

Liturgical Vocabulary Lexicon

St. Thomas the Apostle Parish

Please use the following lexicon to increase your wonder of the holy mysteries, enrich your liturgical ministry, and deepen your participation in the Body of Christ.

Acolyte (ak-uh-lahyt, n.) – *Latin.* “helper.” An Altar attendant in public worship. The highest-ranking member of the four minor orders; a formal office of the church. *See Altar Server. i.e. The Acolyte, like the priest, is allowed to purify communion vessels.*

Agape (ah-gah-pey, v.) – *Greek.* “love.” The last and most beautiful name for God in the New Testament: “God is agape” (1 Jn 4:8. 16). A love that springs from goodness, from pure grace, totally self-less. The mystery at the heart of the Eucharist, the liturgical reality of the Church. *i.e. Christ gives himself for the world, embodying God’s Agape for humanity.*

Alb (n.) – *Latin.* “White (vestment).” A white linen vestment with narrow sleeves, worn in liturgical celebrations as a symbol of a person’s baptism into the life of Christ. *i.e. The server wears an Alb as a symbol to remind all baptized people of their salvation in Christ.*

Altar (n.) – *Latin.* “Ritual table or platform (for offering).” A fixed, ritual table of special construction for the Eucharistic celebration, consecrated at a church’s dedication by a Bishop with Sacred Chrism. Site of the ritual sacrifice of the Mass. *i.e. The Altar is the most important element of a Catholic Church and is often placed front and center.*

Altar Server (n.) – A lay person who assists the priest with the ritual elements of mass, not formally commissioned. *i.e. The Altar Server struggled to hold the large book for the priest at Mass.*

Ambo (am-boh, n.) – *Greek.* “A raised desk.” The pedestal, raised surface (aka pulpit) from which the holy Word of God is proclaimed. Sometimes referred to as the “Table of the Word,” mirroring the term “Table of the Eucharist.” *i.e. The Altar and Ambo of the church were made of the same materials, indicating the presence of God in the Word and the Eucharist.*

Ambry (am-bree, n.) – *Latin.* From the word “Amarium,” which is a cupboard, wall recess or other special location for the keeping of the Three Sacred Oils. *i.e. Before the baptism took place, the priest went to the Ambry to get the Sacred Chrism oil for signing the child’s forehead.*

Anamnesis (an-am-nee-sis, n.) – *Greek.* “reminder, remembrance.” The liturgical celebrations of the Church brings to mind all the saving events that God did in history which have their climax and fulfillment in the Cross and Resurrection of Christ. A “memorial”: the Church’s memory brings an unsurpassed realism of the events in the liturgy into our lives. *i.e. We become the Body of Christ through the act of Anamnesis in the Mass.*

Anaphora (uh-naf-er-uh, n.) – *Greek.* “a carrying on high.” The central movement of the Eucharistic prayer consisting of thanksgiving, anamnesis, epiclesis and intercession. *i.e. Every liturgical celebration is an Anaphora because we offer our lives to share in Christ’s Ascension.*

Aspersory (as-per-sir-ee, n.) – *Latin.* A ritual water pale vessel often with a handle, which is used for the carrying of Holy Water. *i.e. On Sundays during Easter, the priest uses an Aspersory to carry Holy Water in order to sprinkle the people as a reminder of their baptism.*

Aspergillum (as-per-jil-uhm, n.) – *Latin*. “Sprinkler.” A wand, brush or other handheld instrument used for sprinkling holy water. *i.e.* *The new brush-like Aspergillum sprinkles more Holy Water than the older brass one.*

Benediction (ben-i-dik-shuhn, n). – *Latin*. “blessing.” A service of exposition and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, concluding with a blessing of the people with the Sacrament. *i.e.* *Our parish observes the Eucharistic service of Benediction on Sunday evenings during Lent.*

Book of the Gospels (n). The lectionary containing the Sunday Gospel readings, adorned for ritual use to indicate the special presence of God in the Gospels. *i.e.* *The Deacon or a reader processes with the Book of the Gospels, showing the importance of the Word of God.*

Bow (v.) – To bend the head or body in recognition, reverence or submission. *i.e.* *The liturgist said the ministers should make a slight Bow of the head when serving during the liturgy.*

Celebration (n.), **Celebrate** (v.) – A Jubilant, Festive or Solemn gathering. To observe or commemorate with festivities. To make known or proclaim. *i.e.* *The family reunion began as a gathering, but turned into a raucous Celebration.*

Chalice (**chal**-is, n.) – *Latin*. A cup. From the word “calix” which literally means, “a cup for drinking.” Use of the word chalice in contemporary translation often indicates intended use for wine. *i.e.* *He took the Chalice, gave it to his disciples saying, ‘this is the chalice of my blood...’*

