

Catholic Glossary

A

Absolution - the act by which a priest, acting as an agent of Christ, grants forgiveness of sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Abstinence - the avoidance of a particular type of food, such as meat, as an act of penance or spiritual discipline.

Acolyte - person who assists in the celebration of Mass or other liturgical celebration.

Adoration - the external acts of reverent admiration or honor given to a thing or person. In the Catholic faith, adoration is reserved to God alone and to Jesus present in the consecrated Eucharist.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament - Prayer to Christ, who is recognized as being truly present in the Sacrament of Eucharist.

Alb - a long, white garment that can be used by all liturgical ministers; it is a reminder of the baptismal garment worn when the new Christian "puts on Christ."

Alleluia Acclamation - this acclamation of praise follows the second reading and prepares the assembly for the Gospel.

Altar - this is the focal point of the church. It is a table, often made of wood or stone, that is set at the center of the sanctuary and has been consecrated for sacred use. The holy sacrifice of the Mass is offered on the altar, as the gifts of bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ. A relic of a saint is often contained inside the altar.

Ambo - looks like a podium and is where the lector proclaims the readings for Mass. The deacon or priest also reads the Gospel from here.

Ambry - a recess that holds holy oils that are blessed and consecrated at the Chrism Mass during Holy Week.

Amen - a Hebrew word meaning truly, it is true. As a concluding word of prayers, it expressed assent to and acceptance of God's will.

Annul - properly called the degree of nullity, this is the declaration by authorities that a marriage is null and void, because it was never valid.

Apparition – an appearance to people on earth of a heavenly being – namely, Christ, Mary, or a saint or angel.

Apostle - "one sent." This normally refers to the 12 men chosen by Jesus to be the bearers of his teachings to the world.

Apostolate - The ministry or work of an apostle. In Catholic usage, this is a term covering all kinds and areas of work and endeavor for the service of God and the Church and the good of people.

Apostolic - refers to the 12 apostles. It also characterizes certain documents, appointments or structures initiated by the Pope or the Holy See.

Apostolic Nunciature - the offices of the Holy Father's representative to a country or to the Church in that country.

Aspergillum - a container or vessel used for sprinkling holy water that is ordinarily made out of metal.

Assembly - those gathered to celebrate the liturgy.

Associate Pastor - a priest who assists a pastor in the pastoral care of a parish or parishes.

Auxiliary Bishop - a bishop assigned to a Catholic diocese or archdiocese, to assist a residential bishop.

B

Baptismal Font - a receptacle for water that is used in the sacrament of baptism.

Basilica - a church to which special privileges are attached. It is a title of honor given to various kinds of Churches.

Beatification - final step toward canonization of a saint

Benediction Veil - also called the humeral veil; a long, narrow shawl-like vestment used at Benediction.

Bishops - the chief priest of a diocese. Bishops are responsible for the pastoral care of their dioceses. In addition, bishops have a responsibility to act in council with other bishops to guide the Church.

Blessed Sacrament - the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Christ, either at Mass or reserved in a special place in the Church.

Book of the Gospel - the book which contains the Gospel texts, from which the priests or deacon proclaims the Gospel of the day.

Brazier - a metal pan used to hold incense.

Bread and Wine - the elements used in the celebration of Eucharist (unleavened bread and natural pure wine).

Breaking of the Bread - the celebrant recreates the gestures of Christ at the Last Supper when he broke the bread to give to his disciples. This action signifies that in communion, the many are made one in the one Bread of Life which is Christ.

C

Canon - Greek for rule, norm, standard, measure. Designates the Canon of Sacred Scripture, the list of books recognized by the Church as inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Canon Law - the codified body of general laws governing the Church.

Canonization - a declaration by the pope that a person who died a martyr or practiced Christian virtue to a heroic degree is in heaven and is worthy of honor and imitation by the faithful. Verification of miracles is required for canonization (except for martyrs).

Cantor – a person who leads the singing during the liturgy.

Cardinal - Cardinals are appointed by the pope and constitute a kind of senate of the Church, and aid the pope as his chief counselors.

Cassock (KASS-uhk) - a long, black garment worn by altar servers under the surplice; also worn by diocesan priests (black); Monsignors (rose); bishops (violet), cardinals (red), and the Pope (white). This is a non-liturgical, full-length robe.

