

## Altar Server Words and Objects To Know

**Acclamation:** literally "a holy shout!" We sing the Gospel Acclamation as a way of praising God who is present in the Word. We join more fully during the Church's solemn Eucharistic Prayer when we respond with the eucharistic acclamations it contains.

**Acolyte:** someone who helps prepare for the liturgical ceremony, leads the congregation, and assists the priest as a minister of Communion. The acolyte, one of the Church's ministers, is instituted by the Bishop or his delegate in a special ceremony.

**Advent:** the four weeks before Christmas, during which we prepare for Christ's final coming as well as for the upcoming Christmas feast. The priest wears violet, which is a traditional color of waiting, preparation, anticipation and expectation.

**Advent Wreath:** a festive circular wreath, often made of greens, arranged to hold three violet candles and one pink (or rose) candle. The candles are lit for the Saturday evening and Sunday Masses of Advent, with one additional candle lit each week so that the Light of Christ becomes brighter as we approach Christmas. The candles may be changed for white ones, which would burn during the Christmas season until the Baptism of the Lord.

**Alb:** a long, white garment which covers the entire body. This was the clothing that the citizens of ancient Rome wore. The alb is always worn by the priest and deacon. In some parishes, servers and other liturgical ministers also wear albs.

**Altar:** the place where the sacrifice of Jesus is offered to the Father and made present to us. The Lord's Table, around which the assembly gathers to celebrate the Eucharist, is always treated with respect. The altar table represents Christ, the Lamb of God who gave his life for us, the One who is the Center of our lives. Servers and other liturgical ministers show respect to Christ by bowing when passing in front of the altar.

**Altar Cloth:** the long white cloth that covers the top of the altar and hangs over the ends. It is like a table cloth on a dining room table. The corporal is

placed on top of the altar cloth. Further, large decorative cloths are sometimes hung in front of the altar, especially on festive occasions.

**Altar Rail:** the dividing line between the seats for ministers in the sanctuary and those of the congregation in the nave. The altar rail encloses the sanctuary and the altar. Some churches continue to have this railing, although most have removed it.

**Ambo:** a strong and prominent stand or lectern from which the Scripture readings are proclaimed. A church or worship area has one ambo, and may also have a smaller lectern for the music ministers and the person making announcements.

**Ambry:** a special box or glass case attached to a wall of the church where the holy oils are kept. Also **see Oils**.

**Amice:** a white cloth which covers the priest's neck and shoulders. It is now usually part of the alb rather than a separate vestment.

**Ascension:** a feast which occurs on a Thursday or a Sunday [for those in Canada and elsewhere] some forty days after Easter. It recalls the return of Jesus Christ to the Father.

**Assembly:** those called by baptism as God's Holy People. The faithful assembly gives thanks and remembers the wonderful things which God has accomplished for us through Christ Jesus. Also **see Congregation**.

**Benediction:** a service of special devotion to the Eucharist. This liturgy is different from Mass. The priest or another person will instruct the server as to how to assist at Benediction.

**Boat:** a small container that holds the incense. This is usually carried by the thurifer, in the left hand.

**Bible:** inspired by God, the Bible is our collection of holy books which gather together the Hebrew Scriptures and Christian Scriptures. The Church selects certain passages to be proclaimed and heard each time we gather for the Eucharist and other public prayer times. These selected passages are contained in the Lectionary.

**Book of the Gospels:** the book from which the deacon or priest proclaims the Gospel text at the Eucharist. It is carried in procession by the deacon or a reader. Communities that do not have a Book of the Gospels carry in the Lectionary and use it for all the Scripture readings.

**Candle-Bearer:** server(s) who carry a candle in processions during Mass. They often walk on both sides of the processional cross or slightly behind it.

**Canon:** see **Eucharistic Prayer**

**Cassock:** a long dark-colored robe that reaches from shoulders to ankles. Servers in some parishes wear a cassock with a white surplice over it.

**Celebrant:** one who leads a liturgical ceremony. For Mass, this will usually be a priest from the parish, but it may also be a visiting priest or the bishop. For community prayer services, the celebrant may be a deacon or other person specially appointed to lead the assembly. The celebrant leads everyone in celebrating God's Life and Love. Also see **President**.