Chasuble (**chaz**-yuh-buhl, n.) – *Latin*. A sleeveless outer vestment worn by the Priest only for the Celebration of Eucharist, colored and decorated to reflect the day’s celebration. *i.e.* *On the 5th Sunday of Lent, the priest wears a rose colored Chasuble to symbolize hope for Easter.*

Church (n.) – *Greek*. “the Lord’s house.” A building for the public worship of God. An institution or denomination of Christians. From the Latin “Ecclesia,” which also refers to the whole body of Christian believers. *i.e.* *Christ is head of the Church, the body of all the faithful.*

Ciborium (si-bohr-ee-uhm, n.) **Ciboria** (si-bohr-ee-uh, plural) – *Latin*. A cup or bowl with a cover, primarily used for holding consecrated hosts in the tabernacle. *i.e.* *The priest ran out of hosts, and retrieved more from the Ciborium in the tabernacle.*

Cincture (**singk**-cher, n.) – *Latin*. “belt or girdle.” The rope (often in various colors of the liturgical year) or belt used to tie down vestments in the middle. *i.e.* *The Altar Server wore a green Cincture today, because it is ordinary time.*

Cope (kohp, n.) – *Latin*. “cape.” A liturgical vestment worn by a presider in place of a chasuble at any liturgy where the Eucharist is not observed, such as a wedding rite or a celebration of the liturgy of the hours. *i.e.* *I was surprised to see the priest in a Cope, since I thought there would be a celebration of the Eucharist at the wedding.*

Corporal (**kawr**-per-uhl, n.) – *Latin*. “body.” A white linen cloth which is placed centrally on the Altar, upon which the consecrated gifts are laid, typically square and often etched with a red cross at the bottom center middle. *i.e.* *The Corporal is placed on the Altar with folds pointing downward, so that remaining crumbs can be easily folded up inside for purification.*

Credence Table (**kreed**-ns, n.) – A small shelf or side table used for holding ritual items for use in the Eucharistic celebration. From the word “creed” meaning, “belief.” *i.e. Before Mass the sacristan checks the Credence Table to make sure every item was prepared.*

Crucifix (**kroo**-suh-fiks, n.) – *Latin.* A cross upon which the corpus (body) of Christ is shown crucified. *i.e. There is a Crucifix in every Catholic church, to remind all faithful of the power of Christ to conquer death.*

Cruet (**kroo**-it, n.) – *Old English.* A glass bottle or pitcher, especially for holding water, oil or wine. *i.e. At daily mass, a server brings forward a Cruet filled with wine instead of gift bearers as on Sunday.*

Deacon (n.) – *Greek.* “servant, minister.” Ordained religious order, either permanent or transitional, prior to that of priest. The ordinary minister of the proclamation of the Gospel and the precious Blood of Christ. Special minister to those in need. *i.e. Since the beginning of the early Church as recorded in the book of Acts, Deacons serve a special ministry of service.*

Epiclesis (ep-e-klee-sis, n.) – *Greek.* “calling down upon, invocation.” The central moment in the Eucharistic Prayer prior to the institutional narrative, addressed to God the Father that he would send his Spirit on the Church’s offering so that it may be changed into the Body of Christ. *i.e. Ordained ministers are servants of the Spirit, who is called upon through the Epiclesis of the Eucharistic prayer.*

Eucharist (**yoo**-kuh-rist, v.) – *Greek.* “thanksgiving.” The Sacrament, celebration and commemoration of Christ’s self-gift, who is present in the species of bread & wine, the Word, the priest, and the prayer & song of the people. The meal of thanksgiving offered to God the Father, which recalls the passion, death and resurrection of Christ, and through the Paschal mystery, transforms the community of faith by the power of the Holy Spirit. *i.e. Saint Augustine wrote that through the Eucharist we are called to become what we see, and receive what we are: the Body of Christ.*

Extraordinary Minister of Communion (n.) – A fully initiated, Catholic, lay member of the church, who through proper training and formation, distributes the Eucharist in the absence of a sufficient number of ordinary ministers of communion (priests and deacons). *i.e. After seeing the same faces on Sundays, he asked to become an Extraordinary Minister of Communion.*

Font (n.) – *Latin.* “spring, fountain.” A productive source, reservoir or receptacle, usually for water. *i.e. The Baptismal Font is a symbol of the overflowing life God gives us through Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Genuflect (**jen**-yoo-flekt, v.) – *Latin.* “to touch a bended knee to the ground.” A gesture of reverence and worship which expresses servitude made by the touching of a knee to the ground. *i.e. Roman soldiers used to Genuflect.*

