Sacristan’s Handbook

Essential requirements for preparation of the elements and instruments of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass
Greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ:

This handbook is designed to assist in properly preparing all of the elements necessary for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It described the location of all of the elements, as well as the proper handling arrangement for each item.

If the instructions in this handbook seem, at first glance, to be very particular - perhaps even “nitpicky” - please understand that you are not just setting up things for “Father X, Y or Z” to celebrate Mass. You are serving Jesus himself, who is present not only in the consecrated elements of bread and wine, but in the celebrant as well. Every priest who approaches the altar in the execution of this perfect prayer which is the Mass is acting *in persona Christi* – an *alter Christus*, fulfilling the role of our Savior in an eternal action that virtually places us in heaven with all the saints and angels. It is a perfect sacrifice which demands our best attempt at perfection.

To place it in context, consider the soldiers of our Army’s Honor Guard in Washington, D.C., who stand as sentries at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The sentry’s uniform is crisp, clean and creased; his medals, ribbons and devices gleam; his weapon is spotless. If the act of guarding a tomb of a fallen comrade requires that kind of precision and attention to detail, how much more should our Savior’s gift of His own flesh and blood command our best efforts? Vessels should be free of smudges and fingerprints; linens should be neatly folded and arranged, etc.

Thank you for assisting our clergy, as well as our parish, in reverently celebrating this Mystery.
Chalice Cupboard

The chalice cupboard sits directly above the sink and stores our priests’ chalices. Water glasses are also stored here for use by those celebrants who may require one in the course of the liturgy. Occasionally, pyxes for gluten-free hosts (marked “GF”) are stored here as well.

Preparing the Chalice for Mass

When preparing the chalice for Mass, the elements are assembled in the following manner:
1. Chalice
2. Purificator
3. Paten
4. Host
5. Pall
6. Veil
7. Burse (with corporal inside)
8. Large corporal on top of burse (for School & Sunday Masses; two large corporals if Holy Communion is to be administered under both species)

Particulars for each priest’s chalice are explained on the following pages

PLEASE NOTE: At the conclusion of the liturgy, the celebrant’s chalice should always be returned to the cupboard with a fresh purificator in place, to prevent scraping between the paten & chalice.

- **Water glasses** If a glass of water is required by the celebrating priest, it is preferable to take the glass to fill from one of the water fountains in the Narthex, especially during the summer months, if time allows.
- **Pyxes** A pyx which has been used for gluten-free hosts should be purified with a damp purificator and dried thoroughly; it may be stored in the chalice cupboard, but should be returned to the drawer of the credenza in the Narthex at a convenient opportunity.

Purification Table

For Sunday, Holy Day of Obligation & Wednesday school Masses, a full water cruet and lavabo bowl of water with purificators should be in place prior to the start of each Liturgy. The water cruet is for acolytes’ use in purification of the sacred vessels; the lavabo bowl is for those Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion who wish to purify themselves after administering the Precious Body.
Ciborium & Cruet Cupboard

The cupboard above the sink dish rack holds the cruets, ciboria, lavabo bowl & pitcher, along with the cups used for Holy Communion during the Mass.

When cleaning up at the end of the liturgy, **everything** should be dried thoroughly and placed back in its proper place.

The only items ever allowed to “drip dry” are the water & wine cruets; but only after drying their exterior surfaces.

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Paten Cupboard

The unit to the left of the Ciborium & Cruet Cupboard holds the patens used during Holy Communion, along with the unconsecrated priests’ hosts and Sick Call hosts.

The small lavabo bowls (lower shelf, right) are also stored here. One of these is normally used for purification when the celebrant does not have an altar server to assist at weekday Mass.
Thurible Cupboard

To the left of the Paten Cupboard are stored the thuribles, incense, charcoal, lighters and tongs.

Once a thurible has been used during a liturgy, ashes should be emptied before returning it to the cupboard.

Insence

The incense used for our various liturgies is a coarse granular type which is combined with cedar shavings. Invariably in the production and packaging process, there is a fair amount of “sawdust” created. A strainer and measuring cup are stored in the cabinet beneath the counter for the purpose of straining the sawdust prior to refilling the incense boats.

Strain the incense over trashcan, then pour back into its box.

The incense need only be strained when a new box is initially opened. Replacement boxes of incense are generally stored in the cupboard to the left of the Thurible Cupboard.
Bowl Cupboard

To the left of the Thurible Cupboard are stored the spare sanctuary candles, incense, purificators, and bowls & pitchers used for various liturgies.

Preparing the Thurible for Liturgy

The thurible is most commonly used for the 11:00 Sunday Mass, Exposition & Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament, and most funeral Masses.

If used for the 11:00 Sunday Mass, the thurible is prepared prior to the start of the liturgy.

If it is used for Adoration at the end of Tuesday or Wednesday morning Mass, or for a funeral Mass, it should be prepared during the homily.
Preparation of the Thurible (continuing)

It is best to hold the charcoal briquette in the tongs to light it, holding it well away from you; the briquette has a tendency to throw sparks as it ignites, and it is very poor form to burn holes in your surplice.

Once the briquette has ignited, place it in the thurible and repeat the process as necessary.
- Two briquettes to start the small thurible
- Three briquettes to start the large thurible

If the thurible has been charged for the 11:00 Sunday Mass, take it to the Narthex before Mass begins.

If the thurible has been charged during the homily for a funeral Mass, or Adoration following Mass, **do not leave it on the sacristy counter**; as the charcoal smolders, the continued sparking throws off considerable soot, soiling the countertop.

Once charged, place the thurible on the floor in the alcove, adjacent to the credence table. It is advisable to leave the top open until it is needed for use. If left closed for even a short time while the charcoal is burning, it can become extremely hot, making it difficult to handle when the time comes for the priest to add the incense.
Finger Towels & Corporals

Finger towels resemble the purificators, but have no red cross on them.

A finger towel is used with the lavabo bowl for purification of the celebrant before consecration begins.

Small corporals are used with the priest’s chalice & paten to catch stray particles of the Most Blessed Sacrament during the course of the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Large corporals are used under the patens & trays on the altar.

Purificators

A purificator is placed between the priest’s chalice and paten.

They are also used by the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion when distributing the Precious Blood.

Purificators are marked with a bright red cross or a more subtle, “faded” style.

If possible, every effort should be made to maintain uniformity for any given Liturgy, by using the same style corporals throughout.

Dish Towels

There are two drawers for dish towels of varied shapes & sizes.

If, by chance, you happen to find both drawers empty, check for extra towels stored in the under-counter cabinets beneath the Paten Cupboard.