

GUIDELINES FOR SACRISTAN MINISTRY

INTRODUCTION

In Sacred Scripture, especially in the Old Testament, the worship of God is expressed through the offering of the best of human labor, “the first fruits” (cf. Ex 23:19). From the earliest offerings presented to the Lord, we see that worship is not simply about giving something, but about offering what is worthy of God. The Lord deserves our “first fruits:” our finest gifts, our wholehearted devotion, and the best of our service. The spirit of offering our very best is a guiding principle in the ministry of the sacristan.

In offering the best of their time and service, the sacristan serves God and His Church by preparing the sacred space and everything necessary for the celebration of the liturgy. In the liturgy, Christ is truly present and continues His work of sanctification through the Church (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* [SC], 7). This service is especially significant because in every liturgical action, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist, God’s people are sanctified as they encounter God.

We respond to God’s sanctifying grace not by merely giving materials and resources (time, service, etc.), but by the offering of our own selves. St. Paul refers to this by urging Christians to offer themselves “as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” (Rom 12:1)—as Jesus, Himself, did once and for all, and continues to offer His own Body and Blood in the celebration of the Eucharist. Consequently, the sacristan is able to join in Christ’s offering by generously giving their talents, time, and service. Giving generously of oneself is accomplished wholeheartedly and consciously through docile demeanor, servant-like attitude, gentle and humble conduct, and amiable interactions with others.

While pastoral wisdom and experience offer valuable guiding principles, for the benefit of our parishes, the Office for Divine Worship, in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, has prepared the following guidelines for the Ministry of Sacristan. These guidelines provide practical direction for preparing the sacristy and sanctuary while emphasizing the deeper purpose behind the sacristans’ tasks: worshipping God by offering our very best; even in logistical preparation of the liturgy.

THE SACRISTY AND THE WORSHIP SPACE

Sacristy: A Sacred Space

A sacristy is not just about functionality and storage, but rather it is a sacred space where ministers prepare prayerfully for the liturgy. It provides a calm and orderly setting for vesting, cleansing the sacred vessels, storing liturgical books, and carrying out other necessary preparations. Keeping the sacristy clean and well-organized aids in the reverent preparation and celebration of the sacred liturgy. With this purpose in mind, sacristans should diligently observe and foster the following principles:

- *A sacristy is a favorable place for privacy.*
Priests, deacons, acolytes, and other liturgical ministers enter the sacristy to prepare themselves physically, mentally, and spiritually for the celebration of the sacred mysteries. In this context, it is appropriate to ensure that ministers and guests are discouraged from unnecessary activities not related to the liturgy.

- *A sacristy is also a place where prayer, peace, and reverence are fostered.*

It is more evident that the church building requires silence and reverence; however, this disposition should also begin in the sacristy. Therefore, conversations should be limited to matters related to the liturgy and that a sense of social gathering is discouraged.

Preparing the Sacred Space

A well-organized sacristy is the beginning of a well-organized liturgy. Sacristans maintain an organized, efficient, and clean environment for all vessels, books, linens, vestments, hosts(bread), wine, oils, incense, candles, and any other liturgical items.

In addition to preparing the sanctuary and the objects used in worship, some sacristans may also be responsible for cleaning and caring for the altar area, statues, pews, and other parts of the church. They are also responsible for maintaining the order, cleanliness, and beauty of both the worship space and the sacristy. During a walkthrough of the church, the sacristan should pay special attention to the altar, ambo, presider's chair (and deacon's chairs, if used), baptismal font, tabernacle, credence table, sanctuary lamp, and ambry (the cabinet in which the sacred oils are kept)—to ensure that each is clean, properly maintained, adequately supplied, and ready for the liturgy.

Thus, the sacristan, while diligently preparing and organizing the elements necessary for the celebration, helps remove unnecessary distractions and creates an atmosphere conducive to the sacred action that is about to take place—allowing for the community to enter more deeply into prayer and worship. The faithful, gathered by the Holy Spirit, are freely able to listen, respond, pray, sing, and act together, sharing in the grace by which Christ sanctifies His Church. Truly, in this respect, the ministry of those who assist in preparing liturgical celebrations is essential.

The Spirituality of Sacristans

The sacristan prepares the sanctuary for the celebration of Mass, but this raises an important question: *How is the sacristan preparing the inner sanctuary of the heart to celebrate Mass?* A sacristan can prepare everything perfectly while remaining spiritually distracted and disconnected from the communal celebration of the Eucharist. To allow the external preparation of the sanctuary to usher the interior preparation of the heart leads to a deeper encounter with God.

Firstly, prayer is a fundamental dimension of human life and, above all, of the life of the Church. The liturgy is the primary source and school of Christian spiritual life (cf. *Lumen Gentium* [LG], 11). Therefore, it is imperative for the sacristans to also prepare their inner sanctuary with intentional and dedicated prayer before, during, and after the celebration of the Eucharist.

Secondly, service in the sacristy should never become a substitute for participation in the sacred mysteries. Christians do not celebrate the liturgy as isolated individuals (cf. *SC*, 26). In the liturgy, Christ unites His Body to Himself and leads the Church in prayer to the Father. The sacristan, therefore, is not solely serving the worshipping congregation—the sacristan is part of the gathered assembly and is dutifully obliged to praise and worship God as part of the faithful.

