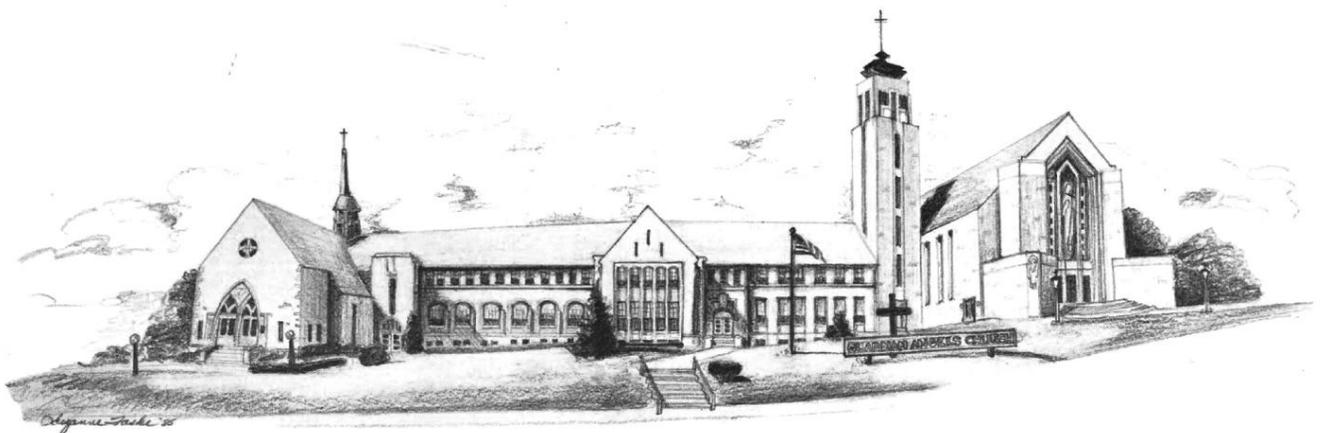


Handbook

for the Ministry of Altar Server

Guardian Angels Parish

Belonging to:



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INTRODUCTION

Seated at the right hand of the Father and pouring out the Holy Spirit on his Body which is the Church, Christ now acts through the sacraments he instituted to communicate his grace. The sacraments are perceptible signs (words and actions) accessible to our human nature. By the action of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit they make present efficaciously the grace that they signify.

- Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 1084

In the earthly liturgy we share in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, Minister of the sanctuary and of the true Tabernacle....

- CCC 1090

To be a server means you are taking a very special role in the prayer of the Church. You are called to serve and assist at Mass and other liturgical functions. This is both an honor and a privilege and should not be taken on lightly. Our hope is that through your service you will help our Church pray well.

Being a server is not always easy. In fact, sometimes it will be difficult, especially when you have to make choices between serving and other activities. It will require you to have more knowledge and understanding about the liturgy than many other people will have. This means you will need to study and be attentive to what happens during the various liturgies.

Each ministry is an opportunity to get closer to God. Your commitment to this ministry is a great blessing for you and for all of Guardian Angels Parish. Thank you for volunteering, and know that our Church is better because of your participation.

This handbook has been developed as a training guide and a reference book. You will need to be familiar with everything in it. Use it as often as you need to and keep it so you can look at it during your years in this ministry. When your training period is completed, you will be expected to know the material in this handbook and demonstrate that knowledge to the server coordinators before you begin this ministry.

Prayer Before Serving Mass

Heavenly Father,

As I prepare to assist You at Your altar, I declare my faith in You.

At this Mass, keep me from distractions. Let me remember that in assisting the priest I am assisting Jesus in offering You the merits of his passion and death.

I thank You for allowing me the opportunity to give my service to You.

At this Mass, I join with your priest in offering You the sacred Body and Blood of my Savior, Jesus Christ, your Son.

May my sharing the Divine Food in Holy Communion bring me eternal salvation.

Amen.