**Celebrant's Chair:** the central chair, used by the priest or bishop or the person who leads the community in prayer. It is sometimes located just behind the altar, but it can also be located elsewhere in the sanctuary. Servers will bring the Sacramentary to this chair, which is also called the president's chair, or simply "the chair."

**Censer:** see **Thurible**

**Chalice:** the cup used by the priest when he consecrates the wine into the Blood of Christ. It is usually made of gold or silver, but it can also be made of other solid materials.

**Chalice Veil:** a cloth that can cover the chalice while it sits on the credence table. The veil is either white or the color of the chasuble.

**Chasuble:** a long, flowing robe that goes over the priest's head. This is the changeable, outer vestment that people see in its entirety. It comes in the colors of the Church Year.

**Christmas:** the celebration of the Birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, when God came to us in human form.

**Ciborium:** a covered container used to hold the bread or wafers consecrated at Mass. The leftover bread or wafers are placed in the tabernacle as a sign of respect for the Eucharist. The plural of ciborium is ciboria.

**Cincture:** a thin rope tied around the waist over the alb. When a parish uses albs for the servers, they also wear cinctures.

**Concelebration:** the celebration of a Mass by more than one priest. This will often happen during Holy Week, at Confirmation, and on other special occasions.

**Congregation:** another word for the faithful people, the assembly, those who have gathered to participate in the worship of God at the Church's public prayer.

**Cope:** a long cape that is worn by the priest during some ceremonies. It is open in the front, and often held together near the chin by a clasp. It is often the color of the Church season.

**Corporal:** a square piece of white cloth which is spread over the altar cloth. It is put on the altar where the priest will offer the gifts of bread and wine to God on our behalf. The chalice, ciboria and flagon are placed on it.

**Credence Table:** a side table in or near the sanctuary, where all the objects used for Mass are placed before and after they are actually used.

**Cross-Bearer:** the server who carries the processional cross during the entrance and exit processions, and who on most occasions leads toward the altar those who present the gifts of bread and wine on behalf of the entire community.

**Cruets:** bottle-like containers that hold the water and wine for Mass.

**Dalmatic:** a coat-like vestment worn by the deacon, especially on festive occasions. It is usually open at the sides, and is the same color as the chasuble. A deacon may wear the dalmatic, or just an alb and stole.

**Deacon:** a person ordained by the bishop to serve the community. Deacons proclaim the Gospel at Mass, preach the homily when permitted, prepare the bread and wine, and assist in distributing communion. Deacons also baptize, join persons in marriage and assist at funeral and burial services. Many parishes have deacons.

**Easter:** the celebration of Jesus' Resurrection from the dead. This is the most important feast day of the Church Year.

**Easter Vigil:** the night before Easter Sunday. This is the most important Mass of the Year. Beginning after sunset, the Easter Vigil includes the renewal of baptismal promises for all, as well as the Baptism, Confirmation and First Eucharist of those who have been preparing to join the church community.

**Eucharist:** a Greek word which means "thanksgiving." It refers to the bread and wine that have been consecrated. It also refers to the part of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, during which the consecration takes place. It can also refer to the entire Mass itself. Also see **Mass**.

**Eucharistic Prayer:** the long prayer spoken by the priest in the name of the congregation. This prayer asks for God to consecrate bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. In reciting this prayer, the priest reminds us of the great things God has done for us, especially in sending us Jesus the Son.

With the priest and by our participation in the sung or spoken acclamations, we give thanks to God from our hearts.

**Flagon:** a pitcher which is used to consecrate enough wine for all present to receive the Blood of Christ during Mass.

**Genuflect:** to briefly touch one's right knee to the floor. A server genuflects whenever passing in front of the tabernacle, as a sign of respect for the Eucharist which is kept there.

**Good Friday:** two days before Easter. On Good Friday, Mass is not celebrated. Instead, we remember the Lord's Passion and Death by venerating or kissing the cross of Christ. This is one of the most simple and solemn church services of the entire year.

**Holy Thursday:** three days before Easter. Our celebration recalls the night when Jesus celebrated the Last Supper with his Apostles. The Mass on Holy Thursday night includes the washing of feet as a gesture of service, and a special procession which concludes the evening.

**Homily:** an explanation of the Scripture readings used at Mass. This is the talk which comes after the Gospel. The homily is preached by the priest or the deacon. In the absence of a priest or a deacon, another person is authorized to offer a reflection on the Scriptures at a Liturgy of the Word with Communion.