Finally, nourished by the Word and the Eucharist, the ministry of the sacristan brings together two forms of preparation: *preparing the sacred space and preparing the heart*. As the sacristan prepares the sanctuary where the Church will worship, the sacristan is also called to prepare the inner sanctuary of the heart, entering the celebration with reverence, prayer, and a spirit ready to receive the grace of God.

Serving from our Inner Sanctuary

Serving as a sacristan requires organization skills and attention to detail but more importantly it requires an inner disposition to surrender one's actions and attitudes as acts of prayer, service, and charity. The manner in which sacred vessels are handled, the altar is prepared, liturgical books are arranged, and vestments are cared for, should reflect an awareness that a place and objects have been set apart for divine worship.

A sacristan approaches one's ministry with care, responsibility, reverence, and a sincere desire to honor God. Even the smallest task—washing altar linens, ironing and folding a corporal, preparing the cruets, arranging the liturgical books, or ensuring that everything is ready before Mass—can become an offering when it is done well and prayerfully. Fidelity in these seemingly hidden tasks is itself an expression of love for Christ, for His Church, and for the community gathered to worship.

The sacristan serves the whole community.

A sacristan works with priests, deacons, altar servers, lectors, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, musicians, ushers, and parishioners. There can be different personalities, expectations, and ways of doing things. Being a sacristan requires patience, charity, and learning to serve without creating unnecessary conflict.

The sacristan has an awareness that sacred time is different from ordinary time. When entering the sacristy, one is not simply entering a workroom. One is entering a place connected to the Church's worship. This awareness encourages silence, recollection, and attentiveness. The sacristan learns to distinguish between necessary conversation and unnecessary noise, between genuine urgency and ordinary busyness, between preparing for worship and merely preparing an event.

Dress Code

As part of the faithful, sacristans wear clothing according to their specific ministry as members of the assembly. As with all physical attire, dress communicates in a non-verbal manner. Care needs to be taken that all liturgical ministers dress appropriately, according to their parish's guidelines.

QUALIFICATIONS AND QUALITIES

Candidates for the sacristan ministry are baptized Catholics who possess a strong faith in God and demonstrate a deep love for the Church and her liturgy. They have a strong personal and communal prayer life. They understand the principles of servant leadership and are respectful in their interactions with other liturgical ministers, clergy, and parishioners.



Some of the basic qualifications and qualities are:

- ☐ Be a fully initiated (Baptized, Confirmed, and Holy Communion) and practicing member of the Catholic Church.
- ☐ Have a sense of reverence for the holy presence of God in all things and all people, especially during the liturgy.
- ☐ Possess patience, charity, and the ability to work with people of different personalities, ages, cultures, and responsibilities.
- ☐ Be an active and prayerful member of the parish community.
- ☐ Have preliminary knowledge of the Order of the Mass, the liturgical year, the Sacraments pertaining to liturgy, the Ritual Books, and the needs of each liturgical ministry (lectors, sacristans, EMHCs, altar servers, music ministry, etc.).
- ☐ Be punctual and able to arrive at least 30 minutes to 1 hour ahead of the Mass/Liturgy.
- ☐ Have the ability and disposition to work alone, yet also capable of working and collaborating with others in a peaceful and synchronized manner.
- ☐ Be flexible and able to take initiative.
- ☐ Be comfortable working behind the scenes without calling attention to him/herself.
- ☐ Be compliant with the Archdiocesan and parish requirements (VIRTUS, Fingerprinting, etc.).
- ☐ Participate willingly in ongoing formation, training, workshops, and classes pertaining to liturgy.
- ☐ Participate in retreats, day of recollections, parish or diocesan conferences, which helps the person to grow in their relationship with God.
- ☐ Ability to be hospitable by welcoming and instructing visiting clergy.
- ☐ Demonstrate discretion and respect for the sacristy as a place of prayer and preparation.

SACRISTAN: LITURGICAL MINISTRY

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* [GIRM] describes the sacristan as one who exercises a liturgical function by carefully preparing the liturgical books, vestments, and other requisites for the celebration of Mass (cf. GIRM, no. 105). Additionally, the *Ceremonial of Bishops* [CB] emphasizes that the sacristan, who acts under the general direction of the clergy, is responsible for the overall preparation of liturgical celebrations: this involves ensuring that everything necessary is in place for both ordinary celebrations and special occasions such as Ash Wednesday and Palm Sunday (cf. CB, no. 37).

Some of the sacristan's principal duties might be:

- ☐ Preparing all liturgical books required for the celebration, with the appropriate pages marked and ready for use.
- ☐ Laying out the vestments and preparing all items needed for any liturgy and ritual—including cruets, chalices, ciboria, linens, holy oils, processional crosses, candles, torches, etc.
- ☐ Working in collaboration with the pastor, the sacristan ensures that vestments, church furnishings, liturgical vessels, and other sacred objects are properly maintained. He may assist in sending items for repair, restoration, or regilding.
- ☐ Maintaining an adequate supply of altar bread, sacramental wine, clean altar linens (altar cloth, purificators, corporals), hand towels, incense, charcoal, holy oils, candles, matches/lighters, batteries for microphones and controls, etc.