Catechesis (cat-UH-key-sis) - religious instruction and formation for persons preparing for baptism and for the faithful in various stages of spiritual development.

Catechetical (cat-uh-KIT-uh-kal) - referring to catechesis.

Catechetics (cat-uh-KIT-iks) - from the Greek meaning "to sound forth," it is the procedure for teaching religion.

Cathedra - the archbishop's chair. It is the symbol of his role of chief teacher and pastor of the local church. The word is Greek and means chair. The word cathedral comes from cathedra, meaning, literally, chair of the bishop.

Cathedral - The major church in an archdiocese or diocese. It is the seat of the local Ordinary.

Catholic - Greek word for universal. First used in the title Catholic Church in a letter written by St. Ignatius of Antioch to the Christians of Smyrna about 107 A.D.

Celebrant - the person who presides over the assembly and consecrates the Eucharist.

Celebrant's Chair - the place where the celebrant sits. It expresses his office of presiding over the assembly and of leading the prayer of those present.

Chalice (CHAL-is) - the large cup used to hold the wine that becomes the Blood of Christ. It is made of durable material and comes in various shapes and sizes.

Chancellor - the chief archivist of a diocese' official records who is also a notary and secretary of the diocesan curia.

Charismatic - Person who believes God endowed them with gifts or graces.

Charisms - Gifts or graces given by God to persons for the good of others and the Church.

Chasuble (CHAZ-uh-buhl) - the sleeveless, outer garment that when slipped over the head, hangs down from the shoulder covering the alb and stole of the priest. It is worn by the main celebrant and its color varies according to the feast.

Chrism - a specially perfumed olive oil that is consecrated for use at baptism, confirmation, and holy orders. Chrism also is used to anoint altars and walls during church or cathedral dedications. This is only time the consecrated oil is not used on a human being.

Christ - the title of Jesus, derived from the Greek translation of the Hebrew term Messiah, meaning the Anointed of God.

Church - the universal Church that is spread throughout the world; the local Church is that of a particular locality, such as a diocese. The Church embraces all its members--on earth, in heaven, in purgatory.

Ciborium (si-BORE-ee-um) - a vessel used to hold the Hosts which will be used for communion; some are cup-like and others are bowl/plate like; they are also used to reserve the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle.

Cincture (SINGK-sure) - a long cord used for fastening some albs at the waist; it holds the loose-fitting type of alb in place and is used to adjust it to the proper length; it is usually white, although the liturgical color of the day may be used.

Cloister - part of a convent or monastery reserved for use by members of the institute.

College of Cardinals - the College of Cardinals is made up of the cardinals of the Church, who advise the Pope, assist in the central administration of the Church, head the various curial offices and congregations, administer the Holy See during a vacancy, and elect a new Pope.

Collegiality - the shared responsibility and authority that the whole college of bishops, headed by the pope, has for the teaching, sanctification and government of the Church.

Communion Cups - when the people receive Christ's blood at communion, they drink from this chalice-like vessel. These cups are kept on the Credence Table and brought to the Altar at communion time.

Communion Song - the music that is used as the consecrated bread and wine is distributed to the faithful.

Concelebrants - the priests and bishops who join the celebrant in celebrating the Mass.

Concluding Rite - the brief rite at the conclusion of the Mass which consists of the celebrant's greeting to all present, final blessing and dismissal.

Confession - part of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, not the term for the sacrament itself.

Confirmation - one of the three sacraments of initiation, along with baptism and Eucharist.

Conscience - the "interior voice" of a person. It is a God-given and directed sense of what is morally right and wrong. Conscience helps people to be responsible for their actions and to strive to do good and avoid evil.

Contemplative Nun - a religious woman who devotes her entire life in the cloister to prayer and reflection.

Convent – a house of women religious.

Cope (KOPE) - a cape-like garment, open in the front that when placed over the shoulders, hangs to the ankles. It is worn by a priest or deacon in processions at Benediction and other services.

Covenant – The relationship between God and human beings which is characterized by mutual commitment and partnership.

Creed – An official profession of faith used in the liturgy of the Church. The word means "I believe." The two most popular Catholic Creeds are the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed.

