

## A LITURGICAL GLOSSARY

- Alb:** White garment (from the Latin “alba”, white) worn under a chasuble or dalmatic. The white color signifies that we have been washed in baptism.
- Altar:** The table on which the communion meal is prepared and consecrated; the focal point of Eucharistic worship. The altar stone is usually etched with five crosses symbolizing the five wounds of Christ.
- Ambo:** The combination lectern-pulpit where the Bible is read and from which the sermon or homily is preached. It is a Latin word meaning “both”, referring to its dual function. Sometimes shaped as an eagle, a popular device since the Oxford Movement in the mid-19th century; a possible reference to Isaiah 40:31 or Exodus 19:4.
- Amice:** Cloth collar worn underneath liturgical vestments to protect them from soiling.
- Anamnesis:** Translated in the Eucharistic Prayer as “in remembrance”, it really means, “to call him into the present by reenacting the past”.
- Anglo-catholic:** A style of worship in some Anglican and Episcopal churches, characterized by the involvement of the whole person in worship: mind, spirit and especially body, by use of action as well as word, and celebration of all the senses; rich in symbols and ceremonial. “Anglo” means that this style originated in England, and “catholic” means it is within the ancient catholic heritage.
- Anthem:** An English variant on the word “antiphon”, it now generally refers to a short sacred musical work in English for choir, but as the Archbishop of Canterbury has decreed, the word has no precise definition. The choir generally sings one at the Offertory.
- Antiphon:** A refrain to be repeated by the congregation at intervals during a psalm. Greek word for “opposite voice”. The refrain may be a short phrase from the psalm, or some other short verse of Scripture.
- Antiphonal:** A style of psalm-singing in which people on the opposite sides of the church sing or say alternating lines of a psalm. Reflects the dualistic literary construction of the psalms. This style of singing led to the development of traditional monastic divided choir stalls, as that is how psalms are usually done in monastic communities. Means, literally, “by opposite voices”.
- Apostles’ Creed:** A statement of faith especially associated with Baptism.
- Asperges:** The act of sprinkling the people with holy water, as a reminder of their baptismal covenant. A Latin word meaning “wash”. The celebrant may asperse the people during the entrance procession. At a requiem the celebrant may asperse the body to call to mind the promises of baptism.
- Aspergillum:** A special small perforated container with a handle that is used to sprinkle holy water.
- Aspersorium:** A small bucket containing holy water to be sprinkled with an aspergillum.
- Aumbry:** A small cupboard or safe to hold the Blessed Sacrament or holy oils.
- Baptismal font:** The pool of holy water in which new Christians are baptized, according to Jesus’ command, as a sign of new covenant with God. Often the baptismal font stands at the entrance to the church, as a reminder that we enter into life with Christ by passing through the water of baptism. If there is holy water in the baptismal font, upon entering the church you might touch it and make the sign of the cross as a reminder of your baptismal promises.
- Blessed Sacrament:** A term of reverence used to refer to bread and wine which has been consecrated to become the Body and Blood of Christ.
- Bow:** A gesture made in reverence to our Lord, by inclining the head slightly forward or bending slightly forward at the waist. Usually done when the processional cross passes by, at the mention of the name of Jesus, at the mention of the Incarnation in the Creed, when passing before the Blessed Sacrament, and other occasions.
- Burse:** A square stiff cloth folding case that holds the corporal, set on top of the chalice and veil. Usually of the liturgical color of the day or season. (see illustration under Veil)
- Cassock:** Floor-length robe, usually black, basic liturgical garment
- Celebrant:** One of the three sacred ministers, the priest who presides at the Eucharist (“celebrates”). The celebrant is vested in a white alb and a chasuble of the liturgical color of the day or season.
- Cense:** To gently swing the thurible (filled with burning incense) toward or around an object or person, symbolic of purifying our intentions or our space. (more at “incense”)
- Chalice:** The common cup of wine given at communion.
- Chancel:** Usually, the part of a church containing the altar and seats for the ministers of the liturgy. The word “chancel” (from a Latin word for a lattice screen) implies an area that is enclosed and separated from the rest of the church; when this is not the case, the area is called the “sanctuary”.
- Chant:** A particular kind of sacred song designed as a method of centering prayer. Sometimes called “Gregorian chant” because the repertoire of chants was codified by Pope Gregory the Great in the sixth century, also called “plainsong” or “plainchant” because it is unencumbered by external ornamentation. Intentionally directionless and without overt rhythm, a kind of entrainment; singing it is not a performance, but a discipline which must be studied; when learned, it can be very effective at centering your mind and spirit for worship. In the way they were conceived, the chants would

have been sung by the entire community at worship—but with the benefit of many years’ practice and repetition. Simple chants are often sung by congregations today.

