

Introduction

For millennia bishops and priests have been assisted by other clergy and laity when they offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Your willingness to serve the priest at the altar of God is an importance service both to God and to the people of the parish.

It is of the utmost importance then that you are attentive to your obligations in this handbook, so that you may assist the people of the parish in their worship of Almighty God. As you assist the priest, it enables him as well as those in attendance to focus on Our Lord.

Prayers for Altar Servers

Altar Server's Prayer

Open my mouth, O Lord, to bless Your Holy Name. Cleanse my heart from all evil and distracting thoughts. Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will that I may serve more worthily at Your Holy Altar. O Mary, Mother of Christ the High Priest, obtain for me the most important grace of knowing my vocation in life. Grant me a true spirit of faith and humble obedience so that I may ever behold the priest as a representative of God and willing to follow him in the Way, the Truth, and the Life of Christ. Amen.

Altar Server's Prayer of Thanksgiving After Mass

O Lord, Jesus Christ, Eternal High Priest, I thank You for the privilege of having served at the holy altar of Your sacrifice. Now, as I put aside the garments of that service, I ask that I may at all times think of You, and always act accordingly, as a privileged altar server. May I ever seek You and find You; may I always follow You; may Your priestly spirit be my guide, and Your service of love be my example.

May your Holy Name always be on my lips, and to Your praise and glory may every work of mine be done. Ever ready in Your service, may I always know and do Your Holy Will in all things. May I remain pure and blameless and be found worthy to be Your servant, and by Your grace may I persevere to the end. Amen.

A Server's Prayer

Loving Father, Creator of the universe, You call Your people to worship, to be with You and with one another at Mass. I thank You for having called me to assist others in their prayer to You. May I be worthy of the trust placed in me and through my example and service bring others closer to You. I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, who is Lord for ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer to St. John Berchmans, Patron of Altar Boys

Dear St. John, you died at a very young age, but in that short time you learned to live an exemplary life as a member of the Society of Jesus. Directed by your Guardian Angel, whom you confidently invoked, you learned to be a most humble server at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Help altar boys imitate you in their service at Eucharistic celebrations as well as in their conduct with others. Amen.

To An Altar Server

To be Christ's page at the altar,
To serve Him freely there,
Where even angels falter,
Bowed low in reverent prayer.
To touch the throne most holy,
To hand the gifts for the feast.
To see Him meekly, lowly,
Descend at the word of the priest.
To hear man's poor petition,
To sound the silvery bell,
When he in sweet submission,
Comes down with us to dwell.
No grander mission surely
Could saints or men enjoy:
No heart should love more purely,

Than yours who serve with joy.
God bless you child forever,
And keep you in his care.
And guard you that you never
Belie the robes you wear.
For white bespeaks untainted
A heart both tried and true:
And red tells love the sainted
And holy martyrs knew.
Throughout your life, then,
endeavor
God's graces to do right;
And be in heart forever
God's witness and God's knight.

Prayers of an Altar Server

O God, You have graciously called me to serve You upon Your altar. Grant me the graces that I need to serve You faithfully and wholeheartedly. Grant too that while serving You, may I follow the example of St. Tarcisius, who

died protecting the Eucharist, and walk the same path that led him to Heaven.

St. Tarcisius, pray for me and for all servers.

Before Mass

Oh Jesus, my King and Lord, by the grace of the heavenly Father and the power of the Holy Spirit, guide me in all righteousness as I serve You today at the Altar so I may be always worthy of Your presence. If I happen to make an error, may it be a lesson so my service will be perfect tomorrow. Jesus, I love you with all my heart. Amen.

After Mass

Lord Jesus, thank you for the opportunity to serve You during the Holy Mass. In Your Sacred Presence, my heart is filled with joy and peace. May Your Spirit always guide me so I may grow in Your love by the grace of the Heavenly Father. Amen.

How to Serve

The Mass Itself

When we step through the doorway of our parish church, we leave the world behind us for a very special consecrated holy place. We should try to collect our thoughts so that our entrance is a joyful, peaceful and prayerful act. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the Paschal Rite of the New Testament, which is the fulfillment of the promises God the Father made in the Old Testament.

In it we receive the True Manna from heaven, Jesus Christ in His Body, Blood, Soul, & Divinity, consecrated by a priest like Melchisedek of old as he offers the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, representing and making present the Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross.