- ☐ Overseeing the proper care of altar linens, ensuring that those entrusted with laundering them follow the norms prescribed in the liturgical books—in particular, the water used for the first washing of linens that have come into contact with the Sacred Species should be disposed of reverently, either in the *sacrarium* or directly into the earth.
- ☐ Properly disposing of worn linens and other sacred items (either by burning or burial) is no longer suitable for liturgical use.
- ☐ Additional duties might include ensuring that the sanctuary lamp is lit, changing altar cloths as needed, cleaning and replenishing the holy water fonts regularly, removing burnt out devotional candles from the candle stand, etc.
- ☐ Turning on and off the church lights, sound system, Air Conditioner or Heater.
- ☐ Being familiar with the parish sound system and other audio-video components, the location of their controls, and basic knowledge of how to make adjustments in case of an immediate need.
- ☐ Being familiar with parish policy regarding the request for Mass intentions before the liturgy, and the protocol for which announcements are included at the end of Mass.

Pastors may entrust further responsibilities to the sacristan according to local needs. These may include coordinating those who assist with the care and decoration of the church, such as cleaners and flower arrangers, as well as communicating with external service providers, including funeral directors and photographers, to ensure that proper decorum is observed.

To fulfill these responsibilities effectively, a sacristan should possess a solid knowledge of the principle liturgical books, an understanding of the norms governing liturgical celebrations, and familiarity with the complexities of the liturgical calendar.

Washing of Sacred Linens

Redemptionis Sacramentum states that linens (corporals, purificators, etc.) which have come into contact with the Sacred Species (consecrated Hosts and Wine) should be kept clean and are traditionally given a **first washing by hand**, with that first water poured into the *sacrarium* (or onto suitable ground), after which they can be washed normally by hand or washing machine.

Washing of Sacred Vessels

Upon the completion of the initial purification (done by the Ordinary minister), the vessels can be cleansed/washed as part of ordinary sacristy maintenance, especially the chalices used for the distribution of the Precious Blood to the Faithful. They may be washed with warm water and mild soap by hand. Do not use abrasive sponges that can ruin the vessels. After washing, the vessels should be thoroughly rinsed, dried with a clean, soft cloth, and stored appropriately.

In case a Host falls to the ground and it is not consumed

If a host or piece of consecrated Bread falls to the ground during distribution, the minister should reverently pick it up and consume it immediately or after distribution. Alternatively, it is placed in a cup/bowl of water until completely dissolved, after which the water and contents are poured into the *sacrarium*. The sacristan may assist in reverently cleaning the area where the consecrated Host fell, following the priest's instructions and the parish's established procedures.

LEAD SACRISTAN

In some parishes it is possible for one sacristan to deal with the great responsibility of taking care of the details for all Sunday Masses, weekday Masses, and other liturgies (Baptisms, Confirmations, 1st Communions, Weddings, Funerals, etc.). However, in other parishes, it might be beneficial and necessary to have a different trained sacristan for each Sunday Mass, and one for the daily Masses.

A possible structure that helps keep Sunday liturgies efficiently organized is to have a “Lead Sacristan” (head sacristan) assigned to each Sunday liturgy. In this structure, the Lead Sacristan is a well-trained sacristan that prepares all the sacramental details for whichever Mass they have been assigned. It may also be desirable to make them the contact person for all assigned liturgical ministers at that Mass. In this approach, all the assigned liturgical ministers check-in with the Lead Sacristan as they arrive and prepare for the liturgy.

Additionally, in the case that there are unassigned ministers present at any liturgy, if they are willing and early to Mass, they may also check-in with the Lead Sacristan in case their services may be needed as replacements. The Lead Sacristan is responsible for replacing any assigned minister who is not present fifteen minutes before the start of Mass with one of those who is willing to serve.

OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

Other Books

There are additional books used within the liturgy, other than the ritual books. The sacristan is responsible for the care and upkeep of these books, also.

- ☐ Ordinarily, most parishes use binders for Mass intentions, Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful), and parish announcements. The sacristan may ensure these are organized and updated.
- ☐ The Book of the Elect is where those to be baptized sign their names in preparation for their participation in the Rite of Election at the cathedral on the First Sunday of Lent.
- ☐ Many parishes have a Book of Remembrance on display during the month of November, the month of the Holy Souls, where community members can inscribe the names of friends and family who have died, to be remembered in our prayers throughout the month.
- ☐ Many parishes have a Book of Intentions on display throughout the year where community members can inscribe prayer requests.

OTHER SUPPLIES

<i>Other necessary equipment:</i> ☐ Iron and board ☐ Steamer ☐ Extension cords ☐ Cleaning rags ☐ Broom and dustpan, vacuum ☐ Sewing kit	<i>Liturgical Environment Tools & Supplies for Decorating:</i> ☐ Tape ☐ Floral Wires and Pliers ☐ Scissors ☐ Measuring tape ☐ Pins and thumb tacks	<i>Emergency Kit</i> ☐ water bottles ☐ facial tissue ☐ hand sanitizer ☐ individual packets of alcohol wipes ☐ band-aids ☐ antiseptic spray	<i>Sacristy Writing Tools:</i> ☐ Pencils, Pens, Markers ☐ Post – It Notes ☐ Paper ☐ Stapler ☐ Paper Clips ☐ Removable Sticky Tape
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Communion Count

The sacristan may be called upon to keep record of the communion count at each Mass. This will help the sacristan to prepare the necessary number of hosts for Mass. At the same time, it will facilitate reserving an appropriate amount of the Eucharist for the sick and homebound.

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) offers the following directive on this issue:

“It is most desirable that the faithful, just as the Priest himself is bound to do, receive the Lord’s Body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and that, in the cases where this is foreseen, they partake of the chalice, so that even by means of the signs Communion may stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated” (GIRM, 85).

