

St. Michael the Archangel

Server Training Manual



St. Tarcisius - Patron of Altar Servers and the Youth

St. Tarcisius was a twelve year old altar server during one the fierce Roman persecutions of the third century.

Each day, from a secret meeting place in the catacombs where the Christians gathered for Mass, a deacon would be sent to the prisons to carry the Eucharist to those Christians condemned to die. At one point, there was no deacon to send and St. Tarcisius was sent carrying the Blessed Sacrament to those in prison.



On the way, he was stopped and recognized as a Christian. A small mob demanded the Blessed Sacrament and turned upon the saint with fury when he refused to do so. He went down under the blows, protecting the Eucharist from those who wanted to desecrate it.

The saint died from his injuries and was buried in the cemetery of St. Callistus, until his relics were claimed by the church of San Silvestro in Capote.

In the fourth century, Pope St. Damasus wrote a poem about this “boy-martyr of the Eucharist” who suffered death rather than give up the Sacred Body of Christ.

St. Tarcisius is the patron saint of altar servers and is an example of youth courage and Christian. Youth is no barrier to holiness. The call to holiness begins at Baptism and we do not have to wait for the old age and gray hair to serve God.

Youthful saints tell us something about sanctity, and their example is especially luminous as they dedicate their young lives to God.

The Role of the Altar

The altar server plays a very important role in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. **His or her immediate primary duty is to assist the presiding priest. By reverently serving the priest, he or she is assisting the entire congregation to enter into praise and worship of Almighty God in the sacred liturgy.**



The altar server remains in full view of *everyone* throughout the Liturgy and is in a unique position to model Christian prayer, worship, reverence, respect, humility, dignity, and modesty for the entire community.

The Responsibilities/Duties of the Altar Server During the Mass

- Carry the Crucifix or a lit candle in the opening procession the altar
- Present the Roman Missal (the book) to the Priest/Bishop and hold it open and still for him as he prays from it
- Escort and honor the Gospel Book during the Gospel Reading

- Present the binder containing the Prayer of of the Faithful to the priest and deacon
- Help prepare and set-up the altar for the Liturgy of the Eucharist during Mass
- Stand to the left and right of the priest at the foot of the sanctuary in order to the Offertory Gifts from representatives of the assembled community
- Pour water over the priest's or bishop's hands as he prays the washing away of his personal sins. Have the finger towel ready for him to dry his hands
- After the distribution of Holy Communion, accept the vessels and return them tot he credence table
- Prepare, carry, and present the thurible and the boat at those times and on those occasions when incense is used in the Liturgy
- Pray and listen attentively during the Liturgy



Scheduling

The altar server is expected to make a serious and firm commitment to his/her duties and responsibilities.

Since most altar servers are not yet of age to drive a car, it must be pointed out that the altar server's parents or guardians are themselves expected to make a serious and firm commitment to their sons' and daughters' altar service.

- **The altar server is to arrive at least 15 minutes prior to his or her scheduled liturgy, and must sign in as notice of his or her presence**
- **The altar server is responsible for finding his or her own substitute when he or she is unable to serve as scheduled**
- **Mark your calendars as soon as you receive a schedule. Keep your roster of altar servers should you ever need to secure a substitute. Do not call the office, the rectory, or any parish authority asking to find a substitute; the responsibility is yours**
(Continues)

- **If an altar server comes to have three (3) “unexcused absences,” he or she will not be scheduled to serve after that. An “unexcused absence” is defined as a failure to either (1) to appear and serve as scheduled or (2) to secure a substitute when circumstances beyond your control prevent you serving as a scheduled.**

Behavior Expected of an Altar Server

You are in God’s house and serving before His altar. Proper behavior is respectful to God and of all people in the Church you are leading prayer

- **Walking** - Walk with your shoulders back, with a straight back, and with your head held high
- **Kneeling** - Your body is to be upright. No not slump, slouch, or sit back on your heels
- **Standing** - Stand straight and tall with both feet firmly planted on the floor. Do not lean against furniture, walls, or other supports. No not slouch. Keep your shoulders back, back straight, and head up
- **Sitting** - Sit still. Do not fidget. Sit up straight, place your hands in your lap and keep them still

- **Hands** - Hands should be kept flat together, fingers pointing up, in front of your chest—unless you are sitting down or carrying something. If you have a free hand, it lays flat in your chest
- **Mouth** - Do not talk during Mass. **In order to receive the Holy Eucharist, every Catholic is required to fast one hour before the reception Holy Communion. The server is required and expected to honor fast. NO CHEWING GUM.**

