



DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

2110 Broadway • Sacramento, California 95818 • 916/733-0200 • Fax 916/733-0215

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DECREE OF PROMULGATION Guidelines for Servers

In order to foster the worthy, reverent, and orderly celebration of the Sacred Liturgy, through which God is rightly worshipped and the faithful are sanctified; in order to promote the spiritual and liturgical formation of those called to serve at the altar in the Diocese of Sacramento; after having carefully considered the current liturgical discipline and consulted with the clergy and others entrusted with the liturgical and pastoral life of the Diocese;

I, the Most Reverend Jaime Soto, by virtue of my office and authority as Bishop of Sacramento, do hereby promulgate these revised Guidelines for Servers in the Diocese of Sacramento and declare that they are to serve as the particular norms governing the selection, formation, conduct, and ministry of altar servers throughout the Diocese.

These Guidelines are intended to ensure that those who serve at the altar fulfill their ministry with reverence, devotion, and fidelity, thereby contributing to the dignified celebration of the Sacred Mysteries and deepening their own participation in the life and mission of the Church.

Given at the Pastoral Center in Sacramento, California, this 8th day of July, in the Year of Our Lord, 2026.

+ Jaime Soto
Bishop of Sacramento

Uli Schmitt
Chancellor



Diocese of Sacramento Guidelines for Servers

Revised and updated July 8, 2026

Title

The ministry of server, like all ministries, arises from the sacrament of Baptism and is rooted in a call to service. Servers minister to the worshipping assembly by assisting the presider, especially at the presider's chair and the altar during Mass or other liturgies. For this reason, they are called "servers." The word "acolyte" is to be avoided so as not to confuse this ministry with the more formal instituted ministry of acolyte.

Requirements

Servers must have received the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist. Youth who have not yet received the sacrament of Confirmation may serve. The minimum age and scheduling procedures are left to the pastor's discretion. The recommended minimum age for youth is roughly the fourth grade. Adults are welcome as well. Both males and females are eligible. Including children and young people honors their presence among the faithful, involves them in the liturgy, and is beneficial for the Catholic Faith formation of both young men and young women.

If desired, it is possible to schedule servers in family groups that includes parents.

Servers are expected to be appropriately prepared, eager to serve God and His People, and committed to giving their time and talent to their parish community. They should be able to understand the sacred nature of the Eucharistic celebration and the other liturgical rites.

Servers should be mature enough to understand their responsibilities and to carry them out with the dignity, grace, and reverence befitting the liturgy. They should actively participate in the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church.

All adults in the ministry (server coordinators, other leaders in server ministry, and servers 18 years old or older) must have a background check through the parish and current diocesan safe environment training before they engage in any ministry or are with young people in trainings, meetings, socials, etc.

Formation

Training and formation of servers should occur before they are commissioned. It should include instruction on the basics of the liturgical year, the Mass and its various parts, and other rites of the Church. Servers should know the names and purpose of sacred items and how to handle them in a reverent and respectful way. They should be trained in how to move around the church in a dignified and unobtrusive manner.

Formation, too, must be concerned with the intention and spiritual disposition of the server and allow for a period of discernment. Once initial training and formation is complete, the candidate is blessed by the local pastor or his delegate at a Mass or other public gathering using *Book of Blessings* #1847-1870.

Practice of Ministry

According to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM, 119.c), servers wear a white alb and, when needed, a white cincture. Cassock and surplice are reserved to Priests who are not involved in a liturgical role (cf. Ceremonial of Bishops, 65-67). The vestments should be clean and properly fit. Appropriate and dignified footwear should be worn. There is no need for a pectoral cross or other adornments.

Since the role of server is integral to the normal celebration of the Mass, servers should be assigned to assist. On Sundays and other more important occasions, at least four servers should be utilized; at funerals, at least five.

Servers may carry the processional cross, processional candles, the thurible and incense; present the gifts to be offered or assist the Priest when he receives them from members of the assembly; wash the hands of the Priest; and hold the Missal or rite book when the Priest or Deacon is not at the altar (see GIRM, #100, #187-190 and #193). They hold the intercessions for the Universal Prayer enabling the Priest to assume the orans position at the conclusion of the intercessions. Additional functions may be required during other rites. It is recommended not to replace a server with furniture, such as a lectern to hold the Missal at the chair, placing the Missal on the altar during the Introductory Rites or using a table at the side of the altar to hold the vessels for wine, water, and washing of the hands.

The processional cross is put away in a dignified place if there is already a prominent crucifix in the sanctuary.

Liturgical movement or processions should take place in front of the altar. This is especially the case when the tabernacle is directly behind the altar. Servers should generally avoid crossing between the altar and the tabernacle. This helps to maintain the same liturgical orientation as the assembly toward the sacred places, altar, tabernacle, ambo, and presider's chair.

The server is a member of the assembly who assists the Priest and Deacon during the Eucharist and other liturgical ceremonies so that the liturgy can be conducted with grace and reverence. 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.

Servers may not distribute holy communion unless they are Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion who have been mandated for this function by the diocesan Bishop. Duplication of liturgical ministries by any one minister is to be avoided when possible.

Servers should be seated in or near the sanctuary in a place where they can easily assist the Priest and Deacon.

Vocations

Servers should be given ample opportunity to reflect on the vocation of all baptized people. We are all called to holiness of life conforming ourselves to the image of Christ. Time should be given to reflect on the various vocations to which one may be called by Christ: the priesthood, diaconate, vowed religious life, and lay ecclesial ministry, as well as married and single life. Priests and Deacons should be present for server gatherings.