APPENDIX I

POSSIBLE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SACRISTAN BEFORE MASS

Every parish has different procedures for setting up for Mass. The following list is a generalization of what the sacristan's before-Mass responsibilities might be.

- ☐ Unlock the building, bathrooms and sacristy
- ☐ Turn on the sound system and turn on the heating or air conditioning, if needed.
- ☐ Put out all necessary microphones
- ☐ Check the ORDO to properly set the lectionary readings and presider prayers in the *Roman Missal*, 3rd edition.
- ☐ Properly set up the Book of the Gospels for the assigned reading.
- ☐ Check the ORDO for the correct liturgical color; then lay out the chasuble and stole for the presider (if desired by the celebrant).
- ☐ Fill the ciborium with the appropriate number of hosts.
- ☐ Fill the wine *ewer* (cruet/pitcher) with the appropriate amount.
- ☐ Take the ciborium and wine cruet/pitcher to the gift table or credence table.
- ☐ Light the altar candles
- ☐ If the Precious Blood is distributed to the faithful, put the appropriate number of chalices, each with a purificator, and the appropriate number of ciboria on the credence table.
- ☐ Place the corporal on the credence table. The corporal is placed on the altar during the Preparation of the Altar at the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist (Offertory).
- ☐ Place the presider's chalice on the credence table with a purificator and a pall.
- ☐ Place the ablution bowl with pitcher filled with water, and a towel on the credence table (for the presider to wash his hands).
- ☐ Fill the small cruet with water and place it on the credence table (the presider adds this to the wine before it is consecrated). After the distribution of Holy Communion, the same cruet of water might be needed on the credence table for the purifying of the chalices.
- ☐ Check the liturgical ministry schedule and be sure that all assigned ministers (Deacons, Lectors, EMHCs, Ushers [Ministers of Hospitality], and Altar Servers) have checked in at least 15 minutes prior to the Mass time. If they have not signed in five minutes before Mass, find a substitute.
- ☐ Be sure copies of the current Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful) is at the ambo and in the priest's binder.



POSSIBLE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SACRISTAN AFTER MASS

- ☐ Assist the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) with the cleaning of the vessels
- ☐ Be sure all vessels, ritual books, and vestments are put back in their proper place
- ☐ Or, if another Mass follows, leave the vessels, books, and vestments where the next sacristan or ministers will expect to find them.
- ☐ If it has been the last Mass of the day, or for the time being, be sure to turn off the lights, the sound system, AC or heater. Put away all sound equipment.
- ☐ If it is the last Mass of the day, be sure to lock the sacristy, bathrooms, and church building. Perform a security “sweep-thru” in and around the church building.
- ☐ Have the vestments (chasubles, albs, cinctures, cassocks, and surplices) dry cleaned or laundered, when necessary
- ☐ Monitor the laundering, cleaning, and ironing of linens (purificators, corporals, *lavabo* towels, and altar cloths)
- ☐ Place the order for additional hosts or wine, when needed
- ☐ Place orders for all candle supplies (tabernacle light, vigil tapers, baptismal candles, votive candles, lighters, pots of sand, wood tapers) and for the new Paschal Candle each year
- ☐ Know where the fire extinguishers and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) are stored, and how to operate them
- ☐ Know proper emergency procedures at the parish.

In case of an emergency, Call 911 FIRST, then inform the pastor.

- ☐ Know and post all necessary emergency contact information
- ☐ Keep incense, charcoal, lighters and foil well stocked
- ☐ Design checklists with the items needed for each of the different celebrations (check appendices)
- ☐ Care for the candlesticks, bells, processional cross, etc.
- ☐ Suggestion: Post photos inside cupboards that show the look of your organization so that others can maintain the same order.

APPENDIX II

TASKS DURING THE DIFFERENT LITURGICAL SEASONS

Season of Advent

In preparation for the season of Advent, the sacristan might be responsible for setting up the **Advent wreath**. This symbol is really a domestic one, so its presence in the church need not be prominent and should never overwhelm the main liturgical action or focal points in the space. See the Office for Divine Worship Advent/Christmas guidelines for more details.

Season of Christmas

There are no special preparations for this season. Parishes might have the tradition of carrying the nativity image of the baby Jesus in the opening procession on Christmas Eve and placing it in the creche scene. The sacristan might need to facilitate this ritual.

If there are overflow Masses in the parish hall on Christmas Day, the sacristan should train and assign another person to serve as sacristan for that Mass. It would be unwise to attempt to serve both Mass locations.

If your church does not typically use incense during Sunday Mass, its use is highly recommended for the Christmas Masses.

Season of Lent

For further details on liturgical preparation, see the Office for Divine Worship Lent and Holy Week Guidelines – [click here](#).

Ash Wednesday

- ☐ Place the order for ashes for Ash Wednesday. Some parishes may ask parishioners to bring back their blessed palms from the previous Palm Sunday and burn them.
- ☐ Mass or Liturgy of the Word are set up as usual. This day will require the extra set up of an appropriate number of small bowls filled with ashes, as well as bowls of soapy water and towels for the ministers to wash their hands afterwards.
- ☐ The remainder of the season is Mass as usual.

The Triduum requires the greatest amount of extra preparation. It is the most important celebration of the year. It is one movement of prayer that runs from sundown on Holy Thursday to sundown on Easter Sunday.

