

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

Arlington, Texas

Directions for
torch bearer

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

The torches should be carried so that the bobeche, the circular sort of plate that catches dripping wax, is at eye level. We try to match torch bearers as to height, but if there is a serious mismatch, the torch bearers may have to adjust the heights at which they carry the torches in order to keep the candle flames from being very different heights from the floor.

The torch standard is naturally gripped in two hands. If the right hand is higher, the right elbow sticks out further than does the left, and vice versa. As a matter of symmetry, and to enable the torch bearers to walk directly side by side, or very close to another person in procession, the torch bearer on the right grips the standard with his right hand above his left, and the torch bearer on the left grips the standard with his left hand higher than his right.

Torch bearers should bear in mind that they are a pair, and should generally act together. Hence they walk side by side in procession, they genuflect together (when not bearing torches), they rise and sit together, and so on. And they are generally symmetrically placed. For example, after the entrance procession and while the celebrant is incensing the altar, they stand at the foot of the altar (on the pavement in front of the first step of the altar), each the same distance from the center.

Torch bearers do not genuflect, sign themselves with the Cross, or bow from the waist when they have hold of the torches.

The ritual of the solemn sung Mass

Before the entrance procession

The torch bearers, as all the servers, should be in the sacristy fifteen minutes before the scheduled time for Mass. They vest immediately in cassocks only, and select the cottas they will wear.

The torch bearers light the candles in the sanctuary about three to five minutes before Mass is scheduled to begin. They vest in cassocks only and light the tapers in the sacristy. They go out of the sacristy together by the altar door and walk to the foot of the altar. Everything they now do should be done together and in symmetry as far as possible. They genuflect together then mount the steps of the altar, one to each side. They first light the candles on the reredos (in back of the altar, flanking the tabernacle), starting with the ones closest to the tabernacle. The candles are actually oil lights. Unlike wax candles, these oil lights require only a touch of the flame to ignite them. If one torch bearer has difficulty getting a light to take, the other does not go ahead with the next light, but waits until the first catches up.

The torch bearers then light the candles on the altar. These should be lighted from the back of the altar, to prevent taper wax dripping on the white altar linen. They go to the foot of the altar and bow towards the tabernacle. Then they go to the shrine of the Virgin and light the two candles there.

The taper can be extinguished, when the Virgin's candles have been lit, by withdrawing the burning tip into the tube and so snuffing it, but if this is done the taper must immediately be pushed out again, as otherwise the hot wax at the end of the taper may stick inside the tube and make it very difficult to get out again. Alternatively, the tapers may be blown out. However it is done, both torch bearers should use the same method and do it at the same time.

The torch bearers return to the foot of the altar and genuflect together, then go back to the sacristy, where they put up the tapers and at once get into their cottas and light their torches.

From the entrance procession to the Gospel

The torch bearers walk in procession immediately after the thurifer. In the entrance procession at the solemn Mass, when the torch bearers arrive in the sanctuary they part right and left. Each stands lined up with his inside shoulder even with the end of the table of the altar. Torch bearers do not genuflect or bow when they are carrying their torches. They should bow their heads only when the celebrant genuflects.

The torch bearers stand in their places until the thurifer has incensed the celebrant. The thurifer then turns to his left, and at the same time the torch bearers turn left, and all walk to their seats. The torch bearer on the left is torch bearer one. He goes to the seat that is next to the sacristy door, the torch bearers' bench being the one between the sacristy and the pulpit. Arriving at his seat, he steps up to the sacristy door and turns around, then places his torch in its holder. In this way, he is out of the way for the thurifer and the boat boy to pass him as they go to their seats. The crucifer also will be standing in this space, on the other side of the doorway.

Torch bearer two simply goes to his seat and puts his torch in its holder. Both torch bearers then stand in front of their respective seats until the readings begin. They watch the MC and sit exactly when he sits.

