

Liturgical Ministers

Reference Handbook

November 2013

General Terms

All members of the faithful who assist in the liturgy of the Church should be familiar with the basic terms used to describe the Church building itself, the actions during the Mass and be able to identify the things that are normally used during the Mass. Below is a list of terms and short description of the basic items used during Masses

Parts of a Church

As a whole the Church building itself is a holy place, a place set aside for the worship of the one true God. It has been blessed and consecrated to represent the new and eternal Jerusalem, the house of God, the meeting place of heaven and earth. Therefore we should have an attitude of profound respect and awe when we enter it. This interior disposition is manifested in our bodily actions as well as our thoughts, thus - loud talking, walking about aimlessly, and socializing are out of place here. This does not mean that we should discourage social activities - on the contrary! We are witnesses to the Gospel and lead a true Christian life through our actions with each other in society. But an organized, reverent, and dignified worship of God has its place as well. Our worship of God in the public liturgy of the Church only accounts for one hour of our week - we have 167 other hours to put what we have done in that one hour into practice.

The ***Sanctuary*** is the area of the church that is marked off from the rest of the building since it is where most of the action of the liturgy takes place.



The ***Altar*** is, in its basic form, a table used to offer the sacrifice of the Mass. We call this table an Altar rather than a table for two reasons the first is that a sacrifice is offered on it, something not ordinarily done on tables. The second reason is because it is a holy thing which represents Christ. It is not an ordinary table. This is why we bow before the Altar, as a sign of respect and love for **Jesus** and the sacrifice He offered for us



The ***Tabernacle*** is the large metal container used to store the consecrated hosts. Tabernacles always have a lock and can be of almost any

size and shape, but most are either shaped like a box or a cylinder. They must be made of opaque, unbreakable material.

The **Sanctuary Lamp** is usually a candle kept burning at all times, as long as the Blessed Sacrament is present, and is found in the Sanctuary. It is usually found hanging above or placed near the tabernacle. It symbolizes the constant presence of Christ in the Church. If you are ever uncertain if you are in a Roman Catholic Church or not, or unsure of the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, look for the Sanctuary Lamp - it is nearly always a sure sign of the presence of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church.



The **Ambo** is sometimes called the pulpit or lectern. It is basically a stand for the Lectionary and is where the main action of the liturgy of the word takes place. An Ambo may be simple or very elaborate, depending on the resources of each parish, but should always be sturdy and beautiful.

The **Credence Table** is the small table that is used to keep everything that is to be used during the Mass. Items such as the chalice, cruets, lavabo bowl, and so on should be kept on the credence table until they are needed. (*The picture shows how the Credence Table is prepared for Mass.*)



The **Confessional** is a small room used for the sacrament of Reconciliation, sometimes called Confession. There are generally two types of confessionals: one is divided into two small rooms divided with a wall and a grille in a window, while the other is usually one room where the Priest and Penitent can celebrate the sacrament face to face. The two-room structure with a grille guarantees that the person coming to confession can come anonymously, while the one-room structure allows those who prefer face-to-face interaction. The first type is required in all churches, while the second is an option



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The **Baptismal Font** is where baptism takes place. Fonts come in many shapes and sizes but all have a basin to catch the water used in baptism.

They may be found almost anywhere in the church, but are most appropriately found in either a separate building reserved for baptism - known as a Baptistery - or in a separate part of the church, often near the entrance since baptism is the sacrament through which we enter the church.

The **Pascal Candle** is the candle blessed during the Easter Vigil each year. It is a symbol of Christ and His resurrection. It is used throughout the Easter season as well as at baptism and funerals.



The **Nave** is the main body of the church. It is where the pews are usually found and is separated from the sanctuary by a few steps, a railing, or a screen of some sort.

The **Stations of the Cross** are a set of 14 panels or pieces of sculpture which represent the final events connected with the crucifixion of Christ. They are usually found evenly spaced along the walls of the nave of the church and were first used in the middle ages, probably by the Franciscans.

