

Preparing the Church for Mass

The items used during the celebration of Mass



TARGET AUDIENCE

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Overview

This Object looks at the elements required for the celebration of the Eucharist. The Object introduces the students to the names of the elements used, as well as providing them with an understanding of their significance.

The multimedia element is a video of all the items that are used during the celebration of Eucharist. As the items are placed on the altar, the associated audio provides a brief overview of each.

Teacher Background

Teachers are encouraged to review the 'Crafting the Art of Liturgy' section of the DVD Rom *Become One Body One Spirit in Christ* to deepen their understanding of the art, beauty and celebration as well as the roles of the ordained ministry and of the liturgical assembly.

In particular, the following aspects of *Become One Body One Spirit in Christ* provide entry points and context for this Learning Object:

- Within the pathway 'Art in the Liturgy' watch the video 'Liturgical Objects'.

Where appropriate, use this material with the students.

Supporting Content

This text supports the focus of the multimedia element.

For the celebration of Mass the Priest uses special vessels, which are called sacred vessels. Sacred vessels are the receptacles and utensils used in liturgical celebrations to hold the consecrated Body and Blood of Christ. These are the chalice, paten, and ciborium. The sacred vessels are to be treated with special care and reverence. Precious metal is the preferred and best material to use for these items. The artistic style and design of the vessels may reflect the local region; however they should be designed in a way to make it apparent that they are indeed sacred vessels for liturgical purposes, not something for everyday use.

It may be necessary to have microphones on the altar, so that the assembly

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Supporting Content

can clearly hear what the Priest is saying. Candles are required for all liturgical celebrations and should be placed either on or around the altar to suit the design of the altar and sanctuary and not interfere with the assembly's view of what is taking place. There is also to be a cross, with the figure of Christ crucified upon it, either on the altar or near it, where it is clearly visible to those assembled.

The following lists the elements required for the celebration of the Mass and outlines their purpose.

Altar

The altar is the table or structure on which the church's sacred meal is celebrated.

This sacred meal makes present the sacrifice Jesus made for us by dying on the Cross and it is a thanksgiving meal where we give thanks to God for sending the person of Jesus to show us the ways to live in the presence of God's love.

The altar is the table that the community gather around under the leadership of the Priest to remember God's love for us and give thanks for the living memory of Jesus who show us the way to the Father in heaven.

The Altar Stone

The altar stone is a solid piece of natural stone containing relics. It is consecrated by a bishop and forms an essential part of the altar.

Altar Cloth

The earliest Christians lived in a region where fine linen, especially linen from Egypt, had been highly prized for centuries. It is no surprise, then, that primitive documents from the Mediterranean basin make note of the use of one fine linen cover over for the altar.

The current practice today echoes the earliest Christian practice with at least one white cloth covering the altar for the celebration of Mass. (General Instruction of the Roman Missal #117)

Altar Crucifix

In ancient times, the processional Cross was the basic Christian symbol used at the altar. After leading the community into their gathering place, it was prominently positioned for the rest of the ritual action. It was later in history

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that the cross became a crucifix or the Body of Christ clearly visible and was placed on the altar so that as the Priest was saying Mass he could glance at it during the Eucharistic Prayer.

Supporting Content

The current practice is to have a crucifix on or close to the altar. (General Instruction of the Roman Missal #117)

Candles

Candles are to be used at every liturgical celebration as a sign of reverence and festiveness.

Symbolically candles represent Christ as the light of the world which is most prominent at the Easter Vigil.

On or next to the altar are to be placed candlesticks with lighted candles: at least two in any celebration, or even four or six, especially for a Sunday Mass or a holy day of obligation. If a diocesan Bishop celebrates, the seven candles should be used.

Corporal

The term corporal is a Latin word that means 'body'. It is an additional smaller cloth that is placed at the centre front of the altar for the paten and chalice to be placed on. The chalice and paten will hold the Body and Blood of Christ once the words of consecration are prayed at the Eucharist.

