St. Joseph's Orthodox Congregation of Windsor

Guidelines for Acolytes

Prepared by Fr. Jerry

INTRODUCTION

The following principles are essential for acolytes to understand, internalize, and apply in their ministry. First, the duties currently performed by altar servers were originally assigned to the various orders of deacons. Because many parishes lack ordained cantors, lectors, subdeacons, and deacons, these responsibilities have been delegated to acolytes. Consequently, acolytes should execute their roles with the same dignity as the clergy. Many acolytes may be unaware of the expectations associated with their position. Our predecessors taught that altar servers are analogous to angels ministering to God. The Holy Altar, as the seat of our Lord Jesus Christ through the presence of the Body and Blood, requires all clergy and servers to serve with profound humility, solemnity, serenity, rectitude, and sanctity. The white alb symbolizes the baptismal garment of purity, while the deacon's stole represents angelic wings. Like the angels, deacons and acolytes serve at the altar with meticulous care and holiness. The following guidelines should be observed by all acolytes.

PREPARATIONS

If an acolyte desires to serve at the Holy Altar on a Sunday, he must begin preparation the evening before, by attending Evening Prayer and participating with the alb on. He should complete the midnight prayers (Qyomtho or Sleebo) found in the Qurbana kramam before the Morning Prayers at the church. He must be prepared to receive Holy Qurbana with proper fasting and prayers, every time he serves for Holy Qurbana. He should also receive Holy Confession frequently.

DRESS

When an acolyte dons the alb, attire beneath the vestment must be appropriate and respectful; white pants and shirts are recommended, though subtle colors that do not show through are permissible. The alb must be worn prior to entering the sanctuary and is required at all liturgical services. Cellular phones and other electronic devices are prohibited in the sanctuary, except when authorized by the celebrant.

BEHAVIOR

During liturgical service at the altar, silence, decorum, and humility are required. When receiving Holy Qurbana, acolytes shall approach the Holy Mysteries in order of seniority: first other priests, then deacons, followed by senior acolytes and junior acolytes. Avoid extraneous movements that may distract the celebrant or the congregation. Refrain from vocalizations or gestures intended to gain the attention of fellow acolytes. Except for the celebrant and the deacon or acolyte performing the censing, no individual shall cross in front of the altar; all shall proceed behind it. While performing duties in the sanctuary or standing at the sides, maintain an upright posture and remain attentive to the service. In the event of an emergency, respond promptly while avoiding disruption or disorder. Acolytes must behave with mutual respect and there must be no show of ego or selfishness while serving in the Holy Altar.

RUBRICS

Acolytes are required to recite the designated prayers prior to entering the sanctuary, donning the alb, and kissing the corners of the holy altar. All acolytes should remain seated with the congregation and attend closely to the Old Testament reading. Following this reading, they must proceed into the sanctuary in a single line, kissing the Gospel stand and the four corners of the Holy Altar while reciting the prescribed prayers for each action. Entry into the sanctuary must never be made from the northern side; access is restricted to the southern side, with exit via the northern side. If you are attending the holy services in any other church than your home parish, it is mandatory to get prior permission from the Vicar of the parish for participating in the service. Acolytes must be in their albs before the beginning of the Qaumo prayer. If by any case you are late, get permission from the chief celebrant before donning the alb.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Confirm the number of acolytes who are willing to participate in each Holy Service at least one day in advance and make the necessary arrangements. Acolytes are responsible for ensuring that the church - particularly the Holy Madbaha - remains clean and orderly at all times. All altar materials, including towels, albs, and altar coverings, must be maintained in a sanitary condition. Towels designated for wiping the chalice, paten, and other vessels used for the Holy Qurbana must not be used for any other purpose. Albs and towels used by one priest should not be reassigned to another unless they have been properly cleaned. Avoid lingering unnecessarily near the Holy Altar unless directed by the Celebrant.

KEEP IN MIND

Acolytes are required to provide their own Bibles and prayer books for worship services. Each acolyte must review the assigned scriptural passages at least once prior to the service. He should be aware of all upcoming liturgical events, and all materials must be prepared before the liturgy commences. All acolytes are expected to abstain from any unethical or immoral conduct and to maintain a lifestyle that serves as a model for others. Acolytes must not hold microphones when stands exist. Keep a minimum three-inch separation between lips and microphone. If a choir is present, yield all songs to them, as they perform a service like that of acolytes. Sing and chant matching the chief celebrant's musical style. Every acolyte must drive the service toward maximum improvement.