**Chasuble:** Primary vestment worn by the celebrant; usually of the color of the season or day.

**Cincture:** Belt-like cloth band worn over a cassock.

**Circumambulate:** To walk in a circle around something; the celebrant circumambulates the altar when he/she censes it.

**Collect for Purity:** Part of the entrance rites, a collect asking the Holy Spirit to cleanse and focus our thoughts for the Eucharist to come. (“Almighty God, to you all hearts are open...” BCP page 355)

**Collect of the Day:** The collect at the beginning of the Liturgy of the Word which sets out the theme of the day and reflects on the readings to come. The Collect of the Day is part of the “propers”, and they are found in the Book of Common Prayer beginning on page 211.

**Collect:** A special form of prayer which “collects” the intentions of all present. (Pronounced COL-lect).

**Communion chant:** See “Proper of the Mass”.

**Communion or Holy Communion:** Receiving the consecrated bread and wine in which we believe Jesus Christ to be truly present.

**Cope:** A long ceremonial cape worn by a priest or bishop in the liturgy.

**Corporeal:** A square linen cloth, used on the altar as a sort of placemat during the celebration of the Eucharist to contain any possible crumbs from the consecrated bread. From the Latin “corpora” (body) for the bread is the body of Christ.

**Corporate:** Formed into a unified body. The Eucharist is *corporate* worship, meaning that we do it together as one body, rather than privately as individuals. From the Latin “corpora” (body).

**Crucifer:** One of the ministers of the liturgy, the bearer of the processional cross. From the Latin “cruce” (cross) and “ferre” (to carry).

**Dalmatic:** Vestment worn by the deacon and subdeacon in the liturgy; usually matching the chasuble in the color of the season or day; similar to the chasuble but with sleeves. Often the deacon’s dalmatic has two stripes; the subdeacon’s has one.

**Deacon:** One of the ministers of the liturgy, the traditional role of the deacon is that of servant and minister to the sick and the poor. By tradition the deacon reads the Gospel, leads the Prayers of the People and prepares the altar for the Eucharist. All priests are also ordained deacons first; therefore the person who serves in a liturgy as the deacon may also be a priest. The deacon is usually vested in a white alb and a dalmatic of the liturgical color of the day or season.

**East end:** Inside every church, the end of the church where the altar is (without regard to the actual geographic orientation of the building).

**Elevation:** Holding up the consecrated bread and wine for all to see.

**Entrainment:** A spiritual discipline designed to draw you deeper into meditation or centering for prayer; Gregorian chant is a form of entrainment.

**Eucharist:** Our principal form of corporate worship, in which we recall, by his command, Jesus’ action at the Last Supper, consecrating bread and wine, thus calling him into our midst in the present. A Greek word meaning “thanksgiving”.

**Eucharistic Prayer:** The great prayer of thanks in which we summarize the story of creation, the tragedy of sin, the history of God’s call to us, God’s coming among us in the person of his Son, his death and resurrection, the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church, and the hope of eternal life; and finally, ask the Holy Spirit to consecrate for us the bread and wine to be the Body and Blood of Christ, after his commandment. There are four forms we normally use: Form A (p. 361), B (p. 367), C (p. 369) and D (372).

**Font:** See “Baptismal font”.

**Fraction anthem:** A short song reflecting on the communion we are about to receive. Part of the Ordinary.

**Girdle:** Belt-like white rope worn over an alb.

**Gloria in excelsis:** The Latin first words (“Glory in the highest”) of the usual Song of Praise sung during the entrance rite. The Gloria is part of the “ordinary”.

**Gospel Book:** The ceremonial copy of the Gospels from which the deacon reads, it contains the Gospel passages of the Bible conveniently arranged in liturgical order. During the Liturgy of the Word, the Gospel Book is placed on the altar to show the focus of that portion of the service upon the Word of God. When it is read, it is carried out to the midst of the people, since it contains the words of Jesus who was God in the midst of us. Because of its importance, all stand and turn to face it the book as the Gospel is read.