Purificator

This cloth functions like a liturgical serviette. It is used to wipe the lip of the chalice after each person drinks from the chalice. There is always one purificator for each chalice used at a Eucharistic celebration. It is used again for the drying of the vessels when they are purified or cleaned at the end of Mass.

Chalice

The word chalice comes from the Latin word 'calix', meaning cup. The chalice is also called a sacred vessel and is held in special honour [GIRM#327] by the worshiping community as it is the cup that holds the Blood of Christ when the wine is consecrated at Mass.

All chalices used at a Eucharistic Celebration are to be made of precious metals as a sign of the importance of these sacred vessels.

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Paten

Patens or plates are what the hosts for communion are placed on. Like the chalice the paten is to be made of precious metals as it is also called a sacred vessel as it will hold the Body of Christ once the words of consecration are said by the priest at Mass.

Cruets containing the wine and water

The term cruet is another word that we don't hear very often but it simply means the bottles or jugs that hold the water or wine that are carried to the altar at the Preparation of the Gifts.

The cruets are traditionally made of glass but other materials can be used.

Bowl, jug, and towel

When the Priest washes his hand during the preparation of the gifts he quietly says the words:

'Wash me, O Lord, from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.' This is a symbolic gesture on the part of the Priest as he prepares to pray the Eucharistic prayer.

For this reason the bowl and jug and towel used for the action should be large enough for the community to see. Even though the words are said quietly the action is rich symbolically.

Roman Missal

The Roman Missal is the book that holds all the prayers for the celebration of the Eucharist.

Ambo

The word Ambo is a Greek word that means step or elevated. The great importance of the Word of God in the scriptures proclaimed at each Eucharistic celebration means that there is a special place for this word to be read from. From the ambo only the readings, the responsorial Psalm, and the exulted (Easter Proclamation) are to be proclaimed; it may be used also for the giving of the homily and for announcing the intentions of the Prayers of the Faithful.

Lectionary

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The Lectionary holds all the scripture readings used during the Liturgy of the Word.

Presidential Chair

The presidential chair is the Priest's chair. From this chair the Priest presides or leads the people gathered in prayer. The Priest is often called the presider because all of the baptised 'celebrate,' and the role of leadership is one of coordinating the many ministers that assist with the celebration of the Eucharist.

Flowers

Flowers have traditionally been part of the decoration for the celebration of Eucharist and can enhance the celebrations of particular feasts and liturgical season and specific liturgical celebrations in the church like weddings. During Advent the floral decorations of the altar should be very simple to suit the liturgical season, while for Christmas celebrations more flowers would express the joy of the Feast.

During Lent we are not to use flowers as this is a penitential season. The fourth Sunday of Lent Laetare Sunday and other Solemnities, and Feasts are an opportunity to use flowers as a sign of celebration and joy.

For Reflection and Discussion: Ideas for Use

Select one or more of the following activities for students to complete.

- 1 **Organise an outing for the class to visit the parish church, school chapel and/or cathedral, and to speak with the sacristan.**
Visit the parish church, school chapel and/or cathedral and ask to see the different items required for the celebration of Mass. Ask the sacristan why she/he does this work.
- 2 **Invite the students to draw their own altar with the different liturgical objects present.**
Draw the altar and all the different liturgical objects listed here and in the video. Label each of them.
- 3 **Invite the students to use their drawing to learn the names of the different liturgical objects and once they have had sufficient time, organise them into pairs to quiz each other or do a matching exercise of item and descriptor.**
Learn the names of the different elements you see in the video and with one of your classmates take it in turns quizzing each other.
- 4 **Screen the multimedia element of *Liturgy of the Eucharist* for the class.**

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Watch the video of the *Liturgy of the Eucharist* and note when and how the Priest uses the different items.

Teacher Professional Development Resources

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, [General Instruction of the Roman Missal](#), 2007, No. 105

Fr McNamara, Edward, '[A Sacristan's Duties](#)', *Zenit*, 2007