Dress Code

- Dress properly: meaning cleanly, modestly, and “dressier” (more formally). The altar server must dress appropriately even though his or her clothing will not show underneath their cassock during Mass
- **Wear dress shoes.** Shoes are the only thing the alb does not cover and is very noticeable as a result. **Black dress shoes are the norm. Athletic shoes, flip-flops (that includes Birkenstocks and Chacos), and high heels are not appropriate footwear**



- The altar server wears cassock and surplice

Before/Preceding the Start of the Liturgy

- The altar server is to arrive in the sacristy at St. Michaels at least **15 minutes** before mass begins

- Altar server is to sign-in on the monitor

- Do not be loud in the sacristy

- The altar server is to vest in order to attend to pre-liturgical duties

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- The altar server is to light the candles for use in the Liturgy. Use a gold candle lighter when lighting the candles. The Easter candle is lit during the Easter season, for Baptisms, and for the Rite of Christian Burials (funeral masses)
- The altar server is to help set-up and check that the credence table has been set

- The thurifer is responsible to put three charcoals in the thurible, light it (this must be done 10 minutes before mass), and see if the boat needs to be refilled
- The altar server is assigned a role to play at each liturgy in which he or she serves. One's role may be cross bearer, candle bearer, thurifer, and/or book bearer. Extra servers assist setting up and cleaning up the altar
- **The altar server is to be standing ready to go in the sacristy no less than five minutes before the scheduled start of Mass. The Processional Crucifix and lit processional candle are to be ready at hand**



The Holy Mass

The Introductory Rites of Mass

- **The Entrance**



Walk shoulder to shoulder with your partner. Candle bearers are to maintain the candles at the same height as one another, and to hold them straight. The Crucifix bearer is to hold the crucifix straight up and down. All held items are to be kept still and are not to be swaying as they are carried. Walk slowly, evenly, and dignified down the aisle. Neither weave nor waver: maintain a straight line and continuous pace

- **Procession Order:**

- ♦ Thurifer
- ♦ Crucifix bearer
- ♦ Candle bearers walking (walking two by two) side by side, flanking the crucifix bearer
- ♦ Altar servers with nothing in their hands



- **Once in the Sanctuary (*For the thurifer)**
 - ✦ *If there is a thurifer, the thurifer bows to the altar and goes to the left side and stands
 - ✦ The crucifix bearer and candle bearers stop in front of the altar, with the crucifix bearer in the middle and candle bearers flanking on either side
 - ✦ The altar servers are to pause in front, in a straight line, and bow their heads to the tabernacle
 - ✦ After the head bow, they are to immediately head to their seats
 - A. Crucifer and right candle bearer go right
 - B. Left candle bearer will go left
 - C. Candle bearer will place the candles on the tables and crucifer will place the crucifix in the stand
 - ✦ Extra servers wait till crucifer and candles are out of the way, then come to the steps, genuflect to the tabernacle and move to their seats
 - ✦ *After Father and Deacon ascend to the altar and kiss the altar, the thurifer will go to Deacon and hand him the boat. Father will impose incense in the thurible (continue)

♦ *Once Father imposes incense, grab the boat from Deacon and hand Deacon the thurible.

♦ *The thurifer will walk down the steps and wait. Deacon will hand Father the thurible and Father will incense the altar. After he is done, Father will hand Deacon the thurible and pass it off to the thurifer. Thurifer will walk behind the tabernacle and place the thurible in the stand

1. If there is no deacon, the thurifer will just hand off to Father

• **Beginning of Mass and The Collect**

♦ Holding the Roman Missal

♦ Stand slightly to the right of the Priest or Bishop at the designated times. He needs to be able to read the book, but also see the people. The book must be held steady and high enough so the presider can read from it

♦ The bottom of the book must be held firmly and still with both hands, and with the top of the book leaning against the upper part of your chest. Make sure the book is right side up



Liturgy of the Word

Sit quietly and listen attentively to the Scripture readings, including the Psalms