The Gospel

After the MC has read the second reading, he turns around to go up to the altar and take up the book of the gospels. As he turns, all other servers rise. The crucifer and torch bearer one step beside their seats, in the sacristy doorway, and wait there until the thurifer and boat boy have passed them. Both torch bearers then take up their torches, in unison, and walk to their positions at the foot of the altar, the same positions they took when they came in procession into the sanctuary. The celebrant comes to the center of the first step to pray briefly. He then turns around. At the same time, all servers turn around. For each server, the turn is made towards the center, so torch bearer one, who is facing the left side of the altar, turns to his right, and torch bearer two turns to his left. The procession begins in the usual order.

The thurifer and the boat boy stop short of the first pew. The torch bearers pass on each side of the thurifer and the boat boy and stop at the head of the first pew. They turn to the center, facing each other, with their backs as close as possible to the pews. The crucifer and the MC follow them and turn around. The MC should end up holding the book so that it is exactly between the torch bearers, but they must not move to compensate for any deviation from this by the MC.

When the proclamation of the gospel has ended, the MC will walk back to the sanctuary. The torch bearers turn and follow him. The crucifer will follow them, just as in the entrance procession. At the foot of the altar, the torch bearers turn left and go to their places. Torch bearer two stands facing his seat, still holding his torch, until the celebrant has passed him and goes up to the pulpit. Only then does he replace his torch in its holder and then stand in front of his seat. Torch bearer one replaces his torch in its holder and then stands with his back to the sacristy door until the thurifer and the boat boy have passed back to their own seats. He then stands in front of his seat. All watch the

MC and sit when he sits down. The MC will not necessarily wait for the thurifer and boat boy to get to their seats. Nevertheless, everyone follows the lead of the MC.

After the sermon, taking the gifts

When the sermoner has come down from the pulpit, all watch the MC and stand when he does. The Creed, the prayers of the faithful, and any anniversary blessings follow. If there are anniversary blessings, all servers kneel for them, on the first step (except for the MC). Then all sit during the announcements. Again, all servers should follow the MC, rising from the kneeling position and sitting just when he does.

All rise when the MC rises after the announcements. The torch bearers immediately go to the center of the pavement, without their torches. They bow together towards the tabernacle, then turn around and step to the edge of the pavement, facing the congregation. The oblationers bring the gifts forward. When they stop in front of the torch bearers, they bow and the torch bearers bow to them. The torch bearers then take hold of the gifts. Properly, the oblationer on the pulpit side should have the cruets and hands them to torch bearer one. Should that oblationer, however, bring the ciborium, torch bearer one takes it, and no attempt is made to switch it for the cruets.

If possible, the cruets should be taken in the palms of the hands, but if the torch bearer is at all concerned about his ability to carry the cruets in this way, he should take them by their necks. Torch bearer two will take the ciborium, grasping the base with the right hand and using the fingers of the left hand to steady either the bowl or the cover. He will also take the attendance slip, which the oblationer should also be carrying, under the ciborium.

Having taken the gifts, the torch bearers again bow to the oblationers. They then turn to the right and walk to the side. The torch bearer with the cruets walks directly up to the thurifer, who should be standing next to the credence table. The thurifer will extract the stoppers from the cruets. This torch bearer and the thurifer bow to each other. The torch bearer turns around and takes just a step or two forward and turns left, facing directly up to the celebrant and the MC.

Meanwhile, the torch bearer with the ciborium and the attendance slip follows along on the side until he is lateral to the MC, who should be waiting at the edge of the top altar step. The torch bearer goes up two steps and offers the ciborium to the MC. After the MC has taken the ciborium and the attendance slip under it, the torch bearer and the MC bow to each other. This torch bearer then retreats to stand in front of his seat.

When the MC has delivered the ciborium to the celebrant, he turns and comes to the edge of the altar step. The torch bearer with the cruets at the same time goes up two steps to meet the MC. He offers the cruets to the MC. After the MC has taken them, the torch bearer and the MC bow to each other. The torch bearer then retreats to his seat.

The altar rail bridge and the lavabo

Immediately, the torch bearers then go to put the bridge in the altar rail. The bridge will be on the pavement, just in back of the altar rail. Each torch bearer takes up an end, and together they fit the bridge into the gap, putting the pins in the holes provided. The bridge only fits one way. Occasionally, it will have been turned wrong way around. Should it not seem to fit easily, it is likely

that it has gotten turned around. As gracefully as possible, the torch bearers turn it around and fit it in.

