To Serve at the Altar:

An Opportunity for Spiritual Growth in a Distracted World

In today's fast-paced, device-driven society, where distractions are just a tap away, it is easy for our children to lose sight of the deeper, more meaningful aspects of life. As parents, we often wonder how we can guide our children toward a life of purpose and connection with others and with God. One answer lies in encouraging them to serve at Mass as Altar Ministers (Altar Servers). This ministry offers them the opportunity to step away from the distractions of modern technology and embrace the privilege of serving at the altar.

We would like to invite the children, youth, as well as adults of our parish community to consider taking up this liturgical responsibility. Serving at the altar is not just a task; it is an invitation to deepen one's relationship with God. Through this ministry, servers at the altar learn reverence, responsibility, and a commitment to their faith community. The church environment, guided by the rhythms of the Mass, offers a rare chance to practice focus, patience, and devotion—qualities often undermined by the constant lure of screens and superficial distractions. This ministry is an opportunity for spiritual growth, and the learning of practical skills such as discipline, teamwork, and attention to detail.

Although we may fear that introducing more responsibility into our own lives and the lives of our children might be overwhelming, the truth is, serving at the altar provides an enriching balance. The liturgy offers a sacred space to develop a sense of purpose, leadership, and belonging in the church community. Through a practical participation in the liturgy, Altar Ministers (Altar Servers) learn about the Mass and grow in their relationship with God, thereby also coming to an awareness of further involvement in the broader life of the Church.

Next week, **25th/26th October** some servers who have distinguished themselves for their spiritual growth and leadership skills will be admitted to the Guild of St. Stephen at the Sunday Masses. There will be a training/social event the following Saturday **9th November** for new and existing servers at **11am**, concluding with a sausage sizzle at **12:30pm**.

If you would like to express your interest or learn more about training opportunities, please add your name or your child's name to the sign-up sheet in the church foyer. Alternatively, you may like to complete the online Expression of Interest form available at https://tinyurl.com/ybehyyhy. You can also scan the QR code to go directly to the registration site. We look forward to welcoming new Altar Servers into this privileged ministry and supporting them on their journey of faith.

Let this ministry guide us towards a richer, more meaningful life in the service of God.

The Structure of the Altar Server Ministry

As Servers advance in knowledge and leadership skills they progress from Altar Ministers into the Guild of St. Stephen. Serving at the altar is therefore not exclusively for children. Youth in their teenage years are strongly encouraged to consider joining this ministry, as are adults, who would receive training as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, to serve at Mass as Senior Altar Ministers.

Altar Ministers

Open to children aged 7 and above, Altar Ministers assist the priest during Mass by performing essential tasks, such as carrying the cross, holding candles, and preparing the altar. They learn about the structure of the Mass, sacred objects, and the liturgical calendar, while developing a sense of reverence, responsibility, and participation in the church community. Here at Mater Christi, it is not necessary for children to receive their 1st Holy Communion before becoming Altar Ministers (Altar Servers).

The Guild of St. Stephen

The Guild of St. Stephen is an international organisation for altar servers, founded in 1901, aimed at encouraging high standards of altar service. It promotes dedication to Christ through service at the altar, fostering spiritual growth and community. Members receive the Guild Medal, symbolising their dedication to this ministry and their overall spiritual growth as they learn to commit themselves to Christ.

Senior Altar Ministers

Senior Altar Ministers, aged 18 and above, serve in a leadership capacity, guiding other Servers. They take on additional responsibilities such as setting up for Mass, assisting with the distribution of Holy Communion and supporting the priest with more complex liturgical duties. Senior Ministers foster a deeper understanding of the faith and ensure the dignity and flow of the liturgy.