



St Catherine's Seminary is the name of the internal study and training program of the Old Catholic Apostolic Church

The Altar

The Altar is a table, a raised structure or a platform on which religious offerings or sacrifices are made.

In the Old Testament the first altar mentioned is built by Noah; after the flood waters recede, for him to offer thanks to God. The early Christians endowed the altar with great symbolism and a new role, it was the place we would remember the Last Supper Christ shared with his Apostles and friends. The sacrifice no longer needed to be made, Christ is risen and the Eucharist is celebrated in remembrance.

Altars

Altars come in many sizes and are made of differing materials, they may be placed at the front of a church, the sanctuary, faced by a congregation, in the middle of the church space or at the side. They can be in a sports hall, or a park, a house or a garden, it is how they are dressed and the purpose for which they are used that makes them an altar. The top of the altar is called the 'mensa'.

Altars are the heart of the sacramental life of the church, and every part of the preparation is important. The altar represents the table that Christ shared the body and blood, and as a table it is dressed with clean linens and candles.

Altar Linens

The altar is covered with three altar linens, this has both a practical and spiritual purpose. The three cloths prevent the sacrilege of any spilled wine, the Precious Blood, spilling to the floor. The three cloths symbolise the three fold nature of the Church; Triumphant, Suffering and Militant and the Trinity. Linen is used to represent the winding cloths used to wrap Christ when he was placed in the tomb (sepulchre).

Altars are dressed in clean altar cloths, the top of the altar is covered by a plain white linen cloth, that protects the altar and the 'fine linens' of lace

or white embroidered cloth that are placed on top of this. Traditionally altar cloths are embroidered with ecclesiastic symbols and or a cross in each corner. Altar cloths are usually long and wide enough to hang over the edge of the altar table.

The altar may have a frontal or ‘antependium’, an embroidered or tapestry stiff cloth attached to the altar by rod or clip system. This hangs across the front of the altar. Some altars have in addition to the frontal a second matching or complementary piece of cloth that fits onto the same hanging as the frontal.

Altars without frontals are covered by an altar cover, these are tapestry or embroidered silk cloths, where the section covering the top of the altar is shaped to fit the altar.

Frontals and altar coverings are coloured to match the Church seasons and holidays. The exceptions are funerals, where a second altar cover is placed over the altar, this is either white or black and purple or black. Placed on the altar is a cross or crucifix and candles, during services these are often made from precious metals. Between services and for funerals the cross or crucifix and candlesticks are wood.

The Missal and stand are placed on the altar ready for services, the stand can be precious metal, plate silver or wood.

At the End of Eucharistic Services

All wine and water and all wafers that have been transformed to conform with Christ's body must be consumed by the Priest, during the service. Entire wafers can be stored in a safe called the aumbry or the tabernacle and is called the Reserve or Reserved bread. The Reserve is used for communion for those who cannot attend services due to health issues or other reasons that the Priest is satisfied that they are unable to attend a service. Because the bread is consecrated this can be shared by non-ordained and lay persons who are trained in home communion. An aumbry or tabernacle is normally behind the altar in the sacristy of the church. Consecrated wafers can also be carried in a pyx, by a Priest. Churches have a red light which is suspended above the aumbry and is lit when consecrated wafers or bread is placed in the aumbry.

Altar

All altar dressings are as in non-Eucharistic services. In addition close to the altar we will find a side table which holds a number of items used by the Priest and assistant for the sacrament of the Eucharist. Before a Eucharistic Service the altar may be sanctified by an assistant with a censer or thurible containing burning incense.

Altar rail

The rail separates the main body of the church; the nave, from the sanctuary. In front of the rail on the nave side is padded step for congregants to kneel to receive the ‘gifts’.

Aumbry

See Tabernacle

Burse

The burse is a hinged embroidered case matched the Chalice veil. Inside the burse are the Corporal, Purificator/s and if used, a post communion veil (the Chalice veil is more often used post communion).

Celebrant

Eucharistic services are led by a Priest, who is termed the celebrant.

Censer

A container usually hanging from a chain and made from brass in which incense is burned. The smoke from the burner is used to cleanse the church of any thing that might harm the purity of the Eucharist. Usually this is carried in front of the priest as they process to the sanctuary up the aisle. It is then used to bless and cleanse the altar.