Holy Thursday – [Click Here for Holy Thursday Checklist](#)

- ☐ The Blessed Sacrament is removed from the tabernacle. Any remaining reserved Sacrament is kept in another place, probably the sacristy or rectory, during the Triduum. Wherever it is kept, place a lighted candle nearby so that people will know that the reserved Sacrament is present. The doors of the tabernacle remain open so that all can see the emptiness, and the sanctuary light is extinguished.
- ☐ Holy Thursday will need the new sacred oils prepared for presentation. These oils will have been received by the pastor or another a member of the parish at the Chrism Mass at the Cathedral on Holy Monday.



- ☐ This Evening of the Mass of the Lord's Supper includes the ritual of the Washing of Feet. The appropriate number of chairs, basins, pitchers of water, and towels will be needed.
- ☐ The Liturgy of the Eucharist proceeds as usual.
- ☐ The presider will need the humeral veil for the Procession of the Blessed Sacrament to the Altar of Repose. The incense boat and thurifer will also be needed.
- ☐ The sacristan is often responsible for setting up the Altar of Repose and organizing the clearing of the altar at the end of the Mass. Remove flowers, candles, altar cloth, holy water from stoups, and any other decorations quietly and reverently.

Good Friday of the Passion of the Lord – [Click Here for the Good Friday Checklist](#)

- ☐ All candles are extinguished on this day.
- ☐ The sacristan will need to prepare the cross that will be venerated at the liturgy.
- ☐ Prepare a corporal and two candles that will be placed on the altar for Holy Communion.
- ☐ The humeral veil will need to be ready for the presider or deacon to use when he brings the Blessed Sacrament to the altar for the Communion Rite.

The Easter Vigil – [Click Here for the Easter Vigil Checklist](#)

- ☐ The Easter Vigil has five parts: the *Lucernarium*, the Liturgy of the Word, the Baptismal Liturgy, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and the Concluding Rite.
- ☐ In addition to preparing Mass, as usual, the sacristan will need to help prepare the Easter Fire, the new Paschal Candle, and the candles for the assembly.
- ☐ For the baptismal liturgy, the necessary ritual book, and the Oil of Catechumen (if there are infants to be baptized) and Sacred Chrism will need to be set up at the font. The sacristan will also need to set up a vessel of water and *aspergillum*/sprinkler for the sprinkling rite.
- ☐ The sacristan may be the one responsible for reserving seats for the elect and their families.
- ☐ The sacristan may also be responsible for handling the lighting: darkness during the *Lucernarium*, with the electrical lights going on at some point before or during the Liturgy of the Word.

Easter Season

During the Easter season, the blessing and sprinkling of water may take place during Mass. The bowls for holy water will need to be placed at the font, and an *aspergillum* or bunched branches to serve the same purpose. Find out in advance how many bowls and *aspergilla* are needed.

Details for the Easter Season are provided on the newsletters' archives for liturgical calendar:

<https://lacatholics.org/worship-newsletter/>

Click here to sign up for the Office for Divine Worship monthly newsletter:

<https://laworship.flocknote.com/OFWMailingList>

APPENDIX III

LITURGICAL SEASONS, SAINTS, AND SOLEMNITIES

Other feasts and memorials occur most often on weekdays. The head sacristan might be responsible for preparing the following days:

Presentation of the Lord, February 2

The sacristan will need to have all the various types of candles for the year ready to be blessed. This is the day when the church traditionally blesses all the candles to be used throughout the year – altar candles, processional candles, votive candles, etc. The prayer for the blessing of candles can be found in the *Roman Missal*, Proper of Saints, “February 2.”

Optional Memorial of St. Blase, February 3

This day includes the traditional Blessing of Throats. The sacristan will need to prepare sets of two candles, tied together at the bottom with a red ribbon. These crossed candles are placed on the shoulders of each person to bless their throat. Preparing prayer cards with the text of the blessing would be helpful. The Order for the Blessing of Throats on the Feast of Saint Blase can be found in the *Book of Blessing*, Ch. 51.

Solemnity of St. Joseph, March 19

The Blessing of St. Joseph’s Table is traditionally included today. The sacristan would prepare the *Book of Blessings* - Ch. 53, an image of St. Joseph, Holy Water bowl, and *Aspergillum* (sprinkler), and incense, if used. An image of St. Joseph can be decorated with flowers and candles.

Solemnity of the Holy Body and Blood of Christ

If your parish has the tradition of processing with the Blessed Sacrament on this day, the sacristan will need to arrange the following items:

- ☐ Monstrance and *luna*
- ☐ cope and humeral veil for the Priest or Deacon
- ☐ Incense, charcoal, lighter, thurible, and incense boat,
- ☐ bells, processional canopy, cross, and candles
- ☐ The ritual book, *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery Outside Mass* (2024)
– Ch. 3 has all the details.

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, August 15

Parishes might have a special image or statue of the Virgin Mary (*Assumpta*). The sacristan may decorate it with candles and/or potted flowers and plants for the celebration.

The Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, October 4

Often on this feast, or sometime near the date, a parish will hold a Blessing of Animals. People bring all sorts of pets to be blessed. This is best held outside. The sacristan will need to have a bowl of holy water, the *aspergillum*, and Ch. 25 in the *Book of Blessing* marked.

All Saints’ Day, November 1

Parishes set up a table with the relics of the saints in their sanctuary. The sacristan may put out candles and/or potted flowers and plants appropriate for this solemnity.