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

1. Servers must be in the sacristy and vested 15 minutes before the liturgy begins.
2. Appropriate dress is long pants/slacks, socks, and dress shoes. Hair is to be combed and hands and face clean. No gym shoes. No shorts. Skirts for girls are now permissible as long as the alb is an appropriate length.
3. Servers are to wear the albs with cinctures for the liturgy. Albs should come down to the shoe tops when standing straight. After use, albs should always be hung back in the cupboards properly. Each alb is marked with a size so you can easily find one that fits.
4. Servers should be helpful and courteous to all in the sacristy. "Fooling around," fighting, or loud talking in the sacristy or church will not be tolerated. Proper respect is to be given to everyone in the church. Your best behavior is expected at all times.
5. Do everything in the church with respect and reverence. People in the congregation notice servers; servers can either help or hinder them in prayer.
6. Stand and sit up straight. Slouching or kicking feet out in front of you while sitting makes a person look too relaxed or sloppy. When sitting, servers keep both feet on the floor and hands in their laps. When standing or kneeling, hands are to be folded at the chest.
7. Participation during the liturgy is essential. Servers sing, pray, and are attentive because we are all called to full, conscious and actual participation at liturgy. Servers should have hymnals and be singing during the processions if they are not carrying something.
8. Talking or laughing during the liturgy will not be tolerated.
9. Work together as partners. Servers always walk together and wait until the other has finished with a specific task before moving on.
10. Never hurry or rush during the liturgy. Perform everything at a dignified pace.
11. Never leave your place when serving except to perform some duty in the sacristy, such as getting something forgotten when preparing for Mass.
12. Ask the priest or coordinator before Mass which way the processions will enter and leave. Ask if there is anything special or unusual that will happen as part of this liturgy.
13. If a server cannot make an assignment, it is the server's responsibility to find a substitute and to inform the server coordinators of the substitution.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

When school is delayed or canceled because of bad weather servers are not expected to report for the 7:30 morning Mass or the Grade level mass scheduled at 8:15 am. You will not be marked absent and this 'no show' will not count against you.

If you are scheduled to serve a funeral later in day or an evening wedding on the day of a school closing we would hope that you would try to make it to the church.

Having said this, **do not risk an accident coming to the church!** Other arrangements can be made if servers cannot make a scheduled funeral or wedding. **Please call the rectory at (513) 231-7440 and let them know you cannot come for the funeral or wedding (do not call for 7:30 a.m. Mass).**

DISCIPLINE

It is unfortunate that we need to address discipline when dealing with a church ministry, but the reality is that we need it. Misbehaving in any way during the liturgy will not be tolerated. This includes talking, laughing, or being any type of a distraction. Such behavior will be considered sufficient reason for immediate dismissal from the serving ministry.

Servers are required to show up for their assignments or to get a substitute. It is understandable that someone might oversleep or forget on one occasion. **All servers will be allowed three unexcused misses.** If a server misses more assignments than this, contact will be made with the server and his/her family to see what action needs to be taken. Normally this would involve removal from the servers' list for a year.

Proper attire is an important issue with all ministries. Each ministry has a dress code. For serving, see point 2 under *General Expectations*. The priest or coordinator will comment on improper attire, and note will be made of the number of times this is a problem. If this continues, contact will be made with the server and his or her family to determine what is to be done.

HEAD SERVERS

Each year, a number of servers are chosen from the 8th grade group to act as head servers. These servers are expected to show leadership to the corps of servers and to be outstanding examples of the ministry. Head servers are chosen at the end of May of each year. Qualifications to be a head server are as follows:

1. The person must be an 8th grade server who has shown excellence in the ministry.
2. The person must be available for all Holy Week, Easter, and Christmas liturgies.
3. The person must be able to follow directions from coordinators and priests.
4. The person must be able to work well with other servers.
5. The person must be able to lead other servers through rehearsals, especially new servers learning the basics.
6. The person must not have missed more than 3 assignments during his or her previous assignments.

If a head server does not live up to these expectations, he/she will be removed from the position of head server.

SERVER OF THE YEAR

As in every endeavor, there are some who stand out from the crowd. This is true of our servers. Each year, those 8th grade servers are particularly recognized who have consistently volunteered to substitute, have not missed any assignments, and have done an excellent job. To recognize the one 8th grade server who stands out beyond the others, a Server of the Year award is given. The qualifications are as follows:

1. He or she has not missed any assignments in the 8th grade and has been punctual.
2. The person has offered special service by substituting for others and volunteering for weddings, funerals, and other special liturgies.
3. Others have noticed the politeness and cooperation of the server.
4. The person has been able to think on his or her feet and has shown the ability to deal with the unexpected during a liturgy.
5. The person must have demonstrated an enthusiasm for the ministry of server.

STRUCTURE OF THE MASS

In the following outline those elements which occur only on Sundays or major feasts are in italics.