Chalice

The word chalice comes from the Latin word calyx or cup. The wine and water are mixed in the chalice and through consecration this becomes the ‘Precious Blood’ of Jesus. Chalices are normally made of precious metal. A Chalice is placed on the altar in preparation for the Eucharistic service. The chalice may be made of precious metal, silver plate, wood, glass or pottery.

Chalice Veil

A square of cloth, the covers the chalice, paten and pall. The veil is made of silk and embroidered in Eucharistic symbols and or crosses. The colour of the veil is dictated by the Church calendar.

Chancel

The area around the altar also known as the sanctuary.

Ciborium or Breadbox

This are placed on the credence for Eucharistic services. This holds the wafers the priest will place on the paten for the Eucharistic service. It may be made from precious metal, silver plate, glass, or pottery.

Confessional

Original confessionals are a private area, screened or enclosed where the Sacraments of Reconciliation can take place. Originally the Priest and the Confessor would not be able to see each other as there would be an obscuring screen between them. Most churches now hold confession in a private area where priest and confessor can see each other.

Conopeum

Where there is a ‘tabernacle’ it must be covered with a veil or ‘conopeum’, which covers all of the tabernacle including the doors. The veil represents the ‘tent’ used to cover the ‘ark of the covenant’.

Consecration of the Elements

The Elements that are consecrated are the bread and the wine, the elements are sometimes called the ‘gifts’. See Corporal Presence and Real Presence.

Corporal Presence

The Catholic Tradition believes that during the consecration they are transformed or ‘transubstantiated’ into the body and blood of Christ. This is believed to be more than a spiritual transformation but a substantial transformation. They still appear as bread and wine but are now the body and blood of Christ. This presence of Christ in the Eucharist is known as the doctrine of the Corporal Presence.

Real Presence

Other Christians, such as the Anglican Union, the Old Catholic Church, and the Lutherans, hold the doctrine of Real Presence. This means they reject the belief of Transubstantiation while believing the bread and wine represent the body and blood.

In both of these beliefs the elements are given the same adoration and devotion that Christians give to Christ.

Corporal

A square of linen cloth with a embroidered cross, which is placed so the edge of the cloth is in line with the edge of the altar with the cross facing the Priest. The chalice and paten are placed on this cloth during the Eucharist.

Credence

A small table set at the side of the altar

The credence is covered in a white cloth which may be embroidered or trimmed with lace.

Cruets or Ampules

These are placed on the credence for Eucharistic services. These are two bottles one holding wine and one water. The plate the bottles stand on is called in Latin ‘pelvicula’.

The bottles are usually glass, however they can be and of silver or gold, when the contents cannot be seen the bottles are marked with A and V (aqua and vinum)

Dais

A raised area forming the Sanctuary area. On this the Altar. Pulpit, Celebrants kneelers and seating, kneelers and seating for assistants and the credence can be found.

Dividunt

The altar should only be stripped or denuded is at the end of ceremonies on Holy Thursday. Dividunt represents the moment when Christ is stripped of his clothes at the foot of the cross.

‘Dividunt’ means ‘they have divided my clothes’.

Font

Traditionally the baptismal font is placed close to a churches main entrance in the vestibule however it may be found in the sanctuary.

Lavabo

A small bowl that the Priest uses for the ceremonial washing of fingers before mixing the wine and water and placing the wafer or bread on the paten. The Lavebo can be precious metal, glass or pottery.

Lavebo cloth

A folded square of linen used by the Priest to wipe their fingers after the ceremonial washing.

Lectern

The Lectern is a stand that the President or Celebrant can lead the service from, it can be used to hold notes, bibles and hymnals. The Homily is usually read from a lectern not the pulpit.

Lectionary

The lectionary lists the readings to be used each day throughout the year. The lectionary has a three year cycle. The lectionary has a guide to which year of the cycle to use and which readings to use.

Monstrance

A Monstrance, is also known as a Ostensory or Ostensorium. A Monstrance may be placed on the altar to hold an object of piety. Monstrance comes from the Latin ‘monstrare’ and ostensorium or ostensory come from the Latin ‘ostendere’ both these terms mean ‘to show’.

