and to the paten bearer. He then goes down from the altar to begin communicating the Precious Blood to the congregation.

The paten bearer and the cup bearer rise together as soon as they have received the Precious Blood. The paten bearer goes to the altar and takes up the communion paten, then goes directly to the celebrant's right side to hold the communion paten as the Sacred Body is communicated to those who come forward.

The cup bearer goes up to the altar and genuflects (even though he has just received Communion), takes up the second chalice and the other purificator, and immediately communicates the Precious Blood to the other servers. He then goes to the center and waits on the first step to begin communicating the Precious Blood to the congregation.

The other servers, having received the Precious Blood, all rise together and go down to the first step and kneel there throughout the communion.

### **After the communion; the ablutions**

When the celebrant has finished communicating the congregation in the Sacred Body, he goes up to the altar. The paten holder goes up with him, on his left side and just behind him. He puts the communion paten down on the corporal on the left side. The celebrant may point to where he wants it placed, or may take it from his hand. The server then retreats to stand in front of the sacristy door. He opens this door as soon as the cup bearer comes down with a sacred vessel to be put in the sacristy. He then kneels on the first step, leaving the way clear for the cup bearer to go to and from the sacristy, and allowing room between himself and the boat boy for the cup bearer later to kneel between them.

When all have communicated, the MC and the cup bearer go up to the altar. Should one finish before the other, he should remain standing on the pavement, facing the altar, until the other is ready. They go up to the altar, the MC to the right of the cup bearer. The cup bearer first puts his chalice on the corporal and lays the purificator in front of it, folded back once, just as it was when he took it up. Usually, the celebrant points to where he wants the chalice placed. The MC then puts his chalice and purificator on the corporal. They genuflect together.

While this is going on, or soon before or after, the celebrant may return some of the Sacred Body to the tabernacle. Again, all should keep their eyes on the Sacrament as this is done, but the MC and the cup bearer, if they still have the chalices in their hands, do not pause but continue on to return the chalices to the altar.

As soon as the tabernacle is closed, the torch bearers go to take the bridge out of the altar rail. They go to the center, bow towards the tabernacle, then turn and take up the bridge. They lay it on the pavement immediately in back of the altar rail on the pulpit side and just clear of the center gap in the rail. They do not bow again, but go back to the forward end of the first step and again kneel down. The boat boy also stands when the torch bearers do, but he goes back to kneel again on the first step, this time next to the credence table. This leaves a reasonable way clear for the cup bearer to take the sacred vessels into the sacristy.

All servers who are not involved in clearing the sacred vessels to the sacristy should be kneeling.

The cup bearer, as soon as he has replaced the chalice on the altar and genuflected, goes to the credence table and takes up the water cruet. As soon as the MC comes towards him, the cup bearer takes the water cruet up to the second step of the altar and gives it to the MC. He waits there.

The MC takes the cruet to the celebrant, stopping one pace short of being right at his side and standing a step away from the altar. The celebrant first cleans the communion paten and puts it to his left. The cup bearer steps forward, takes up the communion paten in two hands and carries it into the sacristy, putting it on the counter near the sacrarium (sink). The MC may find it necessary to look at the cup bearer to signal him that the communion paten is ready. If the MC thinks it well, he may, holding the cruet in his right hand, use his left hand to move the communion paten to the left of the Missal so that it can be taken away by someone else without everyone crowding to the center of the altar. The sacred vessels should not be relayed to the sacristy. Whoever takes up a vessel (including the communion paten) from the altar should take it to the sacristy himself, not hand it off to another person to carry it in.

The cup bearer, in returning from the sacristy, brings with him the celebrant's biretta and puts it down on the crucifer's seat

The celebrant usually has an empty ciborium to clean. Having cleaned it, he puts the cover on it and puts it to the side. The cup bearer<sup>4</sup> steps up to take it from the altar and carry it into the sacristy, putting it on the counter near the sacrarium.

The celebrant turns and holds the secondary chalice towards the MC. The MC steps forward and pours about a tablespoon of water into the chalice. The MC then retreats one pace. The celebrant drinks off what is in this chalice. He then holds out the other chalice to have the MC pour a little water into it, which he also drinks off. The MC retreats a little and steps one pace to the right. The celebrant wipes the first chalice with the purificator, which he deposits in the chalice. He covers the chalice with a pall and puts it to his left. The cup bearer steps forward to take this chalice into the sacristy. The sacristy door should be closed when the last vessel has been carried to the sacristy.

