

A CATHOLIC CHURCH TOUR

PLACES

Church The worship space where people gather to give praise to God.

Narthex The gathering space for the congregation to meet before or after Mass. Also, referred to as the vestibule.

Nave The large section of the Church where the congregation gathers for worship.

Reconciliation Room A separate room also called a confessional where the priest meets a penitent to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation.

Sacristy The place where everything is prepared and kept for Liturgy. Sacristans are parishioners who volunteer to prepare for the Mass and look after all the items needed for Mass.

Sanctuary The part of the Church where the altar and ambo are located. The priest/celebrant and ministers function from this area during Mass.

Choir loft/Balcony The space in the rear of church formerly used for choirs. Can be used for additional seating or special musical/liturgical effects.

Music Ministry Space A designed part of the nave where the music ministry can invite the participation of the assembly.

FURNISHINGS

Holy Water Font Small bowl-shaped containers that hold blessed water at every entrance to the Church. When entering the Church, parishioners bless themselves with the water by dipping their fingers into the containers and with the blessed water makes the sign of the cross in remembrance of baptism and the sacredness of entering a place and space for worship with the faith community.

Pews The name given to the furnishings in the Church where people will sit, stand and kneel during Mass. Some Catholic Churches no longer have kneelers in the pews and so the parishioners stand together in respect and reverence during the Eucharistic prayers.

Votive Lights Candles which can be lit in most Catholic Churches and shrines that have symbolic purpose in seeking some favor from the Lord, Mary or a saint.

Statutes and stained glass windows Statutes and stained glass windows historically have been used to pass on the faith teachings of the Catholic Church when most people did not read. Statues vary from Church to Church and are imbedded with meaning and serve an artistic purpose as well as an avenue for prayerful devotion.

Stations of the Cross Every Catholic Church has 14 Stations of the Cross which depict the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. This visualization leads the parishioners to reflect on Jesus' suffering and death for our salvation. The Church offers a communal prayer time with the Stations of the Cross during Lent with booklets written for this devotion.

Organ, piano, keyboard, guitar, etc. Musical instruments which assist the parishioners in giving praise and worship to God at Mass.

Altar and altar stone The altar is where the assembly gathers around in prayer with the celebrant leading the worship. We gather our prayers around the altar of sacrifice and give thanks for the wonder of Christ's self sacrifice for our nourishment. Every altar has an altar stone imbedded in it which contains the relics of martyrs. This practice is meant to show the bond between those who gather now at Mass and those who gave their lives for Christ. We are reminded at every Mass that we are called to share in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Lectern or Ambo The Word of God is proclaimed by the lector who stands at the lectern or ambo.

Lectionary The readings from scripture are proclaimed from a book called the lectionary which has all the readings chosen for all weekdays and Sundays throughout the year.

Tabernacle and sanctuary lamp The most sacred of furnishing, tabernacle, in the Church is marked by a candle burning in a red glass container, i.e., sanctuary lamp. The tabernacle contains the consecrated hosts that were not consumed at Mass and are available to be taken to those ill, homebound and/or in the hospital.

Crucifix Every Church has in the sanctuary a cross toward which our attention is drawn because it is Jesus' life, death and resurrection which gives our faith it's purpose.

Easter Candle A large candle for which the new light of Christ is given each year at the Easter Vigil. This candle is used at all baptisms, 1st Eucharist and confirmation celebrations, and funerals to symbolize our connection and remembrance to being born new in Christ.

Baptismal Font The place where the community gathers for the celebration of baptism. Fonts vary in size and location with the baptismal rite permitting baptism by the sprinkling of water on the head to a baptismal pool which allows for baptism by immersion.

Sacred Vessels These include the chalice, ciborium, paten, cruets, censer, and monstrance. The **chalice** holds the wine consecrated at Mass. The **ciborium** has a cover and is placed in

the tabernacle with the remains of the consecrated bread. The **paten** is a communion plate which holds the unleavened bread (host) used at Mass. There are two **cruets** which hold wine and water for the Eucharistic celebration and are brought to the altar at the offertory. The **censer** is a metal vessel for the ceremonial burning of incense. Incense is used to honor the bread and wine and altar, people, the body of a deceased Christian, the book of the gospels and other objects. It is used as a sign of reverence and as the smoke rises we are reminded of our prayers rising before the Lord. The **monstrance** is a very ornate vessel used to hold the consecrated host during Benediction or at other times of special adoration.

Vestments The clothing which the priest wears for the celebration of Mass. First is a white **alb** which is secured with a rope like belt called a **cincture**. The priest also wears a chasuble and **stole** over the alb which coordinate with the colors of each liturgical season.

Holy Oils There are three sacred oils which are blessed each year before Easter by the Bishop during the Chrism Mass. These oils are used for anointing. The oil of catechumens is used for strengthening the catechumens as they prepare to celebrate the Easter sacraments. The oil of the sick is used for strengthening those persons ill or preparing for surgery and the oil of Chrism is used during the Rite of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders.

Bells Bells are rung to call people to Mass, to pray at the Angelus, to announce the death of a parishioner and to inform the neighborhood that the consecration is taking place.

PRACTICES

Reverencing the altar and tabernacle Catholics are instructed to be reverent in regard to the holy worshipping space which permeates with the presence of Christ in the tabernacle by bending one knee to the floor called genuflecting or by bowing reverently as one passes in front of the tabernacle.

Postures for worship Devotional gestures and bodily positions are popular forms of sacramental. Catholics use several postures for worship; kneeling, standing, sitting, bowing, striking the breast, folding of the hands, raising of the hands and eyes, and lying prostrate.

Benediction During the 11th century a public practice of devotion began to give reverence to the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Today, Benediction is a ceremony where the consecrated host is exposed to view in a monstrance which is placed on the altar. People gather in silent prayer and devotion.