

Fall 2007

# St. Mary's Customary For Acolytes





# Welcome, Acolyte

“I will go unto the altar of God, even the God of my joy and gladness.”

Perhaps the most distinctive quality of our Episcopal/Anglican tradition is our liturgy, rich in movement, color, music, and deep in its sources and meanings. The word “liturgy” simply means “work of the people,” thus everyone plays an active part in our worship together. Those of us who are called and privileged to serve at the altar are standing very close to the center of things, and everything we do, from the way we stand to how we interact with each other is a reflection of this.

Two things to keep in mind as you undertake serving God as an acolyte.

First, the liturgy cannot be completed alone. The Eucharist cannot be said by a priest by him/herself, and here at St. Mary’s we have many participants. Just like God’s world. We are members of the body of Christ and our lives, our health, our well-being depend on each other. The customs of bowing toward each other and the reminder that acolytes, chalicists, and priests need to watch each other is a lesson we need to keep in mind beyond the vesting room and the sanctuary.

Second is the unending movement of our lives toward the altar of God. Our processions end when we are all in place and ready to begin offering our thanksgiving to God, when we are attentive to the Word, ready to serve Christ. We do this week by week, but hopefully, this one movement toward God each week is not the only one.

So, together we take up the work of liturgy with enough care to take it seriously and enough humility to learn from our mistakes. This customary will be a great aide to all who join our ranks and to those of us who need to be reminded of how important this ministry is from time to time. The work we do, all of it as an acolyte, points not to us or to St. Mary’s but to God. May we approach our work at the altar with joy and a sense that we are not alone.

We are delighted you feel called to this ministry to help lead God’s people in worship. Being an acolyte is a privilege because it is always a privilege to serve God.

Jenn+

## About being an acolyte at St. Mary's

Our mission as acolytes is to make the service run smoothly so that the attention of the congregation can be only on worship. The complete service requires certain people and it will not run well if fewer hands are there to help. Thus, that you arrive on time and when you are scheduled is really important. Please arrive at St. Mary's **at least 20 minutes** prior to your scheduled service.

Our liturgy is part of our response to our belief that God shows up at St. Mary's and we, as acolytes, behave accordingly. There are several conventions and practices that each acolyte should understand. Some important ones are listed here. You are not like a drill team, by any means, however, certain movements are hoped for:

- ??Square corners in turning are desirable, as an easy turn, not a tight spin:)
- ??When acolytes are walking together, they should be side by side, not walking at different paces.
- ??When turning around, always turn toward the center unless you are in the middle, then just turn.
- ??Where there are lots of acolytes, like a thurifer plus crucifer and torches, don't walk on the heels of the persons ahead of you.
- ??Don't run. We have plenty of time during the service and running is not appropriate, even if you forgot to do something.

Finally, how we dress is very important. Even though the vestments seem to cover everything, around the feet we must be very careful not to distract the congregation. Tennis shoes, flip flops, casual sandals, and really bright colored shoes are not appropriate. High heels are also not appropriate due to the slippery wood and the many steps around the altar. We have had too many scary falls attributed to high heels. If possible, **dark dress shoes are preferred**. As Streeter points out, they just look better and will make your whole experience more enjoyable (OK, not really—but try anyway!).

## About using this booklet

The organization of this customary is not complex.

A heading marks the beginning of a major part of the service. Next is a description of what is going on from the congregation's perspective and will be underlined. Below that is a section describing what we are doing at the time. Titles of participants are in bold (ex: **Crucifer**) so they are easier to find if you are looking up what you are supposed to do.

Diagrams are sometimes included too.

And if you are confused by terms used, the final page is a map of St. Mary's with all the names we use.

## **BEFORE THE SERVICE**

### Arrival

- ? Please arrive **at least 20 minutes** prior to your scheduled service.
- ? Go to the Acolyte Vesting Room (off the elevator lobby) and get dressed there. Feel free to leave items such as coats and bags there. Also, remember that parishioners may be praying in the nave while you are vesting. Please try to keep the noise level to a minimum.