At Mass the sign of bread & wine separated reminds us of the violent separation of Christ's Body & Blood. Jesus designates Himself as Servant of the Lord as a ransom for the many (Mt 10:45). Israel was accustomed to consuming sacrificed victim in a Sacred meal as were the pagans.

The Mass reminds us to live our lives as a sacrifice as we look forward to the Banquet of the Lamb in heaven.

In the Sacrifice of the Mass, Christ's Sacrifice on Calvary is made present, its memory celebrated, & its saving power applied. The Mass makes the Sacrifice of Calvary present so that the Church can offer it to the Father for the Redemption of the world. Through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Father sees His Son surrounded by His adopted sons.

It is a Living Sacrifice ► our humbled contrite heart
► Daily crosses
► Spiritual sacrifices.

The Eucharist is the meeting place of the WHOLE Church [The Church Militant, The Church Suffering, & The Church Triumphant] – stretching toward the future & inviting the Second Coming.

The Eucharist always has the aroma of Mary. Mary is spiritually present @ the Eucharist. Mary was involved in the acquisition of the grace of Redemption. In the Eucharist Christ is Fully present, Body, Blood, Soul & Divinity.

Effects of the Holy Eucharist

Presuming a state of grace (not cognizant of mortal sin) & a pious disposition:

1. Union with Christ
2. receive increase in sanctifying grace
3. receive strength against temptation
4. remission of venial sin
5. facilitates the attainment of eternal life

Serving

1) To form a worthy guard of honor to our Divine Eucharistic King in whose service we willingly assume the dignity and honor of becoming His servants;

2) To render faithful, reverent and edifying service to God by assisting His visible representatives, the Bishops and Priests, in offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and in all other liturgical and devotional functions;

3) To enkindle in the hearts of the faithful whom we represent at the altar, greater piety and devotion by reverently performing the duties of our holy office and by giving good example in our daily lives;

Sacred Actions

Walking: There is a great dignity to the right kind of walking. When the occasion is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, what a beautiful action walking can be. It can be a genuine action of worshipping God. Walking in Church can be a reverent awareness that we are entering the "House of God and the Gate of Heaven." Walking into the Presence of God is "To walk before the Lord." The command "to walk before the Lord and be perfect" is to be taken seriously. It means allowing God to work in us; it means working and walking with Our Blessed Lord through our parents, brethren, priests, teachers, and friends.

Kneeling: God is so great and we are so small, so we make our genuflections a real sign of how we recognize God's greatness. Our kneeling is an act of humility, acknowledging the truth of who we are in relation to our Almighty and merciful God who loves us so much as to give us His Son for the sake of our salvation.

Our Hands: When we watch others, we notice how facial expressions indicate pleasure, surprise, love, concern, even dislike and hatred. Next to our facial expressions, our hands also can indicate what we are. They are one of the important ways by which we receive matter from outside of ourselves. Our handshake and the hands of another person joined with ours is a sign of friendship, love, confidence, sympathy and understanding. Consequently, our hands are mighty and meaningful instruments for our worship of God. When we enter God's presence through prayer either at home, school, or in Church, with our palms joined, we are showing our obedience and subjection to Him. Our joined hands are a sign of the words we speak in prayer and in Mass for God alone. They are also a sign that we are ready and attentive to receive His Word who is Christ the Lord.

Our Sitting: All body postures are used in the worship of God. Our sitting can be a sign of reverence and a great aid for relaxed and active listening to what God says to us in the readings and in the sermon. Most of us would be sure to sit erect with our hands flat on our laps for an important person either out of respect or simply to make a good impression. At Holy Mass, we are in the presence of God, Most High, the most important presence.

