

How to Cover the Mass

Jerry Filteau

A resource of the
Office of Media Relations
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Executive Editor
Sister Mary Ann Walsh, Director
USCCB Office of Media Relations

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Contents

Introduction	v
News Credentialing and Positioning to Cover a Mass (For Photographers and Reporters)	1
What is the Mass?	3
The Participants and Their Roles	9
The Order of the Mass	14
Ordination and Other Special Masses	21
Clerical Vestments	24
Church Furnishings	26
Sacred Books	29
Appendix	31
Glossary of Terms	33

Introduction

The Mass is at the heart of the Catholic Church. It conveys the depth of Catholic theology, especially in the Eucharist, which is at its center. Rich in symbolism, the Mass provides a deeply sacred moment for those who participate in it, and even sometimes for those who merely observe it.

The Office of Media Relations of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) developed this resource to assist the media in their important work of covering the church at prayer. The Mass is public prayer, yet on many occasions, it is also a news event. Journalists can be found, for example, at an ordination of a bishop, at a wedding or funeral of a noted personality, at a gathering of people meeting around church concerns, or to commemorate a special occasion in society.

How to Cover the Mass describes the various parts of the liturgy, explains ceremonies therein, and defines liturgical terms so that media can accurately describe events for those who follow their coverage. This pamphlet follows up on a 2008 resource, *How to Cover the Catholic Church*, which journalists in both the United States and beyond have found useful.

The editor is veteran journalist Jerry Filteau. Filteau has been not just a reporter writing about church events, but also a resource for colleagues in various media outlets who have been assigned to cover the Catholic Church for local, national and international media outlets. With confidence-giving precision, and knowledge of church history and fine details of liturgical celebrations, Filteau has put together a media guide related to everything from Sunday Mass to the installation of a bishop to the annual Red Mass, which blesses the nation's legal community.

Special thanks are due to the Catholic Communication Campaign, which funded this effort. We hope it will be especially pertinent as the Catholic Church prepares to introduce the latest version of the *Roman Missal*, the ritual text containing prayers and instructions for the celebration of the Mass.

Thanks also to Monsignor Anthony Sherman and Father Richard Hilgartner of the USCCB Secretariat of Divine Worship and to the USCCB Office of Communications for all their support for this endeavor.

The media bear a heavy responsibility in our society. The USCCB Office of Media Relations hopes this resource will help them bring accuracy and clarity to their vital work.

Sister Mary Ann Walsh, RSM
Director of the Office of Media Relations
USCCB

News Credentialing and Positioning to Cover a Mass

PHOTOGRAPHY

Many Catholic churches have special rules for news or other photographers and videographers who wish to record events visually during the Mass. Since the Mass is an act of worship, an assembly of people at prayer, church officials may object to free movement practices of news photography/videography that may be perfectly acceptable at many other newsworthy events where a number of people are gathered.

Many churches, for example, prohibit flash photography during the Mass, considering it disruptive of the atmosphere of prayer and worship desired in the assembly.

Many parishes and dioceses also have rules barring photographers from wandering the aisles, or especially from entering the sanctuary—the area around the altar—for the sake of a good angle for a news shot. For a Mass that constitutes a major news event (even just locally), the diocese or parish may require photographers and videographers to station themselves unobtrusively in one designated place where their activities will least distract worshippers from the prayer and worship they are engaged in.

If you recognize the reluctance of church officials to have the activities of photographers distract from the act of worship, you may be in a better position to negotiate with a pastor or diocesan media relations office for somewhat more lenient rules on particularly newsworthy occasions, predicated on a photographer's non-interference in the liturgical celebration itself, to be able to provide more adequate photo/video coverage of the event.

If you consider a parish Mass newsworthy for some reason—e.g., special human interest because it is a parish centenary Mass, or it marks the closing of the parish or is the first Mass of a newly ordained priest who grew up in that parish—it may be helpful for the photographer or editor to negotiate

2 | HOW TO COVER THE MASS

with the pastor beforehand to make some exceptions to the parish's usual rules restricting or prohibiting photography at Mass.

For newsworthy diocesan events such as the ordination of a new bishop or new priests, or the celebration of a major anniversary in the diocesan cathedral, the diocese may seek to accommodate visual media coverage by providing one or two platforms or other sites in the church from which photographers can film the celebration. Contact the local diocesan media relations office to find out what provisions are being made for, and what restrictions will apply to, news coverage of the event.

Apart from major international, national or diocesan Masses, news photography credentials are ordinarily not required, but obtaining maximum photo access and mutually agreed rules of conduct may often require advance contact with the party—parish, diocese, religious order or other religious organization—sponsoring or hosting the Mass.

REPORTING

Ordinarily there are no restrictions on where print or broadcast journalists may position themselves during a Mass. But for some events of significant news interest, the diocese or parish may provide a small special section for journalists covering the event—especially if afterward the journalists may be led to a news conference or the like.

If you're covering a special parish Mass or a local Mass being celebrated by a religious order marking some significant occasion in the order's life (e.g., an anniversary of the order's founding or its local establishment; the acceptance of new postulants or novices; or the first or solemn vows of new members), contact the local pastor or officials of the religious order to discuss how you can best cover the event.

If you're covering a diocesan Mass worthy of news coverage, contact the local diocesan media relations director beforehand to see if you can be provided any special seating (or audio feed arrangements if desired) and whether any credentials or other advance requests must be supplied for those arrangements.

What is the Mass?

The Second Vatican Council called the Eucharist “the source and summit of the Christian life.”

For Catholics the Mass is the central act of worship. It is the eucharistic sacrifice in which Catholics (and Eastern Orthodox churches) believe that bread and wine are really and truly transformed into Christ’s body and blood and then shared among those assembled.

The Mass is described in classic and modern Catholic literature both as a sacrifice and as a banquet—celebrating both Christ’s salvific passion and death for all humankind and the joyful anticipation of living with God in a heavenly banquet.

This small booklet is not about the theology of the Mass, however; it will focus on more mundane things like the difference between a procession and recessional, a chasuble and a stole, a miter and a crosier; or the correct terms for various parts of the Mass. In other words, it will try to help you understand the Catholic Mass and describe it accurately to your readers.

Most of you are probably aware of at least some of the terms and distinctions related to the Mass, but I hope what follows will help you further, especially those of you who are new to religious reporting or to coverage of Catholic Masses.

Since the news occasions that typically bring reporters to cover a Mass often involve such events as funerals or weddings of important people in their communities, or the ordination of priests or a bishop, there is a separate chapter later on how the particular rites for those occasions are incorporated into the Mass.

WHAT TO CALL THE MASS

The most common or popular terms for the Mass in the Latin or Western Church are *Mass*, *the eucharistic liturgy*, or, on second reference, *the liturgy*.

Do not use *the liturgy* on first reference to a Mass, because that is a more generic term that can be used for any of the church’s official acts of public worship. For example, *Vespers* (the church’s official daily evening prayer) is

part of the Liturgy of the Hours, and such a service could also be referred to as *the liturgy* on second reference.

This is comparable to the use of words such as *ceremony* or *event* on second reference to something like a graduation, inauguration, wedding or the like. On first reference you would say “At President Obama’s inauguration . . .” and on second reference, “During the ceremony . . .” Similarly, you would say something like, “Bishop Thomas Jones celebrated his first Mass as bishop of Podunk Junction . . .” and on second or third reference, “During the liturgy . . .”

In the Eastern Catholic churches and the Eastern Orthodox churches, *the Divine Liturgy* is usually the preferred term, rather than *Mass*.

(A brief style note: For spelling and capitalization of liturgical and other religious terms, this booklet follows Catholic News Service’s *CNS Stylebook on Religion*, which is generally similar to *The Associated Press Stylebook*. Both stylebooks, for example, capitalize *Mass* and *Divine Liturgy*. Obviously, if your own publication’s style has different capitalization or spelling rules, follow them.)

SUNDAY OR WEEKEND MASSES

One of the liturgical reforms initiated by the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s was a fuller restoration of the ancient liturgical approach to time, in which the new liturgical day starts with the evening of the previous day. One result is that many parishes now celebrate the first Sunday Mass late Saturday afternoon or Saturday evening. For this reason, when a parish or diocese makes an announcement or releases a letter or statement to be read or distributed to Catholics during those Masses, it may be more correct to report that the statement, announcement or letter was read or distributed “*at all weekend Masses May 14 and 15*” rather than “*at all Sunday Masses May 15*.” If the statement in question involved only one parish, check to see whether that parish celebrates a Sunday Mass on Saturday afternoon or evening and whether the statement was first released at that Mass. If it was a diocesan release to all parishes (e.g., a letter from the bishop that was to be read that weekend at all parish Masses), it almost certainly was read or distributed at the Sunday liturgies celebrated Saturday afternoon or evening in most parishes of the diocese as well as at the liturgies celebrated on Sunday.

SPECIAL OCCASION MASSES

Masses for particular groups, for certain liturgical days, or for certain sacramental or other occasions often are referred to by special names, a few of them capitalized.