The Entrance Rite

The Procession
 The Sign of the Cross and Greeting
Introductory comments
 Penitential Rite or the Blessing of
 Water
The Gloria
 The Opening Prayer

The Liturgy of the Word

The first reading (Old Testament or
 New Testament)
 The Responsorial Psalm
The second reading (New Testament)
 Gospel acclamation
 Gospel reading
 Homily
Profession of Faith
 General Intercessions (Prayer of the
 Faithful)

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

The Preparation of the Altar and
 Gifts
 The Prayer over the Gifts
 The Eucharistic Prayer

The Communion Rite

The Lord's Prayer
 The Sign of Peace
 The Breaking of the Bread
 (Fraction Rite)
 Reception of Holy Communion
 Prayer after Communion

The Concluding Rite

Announcements
Final Blessing
Recession

Servers need to anticipate the next part of the Mass and be ready to do their job for that part of the mass. It is a very good idea to memorize the above outline and to know what the servers do at each part of the Mass.

ITEMS NEEDED FOR MASS

Servers are responsible for making sure these items are in place before each Mass. Even if a coordinator has set them out, servers are expected to double check. The items are:

Chalice, Extra Chalices, Purificators (One for each chalice), Paten w/hosts, Extra Patens, and Pitcher of Wine. Pitcher of Water, Bowl, and Hand Towel.

Tabernacle Key in the tabernacle.

Lectionary and Sacramentary.

Hymnals for Servers.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR SERVING

When do servers bow and genuflect?

Servers genuflect when walking in front of the tabernacle outside of Mass. For instance, a server always genuflects in front of the tabernacle on the way to the sacristy. A genuflection is also made to the Blessed Sacrament when it is exposed on the altar in the monstrance.

A server bows from the waist to the altar outside of Mass whenever passing by it. A bow is also made at the beginning and end of the Mass. Servers carrying anything do not bow.

What is the order of a procession?

Servers always lead the procession. The following is a standard order and should be adjusted according to who is in the procession:

- Thurifer (server with incense)
- Cross
- Acolytes (servers with candles)
- Reader with the Lectionary
- Deacon
- Priest

At the end of Mass, the reader does not recess.

What is proper posture at Mass?

Servers who are not holding anything should always have hands folded at the chest—to include when they kneel at the altar. They should always be attentive and calm. Eyes should be on what's happening and on the priest, in case he needs to get a server's attention.

DUTIES BEFORE AND AFTER MASS

Before Mass begins servers need to do the following:

1. Sign the attendance sheet.
2. Make sure all the items needed for Mass are in their places (See *Items Needed For Mass*).
3. Check with the priest to see if something different is happening at Mass that day.
4. Make sure the candles are lit.

After Mass:

1. Help bring the items on the credence table into the sacristy.
2. Make sure the Lectionary and Sacramentary are returned if no more Masses that day.
3. Extinguish the candles at the altar.
4. Neatly hang the albs in the servers' wardrobe, making sure to hang them in the proper section according to size, and buttoning them so they don't fall down.
5. Return cinctures to the hooks and close the cupboard doors.
6. Check with the sacristan or Father to see if they need your assistance for anything else.

HOW TO SERVE A WEEKDAY MASS

The Entrance Procession and Opening Rites

Before the priest and servers leave the sacristy, they bow to the crucifix. The servers lead the procession from the school side of the sacristy, genuflect at the tabernacle, and process to the bottom step of the sanctuary where all bow together to the altar. After bowing, the servers move to their places.

A server brings up the Sacramentary when the priest says *Let us pray*, returning it to the credence table when the prayer is done.

The Liturgy of the Word

Servers listen attentively to the readings and join in the singing of the psalm and *Alleluia*.

Preparation of the Altar and Gifts

After the General Intercessions, servers prepare the altar (normally during the weekday Masses there isn't a procession with the gifts; if there is, follow Sunday procedure). Moving together, one server brings the Sacramentary to the altar while the other brings the main chalice with a purificator. Next, one server will take the pitcher of wine and the bread while the other server brings the tray of chalices. The wine is placed on the left side of the priest and the chalices are placed on the right. Finally, one server carries the pitcher of water and bowl, the other server carries the hand towel to the priest. He will take the water, add some to the wine, then hand it back to the server. After a quiet prayer, he will turn to wash his hands by having the server pour the water over his hands into the bowl. The other server should open the towel so it is easy for the priest to take it to dry his hands. They then return to their places.