Expectations: Arrival, dress and vesting

1. All servers are expected to arrive and vest at least 10-15 minutes before Mass. In the future, if servers are late and subs have been gotten by the priests, late servers may not be permitted to serve.
 2. All servers are expected to be present whenever they are scheduled unless they have found a substitute and have notified the appropriate party. Failure to do so may result in a server being dismissed after the third offense.
 3. All servers must sign-in upon arrival.
 4. Appropriate attire and hygiene reflect our respect for Our Blessed Lord. This includes clean hands and groomed hair. Absolutely nothing should be written on one's hands.
 - Girls with long hair should have it pulled back in a ponytail. Make-up and inappropriate nail polish are not permitted.
 - Boys' hair must be groomed and cut in a style that does not go beyond the collar of his shirt.
- a. Because of the sacredness of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and other liturgical services and the role which the servers play in them, and appropriate dress code must be followed and will be enforced. Violations of the dress code may result in a server being told not to serve at a particular Mass and will count as an unexcused absence.
 - b. Presentable dress includes:
 - i. A clean collared shirt for boys (always tucked in); a presentable modest top (covering the shoulders) for girls.
 - ii. Dress pants, school uniform pants, or Khakis for the boys; skirt (of a length at least covering the knees), dress pants, or school uniform for the girls.
 - iii. Dress shoes for boys (yes, socks are required!); dress shoes for the girls.
 - c. The following **are never** acceptable attire:
 - i. Sneakers, open toe sandals, flip-flops, high heels or soles.

- ii. Shorts, jeans, t-shirts, net shirts, jewelry except a watch, dangling earrings (except small stud earrings for girls – *boys are never to wear earrings of any kind*).

Before Mass: Once vested and signed in the book, servers should stop by the priest sacristy so that he knows who is present, and then await the priest in the rear of church with Cross and candles (and thurible, if used) except for the Mass without music where there is a short procession from the front side door.

The Mass: At the priest's signal, the bell is rung; servers line-up in the center aisle facing the priest. He will say, " We adore You, O Christ and we bless You." To which all respond, "Because by Your Holy Cross You have redeemed the world."

Once the people are singing the words to the Entrance Hymn, proceed down the aisle at a dignified pace. Upon your arrival at the foot of the altar bow from the waist if you are carrying something and genuflect if you are not carrying anything, then proceed to the priest sacristy to place everything in its place i.e. processional cross and candles.

[If incense is used, the thurifer goes to his left and awaits the priest at the altar. At the priest's arrival, the boat is given to the priest, the thurible is opened and held at the priest's waist so that incense may be placed in the thurible. After Father blesses the incense, the thurible is closed and handed to the priest while the thurifer receives the boat back. He takes two or three steps back until Father is finished incensing and receives the thurible back and places it on the stand until it is needed again. Please note that the thurifer is responsible for adding coals as necessary to the thurible.]

The Crucifer and acolytes sit on the chairs on the BVM side while the book-bearer sits on the other side of the sanctuary near the priest. If there is no book-bearer, the crucifer customarily serves as book-bearer.

The book-bearer should immediately come to the priest upon his arrival at the sedilia (chair). Hold the book with the spine under your chin and allow the priest to open and position the book unless the priest prefers to be at the altar..

The other servers stand at their seats for the Introductory Rites: Sign of the Cross, Greeting, Penitential Rite, Gloria, and Collect. *N.B. If the priest is doing the Sprinkling Rite, a server needs to be at the priest's side immediately upon his arrival at the sedilia with a bucket of water for him to bless. The Holy Water bearer accompanies the priest at his right at all times for the sprinkling and returns to his/her place at its completion.*

When the priest is finished (after the Collect or dismissing children in the event of Children's Liturgy of the Word), the book-bearer returns to his/her place until the Creed.

Servers should remember that the people look to them for the responses and will follow their lead regarding when to sit, stand, and kneel.

Liturgy of the Word: First Reading, Responsorial Psalm, Second Reading, Gospel Verse, Gospel, Sermon / Homily, Creed / Profession of Faith, Universal Prayer / General Intercessions.

At the conclusion of the Collect, servers should be seated until they stand at the Gospel Verse & Gospel. Be seated for the sermon.

Immediately upon the completion of the sermon, all stand and the book-bearer goes to the priest at the chair with the binder containing the Creed and the Universal Prayer (General Intercessions).

Liturgy of the Eucharist: Offertory / Preparation of the Gifts, Eucharistic Prayer.

Offertory: At the end of the Universal Prayer, DO NOT SIT. Unless it is already there the Book-bearer immediately brings the large Roman Missal and book stand and places it upon the altar, returning to his/her seat.

The acolytes and crucifer, if necessary, bring any chalices and ciboria to the altar. If there is an Offertory procession, the acolytes and the priest will receive the gifts at the bottom of the steps and the priest will hand each to a server. Priest and servers all turn toward the altar and bow, allowing the priest to proceed first. Servers go toward their left, placing any ciboria and chalices upon the altar.