- After the Psalm, the thurifer and candle bearers will grab their items and wait in position
 - ✦ Candle bearers stand next to the table, towards the congregation side, and the thurifer will stand behind the presiders chair
- **The Gospel**
 - **Procession**
 - After the second reading, Deacon will stand and Father for his blessing
 - ✦ *The thurifer will go to Father and hand the Deacon the boat. Go to Father and Father will impose incense in the thurible. Grab the boat from Deacon and go to the left side of the left candle bearer
 - ✦ Once the Deacon stands, candle bearers will then proceed to the foot of the altar and align themselves with the pillar, facing the pillar itself
 - ✦ *If a Deacon is not present, once Father stands, proceed to your position (continues)

- ♦ ****If a Bishop is present, the thurifer will go on one knee when Bishop imposes the incense**
- The priest or deacon will then head to the front of the altar to grab the Book of the Gospels and turn towards the congregation
- **Once Father or Deacon takes a step, candle bearers will turn toward each other and take three steps**
 - ♦ ***On the third step*, they will turn towards the congregation (they should be walking side to side)**
 - ♦ **They will clear the carpet and walk down the stairs**
 - ♦ **Once they do that, *they will take two steps and turn (at the same time) towards the ambo and proceed in front of it.* They will face each other and hold their candles level to each other. Remain still and listen to the Gospel**
- ***Thurifer - Once Father turns, the thurifer will turn and wait for Father**
 - ♦ **Once Father takes a step, the thurifer will turn right and take three steps**
 - ♦ **On the **third step**, the thurifer will turn towards the congregation**
 - ♦ **The thurifer will take **two steps** and on the second step, will turn right towards the prediu**
 - ♦ **The thurifer will take four steps and stop, turn towards the ambo**

- ✦ Deacon will proceed up the ambo and say, “The Lord be with you.”
- ✦ After Deacon says, “A reading from the Gospel of “Gospel writer,”” the thurifer will go up the ambo and hand him the thurifer. After Deacon is done with that, he will hand it back to the thurifer and proceed with the Gospel reading
- After the Gospel is said, the right candle bearer will turn right and go up the stairs; the left candle bearer will follow. Candle bearers will place their candles on the tables like before and go to their seats
- ✦ Right candle bearer will go behind the tabernacle
- *The thurifer will turn around (go right) and go behind the tabernacle and place the thurible in the stand and proceed to their seat

