A-Z of Eucharist



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| Acolyte  An acolyte is an someone who assists the priest/celebrant in a religious services such as Mass. They often perform duties such as lighting altar candles and carrying the candle for the procession at Mass. An acolyte can also be an altar server. An altar server serves at Mass by supporting with tasks such as fetching objects, ringing the bell and bringing the book. They usually wear white vestments called albs. |
| Adoration  A sign of devotion to and worship of Jesus Christ under the appearance of the consecrated host, that is, sacramental bread. |
| Altar  The place where bread and wine are consecrated (transubstantiation); it is a place of sacrifice and a table of sharing. |
| Benediction  A service in which the congregation is blessed with the Blessed Sacrament in the Monstrance. Benediction means the blessing given by the priest or deacon with the Sacred Host at the end of Exposition. It includes hymns, prayers and readings related to the Real Presence of the Lord Jesus in the Eucharist eg the Divine Praises. During Benediction, the priest wears a big cloak called the cope and a humeral veil to cover his hands and shoulders as a sign of respect. |
| Bidding prayers  Prayers which request help or relief for someone else. Prayers of intercession, or bidding prayers, are said during Mass. |
| Blessed Sacrament Blessed Sacrament refers to the Eucharist as having a unique and special place among the seven sacraments. It can also mean the consecrated bread (the host) reserved after the celebration of the Mass (see Real Presence). |
| Blood of Christ   1. The real blood which Jesus shed on the cross for our salvation 2. The sacramental blood of Jesus present at the Last Supper and at the Sacrament of the Eucharist |
| Body of Christ   1. The sacramental body of Christ present at Last Supper, the Sacrament of the Eucharist and Adoration 2. Christ’s post-resurrection body 3. The mystical body of Christ, the Church   For more information about this, see the Q&A section. |
| Chalice  A cup for the wine to be consecrated in during the Mass. |
| Ciborium  The covered dish or container for holding the hosts which are usually stored in the tabernacle after the Mass. |
| Communion (Holy)   1. The Blessed Sacrament/the Eucharist under the appearance of bread and wine 2. The action of receiving the Sacrament (eg children making their First Holy Communion) |
| Congregation  A group of people assembled for religious worship. |
| Consecrated bread and wine Unleavened bread and wine changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus (transubstantiation). For more information on consecration, see the Origin of Words section. |
| Divine Praises  This is a very special prayer that is said during Benediction in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. The priest leads the prayer and the participants echo his words. It is a prayer giving praise and glory to God. It begins ‘Blessed be God. Blessed be his holy name…’ |
| Eucharist   1. The sacrament (Mass) in which Catholics receive the bread and wine which has become the body and blood of Jesus. It comes from the Greek meaning ‘thanksgiving’. It is the central form of worship for Christians. 2. The name given to the consecrated bread and wine which are received during the sacrament. |
| Exposition  At the beginning of the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, a priest or deacon removes the sacred host from the tabernacle and places it in the monstrance on the altar for Adoration by the faithful. We may sing ‘O Sacrament most holy’ or ‘Salutaris Hostia’ at this point. |
| Eucharistic prayer  This is the central part of the Eucharistic liturgy. There are eight parts to this prayer and its ritual history goes back to the time of the Apostles. |
| Genuflect To bend the knee or touch the ground (usually with one knee) as a gesture of respect. |
| Gloria  A prayer said or sung in praise of God towards the beginning of Mass after the Penitential Rite. It begins with the words of the angels when they appeared to the shepherds on the night Jesus was born: ‘Glory to God in the highest…’ |
| Gospel  A reading from the Gospel according to St Matthew, St Mark, St Luke or St John. This is read by a member of the clergy. The congregation stands to greet the Gospel. |
| Gospel acclamation  This is said or sung before the Gospel. It begins and ends with the word Alleluia (except in Lent when Alleluia is omitted). To acclaim is to praise enthusiastically and publicly. The Gospel is acclaimed because it is the part of the Bible which has Jesus’ specific words and is centred on his life, death and resurrection. The congregation stands for the Gospel acclamation as this is away of honouring Jesus’ presence in the word of the Gospel. |