The acolytes should bring the water and wine to the priest. Please come immediately to the end of the altar; you should be awaiting the priest not the other way around. Be sure to hold the cruets in such a way (handles facing out and tops removed) as to allow the priest to take the cruets. Once the priest has poured water and wine and returned BOTH cruets to the acolytes, they bow to the priest and return to the credence table.

If incense is used, the thurifer comes to the end of the altar and awaits the priest, repeating the same procedure as at the beginning of Mass.

Then they return to the end of the altar, one with the ewer and bowl, the other with an unfolded hand towel. The priest will wash his hands (stop pouring when Father lifts his hands). He will dry his hands and return the folded towel into the folded hands of the server. Acolytes bow to the priest together and return to the credence table and prepare for the Eucharistic Prayer.

The Eucharistic Prayer: At the end of the Sanctus, servers should kneel. Customarily, the crucifer will ring the bells.

The bells are thrice during the Eucharistic Prayer.

1. At the epiclesis. That is when the priest places his hands over the chalice and host. Ring bells once.
2. At the elevation of the host. Ring bells thrice.
3. At the elevation of the chalice. Ring the bells thrice.

N.B. When ringing the bells, hold them until the bells cease singing, then gently place them on the floor.

Communion Rite: Servers should stand at the end of the Amen for the Lord's Prayer. For the sign of peace, servers should come to the priest first, then exchange with each other at their places. Servers should kneel at the end of the Agnus Dei. Crucifer should ring the bell once when the priest receives Holy Communion from the Chalice.

Servers, if they are in a state of grace, should receive Holy Communion in the usual way by coming to the priest at the altar, preferably single file. While the priest is distributing Holy Communion to the people, the book-bearer should remove the Roman Missal and bookstand from the altar unless the priest wishes it to remain there.

At the priest's return, an acolyte should be at the ready with the water cruet to pour water over the priest's fingers into the chalice. When Father lifts his fingers, stop pouring, bow, and return to your place. [The priest may wish to use wine too; if so, he will tell you before Mass.]

Once the chalice is dressed, remove the chalice (unless it is one you are not permitted to carry) as well as any other items on the altar.

The Concluding Rites:

The book-bearer should have the Roman Missal in hand and ready. Once the priest reaches the chair, the book-bearer should be no less than a few steps behind him unless he dismisses from the altar.

All other servers stand once the priest says, "Let us pray."

After the closing prayer the book-bearer holds the binder (if there are announcements). The priest may or may not need the Missal for the final blessing.

Immediately upon the saying the dismissal, servers should be moving to line-up in the aisle for the recessional. Line up on the floor of the nave using the squares to mark your place.

Remember to Process out - NOT race up the aisle.

Upon arriving at the last pew turn and face the priest.

He will say, "Prosit." [Pro - zit] {May it be profitable}

You will say, "Omnibus et singulis." [om-nee-bus et sing-you-lease] {For one and all}

Return the Crucifix and candles to their proper places. Please leave the server sacristy neat and clean. Servers should offer to assist the sacristan in cleaning up after Mass and setting up before Mass. Also, never blow out candles, smother them gently.

After Mass, don't forget to say a prayer of Thanksgiving to Our Lord before you depart.

Funerals:

Like any Sunday Mass except :

1. The Entrance:

Cross, candles & book like on Sunday

- We proceed out of the sacristy, genuflecting before the MBS and meet the casket in the aisle near the Baptismal font. [N.B. Use of the holy water font is not always possible; if not, the priest will inform you before Mass and a server will need to carry the Holy Water Bucket in that instance.]
- Upon reaching the Baptismal font, please move to the side to allow the priest to get near the coffin. After the pall is placed over the coffin, the priest will turn to proceed down the aisle. Line up as usual and precede him and go to your usual places.

**N.B. Some priests use the book at the chair, others at the altar.

2. Offertory:

- a. Offertory Procession usually begins from break. Some families opt out or do not want a long walk. Check before Mass.
- b. Incense will be used before the Washing of the Priest's hands.

