

Altar Guild Glossary

Advent Wreath: A festive wreath of greens arranged to hold four candles (3 purple or blue and 1 rose/pink) of the same height and a center tall candle (white) symbolic of the light of the world. The first candle is lighted on the first Sunday of Advent. The candles are lighted each Sunday in Advent. The pink candle on the 3rd Sunday, Gaudete (Rejoice) Sunday. The center candle is lighted on Christmas day.

Alb: A long white linen basic garment (shoulder to ankles) worn by ministers who celebrate the Holy Communion in Eucharistic Vestments. The alb may have an attached hood or cowl, and is white symbolizing purity. The vestment can be worn by an acolyte or crucifer.

Altar Rail: The railing enclosing the sanctuary or surrounding the altar at which communicants kneel or stand to receive communion; also called sanctuary rail.

Altar: The table with the Altar Book (or Missal), and two Eucharistic Candles, where the Celebrant leads the service and the Communion is prepared.

Aumbry: A wall safe, not on or in the altar, in which are stored reserved elements of the Sacrament—sometimes referred to as the Tabernacle.

Baptismal Font: A stand equipped with a bowl or basin that holds water. The water is blessed as it is being poured into the bowl, and is used to make the sign of the cross on a person's forehead as they are being baptized. The font is at the front of the nave and is a reminder of our baptism in Christ.

Bishop's Chair: A chair (also called a sedilia) is usually placed in the chancel for use by the Bishop on his visitation.

Bread Box: A covered container for the unconsecrated bread or wafers.

Burse: The square pocket or purse, usually made of the same material and color as the chalice veil, which contains the corporal linen chalice veil, and often extra purificators. It is placed over the veiled chalice and paten on the credence table.

Candle Lighter – Extinguisher (Snuffer): A long pole with a two-pronged end. One side is a tube into which is inserted a taper; a knob is used to raise or lower the taper for lighting of candles. The other side is a bell shaped snuffer used to extinguish the candles.

Cassock: A long garment reaching from the shoulder to the ankles, worn by clergy, choir, and all those who assist in the services. Cassocks are usually black, purple for bishops, and often red for acolytes. White, blue, maroon, etc. are often used for choirs.

Chalice Veil: A silk square veil which matches the burse (color of season), used to cover the empty chalice.

Chalice: The cup, usually of silver (or gold), in which the wine is consecrated in the service of the Eucharist. If the chalice is of silver, it is often gold plated within.

Chancel: The part of the church (also known as “Liturgical East”) which contains the sanctuary and the choir, usually raised by the chancel steps from the Nave.

Chasuble: A large, poncho-like vestment, worn over the alb, with an opening in the center to go over the head of the celebrant. It is worn by a priest when celebrating the Eucharist. The color conforms to the season of the church year.

Ciborium: A covered chalice or box, usually of silver, for holding the consecrated bread of the Eucharist.

Cincture: A rope, usually made of white cotton, tied around the waist over the alb. As part of the Eucharistic vestments, it represents the cords with which Jesus was bound in His Passion.

Corporal: A fine linen napkin that is spread over the fair white linen cloth on the altar, and upon which the sacred vessels of the Holy Communion are placed.

Cotta: The outer white cloth vestment worn over a cassock, full, with wide, open sleeves, and usually shorter than the surplice worn by persons officiating the Daily Office, lay preachers, or by clergy participating in ordinations.

Credence Table or Shelf: The shelf or table made of wood or stone where the elements and vessels of the Eucharist are placed before use in the service.

Crozier: The bishop’s staff representing a shepherd’s crook.

Cruets: Two small vessels of glass or metal provided for unconsecrated water and wine and placed upon the credence table. Elements: The water, wine, and bread of the Eucharist.

Dust Cover: The linen cloth which covers the altar fair linen after the worship

Elements: The bread, wine, and water which are used at the Eucharist.

Epistle Side: The right side of the chancel as one faces the altar.

Eucharistic Candles: The two candles used for the service of the Eucharist that are placed on the altar. They represent Christ as the light of the world, Christ as human and God, and the two parts of the sacrament: outward sign and inward grace. They are only lit when the service being offered is a Eucharist.

Fair Linen: The altar cloth; a long linen cloth covering the altar and hanging over the ends, often embroidered with five crosses.

Flagon: A large metal, glass, or ceramic pitcher used for wine or water at the Eucharist or for the water at Baptism.

Floor Candles: Two large candles on stands

Frontal: A full-length, colored hanging for the altar.

Gospel Book: The book which contains all of the Gospel readings that is read from by a clergy person during the Eucharist service

Gospel Side: The left side of the chancel as once faces the altar.

Lavabo: (means "I will wash") The name to describe the small towel and the bowl used in the ceremonial washing of the celebrant's hands before the consecration, usually at the offertory.

Lectern: The stand or desk from which Scripture lessons may be read or prayers led. The Old Testament Reading, Psalm or Canticle, and New Testament Reading are read from the Lectern.