Objects of piety, include a consecrated host, which is raised for the Eucharistic adoration or Benediction. In addition objects of piety the Monstrance can be used to display Holy relics.

In some services the Monstrance is raised to bless the congregation, this is not the Priest's blessing but is believed to be the blessing of Christ himself.

Missal

A liturgical book with instructions and texts necessary for the celebration of Mass or Eucharist through the liturgical year.

Ostensory or Ostensorium

see Monstrance

Pall

This is a stiff square of linen covered card, or plastic. This is placed on top of the paten and supports the chalice veil.

Paten

A paten is a small plate, with a raised lip, normally made of precious metal, and during the Eucharist it is used to hold the Host. The paten may be placed on top of the chalice. The Priest's host, a larger wafer, is placed on the paten. The paten may be made of precious metal, silver plate, wood, glass or pottery.

Pitcher

A small stoppered bottle containing water, where the Priest has a Deacon or a lay person assisting this person pours a small amount of water over the Priest's fingers from the pitcher in the Lavabo. This part of the service takes place before the Priest touches the Eucharistic elements.

President

The person leading services in some churches (for example Methodist) may be called the President, as in the person presiding over the service. A President can be non-ordained or lay.

Pulpit

A pulpit is a raised stand or desk used for preaching or teaching from. The word pulpit comes from the Latin *pulpitum*. Traditionally pulpits are raised above the surrounding area to improve visibility and audibility. Traditionally the sermon is given from the pulpit. Where the Gospel is not read by the Priest from the centre aisle of the church, it is read from the pulpit. Where there is no pulpit a lectern may be used.

Purificator

The purificator is a small piece of white cloth, sometimes linen, which may have a cross in the centre. It is folded into three layers and is used by the Priest after the Eucharist to purify their fingers, the chalice and paten. Folded this is draped over the chalice before the service. It is also used to wipe the lip of the chalice after it has been drunk from.

Relics

A Roman Catholic Altar contains two relics, which are placed inside during the altars consecration.

Sacred Vessels

See Cruets, Chalice, Ciborium, Monstrance, bottles of Holy Oils.

Sacristy (see vestry)

A preparation or robing room, that may be directly accessed from the altar area, or in another part of a church building or in a separate building or annex.

A room where robes worn during mass are kept. Where the Priest and attendants 'vest' or robe. Robes can include, Chasuble and Alb, Cassock, surplice, stoles and scarves.

The vestry may also contain sacred vessels, candles, altar linens frontals and other church furnishings. Sacred vessels and the Host are usually placed in a safe. Parish records, sacred vessels and church furnishings may also be stored in this room.

Sanctuary or Chancel

The Sanctuary in Christian Churches has been in existence since the 4th Century and the adoption by Christians of the Bishop as Intercessor. The Sanctuary is a place devoted to the sacraments or 'gifts'. The Sanctuary is separated from the body of the church by the altar rail.

Sanctuary Lamp

This is a red light/lamp that is suspended above the Tabernacle and indicates there is a sanctified host in the tabernacle.

Tabernacle

A safe that holds consecrated hosts known as the reserve. The Tabernacle is free standing in the sacristy or set into the wall above the altar.

Tabernacle Veil

See Conopeum.

Vestments (worn by the celebrant)

Robing or vesting in part of the sacrament and each part of donning the vestments is accompanied by a prayer.

- Amice

This is a rectangular piece of fine linen. The celebrant places it first on their head, then allows it to rest on their shoulders. As they do they pray:

'Place oh Lord on my head the helmet of salvation, that so I may resist the assaults of the devil'

- Alb

This is a white linen robe that covers the whole body, including the arms reaching from the neck to the feet. The prayer is:

'Make me white O Lord and cleanse my heart, that being white in the Blood of the Lamb I may deserve an eternal reward'

- Cincture or girdle.

This is a cord of linen, fastened around the waist over the alb. The prayer is:

'Gird me oh Lord with the cincture of purity and quench on my heart the fire of concupiscence, the virtue of continence and chastity may abide in me'

- Maniple

A strip of silken cloth worn on the priests left arm of the priest.