**Gospel:** One of the four books in the Bible (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) containing the story of the life of Jesus Christ. The principal Bible reading at the Eucharist. Means, “good news”.

**Gradual:** A psalm appointed to be sung between readings from the Bible. From the Latin “gradus” (step) because it used to be sung while the reader was walking down the steps from the altar to the ambo. Part of the propers, the schedule of psalms can be found in the Book of Common Prayer beginning on page 888.

**Great Amen:** The “Amen” by the people that concludes the Eucharistic Prayer, it should be given special emphasis as you are proclaiming your assent to God’s saving grace which has been recounted in the prayer.

**Holy water:** Water which has been blessed by a priest, used as a reminder of our baptismal covenant. Holy water can often be found in the baptismal font, at the entrance of the church, and is sprinkled on the people in the asperges.

**Homily:** A short sermon, expounding on the Scripture readings. In the liturgy, it follows immediately after the Gospel.

**Hymn:** A certain kind of poem set to music, which you can use to your spiritual benefit by singing the words and allowing them to speak to you. Tunes and words are usually written by different people; the tunes are given names, to distinguish them, such as *Hyfydol* or *Duke Street* or *Adoro devote*.

**Incense:** More about its use can be found in the St. John's brochure, "What is Incense All About?" In the ancient world it served a practical fumigatory purpose at worship, but also its rising smoke was thought to symbolize prayers ascending to heaven (Psalm 141:2). We use it, not so much to purify the air but to purify our intention, as a way of focusing attention on an object or person about to play a role in the liturgy. Because smell is a powerful memory association trigger, the use of incense in church can quickly call you into a worshipful frame of mind.

**Introit:** See "Proper of the Mass".

**Kyrie eleison:** Greek first words ("Lord have mercy") of one of the Songs of Praise sung during the entrance rite, especially during penitential seasons. The Kyrie, when sung, is part of the "ordinary".

**Latin:** Because it was the universal language of the Western church for centuries, many of our liturgical terms, as well as much beautiful hymnody, poetry and prose, are in the Latin which has been handed down to us since the early days of the Church.

**Lavabo:** Latin word for "I wash". Refers to the action of the celebrant washing his/her hands before celebrating the Eucharist, also to the bowl and the towel used for this handwashing.

**Lay person:** Lay persons are the primary ministers of the Church, encompassing all Christians who are not otherwise ordained. According to the Book of Common Prayer (page 855), "The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests and deacons." Lay persons read the Old Testament and New Testament lessons, often read or sing the Prayers of the People, and serve as ministers of the liturgy as subdeacons, thurifers, and crucifers.

**Lectern:** When there is also a separate pulpit, a reading stand from which the Bible is read. (See also "Ambo".) Often a lectern is shaped as an eagle, a popular device since the Oxford Movement in the mid-19th century; a possible reference to Isaiah 40:31 or Exodus 19:4.

**Lecternary Book:** Contains the Bible readings conveniently arranged in the order in which they will be read at the liturgy. Placed on the ambo or lectern.

**Lectinary:** The Bible readings, which are part of the "provers". The Lectionary, a three-year schedule of Bible readings, is found in the Book of Common Prayer beginning at page 888.

**Liturgy of the Word:** The first of two large sections of the Eucharistic liturgy; based on forms of synagogue worship from the time of Jesus. Includes the Collect of the Day; readings from the Bible, which the preacher then expounds upon; our response by proclaiming our belief in the Creed, and prayer. Concludes with the Peace.

**Liturgy:** From the Greek words *laos* (the people) and *ergon* (work): "a work of the people". The official corporate worship of the Church.

**Lord's Prayer:** The "Our Father", the prayer that Jesus taught us to say. (Matthew 6:9, Luke 11:2) Spoken at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer, just before we receive communion.

**Maniple:** Decorative cloth sometimes worn on the forearm of the celebrant.

**Memorial Acclamation:** A short exclamation of praise by the congregation in the midst of the Eucharistic Prayer ("Christ has died..." or "We remember his death..." or "We praise you...").