Crosier (pastoral staff) - The staff which a bishop carries when he presides at the liturgy.

Cross bearer - the one who carries the cross in the procession (entrance and recessional).

Cross/Crucifix - an object is a crucifix only if it depicts Christ on a cross; otherwise it is a cross.

Cult - any act or system of veneration or worship.

Cursillo - conducted by priests and laypersons, it consists of a three-day weekend focused on prayer, study, and Christian action, and follow-up program known as the post-cursillo.

D

Dalmatic (dahl-MAT-ik) - a loose-fitting robe with open sides and wide sleeves worn by a deacon on more solemn feasts; it takes its color from the liturgical feast as listed above.

Deacon - an ordained minister who assists the celebrant during the Liturgy of the Word and at the altar for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Deacons can also provide assistance to the pastor in baptismal and/or marriage ministry. Deacons serve in the ministry of the liturgy, of the word, and of charity. Transitional deacons are men who are preparing for the priesthood. Permanent deacons are men who are not planning to become ordained priests. They can be married and have children.

Decanter or Flagon (FLAG-un) - the bottle- or pitcher-like vessel used to hold the wine which will be

consecrated at Mass for the communion of the people; it is brought forth with the gifts.

Diocese - a particular church; a fully organized ecclesiastical jurisdiction under the pastoral direction of a bishop as local Ordinary.

Disciple - one who follows the teachings of Jesus. It is based on a word meaning pupil or student.

Dispensation - an exemption from Church law.

Doctrine – an official teaching of the church based on the revelation of God by and through Christ.

Dogma – Church teachings that are central to the faith, defined by the magisterium, and accorded the fullest weight and authority.

Doxology - the response of the people acclaiming the sovereignty of God.

E

Eastern-rite (Oriental) Church - term used to describe the Catholic Churches which developed in Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa. They have their own distinctive liturgical and organizational systems. Each is considered equal to the Latin rite within the Church.

Ecclesial - having to do with the church in general or the life of the Church

Ecclesiastical (ee-CLEE-zee-as-tuh-cal) - refers to official structures or legal and organizational aspects of the Church

Ecumenism (eh-KEW-meh-nizm) / Interdenominational / Ecumenical (EK-you-meh-nikal) Movement - a movement for spiritual understanding and unity among Christians and their churches. The term also is extended to apply to efforts toward greater understanding and cooperation between Christians and members of other faiths.

Encyclical - a pastoral letter addressed by the Pope to the whole Church.

Entrance procession - priest, deacon, altar servers, lectors, enter the church or designated place for celebration of the liturgy.

Entrance song/music - the song/music which takes place during the entrance procession.

Episcopal - Refers to a bishop or groups of bishops as a form of Church government, in which bishops have authority.

Eschatology - doctrine concerning the last things: death, judgment, heaven and hell, and the final state of perfection of the people and the kingdom of God at the end of the world.

Eucharistic Prayer - the prayer of thanksgiving and sanctification used during the Mass. It is the center of the celebration. During the Eucharistic Prayer, the Church believes that the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

Evangelist - a preacher or revivalist who seeks conversions by preaching to groups.

Exarch/Exarchy - A Church jurisdiction, similar to a diocese, established for Eastern-rite Catholics living outside their native land. The head of an exarch, usually a bishop, is an exarch.

Excommunication - A penalty of censure by which a baptized person is excluded from the communion of the faithful for committing and remaining obstinate in certain serious offenses specified in canon law.

Even though excommunicated, a person still is responsible for fulfillment of the normal obligations of a Catholic.

F

Final Doxology - a final prayer of praise of God.

Free Will - The faculty or capability of making a reasonable choice among several alternatives.

Friar - a member of a mendicant community, such as the Dominicans, Franciscans or Carmelites. They live a rule of communal poverty, living primarily from the freewill offerings of the faithful, engage in various forms of pastoral ministry, and belong to a religious order that is a wider community beyond the local house, in contrast to a monastery, which is self-contained, even if in federation with others.

G

General Intercessions - a prayer of intercession for all of humankind; for the Church, civil authorities, those in various needs, for all peoples, and for the salvation of the world.