Masses for Special Groups

The traditional *Red Mass*, an annual event in most dioceses and archdioceses, asks the Holy Spirit to guide all those who seek justice. It is a special Mass for judges, attorneys, law professors and their students, as well as government officials in the legislative and executive branches. The yearly Red Mass in Washington marks the opening of the judicial year for the U.S. Supreme Court and is usually attended by several Supreme Court justices and many other high government officials. Dating from the Middle Ages, the Red Mass gets its name from the red vestments worn by the celebrant and from the English tradition of red as the academic robe or hood color for those with law degrees.

Of more recent vintage, but becoming a yearly tradition in a number of U.S. dioceses, are the *Blue Mass* for police and others in law enforcement and the *White Mass* for those in the health care professions. These get their names not from the Mass vestments, but from the traditional colors worn, respectively, by police and by doctors and nurses.

Special Liturgical Days

Among Masses for specific liturgical days, a very few have special names. Foremost among these is the *Easter Vigil* (also *Paschal Vigil*, *Easter Vigil Mass* or *Mass of the Easter Vigil*). Held after nightfall on Holy Saturday, it is the first Easter Mass to celebrate Christ's resurrection from the dead, the most important feast in the church's liturgical year.

Just as sunset marks the end of one day and beginning of the next in traditional Jewish time reckoning, so also sunset marks the start of a new liturgical day in the Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican and some other Christian traditions. This is particularly seen in Vespers (evening liturgical services of prayer) in the Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican communions before all Sundays and other major feasts.

In the Catholic Church the Easter Vigil begins with a Service of the Light that starts outside or just within the main entrance the church. The Easter fire is lit in a brazier; then the Paschal candle—a tall candle inscribed with

the cross and other Christian symbols—is blessed and lit from the Easter fire. In a procession into the church the flame from the Paschal candle is passed on to other candles, culminating in the lighting of candles held by the entire congregation after the celebrant sings “The light of Christ” and the people answer “Thanks be to God” for the third time. Throughout the Easter season, concluding seven Sundays later with Pentecost, the Paschal candle is lit during Mass.

Unlike most Masses, the Easter Vigil features up to nine Scripture readings—six more than on major feasts and seven more than on lesser feasts or weekday Masses with no feast. Also during the Easter Vigil, following the celebrant’s homily, baptismal water is blessed for use in the church throughout the year.

After that, previously unbaptized youth or adult converts to Catholic Christianity (called *catechumens*, then referred to as the *elect* during Lent) are baptized and confirmed, and in certain circumstances, baptized members of other Christian denominations are received into full communion with the Catholic Church (called *candidates* or *candidates for full communion*) and confirmed. At this Mass, the newly initiated receive their First Communion. For more on baptism and confirmation, see the glossary at the end of this booklet; see **The Order of Mass** for other rites celebrated during Mass.

Whether or not new catechumens are baptized and confirmed, or candidates are admitted to full communion, this is a service at which all Catholics renew their baptismal vows and are sprinkled with holy water. Aside from the *Easter Vigil* and (on the following morning) the *Easter Mass*, most Masses of the church’s liturgical or sanctoral cycles are ordinarily referred to in the form of *the Mass for*, *the Mass of*, or other qualifiers such as *marking* or *observing* or *celebrating*: e.g., *the Mass of the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception*, *the Mass for the Third Sunday of Lent*, *the Mass marking the Second Sunday of Advent*, *the Mass celebrating the Memorial of St. Francis of Assisi*.

Some Masses may be referred to with a preceding adjective or nominal adjective by the occasion for the celebration, whether sacramental, civil or other—for example, (civil): *Thanksgiving Day Mass*, *Memorial Day Mass*, *Fourth of July Mass*; (sacramental): *ordination Mass*, *wedding Mass*, *confirmation Mass*; or (other): *funeral Mass*, *memorial Mass*.

Only a few most recognized Masses are commonly referred to by a preceding nominal adjective reflecting the liturgical day the Mass observes: *Ash Wednesday Mass*, *Christmas Eve Mass*, *Christmas Mass*, *chrism Mass*. The first three of these are self-explanatory.

The *chrism Mass* is the Mass celebrated by the bishop with the priests of his diocese on Holy Thursday (but often moved to a day earlier in the week because of the busy schedule of pastors in the last days before Easter) at which the local bishop consecrates and distributes holy oils which are to be used throughout the year for sacramental rites involving oil. The *chrism oil* is used for anointing in baptism, confirmation, ordination and the dedication of a church. Other oils blessed at the same Mass are *oil for the anointing of the sick* and *oil for anointing catechumens*.

The *Mass of the Lord's Supper* is a Mass that is generally celebrated only one time in any Catholic parish on Holy Thursday, the day marking the institution of the Eucharist by Christ at the Last Supper.

On every day of the year except Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday, any parish can celebrate more than one Mass.

Good Friday, the day of Christ's death, is the only day in the Catholic Church's liturgical calendar on which celebration of Mass is forbidden throughout the world. On Holy Saturday, as mentioned above, no Mass can be celebrated until after dark, the start of a new liturgical day, when the Easter Vigil can begin.

Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter, the time of Christ's passion, death and resurrection, are referred to in Catholic liturgical vocabulary as the Sacred Paschal Triduum (in Latin, *sacrum triduum*, sacred period of three days).

Other Liturgical Days or Special Occasions

Most other Masses can be described by the day of news interest for which they are being covered. Often these are matters of civil reference, not the church's liturgical occasion as such: e.g., *a Mother's Day Mass*, *a Father's Day Mass* (or, perhaps more accurately, a Mass *on* Mother's Day, Father's Day, etc.).

Sometimes the liturgical occasion also has civil observances connected to it: a *St. Patrick's Day Mass*, a *Mass on the Memorial of St. Patrick* (March 17). Sometimes a civil observance in a particular country may lead to development of Mass texts for use on that occasion. For example, in the United States there is a special *Thanksgiving Day Mass*, adopted by the bishops and approved by the Holy See (Vatican) for use on that day.

On the use of *feast* (capitalized when referring to a particular one, such as the *Feast of St. Francis*) to describe a liturgical observance: the technical liturgical ranking of various observances—*solemnity*, *feast*, *memorial* or *optional memorial*—is not ordinarily of any news significance and in fact is

not readily understood by many Catholics. *Feast* is a good generic news term to describe any liturgical celebration commemorating a significant day in the liturgical year or sanctoral cycle (the church's calendar of liturgically commemorated saints). For most news reporting, *feast* conveys the notion quite well on the popular level of who or what the Catholic Church is honoring liturgically on a particular day.

There are also feasts that are not on the church's universal calendar but are celebrated only in particular dioceses or countries, or only by the religious order to which the commemorated person belonged. For example, the Feast of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha is celebrated April 17 in Canada and July 14 in the United States. Other North Americans whose feasts are observed in the United States include Sts. John Neumann, Frances Xavier Cabrini, Katharine Drexel, André Bissett and Elizabeth Ann Seton.

Feasts involving attributes of or events in the life of Christ include the feasts of Christ the King, the Sacred Heart, the Ascension and the Transfiguration.

Feasts involving attributes of or events in the life of Mary include the Immaculate Conception, the Annunciation and the Assumption (called the Dormition in Eastern Christianity).

Among feasts involving events in the church's history is the Feast of St. John Lateran (Nov. 9), marking the dedication of the Basilica St. John Lateran in Rome, the cathedral of the pope as bishop of Rome. (No, St. Peter's Basilica is not a cathedral; the cathedral, seat of the local bishop's chair in Rome, is St. John Lateran.)

On many weekdays throughout the year there is no feast to be celebrated. These are called *ferial days*, and the Masses celebrated on those days are often referred to as *weekday Masses*. Priests may replace the Masses for ferial days and optional memorials with votive Masses or other Masses for various circumstances.

What other Masses might a reporter cover? See **Ordination and Other Special Masses**.

The next two chapters describe the role of various participants in the Mass and the basic way the Mass is structured. Ordinarily, most of these elements are not very important in news coverage of a Mass, but they can be significant if a journalist is trying to report on details of a Mass. The important thing in these chapters is to recognize possible mistakes in order to avoid them, rather than to prescribe rules of news coverage.

The Participants and Their Roles

The main participants in any Catholic Mass are the ordained celebrant—always a priest or a bishop—and the assembled *worshippers*, also called *participants* or the *congregation*. The *liturgical assembly* refers to the celebrant, assisting ministers, and the congregation together.

If the Mass is a parish liturgy, it is also appropriate to refer to its participants as *parishioners*, since all or nearly all of those present are members of that parish. If the circumstances of the Mass make it likely that many in the congregation are not members of the parish in which the Mass is being celebrated—a funeral or wedding that has drawn many friends and relatives from outside the parish, for example, or a celebration of a diocese-wide event at the diocesan cathedral—it is more accurate to refer to those present as the *congregation*, *assembly*, *worshippers* or *participants*. It is never appropriate to call a gathering of worshippers an *audience*, since they are not there simply to hear a performance or a reading, but to participate actively in religious worship.

The priest or bishop who leads the worship is called the *presider* or *celebrant* when he is being referred to specifically in his role as leader of the liturgy. (He can, of course, also be referred to simply as the *priest*, *bishop*, etc., as appropriate: *The Rev. Thomas Shea celebrated the noon Christmas Mass at St. Francis Parish, where he grew up. It was the first time since his ordination six months ago that the priest, who is associate pastor of St. John's Parish in Middlevale, had returned to his old home parish to preside at a Mass.*)

Verbs typically used to describe the celebrant's role are *celebrated* or *presided at*. The AP Stylebook and CNS Stylebook on Religion both advise against using *said*, which is a more informal version of Catholic parlance: “*Who said the 11 o'clock Mass? Father O'Connor.*” In news reporting, the problem with *said* is not so much a question of accuracy as it is of the degree of informality used in reporting on an act of worship.