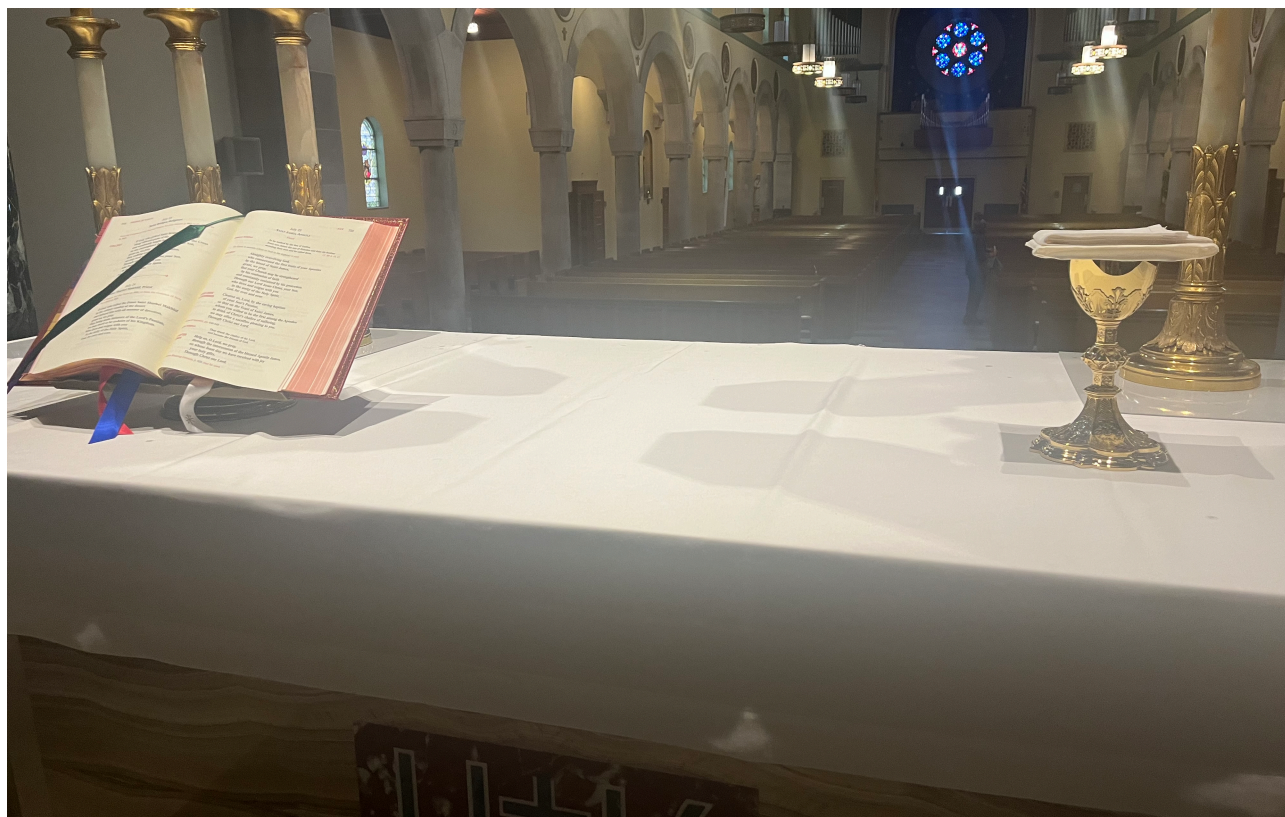
Nicene Creed

- After the Creed, the altar server is to bring the three-ring binder (which contains the Prayers of the Faithful) to the priest. Open it for the priest. The priest will read a brief invitation to prayer, then the altar server is to move over in front of the Deacon so he may read the petitions/intercessions (continues)

- When the Deacon is finished with the petitions, the altar server is to move back in front of the priest so he may read an ending prayer (continues)
- ♦ If the Deacon is not present, stay in front of the priest

Liturgy of the Eucharist

- **Preparation of the Altar and Procession with Gifts**
 - Left candle bearer will grab the celebrant's chalice
 - Right candle bearer will grab the stand and missal
 - Both candle bearers will come up at the same time and place the items on the altar (look at picture)



- Once items are placed, servers will take a step back and head bow
- All other liturgical items will be taken up
- **If only one server is present, missal and stand will be placed first then head over to the chalice and either hand it to Father or Deacon. If neither are at the altar, place chalice on the altar*
- The two candle bearers will accompany the priest to the foot of the sanctuary in order to assist him in receiving the gifts
- The priest will give the gifts to the candle bearers
- The candle bearers then go to the left hand side of the altar by the credence table. If a server has a ciborium with hosts in it, it is to be handed directly to the Priest (or Deacon if one is present) at the altar
 - ♦ **Servers are never to put the bread on the altar themselves.**
They should wait for the Priest or Deacon to receive the bread from them
- The server carrying the wine should wait at the foot of the altar. The other server should pick up the water
- Take the tops off of the cruets (water and wine) and turn the handles to face the tabernacle

- Go up the step together so Father or Deacon can fill the chalice first with wine then a few drops of water
- Turn and go back the credence table. The priest will offer the chalice to God and then will need to purify his hands with water
 - ✦ One server picks up the finger bowl and the water
 - ✦ The other server has the towel, which he or she unfolds



- *If a **thurifer** is present, stand next to the credence table where the chalice was placed
 - ✦ Stand there and go up to Deacon after Father bows
 - ✦ Hand Deacon the boat and Father will impose incense
 - ✦ Grab the boat from Deacon and hand it to him
 - ✦ After Father incenses the altar, Deacon will incense him and the congregation

- ♦ If a Deacon is not present, after Father incenses the altar, the thurifer will incense him (two swings, three times, pause between every two swings) and the congregation (one swing, three times)
- Candle bearers, with water, finger bowl, and towel, will go back to where they were when the priest filled the chalice
- Pour the water over the priest's fingers while he says his prayer
- Then bow to the priest as he bows to you
- Return the water, towel, and bowl to the credence table