The Eucharistic Prayer

Servers line up at the bottom step at the corner of the sanctuary at the beginning of the *Sanctus (Holy Holy)* and kneel when the congregation kneels. Return to seats after the Great Amen.

The Communion Rite

As the *Lamb of God* begins, the servers again line up at the bottom step, except for one server who brings the extra communion plates to the altar. He or she then returns to the bottom step to kneel, with hands folded at the chest.

While Communion is being administered, the servers clear the altar. They are then to sit at their places until all have received Communion and are to join the assembly in singing or praying. The priest will return to his chair for some quiet prayer. As soon as he stands, a server brings him the Sacramentary for the Closing Prayer. After the Amen is said, the server returns the Sacramentary to the credence table and stands at his/her seat.

The Concluding Rites

When the priest moves to the bottom of the altar steps, the servers join him, one server on each side. They all bow together, turn, and recess out, once again genuflecting at the tabernacle. Both servers then lead the recessional into the sacristy and all bow to the crucifix. The priest may say *Prosit*, to which the response is *omnibus et singulis*, or he may say *Praise be Jesus Christ*, to which the response is *now and forever*.

HOW TO SERVE A SUNDAY MASS

Entrance Procession and Opening Rites

The procession forms at the Beechmont entrance. If only two servers are present, then the candles alone are carried. See page 7 for the order of procession. At the direction of the celebrant, the servers walk to the altar, stop at the bottom step, and move to both sides, leaving room for the priest to come to the middle and genuflect. The servers do not genuflect or bow if they are carrying anything. Servers move to their seats after the priest has genuflected, walking around the altar steps on both sides. Candles are placed on the credence table. A server brings up the Sacramentary when the priest says, "Let us pray" (or ideally as the *Gloria* ends, to be ready right on time).

Some Sunday Masses begin with special rituals, like Baptisms or the rite of blessing and sprinkling of water. Servers need to be aware of these instances and ask what they need to do differently. Before Mass, the priest or coordinator will explain what to do, but the servers must be especially attentive at the explanation and during the ritual.

Liturgy of the Word

Servers listen attentively to the readings and join in the singing of the psalm and *Alleluia*. At the end of the Profession of Faith, at the words "We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church..." a server brings the special folder to the priest for the General Intercessions and remains there until they are finished.

Preparation of the Altar and Gifts

When the congregation is seated, three servers move to the altar and place the Sacramentary, main chalice with a purificator, and a tray of chalices on the altar. The Sacramentary is placed in the center, the main chalice with purificator and the tray of chalices are placed on the right side of the altar (school side). The two Acolytes will then move down the side steps of the altar and proceed down the side aisles to prepare for the procession with the gifts. The third server (crucifer) will return to credence table and bring the second tray of chalices to the altar (if a second tray is needed). When the procession is ready, the two servers who went to the Beechmont credence table will lead the procession to the priest or deacon. The servers help take the gifts from the priest or deacon after they are received. The collection basket is placed by the altar. As the priest or deacon moves to the altar, the servers bring the communion plates and pitcher to him. After this, they return to the credence table. One server picks up the pitcher of water and bowl while the other one picks up the towel. They return to the altar and hand the water to the priest/deacon who prepares the chalice. The priest will then wash his hands by having the server pour the water over his hands into the bowl. The other server should open the towel so it is easy for the priest to dry his hands. They then return to their places.

The Eucharistic Prayer

Servers line up at the bottom step at the corner of the sanctuary at the beginning of the *Sanctus* (*Holy Holy*) and kneel when the congregation kneels. Return to seats after the Great Amen.

The Communion Rite

As the Lamb of God begins, they bring the extra communion plates to the altar. On Sundays it is important that the plates be put on the rectory side. During the reception of communion, the servers clear the altar and place the items on the credence table. They are then to sit at their places until all have received communion and are to join the assembly in singing or praying. When the priest stands after sitting for quiet prayer, a server brings the Sacramentary to him for the final prayer and the blessing. After the Amen is said, the server returns the Sacramentary to the credence table and stands at his or her seat. If a solemn blessing is to be used, the server will remain with the priest until the final Amen. The priest will inform the book bearer before Mass begins if he is using a solemn blessing.