**Miter:** The distinctive tall pointed hat worn by a bishop in the liturgy.

**Motet:** An intimate-scale musical work for choir, usually polyphonic, often in Latin on a traditional text, but like the word "anthem" it has no precise definition. The choir may sing one during communion.

**Nave:** The main body of the church where the people sit.

**Nicene Creed:** A statement of faith drawn up by the Council of Nicaea in the 4th century and recited by Christians ever since. Part of the Ordinary.

**Offertory chant:** See "Proper of the Mass".

**Oil aumbry:** A small glass safe containing holy oils used to anoint the sick and the newly baptized.

**Opening Acclamation:** A short exclamation of praise by the congregation at the beginning of the liturgy ("Blessed be God...")

**Orans:** Latin for "praying", the hands-upraised position of the celebrant during prayer. Shown in the earliest depictions of Christians at prayer.

**Ordinary:** The texts "ordinarily" sung at all celebrations of the Eucharist. Includes the Song of Praise (**Gloria in excelsis** or **Kyrie** or **Trisagion**), the **Creed**, the **Sanctus** and **Benedictus**, and the **Fraction Anthem**.

**Organ voluntary:** A short work played on the organ, usually just before the liturgy begins (prelude) or at the end (postlude).

**Pall:** A square linen-covered board used to protectively cover the chalice during the celebration of the Eucharist.

**Paten:** The small plate on which the communion bread is placed.

**Peace:** Following Jesus' command to be reconciled with each other before offering our gifts at the altar (Matthew 5:23-24), we exchange "the Peace" before the Offertory, greeting one another in the name of the Lord, with a handclasp or an embrace.

**Penitential Order:** A rite containing the Confession and Absolution, usually done at the very beginning of the liturgy in Lent, to point up our need to be reconciled to God. (p. 351)

**Posture:** One way we use our bodies in worship is by some modest movement. Our general custom is to sit to listen, stand for prayer and praise and to hear the Gospel, and kneel for confession. We get up out of our places and come forward, to receive God in the communion, and the laying on of hands at the anointing for healing.

**Procession:** The orderly movement of the ministers of the liturgy into and out of the sanctuary. Occasionally they process from the sanctuary to some other location in the church, such as to the baptismal font for a baptism.

**Proper of the Mass:** Before the development of hymns as we know them, there were Gregorian chants appointed to be used at the (approximate) points in the liturgy where we now sing hymns; they are called the Proper of the Mass. Includes the **Introit** (sung at the entrance procession), the **Gradual** (sung between the first and second readings), the **Alleluia** verse or **Tract** (sung before the Gospel), the **Offertory** (sung during the offering of the bread and wine) and the **Communion** (sung during the distribution of communion). Often, the texts of anthems and motets are drawn from the traditional Proper of the Mass.

**Propers:** The Bible readings and prayers which are specific, or "proper" to a particular day or season. Includes the Bible readings and Psalm (BCP p. 888 ff.), the Collect of the Day (p. 211 ff.) and the Proper Preface (p. 377 ff.). See also "Proper of the Mass".

**Psalm:** A passage from the book of Psalms is sung as the Gradual between the first and second readings. See also "Antiphon", "Antiphonal" and "Responsorial".

**Pulpit:** When there is also a separate lectern, the stand from which the sermon or homily is preached. See also "Ambo".

**Purificator:** A linen napkin used to clean the chalice.

**Pyx:** From the Latin *pyxis* (box), a container for the consecrated bread, the Body of our Lord. The hanging pyx is a medieval tradition.

**Responsorial:** A style of psalm singing in which a choir or cantor sings the psalm verses, and the congregation responds at intervals with a repeated refrain.

**Rite Two:** The Book of Common Prayer contains services in two versions: Elizabethan language (Rite One) and contemporary language (Rite Two).

**Sacrament:** "The Sacrament" generally is a term of reverence for the consecrated bread and wine which has become the Body and Blood of our Lord. Also "the Blessed Sacrament". A Sacrament is "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace".

**Sacred ministers:** The chief ministers of the liturgy, usually, the celebrant, deacon and subdeacon. The sacred ministers are seated on the sedilia.

**Sanctuary lamp:** Candle on the wall in the sanctuary, lighted to indicate the presence of the Body of our Lord in consecrated bread inside the pyx (or tabernacle). When it is lighted, it is customary to pause before the Blessed Sacrament in reverence to our Lord, perhaps with a bow or genuflection.