The Eucharistic Prayer

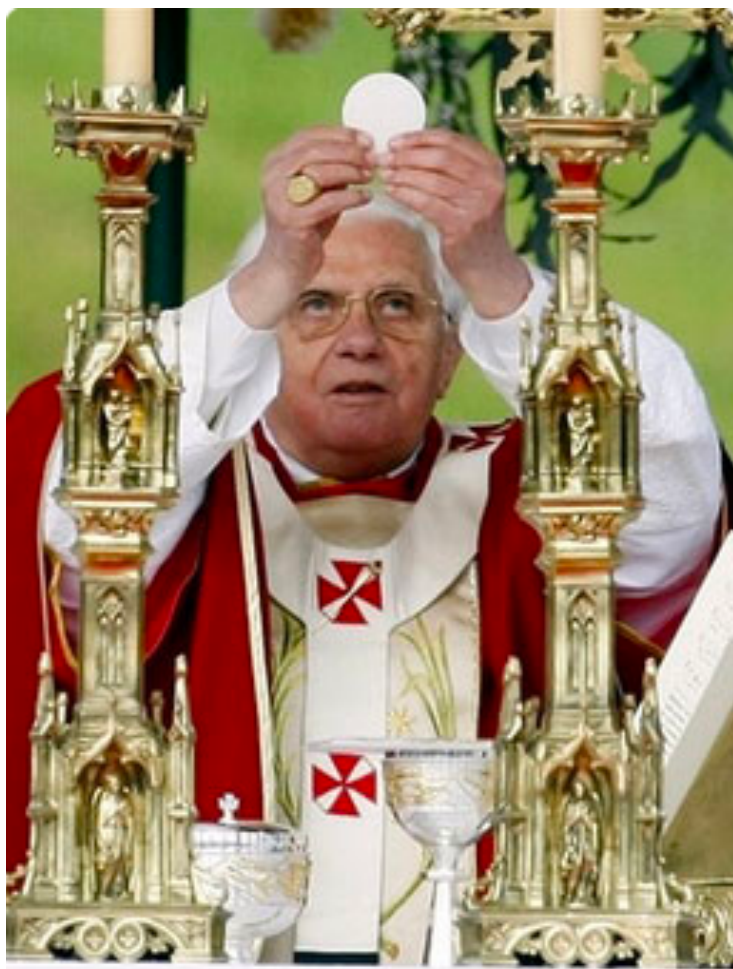
- The priest will say the Prayer over the Gifts and then say the Preface
- You are to stand reverently, straight, and tall with your hands folded in front of you
- During the Sanctus/Holy Holy Holy, all altar servers will take their places at the foot of the altar
- After the Sanctus is finished, kneel

- If you have incense or candles, keep them upright and straight

- **At the Epiclesis (when the priest asks the Holy Spirit to come over the gifts), Father holds his hands flat over the bread and wine, and an altar server rings the bells once, briefly**



- Remain still and pray during the Consecration
- **When the Body of Christ is elevated, an altar server rings the bells 3 short distinct times with a 1-sec break between each ring.**



- *If you have incense, you will incense the Body of Christ and Blood of Christ with 3 double-swings

- If you don't have anything in your hands, it is a pious practice to look at the Host and say to yourself, "My Lord and my God!"

- When the Blood of Christ is elevated the server will again ring the bells 3 short times with a distinct break between each ring
- The server may bow his or her head again and this time to pray silently, **“Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner”**

Communion Rite

- After the Great Amen is said by the congregation, **stand and pray** out-loud the “Our Father” with the priest and the congregation
- At the “Sign of Peace,” split to your sides and head bow your head to your fellow altar servers
- Line up by the credence tables in order to receive the peace from the priest and deacon
- Line-up along the wall and kneel after the Agnus Dei/Lamb of God is done (if one is unable to kneel, everyone must stand)
- After Father drinks from the chalice, stand up and receive Holy Communion



- After you receive Holy Communion, go to your seats and kneel
 - ✦ Thank Jesus for coming to you in the Blessed Sacrament



- When the priest and deacon return to the altar, **stand**.
 - ✦ Everyone will remain standing until either Father or Deacon go to the tabernacle
 - ✦ **When Father or Deacon genuflect/bow, all servers will genuflect**
- After genuflecting, one or two servers assist the priest and/or deacon with clearing the altar and returning all items given them to the credence table
 - ✦ One altar server will need the water so Father can purify

- These assisting altar servers are to return to their seats by going behind the altar and tabernacle—not in front of the altar
- During the communion song and/or period of silence, the book bearer should grab the Missal
- After a communion song and/or a period of silence for private prayer, the priest will stand and the book bearer will go to Father, to which he will pray the Prayer after “Communion”
 - ✦ Candle bearers will grab their candles and go in place
 - ✦ *Thurifer will grab the thurible
- After Father says, “Through Christ our Lord,” the server will leave and return the Missal to the stand
 - ✦ The altar server will grab the cross

The Concluding Rites

- Make the “Sign of the Cross” when the priest blesses everyone
- St. Michael prayer is prayed (items should be in hand by this point)



