



Church Glossary

Alb - A white robe worn during Mass by priests to cover street clothes.

Altar - A table on which the sacrifice of the Mass is offered to God. It is the centre of importance where the Mass is celebrated.

Angelus - The Angelus is a short prayer in honour of Mary's acceptance to be the mother of Jesus Christ, usually said at noon. It consists in the triple repetition of the Hail Mary, to which have been added three introductory verses and a concluding verse and prayer.

Apostle - A person called and chosen by Jesus Christ and sent to preach the Gospel.

Archbishop - Title of the bishop of an archdiocese.

Archdiocese - The chief diocese of a Church province or grouping of dioceses.

Aspergillum - A device used for sprinkling holy water during special blessings. The ordinary type is a metallic rod with a bulbous tip which absorbs the holy water and discharges it at the motion of the user's hand.

Assembly - Those present to celebrate the liturgy. It is the entire assembly, ordained and non-ordained, who celebrate the Mass.

Auxiliary Bishop - A bishop assigned to help the ordinary or head bishop of the diocese.

Bishop - The head of a diocese, who has the powers to confirm, ordain, and consecrate along with the normal powers of a priest. Today's bishops are successors of the first bishops, the twelve Apostles selected by Jesus.

Blessed - A person who has died and is in the process of being declared a saint.

Brother - A lay man who is a member of a religious community.

Cantor - One who leads the singing during the liturgy, such as the responsorial psalm.

Cardinal - Cardinals are appointed by the Pope and constitute the senate of the Church. They aid the Pope as his chief counselors and are the electors of a new Pope.

Catechesis - Catechesis is the process by which Christians are nourished and educated in the faith. Catechesis includes Christian teaching from the first announcement of the Good News to theology.

Cathedral - The principal church building of a diocese or archdiocese. It is the seat of the bishop.

Catholic Church - The Mystical Body of Christ founded by Christ, which he continues to lead from heaven. The Catholic Church counts more than 20 churches in its communion, including the Roman Catholic Church, the Ukrainian Catholic Church, and the Maronite Catholic Church.

Celebrant - The priest or bishop who presides over the assembly and consecrates the bread and wine at Mass.

Chalice - The cup used to hold the wine that is consecrated to become the Blood of Christ.

Chasuble - The vestment worn over the alb by priests when celebrating Mass.

Ciborium - A vessel used to hold the consecrated bread for its distribution during Communion.
Plural: ciboria.

Communion - Communion has several meanings. It refers to the unity of all believers in Christ; the sacrament of the Eucharist; the reception of the body and blood of Christ in the form of bread and wine.

Concelebrants - Ordained priests and bishops who join the celebrant, also known as the presider, in celebrating Mass.

Confession - (see reconciliation)

Convent - A house of women religious.

Deacon - An ordained minister who helps in the ministry of service in the church. He proclaims the Gospel, preaches, baptizes, celebrates marriage and Christian burial.

Diocese - A territorial division of the Church headed by a bishop. The chief diocese of a group of dioceses is an archdiocese.

Disciple - Follower of Jesus Christ.

Eparch - The Eastern Catholic Churches' term for their bishops.

Eparchy - A diocese of the Eastern-rite Catholic Churches.

Eucharist - The Sacrament in which Catholics receive Jesus' Body and Blood in the form of bread and wine.

Eucharistic Adoration - The devotion of adoring the presence of Jesus in the consecrated host (Eucharist, Blessed Sacrament, Body of Christ).

Extra-ordinary Ministers of Communion - Specially chosen lay faithful who provide Communion to the community during Mass or to the sick and shut-ins at home.

God - The infinitely perfect supreme being, the beginning and the end of all things. God exists in three equal persons, called the Trinity, which is composed of the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ) and the Holy Spirit. There are not three gods but one God in three persons.

Gospel - The Gospel, or Good News, tells the story of Jesus' life. The first four books of the New Testament constitute the Gospel according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Grace - Grace is our sharing in the life of God. God's grace is a gift from God the Father to all humans. It is necessary for salvation and we must freely cooperate with grace for it to be effective.

Homily - The homily is a reflection by an ordained minister on the Scripture readings of the day, usually during Mass.

Jesus Christ - Jesus Christ is God, the second person of the Trinity, who became man and is the one redeemer of humanity. He was fully human and fully divine.

Jubilee - A jubilee year is a holy year. It is convoked to strengthen faith, encourage works of charity and call Christians to return to God and renew their faith through pilgrimage and penance. There are ordinary jubilees every 25 years and extraordinary jubilees. Pope John Paul II declared 1983 a holy

year to mark the 1950th anniversary of Redemption. The most recent one was the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 commemorating the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Christ.