Verbs that are inappropriate, however, are *recited*, *performed*, and *read*. The Mass is an act of worship, not a play, pageant or public reading in which the priest is an actor addressing an audience.

If it is a Mass at which two or more priests or bishops join in the celebration at the altar, the one who presides is called the *main (con)celebrant*

or *principal (con)celebrant*. The other priests or bishops who join him at the altar are simply called *concelebrants*. A Mass at which more than one priest or bishop celebrates can be called a *concelebrated Mass*. In most cases, however, that information is probably secondary or entirely irrelevant to the news about that Mass. It's a minor element of color if you want to draw your readership or audience a little more deeply into the picture of what the Mass was like.

Vatican II encouraged concelebration of the Mass on major pastoral and liturgical occasions when several or many priests are gathered for a eucharistic liturgy, as a sign of the unity of the priesthood.

A side note: when a deacon assists the priest or bishop at Mass, he is not a concelebrant; if the deacon is the only other ordained minister at the altar besides the celebrant, it is not a concelebrated Mass.

A second side note: since in most cases the celebrant in question is a priest, this booklet will use *priest* and *celebrant* interchangeably. It should be understood that *priest* in this context also applies to any bishop, archbishop or cardinal who is the celebrant of the Mass as well.

Other ministers who may hold various leadership roles in the celebration of a Mass include:

- **Ordained *deacons*.** Most deacons in the Catholic Church today are *permanent* deacons, ordained primarily for charitable service to others on behalf of the church, but also authorized to hold special liturgical roles at Mass—notably they assist the priest-celebrant at the altar, proclaim the Gospel, and, on occasion, may give the homily. Permanent deacons do not seek priesthood, and most of them are married. *Transitional* deacons—seminarians ordained to the diaconate in the final year of their preparation for priesthood—have the same charitable and liturgical duties as permanent deacons, but they are preparing for ordination to the priesthood. In recent years in the United States there have typically been less than 500 transitional deacons doing their final year of priesthood studies, while the number of permanent deacons is now more than 16,000.
- ***Lectors* or *readers*.** They are entrusted with reading the first reading in daily Mass or the first and second readings at Sunday Masses or other major feasts. (When there is only one reading before the Gospel, it is usually from either the Old or New Testament; on Sundays and other major feasts at which there are two readings before the Gospel, the first is usually from the Old Testament and the second is from the New Testament—Acts, Revelation, or one of the letters from the Apostles.)

Lectors are never allowed to proclaim the Gospel or preach the homily; that is entrusted only to a deacon, priest or bishop.

- *Ministers of the Eucharist.* Any bishop, priest or deacon is an *ordinary* minister of the Eucharist, qualified by ordination to administer Holy Communion to members of the congregation at any Mass. When this function is delegated to lay people because there are not enough ordained ministers to facilitate the distribution of Communion within a reasonable time, those lay people are called *extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion*. The term *extraordinary* in this case does not carry the typical English meaning of *highly unusual*, as it occurs weekly in most U.S. parishes. Rather, it is a strictly canonical (canon law) reference to the fact that lay people do not have ordinary power (i.e., automatic legal authority in church law) to distribute Holy Communion. In a 2004 instruction, *Redemptionis Sacramentum (The Sacrament of Redemption)*, the Vatican explicitly rejected use of *special minister of the Eucharist* for lay people exercising this function, insisting that the only proper term for them is *extraordinary minister of Holy Communion*. In news coverage, of course, there is ordinarily no reason to mention the distinction between *ordinary* and *extraordinary* among the ministers of the Eucharist; it rarely has news relevance unless it has become a source of controversy in a particular parish or diocese.
- *Altar servers.* Also called *acolytes*, and once exclusively male, altar servers may now be male or female in most U.S. dioceses. Since servers may often be adults as well as younger boys or girls, the best generic term for all those who assist the priest at the altar is *altar servers*.
- *Master of ceremonies.* In more solemn Masses, especially those celebrated by a bishop, a leader who helps direct the liturgical action (usually a priest, deacon or seminarian) may be called the master of ceremonies. His role is simply to assure that the liturgical rites proceed as planned, with everybody in place and doing their part. The master of ceremonies is almost never a significant figure in news coverage of a liturgy, although he may be visible throughout the liturgy.
- *Cross bearer.* In the opening procession of many liturgies, a person holding up a cross atop a pole leads the procession. Barring some extraordi-

nary link to the event—e.g., the cross bearer is the son or grandson of the deceased at a funeral Mass—this is of no news interest.

- *Thurifer* or *thurible bearer*. The thurible is the metal vessel fastened to a chain, in which incense is placed atop lit charcoal. In some more solemn Masses, incense is used to bless the altar and the people at several times during the liturgy. In most cases the thurifer assists the priest or bishop in placing incense atop the charcoal, and the priest or bishop then uses the thurible to bless the altar; but there are also times when the thurifer takes the thurible and blesses the people with incense. Incense is not ordinarily used in most weekday or weekend parish Masses. This is again just personal information for reporters about personnel in the Mass, rarely if ever relevant to news reporting.
- *Cantor*. An individual who leads the congregation in song at various points in the Mass. A cantor may sing, for example, the opening antiphon of the responsorial psalm between the first and second reading, invite the congregation to repeat it, and then sing the verses of the psalm and invite the congregation to repeat the antiphon between the verses. The cantor normally initiates the alleluia before the proclamation of the Gospel.
- *Music ministers*. The cantor, if there is one, is the primary music minister at any Mass in which there is music. Other singers or players of musical instruments used during the Mass are also music ministers. Virtually any Mass worthy of news coverage will involve some kind of music ministers. Ordinarily who they are or the roles they play in the liturgy are of no news importance. This may change if, for example, the Mass seeks to use its music ministry to highlight the church's racial/ethnic diversity or to single out a particular ethnic or cultural group for recognition.
- *Choir*. If a distinctive group of liturgical leaders in music ministry consists of singers who not only lead the congregation in song but also sing hymns or other parts of the Mass alone without congregational participation (sometimes polyphonically), that group of music ministers is properly called a choir. Usually the term *choir* is associated in current Catholic culture with a group that sings at Mass a capella or with organ accompaniment and sings at least some parts of the Mass by itself, without congregational participation.

- *Ushers*. Also referred to in some parishes as *greeters* or *welcomers*, ushers greet the worshipers as they enter the church and may assist them in finding a seat, especially at Masses where the size of the congregation nears or exceeds the seating capacity of the church.

The Order of the Mass

The four major parts of the order of the Mass are the Introductory Rites, Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Eucharist and Concluding Rites.

Another way of dividing a Mass is into its *ordinary* parts—those texts which, with some variations, are part of the Mass on a daily basis—and its *proper* parts—the texts of prayers and selection of Scripture readings proper to the specific feast, feria or other occasion being observed.

Here is a brief review of the sequence of events in a typical parish Mass. The next chapter will deal with circumstances in which other sacramental rites occur within this order.

INTRODUCTORY RITES

In the *entrance* or *opening procession* the priest enters from the back of the church, typically preceded by at least a cross bearer and bearer of the Book of the Gospels. If a deacon is involved in the celebration, he carries the Book of the Gospels; if no deacon is involved, it may be carried by one of the readers (usually a lay person). The cross bearer is also an altar server at the Mass. If there are other altar servers, they enter in procession behind the cross bearer. Ordinarily the congregation or a choir sings an entrance chant during the procession. If there is no singing, the entrance antiphon for the day is read from the Missal.

Other participants in the opening procession vary with the solemnity or importance of the Mass. For example, a Mass for the ordination of a bishop, priest or deacon may involve dozens or even hundreds of bishops, priests or other ministers in the opening procession. The last person in the procession is the priest or bishop who is the celebrant (or chief concelebrant) of the Mass.

After approaching the altar and venerating it, the priest goes to the presider's chair and makes the Sign of the Cross ("In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," to which the people answer "Amen") and greets the people with "The Lord be with you" or a similar greeting.

Usually a *penitential act* then takes place, although this may be replaced on some Sundays, especially during Easter time, by a blessing of the congrega-

tion with holy water. There are three basic formularies to choose from for the penitential act, the third of which is the *Kyrie* (Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy). If one of the first two forms is used, the choir or congregation may then sing a version of the *Kyrie*. (*Kyrie eleison* is Greek for *Lord, have mercy*; it is the only prayer that was retained in Greek through the centuries in the Latin Mass.)

The *Gloria* (“Glory to God in the highest . . .”) is then recited or sung on Sundays and major feasts but not at ordinary weekday Masses, memorials or votive Masses. During Advent and Lent, however, the *Gloria* is generally omitted throughout the season with the exception of a few major feasts. In Advent it is used on Immaculate Conception on Dec. 8 and Our Lady of Guadalupe on Dec. 12; in Lent, on the Chair of Peter on Feb. 22, St. Joseph on March 19, and the Annunciation on March 25.