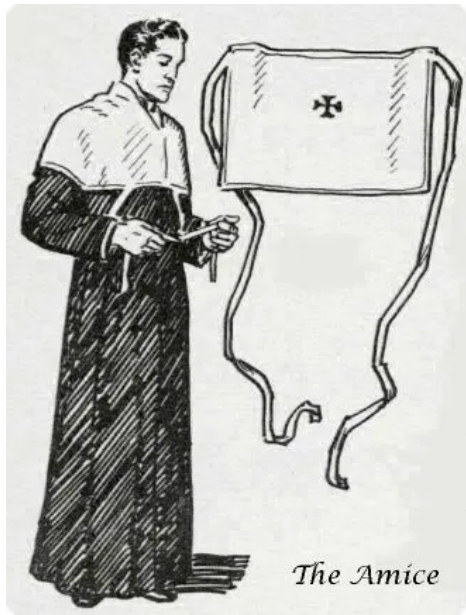
- When the priest and deacon start to ascend to the altar to kiss it, all the servers will go take their place in the center of the sanctuary in front of the altar
- The crucifer and candle bearers are to line up together as usual, but they are to stand nearer the edge of the carpet
 - ✦ *The thurifer will be on the top step
- Any altar server who has nothing in his or her hands is to stand immediately in front of the crucifer and candle bearer but behind the lector(s)
- The priest and deacon will reverence the altar with a kiss and then come around to the altar's front and genuflect
 - ✦ Servers with liturgical items in hand will head bow
 - ✦ Servers w/o liturgical items will genuflect
- After the genuflection/bow, everyone turns and process out of the sanctuary



After Mass

- Line up in the sacristy before the crucifix on the wall and pray the sacristy prayer with the priest
- Altar servers then extinguish the candles with a snuffer. **NEVER blow out a candle! Wax flies everywhere and it makes the candle harder to relight!**
- The altar server is to ask the adults whether he or she may help in cleaning, preparing for the next mass, or returning items to storage if not needed further
- The Altar server is not to take off their cassock until he or she has determined that all of his or her duties have been fully discharged
- The altar server is to put his or her cassock and surplice back on the hanger
 - ✦ Please be sure to put them back in their proper place according to size
- Last server to put away cassock and surplice closes the door

(All images came from Google)



The Amice



Stole



Alb



Cinture



Chasuble



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Dalmatic w/ Dc. Stole



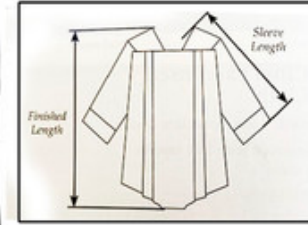
Cope



Cassock



Surplice



What are the items used at Mass?

Practical guide of the objects used at the altar  CatholicLink

Chalice



A large cup used to hold the wine which becomes the Blood of Christ.

Purificator



A white cloth that the priest uses to cleanse the chalice.

Ciborium



It is used to hold the Hosts which will be used for communion.

Corporal



A linen cloth on which the vessels (with bread and wine) are placed.

Pall



It is a stiff, square, white cover that is placed over the chalice.

Host and paten



The host is placed in the paten (a saucer-like disk).

Lavabo and manuterge



They are used by the priest to wash his hands during Mass.

Cruets



Small vessels that hold the water and wine.

Roman Missal



It contains the prayers, chants and instructions for the Mass.

Candles and crucifix



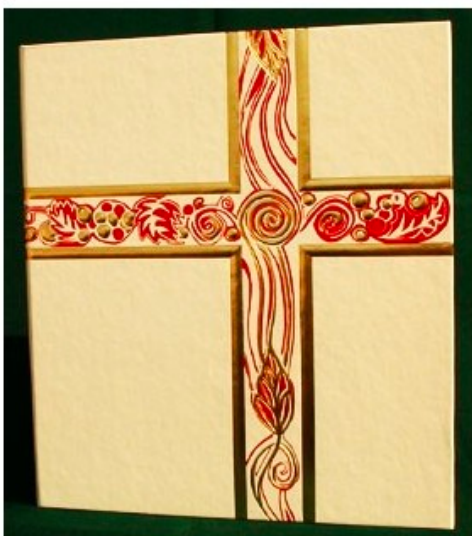
It reminds us of the sacrifice of Christ, Light of the World.



Chalice veil and burse



Roman Missal



Liturgical
binder



Thurible and boat