The prayer is:

'May I deserve O Lord, to bear the maniple of weeping and sorrows in order that I may joyfully reap the reward of my labours'

- Stole *The stole is a long piece of silk, it is the same width as the maniple but is three times as long. It is worn around the neck and crosses the chest. The prayer is:

'Restore to me O Lord the state of immortality which I lost through the sin of my first parents and although unworthy to approach the Sacred Mysteries may I deserve nevertheless eternal joy'

- Chasuble

This is the outer and primary vestment of the priest. It is the vestment worn for mass and is now only worn by the priest. The prayer is:

'O Lord who has said 'my yoke is sweet and my burden light' grant that I may so carry it as to merit Thy grace'

*Stoles are also worn for mass and other services where the celebrant wears a cassock and surplice. Where the stole is not matched to the chasuble it may be made of other materials such as tapestry, or

embroidered cloth and not fine linen or silk. In these circumstance the Priest allow the stole to hang straight down front of the body from the neck. When the stole is worn by a Deacon it is crossed over the body and joined at the left side resting against the wearers hip.

Vestry (see Sacristy)

Votive (votive candle)

The votive holds votive candles that can be found in Roman Catholic Churches beneath for example statues of the Sacred Heart and the Virgin Mary. Congregants are able to light these to ask for their prayers to be answered.

Altar Furniture - history

The altar items are historic, but also bring to life the sacraments that they're used for.

Chalice

The 'cup' used for the wine at Eucharist. Usually made of precious metal, but originally would have been pottery.

In Western Christianity, chalices will often have a pommel or node where the stem meets the cup to make the elevation easier. In Roman Catholicism, chalices tend to be tulip-shaped, and the cups are quite narrow.

In Eastern Christianity (Oriental Orthodox, Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic churches), chalices will often have icons enameled or engraved on them, as well as a cross. In Orthodoxy and Eastern Catholicism, all communicants receive both the Body of Christ and the Blood of Christ. To accomplish this, a portion of the Lamb (Host) is placed in the chalice, and then the faithful receive Communion on a spoon. For this reason, eastern chalices tend to have larger, rounded cups. In the Russian Orthodox Church, the faithful will often kiss the "foot" (base) of the chalice after receiving Holy Communion. In other traditions, they will kiss the cup. Although Orthodox monks are not permitted to hold personal possessions, the canons permit a hieromonk (i.e., a monk who has been ordained to the priesthood) to keep a chalice and other vessels necessary to celebrate the Divine Liturgy.

Paten

A paten (or diskos) is a small plate, used during the Mass. It is generally used during the liturgy itself, while the reserved sacrament are stored in the tabernacle in a ciborium.

In many Western liturgical denominations, the paten is typically either a simple saucer-like plate or a low bowl. A smaller style paten will often have a depression that allows it to securely sit on top of the chalice.

In the Byzantine Rite Eastern Orthodox and Byzantine Rite Catholic Churches, the paten is called a *diskos* and is elevated by a stand (or "foot") permanently attached underneath. The *diskos* is usually more ornate than its Latin counterpart, and must always be made of gold or at least be gold-plated. The *diskos* may be engraved with an icon of Jesus Christ, the Nativity of Christ, the Cross, or most frequently the Theotokos (Mother of God).

In the usage of the Alexandrian Rite, the *diskos* usually has a flat bottom with no foot. Additionally, it has a raised edge, forming a relatively high rim, preventing particles of the offered elements from falling to the floor.

Aspergillum

An aspergillum is used in Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Anglican ceremonies, including the Rite of Baptism and during the Easter Season. In addition, a priest will use the aspergillum to bless the candles during Candlemas services and the palms during Palm Sunday Mass. At a requiem, if a coffin is present, the priest will sprinkle holy water on the coffin. The aspergillum can be used in other manners where sprinkling of holy water is appropriate, as in a house blessing, in which the priest might bless the entry to the home, or as part of the ceremony consecrating an altar and a church building. The name derives from the Latin verb *aspergere* 'to sprinkle'.

The form of the aspergillum differs in the Eastern Orthodox Church. In the Greek Orthodox Church the aspergillum (*randistirion*) is in the form of a standing vessel with a tapering lid. The top of the lid has holes in it from which the *agiasmos* (holy water) is sprinkled. In the Russian Orthodox Church the aspergillum is in the form of a whisk made of cloth or hair. Sometimes, sprigs of basil are used to sprinkle holy water. In some of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, no aspergillum is used, but the priest will pour holy water into the palm of his right hand and throw it on the faithful.