All Souls' Day, November 2

Parishes may set up the Book of Remembrance, an altar to place pictures of loved ones, and flowers. Make sure it is clean, nice, and neat. Special prayers may also be found in the *Book of Blessing* – Ch. 57.

The Dedication of St. John Lateran, November 9

On this feast, it is appropriate to light the dedication candles in your church, if you have them.

Immaculate Conception, December 8

Parishes might have a special image or statue of the Virgin Mary (*Immaculata Conceptio*). The sacristan may help decorate it with candles and/or potted flowers and plants for the celebration.

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, December 12

Parishes might have a special image or statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The sacristan may decorate it with candles and/or potted flowers and plants for the celebration. Extra vases may be set up for the flowers being offered. Any shrine made to honor Our Lady should not obstruct or overpower the view of the sanctuary.

SECULAR HOLIDAYS

For civic holidays (Memorial Day, 4th of July, Labor Day, Veterans' Day, etc.) the sacristan prepares Mass as usual. It should be noted that flags may not be placed on or in front of the altar and/or ambo.

Please see the link from the USCCB about displaying flags in Catholic Church.

<https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/sacred-art-and-music/architecture-and-environment/display-of-flags-in-catholic-churches>

Thanksgiving Day Mass

Mass is prepared as usual for this day. If the parish chooses to have a special Blessing of Food, the sacristan will need to set up the *Book of Blessing* – Ch. 58., the table for people to bring their food, and decorate it appropriately.

APPENDIX IV OTHER LITURGIES

Funerals

For Funeral Guidelines, [click here](#).

- ☐ Ritual Book: *Order of Christian Funerals* (1998)
- ☐ a bowl of holy water and *aspergillum*/sprinkler
- ☐ pall (white cloth that will cover the casket)
- ☐ incense boat and thurifer
- ☐ the Paschal Candle (which is lit before each of the Funeral Rites)
- ☐ If cremated remains are present, rather than a casket, a small table is set up at the location at head of the pews (where the casket would normally be). The cremated remains should be in a beautiful vessel. No white pall is used on cremated remains.

Weddings

- ☐ Ritual Book: *Order of Celebrating Matrimony* (2016)
- ☐ Mass or a Liturgy of the Word are set up as usual.
- ☐ Kneelers and special chairs for the bride, groom and witnesses may need to be set in place.
- ☐ A tray for the blessing of the rings will be needed, along with a vessel of holy water and an *aspergillum*/sprinkler.

Anointing of the Sick at Mass

- ☐ Ritual Book used *Order of the Anointing of the Sick and of their Pastoral Care* (2026).
- ☐ For an Anointing of the Sick at Mass, the sacristan will need to set up the Oil of the Sick (OI), and an appropriate means for the priests to clean their hands afterwards (water, lemon juice, and towel).

First Communion

- ☐ First Communion is a Eucharistic Liturgy, so the sacristan's responsibilities are the same as for Sunday Mass.

Confirmation

For Confirmation guidelines, [click here](#).

- ☐ Ritual Book: *Order of Confirmation* (2016)
- ☐ The Confirmation Liturgy will need the extra set up of the Sacred Chrism, and a means by which the bishop can clean his hands afterwards (water, lemon juice, and towel).
- ☐ Extra chairs may be needed in the sanctuary for the Bishop's Master of Ceremonies, as well as for other priests, deacons, and altar servers.

Liturgy of the Hours

For the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer may require the following:

- ☐ Incense (if it is a custom of the parish)
- ☐ Cope and stole for Priest or Deacon
- ☐ Worship Aids
- ☐ Prayer Books
- ☐ Processional Cross and Candles



Penance Services

- ☐ Ritual Book used: *Order of Penance* (2nd edition, 2023).
- ☐ The sacristan might be called upon to set up various stations for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This would consist of two chairs placed close together, facing each other, one for the priest and one for the individual confessing. These stations should be placed in a way that allows for the maximum amount of privacy.
- ☐ Preparing several purple stoles for the priests would also be helpful.
- ☐ The sacristan may set up recorded religious background music (ex. Gregorian Chant, Catholic hymns rendered on a solo instrument).

APPENDIX V

SACRISTAN CHECK LIST

MASS SET-UP

Ritual book: *Roman Missal* 3rd Edition (2011)

Introductory Rites

- ☐ Incense/thurible (if used)
- ☐ Processional Cross
- ☐ 2 processional candles
- ☐ *Aspergillum* (Holy Water Sprinkler set - if used)

Liturgy of the Word

- ☐ ORDO (check the readings)
- ☐ Lectionary
- ☐ Vol. 1 – Sunday Readings
- ☐ Vol. 2 – Weekday Readings (Year I)
- ☐ Vol. 3 – Weekday Readings (Year II)
- ☐ Vol. 4 – Ritual Masses (1st Communion, Confirmation, Funerals, Weddings, etc.)
- ☐ Gospel Book
- ☐ Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful) Binder

Liturgy of the Eucharist

- ☐ Corporal
- ☐ Chalice (Priest)
- ☐ Chalices (Communal, if used)
- ☐ Purificator(s)
- ☐ Chalice Pall (square cover over chalice)
- ☐ Paten
- ☐ *Ciboria*
- ☐ Hosts (Bread)
- ☐ Wine
- ☐ Cruet for Wine
- ☐ Cruet for Water
- ☐ Lavabo (Water for priest's washing)
- ☐ Towel
- ☐ Bells (if used)
- ☐ Incense/thurible (if used)