**Sanctuary step:** The step leading to the sanctuary, where the altar is; the people come forward to the sanctuary step to receive communion and the laying on of hands for healing.

**Sanctuary:** The area of the church where the altar is, and seats for the ministers of the liturgy. In churches where it is enclosed, it is referred to as the chancel.

**Sanctus:** Latin for "Holy", the ancient song sung during the Eucharistic prayer, echoing the vision of Isaiah and St. John the Divine of the heavenly host surrounding the throne of God with praise. "Holy, holy, holy". Part of the Ordinary. Includes the Benedictus, "Blessed is he who comes".

**Sedilia:** The chairs upon which the sacred ministers are seated.

**Senses:** We celebrate the human body by reaching out to all the senses in worship: sight (color, light and movement), hearing (music, silence, the rhythm of words), smell (flowers and incense), touch (embracing at the Peace, touching holy water, laying on of hands), and taste (bread and wine).

**Sequence:** The word "Sequence" originally referred to the sequence of readings from the Gospels, and also meant one of five special Gregorian chants, sung on certain days, as the ministers moved to the place where the Gospel would be read. Some congregations sing a hymn as the Sequence, during this movement of the ministers.

**Sermon:** A talk explaining and expounding upon the Scripture readings of the day. If it's short it's called a homily.

**Sign of the cross:** A gesture made as a reminder of God's saving grace. With the right hand, touch forehead, breast, left shoulder, right shoulder. Usually done in response to a blessing, when we remember those who have died in Christ, at mention of the Trinity, and other occasions.

**Silence:** One of the most important sounds of the liturgy. Use it well. In periods of liturgical silence, we pray God to lift us to that still place where we may contemplate his presence and breathe his living Word.

**Song of Praise:** A song, usually the Gloria in excelsis, sung during the entrance rite, to focus our attention upon the praise of God, our chief work. Also includes the Kyrie, and Trisagion, and other songs of praise.

**Stations of the Cross:** A series of fourteen images depicting events in the Passion of our Lord, used as a devotion especially during Lent. The devotion is an adaptation of a custom widely observed by pilgrims to Jerusalem: the offering of prayer at a series of places in the city traditionally associated with Jesus' passion and death.

**Stole:** Long narrow scarf-like cloth, usually matching the chasuble and dalmatic, worn by priests and deacons in the liturgy. The priest's is worn with both ends hanging down in front; the deacon's is worn crosswise, on one shoulder and crossing the chest, fastened at the opposite hip.

**Subdeacon:** One of the ministers of the liturgy, the subdeacon is a lay person who assists the deacon and celebrant in the liturgy. The subdeacon is vested in a white alb and a dalmatic of the liturgical color of the day or season (distinguished from that of the deacon by somewhat less ornament).

**Surplice:** Long white garment worn over a cassock. From the Latin "superpelliceum", meaning "over the fur coat", it was originally an alb designed to be oversized so that a fur coat could be worn underneath it for warmth in an unheated medieval cathedral. Cassock and surplice are referred to as "choir vestments" as they are worn for services that would take place in the Choir of a cathedral—namely the Daily Office (services of prayer and scripture)—as opposed to the Eucharist, for which alb and chasuble or dalmatic would be worn.

**Thurible:** The pierced metal container in which incense is burned, suspended on a long chain for carrying and swinging, allowing the fragrant smoke to rise. Carried by the thurifer.

**Thurifer:** One of the ministers of the liturgy, who handles the incense. From the Latin "turis" (incense) and "ferre" (to carry).

**Torches:** Large candles carried in the procession. Those who carry them are called acolytes or torchbearers.

**Trisagion:** One of the Songs of Praise that may be sung at the beginning of the liturgy. In Greek it means "three holies" because of the text: "*Holy God, holy and mighty, holy immortal one, have mercy upon us.*"

**Veil:** A richly colored cloth, in the liturgical color of the day or season, which both ornaments and protectively covers the chalice until it is used. (Usually of a set with the Burse)

**West end:** The end of the church opposite the altar (regardless of the actual geographic orientation of the building). Usually the location of the main entrance.

**Zuchetto:** The skull cup a bishop wears underneath his or her miter.

#### SOURCES FOR FURTHER READING ABOUT LITURGY:

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