The introductory rites end with the priest inviting the people to pray in silence and then praying the opening prayer, called the *Collect*. There is a different *Collect* for each day of the liturgical year and each feast in the sanctoral cycle.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Following the introductory rites and prayers comes the *Liturgy of the Word*, a series of Scripture readings followed by a homily and, on Sundays and other major feasts, a profession of faith, and the prayer of the faithful.

On Sundays and other major feasts there are two readings before the proclamation of the Gospel: the first usually from the Old Testament, the second from a New Testament book other than the Gospels (Revelation, the Acts of the Apostles or one of the letters). On weekdays and observances of lesser feasts, preceding the Gospel there is only one other reading from either the Old or New Testament.

After the first Scripture reading, whether or not there is a second one before the Gospel, the congregation engages in a *responsorial psalm*. The God-centered poetry of the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament—scholars attribute about half of the 150 psalms to King David—is one of the cornerstones of Catholic liturgy. In addition to their regular use after the first reading in every Mass, the psalms are the mainstay of the church’s daily Liturgy of the Hours and are used directly or indirectly as a source of many other prayers at Mass or in other liturgical actions. In a responsorial psalm, the cantor or other leader recites or sings a thematic line from the psalm, which the congregation repeats. The leader then recites or sings several verses from

the psalm, with the congregation repeating the thematic line as a response after each verse.

As the priest or deacon prepares to proclaim the Gospel, the congregation stands and acclaims it with a celebratory triple *alleluia*. *Alleluia* comes from the Hebrew word meaning “praise God.” The *alleluia* is also called the *Gospel acclamation*. At weekend Masses it is usually sung.

During Lent, other Gospel acclamations must be used in place of an *alleluia*, such as “Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory!” or “Praise and honor to you, Lord Jesus Christ!” or “Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!”

At the end of the Gospel the congregation says, “Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!” and on occasion, may repeat the *alleluia*.

In the *homily* following the Gospel, the bishop, priest or deacon ordinarily reflects in some way on the Scripture readings or other texts of the Mass, often by applying their lessons to daily living by the followers of Christ.

On special occasions that are not part of the church’s liturgical year or sanctoral cycle, such as Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Memorial Day, July 4, Labor Day, etc., homilists may apply the reflection on the day’s Scripture readings to the civic occasion that is uppermost in the minds of the worshipers that day. That is simply a question of pastoral prudence.

When other sacraments of the Catholic Church are to be administered during a Mass, the most common point at which they are administered is after the homily. (*See Ordination and Other Special Masses.*)

On Sundays and other major feasts, the Liturgy of the Word ends with the profession of faith—commonly called the Nicene Creed, but more technically the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. This is the profession of faith approved by the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325 and given a slight editorial adaptation in A.D. 381 by the Council of Constantinople.

At most weekday celebrations of Mass, the profession of faith is not recited. On some occasions, especially at Masses where most of the participants are children or at Masses during Lent and Easter time, instead of the Nicene Creed, the Apostles’ Creed may be recited. The Apostles’ Creed, a shorter profession of faith which may date back as far as A.D. 390, is a formulation of faith widely used throughout Western Christianity (including many Protestant churches today as well as the Latin Catholic Church), but never accepted in Eastern Christianity, because it was not a formula developed or approved by an all-church council. The Roman Catholic liturgy describes it as a “baptismal symbol of the Roman Church.”

The final element of the Mass before the start of the Liturgy of the Eucharist is the *Prayer of the Faithful* or *general intercessions*. This is also referred to in the *Roman Missal* as the *Universal Prayer*. To each intercession the congregation responds with a petition such as, “Lord, hear our prayer.” Examples of such intercessions might be praying for God’s guidance for the church and its leaders, praying for civic leaders and other public officials and praying for the sick and the dead; they might range from praying for peace in the Middle East or for the victims of a recent hurricane or earthquake, to praying for a parishioner who recently died, married, had a baby or faces an illness.

The priest, the deacon or a lay person may lead the intercessions. On some special occasions, such as a large diocesan gathering, each intercession may be led by a different person and they may be given in several languages as a means of celebrating the church’s racial, ethnic and cultural diversity.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

The first part of the Liturgy of the Eucharist is the *preparation of the gifts*. At weekend parish Masses, after the Prayer of the Faithful, collection baskets are passed among the congregation to collect their weekly offerings (although many Catholic families now donate through electronic deposit rather than through the collection basket). The collection is not an integral part of the liturgy as such, and there ordinarily is none at weekday Masses or at non-parish Masses (such as a Mass at a diocesan congress of religious educators or at a national meeting of some kind).

In the Offertory Procession some selected members of the congregation carry a flask or pitcher of wine, and a ciborium, plate or bowl of bread—the Communion wafers—to the altar and present them to the priest. If there was a collection, in many parishes the collection is brought up in one or more baskets first and placed at the foot of the altar. The bread and wine brought up as gifts are to become, in Catholic belief, the body and blood of Christ in an unbloody sacrifice reenacting his once-for-all saving passion and death on the cross 2,000 years ago.

At the altar the priest, or the deacon assisting him, pours the wine and a small amount of water into the main chalice and distributes wine to other chalices or cups as well, if Communion is to be given under both kinds (bread and wine) later.

At most weekend parish Masses the congregation or choir begins singing an Offertory hymn during the collection and continues it until the priest has prepared the gifts at the altar.

The priest then says prayers over the bread and the wine and asks people to pray “that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.” The people respond with a prayer, “May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands . . .”

The *eucharistic prayer* is, in the words of the Vatican’s 2000 *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, “the center and summit of the entire celebration” of the Mass. It begins with a brief dialogue between the priest and congregation that begins, “The Lord be with you . . .”

The priest then recites the *Preface*—considered a part of the ordinary of the Mass, although it is variable and there are many prefaces proper to specific feasts. The Preface ends with the (usually sung) *Sanctus* (“Holy, holy, holy . . .”).

Before Vatican II, in the Roman Catholic liturgy there was only one fixed text of the central prayers surrounding the consecration of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ; it was called the Canon of the Mass. In 1968 the Vatican issued three alternative versions of these prayers, and several others were added in more recent years. The first of the ten eucharistic prayers is the original Canon, which is now referred to as the Roman Canon.

What is common to all versions of the Liturgy of the Eucharist is that the Preface is a prayer of thanksgiving, the *Sanctus* is an acclamation of praise, and the other major parts of all the eucharistic prayers are:

- Invoking the power of the Holy Spirit, imploring that the human gifts of bread and wine will become the body and blood of Christ, for the salvation of those who partake of it.
- The priest’s consecration of the bread and wine through what the church calls Christ’s “words of institution” of the Eucharist—the scripture-based formulas that were adopted early in Christianity to reenact Christ’s actions at the Last Supper. According to the accounts in all three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke), although some details vary, at the Last Supper, a Passover meal the night before he died, Christ broke bread and gave it to his Apostles, telling them to eat it because it was his body. He then took a cup of wine and told them to drink from it because it was the cup of his blood, of the “new covenant.” In all three accounts he called the wine his blood of the new covenant, said he would not drink of it again in this life, and told them to “do this”—eat the bread that is his body, drink the wine that is his blood—in memory of him. Roman Catholic, Eastern Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christians are

among those who continue to hold the faith of ancient Christians that during the eucharistic liturgy the bread and wine truly become the body and blood of Christ, although their appearance remains unchanged. In Scholastic (classical) Catholic theology, heavily reliant on Aristotelian philosophy—which distinguished the substance of an object (its essential elements) from its accidents (nonessential characteristics, like the blackness or size of a small black cat)—the mystery of the Eucharist was explained by the concept of *transubstantiation*, that the substance of the bread and wine has changed into the body and blood of Christ, while the appearance—*species* in Latin—remains unchanged.

- After the consecration of the bread and wine, the priest proclaims “the mystery of faith,” and the congregation responds with one of several eucharistic acclamations, such as “We proclaim your death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection, until you come again.”
- All of the eucharistic prayers end with the priest proclaiming, “Through him [meaning Jesus Christ], and with him, and in him, O almighty God and Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, for ever and ever”—to which the congregation responds with an acclamation that is often called the “great Amen,” usually sung, repeating the affirmation (*Amen* is a Hebrew word that means “so be it”) several times.
- Finally there is the *Communion rite*. It begins with the *Lord’s Prayer* and includes several other elements: the *Rite of Peace* (also called the exchange of peace or kiss of peace) among the members of the congregation; the chant *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God), during which the symbolic breaking of the bread (a large host is split into several parts) takes place; the priest’s presentation of the Eucharist to the community (“Behold, the Lamb of God . . .”) and the congregation’s response (“Lord, I am not worthy . . .”); the reception of Communion by the assembled worshipers, usually with an accompanying hymn; and finally a period of silent meditation and the recitation of a post-communion prayer that is specific to the proper feast of the day.

At weekend Masses it is customary in many parishes for Communion to be offered under both kinds, or both species—that is, under the appearance of both bread and wine. Remember, Catholics and Orthodox, who make up the vast majority of the world’s Christians, believe that what were bread and

wine are now really the body and blood of Christ, although their appearance to the senses (their *species* in Latin, a word that has been taken over into English) has not changed.

CONCLUDING RITE

After a period of silent meditation and the prayer after Communion, the priest blesses the assembly, and he or the deacon dismisses the people with one of several formulas. Among these are, “Go forth, the Mass is ended” and, “Go in peace.”

