

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

Arlington, Texas

Directions for servers at
Stations of the Cross liturgy

These directions are supplemental to the “Directions for all altar servers”. Neither takes the place of the other. They must be read together and all directions in both are to be followed.

29 December A. D. 2001

Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam

General instructions

At Stations of the Cross, the only servers are two torch bearers and a crucifer. The present set of instructions comprises the special instructions for all three servers involved in the liturgy. Nevertheless, the “Directions for all altar servers” should be consulted for matters such as vesture, posture, and the like.

At the Liturgy

Preparation

The only special preparation that is needed is to be sure that the communion rail bridge has been removed. The torches are lit just before the ceremony begins. The celebrant will ordinarily vest only in an alb or surplice (and stole, if he wishes). The servers will vest as usual in cassock and cotta. No altar candles are lit.

The crucifer does not carry the processional cross used in other solemn processions and at the Sunday sung Mass. It is too heavy to hold securely for the entire length of the stations liturgy, and has too short a standard to be rested on the floor. The plain cross with the long standard is used instead.

The ceremony proper

At the appointed time, the ministers leave the sacristy by the aisle door. The bell is not rung. The torch bearers are first, the crucifer following. The torch bearers go to stand at the foot of the altar, left and right of center. The crucifer stands farthest to the left. The celebrant goes to the center and genuflects to reverence the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. No server genuflects, either now or at any time during the service.

The celebrant reads a short prayer. He turns to proceed to the first station. The servers turn with him and go out of the sanctuary. Unlike all other processions, the servers proceed all three abreast once they are beyond the communion rail. The first verse of the “Stabat Mater” is meanwhile sung by the congregation.

The first station is on the south side of the church. The servers proceed until they are two feet or about one full pace beyond the station. They stop and turn right around so as to face the back of the church. The torch bearers turn around by turning towards each other. The crucifer turns towards the nave. The crucifer sets the pace of the procession, and the torch bearers watch to turn when he does.

The celebrant faces the station. The order of the service at each station is announcement of the station, a versicle and responsory, a meditation and imprecatory prayer, and finally a common prayer. The servers should join in the versicle (but not genuflecting), and the common prayers and the singing, as best they can. The servers cannot carry the service cards. Some of the prayers are not familiar ones, and few people have memorized the verses of the “Stabat Mater”, so no one expects very much participation by the servers.

The crucifer rests the standard of the processional cross on the floor, still keeping it perfectly vertical with both hands, during the meditation and the following prayers. He takes it up again when the common prayer ends.

The common prayer concluded, the congregation sings the next verse of the “Stabat Mater”. As soon as the common prayer is ended, the servers turn around and proceed to the next station.

The torch bearers turn towards each other, and the crucifer towards the nave. They proceed to a point two feet beyond the second station, and the entire station ceremony is repeated.

This goes on for each station, right around the church. The only other particular point to be observed is that the procession, which can have a very stately pace between most of the stations, which are separated by only two or three yards, should proceed more rapidly between the seventh and eighth stations. This is the point at which the procession must move from one side of the church to the other. In doing so, the servers must pass through the narrow openings between the side aisles and the nave of the church. In leaving the seventh station, they simply all turn left and go in single file to the other side. A torch bearer will therefore lead, and the other will follow the crucifer. When they have all arrived at the side aisle, they turn right and go to the usual place two feet beyond the station. They turn around in the usual way.

At the twelfth station, the celebrant and congregation will genuflect at the point at which the meditation speaks of the death of the Savior. Again, however, the servers remain standing.

At the end of the common prayer at the fourteenth, the last station, the servers turn in the usual way and return to the sanctuary. As they approach the communion rail, the crucifer must fall behind, as the opening in the communion rail does not allow enough room for the servers to go through three abreast. The servers take up the places they had when they first entered from the sacristy. The celebrant concludes the service with a prayer and blessing. As he turns to his left to go to the sacristy, all servers turn with him and go out in the same order they first entered, but single file. They go directly to the sacristy, entering it by the sanctuary door. This is the one time that a procession returns to the sacristy by a different way than it left it.

After the ceremony

The torches and the crucifix are put up in their accustomed places. One or more servers, after taking off their cottas, should go immediately to the foyer and collect the service cards from the congregation as its members leave. These are brought back to the sacristy. Each server is responsible, as usual, for returning to the rack all garments he has taken from it.