### Torch Bearers

- ? Wear a red cassock with a white cotta over it. Please make sure the vestments fit properly. The red cassock should be to your ankles and the cotta to your waist, if not a bit longer.
- ? Once dressed, retrieve the torches from the front of the sanctuary and proceed to the Paca Parish Hall. Light the torches there.

### Crucifer

- ? Wear an alb with cincture knotted at the left hip. Cincture should be knee length, the alb should be to your ankles.
- ? The Crucifer should begin lighting the candles at least 10 minutes before the service.

### Thurifer

- ? Same dress as a Crucifer.
- ? You must begin lighting the thurible at least 20 minutes before the service.

### Lighting the Candles—the Crucifer

- ? Use the taper/candle lighter in the short hallway behind the sanctuary. Go behind the altar. Walk up the steps, reverence the altar, and first light the candles on the altar.
- ? After you finish lighting the candles on the altar, stand in the center and reverence the altar. Next light the four large floor candles/pavement candles. When you are done lighting the candles, reverence again and return the candlelighter to its holder.
- ? Now get the cross and go to the Paca Parish Hall to join the other acolytes and ministers.

## THE ENTRANCE

### An organ prelude

The **Acolytes**, **Choir**, and **Ministers** gather in the PACA Hall, fully vested with all implements, at least 5 minutes before the service. The candles have already been lighted by the **Crucifer**. The **Celebrant** says a brief prayer. The **Acolytes** then line up for the procession. Remember that the **Acolytes** set the tone for the service.

If there is a **Thurifer**, s/he lines up first with the **Boat bearer**. The **Thurifer** holds the thurible in his/her right hand with the other hand across his/her chest (like the pledge of allegiance). The **Boat bearer** stands to the left of the **Thurifer**, holding the boat with both hands.

The **Crucifer** and **Torch Bearers** line up side by side with the **Crucifer** in the middle. The **Crucifer** should hold the cross high, with hands on either side of the brass or completely below the brass. **Torch Bearers** hold their torches at the same height, and straight so no wax is spilled.

### Figure 1—The Order of Procession (optional participants)

(Boat) (Thurifer)  
Torch Crucifer Torch  
Choir  
Chalicists  
Ministers  
Celebrant

Note: The exit procession is identical except the absence of the choir.

### The Opening Hymn

When the congregation begins to sing the opening hymn, the **Thurifer** (if present) or **Crucifer** steps off, keeping a steady, even pace. As acolytes, you set the pace for the procession and the beginning of the liturgy. *You can never walk too slow.*

All **acolytes** should be in unison and in lines straight across. This involves an awareness of the person next to you.

As you get to the top of the altar steps and enter the sanctuary, the following happens:

- ?? The **Thurifer** and **Boat bearer** make a simple bow before the altar, turn right and go behind the altar to wait for the **Celebrant**.
- ?? The **Crucifer** and **Torch Bearers** stop together. The **Torch bearers** make a simple nod of reverence toward the altar (not a bow, due to your torches!). The **Crucifer** does not reverence but waits for the **Torch bearers**. As the direction of the **Crucifer**, the group turns to the right, proceeds down the steps and around to the Reserve Sacrament/Tabernacle.

While the **Crucifer** continues to walk, the **Torch bearers** pause to place their torches in their appointed position, extinguishing the candles. The **Torch bearers** take their seats and join the singing of the opening hymn with the congregation.

The **Crucifer** continues behind the altar, through the arch to the nave, and down the center aisle of the nave to lead the children to Children's Chapel. The **Crucifer** then returns to the sanctuary via the downstairs hallway and the stairs near the nursery. The **Crucifer** waits until the congregation is singing to reenter the sanctuary. The **Crucifer** then places the cross in its stand—making sure it faces the congregation—and joins the service.

When the **Celebrant** gets behind the altar, the **Thurifer** hands off the thurible to the **Celebrant** when asked and waits behind the altar. After the altar is censed by the **Celebrant**, unless there is a Gospel Procession (Christmas and Easter), the **Thurifer** and **Boat bearer** exit the sanctuary, leave the thurible in the sacristy sink, and return to the service.