Before the last blessing and dismissal there may be some brief announcements—about upcoming parish events, a change in Mass schedules the following week, etc. When the Mass marks another sacramental event such as a wedding, ordination, baptism or confirmation, or something such as a funeral or the profession of vows by a member of a religious order, the celebrant may take this occasion to make some final personal remarks about the occasion and the person or people involved.

Following the dismissal, the priest kisses the altar. He and those who have assisted him at the altar bow together to the altar and walk down the aisle in a departing procession, sometimes called a *recessional*, usually to the accompaniment of a closing hymn.

Ordination and Other Special Masses

The Catholic and Orthodox churches hold that there are seven sacraments, while most other Christian churches formed since the 16th century consider only two—baptism and the Eucharist, or Lord’s Supper—as sacraments. The other five are *confirmation* (called *chrismation* in Orthodox and Eastern Catholic churches), the *sacrament of reconciliation* (*penance*), *marriage*, *holy orders* (*ordination to diaconate, priesthood or episcopacy*) and *anointing of the sick*.

When a baptism, marriage, confirmation, ordination, or anointing of the sick takes place within the context of a Mass, those sacramental rites occur after the homily.

BAPTISM

A priest or deacon may administer baptism, which takes place in the church’s baptistry. An adult being baptized makes his or her own baptismal promises; when an infant is baptized, the parents and godparents make the promises on the infant’s behalf.

MARRIAGE

In a marriage, the two exchanging vows are themselves the ministers of the sacrament in Catholic teaching in the Latin Rite. The pastor is the ordinary chief witness for the church to the sacrament, but he may delegate another priest or a deacon to exercise that function. When a marriage takes place during Mass, the liturgy is called a *nuptial Mass*.

CONFIRMATION

A bishop—whether a diocesan, auxiliary or retired bishop—is the ordinary minister of confirmation, but he may also delegate the task to one or more priests, especially if the diocese has too many parishes for the bishop to cover

them all in a year, or when adult catechumens and candidates are being confirmed in their home parishes at the Easter Vigil.

HOLY ORDERS

Only a bishop may ordain a deacon or a priest. To ordain a bishop, the ordaining bishops, the chief consecrator, must be joined by two other bishops as co-consecrators. Deacon, priest and bishop are the three orders of priesthood collectively known as the sacrament of *holy orders*. A Mass at which any ordination takes place is called an *ordination Mass*.

The rites for ordination of a bishop begin with a reading of the papal letter of appointment, after the Gospel, but before the homily. After the homily, during the ordination itself, not only the three designated consecrators but all bishops present join in the laying on of hands. If the bishop being ordained is the new head of the diocese, the Mass may also be called an *installation Mass*, because along with his ordination he is installed as the diocesan bishop.

Note: when someone who is already ordained a bishop is named the head of a diocese or transferred to a new diocese, he is not ordained again. He is chief celebrant of the Mass at which he takes possession of his new diocese, and it is usually called an *installation Mass*, not an ordination Mass. In this case, the letter of appointment from the pope is read before the Mass, not after the Gospel.

RECONCILIATION (PENANCE)

The sacrament of reconciliation should never take place during Mass, since it involves private confession of one's sins to a priest, and such a confession during Mass would remove the penitent from being an integral part of the celebration of the eucharistic liturgy.

ANOINTING OF THE SICK

The anointing of the sick frequently takes place in the home, hospital, or place of care for the sick or elderly, though in some places the sacrament takes place during a regularly scheduled Mass. The anointing of the sick is intended for those who are seriously ill and those who are dying. "Last rites" or "extreme unction" is the anointing of the dying at the point of death and often includes Viaticum, last Eucharist, which commends the individual to the Lord.

RELIGIOUS PROFESSION

When a man or woman professes *religious vows* as a member of a religious order or institute, such as the Jesuits or Sisters of Mercy, the vows are made during Mass after the homily.

DEDICATION OF A CHURCH

In the *dedication of a church and altar*, after entering the darkened church and greeting the people, the bishop blesses the congregation and the walls of the church with holy water. Following the homily and profession of faith the people pray the Litany of the Saints, and the bishop deposits relics of saints in the altar. After a prayer of dedication, he anoints the altar and the walls of the church with the oil of chrism. He then incenses the altar and church. The altar is then covered and lit with candles, and the church lights—up to that point turned off or dimmed—are fully switched on for the Liturgy of the Eucharist that follows. Following the prayer after Communion, and before the concluding rite, the bishop goes to the tabernacle, where the Blessed Sacrament is stored and venerated, and blesses it.

FUNERAL

In a *funeral Mass* with the body or its ashes present, the priest greets the body or its ashes at the church entrance and blesses it at the start of Mass. The homily is not to be replaced by a eulogy. Some dioceses have particular policies about eulogies while others suggest that this be done at the funeral home. At the end of Mass a final commendation of the body or ashes replaces the usual closing rite. If burial or entombment is to take place immediately after the funeral, the priest ordinarily accompanies the funeral cortege to the site for burial rites. A funeral Mass, as the foremost Mass for the dead, may be celebrated on any day except holy days of obligation, Ash Wednesday, Holy Thursday or the sacred Triduum, or the Sundays of Advent, Lent and Easter.

A Mass for the dead may be celebrated upon learning of the person's death, on the day of burial or on the anniversary, except when these fall on the days mentioned above or any of the days of Holy Week.

Other, daily, Masses for the Dead may be celebrated only on weekdays in Ordinary Time (outside Advent, Lent and the Easter season) when there is no feast ranked as an obligatory memorial. The four rankings of feasts are optional memorial, memorial (obligatory), feast and solemnity.

Clerical Vestments

This chapter will cover the main vestments worn by deacons, priests or bishops when celebrating Mass. It will also note optional garb by other ministers at the liturgy.

The priest wears an alb, a long-sleeved white robe that extends to his ankles, and a stole, a strip of cloth about four inches wide and typically about eight to nine feet long so that it extends from the shoulder to somewhere between the knee and the ankle. He drapes the stole around the back of his neck so that the two parts hang straight down the front. He may also wear a *cincture*, a rope with tassled ends, to gird the alb and tie the stole to the waist. In addition, over the alb and stole the priest wears a *chasuble*, a loose-fitting vestment that rests on his shoulders and hangs down to about the knees or even the ankles. The *color* of the stole and chasuble reflects the feast being celebrated or the liturgical season. For example, violet is worn in Lent and Advent, white or gold at Easter and on the Sundays of the Easter Season, green in Ordinary Time, and red on the feasts of martyrs or of the Holy Spirit.

Beneath the alb some priests may wear the traditional *cassock*, a long-sleeved, ankle-length black robe with a Roman collar at the neck, but in the United States most priests prefer simple clerical street garb—black pants and a black shirt with the Roman collar.

The bishop, like the priest, wears an alb, stole, cincture and chasuble when vested for Mass.

In addition the bishop wears a purple *zucchetto*, a small skull cap like the yarmulke. If the bishop is a cardinal, his zucchetto is red. If he is the pope, it is white. In the opening procession and at other times during the liturgy the bishop wears a *miter*, a tall, peaked, folding cap with two *lappets*, short cloth strips, or tails, attached to the back panel. While the miter is ordinarily made of linen or silk, it may have gold or silver bands or embroidery embellishing it. Normally, it is white. On certain occasions, a more ornately decorated miter may be worn. The abbot of a monastery may also wear the miter at Mass.

In the opening procession and at other times in the liturgy the bishop carries with him his *crozier* or *crossier*—not a vestment, but a pastoral staff about five to six feet in length signifying his office as bishop and chief shepherd of his people.

If the bishop is a metropolitan archbishop (or the pope), around his neck atop the chasuble he wears a *pallium*, a thin circlet of white lamb's wool about three inches wide with six black crosses. A metropolitan archbishop is one who heads an archdiocese under which there are several dioceses, forming an ecclesiastical province. (Archbishops such as papal nuncios and some high Vatican officials who do not head an ecclesiastical province are titular archbishops; they are ordained bishops and hold the title of archbishop, but they are not metropolitan archbishops and do not receive the pallium.) The pallium has two short lappets or tails, one in front and one in back, each with a black cross. The other four crosses are on the circlet itself. The pallium was once worn only by the pope, and its conferral by the pope on metropolitan archbishops signifies their unity with the pontiff. The archbishop may wear the pallium whenever he celebrates Mass in his own archdiocese or in any of the neighboring dioceses that form the ecclesiastical province he is in charge of.

The deacon also wears an *alb, stole, and dalmatic*. His stole is draped over his left shoulder and comes across the chest and back to be fastened on his right side. The dalmatic is a tunic, usually in the liturgical color of the day, worn over the alb and stole.

Lay ministers at Mass may wear distinctive robes—the alb is permitted for any of them—but no distinctive robe is liturgically prescribed, so practice may vary widely from parish to parish. For example, it once was common for altar boys to wear a *cassock* (minus the Roman collar worn by priests, and sometimes in a color other than black, such as red) topped by a *surplice* (a loose white top with shorter sleeves, coming down to somewhere between the hips and the knees). In some parishes altar servers may wear a distinctive robe or tunic, often in white or an off-white color, and such distinctive garb may be seen regularly in more solemn celebrations such as diocesan gatherings.