**Host:** the round piece of bread used at Mass. It is made of flour and water without yeast. The priest often uses a larger host so that everyone at Mass will be able to see it.

**Humeral Veil:** a long cloth, usually white, which goes over the priest's shoulders and covers his arms. This is attached by a clasp in the front. It is used during Benediction, or when carrying the Blessed Sacrament in procession.

**Incense:** a mixture of resins, bark and other natural materials such as flowers, which gives off a sweet-smelling smoke when burned. This smoke rises and represents our prayers rising to God. The use of incense is always optional in a parish. The priest or person instructing the servers will tell them when incense will be used.

**Intinction:** a way of dipping the host or Eucharistic bread into the consecrated wine during Communion time, so that persons may receive both the Body and Blood of Christ.

**Lectern:** a strong and sturdy reading stand used to hold the Lectionary or Book of the Gospels while a person proclaims one of the Scripture readings. Each church or worship space should have one of these. Also see **Ambo**.

**Lectionary:** a large book containing the Bible readings which have been selected for use at Mass and other church services. This is the book used by the reader who proclaims God's Word. If there is no Book of the Gospel, the deacon or priest proclaims the Gospel from the Lectionary.

**Lector:** also called the reader or proclaimer, this is the person who reads God's Word so that the faithful assembly might hear it. The lector walks in the procession and may carry the Lectionary. In the absence of the deacon, the lector carries the Book of the Gospels or the Lectionary.

**Lent:** a period of about forty (40) days before Easter, beginning with Ash Wednesday and ending on Holy Thursday before sunset. It is a time to prepare for Easter joy by performing additional acts of charity, by fasting, by praying more regularly, by changing some negative attitude or action, or by freely giving up some treat or pleasure.

**Liturgy:** literally, it means "the work of the people." A liturgy is a worship service of praise and prayerful thanks to God. The Eucharist or Mass is the most familiar form of liturgy. God's People also gather in some places for a common celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, which is the church's daily prayer. The most important hours are Morning and Evening Prayer.

**Mass:** also known as the Eucharist, and originally called "the breaking of bread." It is the principal liturgical celebration of Catholic worship. During Mass, Jesus is present in the reading of God's Word, in the consecrated Bread and Wine of the Eucharist, in the worshipping community gathered, and in the liturgical ministers themselves. We celebrate Jesus' presence and give thanks for his life-giving sacrifice. Also see **Eucharist**.

**Missal:** see **Sacramentary**

**Monstrance:** a large metal container to display or show the host. It is often gold or silver-colored. Benediction is the ceremony when the monstrance is most often used.

**Nave:** the large part of the worship space from which the assembly or congregation prays.

**Novena:** originally referred to any religious devotion that lasted for nine days. Now it refers to particular religious devotions, often to Jesus, Mary or the saints.

**Octave:** the eight days after a major feast, such as Christmas or Easter. These feasts are too big for one day, so the celebration lasts all week.

**Oils:** the holy oils blessed during Holy Week or earlier in Lent by the Bishop, who gathers the priests and the faithful of the diocese around him. There are three kinds of oil: the Oil of the Sick, used in the sacrament called The Anointing of the Sick; the Oil of Catechumens, used during Infant Baptism and during the time of preparation before an adult is baptized; Chrism, used in Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders.

**Pall:** a large white cloth which is spread over the coffin at a funeral. It represents the white garment worn by a person at his or her baptism. Some parishes also use a small cloth-covered square pall that covers the chalice.

**Patin Sunday:** see **Passion Sunday**

**Paschal Candle:** a large wax candle placed in a tall holder to symbolize the light of the Risen Christ. It is called the "Easter candle" in some places, because it is prepared and blessed at the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday night. The Paschal Candle stays in the assembly's view until the end of Pentecost, and is lighted during every liturgy. After Pentecost, it is placed near the baptismal font, and used during Baptisms and funeral liturgies.

**Passion Sunday:** the Sunday before Easter, also known as Palm Sunday, when we receive palms at Mass. The important action of the day is the reading of the gospel account of the Passion and Death of Jesus.

**Paten:** a round metal plate which can hold hosts for the faithful, the ministers and the priest during the Eucharist. See also ciborium. It is also the name of the plate used in some churches by servers during Communion time.