The Concluding Rites

As soon as the recessional hymn begins, the servers retrieve the candles and crucifix and line up at the bottom step of the sanctuary on the Beechmont side, similar to the entrance procession. After the priest genuflects, the servers turn and lead the recession. The recession will not always return to the Beechmont doors, so servers have to ask prior to Mass where they should lead the recession.

FUNERALS

Note: for funerals in which the family sits in the tabernacle section, the servers will have their seats and the credence table moved to the other side (by the organ).

The servers will lead the priest to the door of the church and they will carry the holy water container with sprinkler and the cross. The funeral pall will be carried or on a pew where the funeral director can get it. When ready, the servers will lead the procession into church, stopping at the casket. The casket will be blessed with the water and the pall will be placed on it. After this is done, the servers resume the procession to the altar, where the ministers bow, then go to their seats.

The Mass continues as usual until after communion. When the priest has finished the prayer after communion, a server brings the thurible and boat to him at the casket. The other server gets the cross and stands on the opposite side of the casket from the priest. The priest begins the Final Commendation during which he will use the incense. *The sacristan for the funeral will have prepared the incense and placed the thurible on a stand by the pew where the servers are sitting.* When the rite is finished, the servers will lead the recession back to the church door where one of the servers will take the pall from the funeral director. The recession then returns to the sacristy.

WEDDINGS

If the wedding takes place at Mass, the procedure is very similar to a Sunday Mass. The only difference will be where the priest might be when he needs the Sacramentary. Being attentive is the most critical thing for serving a wedding.

USING INCENSE

At the Entrance Rite

If incense is used, the thurifer leads the procession with the thurible and boat. The thurible is filled with incense before the procession begins. After reverencing the altar, the server moves to the school side of the altar, climbs the steps, and stands ready for the priest. After kissing the altar, the priest will charge and take the thurible, then incense the altar. When the priest stops to incense the crucifix, the thurifer should turn towards the crucifix, give a slight bow, wait until the thurifer is swung (9 times), give another slight bow, then turn back towards the altar. When the priest is done, he will hand the incense back to the thurifer, who hangs the thurible on the stand next to the sacristy and returns to his or her place.

At the Gospel

The server leaves his or her seat as the second reading begins and goes to the sacristy. The server gets ready to return to the sanctuary with thurible and boat. As soon as the second reading is done, the thurifer should move up towards the altar. As the *Alleluia* begins, he or she brings the thurible and boat to the priest, who puts incense in the thurible. Moving aside to the middle of the top of the step on the tabernacle side, the thurifer stands ready directly in line with the altar. When the priest or deacon begins moving with the Gospel, the thurifer leads him to the ambo, standing aside to leave him room. The priest or deacon will use the incense before beginning the reading. At the end of the reading, the thurifer returns the thurible and boat to the sacristy. As the homily begins, he or she adds a piece of charcoal to the thurible and makes sure it is lit, then returns to his or her place.

At the Preparation of the Gifts

The thurifer leaves the altar area as soon as the General Intercessions are completed. He or she returns to the sanctuary and stands in the middle of the top step on the tabernacle side as the procession with the gifts reaches the altar. The server waits until the priest or deacon is ready to fill the thurible with incense. The priest incenses the gifts and the altar. The thurifer again turns and bows when the crucifix is incensed. Afterward, the thurible is returned.

During the Eucharistic Prayer

Note: This will usually only be done on solemnities or feasts, though it can be done at any Mass with a thurifer. Ask the priest if he would like the thurifer to do this.

After the incensing of the altar at the preparation of gifts, the thurifer returns the boat to the stand or to the credence table, while keeping the thurible. During the *Sanctus (Holy Holy)*, the thurifer walks around to the front of the altar at the center of the bottom step. Kneeling when everybody else kneels, the thurifer then incenses with three sets of three swings each (nine swings total) at the elevation of the Body of Christ and at the elevation of the Blood of Christ. Eventually, the server stands back up with the rest of the congregation (after the Great Amen) and returns the thurible.

At the Recession

After the final prayer, the thurifer should retrieve the thurible to be ready for processing out.

