

FUNERAL SERVER TIPS

April, 2026

Welcome and thank you for offering to join this ministry. I'm sure you'll find it is a pleasure and a privilege to serve each family during this difficult time for them. Hopefully, a couple of my thoughts along with the Funeral Server Guide and the Funeral Server Tips will allow you to seamlessly transition into a seasoned Altar Server. As a new server for funeral liturgies, it was helpful to me to arrive 1 hour before the service begins. This afforded me the opportunity to "set up" on my own to get the hang of it. If the other server arrives early as well, ask him/her to observe while you get everything ready in the sacristy. Another option would be to ask the other server if you might observe them set up. After serving a few times, you'll find your comfort zone in working as a team. The important thing is to make sure each step is followed by both servers to assure everything has been properly prepared. Find what works for you, and stick with it.

Immediately Upon Arrival, I do two things before beginning the instructions as outlined in the Guide.

- 1. Check to make sure the Paschal Candle is at the bottom of the steps to the sanctuary. (I don't know what angel moves the candle there, but it has always been in place for me.) If it's not in place, find at least one other person to help you move it. It must be moved in 2 pieces. If the candle has not been lit, do so immediately if the cremains are already present on the table at the base of the sanctuary (or no later than the beginning of visitation). Father Andrew prefers the candle to be lit when the body or cremains are present in the church for viewing. That is normally one hour prior to the funeral service. Preferably the candle will be lit by two people. One to remove the candle from the holder while the second person lights it.**
- 2. If the body will be present in the Viewing Room (Parlor), the small Paschal Candle should already have been lit by an usher. If it's not, light it right away. This candle should be lit when the body arrives, and the large Paschal Candle in church will be lit before Mass begins.**

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3. Find the basket of worship aids. The usher usually has them on the table behind the Baptismal Font (unless the usher has not yet arrived). If not there, the parish secretary may still be working on them or they might be on the floor outside of her office door. Read the obituary for info you might need to know. Also in this basket are the two readings as well as the Gospel reading and the Prayers of the Faithful. Take **ONLY** the Gospel reading and clip it in the book of Gospels for Father's use. The usher will instruct the appointed readers how to approach the Ambo, the use of the mic etc. and give them their readings which will have been placed in the 3 ring binder and set on the Ambo by the usher. Continue from this point using the instructions in the Funeral Servers Guide.
4. **It is the responsibility of BOTH servers to make sure all points on the ALTAR SERVER CHECKLIST FOR FUNERALS have been followed.**
5. Always be prepared to adjust accordingly, as needed. Father may ask you to fill in as a reader. He may ask you to increase the amount of bread or wine at the last minute. Check with the usher to see if there are pre-selected Eucharistic Ministers. If not, you may have to serve. Then you will have to clear the altar and bring the lit incense to the stand after communion.
6. If the Sacristy is locked, see the receptionist, the secretary, or the music minister for a key. Unlock the door, and return the key **IMMEDIATELY**.
7. The obvious - dress appropriately and don't check your watch once the liturgy has begun.
8. As a courtesy, avoid using cologne and fragrances. We're in close proximity to each other for this hour.
9. If you have to get from one side of the sanctuary to the other, use the ramp behind Father. Don't walk in front of him, and never sit until Father sits. Always reverence the Tabernacle, and ask for help if you need it.