Some church choirs, especially in larger parishes, cathedrals or other prominent churches, may wear distinctive *choir robes*. The color and style of the robes is up to that particular church.

Church Furnishings

Besides the altar, the two main fixed furnishings in the Mass that are placed in the *sanctuary* are the *ambo* and *chair of the priest celebrant*, also sometimes called the *presidential chair*. The sanctuary is the main area in which the priest and other ministers of the liturgy exercise their offices. The ambo is the lectern or reading stand from which the word of God is proclaimed during the Liturgy of the Word. The chair of the priest celebrant is the place where he sits at certain times in the Mass and from which (usually standing) he leads prayers during the introductory rites, the Liturgy of the Word, the prayer after Communion and the closing rite. A chair for the deacon is usually located next to the celebrant's chair.

In a cathedral, the *cathedra*, or bishop's chair, is the chair from which the bishop leads prayers when he is the celebrant of a Mass. There is a separate chair, usually near the *cathedra*, for use by the rector of the cathedral or other priests of the cathedral parish when they celebrate Mass there.

The altar, ambo and celebrant's chair should ideally be visible from all parts of the congregational area.

Norms and guidelines for the construction and placement of the altar and materials to be used for it can be found at www.usccb.org/liturgy/living-stones.shtml#chaptertwo—part of the text of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' 2000 document, *Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture and Worship*. This and other related chapters of the document also present guidelines for the *ambo* and *chair of the priest celebrant* in the *sanctuary*, *congregational seating*, the *tabernacle* and its placement in the *chapel of reservation* or the *sanctuary*, the *baptistry*, the *cross*, *candles* and the *Paschal candle*. It also includes guidelines for other church furnishings not directly relevant to the celebration of Mass, such as the use of *sacred images* in a church, the *Stations of the Cross*, and the *place for sacred oils*. This chapter will be limited to a brief description of furnishings regularly used at Masses.

The *congregational area* is sometimes called the *nave* of the church. Apart from the ministers, those assembled at Mass sit, stand and kneel, generally at pews or chairs, in the congregational area.

In the traditional cross-shaped structure of a church, the smaller alcove behind the altar and sanctuary area is called the *apse*; it may in some churches house the tabernacle and a chapel of reservation, where the Blessed Sacrament is kept after Mass for adoration and for use as needed to bring Com-

munion to the sick or dying. Wherever the tabernacle is placed, the hosts that were not consumed by the congregation during Holy Communion at Mass will be brought to be placed in reservation for adoration during the day and for use as needed.

The baptistry, as noted earlier, is placed near the main entrance to the church (the front of the church when viewed from outside, the rear when viewed from inside) or near the sanctuary, symbolically representing the place of baptism as the first sacrament of initiation or entry into the church. It is used in the Mass only during ritual Masses when baptism is administered. *Baptistry* is an alternate spelling for *baptistry*, and Microsoft Word's spelling checker will automatically change the latter to the former, but in general usage the two spellings are roughly equal, and in my personal experience as a journalist reporting on Catholic architectural and liturgical literature over the past 37 years, I've almost never seen the spelling with an "e." The baptistry may actually be outside the church—witness the famous Baptistry of St. John in Florence, Italy, in the piazza adjacent to the cathedral—but in most cases it is located within the church, near the entrance.

The *cross*—more technically a *crucifix*, the cross with an image of Christ crucified on it—is a central symbol in the Mass for the reenactment in the Eucharist of Christ's once-for-all passion and death for the redemption and salvation of all. In most Catholic churches the crucifix is prominently displayed above or behind the altar. When the crucifix is carried to the altar by a cross bearer in the opening procession at Mass, it is to be placed in a prominent place near the altar if there is not already a fixed crucifix prominently displayed above, behind or otherwise near the altar. If a fixed cross is already there, the processional cross may be placed at another appropriate place, not necessarily on prominent display.

Lit *candles* are on or near the altar at any Mass. Sometimes they may be carried to the altar in the opening procession, but more usually they are already in place and are lit shortly before the Mass begins.

The *Paschal candle* is the largest candle used in the liturgy. It typically ranges from about two to three inches in diameter and from about 40 to 60 inches in height. First blessed and lit at the Easter Vigil, it is placed prominently in the sanctuary and lit at all Masses throughout the Easter season. After that, it is often placed in the baptistry for the rest of the year for the celebration of baptism, and it is placed in the sanctuary for funerals.

In the middle of the Paschal candle are four symbolic signs: a cross, recalling Christ's death; an alpha above the cross and an omega below, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet signifying Christ as the beginning

and the end; five pieces of incense attached to pins, inserted into the cross at its four corners and center, signifying the five wounds (both hands and feet and the side) that Christ suffered during his crucifixion; and finally the current year, traced in the four corners around the cross to signify God's continuing saving presence today. At the beginning of the Easter Vigil the celebrant prays as he traces out the symbols on the Paschal candle and inserts the pieces of incense before lighting the candle with the blessed Easter fire.

Sacred Books

Passages from the Scriptures have a prominent place in every Mass, but the Bible itself is not used. Instead, its texts are found in the Mass's Lectionary, *Roman Missal* and Roman Pontifical, and in other liturgical books such as the Liturgy of the Hours.

The four most common books or sets of books used in a Catholic Mass are the Book of the Gospels, the *Roman Missal*, the Lectionary and the Roman Pontifical, a book of liturgical rites at which a bishop presides.

Use of the term Sacramentary for the book of daily and proper prayers used at Mass was common for the past 40 years or so in the English-speaking world. In 2002, upon issuing the Third Edition of the *Roman Missal*, the Vatican's Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship indicated that the book is to be referred to as the *Roman Missal*.

The Book of the Gospels is either brought into the church by the deacon or a lay reader in the opening procession and placed on the altar until it is removed for the proclamation of the Gospel, or it is placed on the altar before the opening procession. In either case, it sits on the altar until it is carried in procession to the ambo for the proclamation of the Gospel, and it is then put in an appropriate place off the altar for the rest of the Mass. This book contains the passages of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) arranged for use throughout the entire liturgical year. It once was common to carry the Lectionary in the opening procession, but the Vatican's 2001 *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* made clear that it is a Book of the Gospels, distinct from the other readings, that is to be placed on the altar or carried in at the entrance.

The *Roman Missal* is the main book of prayers said at Mass, including both the Ordinary of the Mass (prayers said daily or almost daily) and the Proper of the Mass (prayers said only on specific days—solemnities, feasts, memorial days, optional memorials, ferias, or at votive Masses or Masses for certain circumstances).

The Lectionary is the book of readings from Scripture arranged for reading at Mass throughout the year. In the United States, the *Lectionary for Mass* is published in several volumes.

The Roman Pontifical includes all Masses or other rituals usually or only celebrated by bishops. Among these are Masses of ordination or of the solemn

30 | HOW TO COVER THE MASS

dedication of a church, at which only a bishop can preside, and Masses of confirmation, at which the bishop is ordinarily the presiding prelate.

Appendix

GUIDELINES FOR THE RECEPTION OF COMMUNION

On November 14, 1996, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops approved the following guidelines on the reception of Communion. These guidelines replace the guidelines approved by the Administrative Committee of the NCCB in November 1986. The guidelines, which are to be included in missalettes and other participation aids published in the United States, seek to remind all those who may attend Catholic liturgies of the present discipline of the Church with regard to the sharing of eucharistic Communion.

For Catholics

As Catholics, we fully participate in the celebration of the Eucharist when we receive Holy Communion. We are encouraged to receive Communion devoutly and frequently. In order to be properly disposed to receive Communion, participants should not be conscious of grave sin and normally should have fasted for one hour. A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to receive the body and blood of the Lord without prior sacramental confession except for a grave reason where there is no opportunity for confession. In this case, the person is to be mindful of the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition, including the intention of confessing as soon as possible (canon 916). A frequent reception of the sacrament of penance is encouraged for all.

For Our Fellow Christians

We welcome our fellow Christians to this celebration of the Eucharist as our brothers and sisters. We pray that our common baptism and the action of the Holy Spirit in this Eucharist will draw us closer to one another and begin to dispel the sad divisions which separate us. We pray that these will lessen and finally disappear, in keeping with Christ's prayer for us "that they may all be one" (Jn 17:21).

Because Catholics believe that the celebration of the Eucharist is a sign of the reality of the oneness of faith, life and worship, members of those churches with whom we are not yet fully united are ordinarily not admitted to Holy Communion. Eucharistic sharing in exceptional circumstances by

other Christians requires permission according to the directives of the diocesan bishop and the provisions of canon law (canon 844 § 4). Members of the Orthodox churches, the Assyrian Church of the East and the Polish National Catholic Church are urged to respect the discipline of their own churches. According to Roman Catholic discipline, the Code of Canon Law does not object to the reception of Communion by Christians of these churches (canon 844 § 3).

For Those Not Receiving Holy Communion

All who are not receiving Holy Communion are encouraged to express in their hearts a prayerful desire for unity with the Lord Jesus and with one another.

For Non-Christians

We also welcome to this celebration those who do not share our faith in Jesus Christ. While we cannot admit them to Holy Communion, we ask them to offer their prayers for the peace and the unity of the human family.