## **DURING THE SERVICE**

### The Service of the Word

During the service, please remember that you are part of the congregation and a full participant in the service. Also, remember that you are in the sanctuary, in full view of all of the participants in the service, from the ministers to the full congregation. Please do your best not to whisper (unless you have to!), swing your legs, chew gum, etc...

(The Gospel—if there is a procession)

After responding “Thanks be to God” to the second lesson, as soon as the Sequence Hymn begins, **all acolytes** arise. The **Torch Bearers** get their torches and light them immediately. The **Crucifer** joins them but does not get the cross.

The **Thurifer** and **Boat bearer** approach the **Celebrant** who adds more incense to the thurible and blesses the incense.

After the torches and lit and more smoke has been made, following the Deacon’s lead, all line up (not the **Boat bearer**) in the following order, in front of the altar and facing the altar:

### **Figure 2—The Gospel Procession**

#### **ALTAR**

Deacon

Torch Crucifer Torch

Thurifer

The **Deacon** will reverence the altar, pick up the Gospel Book, and turn. All will turn on the **Deacon’s** turn.

The **Thurifer** will step off, swinging the thurible (no 360s). After about 8 pews, the **Thurifer** will step to the right. The **Crucifer, Torch Bearers** and **Deacon** will pass the **Thurifer**. The **Thurifer** will follow the **Deacon**.

The **Crucifer** and **Torch Bearers** will continue about 4 more pews past the **Thurifer**, turn around, and stop. The **Torch Bearers** will face each other in the aisle. The **Crucifer** will hold out his/her hand into which the **Deacon** will place the gospel book.

The **Deacon** will sing/say: The Holy Gospel + of our Lord Jesus Christ according to \_\_\_\_\_.

The **Thurifer** will then hand the thurible to the **Deacon** who will cense the gospel book and then hand the thurible back to the **Thurifer**.

The **Thurifer** will then return to the front of the aisle, turn to face the gospel, and gently swing the thurible in front of him/herself while the gospel is read/chanted.

At the end of the gospel, the **Deacon** will say/sing: “The Gospel of the Lord.”

When the Gospel is completed, the **Deacon** will take the book, stepping to the side. The **Thurifer** turns to the right, and goes out to put the thurible in the Sacristy, quickly and quietly returning to the sanctuary for the sermon. The **Crucifer** and **Torch bearers** will walk past the **Deacon** and process in like at the opening procession, putting away their implements quickly and quietly and sitting for the sermon. The **Deacon** follows the **Crucifer** and **Torch Bearers**, reverencing the altar and then carrying the gospel to his/her seat.

## The Creed

If there is incense, after the sermon, as the Creed begins, the **Thurifer** and **Boat bearer** exit the sanctuary and go to the vesting room. Without removing the old coals, they add 1 1/2 new coals (broken) to the thurible, light them, and get them nice and hot as quickly as possible. Close the door to keep noise to a minimum.

The **Thurifer** and **Boat bearer** must reenter the sanctuary during the Peace. They share the peace and then remain behind the altar.

## The Offertory

After the Announcements and the Offertory Sentence, both **Torch bearers** immediately go to the front of the altar—walking side by side—to receive the gifts of bread and wine. Take the gifts, turn toward the center, walk up the steps, hand them to the **Deacon**, bow, and then return to the side of the altar.

The **Crucifer** stands behind the altar, helping the **Deacon** prepare the altar, taking implements to the credence table and bringing the **Deacon** what s/he asks for. *Each Deacon may do things differently, so listen and follow the directions of the Deacon.*

Meanwhile, one **Torch Bearer** goes to the credence table. Take a towel and place it over your left forearm. Take the lavabo bowl and water. Turn to the **Celebrant**. The **Celebrant** will place his/her hands over the bowl and you pour water (don't be afraid—more than a trickle!) over the **Celebrant's** hands. When the **Celebrant** places the towel back on your arm, return the towel and bowl to the table. This custom of hand washing comes from the 26th Psalm—check it out.