The **Sacristy** is the room where most of the items used during the Mass are kept and where the priest and servers prepare for Mass. Since we prepare both physically and spiritually for the Mass it is appropriate that the sacristy be a place of calm and silence

Items used in the Mass

Many of the items used for Mass have been specially made for sacred use and are blessed. This blessing makes these items holy - it sets them aside for sacred use only and consecrates them for the worship of

God. Therefore we treat these items with respect and use special names for most of them. Because they are holy we do not throw them away, even when they become worn or broken. When this happens we do what has always been done with something consecrated to the worship of God - we burn and bury it respectfully.



A **Chalice** is the vessel used by the priest during the Mass which contains the Blood of Christ. A chalice is essentially a cup made of a precious or semi-precious material (gold, silver, or gold plating) and can only be used during the Mass. It should not be made of pottery or glass since, according to liturgical law, the chalice should be made of material which is "noble", "solid", and does not "break easily". Once a chalice has been properly prepared for Mass it is usually called a 'dressed chalice'.

A **Paten** is the plate used to hold the hosts during the Mass. A paten, like the chalice, is also made of a precious or semiprecious material. There are basically two kinds of patens used today: the small paten which usually matches the chalice and only holds a small number of hosts, and the larger dish-paten which usually holds many hosts.

The **Host** is the proper term for the bread used during the Mass. We usually refer to hosts that have been consecrated as the **Body of Christ**, the **Eucharist**, or the **Blessed Sacrament**. We should never refer to the hosts which have been consecrated as 'bread' for two reasons. The first is that we do not believe that it is bread, and the second is that it shows our respect for true presence of **Jesus**.

The **Wine** used during Mass is a special type of wine that has no preservatives and is properly called the **Blood of Christ** or the **Precious Blood** after it has been consecrated. We never refer to it simply as 'wine' after the consecration for the same reasons that we call the host the **Body of Christ** - first because it is not wine, and second as a sign of respect for the true presence of Christ.

The **Corporal** is the square piece of white Linen that is put on the Altar cloth to catch any small particles of the host that might fall. The term comes from the Latin term for 'body' since it safeguards the **Body of Christ**.

The **Purificator** is a white linen napkin that is used only during the Mass to purify the sacred vessels - the Chalice and Paten.

The **Pall** is usually a square of white linen with a stiff cardboard or plastic insert in between the layers of linen. It rests on top of the Chalice during the consecration to prevent anything (usually insects) from falling into the Precious Blood. It is optional. Also, a covering for a casket at a funeral.



A **Ciborium** is a vessel that is used to store hosts that have already been consecrated. It can look like a chalice with a somewhat larger cup and a lid on top.

A **Cruet** is usually a small glass container used to keep the wine or water for use at Mass. Since we always use both water and wine there are two cruets.



A **Flagon** is a container, usually glass or metal, that is used to keep larger amounts of wine for use at Mass. It is essentially a large version of a cruet.

The **Lavabo Bowl** is usually a small bowl that the priest uses -: to purify his hands before the consecration. It is also used by the Ministers of Communion to clean their fingers after distributing communion. The term comes from the Latin word meaning 'to clean'.



The **Ablution bowl** is a small cover bowl of Holy Water that the Priests and Ministers of Communion use to wash their fingers after communion.



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A **Thurible** (sometimes called a **Censer**) is the vessel used to burn incense during the Mass. Some are large, some smaller - some have one chain, some have three, four, or even

five chains. We use incense during Mass to symbolize our prayers rising like incense to God as well as to give a pleasant smell reminding us of the Garden of Paradise .

A **Boat** is the small container that is used to store incense. It usually matches the thurible and is called a boat because many old ones are shaped like a boat. (Our Boat rests atop the pole supporting the Thurible)

An **Aspergillum** is the sprinkler that holds holy water for use at funerals and occasionally at Mass The aspergillum is usually used along with a small metal bucket that holds the holy water.



The **Sanctus Bell** (sometimes called **Altar Bells**) are used during the consecration. They are called the Sanctus bells because they used to be rung during the Sanctus - the Holy, Holy, Holy. We only ring them now three times: the first time for the *epiclesis**. the second at the elevation of the host, and the third time at the elevation of the chalice. The bells remind us that what we are doing is sacred and that the actions carried out when they are rung are most important.