The celebrant finally wraps a purificator around the principal chalice and holds his fingers over the chalice bowl. The MC pours about a tablespoon of water over the celebrant's fingers. The celebrant signals that enough has been poured by slightly lifting his fingers and the chalice. He and the MC bow to each other. The MC turns and hands the water cruet to the cup bearer. If the cup bearer is still in the sacristy, the crucifer steps up to take the cruet from the MC. The water cruet is put back on the credence table and the stopper inserted. The cup bearer then kneels on the first step, between the boat boy and the crucifer.

### **The end of the Mass; the procession to the sacristy**

When he has given over the water cruet to be put back on the credence table, the MC goes to the celebrant's chair to retrieve the celebrant's prayer book. If there is to be a solemn blessing, he brings

---

<sup>4</sup>The new General Instruction of the Roman Missal directs that only an "instituted acolyte may touch a chalice or a ciborium. The paten bearer or another server may step forward to carry these vessels into the sacristy, if the cup bearer is not immediately available to do so, only if he has been instituted.

also the small Missal. These he lays to the left of the altar Lectionary. Each time he passes in back of the celebrant, he pauses and bows towards the tabernacle.

When the celebrant has finished assembling the chalice, paten, pall, veil, and burse, he reads the post-communion prayer proper to the day. The MC points this for him. The celebrant then turns to the people, gives them his blessing, and dismisses them. The MC genuflects for this.<sup>5</sup> If there is to be a solemn blessing, the MC takes up the small Missal the instant the post-communion prayer has been read, and goes to kneel on one knee on the second step, directly in front of the celebrant. The MC holds up the small Missal at a convenient position for the celebrant to read, opened to the proper blessing, marked by the white ribbon. The MC remains kneeling until the celebrant has dismissed the congregation. He rises while the congregation is responding “Thanks be to God” and replaces the small missal on the stand. If there is no solemn blessing, and if the celebrant has not done so, the MC closes the altar Missal and takes up the celebrant’s prayer book and hands it to him. He then goes down the steps with the celebrant, passing in back of him to stand at his right at the foot of the altar.

The servers stand as soon as the congregation has finished its response to the dismissal. The crucifer takes up the biretta and hands it to the celebrant as the celebrant goes down from the altar. The crucifer then goes to the cross as directly as possible and carries it down along the second step of the predilla. The thurifer takes up the thurible and the boat boy takes up the boat. They go along the pavement to line up as they did when they first came into the sanctuary. The torch bearers take up their torches. Torch bearer two precedes the thurifer in going to the foot of the altar and torch bearer one follows the boat boy. Torch bearer two passes in back of the celebrant and the MC. The crucifer will be the last to come to the foot of the altar. As he comes along, the celebrant genuflects and the thurifer, the boat boy, and the MC genuflect at the same time. All turn around, and the thurifer leads the procession out of the sanctuary, retracing the route of the entrance procession, and proceeding in the same order. At the sacristy door, the thurifer opens the door and holds it for the rest of the altar party. After all others are in, the thurifer enters and closes the door behind him.

### **After the Mass; the Angelus**

All stand facing the crucifix on the cabinet door at the back of the sacristy while the celebrant leads the party in a short prayer. The torch bearers then put the torches in the holders and blow out the flames. The thurifer hangs up the thurible and the boat is put back in its place. The crucifer puts the cross in its holder. All take off their cottas while the celebrant takes off his chasuble.

On Sundays, all then go out the aisle door, in any order, to stand in front of the pulpit facing the statue of the Virgin while the concluding hymn is sung. The celebrant stands in front with the MC to his right. As the last verse of the hymn is being sung, the celebrant closes his prayer book and hands it to the MC. The celebrant then steps forward to the center. The servers step forward until they are just past the pulpit, forming in two ranks, in any order. The celebrant then leads the congregation in the Angelus. At the verse “And the Word was made flesh ...”, all genuflect. All sign

---

<sup>5</sup>Always in public liturgies, particularly solemn liturgies, we genuflect or kneel to receive a blessing from anyone who has ordinary authority over us. This includes the Pope, our bishop, and our pastor. We do not bend the knee for anyone else’s blessing, but if we are already down when the blessing starts, we do not make a point of getting up while the blessing is being given.

themselves with the cross at the mention of the cross and passion. The Angelus concluded, the celebrant and all the servers turn towards the tabernacle and genuflect in reverence to the Sacrament. The servers return to the sacristy.

The torch bearers extinguish the altar candles, still vested in their cassocks. The thurifer puts off his cassock before cleaning the thurible. Each server must hang up, neatly and in good order, his cassock and cotta and anything else he has taken from the rack.