Host (n.) – *Latin.* “sacrificial victim.” The term refers to Christ, the sacrificial victim, who through the power of the Holy Spirit, is present in the unleavened bread. *i.e. Our church orders larger Hosts for communion, to give a richer sense of being fed through the sacrifice of Christ.*

Kenosis (ki-noh-sis, n.) – *Greek*. “emptying of self, self-annihilation.” The divine way of loving through complete self-denial. The Word of God radically turns down Glory through the incarnation without reservation and without call for recognition as radically proclaimed in Philippians 2:7. *i.e. Jesus saves the world by Kenosis, complete self-denial out of love.*

Lavabo (luh-vah-boh, n.) – *Latin*. “bowl for hand washing.” A bowl used for the ritual washing of a priest’s hands prior to the Eucharistic Prayer. *i.e. Our servers hold a larger Lavabo so the hand washing does not spill water on the sanctuary floor.*

Lectionary (lek-shuh-ner-ee, n.) – *Latin*. The book containing the scriptural lesson appointed for public reading at Mass according to the liturgical calendar. The lectionary observes 3 annual Sunday cycles (A – Mathew, B – Mark, and C – Luke, with John interspersed), and 2 weekday cycles. *i.e. Proclaimers of the word review the Lectionary before Mass.*

Lector (lek-ter, n.) – *Latin*. “reader.” A member of the four minor orders who proclaims the Word of God during the liturgy; a formal office of the church. *i.e. At our parish, we call the Lector a Proclaimer, because they do more than simply read the Word of God to the people.*

Liturgy (lit-er-jee, n.) – *Greek*. “work of the people.” The public and official rites of the Church. The worship of the gathered people finding its goal in the transformative, communal glorification of God. *i.e. Through the Sunday Liturgy the people’s praise cooperates with God’s grace, changing our lives for the sake of the Kingdom.*

Liturgical Year (n.) – The formally organized structure of the Church’s worship, divided into observances of seasons (Christmas, Ordinary and Easter) and Solemnities/Feasts/Memorials which are observed on specific dates. *i.e. Thanks to the Liturgical Year, the Church’s celebrations align with my personal life experience throughout the year.*

Mass (n.) – *Latin*. From the old Latin dismissal rite, “*Ite, missa est, ‘Go, the Mass is [ended],’*” the traditional name for the Eucharist, that is, the celebration of the death and Resurrection of Christ. *i.e. We call it the Mass, because we are sent forth into the world to proclaim Christ.*

Missal (n.) – *Latin*. The book containing the introductory documents and pray texts for the celebration of the Mass according to the Roman rite, formerly called the Sacramentary. *i.e. The altar server was young, and struggled to hold the large Missal for the priest at Mass.*

Monstrance (mon-struhns, n.) – *Latin*. “to show, display.” A vessel used to expose to view the Eucharistic bread, usually made of precious metal with a broad base, stem and round opening. *i.e. At Eucharistic adoration, a Monstrance is used to show the consecrated host.*

Nave (neyv, n.) – *Latin*. “ship.” The ecclesiastical architectural term referring to the space between the church entrance and the sanctuary, where the congregants sit or stand. *i.e. The procession crosses the church Nave from the entrance to the sanctuary.*

Pall (pawl, n.) – *Latin*. “cloak.” A sacred cloth often derived from Altar linen for covering the coffin at funeral Masses as a symbol of Baptism; also a small square cloth with hard backing that was previously placed atop the chalice at Mass. *i.e. The family spread the Pall over their loved one at the beginning of the Funeral Mass to recollect life in Christ through Baptism.*

Paschal (pas-kuhl, adj.) – Hebrew. “Passover.” Of or pertaining to the unified total event of Christ’s Passion, death, Resurrection, Ascension, and sending of the Holy Spirit. *i.e.* We call Christ the Paschal Lamb, because He was sacrificed so that we might have life.

Paten (n.) – Latin. A small plate or disk, often made of metal, used to hold bread which is to be consecrated at the Eucharist. *i.e.* The hosts are served on a paten at Mass in many churches; our church uses bowls.

Presider (n.) – The one who oversees any act of public worship, responsible for animating ritual texts and inspiring the assembly to active participation. *i.e.* This weekend’s Presider at Mass was very passionate about the Gospel, which in turn motivated me personally.

Priest (n.) – The one who performs the basic ordained ministry in the Catholic Church who has responsibilities pertaining to worship and pastoral care in place of his Bishop or Superior. *i.e.* The Priest at our parish presides at all Sunday celebrations of the Eucharist and exercises a variety of pastoral ministries during the week, among many other responsibilities.