Layman/woman/person, the Laity - Each member of the Church becomes part of the laity at Baptism, sharing in the common priesthood of all Christians. Ordained ministers of the Church cease to be lay persons and enter the clerical state.

Lectern - The stand or place from which the Scriptures are read and the homily preached during Mass.

Lectionary - The book that contains the Scripture readings used for Mass.

Liturgy - Liturgy means “the work of the people.” It refers to the public prayer of the Church, including the Sacraments as well as prayers and readings.

Lord’s Prayer - Also known as the Our Father, it is the prayer that Jesus taught his followers. It is a prayer of praise to God, and a petition for what we need and for forgiveness.

Mary - Mary is the mother of Jesus, the first disciple of the Lord and spiritual mother of all humanity. She cooperated fully with God’s plan for our redemption and salvation.

Mass - Mass refers to the celebration of the Eucharist that recalls the actions of taking, blessing, breaking and giving of bread and wine by Jesus at the Last Supper when he transformed the bread and wine into his Body and Blood.

Mitre - A headdress worn at some liturgical functions by bishops.

Nun - A contemplative woman who is a member of a religious congregation.

Ordain/Ordination - The conferral of the Sacrament of Holy Orders on a deacon, priest or bishop.

Pallium - Special lamb’s wool stole (white with small black crosses) worn over the chasuble by the Pope and archbishops.

Parish - A community of the faithful within a certain territory of a diocese. A parish normally has a priest as its head and usually its own place of worship.

Patriarch - The head of an autonomous ritual Church within the Catholic communion.

Patriarchate - The territory and people under the care of a Patriarch.

Patron - A patron is a saint who acts as a special intercessory with God for a particular group, most often a parish.

Pilgrimage - A pilgrimage is a spiritual journey to encounter God. Pilgrims often go to holy places such as the Holy Land – the land of Jesus, or Rome – the city of the first Christian martyrs, or to shrines.

Pope - The Pope is the successor of St. Peter. He is the chief pastor of the whole Church, the representative of Christ on earth.

Prayer - The lifting up of the mind and heart to God in word, thought, deed or repetition of some standard prayer, such as the Our Father. Prayer can be asking God for something, thanking Him for His gifts, adoring Him or asking Him to forgive our sins.

Priest - The priest is the minister of divine worship. By his ordination, a priest is able to celebrate mass, forgive sins, preach the Gospel, administer the sacraments, direct and minister to the Christian people.

Reader - One who reads from the Scriptures during the Liturgy of the Word at Mass.

Reconciliation - Also called penance and confession, reconciliation is a sacrament instituted by Christ. The priest listens to a person's confession and grants forgiveness in the name of Jesus Christ.

Religious - Men and women who live in a way that binds them closely to Christ. Religious live in community as sisters and brothers. There are communities for men religious (brothers, monks or priests) and for women religious (sisters or nuns). They normally take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

Sacrament - Sacraments are specific moments in the life of a Christian where God's grace can take effect of us. They were instituted by Christ. There are seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Reconciliation, Sacrament of the Sick, Marriage and Holy Orders (the ordination of deacons, priests and bishops).

Sacramentary - The book used by the celebrant, containing all the prayers for the Mass.

Saint - A person who as died and has been recognized by the Church as having lived a life of holiness that is worthy or imitation. Catholics pray to God through the intercession of saints.

Salvation - Salvation is the liberation of the human race or of individuals from sin and its consequences. By dying on the cross Jesus Christ offered salvation for the entire world.

Sin - Sin separates human beings from God. Sin is committed by a free personal act of the individual will. To sin is to carry out an act against God's law or a failure to do what is commanded.

Sister - A woman who is a member of a religious community.

Stole - The vestment worn by ordained ministers. Priests wear it around their neck and deacons wear it over their left shoulder crossed and fastened at the right side.

Tabernacle - Place in the church where the Eucharist is stored.

Testimony - A public profession of faith.

Vigil - The evening before a religious feast observed as a moment of spiritual preparation. It also can mean evening or nightly devotions or prayers.

Vocation - Through Baptism, all Christians are called to follow Christ. A vocation is the particular way that a Christian responds to the call to follow Christ. There are several vocations; priesthood, religious life (a member of a religious community), diaconate, marriage, single celibate life, consecrated virginity.

Zucchetto - Skull cap worn by the Pope (white), cardinals (red) and bishops (purple).

OTHERS

Monsignor - Title of honour, derived from the Italian word for "my lord."

Monstrance - The ornate container for the host used for the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

Chalice - A cup that holds the wine during the Eucharist.

Crucifix - Cross bearing the figure of the crucified Christ (corpus)