A **Monstrance** is a large metal stand with a small round window in its center. A Monstrance is used for exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and benediction. The term *monstrance* comes from a Latin word which means 'to show' or 'to point out'.



The **Luna** is the small, round container made of glass and metal that holds the Blessed Sacrament. The luna fits into the center of the monstrance. The term is from the Latin word for 'moon' since this is what it looks like when it is used.

**The epiclesis is the part of the Eucharistic Prayer where the Priest extends his hands over the gifts on the Altar, asking the Father that the Holy Spirit be sent to sanctify them. The word is Greek and refers to the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the gifts.*



The **Sacramentary**, sometimes called the Missal, is the large book used by the Priest at the Altar. It contains all of the prayers used during the Mass.

The **Lectionary** is the large book that has all of the readings from the Scriptures that are used during the Mass. It looks like the Sacramentary and is located on the Ambo, and read by the Lectors.

Other Items

The **Pyx** is a small container used to carry the Consecrated Host(s), primarily to the sick and shut-ins. (A **Burse** is a liturgical envelope that rests atop of a Dressed Chalice and contains the Corporal. It is also the item used to carry a Pyx. The Burse is completely optional and is not seen today in Catholic Churches, though it is often found in Anglican Churches.)

Names and Types of Vestments

Vestments are the special clothes worn by the Priest during the Mass. They have a very long history and have been used since at least the time of Moses when God commanded particular types of vestments be made for the Priests who offered sacrifices on behalf of Israel, the chosen people of God. In the Church they have been in use since the earliest Christian times. They are only used during the liturgy, but like all fashions, there have been different styles used throughout history. Over the course of time many of the vestments that originally had very practical uses also developed symbolic meanings. When putting on the vestments the Priest first puts on his Amice, then the Alb followed by the Cincture. He may then put on his Maniple and Stole, and finally puts the chasuble on over *everything else*.

The **Amice** is a square of white cloth with strings or strips of cloth on two sides to tie it with. The Amice is worn around the neck and shoulders to cover clothes that are not covered by the Alb. It is optional, but should be worn if the Alb does not completely cover the clothes worn under the Alb. The Amice has been in use since about the year 800 and the term comes from the Latin word for a 'covering' or 'wrapper'. The amice symbolizes the helmet of salvation since it was originally a type of hood which covered the head.

The **Alb** is a long white robe that covers the clothes worn under it. The alb is the most common vestment since it may be worn by anyone who has been baptized and is serving in some way during the liturgy, even if he is not a cleric. An alb sometimes has some decoration around the borders of the sleeves and the bottom. The term alb comes from the Latin term which means 'white' and, because of its color symbolizes purity.

The **Cincture** is a cord tied around the waist like a belt to keep the alb fitting properly. It is optional, but should always be worn if the alb is loose fitting. It is a symbol of chastity and is sometimes the proper liturgical color of the day.

The **Stole** is a long strip of cloth that is only worn by those who have received the Sacrament of Holy Orders. It has been in use since the fourth century and is the symbol of spiritual authority and obedience. The stole is worn over the left shoulder by Deacons and hanging straight down in the front for Priests and Bishops. It is the same color as the chasuble that goes with it

The **Chasuble** is the Eucharistic vestment worn by the Priest during the Mass. The term comes from the Latin word for a small 'tent' or 'house' and the chasuble has been used since the earliest times of the Christian religion - there are even some frescos in the catacombs which seem to show an early version of the chasuble. The chasuble is usually large enough that it covers most of the other vestments and is a symbol of charity. This is why Priests should never wear a stole over a chasuble - this would emphasize authority rather than love. The chasuble worn should be the proper liturgical color of the day.

The **Cope** is a liturgical cape worn in some liturgical rites outside of Mass, the term cope comes from the Latin word for 'cape'. We most frequently see copes used during Benediction and at the Stations of the Cross

The **Humeral Veil** is a long rectangular piece of cloth that looks something like a large scarf and is used only during the handling of the monstrance. It is worn over the arms and shoulder and covers the hands.

The **Surplice** is essentially a short alb or tunic. It is the newest of vestments, only being in use since the late middle ages, about 600 years ago. It is usually worn over a cassock and may have some decoration added to its borders. A surplice should be long enough so that it ends about the knees of the person wearing it.