3. The Concluding Rites:

- a. After the Post-Communion Prayer, Thurifer comes to the lowest step to the priest's right and Book-bearer to the priest's left, and Crucifer goes into the aisle with the Cross about five or more pews past the casket and faces the altar. N.B. If sufficient servers (usually four) are present, two acolytes may join Crucifer with candles and the priest can handle the book himself.

4. The Recessional:

- a. The priest will say some prayers and incense the casket; he will say a few more prayers and then say, "Let us take N. to his place of rest." Then the thurifer and Book-bearer line-up with the Crucifer; we all genuflect with the pall bearers and proceed to the back and await the funeral pall. At the priest's signal we return to the sacristy.

Weddings:

Like any other Mass except:

1. The Entrance: we proceed out of the sacristy, genuflect before the MBS and go to your seats. The priest will wait for the bride & groom then he will go to his place. Some priests will go to the chair and will need the book; other priests will go to the altar.
2. After the Homily: one server will go to the priest's right with the Holy Water, another to his left with a gold tray for the rings. Once the bridal party leaves, servers go back to their places.
3. After the intercessions: lead up the Offertory Procession which may be from the break or from the front pew or not at all. Check BEFORE Mass.
4. The Recessional: the priest will send out the bride and groom; after they have gone a few pews line up in the aisle, genuflect at the priest's signal and proceed back to the sacristy.

Instructions for serving Stations of the Cross

1. Setting up
 - Arrive 20 minutes early.
 - Sign in.
 - Get vested.
 - Be sure that stations booklets are at the entrances of the church.
 - Place humeral veil on the modesty screen of the first pew.
 - Move bells to second step outside of the railing on the Sacred Heart side so server may get them easily.

- Place seven branch candles on the altar (front corners) unless the priest directs otherwise.
- Light the candles.
- Place monstrance on altar sideways so the face is not facing the people.
- Place a corporal on the altar in the center front.
- Place tabernacle key in keyhole of tabernacle.

2. Serving

N.B. Stations is composed of three main parts : Exposition, Stations, & Benediction. Some priests may prefer a different order such as Stations, Exposition, & Benediction. He will tell you beforehand.

Exposition

- Servers come out of the sacristy preceded by the thurifer. The thurifer and other servers come out and kneel to the right & left of the priest – two on the R & two on the L. Note that the thurifer should be to the priest's immediate Right & the Crucifer should be on the priest's left. The acolytes should be one on the outer right & left. The acolytes may bring candles with them if the priest wishes. If so, place them on the step next to you.
- The priest goes to the tabernacle to expose the Blessed Sacrament.
- When the priest returns **THE THURIFER ONLY WILL STAND AND FACE THE PRIEST** thurible in one hand and boat in the other. Hand The priest the boat and he will impose incense onto the coals. The priest will bless the incense after he hands the boat back to the server. **DO NOT HAND THE THURIBLE TO THE PRIEST UNTIL HE HAS KNELT DOWN.**
- Everyone bows when the priest bows. Servers on each side should pull the cope back so that it does not get singed by the thurible. The priest incenses the Blessed Sacrament.

Stations

- Upon receiving the Thurible back, the Thurifer will take the Thurible back into the sacristy and return to the priest's side. At

this time the Crucifer will also retrieve the Cross and acolytes retrieve the candles.

- The Thurifer walks next to the priest and uses the prayer book to respond with the people.
- Crucifer and acolytes step back when they reach the center so that they are in between the first pews in the center aisle. This allows for the room for the priest and the thurifer to kneel down for the opening prayers.
- When the priest and the thurifer stand up to proceed to the first station the crucifer and acolytes swing in line so that their backs are against the pews at the first station. [Some priests may prefer you to be directly in front of the stations with your back against the wall. Check before Mass.]
- After each station crucifer and acolytes as well as the priest and thurifer turn in their place and process to the next station. (Always look to see where the priest stops and crucifer should be directly in front of him with your back to the station.)
- After the 7th station the priest and the thurifer will face the altar the crucifer and acolytes will pass behind them. While everyone is facing the altar, the priest and the thurifer will genuflect while the other servers bow. Everyone then turns so that their backs are now against the 8th station. (The priest and the thurifer will be facing that station.)
- After the 12th station the thurifer leaves the priest's side and goes to the sacristy to light another charcoal unless a sacristan is present to do it. Thurifer waits in sacristy until the priest and servers return to the sanctuary.
- After the 14th station the servers face the altar and the priest follows them into the sanctuary.

