



THE COMPLETE ALTAR SERVER GUIDE

Everything You Need to Know to Serve at the Altar





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CHALICE

From the Latin calix, meaning "cup."
A sacred vessel that holds the wine and the small drop of water which, through the consecration, become the Blood of Christ.



PATEN

From the Latin patena, meaning "small plate." A small, flat plate on which the large host that will be consecrated by the priest and distributed to the faithful is placed.



CIBORIUM

From the Latin ciborium, meaning "vessel for food." A sacred vessel with a lid used to consecrate and keep the hosts in the Tabernacle.



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CRUETS

From the Latin ampulla. Two small glass vessels; one contains the wine and the other the water, which are presented at the Offertory to be mixed in the Chalice.



CORPORAL

From the Latin corporalis. A square white linen cloth that is spread on the altar and marks the sacred place where the Chalice, the Paten, and the Ciborium are placed.



HAND BELL

From the Latin campana. A small resonant instrument that the Altar Server rings during the Consecration to signal the most sacred moment of the Mass.



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LAVABO

From the Latin lavabo, meaning "I will wash." A set consisting of a pitcher and basin that the Altar Server presents to the priest so that he may wash his hands before the Consecration.



MANUTERGE

From the Latin manus et tergere, meaning "to wipe the hands." A small white towel used by the priest to dry his hands after the Lavabo rite.



MONSTRANCE

From the Latin monstrare, meaning "to show." A sacred vessel made of precious metal in the shape of a sunburst, in which the consecrated Host is placed for the adoration of the faithful.



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LUNETTE

From the Latin *lunula*, meaning "little moon." A crescent or circular gold and crystal frame that holds the sacred Host securely and keeps it upright inside the Monstrance for adoration.



PYX

From the Latin *pyxis*, meaning "box." A small round gilded metal container used by the minister to carry Holy Communion safely to the sick and homebound who are unable to attend Mass.



CROTALUS (WOODEN CLAPPER)

From the Latin *crotalum*, meaning "rattle." A wooden liturgical instrument used to create a solemn sound during Holy Week, replacing the altar bells during the days of mourning for the Passion and death of Jesus.



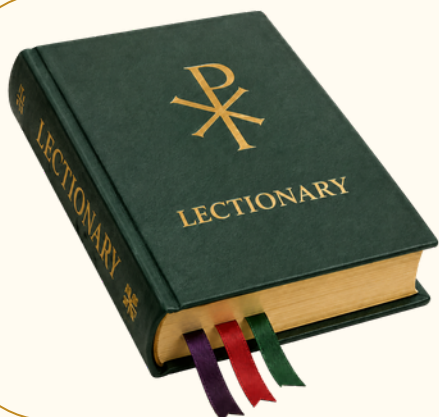
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MISSAL

From the Latin *missalis*, meaning "of the Mass." The official book used by the priest at the altar, containing the prayers, formulas, and rubrics for the celebration of the Holy Mass throughout the liturgical year.



LECTIONARY

From the Latin *lectionarium*, "book of readings." A sacred book containing the readings from Sacred Scripture, arranged to be proclaimed by the lector or the deacon from the ambo.



MISSAL STAND

From the Latin *lectrinum*, meaning "reading stand." A stand made of metal or wood placed on the altar to hold the Roman Missal, making it easier for the priest to read while keeping his hands free.



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PURIFICATOR

From the Latin *purificatorium*. A white linen cloth, usually embroidered with a small cross, used by the priest to cleanse the Chalice and his fingers after Communion and the ablutions.



PALL

From the Latin *pallium*, "covering." A square of stiffened, starched linen placed over the Chalice during Mass to protect the sacred wine from dust or insects.



CHALICE VEIL

From the Latin *velum*, "curtain" or "cloak." A square piece of cloth, matching the color of the priest's vestments, used to cover the Chalice and the Paten from the beginning of Mass until the Offertory.



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THURIBLE

From the Latin *thuribulum*. A metal vessel suspended on chains in which incense is burned during solemn celebrations, as a sign of prayer and adoration rising up to God.



INCENSE BOAT

From the Latin *navicula*, meaning "little boat." A vessel designed to hold the incense grains before they are placed in the thurible. It includes a small spoon for placing the incense carefully.



ASPERSORIUM AND ASPERGILLUM

From the Latin *aspersorium*. A set consisting of a vessel holding holy water (the *aspersorium*) and a metal wand (the *aspergillum*) used during the rite of sprinkling at the beginning of Mass.



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ALTAR CRUCIFIX

From the Latin *crucifixus*, meaning "crucified." A cross bearing the image of Christ, placed on or near the altar during the celebration of the Mass, reminding the faithful of the redemptive sacrifice of Our Lord.



PASCHAL CANDLE

From the Latin *cereus paschalis*. A large and solemn candle representing the Risen Christ, the true Light of the world. It is lit at the Easter Vigil and remains burning beside the ambo or altar throughout the Easter season.



CANDLESTICK

From the Latin *candelabrum*. A stand that holds the candles during the celebration of the Mass. The presence of lit candles on or near the altar is required at every celebration to express the festive character of the Holy Sacrifice.



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TABERNACLE

From the Latin *tabernaculum*, meaning "tent" or "dwelling." A secure and sacred cabinet in which the Blessed Sacrament is reserved for the Holy Communion of the sick and for the adoration of the faithful.



AMBO

From the Greek *ambon*, "raised platform." A liturgical structure from which the Word of God, the Scripture readings, and the Gospel are proclaimed, and from which the Responsorial Psalm is sung.



BURSE

From the Latin *bursa*, "purse." A rigid square case, made in the same liturgical color as the vestments, used to store and carry the Corporal in a dignified manner.



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BOOK OF THE GOSPELS (EVANGELIARY)

From the Latin *evangelarium*. A sacred book containing only the Gospel texts for Sundays and major feasts. It is carried in the entrance procession by the deacon or lector and placed flat upon the altar until its proclamation.



ALTAR CLOTH

From the Latin *tobalea*. A white cloth that covers the altar table during the celebration, serving as a sign of reverence for the place where the Holy Sacrifice of Christ is renewed.



ALTAR FLOWERS

From the Latin *flos*, meaning "flower." Floral arrangements placed near the altar to express joy and gratitude. Their use varies by season: they are prominent during solemnities and completely omitted during penitential times like Lent.



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HOST

From the Latin *hostia*, meaning "victim" or "offering." Unleavened bread made of wheat flour and water, which is consecrated during the Mass to become the Body of Christ. It is brought to the altar with great reverence inside the sacred vessels.



SANCTUS BELLS

From the Latin *campana*. A set of small bells joined together, rung by the Altar Server during the Consecration to draw the attention of the faithful to the most sacred moment of the Mass, when the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ.



PROCESSIONAL CROSS

From the Latin *crux processionalis*. A crucifix mounted on a long staff, carried by the Altar Server at the head of the liturgical processions. It represents Christ, the Light who guides His people and opens the way for the celebration.



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ALTAR CANDLE

From the Latin *candela*. A wax candle placed on or near the altar, whose flame symbolizes the light of Christ. At least two candles are required at every celebration to express the festive character of the Holy Mass.



BALDACHIN

From the Latin *ciborium*, meaning "sacred canopy." An architectural structure in the shape of a roof, supported by columns, that covers and shelters the main altar, highlighting its importance as the central place of Christ's sacrifice.



PAX

From the Latin *osculatorium*. A small sacred plaque made of precious metal, usually decorated with a religious image, formerly used to convey the sign of peace between the priest and the faithful as a sign of unity and fraternity in Christ.