A **Cassock** is technically not a vestment at all. It is one of the proper types of clothing worn by those who have received the Sacrament of Holy Orders, and is most often seen when it is used in the liturgy. It is usually black, but can have red cording of the borders, or be completely purple, or red – all depending on whether the person wearing it is a Deacon, Priest, Monsignor, or Cardinal. The Pope wears something which looks a great deal like a white cassock, but it is technically known as a *simar*.

**The following items are offered for your information
should they be used at Mass.**

The **Biretta**, like the cassock, is not a vestment at all. It is a type of hat worn by a cleric at certain points during the liturgy and occasionally outside of the liturgy. It is not required for a Priest and is completely optional. It is required in certain cases for a Bishop.

A **Burse** is a liturgical envelope that rests atop of a Dressed Chalice and contains the Corporal. It is also the item used to carry a Pyx. The Burse is completely optional and is not seen today in Catholic Churches, though it is often found in Anglican Churches.

The **Chalice Veil** is used to cover a chalice once it has been dressed. It usually matches the color and style of the vestments of the day, but a white veil is always allowed, even if it does not match the other vestments. A chalice veil is not optional • it is required by the liturgical law of the Church, though the law is rarely observed. We veil the chalice for reasons similar to veiling a tabernacle - because it is a sacred vessel.

The **Communion Paten** is a small paten with a handle attached to it. It is sometimes used when communion is distributed to the faithful. Technically speaking it is required, though it is rarely seen.

The **Dalmatic** is a sort of tunic which usually matches the color and style of the chasuble, and is worn by Deacons during the liturgy. Like the chasuble, it is a symbol of the charity which a Deacon should always show towards others.

The **Maniple** looks like a small stole and is worn over the left arm of the Priest during Mass. It is optional and only very rarely seen now, but is still permitted. It is a symbol of suffering and tears shed by Christ since it was originally used as a sort of handkerchief. It should be the proper liturgical color of the day.

The **Tabernacle Veil** is a cloth cover which is sometimes draped over the tabernacle. It is often the proper liturgical color of the day and is used to indicate that what is veiled is holy.

The **Zucchetto** is essentially a skullcap. It can be worn by all clerics, but only Bishops, Cardinals, and the Pope may wear it during the liturgy. For Priests it must be black and is completely optional.

Colors of Vestments

Green is the most frequently seen color and is used for all Sundays in ordinary time. The color green, when used in vestments, is a symbol of hope.

Violet is used during Advent, Lent, and sometimes for funerals. Violet vestments are a symbol of expectation and penance. This is why a Priest always wears a violet stole when he hears confessions.

White can be used anytime, even if white is not the proper liturgical color of the day. It is usually used for Masses of the Virgin Mary, saints who were not martyrs, baptisms, and sometimes funerals as a reminder of baptism. White vestments symbolize purity.

Red is used for feasts of martyrs, Pentecost Sunday, and Masses of the Holy Spirit since red vestments symbolize blood and fire.

Gold is usually used only for the most solemn occasions like Christmas and Easter. Gold, as a liturgical color, is a symbol of glory. In a few rare cases we might see silver vestments, which are allowed as a variation on gold ones.

Rose is only permitted on two Sundays of the year - the third Sunday in Advent (*Gaudete Sunday*), and the fourth Sunday of Lent (*Laetare Sunday*). The color changes from the usual violet worn during these seasons of penance to show that penance leads to joy. Therefore the color rose, when used in liturgy, symbolizes the joyful result of doing penance.

Black is sometimes used for funeral Masses or other Masses for the dead like the Mass of All Souls in November. It is rarely used today, but is still permitted and symbolizes the sorrow we feel at being separated from those who have died. It is a traditional expression of sorrow that is still regularly observed in secular culture and society.

Other colors: Occasionally other colors are used, but this can only be done if special permission has been given by the bishop. Permission is usually given to a place rather than a person. An example of this is that the color blue can be used in Lourdes, France, in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and can be used in some cities in Spain on feasts of Our Lady. There are no special permissions given at the present time in the Diocese of Charleston.