BAPTISM SET UP

Ritual Book: *Order of Baptism of Children* (2019)

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Baptismal Font OR Holy Water bowl | ☐ Candle for newly baptized |
| ☐ Oil of Catechumen (OC) | ☐ Purificator(s) |
| ☐ Oil of Sacred Chrism (SC) | ☐ Towel(s) |
| ☐ Paschal Candle/Easter Candle | ☐ Vol. 4 Lectionary – Ritual Masses
(Baptism – reading options) |



FUNERAL SET UP

Ritual Books

- ☐ *Order of Christian Funerals*
- ☐ *Roman Missal* 3rd Edition
- ☐ Lectionary: Vol. 4 – Ritual Masses (Masses for the Dead – reading options)

Introductory Rites

- ☐ Incense/thurible (if used)
- ☐ *Aspergillum* (Holy Water Sprinkler set)
- ☐ Funeral Pall (white cloth that will cover the casket)
- ☐ Crucifix (placed over the coffin – if used)
- ☐ Gospel book or Bible (place over the coffin- if used)

Liturgy of the Eucharist (regular items used for Mass – see list above)

- ☐ Concluding Rites
- ☐ Incense/thurible
- ☐ *Aspergillum* (Holy Water Sprinkler set)

WEDDING SET UP

Ritual Books

- ☐ *Order of Celebrating Matrimony* (2016)
- ☐ *Roman Missal* 3rd Edition
- ☐ Lectionary: Vol. 4 – Ritual Masses (For Marriages – reading options)

Other items used:

- ☐ *Aspergillum* (Holy Water Sprinkler set)
- ☐ Kneeler
- ☐ Liturgy of the Eucharist (regular items used for Mass – see list above)

QUINCEAÑERA MASS SET UP

- ☐ Set up is done as regular Mass
- ☐ *Aspergillum* (Holy Water Sprinkler set)
- ☐ Kneeler is used
- ☐ *Order for the Blessing on the Fifteenth Birthday (Bendición al cumplir quince años)* (Liturgy Training Publications/Catholic Book Publishing) may be used.

APPENDIX VI

GLOSSARY

LITURGICAL OBJECTS USED IN CHURCH

- **Aspergillum** – An instrument used for sprinkling holy water
- **Aspersorium**: The bucket used to carry holy water for sprinkling.
- **Book of Gospels (*Evangelarium*)**- The book which contains the Gospel readings, from which the priests or deacon proclaims the Gospel – Usually carried in procession during Mass by deacon or lector, if no deacon is present.
- **Chalice Pall** – A square fabric covered "board" that covers the chalice.
- **Chalice Veil** – the external cloth cover for the Priest Chalice, paten, pall, and purificator – usually matches the liturgical color of the day.
- **Ciborium** *Ciboria* (*plural*) – A container used for distribution of the Body of Christ.
- **Corporal** - A square cloth placed on top of the altar cloth.
- **Cruets** - The vessels (usually glass) holding the water and wine.
- **Lavabo bowl** - the bowl used for washing the priest's hands.
- **Lectionary** - The book that contains all the readings from the Scriptures for use in the celebration of the liturgy. Most lectionaries come as a set of 4s (Volumes I, II, III, IV).
- **Roman Missal (3rd Edition, 2011)** - The book used by the celebrant, containing prayers for the Order of the Mass.
- **ORDO** - A liturgical aid containing details for specific celebrations of the liturgy.
- **Paschal candle (Easter Candle)** - the light stands near the altar during the Easter Season and near the baptismal font during the rest of the year. It may also stand near the casket during the funeral rites.
- **Paten** – The saucer-like dish that holds the main host to be consecrated by the Priest. Usually placed on top of the chalice.
- **Purificator** – The cloth used to absorb the Precious Blood and wipe the chalice between communicants.
- **Pyx** - A small vessel that is used to bring the Eucharist to those who cannot come to the church (Homebound Ministry).
- **Sacrarium** - A special drain located in the sacristy that leads directly into the earth. It is used to reverently dispose of water or wine used in the cleansing of sacred vessels, ensuring that any remaining particles of the Eucharist or the Precious Blood are treated with proper care and respect.
- See Memo on Sacrarium Use: <https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:US:9bfac47-4e93-43b9-872e-5a9f36b5b56a>
- **Sanctuary Lamp** – A candle that burns near the tabernacle when the Blessed Sacrament is present inside.

CHURCH LAYOUT TERMS

- **Altar** - The sacred table on which the sacrifice of the Mass is offered
- **Ambo** - The stand/podium used for proclamation of the Word of God.
- **Ambry** - The cabinet in which the three holy oils are kept: Sacred Chrism (SC), Oil of Catechumen (OC/OS), Oil of the Sick (OI)
- **Celebrant's Chair** - The chair on which the priest sits during Mass.
- **Credence Table** - The table on which the sacred vessels are placed during the celebration of Mass.
- **Nave** - The main body of the church where the congregation gathers.



- **Sacristy** – Where the Sacred Vessels are prepared and cleaned – the area where the Priest or Deacon vests for the liturgical celebration.
- **Sanctuary** - The elevated portion of the church where the clergy and other liturgical ministers execute their proper functions in the worship of God. The sanctuary symbolizes heaven.
- **Tabernacle** - The golden container in which the Blessed Sacrament is reserved.
- **Transept** – Side seating areas oriented toward the sanctuary in a cross-shaped placement.
- **Vestibule** – Anteroom of the church between the main entrance doors and the nave.