Benediction

- Servers **IMMEDIATELY BOW AND GO TO THEIR PLACES.** Acolytes place the candles in the sacristy. The crucifer places the cross into the sacristy and comes out and kneels to the left of the priest in front of the bells. The thurifer comes out and kneels to the right of the priest.
- When the priest returns **THE THURIFER ONLY WILL STAND AND FACE THE PRIEST** thurible in one hand and boat in the

other. Hand The priest the boat and he will impose incense onto the coals. The priest will bless the incense after he hands the boat back to the server. **DO NOT HAND THE THURIBLE TO THE PRIEST UNTIL HE HAS KNELT DOWN.**

- Everyone bows when the priest bows. The priest incenses the Blessed Sacrament. All may sit if the priest does a short reading gives a talk and offers some time for silent reflection.
- When the priest rises and returns to the foot of the altar all servers do the same (thurifer brings incense at this time.)
- All bow when the priest bows. The priest and thurifer stand to impose the incense same as before. Everyone is kneeling while this happens.
- The priest takes incense after he kneels and incenses the Blessed Sacrament. Crucifer & Thurifer should remember to pull back the edges of the priest's cope.
- The priest stands to recite the prayer for the benediction, only the acolyte to his left stands at this time and goes to bring the humeral veil at this time. Everyone else remains kneeling.
- When the priest kneels the acolyte will place the humeral veil on the priest's shoulders and kneel at his place.
- The priest alone stands and goes to the altar to give the benediction
- While the priest gives the benediction the thurifer is incensing the Blessed Sacrament with three sets of three swings while the crucifer rings the bells three times (each time the priest faces the center.)
- The priest returns to the bottom step while the acolyte who brought the humeral veil now takes it from the priest and returns it to the sacristy.
- After the Divine Praises the priest returns the Blessed Sacrament to the tabernacle.
- While the priest is returning to the bottom step the crucifer is bringing the cross from the sacristy and stands behind the priest in the center of the aisle.
- After the priest and other servers genuflect, all process back to the sacristy in the following order: thurifer, crucifer with acolytes, the priest.
- Upon reaching the sacristy everyone faces the crucifix and waits for the priest to bow and say, "Prosit." Then all respond, "Omnibus et singulis."

3. Cleaning up.

- Reverse everything you did the section marked “setting – up.”

General Notes on Reverences

1. **Outside of Mass:** Avoid crossing between the tabernacle & altar. Whenever you pass in front of the tabernacle, genuflect. No bows and no cursory half-hearted genuflections. Genuflecting means going down to the floor on your right knee. Remember that chalices are to be carried with two hands. NO EXCEPTIONS. Fr. McKale's chalice is NEVER to be touched.

2. **During Mass:** At the beginning and end of Mass, one genuflects to the tabernacle, then in between the server bows when crossing in front of the altar & tabernacle. If a server is carrying something such as a crucifix, candle or thurible, then the server simply bows.

a. When bringing or removing anything from the altar, the server approaches the altar, bows, places the item on the altar, bows and returns to his / her place.

b. When approaching the priest (with the Roman Missal, cruets, lavabo dish) a server bows to the priest after assisting him.

Sacred Vestments

Cassock - a long black robe usually with 33 buttons down the front in honor of Our Lord's 33 years on earth (and sometimes 5 on the sleeves for Our Lord's Wounds). It is a constant reminder of the priest's state and its attending obligations. Its length symbolizes his total consecration to God and its color, death to worldliness and sin.

Surplice - short wide-sleeved, white garments worn by a cleric over his cassock. Unlike the cassock, it is a liturgical vestment symbolizing the kind of life that a cleric should live that is the daily practice of religion, piety, all virtues, cultivating purity of mind, heart, imagination and the senses making him pleasing to God.

Amice (amictus: cloak, hood, helmet) - historically used on the head and upper shoulders for protection. Protection from the cold and to keep the upper vestments from becoming soiled. It symbolizes the "helmet of salvation" protecting the wearer from temptation. It is a rectangular piece of linen cloth with two long ribbons attached to the top corners. This garment is worn over the shoulders and the neck of the priest.

Alb (tunica alba - white tunic) - historically used as undergarments for the Romans; used by those in sacred orders in liturgical celebrations symbolizing purity. It is a full-length white garment worn by the priest offering Mass.

