

Altar Server's Glossary of Terms

Ablution Cup – covered dish of water on the side of the tabernacle which is used by the priest, deacon or extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist to wash their fingers after distributing Communion.

Altar - The table in the sanctuary at which the bread and wine are prepared and transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ.

Ambo (Lectern/Pulpit) – The platform where the readings and homily take place.

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

Bells – Rung during the consecration of the Mass.

Book of Gospels – The book which contains the Gospel readings.

Chalice - The metal cup (either gold or silver) used to hold the wine that will be consecrated and distributed to the assembly at Mass.

Ciborium - A metal container with a lid used to store consecrated hosts in the tabernacle.

Communion Cups – Goblets used for distribution of Holy Communion.

Corporal – The large, square white cloth which is placed on the altar underneath the chalice and platen.

Credence Table – The table located to the left of the Altar, used to hold the purificators, chalices, and other items needed for the celebration of Mass.

Cruets – Water and wine containers.

Finger Bowl and Towel – Used for the rite before Eucharistic prayer.

Flagon (Pitcher) - The pitcher used to hold the wine which will become the Blood of Christ during the consecration.

Gift Table – The table in the back of the center aisle where the bread and wine are placed before Mass begins.

Lectionary – The book which contains the Scripture readings.

Pall – A piece of cardboard or plastic which is covered by linen and used to cover the chalice.

Paschal Candle – The tall candle which is blessed and used during the Easter season, baptisms, and funerals.

Paten - The 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 of the Mass.

Purificator - A long narrow piece of folded linen cloth, which sometimes has a small cross sewn on. It is used by the priest and Eucharistic Minister to wipe the chalice after a person takes a drink from it.

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

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

Sacristy – The room next to the Sanctuary where the priests, altar servers, and other ministers prepare for the Mass.

Sanctuary - The raised area in the front of the church. It is considered a holy and special area because this is where the sacrifice of the Mass is offered and where the word of God is read. It should be approached with great respect.

Tabernacle – The gold “safe” in which the Blessed Sacrament (Consecrated Host) is stored.

Thurifer – The person who carries the censer and incense boat.

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

Vestments

Vestments are what the priest and altar servers wear during Mass.

Alb - A long white linen robe worn by the priest and altar servers.

Cincture - A cord made of silk or cotton with tassels on the ends. It is used around the waist to secure the alb so that it will not interfere with walking.

Stole - A long strip of cloth worn by the priest around his neck and shoulders.

Chasuble – Colored vestment worn only by the priest.

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

The 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 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.

Incense, Incense Boat, Censer/Thurible - Incense is perfumed grains that are burned during special occasions. An Incense Boat is the container that holds the unburned incense. The Censer/Thurible is a metal container that holds hot coals. It has a top with air vents and a long chain so that it can be carried. Incense is scooped out of the incense boat and sprinkled on the hot coals in the censer. When the incense is burned it makes smoke.

The 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 everyone by sprinkling them using the Aspergillum. This is used on special celebrations.

The Ministers 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.

Deacon - A 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.

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

Eucharistic Minister - A person who is specially conferred by the Bishop to 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 the Prayers of the Faithful at mass.

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

Bishop - A 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 - A 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.

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