DICTIONARY

Acolyte	An acolyte is instituted to serve at the altar and to assist the priest and deacon.
Alb	Long white robe which is the basic garment for all liturgical ministers who vest. It signifies our baptismal garment and symbolizes being in a state of grace.
Altar	The table of the Lord and the place where the sacrifice of the cross is made present and offered under sacramental signs. The altar is also a symbol of Christ and it is the focal point of the Church building.
Ambo	The reading stand from which the Scriptures are read and the homily is preached. It is also sometimes called a lectern or pulpit.
Baptistry	The area of the church in which Baptism is administered.
Benediction	A liturgical celebration which culminates in the blessing of the people with the Blessed Sacrament in a monstrance.
Blessed Sacrament	A name used to refer to the Real Presence of Jesus under the appearance of bread and wine after the consecration in the Eucharistic Prayer of the Mass.
Boat	The container for fresh incense. It has a small spoon to put the incense in the thurible.
Book of Gospels	A Lectionary that only contains the Gospel readings for Mass on Sundays and special feasts. It is carried in procession for Mass. Also called the Evangeliary.
Cassock	An ankle-length garment worn by the Catholic clergy and sometimes by altar servers while serving Mass (with a surplice).
Chasuble	The outer vestment worn by the priest for Mass. It is an emblem of charity. The different colors of chasubles signify the different liturgical seasons and feasts.
Ciborium	The container used to reserve the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle (plural: <i>ciboria</i>).
Cincture	The rope-like belt worn with the alb to hold it at the waist. Symbolizes chastity.
Communion Plate	A consecrated plate from which the Body of Christ is distributed.
Cope	A cape worn by clergy for liturgies outside of the Mass.
Corporal	The white cloth placed on top of the altar cloth. On it is placed the bread and wine to be consecrated at Mass.
Credence Table	A small table near the altar where the items for Mass are kept until they are needed. It is near the servers' seats so they have easy access to it.
Cruet	A vessel used to hold the wine or water for the celebration of the Mass.
Dalmatic	The outer vestment worn by the deacon over the alb and stole. It is square cut with sleeves and is made in all the liturgical colors.
Eucharistic Prayer	The prayer said by the priest at Mass during which the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ.
Extraordinary Ministers	People who are asked to administer the Body and Blood of Christ at the Eucharist when the number of ordinary ministers is not sufficient.
Holy Water	Blessed water kept in a large container and in small fonts at the church doors. Sometimes used in the liturgy for blessing. Reminds us of Baptism.

Humeral Veil	A liturgical veil that is worn over the shoulders by a cleric when he carries the Blessed Sacrament in procession or blesses the Faithful with the Blessed Sacrament.
Incense	A mixture of spices which produce a sweet smell and smoke when burned. It is used to symbolize our prayer to God (Psalm 141 says <i>Let our prayers rise like incense, O God</i>).
Lavabo	The bowl into which water is poured over the priest's hands at Mass.
Lectionary	The book of Scripture readings used for the liturgy.
Liturgy	The public official prayer of the Church in union with Christ. Primarily the Mass.
Monstrance	The large container used for displaying the Blessed Sacrament for adoration.
Nave	The part of the Church in which the congregation sits; outside of the sanctuary.
Pall	1. The large white cloth used to cover the casket at funerals. It reminds us of the white robe used for everyone at their baptism to signify the holiness God gives us in baptism. 2. The small linen cloth stiffened with a piece of cardboard, with which the chalice is covered at Mass. It is used to prevent foreign objects from getting into the chalice after consecration.
Paschal Candle	The large candle blessed at the Easter Vigil to symbolize Christ's victory over sin and death through His glorious Resurrection. It is also a symbol of Christ being the light of the world. This special candle is used at all Masses in the Easter season and at Baptisms and funeral liturgies throughout the year.
Paten	Another name for a communion plate. Often it is smaller and only holds a few hosts.
Purificator	The small white linen towel used by the priest and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to wipe the chalice, communion cups or pitchers.
Pyx	A small container used for carrying the Body of Christ to the sick or homebound.
Sacramentary	The book of prayers used by the priest and deacon during the Mass.
Sacristan	The person who helps prepare all the items needed for Mass.
Sacristy	The place where the ministers prepare for the liturgy.
Sanctuary	The raised area in Church encompassing the altar, ambo, and presider's chair.
Stole	The cloth strip hung around the neck of a priest or deacon. It symbolizes their ordination and role in the community.
Surplice	A liturgical vestment of white linen worn over a cassock. It is hip-length.
Tabernacle	The large container in which the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. The ciborium filled with the consecrated Hosts is placed inside it. A candle is kept burning near it to indicate that the Blessed Sacrament is present.
Thurible	The container in which incense is burned; it is on a chain. Also called a censer.