| Holy Hour A Holy Hour is when we spend a set amount of time (like an hour) in Eucharistic Adoration where the Blessed Sacrament has been exposed and we pray together with other people. A Holy Hour will often begin with Exposition and end with Benediction. |
| Homily  A commentary given by the priest (or deacon) that follows the readings from the Bible. |
| Host  Unleavened bread changed into the Body of Jesus. The word ‘host’ comes from the Latin ‘hostia’ which means ‘sacrificial victim’. The term ‘host’ can be used to describe the bread both before and after consecration although it is more correct to use it after consecration. Prior to consecration, the term ‘altar bread’ is preferred. |
| Incense  Burning incense is an ancient tradition and has its roots in Jewish Scripture. Just as the smoke rises to God, so do our prayers. The incense is a reminder of God’s presence. Incense is burned at funerals and to bless statues. It is also used at other special services. However, the use of incense at Mass is optional and is not as common as it was in the past, although it is still used in many churches. |
| Intercessions  Prayers of intercessions (also known as bidding prayers) are read by a member of the congregation and all of the participants are invited to say their own personal prayer to God in the silence of their own hearts. These prayers are united with the prayers of Mary, Jesus’ mother and mother of the Church, as she acts as an intercessor (a mediator) between us and her Son. We believe Mary intervenes on our half through prayer, just as she did at the wedding feast at Cana. |
| Jesus Jesus himself acts in every celebration of the Mass. It is the Church’s belief that the priest or celebrant stands at the altar *in* *persona Christi capitis (Lain = in the person of Christ, the Head).* This means that Christ, as Head of the Church, acts through the priest; he does not merely act in Christ’s place or at his command. |
| Kyrie eleison  These Greek words mean‘Lord have mercy’ and is said or sung at Mass. These words have their roots in ancient tradition. |
| Lamb of God  Jesus is the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world through his death on a cross. He is the Paschal Lamb. |
| Last Supper  The Passover meal celebrated by Jesus and his friends the night before he died. It is then that we believe that he ‘instituted’ or introduced the Eucharist (‘This is my body, this is my blood, do this in memory of me’). |
| Lectern  The book-stand from which the Bible is read. |
| Lectionary  A book which contains the selection of approved readings from the Bible to be read at Mass and other celebrations. |
| Mass  The celebration of the Sacrament of the Eucharist. See further information in the Q&A. |
| Missa  From the Latin ‘Ite, missa est’ (‘Go, it is the sending’) when the faithful are sent out to love and serve the Lord at the end of Mass. |
| Maundy Thursday  This was when Christ had his last supper with his friends which was a Passover meal. He initiated the Eucharist after he washed his disciples’ feet. The word ‘maundy’ is a shortened form of ‘mandatum’ (Latin) which means ‘command’. This is because he gave them a new commandment which was to ‘love one another’. He also told his friends to ‘do this in memory of me’, meaning to share his body and blood in the form of bread and wine. Maundy Thursday marks the first day of the Triduum which lasts for three days. It is followed by Good Friday when Jesus was put to death on the cross and Holy Saturday when he laid in the tomb. |
| Monstrance  A decorated frame used to hold and display the consecrated host during Adoration/Benediction. |
| Offertory  This is when gifts of bread and wine are brought to the altar to be consecrated during Mass. |
