

Church Vocabulary

Liturgical Objects and Sacred Vessels

Amphora: (Greek: *amphi*, both sides; *phero*, to carry) A wine vessel for Mass; tall, two-handed, often pottery (Symbolically inscribed one were found in the Catacombs.)

Ampulla: Two-handed vessels for holding oils or burial ointments.

Aspergillum: An instrument (brush or branch or perforated container) for sprinkling holy water.

Aspersory: The pail for holy water

Boat: The supply container for the incense.

Capsula: The container for reserving the consecrated host for exposition in the monstrance.

Censer: A vessel for burning incense (mixture of aromatic gums) at solemn ceremonies. Its rising smoke symbolizes prayers.

Chalice: A cup that holds the wine (grape, “fruit of the vine”). Formerly of precious metals (if not gold, gold plated inside). Since Vatican II it must at least be a non-porous material of suitable dignity. Consecrated with holy chrism by a bishop; also “consecrated by use” (contact with Christ’s blood). Eight inches was the traditional and common height. Christ’s Last Supper chalice is the centerpiece if the medieval Holy Grail legends.

Chalice veil: (no longer in common use) Covers the chalice and paten from the beginning of Mass until the offertory and after the ablutions.

Ciborium: Container for the communion host; similar to a paten and traditionally resembling the chalice except for its cover.

Communion plate: This was a plate made of a precious metal which would placed under the mouth or hands of the person receiving communion lest the Precious Body fall to the floor.

Corporal: A square of linen cloth placed upon the altar and upon which the chalice and paten are placed (Its container, when the corporal is not in use, it called the Burse. Like the Chalice veil, the Burse is no longer in common use.)

Crescelle: The knockers formerly used in place of the bell (at the consecration, for example) during Holy Week.

Cruets: Water and wine containers; an A and V indicating *aqua* (water) and *vinum* (wine).

Ewer, basin, and towel: These are used for washing the hands of the priest. It is made of glass or ceramics. By traditions, an ewer and basin of precious metal is reserved for bishops or prelates. It is used for the rite before the Eucharistic Prayer. The linen for drying was called a Manuterge.

Lavabo dish: The saucer for the presider's ceremonial washing of fingers, called this because the first words of the prayers formerly used by the priest, "I was (Latin: *lavabo*) my hand is innocence" (Psalm 26:6; see also Matthew 27:24-26).

Liber Usualis: (no longer commonly in use) A book containing most of the Gregorian chants and readings for the Mass and the Divine Office.

Luna(lunette): The glass-sided, removable receptacle at its center, the luna (or lunette), actually holds the host.

Monstrance (*ostensorium*): Container for the host in exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, commonly surmounted by a cross.

Ordo: Mainly, an annual calendar of directions for each day's Mass and Liturgy of the Hours.

Pall: A flat saucer of the same material as the chalice, it is for the host (which is made of unleavened wheat bread).

Paten: A flat saucer of the same material as the chalice; it is for the host (which is made of unleavened wheat bread).

Processional candlesticks: These are used by servers and should be tall candlesticks. They are often carried in procession and recession and are left burning throughout the Mass.

Processional cross: A mobile cross or crucifix that leads the procession and recession of liturgical ministers, placed in the sanctuary to signal the presences of the assembled praying community.

Purificator: A band of linen to cleanse the chalice.

Pyx: The container for the communion host outside of the church and Mass.

Roman Missal: (Latin: *missalis*, pertaining to Mass) The liturgical book, containing the Sacramentary and lectionary, which became the norm in the ninth century. The liturgical restorations of Vatican II involved separating these two books.

Thurible: Another name for the Censer.

Torches: According to Roman practice and widespread custom, torches may be used at solemn Mass during the Eucharistic Prayers. The "torch" was originally a bundle of three or four long candles fused together. There may be two, four, or six torches at a solemn Mass, and even eight when a Bishop offers Mass.

Liturgical Vestments

Alb: A long loose-fitting tunic worn under other vestments, common to all minister in worship. Adaptation of fourth-century Greek and Roman undertunic. Symbolizes the garment of the newly baptized, also the parity of soul required for Mass, also the garment in which Pilates clothed Christ.

Amice: A white linen square worn over the neck and shoulders under the alb; formerly used as a cap to cover the priest's head.

Biretta: (no longer in common use) A square hat with three ridges or peaks worn mainly by principal ministers on the way to and from the altar. In its place, religious cover their heads with an amice and a hood.

Cassock: A full length, fitted robe for ordinary use, either black (priest), purple (bishop), red (cardinal), or white (pope). In sub-tropical lands, a priest can wear a white cassock, but the buttons of the cassock must be black. Only the pope can wear a white cassock with white buttons.

Chasuble: The external garment worn by the presider at the Eucharist, with a stole worn over it (or, depending on style, under it); sometimes designed so that the chasuble serves the purpose of both vestments.

Cincture: A cord used to belt the alb.

Cope: A long cloak with fastening in front, worn on solemn occasions and for specified ceremonies (for example, Eucharistic benediction) outside of Mass.

Crosier: The pastoral staff, turned outward when carried by the bishop with his diocese.

Dalmatic: A sleeved outer garment, fashioned after the chasuble, worn by a deacon in place of a chasuble; patterned on the royal vest of Dalmatia, once worn by kings at solemnities like coronations.

Humeral veils: (Latin: humerous, shoulder) A wide scarf worn over the shoulders for carrying the sacred vessels for the Blessed Sacraments.

Maniple: (no longer in common use) An ornamental strip of cloth pinned or tied to the left forearm signifying authority; formerly a handkerchief worn on or carried in the left hand.

Miter: (Greek: headband, turban) The ceremonial headgear (for abbots as well as bishops).

Orphrey: (Latin: aurum, gold; from the ancient country of Phrygian) The painted or embroidered images or symbols on a chasuble, front and back, and around the cope's opening.

Pallium: This is a vestment signifying the fulness of the bishop's office, so is worn only by the pope and metropolitan bishops.

Stole: A sign of priestly office, worn in the celebration of sacraments; a narrow strip of cloth of a liturgical color worn over the shoulders; or a deacon, worn over the right shoulder and crossing to the left side of the body.

Surplice: A vestment of white linen with wide sleeves worn over a cassock, often used by ministers other than the presider; sometimes worn by a priest for the administration of the sacraments.

Liturgical colors

Black: (not in common use) May be used for Masses for the dead (as well as violet and white). It is most commonly used only once a year for the All Soul's Day Mass on November 2nd.

Green: Used on Sunday's in Ordinary Time.

Red: Used on commemorations of our Lord's passion (Passion or Palms Sunday, Good Friday), the feast of apostles, evangelists, and martyrs for the faith. Also used for feast of the Holy Spirit.

Rose: May be used on Gaudete Sunday (Third Sunday of Advent) and Laetare Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent).

Violet (Purple): Used during the seasons of Advent and Lent> Often called purple, it has a variety of shades ranging from blue-violet to red-violet. Whereas the traditional "Roman purple" is actually a re-purple, a more blue-purple has prevailed in other parts of Europe. Some have taken advantage of this hue variation to differentiate between Lent (red-purple) and Advent (blue-purple).

White: Used for solemnities and feast of Our Lord and Our Lady, in the festive seasons and on days specified. It may also be used for funerals. In practice, ivory, cream, or a similar shade may replace white. Also, gold may replace white.