Having inserted the bridge, the torch bearers turn towards the tabernacle and bow towards it. They return to stand in front of their seats.

As the thurifer takes the thurible up to the celebrant, the torch bearers go to the credence table. One takes up the water cruet, the other the lavabo bowl and the finger towel. The torch bearer with the cruet stands to the right, the other to the left. The water cruet is held in two hands. The bowl is held in two hands, with the finger towel draped over the left forearm, close to the wrist. The finger towel is not unfolded all the way, but only once, so as to drape it. As soon as the thurifer has finished incensing the celebrant and is starting to move out of the way, the torch bearers go up to the celebrant. The bowl is held at a convenient height while a tablespoon or two of water is poured over the celebrant's fingers. The celebrant may move his fingers slightly to signal that enough water has been poured. The celebrant takes the finger towel and dries his fingers, then drops the towel back on the forearm of the server, who should present his arm to make this easy for the celebrant. The celebrant and the torch bearers bow to each other. The torch bearers then go to the credence table and replace the cruet, bowl, and towel. They do this as quickly as possible, and turn around where they stand, to be incensed. They then walk along *on the first step* until they are past the thurifer and the boat boy, and so return to their places.

During the Canon of the Mass

After exhorting the people "Let us give thanks ...", the celebrant chants the preface to the Canon of the Mass. Most usually, this preface concludes with a section that begins with the word "Therefore". This word is taken as the signal for the servers to start moving to the front of the altar. The servers should nonetheless watch the MC, particularly at solemnities such as Christmas, which has a special preface that does not contain this word. The MC should give a glance to the servers when the celebrant has nearly finished the preface and it is time to move into position.

The torch bearers take up their torches. Torch bearer two starts towards the center of the altar as soon as the thurifer and the boat boy are even with the sacristy door. Torch bearer one follows the boat boy. The torch bearers station themselves at the foot of the altar, their inside shoulders in line with the sides of the base of the altar (not the ends of the table). When the Benedictus ("Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.") ends, each torch bearer places the end of his torch on the first step, against the riser, and kneels on the first step.

When the congregation and choir have finished the great Amen, the torch bearers, the thurifer, and the boat boy stand and return to their places. Once again, torch bearer one should stand beside his seat until the thurifer and the boat boy have passed him on their way back to their places. The torch bearers now do not stand in front of their seats, but move back next to the thurifer, who should now be standing in front of what to this point was the crucifer's seat.

During the communion service

At the celebrant's invitation to the congregation to give each other a sign of peace, each server greets at least one other server. The greetings exchanged should not be overly demonstrative, and should be concluded before most of the congregation have concluded theirs. After the chant

“Therefore let us keep the feast, [alleluia]” the servers all kneel on the first step, the same time at which the congregation kneels.

About the time that the “Lamb of God” verses are chanted, the celebrant may go to the tabernacle to take out the ciborium with the reserved Sacrament. All servers keep their eyes on the tabernacle as it is opened and the Sacrament removed.

When the crucifer rings the bell simultaneously with the celebrant striking his breast while preparing himself for communion, all the servers rise. The thurifer and the crucifer ordinarily are the cupbearer and the paten bearer, respectively, and they kneel on the top step facing the front of the altar. The torch bearers and the boat boy also kneel on the top step, but facing the altar from the side. The celebrant communicates all the servers in the Body of Christ. Ordinarily, the MC will have received communion at the earlier Mass. If he has not already received, then the celebrant will communicate the MC in the Precious Blood. In either event, the cup bearer will communicate the torch bearers and the boat boy in the Blood of Christ. When all have received the Precious Blood, all rise together and retire to kneel on the first step, as far forward as possible. Torch bearer two should kneel farthest forward, torch bearer one next to him, and the boat boy last in line.