Glossary of Terms

acolyte. See altar server. Seminarians preparing for priesthood are formally instituted as acolytes during their theology studies, before they are ordained deacons. Other lay men, but not women, may also be formally instituted as acolytes under church law. The practice of formally instituting lay men other than seminarians as acolytes is not widespread in the United States.

Advent. The season beginning roughly a month before Christmas that marks the start of a new liturgical year. In the Latin or Western Church, Advent starts on the fourth Sunday before Christmas (actually, in liturgical time, at sundown the day before). This means it will start as early as Nov. 27 when Christmas is on Sunday or as late as Dec. 3 in the years Christmas falls on Monday. In Eastern Catholic and Orthodox churches the period of preparation for Christmas begins Nov 15, 40 days before Christmas (actually, in liturgical time, at sundown Nov. 14). In the Eastern churches it is often called the Nativity Fast, the Philippian Fast or Philip's Fast, since Nov. 14 is the Feast of St. Philip. See *liturgical year*.

alb. A long-sleeved, ankle-length white robe worn by a bishop or priest while celebrating Mass or by a deacon assisting at Mass, and possibly by some lay ministers such as altar servers and lectors.

altar. A table in the sanctuary of a church, usually fixed in place, at which the central part of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, is celebrated. The *mensa*, or table top, is usually made of fine stone such as marble or granite, but possibly also of wood.

altar server. A lay person who assists the priest at the altar, also called an *acolyte*. Among altar servers may be people with specific functions in the opening procession or during other parts of the Mass, such as the cross bearer, candle bearers and the thurifer (thurible bearer or censer bearer).

ambo. The lectern in the sanctuary from which the Scripture readings are read.

Ash Wednesday. In the Latin or Roman Church, the start of Lent, 46 days (40 days excluding Sundays) before Easter. The date of Ash Wednesday may range from Feb. 4 to March 10 because of the variable date of Easter. See *Lent* and *Easter*.

assembly. One of the appropriate terms for those assembled for Mass. Others are *congregation*, *participants*, and *worshipers*. If it is a parish Mass, *parishioners* is also appropriate.

bishop. The highest order of priestly ordination (after deacon and priest). A bishop is the leader (chief pastor) of a diocese. Only a bishop can ordain a deacon, priest or another bishop. A bishop is also the ordinary minister of confirmation, although priests may be delegated to administer that sacrament. When a bishop celebrates Mass, it can be called a *pontifical Mass*, but ordinarily that form of reference to a Mass celebrated by a bishop is of little or no importance in news reporting.

Book of the Gospels. A book that contains the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, arranged for use in proclaiming the Gospel at Mass. See *Sacred Books*.

candles. At every Mass candles are lighted upon or near the altar. Usually the candles are lighted in place shortly before the liturgy, but they may be carried in, already lit, in the opening procession, and then placed in candle holders on or near the altar. For the opening procession, any altar servers who carry candles are called candle bearers. See also *Paschal candle*.

cantor. One who leads the congregation or a choir in singing, especially in the antiphonal singing of psalms.

celebrant, celebrate. The priest or bishop leading the assembly in a Mass is often called the *celebrant*. He *celebrates* or *presides at* the eucharistic liturgy.

censer, censer bearer. See *incense* and *altar server*.

chalice. A stemmed cup used on the altar at Mass to hold the wine that is consecrated into the blood of Christ. The chalice is usually to be made of, or at least plated with, a fine metal such as gold, at least on the inner lining of the cup. If Communion is to be distributed under both kinds, there may be sev-

eral drinking vessels of wine on the altar during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Unless these are also made of or plated with a fine metal or otherwise of truly distinctive style and craftsmanship, they probably are more appropriately referred to as *cups*. It is also acceptable to refer to any chalice as a *cup*.

chasuble. A loose outer vestment similar to a poncho worn by a priest or bishop when celebrating Mass. It rests on the shoulders and may drape, front and back, to somewhere between the knees and ankles. Its color varies with the nature of the feast or liturgical season being celebrated at the Mass of that day.

Christmas Season. Also called *Christmastide*, it traditionally is associated with the 12 Days of Christmas from Dec. 25 to the Feast of the Epiphany Jan. 6. In current Catholic liturgical practice, however, Christmastide ends with the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the first Sunday after the Epiphany. In the United States, the Epiphany is celebrated on the Sunday on or near Jan. 6. See *liturgical year*.

ciborium. A bowl or a stemmed cup (somewhat similar to a chalice but usually with a wider and larger bowl) used to hold the hosts—unleavened bread wafers—that are consecrated into the body of Christ at Mass. The traditional ciborium is made of or plated with a fine metal such as gold, at least on the inner lining of the cup, and has a removable lid. If the vessel holding the consecrated bread has no stem and is rather flat, it may be called a plate or paten.

Communion. The term used by Catholics for the reception of the Eucharist, the body and blood of Christ, near the end of a Mass, or to the part of the Mass during which that occurs. *Communion under both kinds* refers to the practice of receiving the Eucharist both under the appearance of bread and under the appearance of wine. See *Eucharist*.

concluding rites. The shortest and final part of a Mass is the concluding rites. Following the Communion and a post-communion meditation and prayer, they consist mainly of a blessing, dismissal and recessional in which the celebrant and his assistants at the altar process from the altar to the rear of the church. See **The Order of the Mass**.

confirmation. One of the three sacraments of initiation (along with baptism and first Eucharist), confirmation is ordinarily administered by a bishop, but

he can delegate priests to administer the sacrament as well. A Mass at which confirmation is administered can be called a confirmation Mass.

crozier. Also spelled *crozier*, it is the *staff* a bishop carries in procession and uses briefly at some other parts of the Mass. It symbolizes the bishop's pastoral authority as shepherd of his people.

dalmatic. A vestment similar to the chasuble, which a deacon assisting at Mass may wear over the alb and stole, especially on more solemn occasions. The alb and stole are required; the dalmatic is not.

deacon. An ordained minister who often assists a priest or bishop in the celebration of Mass. The diaconate is the first of the three holy orders (followed by priest and bishop). A deacon cannot celebrate Mass, but he proclaims the Gospel, sometimes preaches the homily, serves as a minister of the Eucharist (distributing Communion) and announces the dismissal at the end of Mass.

Divine Liturgy. The term commonly used in the Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic churches for the eucharistic liturgy that Latin or Roman Catholics usually refer to as the *Mass*.

Easter. The day Christians celebrate the resurrection of Christ from the tomb three days after his death. Because of its relation to the Jewish Passover, which is based on a lunar calendar—the Last Supper the day before Christ died was a Passover meal—Easter is a variable feast, which means that its date changes from year to year. Its dates may vary from March 22 to April 25, because it occurs on the first Sunday following the first full moon after March 21, the spring equinox. Because Eastern Orthodox churches base their calculations of the first full moon of spring on the Julian Calendar instead of the Gregorian Calendar (issued by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582), the Orthodox date of Easter may coincide with that of the Latin Church or occur one or five weeks later.

Easter Season. Also called Eastertide, the 50-day season from Easter to Pentecost, the feast celebrating the beginning of the church. The season used to be considered 40 days in duration, ending with the Feast of the Ascension, when in Christian belief Christ rose into heaven in his glorified body. The six Sundays between Easter and Pentecost are called the First Sunday of Easter, Second, etc. See *liturgical year*.

Easter Vigil. The solemn first celebration of Easter, it takes place after dark on Holy Saturday when, by liturgical time—measuring days from sunset to sunset—Saturday has ended and Easter has begun. The Easter Vigil liturgy includes the blessing of baptismal water, renewal of baptismal promises by the congregation, and in many parishes administration of baptism, first eucharist and confirmation to new Catholic converts.

Eucharist. The proper name used by Catholics for the consecrated bread and wine which are the body and blood of Christ. During Mass, which is also called the *eucharistic liturgy*, most Catholics receive the Eucharist at Communion time. See *Communion*. Often Catholics will refer to the Eucharist itself, especially the consecrated bread, as *Communion* or *holy Communion*—many times also capitalizing the adjective *Holy* out of reverence for the Eucharist—as in “*I received (or went to) Communion at the 11 o’clock Mass.*”

eucharistic liturgy. Another term for the Mass.

extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. The church’s term for any layperson delegated to assist in distributing Communion because of a lack of sufficient ordained ministers to administer the sacrament in a reasonable amount of time.

feast. A generic term for any liturgical observance in the church year. More specifically, special observances are ranked liturgically (in descending order) as: *solemnity*, *feast*, *memorial* or *optional memorial*. Ferial days—weekdays of the liturgical seasons on which there is no obligatory or optional liturgical commemoration of a particular saint or event—are not called feasts. A Mass on one of those days may be referred to as a *weekday Mass* if there is any news reason for specifying what the Mass of the day was.

feria, ferial day. The Mass on a weekday when no special feast is celebrated may often simply be called a *weekday Mass*—or if there is some technical reason why a news story must be more specific, something like, the *Mass for Tuesday of the third week of Easter*, for example. It’s obvious that such technical details are almost never relevant to news reports even in Catholic media, let alone in non-Catholic media. If there is some reason the Mass on a ferial day is newsworthy, it will almost certainly be a *ritual Mass*, *votive Mass*, *Mass for certain occasions*, or some other Mass rather than the Mass of the day. See *feast*.