Procession (n.), **Process** (proh-ses, v.) – The deliberate, ritualized and symbolic movement of the people of God into the church for worship. The act of moving from one place to another, acting out the holy mystery, celebrated. *i.e.* The people of God Process into the world, when they are sent forth at the end of Mass.

Proclaim (v.) – To announce or declare in an open or ostentatious way, making known publicly, extoling and praising. *i.e.* The deacon must Proclaim the Gospel in such a way to bring to life the Good News of Jesus Christ, not simply just reading the words.

Purificator (pyoo r-uh-fi-kay-ter, n.) – Latin. “to purify.” A small cloth used for wiping the paten and drying the chalice at Mass, made of white absorbent linen, often folded in thirds and occasionally marked by a red cross. *i.e.* Every minister of the Precious Blood uses a Purificator to wipe their vessel’s lip.

Pyx (picks, n.) – Greek. “wood container.” Despite the original Greek meaning, it is a small metallic receptacle used to carry Holy Communion to those are unable to attend Mass. *i.e.* The ministers to the sick and homebound often borrow a Pyx from the sacristy.

Relic (n.) – Latin. “remains.” Material remains of the bodies of canonized and beatified saints, distinguished as major (parts of the body) or minor (objects touched by the body) objects. *i.e.* The Altar of every Catholic Church has a Relic either within it or under it, replicating the early church practice of building churches on ‘holy ground,’ over the burial places of martyrs and saints.

Reverence (v.) – The act of showing respect and awe; veneration. *i.e.* The proclaimer bows before the Altar as she passes, indicating Reverence for God’s life-saving Word.

Sacrarium (suh-krair-ee-uhm, n.) – Latin. “sacristy.” A basin or sink located in the sacristy that drains directly into the earth, used for the cleaning of Eucharistic vessels and disposal of blessed ashes, oils or holy water. *i.e.* We rarely use the Sacrarium in the sacristy, since Father purifies the vessels immediately after communion.

- Sacristan** (**sak-re-stuhn, n.**) – *Latin. “vestry.”* A person charged with the care, preparation and maintenance of sacred vessels, vestments, oils, and other liturgical items. *i.e. The Sacristan places the sacred books and vessels out before Mass for the celebration of the Eucharist.*
- Sacristy** (n.) – *Latin. “sacristy.”* A preparation and vesting room where Eucharistic vessels, Altar linens, Vestments and other liturgical wares are stored. *i.e. The priest and other ministers compare final details about the liturgy while preparing in the Sacristy.*
- Sanctuary** (n.) – *Latin. “building for religious worship.”* The space in a church immediately around the Altar, often an elevated platform. *i.e. The Ambo and Altar are placed on the Sanctuary.*
- Silence** (n.) – The quieting of one’s being; first requirement of which is not speaking, then recollection, stillness, calming emotion and acceptance of experiences without judgment. *i.e. The most important parts of the Mass are often those of prolonged Silence.*
- Solemnity** (*suh-lem-ni-tee, n.*) – A principal day with the highest rank in the liturgical calendar, eclipsing all other feasts or memorials. *i.e. The greatest Solemnity is the celebration of Easter.*
- Stole** (n.) – A long, narrow strip of fabric worn over one or both shoulders by bishops, priests, and deacons, normally under an outer garment, signifying office in the church. *i.e. The deacon’s Stole rests on one shoulder and is fastened at the opposite side on the waist.*
- Tabernacle** (**tab-er-nak-uhl, n.**) – A secured, stationary container in the church in which the consecrated Hosts are reserved, primarily for Holy Communion to the sick and dying. *i.e. The people genuflect towards the Tabernacle when passing it as a sign of reverence for Christ’s presence.*
- Thurible** (**thoor-uh-buhl, n.**) – *Latin “censer” or “incense.”* the vessel containing hot coals in which incense is burned, also called a censer. The minister charged with holding the thurible is called the thurifer. *i.e. Fr. usually places lots of incense in the Thurible as a rich, visible symbol.*
- Universal Prayer** (n.) – The petitionary prayers which represent the needs of the local church, formerly called, “general intercessions,” or “prayers of the faithful.” *i.e. When the Deacon is not present, the second Lector proclaims the petitions in the Universal Prayer.*
- Usher** (n.) – A minister charged with overseeing and enhancing the church’s ministry of hospitality, ensuring at every gathering that no one is hindered from worshipping God because of external obstacles. *i.e. The Usher helped me find a seat and also assisted with the collection.*
- Vestment** (n.) Vesture (plural) – The special garments worn by liturgical ministers indicating the proper function of the wearer. *i.e. The parishioner generously donated funds for a new Vestment for the priest to wear.*