After communion

After the communion, the celebrant is most likely to return a ciborium to the tabernacle. Once again, all servers will keep their eyes on the tabernacle as this is done. As soon as the tabernacle is closed, the torch bearers rise and go to take the bridge out of the communion rail. If the tabernacle was not opened *and* the celebrant does not take a ciborium toward it by the time the MC and cupbearer have replaced the chalices on the altar, then the torch bearers should rise at that time to take out the bridge. Should they misjudge the situation and actually be up and about when the celebrant is going to the tabernacle, then they must stop where they are and look to the tabernacle until it is closed. They then go on to finish what they were doing. Having replaced the bridge, they return to kneel on the first step, as far to the front as possible so as to leave ample room for the cup bearer to go back and forth to the sacristy.

The instant the congregation has finished saying “Thanks be to God” in response to the celebrant’s dismissal, the torch bearers take up their torches and go in the usual way, torch bearer two in front of the thurifer, torch bearer one following the boat boy, to the foot of the altar, taking up the positions they had when they first entered the sanctuary. Exactly when the celebrant turns around to face the aisle, the torch bearers turn, too, and follow the thurifer in the procession to the sacristy.

After Mass

In the sacristy after the Mass, the torch bearers remain standing with their torches still alight until the celebrant has led the group in a short prayer. They then extinguish the torches and replace them in their holders.

At the Sunday solemn Mass, the Angelus immediately follows. The servers take off their cottas as quickly as they can and go out with the celebrant. All stand in front of the pulpit until the closing hymn has been concluded. The celebrant goes forward to the center of the pavement, and the servers move forward past the pulpit, forming up in two ranks, in any order.

At the verse “And the Word was made flesh,” all genuflect. When the Angelus is concluded, all genuflect to reverence the Sacrament in the tabernacle, then go to the sacristy.

The torch bearers, still vested in their cassocks, immediately go to extinguish the candles. This is done by holding the cup of the extinguisher over the flame for about three to five seconds. It is important to extinguish the light completely, that is, not to leave the wick glowing. When the flame has died but there is an ember, a bit of smoke will be generated. It is best to wait a couple of seconds after the smoke appears to be sure that the spark, too, has been extinguished. The cup must not be pressed down and ought not actually touch any part of the candle, particularly when wax candles are being extinguished. Pressing down presses the wick into the wax and makes it very difficult to relight.

The torch bearers extinguish the altar lights exactly in reverse order of the way they lit them. They go out together and genuflect in front of the altar. They extinguish first the candles on the altar, then the candles in back, starting with the ones farthest from the tabernacle. Bowing to the tabernacle, they go down to the pavement. They do not bow again to the tabernacle but go directly to the Virgin’s shrine to extinguish the two candles there. Coming back to the foot of the altar, they genuflect towards the tabernacle and return to the sacristy.

Every server is responsible for hanging up his cassock and cotta, and any other vestment he has taken off the rack.

In solemn procession

On some occasions, the entrance procession will start not in the sacristy but in the church foyer. There is otherwise nothing different about this procession.

Solemn processions are those which, after the entrance procession, begin from the altar and make the circuit of the church. If there is to be a solemn procession, the crucifer, when the entrance procession reaches the sanctuary, does not put the cross into its holder in back of the altar. He instead stops at the foot of the altar, lining up with the other servers, to the left of the torch bearer on the left side, the sacristy side. After all have lined up, the celebrant will reverence the altar and then put incense on the coals in the usual way. He then chants an antiphon to the processional hymn. As he turns around, all turn with him, turning towards the center. The procession then proceeds in the usual order, the thurifer leading and the torch bearers following him. The torch bearers keep the same pace as the rest of the procession, and maintain a distance of about two yards between themselves and the thurifer.

The procession goes up the main aisle, then down the south aisle. The Sacrament in the tabernacle is *not* revered as the procession passes in front of it to the north aisle. The procession ends by passing down the main aisle. Again, all go into the sanctuary and take the places they held before the solemn procession began, including the crucifer. There then occurs what is called a “station” at the foot of the altar. Theoretically, it is a pause in the procession to chant a prayer. In this case, the station ends the solemn procession. When the prayer ends, the crucifer immediately goes directly up the altar steps and puts the cross into its holder in back of the altar. All others remain in their places. From this point the Mass proceeds in the usual way.