Cincture (cingere - to bind) - a long cord tied at the waist to gather and bind the long flowing alb. It is symbolic of chastity and continence.

Stole (stola - garment) - origin: Roman scarf, wiping cloth, Jewish prayer shawl. The stole is a long, narrow band of material several inches wide which is worn around the neck by the priest during Mass and is used by those in Holy Orders in other liturgical functions. It is symbolic of the yoke and authority of Christ.

Chasuble (casubla, casa - house) - outer garment used against weather which was later decorated for liturgical use. It is a sleeveless, outer liturgical garment which is worn over all the other vestments. The chasuble comes in a variety of lengths and styles i.e. Roman, Gothic, and conical. It symbolizes the charity of Christ.

Maniple (manipulus, from manus, hand, and plere, to fill) - a liturgical vestment proper to all orders from the subdeacon upwards. It is a narrow strip of material, silk or half-silk, about a yard long, worn on the left forearm in such a way that the ends hang down to an equal length on either side. It is ornamented with three crosses, one in the centre and one at each end, that in the centre being obligatory, and is often elaborately embroidered. The vestment has been optional since 1972 and is symbolic of the binding of Christ and the labor of the priest.

Cope (capa - cape) - long cape-like garment worn over the shoulders by the priest for processions, Benediction, and other solemn occasions. Originally, it was used as protection from the elements.

Humeral Veil (humerus - shoulder) - short shawl-like garment covering the shoulders of the priest at Benediction and when holding other sacred objects.

Funeral Pall - large cloth covering the casket at a funeral. Now it is usually white to recall the baptismal garment, but that is a new development. During the Middle Ages, they were bright colors.

Server Alb - vestment worn by servers which is similar to the priest's alb and is fastened around the waist by a cincture.

Sacred Vessels

Chalice (calix - cup) - sacred cup which is used by the priest at Mass, which holds the Precious Blood of Our Lord.

Paten (patena - dish) - main plate used by the priest at Mass which holds the Sacred Host of the priest.

Bowl paten - a larger paten shaped as a bowl which holds both the priest's host and hosts for distribution by him.

Ciborium (a) - (cup) - a sacred vessel which hold the consecrated hosts. It has a lid to cover the top and is often covered by a small veil.

Pyx (pyxis - box) - a small container for hosts usually used to bring Holy Communion to the sick, aged, or infirm.

Purificator - (purus + facere) - make clean - It is a triply folded rectangular, linen cloth used to clean chalices and ciboria.

Pall (pallium - cover) - the stiff square white linen which is placed over the chalice to protect the contents from contamination.

Chalice Veil - the large cloth, which usually matches the color of the priest's vestments, is used to cover the chalice. Regardless of the liturgical day or feast, white may always be used.

Burse (bursa - sack or cavity) - A flat cloth case for carrying the corporal that is used during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It is usually the same color as the priest's vestments and chalice veil. White may always be used.

Corporal (corpus - body) - a white linen cloth with a red cross in the lower middle placed on the middle of the altar upon which the sacred vessels are placed.

Parvum coclearium or scruple spoon - a gold or silver spoon used by the priest to place one drop of water into the chalice at the Offertory of the Mass.

Cruets - small vials containing water and wine.

Lavabo dish (lavare - to wash) - the dish used by the priest to purify his hands at the Offertory of the Mass.

Finger towel - the small cloth used by the priest to dry his hands at the Offertory of the Mass.

Thurible (thyos - incense) - censor used at liturgical celebrations. The server who carries this is called the Thurifer.

Incense Boat - a small covered metal container that holds the incense with a small spoon to place the incense in the thurible.

Incense - small pieces of resin that produce smoke and a pleasant fragrance when burned over the charcoal. It is a sign of honor and a sign of prayer that ascends like smoke before God.

Charcoal - is generally made from burnt or charred wood while being deprived of oxygen so that what is left is an impure carbon residue that burns easily.

Monstrance or Ostensorium (monstrare - to show) - used to expose the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Luna or Lunette (moon) - small round container with glass; holds the Sacred Host and is placed in the monstrance. Custodial or capsula is the case in which it is placed when in the tabernacle.

Extinguisher - tool used to light and extinguish candles.