Lectionary Book: The large, ribboned book containing the lectionary readings which the Gospeller carries in procession.

Liturgical Colors: The appropriate color for the day according to the church calendar. It is the color of the hangings and the color of the priest's vestments. The calendar on the wall of the sacristy has the days printed in the appropriate color. The basic seasonal colors are: Advent-Purple or Blue; Christmas-White; Epiphany-Green; Lent-Purple; Holy Week-Red; Easter-White; Pentecost-Red; Trinity Sunday-White; Sundays After Pentecost (Ordinary Time)-Green

Missal: The book containing the Communion Service from which the celebrant reads at the altar. It is sometimes called the Altar Book.

Narthex: The rear of the Church, usually where people enter the nave. Others might call this a foyer.

Nave: The large space running between the Narthex and the Chancel; the area where the congregation is seated.

Offering plate: A large plate of metal or wood in which offerings and alms from the worshipers are placed for presentation before the altar.

Offertory: The bringing of the gifts (bread, wine, and offerings) to the altar.

Pall: This word means 'covering'. It refers to two quite different coverings: 1)A pall is the small, linen covered square of Plexiglas which we use to cover the paten and host wafer on a vested chalice. 2) The funeral pall is the large, embroidered silk covering which covers the casket for a funeral.

Paschal Candle: A large, pure white candle, preferably of bleached wax, placed in a large candlestick in the sanctuary on the Lectern side, symbolizing the rising of Christ. It is lighted ceremonially at the Great Vigil of Easter and remains lit until Ascension Day.

Paten: A round flat plate, usually of silver, upon which the bread is consecrated and from which it is administered at communion.

Pew: A bench or seat with a fixed back; usually used for seating the congregation during church services.

Piscina: A sink that drains directly into the ground and is used for washing the vessels used at the Eucharist and for reverently disposing of unconsumed consecrated wine.

Priest's Host: The large piece of bread or wafer consecrated by the priest that s/he breaks or "fractures" during the Eucharist.

Pulpit: A platform that can have a railing and a reading desk from which the Gospel or Sermon is delivered, usually located at the front of the Chancel.

Purificator: A small napkin used to wipe or cleanse the chalice during distribution at communion and at the ablutions.

Rector's Chair: A place reserved for the celebrant to sit during a service.

Reserved Sacrament: Consecrated bread and wine, the Body and Blood of Christ, that has not been distributed to communicants in a service of Holy Eucharist, and is kept in an aumbry or tabernacle. A small amount of consecrated bread and wine is often reserved for use by the priest and lay ministers in visitations, or for the sick, dying, or other similar circumstances.

Sacristy: The room in the church building where the vestments, sacred vessels, and altar hangings are kept.

Sanctuary Candle or Light: A light which is lit whenever there is consecrated sacrament held in reserve in the Sanctuary, Aumbry or Tabernacle.

Sanctuary: "Holy Place" The area around the altar, or portion of the chancel within the altar rail.

Sanctus Bell: Rung three times at the Sanctus (Holy, holy, holy), part of the Eucharistic Prayer. It is rung three times to honor each person of the Trinity and was historically used to call the congregation's attention to the consecration of the bread and wine at the Eucharist.

Solemn Procession: On special occasions, the worship service begins with a solemn procession. The crucifer leads the procession from the narthex to the chancel, turns left at the chancel steps and goes back through the knave to the center aisle at the back of the church. The procession then goes up to the chancel again, and this time turns right at the chancel steps, goes back around to the center aisle at the back of the church, and finally back up to the chancel - which marks the end of the procession. The altar party then goes to their usual places for the start of the service.

Stole: A long narrow band of cloth, sometimes fringed at the ends, and often embroidered, which a priest wears about her/his neck. The stole is the only required vestment for the priest at the Eucharist. A deacon wears the stole across her/his left shoulder and tied on the right side. The stole's color matches the church season, and symbolizes the yoke of Christ.

Surplice: The outer vestment worn over a cassock by persons officiating the Daily Office, by lay preachers (with a tippet), or by clergy participating in ordinations. It is of white cloth, full, with wide, open sleeves, and usually longer than the cotta worn by the choristers.

Tabernacle: A wall safe, not on or in the altar, in which are stored reserved elements of the Sacrament—sometimes referred to as the Aumbry.

Taper: A waxed wick placed in a candle lighter from which candles are lighted.

Thurible: The vessel used for burning incense. Carried by an acolyte who is called a Thurifer.

Tippet: A long black scarf worn by clergy over cassock and surplice at the Daily Offices. It resembles a stole and is worn around the neck with ends hanging down the front. Also called a preaching scarf.

Vested Chalice: The chalice, covered by a purificator, paten and host wafer, ready to be used by the priest. A priest's host is not placed on the paten when the host is being presented from the oblation table.

Wafer or host: A small flat disk, or piece of unleavened bread, for the Communion, also called the people's host. The large 'Wafer' is called the priest host.