**Pentecost:** fifty days after Easter. This is the celebration of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. It is also called "the birthday of the Church."

**Presider's Chair:** the central chair used by the priest during Mass, or by lay people at different liturgical celebrations. It is sometimes referred to as the Celebrant's Chair, or simply "the chair."

**Procession:** a solemn way to walk through or around a church or other worship space. Many people walk together toward or away from the sanctuary, usually at the beginning or end of a ceremony. This may be



done with music or in silence. Sometimes processions are held in the streets or neighborhoods outside the church building.

**Purificator:** a small white cloth used to clean the chalice after each person receives communion under the form of wine, and to clean the chalice after Mass.

**Pyx:** a small container used to bring Communion to the sick and home-bound. It is often kept in the sacristy.

**Ritual:** the ceremonies that express and strengthen the faith we share together in Christ Jesus. This word also refers to the books which contain these ceremonies, such as the Lectionary and the Sacramentary. These two books contain directions on how to conduct these rituals.

**Sacramentary:** the large book which contains all the prayers said by the priest during Mass, or the one who leads the community in worship at other times. This book is usually held by the server for the opening and closing prayers of the Mass. It is placed on the altar for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

**Sacrarium:** a special sink in the sacristy, from which the water goes directly into the ground. It usually has a metal cover. The vessels used for Mass may be washed here.

**Sacristy:** the room in the church building where the priest prepares for Mass. Most of the objects used at the Eucharist are kept in this room. The servers will also prepare in this room, unless they have a special sacristy of their own.

**Sanctuary:** the area around the altar. It is sometimes distinguished from the nave, which is the area from which the assembly or congregation participates.

**Sanctuary Lamp:** the single candle or light that burns near the tabernacle to show the presence of the reserved Eucharist. This candle reminds the faithful of the presence of Christ, the Light of the world, in the worship space, chapel or shrine area. The sanctuary lamp also reminds us of our watchfulness before Christ, until He returns in glory.

**Scriptures:** the readings from the Bible that are proclaimed publicly at the Eucharist and other liturgical services. The Scriptures are divided into two groups: the Hebrew Scriptures [also called the Old Testament] and the Christian Scriptures [also called the New Testament].

**Server:** a person who helps and assists the priest during a Mass, or assists the prayer leader during other prayer ceremonies.

**Sprinkler:** an instrument capable of holding water, and which usually accompanies the bucket or pail containing holy water for the Sprinkling Rite. Originally called the *aspergilium*.

**Sprinkling Rite:** also known as the "Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling Holy Water" and formerly called the Asperges Rite. This is the option at the opening of Mass on Sundays, when water is blessed and sprinkled on the congregation as a reminder of their baptism.

**Stole:** a long band of cloth worn during ceremonies by bishops, priests and deacons. The stole is a symbol of the sacrament of Holy Orders. It is usually the color of the Church season or special day. A deacon wears a stole over the left shoulder. Priests and bishops wear their stoles over both shoulders.

**Surplice:** a white garment that is half the length of a cassock. It is worn over the cassock in parishes that use it.

**Tabernacle:** the place where the Eucharist is kept during the week. Many churches have a special chapel or shrine for the tabernacle, while in other churches the tabernacle is behind the altar of sacrifice. As a sign of reverence, a server genuflects when passing in front of the tabernacle.

**Thurible:** the metal container that holds the hot charcoal for the incense. This is carried by the thurifer in the right hand. It can also be called the censer.

**Thurifer:** the server who carries the thurible and the boat. When incense is used, the thurifer leads the procession at the beginning and end of Mass.

**Triduum:** any religious devotion that lasts for three days. The best known and most important triduum extends from the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday up to and including the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday night.

**Vestments:** the general term for clothing or garments worn by priests, deacons or other liturgical ministers when serving the people of God at Mass or other ceremonies.

**Washing of Hands:** an action of the priest who presides at the Eucharist occurs after the Presentation of the Gifts and before the Eucharist Prayer begins. The servers bring a bowl, the water cruet, and a towel for this washing, during which the priest prays silently for purification and forgiveness.

**Washing the Vessels:** An action which occurs at the credence table after Communion, or in the sacristy or at the credence table after Mass. The most familiar vessels to be washed are the chalices used during the Eucharist.