Thurible

A thurible (via Old French from Medieval Latin *turibulum*) is a metal censer suspended from chains, in which incense is burned during worship services. It is used in Christian churches including the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Assyrian Church of the East and Oriental Orthodox, as well as in some Lutheran, Old Catholic, United Methodist, Reformed, Presbyterian Church USA, Anglican churches (with its use almost universal amongst Anglo Catholic Anglican churches). In Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Anglican churches, the altar server who carries the thurible is called the *thurifer*. The practice is rooted in the earlier traditions of Judaism in the time of the Second Jewish Temple.

The workings of a thurible are quite simple. Each thurible consists of a censer section, chains (typically three or four, although single-chain thuribles also exist), a metal ring around the chains (used to lock the lid of the censer section in place), and usually (although not always) a removable metal crucible in which the burning charcoals are placed. Many thuribles are supplied with a stand, allowing the thurible to be hung

safely when still hot, but not in use. Burning charcoal is placed inside the metal censer, either directly into the bowl section, or into a removable crucible if supplied, and incense (of which there are many different varieties) is placed upon the charcoal, where it melts to produce a sweet smelling smoke. This may be done several times during the service as the incense burns quite quickly. Once the incense has been placed on the charcoal the thurible is then closed and used for censuring.

Credence Table

A credence table is a small side table in the sanctuary of a Christian [church](#) which is used in the celebration of the Eucharist. (It comes from the Latin *credens, -entis*, meaning believer).

The credence table is usually placed near the wall on the epistle (south) side of the sanctuary, and may be covered with a fine linen cloth. It is sometimes tended by an acolyte (or altar server) and contains on it the implements that are used in the Eucharistic celebration, which may include the bread and wine prior to their consecration, a bowl, perforated spoon, ewer and towel for the lavabo and the ablutions after Holy Communion. The wafers for the communion of the faithful may be stored in a ciborium, or host box (sometimes erroneously referred to as a pyx). The wine and water for the chalice will be in cruets. The chalice, and paten, covered with their cloths and veil (see chalice cloths for details) may be placed on the credence from the beginning of the service until the Offertory, at which time they are moved to the altar.

Credence bell

In the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church, Lutheranism, Methodism and Anglicanism, an altar bell (also Mass bell, sacring bell, Sacryn bell, saints' bell, sance-bell, or sanctus bell) is typically a small hand-held bell or set of bells. The primary reason for the use of such bells is to create a “joyful noise to the Lord” as a way to give thanks for the miracle taking place atop the altar. An ancillary function of the bells is to focus the attention of those attending Mass that a supernatural event is taking place on the altar. These are kept on the credence table or some other convenient location within the chancel.

Candlesticks

In the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church, candles are required to be placed on or beside the altar, at least for the celebration of Mass. For reasons of religious tradition, the Church used the candles at divine service that are made of beeswax.

For celebration of Mass, it is required that "on or next to the altar are to be placed candlesticks with lighted candles: at least two in any celebration, or even four or six, especially for a Sunday Mass or a holy day of obligation. If the Diocesan Bishop celebrates, then seven candles should be used, except if he is outside the boundary of his jurisdiction".

At the beginning of the 20th century, complex rules governed the composition and number of candles to be used at Mass. Lighted candles of the correct composition (beeswax, with no more than a minimal admixture of other material, and usually bleached) were considered so essential that, if before the consecration they happened to go out (quenched, for instance, by a gust of wind) and could not be relit within fifteen minutes, the celebration of Mass had to be abandoned, and some writers main-

tained that even if the candles could be relit within that time, Mass should in any case be begun again from the start. Some of these rules were formulated only in the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the 20th century. The Roman Missal of 1920 indicates that on the altar there should be "at least two candlesticks with lit candles" with a centrally placed cross between them. There is also a rule given in the same section of this Roman Missal that "a candle to be lit at the elevation of the Sacrament" should be placed with the cruets of wine and water to the Epistle side of the altar.