

VERGER'S CUSTOMARY
ST. VINCENT'S CATHEDRAL
BEDFORD, TEXAS



Amori Christi et Ecclesiae

VERGER'S CUSTOMARY FOR ST. VINCENT'S

Introduction

At St. Vincent's, Vergers have both ceremonial and "behind the scenes" functions. The purpose of this manual is to describe those duties. As you will see, the ceremonial duties of the verger are the least important. Knowing what goes on behind the scenes, double-checking the work of others, and being able to fill in for others when needed allows the clergy to focus on the upcoming liturgy without having to worry whether or not the altar candles are lit. The main qualifications for being a Verger are personal maturity and a willingness to serve. At St. Vincent's, all Vergers are also Lay Readers.

I. History of Verger

- A. The name of the position of Verger comes from the term Verge (or sometimes spelled Virge), the ceremonial mace or scepter, which a Verger carries when acting as a Verger in the liturgy. In medieval times, the Verger led the religious procession through the towns. Using his virge, he would clear the way of animals and unruly crowds so that the procession could make its way to and from the church. At some cathedrals or large parish churches, a Verger also acts as the building custodian, cemetery sexton and liturgical expert. Vergers can be full time paid staff or purely volunteer. At St. Vincent's, all Vergers are volunteers.
- B. The Verger serves in four main roles:
 - 1. Master of Ceremonies – on the day of the service, the Verger helps to ensure the assigned acolytes/servers are present. The Verger also makes the order of service run smoothly; working with the Dean and Deacon to ensure.
 - 2. Processional Leader – on normal Sundays, Holy Days and visitations (or as needed), leads the procession into the church, during the service and the processional out of the church. Other processions might include the Gospel procession and the offertory procession.
 - 3. Assists the clergy as needed.
 - 4. Is visible to members and visitors of the Parish as someone who can answer any questions which may arise.

II. Vestments

- A. The Verger(s) of St. Vincent's Cathedral wears a black chimere (similar to that of a Bishop) which is a sleeveless, open front vestment or gown worn over the cassock. The chimere may have a clasp close to the neck which keeps it semi-closed. The chimere may also be "gathered" in the back to create a pleated appearance.
- B. A Verger may have one or more patches/badges (made of cloth, bullion or other material) worn on the chimere. These may include the seals of: Diocese of Ft. Worth, ACNA, St. Vincent's Cathedral and Verger's Guild of the Diocese of Ft. Worth. Others may include the Verger's Guild of the Church of England (membership required) and International Order of St. Vincent.

- C. A Verger may wear a cross or other medal on a chain around the neck. The medal may be that of the Order of St. Vincent membership medal or similar medallion of the Vergers Guild of the Church of England or a simple cross. To be at the discretion of the Dean.
- D. A Verger will have some form of virge or mace. This can be made from a variety of materials including metal or wood. The typical length is about 36" – 40" overall. The "topper" (finial) of the virge will be something which is appropriate for the office of Verger, taking into consideration that the virge or mace is not to distract from the processional cross, the liturgy and the order of service. In the Diocese of Ft. Worth, a virge shall not have a cross as the finial.
Carrying the Virge:

- a. A Verger carries his virge in several different ways depending on whom and when he is verging.
 - i. When leading in or leading out the procession, the Verger holds his virge out at a 45 deg angle. The virge should be held as close to the end as possible with the hand (right) close to the abdomen.
 - ii. When verging an individual or while moving during liturgy, the virge is held with the top portion resting against the right shoulder so that the finial is pointing away from the head of the Verger at about a 45 deg angle.
 - iii. While standing or waiting for a period of time, the virge can be held in the crook of the arm so that the finial of the virge is point to the right.
 - iv. An alternate position of carrying while verging an individual or during liturgy is when the Verger carries his virge under his right arm to that the majority of the length of the virge and the finial are pointed forward at about a 45 degree angle. The right hand is holding the virge as close to the chest as possible.

III. Verger Duties – Specifics

- A. The Verger's principle duty is the leader of a procession. Processions include: Sunday Mass at 9 a.m. – processional, recessional, Gospel and Offertory. Other processions listed below and any other occasion in which the Dean requests the services of the Verger. **For the time being, the Verger of St. Vincent's will serve on the last Sunday of the month. However, the Verger will also ensure that the Sanctuary is ready for both the 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. services each Sunday, whether or not he is scheduled as a Lay Reader or not. It will be the responsibility of the Verger to notify Clergy, Deacon and Sub-Deacon of a planned absence.
- B. 9:00 a.m. service includes – lead in of the procession and lead out of the procession at the beginning and end of the service. During the service, the leading of the Gospel and Offertory processions. Prior to and after the service, the Verger is visible to visitors and parishioners as a source for assistance.