DETAILS

PREPARATION FOR VESPERS/MATINS

Enter the church with its prayer

In reverence will I enter Thy house and present my offerings to Thee.

Light the main Lamp

By Your light we see the light Jesus full of light, You are the True Light which enlightens creation, O splendor of the Father, shine Your joyous light on us.

Wear Alb (Kuppayam) after doing its prayer

Clothe me, O Lord God, with an incorruptible surplice, by the power of the Holy Spirit. O Father, Son and Holy Spirit (+), grant that we may walk in true faith and in pure and upright paths, all the days of our lives, Amen.

Enter Madbaha with its prayer

I will go to the altar of God and to my God, who gives joy to my youth. (Psalm 43:4)

Kiss the Evangelion with its prayer
Into Thy house, O God, I have entered, and before Thy throne, O heavenly King, I have worshipped. Forgive me all the sins I have committed against Thee.
Kiss and circle the thronos with its prayer
Bind, O Lord, our festivals with chains, even to the horns of Thy altar. Thou art my God; I will give thanks to Thee. Thou art my God; I will glorify Thee.
See if everything is neat and clean
Bookmark the Evengelion Reading by referring to the day's lectionary
Arrange Censor with charcoal and incense pot
Light the center candle on Thronos
Ring the Big Bell before Namaskaram
Open the Curtain when instructed.
Join the Prayer

PREPARATION FOR HOLY QURBANA
Enter the church with its prayer
Light the Lamp
Fill water in the kettle for Madbaha
Switch on the sound system
Arrange the microphones
Wear Kuppayam after doing its prayer
Enter Madbaha with its prayer
Kiss the Evangelion with its prayer
Kiss and circle the thronos with its prayer
See if everything is neat and clean

Keep all items on thronos for the priest
- -Tabalaitho (Center)
- -Virikkuttu (over Tabalaitho)
- - Bread box (Left side)
- - Water jar (Left side)
- - Wine jar (Left side)
- - Towel (Left side)
- - Taksa stand (Right side)
- - Taksa English & Malayalam (Right side)
- - Hoothomo Book (Right side)
- - Kappa set and shoes

Bookmark the Bible Readings
Bookmark the Evengelion Reading
Arrange Censor with charcoal and incense pot
Light the center candle on Thronos

Ring the Bell before Namaskaram

-Pattern of 12

1st bell: 1;1-1;1-1;1-1;1-1;1-1;1-1;1

2nd bell: 1-1;1-1;1-1;1-1;1-1;1-1;1-1

3rd bell: 1,1-1;1,1-1;1,1-1;1,1-1

-Pattern of 72

-Special Service Patterns

Open the Curtain when instructed.
Join the Prayer

DURING HOLY QURBANA

- Please refer & follow the Holy Qurbana Book
- Follow instructions for special prayers
- NO TALKING inside Madbaha
- Perfect discipline to be maintained
- Minimum/No movement in Madbaha.
- Make sure at least one person is assigned for:

1. Censor
2. Candle 1
3. Candle 2
4. Small bell 1
5. Small bell 2
6. Marvah'so (fan) 1
7. Marvah'so (fan) 2
8. Reading
9. Singing
10. Bible Reading 1
11. Bible Reading 2
12. Water
13. Thuyobo
14. Other arrangements

AFTER HOLY QURBANA

Make sure everything is reset including

- Things on thronos
- Kappa
- Bells & other things used
- Censor and incense
- Batteries to be removed from Microphones
- Mixer to be unplugged & covered

- Holy Qurbana Books & Holy Bibles
- Candles and Lamp
- Water in plate and jug emptied
- Water cups thrown inside thrash can
- Thronos to be cleaned
- Complete all prayers.
- Make sure everything is reset.
- Lock the church

These guidelines are for acolytes to follow in accordance with the need as defined by the priests or head of acolytes.

Acolytes are always required to be on alert to help the priest and the public worship God without any trouble or inconvenience.

An acolyte must be humble, prayerful and alert.

May God bless you all.