funeral Mass. Generally speaking, the main Mass for a recently deceased person prior to the interment of his or her body or ashes—usually but not always celebrated with the body or ashes present in the church and followed immediately by a funeral procession to the graveyard, mausoleum or columbarium where the interment of the body or ashes is to take place. Masses other than the main one preceding interment are more properly referred to as Masses *for the dead*, not *funeral* Masses.

holy day of obligation. In the Catholic Church, all Sundays and certain other feasts during the year are described in church law, as well as in common language, as *holy days of obligation*, meaning that Catholics are obliged by law to assemble together to worship God on those days. They ordinarily do this by participating at Mass. In the dioceses of the United States, there are six holy days of obligation: Mary, Mother of God (January 1); The Ascension of the Lord (40 days after Easter; transferred to Sunday in many dioceses); The Assumption of Mary (August 15); All Saints' Day (November 1); The Immaculate Conception of Mary (December 8); and Christmas (December 25). Holy days of obligation other than Sundays are always ranked as *solemnities* and will replace seasonal Sunday Masses when they occur on a Sunday, except the Immaculate Conception, which always falls in Advent.

homily. The deacon, priest or bishop's preaching on the Gospel or other Scripture readings or other texts from the Mass of the day. The term *sermon* was once widely used to refer to preaching at Mass in Catholic churches, but since the renewed emphasis on preaching about the Scripture readings or Mass texts of the day, following the liturgical reforms of Vatican II, *homily* has become the term of choice.

host. A common term in Catholicism used for the rounds of unleavened bread consecrated during Mass to become the real body of Christ. *Host* can be used to describe such bread both before and after its consecration—although in Catholic belief, following the consecration the bread remains only an appearance, while its substance has been changed into the actual body of Christ. In Orthodox and Eastern Catholic churches, leavened bread is used for the Eucharist, and it is not appropriate to refer to those breads as hosts.

incense. A combination of aromatic spices burned on charcoal at several points in more formal or solemn Masses. At the beginning of a more solemn Mass, the celebrant may *cense* or *incense* the altar; before the proclamation of

the Gospel, the Book of the Gospels may be incensed; in the dedication of a new or renovated church, several censings of the altar, church and people are called for; in other ritual Masses other uses of incense may occur. The vessel holding the charcoal and incense—a covered metal cup attached to a chain allowing it to be swung to and fro to spread the fragrance of the incense—may be called a *thurible* or *censer*. The altar server who carries the censer and assists the celebrant in adding incense to the burning charcoal is called the *thurifer*, *thurible bearer* or *censer bearer*.

Lectionary. The book of readings from Scripture, arranged according to what readings are to be read at any particular Mass throughout the year. In dioceses in the United States, Lectionaries are usually arranged in several volumes—reflecting the fuller use of Scripture since the council.

Lent. The penitential season before Easter in the liturgical year. In the Latin Church it begins on Ash Wednesday; in Eastern Catholic churches it starts two days earlier and is called the *Great Fast* or *Great Lent*. See *Ash Wednesday* and *liturgical year*.

liturgical year. The main cycle of the liturgical year is the *liturgical* or *seasonal cycle*. In the Latin or Roman Catholic Church it begins with *Advent*, followed by the *Christmas Season*. Several weeks of the first part of *Ordinary Time* follow, ending with Ash Wednesday and the start of *Lent*. Easter marks the start of the *Easter Season*, which ends seven weeks later with Pentecost. Following Trinity Sunday, the Sunday after Pentecost, weeks of *Ordinary Time* resume, ending with the First Sunday of Advent. See the entries for the italicized words. The secondary cycle of the liturgical year is often called the *sanctoral cycle*, because most of the feasts celebrated in it are feasts of saints. See *sanctoral cycle*. In the sanctoral calendar, feasts are fixed by specific dates—St. Patrick's Day March 17, the Solemnity of St. Joseph March 19, the Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven Aug. 15, etc. Feasts of the liturgical cycle and sanctoral cycle that apply throughout the Latin Church together constitute the *Roman calendar*. The calendar is a liturgical schedule, including rankings of feasts, that determines which Mass must be celebrated or which alternative Masses can be celebrated on any particular day throughout the year.

liturgy. A general term for all the church's official acts of worship, including Mass, celebration of the sacraments, and the Liturgy of the Hours.

Liturgy of the Eucharist. That part of the Mass in which the celebrant consecrates the bread and wine and people receive Communion. For a more complete description, see **The Order of the Mass**.

Liturgy of the Word. The part of every Mass during which two or three Scripture readings are proclaimed and a homily is given by the priest or deacon (not always on weekdays). For a more complete description of the Liturgy of the Word as a part of the Mass, see **The Order of the Mass**. Outside of Mass, a *Liturgy of the Word* is a service of prayer and readings similar to that found in the first parts of the Mass. It may be used in place of a Mass for weddings or other rites, or for Sunday or weekday services in the absence of a priest. It may or may not be followed by a Communion service, but when it is done in the absence of a priest, it is not a Mass. If Communion is given in the absence of a priest, the hosts must have been consecrated at a previous Mass celebrated by a priest.

marriage. One of the seven sacraments in Catholic teaching. When a couple marries during a Mass, it can be called a *wedding Mass* or a *nuptial Mass*.

Mass. From the Latin *Missa*—which is related to “*missio*,” meaning “sending forth” or “mission”—from the dismissal at the end of Mass, “Go, the Mass is ended” (in Latin, “*Ite, Missa est*”). The eucharistic liturgy is commonly called *the Mass* throughout the English-speaking Catholic Church. In Latin or Western Catholic Christianity it is also called *the eucharistic liturgy* or, on second reference, simply *the liturgy*. Among Eastern Christians, Catholic or Orthodox, it is more commonly referred to as the *Divine Liturgy*. See *Divine Liturgy*.

memorial. A Mass commemorating a saint that is below the liturgical rank of any Sunday, feast or solemnity. In ordinary news writing the distinctions between optional memorials, memorials, feasts and solemnities are usually irrelevant, and any of them may be called a *feast*. See *feast*.

minister. The general term for the celebrant of a Mass and all those who assist him and the congregation in worship.

missal. A book containing the prayers of the Mass, but not the readings from Scripture. The official book used by the celebrant at the altar is called the *Roman Missal*. For many years the English translation of the missal used at

Mass was called the Sacramentary, but the Vatican notified bishops' conferences that when translations of the Latin Third Typical Edition of the *Roman Missal* are produced, use of the term *Roman Missal* is to be restored.

miter. A folding, pointed hat with two ribbon-like tails that is worn by a bishop at certain times during the Mass, most notably in the opening and closing processions.

music minister. Anyone who assists the congregation in worship by singing, playing a musical instrument, or leading in song.

nuptial Mass. See *marriage*.

optional memorial. A saint's feast on which the Mass observing that feast can be celebrated but does not have to be. A *ritual Mass*, *votive Mass* or *Mass for certain occasions*, for example, may be substituted. See *memorial* and *feast*.

pallium. A circlet of white lamb's wool with black crosses that an archbishop wears around his neck when celebrating Mass in his archdiocese or any of the neighboring dioceses that form part of his province. It has a tail in front and back, giving it a "Y" shape when viewed from front or back.

recessional. The procession from the altar to the rear of the church by the celebrant and other ministers at the end of Mass.

Red Mass. A yearly Mass in many dioceses for lawyers, judges, law students and professors, and others whose profession involves seeking justice.

ritual Mass. The general term for a Mass at which another rite, such as ordination, baptism, marriage, confirmation, or profession of religious vows takes place. The term also includes funeral Masses.

sacristy. A side room in a church where the celebrant and other ministers vest for Mass. To *vest* is to don the liturgical garb known as *vestments*. See *vestments*.

sanctuary. The area of the church that holds the altar, ambo and celebrant's chair and, in a cathedral, the bishop's chair.

staff. See *crozier*.

tabernacle. The locked container in a church, usually of fine artistry and plated with gold or other fine metal, and fixed permanently on a table or in a niche, where consecrated bread that was not consumed at Mass is reserved. In some churches it is placed prominently in a small chapel where parishioners can go to pray before it. In others, it is in the sanctuary. In many churches that originally had the main altar fixed to the wall, the tabernacle remains on that altar, while the church has been remodeled to incorporate a newer, freestanding altar at which Mass is celebrated. The reserved hosts in the tabernacle may be used to bring Communion to the sick and dying. In places where there are too few priests to cover all parishes for Mass every weekend, they may be used for a Communion service in the absence of a priest. A burning candle near the tabernacle, usually in a red glass container, signals that the Eucharist is present in the tabernacle. As a sign of their deep reverence for the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, most Catholics genuflect toward the tabernacle when they pass in front of it.

thurible, thurifer. See *incense*.

vestments. The general term for the outer liturgical garb worn by bishops, priests and deacons while celebrating or assisting at Mass. See *alb*, *chasuble*, *dalmatic*, *pallium* and *stole*.

votive Mass. Any weekday Mass for an intention or purpose in which the prayers and readings are not the ones designated for that day in the liturgical year. A votive Mass can be celebrated whenever the Mass of the day is a ferial Mass or an optional memorial.

wedding Mass. See *marriage*.

zucchetto. The small skull cap worn by a bishop at Mass. A pope wears a white one, a cardinal, red, and a bishop, purple.