C. Details on Verger duties during the 9:00 a.m. Mass:

1. Assist the Deacon, Sub-Deacon and Lay Reader in the preparation of the sanctuary for the next service*. This includes, but not limited to:

- a. Bulletins at each seat
- b. BCP & Hymnal
- c. Lesson book marked at appropriate readings
- d. Microphone working
- e. Other as needed

*Next service includes preparation for the 11:30 a.m. Mass immediately after the 9 a.m. Mass

2. Assist Clergy & head of acolytes to ensure all acolyte positions are filled for next service.

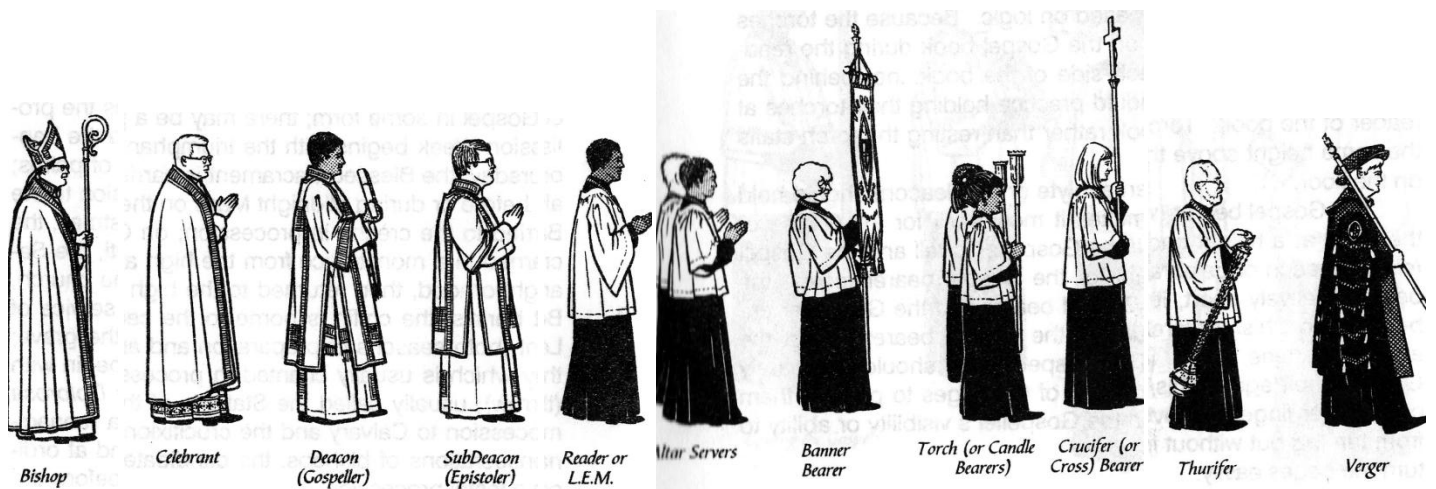
3. Serves as Verger of the Procession as follows:

- a. Takes place in front of Thurifer (or Crucifer if Thurifer not used).
- b. Leads procession to the altar rail. Pauses and turns left. Crucifer and torches follow. Verger stands at opening of altar rail (TR/CR/TR are at his right). Once the Clergy have genuflected, Verger takes his place at the Vergers chair (located in front of first pew). Remain standing for the Collect.
- c. At the Gospel, Verger proceeds from his chair to be in front of the Thurifer & TR/CR/TR at altar rail; bows, turns around and is followed by the Thurifer & TR/CR/TR. Leads Gospel procession to center of Nave. Verger stands opposite the Thurifer during the reading of the Gospel. When Gospel is finished, Verger proceeds to move in front of the Thurifer, leading the procession back to the sanctuary. Verger leads the TR/CR/TR to the altar rail, pauses while TR/CR/TR move up steps and then moves back to Vergers chair, remain standing until preacher begins sermon. TR/CR/TR is placed back into holder on wall and seated.
- d. At the beginning of The Peace, Verger leads the TR/CR/TR from the sanctuary to the back of the nave. When offering is ready to be processed, Verger leads the Offertory procession to the altar rail, as in B above. Pauses and turns left. Crucifer and torches follow. Verger takes place at Vergers chair after TR/CR/TR are in place. Remain standing for the Eucharistic prayer.
- e. At the end of the Eucharist, leads procession out of the nave. Takes place behind the Thurifer (or TR/CR/TR) at the altar rail. After Clergy genuflection, turns around and leads procession out of the Nave and into Narthex.
- f. After service, Verger ensures sanctuary is ready for next service (see III.C.1 above). Verger returns to narthex, courtyard and parish hall to assist in helping visitors with questions, if needed.
- g. Verger might be tasked with escorting the Bishop from the Narthex or Sacristy to the Parish Hall or to another location for a function after the service.

D. Serves as Verger of the Procession in the following other processions or occasions:

1. The Great Litany – leads the procession in front of the TR/CR/TR.
2. Palm Sunday – leads the procession in front of the TR/CR/TR.
3. Easter Vigil – serves as Bishops Verger in the procession.
4. Christmas Eve Family Mass and Midnight Mass
5. Ash Wednesday (if available)
6. Easter Sunday – all services
7. Trinity Sunday
8. All Saints Sunday
9. Feast of St. Vincent
10. Mass of Collegiality (if available)
11. Ordinations
12. Evensong & Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament
13. Any visiting Archbishop, Bishop, Priest or Clergy
14. Any occasion in which the Dean requires the services of the Verger

Typical Procession – shown without choir



Almighty Father, from whom every family in Heaven and earth is named, who has called us into the fellowship of the Church: grant, we pray, that in all our parishes we may fulfill the duties and enjoy the privileges of our spiritual home. And on those who offer themselves as Vergers in the House of God bestow the fullness of your Grace; that united in love to you and to one another, we may show forth your glory and hasten the coming of your kingdom. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.