The other **Torch Bearer** goes to the credence table and gets the offering plate. The **Torch Bearer** waits to the side of the sanctuary until the ushers begin to walk down the aisle. When they begin down the aisle, go to the front of the altar and wait, holding the offering plate vertically (up and down).

When the ushers line up in front of you, walk down and holding the plate horizontally, gather the offering from left to right. After receiving the offering, turn and walk up the stairs, reverence the altar, and go to your left around the altar to the **Celebrant**. The **Celebrant** will take the offering and give it back. When the **Celebrant** bows in thanks to you, bow back and then bring the offering to the credence table and go to your seat.

If there is incense, at the beginning of the Offertory, the **Thurible** and **Boat bearer** approach the **Celebrant** who adds more incense and blesses it. The **Thurifer** then waits behind the altar until the **Celebrant** goes to the altar and turns for the thurible. The **Celebrant** will then cense the altar. The **Boat bearer** stays behind the altar.

When the thurible is handed back, the **Thurifer** goes to the front of the altar, turns to the altar, and bows to the ministers. S/he then swings the thurible in 3 directions, *center, left, right*. The **Thurifer** bows again, then turns to face the congregation. The **Thurifer** bows, then swings the thurible again in 3 directions, *center, left, right*. Bow once more, then go to the kneeler to the right of the altar and stand.

## The Eucharistic Prayer

The **Torch Bearers** and **Boat bearer** come to the altar rail, kneeling when the congregation kneels.

The **Crucifer** kneels by the bell and, at the moments marked in the BCP, strikes the bell once. This happens immediately after the **Celebrant** says “Do this for the remembrance of me.” This action will take place twice during the Eucharistic Prayer.

The **Thurifer** kneels with the congregation to the right of the altar on the cushion, holding the thurible in both hands. Each time the **Crucifer** rings the bell, swing the thurible in small swings 3 times toward the chalice in the center of the altar. This will happen twice. At the end of the Eucharistic Prayer, when the **Celebrant** begins to sing again— “By whom, and with whom, and in whom...” - the **Thurifer** swings the thurible toward the altar in small swings until all sing “Amen.”

After the Lord’s Prayer begins, the **Thurifer** rises, exits out the back door, quickly and quietly returns the thurible to the sacristy, and reenters quietly to receive communion.

## **THE RETIRING PROCESSION**

### The Closing Hymn

At the start of the closing hymn, the **Thurifer** goes to the sacristy, retrieves the thurible, and returns immediately to the sanctuary. The **Thurifer** and **Boat bearer** approach the **Celebrant** who adds incense and blesses it.

At the start of the closing hymn, the **Crucifer** retrieves the candlelighter and proceeds to put out the candles in the reverse order in which they were lit. First, walk up the steps from behind the altar, reverence the altar, and put out all four pavement candles beginning with the one on your right. Then proceed to put out the four pavement candles, holding the taper high and straight above the candle.

When finished, return to the center of the altar, reverence, return the candlelighter to its holder, get the cross, and prepare to process out.

At the start of the closing hymn, the **Torch bearers** retrieve their torches, light them, and wait to process out, one on each side behind the altar.

*Note to all:* Do not step off before you have the signal of the **Celebrant**.

When present, the **Thurifer** and **Boat bearer** will lead the procession, walking to the front of the altar, turning to the congregation, and walking out swinging the thurible.

The **Crucifer** and one **Torch Bearer** begin walking from the left side and the other **Torch Bearer** from the right side. The **Crucifer** will meet the other **Torch Bearer** in front of the altar, turn toward the congregation, pause to make sure all are in a line, and step off down the center aisle. Remember, the **Torch Bearers** carry torches at the same height and are in a straight line with the **Crucifer**.

When the congregation is dismissed, return your torches and the cross to their places. The **Thurifer** returns the thurible to the sacristy. And all return their vestments. Be proud of yourself for serving so well. Thank you!