LITURGICAL COLORS

- **Green** - Ordinary Time - the natural color of life, points to the hope of life eternal
- **Red** – symbol of fire and blood. It is used on Masses of the Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Pentecost Sunday; celebrations of the Lord's Passion, of Apostles, and of Evangelists; celebrations of Martyrs
- **Rose** - symbolizes joy in the midst of a penitential season (rose being between violet and white). It may be worn only on two days in the year: Gaudete Sunday (Third Sunday of Advent) and Laetare Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent).
- **Violet/ Purple** - symbolizes melancholy and somberness. It is used in penitential seasons (Advent and Lent), and may be used in Masses for the Dead.
- **White (Gold/Silver)** - symbolizes light, purity, innocence, joy, and glory. It is used on certain feast days and during Christmas and Easter Season. It may also be used in Masses for the dead.
- **Black** - may also be used in Masses for the Dead.

GESTURES

- **Bow of the head** - made during Mass at the name of Jesus, of the three Divine Persons mentioned together (e.g., "Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit"), of Mary, and of the saint in whose honor the Mass is celebrated.
- **Genuflection**: made by bending the right knee to the ground. It is given to the Blessed Sacrament when entering or leaving the church or when passing in front of the tabernacle not during a liturgy.
- **Kneeling** - signifies adoration of God and humility before him. It is the proper posture for the congregation during the Eucharistic Prayer, and after the Agnus Dei (Lamb of God) before the reception of Holy Communion.
- **Profound bow** - A profound bow is made to the altar whenever one passes in front of it during Mass and during the Creed at the words that refer directly to the Incarnation: "... and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man."
- **Sitting** - Sitting signifies attentiveness, especially to the readings from Sacred Scripture or during the preparation of the altar.
- **Standing**: Standing shows a special level of respect and readiness, e.g., during the Gospel reading. It is also the normal posture when singing or when praying in common.

APPENDIX VII

VALID BREAD AND WINE

Bread:

The bread used in the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharistic Sacrifice must be unleavened, purely of wheat, and recently made so that there is no danger of decomposition. Bread, which tastes like unbaked flour, or which becomes hard too soon and cannot immediately be eaten, should be completely avoided. In the same manner, any bread that has spoiled so much that the continuity of its parts is destroyed, and the taste, color, and other accidents are changed, such bread should also be avoided.

Additionally, bread made from another substance, even if it is grain, or if it is mixed with another substance different from wheat to such an extent that it would not commonly be considered wheat bread, does not constitute valid matter for confecting the Sacrifice and the Eucharistic Sacrament. It is a grave abuse to introduce other substances, such as fruit or sugar or honey, into the bread for confecting the Eucharist. Hosts should obviously be made by those who are not only distinguished by their integrity, but also skilled in making them and furnished with suitable tools. (see *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, no. 48)

Low Gluten Hosts

Altar bread that is completely gluten-free is invalid matter for the Eucharist, since gluten is considered a constituent part of wheat bread. However, low-gluten hosts are valid matter, provided they contain a sufficient amount of gluten to obtain the confection of bread without the addition of foreign materials and without the use of procedures that would alter the nature of bread. These breads are considered to be made from wheat starch (that is, wheat flour from which much of the gluten has been removed).

Low-gluten hosts made of only wheat and water (which may be advertised as “gluten-free”) should be used and **not wheat-free hosts** made with rice or potato starch (which would be invalid matter). For severely sensitive individuals, it is important to know that cross contamination can be a health risk factor. Parishes are encouraged to have at least a small stock of low gluten hosts; however, if not available, the individual may receive the Precious Blood.

Resources to purchase Hosts (regular and low gluten)

- **Benedictine Sisters (Clyde, Missouri)**
www.altarbreadsbspa.com
www.benedictinesisters.org
- **Benedictine Sisters (Westfield, Vermont)**
<https://www.ihmwestfield.com>
- **Cistercian Sisters (Prairie du Sac, Wisconsin)**
<https://cistercianaltarbread.com>
- **Cistercian Sisters (Sonoita, Arizona)**
<https://www.santaritaabbey.org/altar-breads>



Wine:

Diligent care should be taken to ensure that wine intended for the Eucharist is kept in a perfect state of conservation, meaning that the wine does not turn to vinegar. Wine that has just begun to turn sour is valid but illicit. Wine that has totally soured or turned to vinegar is invalid matter. Valid matter for sacrament must always be used; to use anything else renders the sacrament invalid. Illicit matter, while valid, goes against the laws and rubrics and should not be used.

Alcohol content has varied over the years and identified a range of percentages between 9–18%. The color and flavor are not defined: red, white, or rosé are acceptable as sweet or dry wine; however, sparkling wine such as champagne or spumante are not valid.

Mustum Wine

Mustum is defined as grape juice in which fermentation has begun but has been suspended with the result that its alcohol content (usually less than 1.0%) does not reach the levels found in most table wines.

Resources to purchase *Mustum* Wines

- **Mont La Salle Altar Wines (Napa, California)**
<https://www.montlasallealtarwines.com/>
- **Monks Wine & Candles (Schaumburg, Illinois)**
<http://www.MonksWineAndCandles.com>