Holy Water Bucket and Aspergillum - container for the Holy Water and the aspergillum is used to sprinkle the Holy Water.

Roman Missal - the principle book which contains the prayers and rites to be used by the priest during Holy Mass.

Lectionary - a book containing the readings from Sacred Scripture for use at liturgical celebrations such as Holy Mass or the sacraments.

Book of the Gospels - a book which contains the Gospel readings for use at Holy Mass.

Sanctuary Lamp - the candle(s) that burn in the sanctuary to indicate that the Most Blessed Sacrament is present. There may be one, three, five or seven lamps.

Altar Candles - candles made of beeswax a lit during Holy Mass or other liturgical services on each side of the altar. Typically, there are from two to six; however, by custom there may be more for the most solemn occasions, eg. the close of Forty Hours would normally have 40 candles lit.

Altar Cloth - a large cloth used to cover the altar which reminds us of the burial cloths of Christ. While only one is currently required, from the apostolic age, three cloths have typically been used in addition to a cerecloth to protect the linen from moisture and mold.

Processional Cross and candles - Crucifix and candles which are carried at the front of processions.

Liturgical Colors

White vestments symbolize:
Innocence, Purity, Virginity, Victory, Joy

White vestments are used for all occasions of the Joyful & Glorious Mysteries of Our Lord (Christmas & Easter), of Our Lady (Annunciation), of the angels and saints who were not martyred and for Nuptial Masses. They may also be used for funerals.

Nota Bene : White vestments may be replaced by Silver vestments on solemn feasts of Our Lady. Blue is NOT an approved liturgical color for any time period; however, it is tolerated in light shades for feasts of Our Lady by custom.

Gold vestments symbolize:
joy

Gold vestments are worn on for solemn feasts of Our Lord, patronal feasts or other solemn occasions. Gold vestments can replace white, red, green but not black, violet or rose vestments.

Black vestments symbolize:
Death, Mourning, Despair

Black vestments are to be used for Masses for the dead, especially funerals & All Souls' Day. They acknowledge the sorrow that the faithful experience at the loss of a loved one and the solidarity of the Church with them in their trial.

Green vestments symbolize:
the Holy Ghost, Hope, Growth, Increase, Life, Immortality, Fidelity

Green vestments are worn during the Epiphany tide & the Time after Pentecost also called Ordinary Time.

Red vestments symbolize:
Sacrifice, Passion, Fire, Blood, Life Itself, Charity, Zeal, God's love, Holy Spirit

Red vestments are worn for the Commemorations of Our Lord's Sorrowful Passion i.e. Palm Sunday & Good Friday, feast of the Precious Blood, the apostles, evangelists, and martyrs for the Faith; Pentecost

Violet vestments symbolize:
Sorrow, Penitence, humility, Preparation, melancholy

Violet vestments are worn during Advent & Lent. They may be used for funerals.

Nota Bene: Violet, literally "amaranth red," is the color of Patriarchs', Archbishops', and Bishops' choir dress.

Rose vestments symbolize:
Subdued Joy, relieved repentance

Rose vestments are worn for the Gaudete Sunday (Third Sunday of Advent) & Lætare Sunday (the Fourth Sunday of Lent). By custom, rose may also be worn the Monday, Tuesday & Thursday of those weeks unless a feast falls upon them.

Church Furnishings

Altar - the table-like high place upon which the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is offered. The term "altar" comes from the Latin word "altus" which means "high."

Pulpit / Ambo - also called "lectern". The elevated platform from which the readings from Sacred Scripture are proclaimed and the sermon is given. The term "lectern" comes from the Latin word "legere" which means "to read."

Tabernacle - the fixed safe-like place wherein the Most Blessed Sacrament is reserved.

Sedilia - the main chair from which the priest presides over the Mass.

Credence Table - the small table(s) in the Sanctuary upon which are kept sacred vessels and books i.e. the Missal, cruets, and lavabo dish.

Sacristy - the room next to the sanctuary where the priest and other ministers prepare for Holy Mass.

Sanctuary - the front part of the church, which contains the altars, tabernacle, lectern and sedilia.

Sacrarium— a special sink which drains into the ground. This is used to dispose of holy water and to wash and purify sacred vessels.

Communion plate— a special dish to be used when distributing Holy Communion to catch any hosts or particles that may fall.

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