

Altar Server's Glossary of Terms

Acolyte one who assists or serves the Priest or Deacon at the altar before, during, and after the Communion service. Altar server is known as an Acolyte.

Alb is a long white robe worn by the Priest, Deacons and Altar Servers.

Altar the Holy table from which the priest presides over the Mass. It is used for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, where the priest consecrates bread and wine into the substance of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

Altar Server Sacristy is the room where the Altar Server albs are stored.

Baptismal Font a stand with a basin or pool containing water in the area of church where Baptism takes place.

Book of Gospels the book which contains the Gospel readings.

Chalice is the cup that holds the wine for consecration and it becomes the Precious Blood of our Lord.

Cincture is a rope or cord worn around the waist over the alb.

Ciborium is used to hold the consecrated hosts the Precious Body of Our Lord. The ciborium are kept in the tabernacle.

Cruets two small jug-like containers made of glass. One cruet contains wine and the other contains water.

Communion Cup are used at Communion for the people to receive the Precious Blood of Jesus.

Corporal a large, square white cloth which is placed on the altar underneath the chalice and paten.

Credence Table is used to hold the chalice, paten, ciboria, communion cups and other liturgical items before they are brought to the altar.

Cross Bearer the Altar Server who carries the cross in procession.

Elements the bread and wine to be consecrated at the Eucharist.

Eucharistic Candles two candles placed on the altar, at each end of the altar. As you face the altar with your back to the Nave, the one on the right is known as the "Epistle Candle" and one on the left is known as the "Gospel Candle". They are lit before each Eucharistic Service and extinguished at the end of the service. The Epistle Candle should be lit first and extinguished last, if only the two candles are used. The Gospel Candle "never stands alone."

Finger Bowl / Lavabo the bowl is used to catch the water poured over the priest's hands.

Lectiary the book which contains the Scripture readings. This book is held on the Ambo.

Lecturn / Pulpit/ Ambo podium where the readings and homily take place.

Offertory Table a small table or surface in the back of the Church. The wine and hosts are placed before mass to be carried to the Sanctuary during the Presentation of the Gifts.

Pall a square, protective cover of stiffened cloth placed on the chalice during Mass.

Paschal Candle a large decorated candle (with a cross and Alpha and Omega letters). It is lit during all baptisms, funeral services and during the Masses of the Easter season.

Paten a plate used to hold the large hosts which will become the consecrated body of Jesus.

Pews the bench-like seats in the main body of the Church.

Presider's Chair (Celebrant Chair) the chair in which the priest sits.

Processional Cross/ Crucifix the cross carried in and out during Mass.

Processional Candlesticks "Guard of Honor" candles during the distribution of Holy Communion.

Purificator a fine linen (or other) white cloth used for wiping the chalice during the administration of Communion and for cleansing the paten and chalice during ablutions.

Pyx a small metal container which is used to hold consecrated host(s) when visiting the sick or homebound.

Roman Missal or just the Missal is the large book with the red cover containing all of the prayers used by the priest at Mass. This book is placed on the altar during the Mass.

Sacramentary the book of prayers and instructions used by the priest during the liturgy.

Sanctuary Candle a clear/translucent container with a candle that burns near the place where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. The candle is never extinguished when the Sacrament is present.

Sacristy a room where the Priests and Deacons, Altar Servers, and other ministers prepare for the Mass.

Sanctuary a Sacred consecrated area around the Altar of a church where the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is celebrated; and the Altar, Ambo, Tabernacle, Credence Table, Priest, Deacon and Altar Server chairs are located.

Sanctus Bell a set of bells sometimes called Sacred Bell because it is rung at the time of the Sanctus, the “Holy, Holy, Holy, and may be rung to call attention to the Consecration of the bread and wine.

Tabernacle a box or house-shaped receptacle where the consecrated Eucharistic bread (Jesus) is reserved after Holy Communion has been distributed.

Vestibule the back of the Church where the main entrance doors to the Church are located.

Vestments are what the Priest and Deacons wear during Mass.

Color of Vestments and Altar Cloth

The color of vestments gives expression to the mysteries of our faith and is like a calendar for the church year.

White masses of Easter, Christmas season, Feasts and Memorials of Jesus, Mary, the Angels, Saints who were not martyrs, Weddings, and Funerals, symbolizes Purity, Holiness, Joy, Triumph, and the Resurrection.

Red used on Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday), Good Friday, Pentecost, feasts of the Apostles, Evangelists and Martyrs. Red symbolizes the Holy Spirit and the blood of martyrs.

Green used during Ordinary time, symbolizing Life, Growth and Hope.

Violet used during Lent and Advent, symbolizing Penance, Atonement and Expiation.

Gold more festive than white, which may be used on more solemn days such as Easter and Christmas, and also symbolizes Joy, Triumph and the Resurrection.

Items Used for Special Celebrations

Aspergillum and Container the Aspergillum, or sprinkler, usually looks like a ball on a handle. The priest puts the Aspergillum in a container of Holy Water, so that water will get inside the Aspergillum through little holes. The priest then walks through the church and blesses people and objects by sprinkling them using the Aspergillum. This is used on special celebrations.

Censer / Thurible a metal container that holds the charcoal for the incense. This is carried by the server in the right hand.

Incense boat is a covered container, with a spoon, for the incense that will be burned in the censer.

Monstrance the Monstrance looks like a sun burst with a glass center. The back of the Monstrance has a small door. The inside holds a glass container called the Luna. The Priest or Deacon puts a consecrated host in the Luna, and places the Luna in the Monstrance. The Monstrance is then placed on the Altar for Benediction or Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

Thurible is a metal container on a chain in which incense is burned on a piece of charcoal.

The Ministers at Mass

Altar Servers a young boy or girl, or an adult who is specially trained to assist the priest at mass.

Bishop is higher than a priest, he's like their boss. He has the authority to ordain priests. This authority is given to him by the Pope.

Cardinal is a high church official ranking next in line to the Pope. He assists and advises the Pope, consecrates Bishops and elects the Pope.

Deacon is like a priest in training. He can assist in preaching, perform baptism, marriages, and help run the parish. He does not offer mass or hear confessions.

Eucharistic Minister a person who assist the Priest in giving communion. They also can bring communion to people who are sick at home or in the hospital.

Lector the person who reads the Epistles (first and second readings) and sometimes the Prayers of the Faithful at mass.

Priest specially ordained men who consecrate and offer the Body and Blood of Jesus at Mass. They forgive sins, perform baptisms, marriages, funerals, run the parish and lead the people closer to God. Their ordination to the priesthood can be traced to the Apostles who were the first priests after Jesus.

Pope is the supreme authority of the Catholic Church. He is sometime called "Pontiff" and "Holy See", and will be the leader of the church until he dies.

Sacristan the person whose ministry is the care of the sacristy, sanctuary, vestments, sacred vessels, etc.