| PaschalWe refer to Easter as the Paschal season. The word ‘paschal’ is the equivalent of Greek ‘pascha’ and is derived from Aramaic ‘pasḥā’ and Hebrew ‘pesaḥ’, meaning ‘The passing over’. It originates from the Passover experience of the Israelites when they fled from slavery in Egypt.  The Paschal lamb, in Judaism, is the lamb sacrificed at the first Passover, on the eve of the Exodus from Egypt, the most momentous event in Jewish history. According to the story of the Passover (Exodus:12), the Jews marked their lintels and doorposts with the blood of the lamb, so that the Angel of Death passed over their houses sparing them from destruction, and allowed them to flee to freedom. St. Paul, draws a parallel with the sacrifice made by Jesus, referring to Christ as the **Paschal lamb** (I Corinthians 5:7); hence, the **Christian** view of Christ as the spotless **Lamb** of God who by his death freed mankind from the bonds of sin. At Mass we say ‘*Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us…grant us peace*.’  The Paschal mystery is one of the central concepts of Catholic faith relating to the history of salvation. Its main subject is the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ – the work that God the Father sent his Son to accomplish on earth.  The Paschal candle is a big, white candle, marked with the Greek letters, Alpha and Omega, and the numbers of the current year, used in liturgies in Western Christianity. A new Paschal candle is blessed and lit every year at the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday night, and is used throughout the Paschal season – the Easter season and then throughout the year at baptisms and funerals. Baptismal candles are lit from the Paschal candle.  Paschal Triduum Triduum is a Latin word, formed from the Latin prefix tri- (meaning ‘three’) and the Latin word dies (‘day’). The Triduum is the period of three days that begins with the liturgy on the evening of Maundy Thursday which reaches its high point in the Easter Vigil, and closes with evening prayer on Easter Sunday. It is the highlight of the liturgical year and is of great significance for Christians as it commemorates the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus. |
| Passover  The meal Jesus shared with his friends at the Last Supper when he instituted the Eucharist. |
| Paten  A plate that usually holds the priest’s larger host (bread) to be consecrated at the Mass. See Q&A for more information about the size of hosts. |
| Penitential rite  The part of the Mass (near the beginning) when Catholics acknowledge their sins, express sorrow for them and ask God for forgiveness. |
| Readings  At Mass, during the Liturgy of the Word, there are two readings: the first is usually from the Old Testament and the second is from the New Testament (not a Gospel reading as this is separate). In Eastertide the first reading is also from the New Testament. These are read by members of the parish. |
| Real Presence This is Jesus who is fully present among us under the appearance of bread and wine. His presence remains in the consecrated bread (the host) reserved after the celebration of the Mass*.* |
| Responsorial Psalm  The psalm is read (or ideally sung) in between the first and second readings. Members of the congregation join in with the response. |
| Resurrection  At Mass, Christ’s death as well as his resurrection are made present. |
| Sacred vessels  Sacred objects that hold the Body and Blood of Jesus. There are three: the paten, chalice and ciborium. |
| Sanctuary  The sacred space where the altar is and where Mass is celebrated. |
| Sanctuary lamp  A wax candle, generally in a red glass container, kept burning day and night wherever the Blessed Sacrament is ‘reserved’ meaning kept or contained. The Blessed Sacrament is reserved in the tabernacle. |
| Sign of peace  A handshake or embrace which takes place at Mass before receiving the Eucharist. The words ‘Peace be with you’ …‘And with your spirit’ are often used. |
| Tabernacle  The tabernacle is the ornate, secure box in which the Blessed Sacrament is reserved outside of Mass. It is often at the centre of the church. The sanctuary lamp burns near the tabernacle as a sign in honour of the Real Presence of Christ. |
| Transubstantiation  The belief that the bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit, during Mass. |
| Vestments  During Mass, a priest wears several vestments, the outer one being the chasuble. It has a special colour depending on the liturgical year and each colour represents something different:  **Green:** Ordinary time *(Symbolising hope, eternal life)*  **Purple:** Lent and Advent; Reconciliation; Funerals *(Penance)*  **White:** Christmas and Easter; Feasts of Our Lord, Mary and the Saints who were not Martyrs; weddings and funerals; Confirmation *(Purity, joy, triumph)*  **Red:** Feast of Our Lord’s Passion; Palm Sunday; Feasts of Martyrs and Pentecost *(Passion, blood, fire, God’s love, Holy Spirit, martyrdom)*  **Gold**: This can replace white, gold or green but not purple *(Joy)* |
| A Mass held on a Saturday evening or the evening before a feast such as Easter or Christmas. This counts as the Sunday Mass. |