Great Amen - the acclamation by the people expressing their agreement with all that has been said and done in the Eucharistic prayer.

Gloria – an ancient hymn of praise in which the Church glorifies God. It is used on all Sundays, except for those during Advent and Lent, and at solemn celebrations. The text originates from the Christmas narrative in the Gospel of Luke (2:14 - "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.")

God - the infinitely perfect Supreme Being, uncaused and absolutely self-sufficient, eternal, the Creator and final end of all things. The one God subsists in three equal Persons, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Grace - a free gift of God to human beings, grace is a created sharing in the life of God. It is given through the merits of Christ and is communicated by the Holy Spirit. It is necessary for salvation.

Greeting - the celebrant greets all present at the liturgy, expressing the presence of the Lord to the assembled community.

H

Heresy - the conscious and deliberate rejection of a dogma of the Church.

Hierarchy - in general, the term refers to the ordered body of clergy, divided into bishops, priests, and deacons. In Catholic practice, the term refers to the bishops of the world or of a particular region.

Holy Days of Obligation - feasts in Latin-rite churches on which Catholics are required to attend Mass.

Holy See - 1) The diocese of the pope, Rome. 2) The pope himself or the various officials and bodies of the Church's central administration--the Roman Curia--which act in the name and by authority of the pope.

Holy Communion - after saying a preparatory prayer, the celebrant (or other designated ministers) gives communion (the consecrated bread and wine) to himself and the other ministers at the altar, and then communion is distributed to the congregation.

Homily - a reflection by the celebrant or other minister on the Scripture readings and on the application of the texts in the daily lives of the assembled community.

Host, The Sacred - the bread under whose appearances Christ is and remains present in a unique manner after the consecration of the Mass.

Humanae Vitae - The 1968 encyclical by Pope Paul VI on married love and procreation.

Hymnal/Missalette - contains all parts of the Mass for a specific season in the liturgical year, including instructions on when to stand, sit, or kneel.

I

IHS - in Greek, the first three letters of the name of Jesus.

Immaculate Conception - Catholic dogma concerning Mary and the name of a feast in her honor celebrated Dec. 8. It refers to the Catholic belief that Mary was without sin from the moment she was conceived.

Incense - material used to produce a fragrant odor when burned and used as a symbol of the Church's offering and prayer going up to God. Used on major feast days and for funerals, it symbolizes communication with God. The image of smoke rising to the heavens in combination with the fragrance it emits, invoke a connection with the divine.

Indulgence - the remission before God of the temporal punishment due for sins already forgiven.

Infallibility – The gift of the Spirit by which the pope and bishops in union with him are protected from fundamental error when formulating a specific teaching on matters of faith and morals.

Intercessions - A series of prayers for the Church, the world, the Pope, clergy and laity, and the dead.

Intercommunion - The agreement or practice of two Ecclesial communities by which each admits members of the other communion to its sacraments.

J

Jesus - The name of Jesus means Savior.

K

Keys, Power of the - spiritual authority and jurisdiction in the Church, symbolized by the keys of the kingdom of heaven, Christ promised the keys to St. Peter and head-to-be of the Church. <http://www.archmil.org/ourfaith/glossary.asp> - top

L

Laicization - the process by which a man ordained is relieved of his obligations and is returned to the status of a lay person.

Lamb of God - an invocation during the breaking of the bread in which the assembly petitions for mercy and peace.

Lay ministries - these are ministries within the church that are carried out by laypersons. Included are altar servers, Eucharistic minister and lectors.

Layman, woman, person - any church member who is neither ordained nor a member of a religious order. When the Second Vatican Council spoke of the laity, it used the term in this more common meaning.

Lectionary - contains the scripture readings for Mass.

Liturgy - The public prayer of the Church.

Liturgy of the Word - the occasion during Mass when readings from the Scriptures are proclaimed and reflected upon. On Sundays and major feasts, there are three readings:

- First reading - from the Old Testament
- Second reading - from the Epistles
- Gospel

Liturgy of the Hours - this is the preferred term in the Latin rite for the official liturgical prayers sanctifying the parts of each day.

Liturgy of the Eucharist - the section of the celebration when the gifts of bread and wine are prepared and the Eucharistic Prayer is proclaimed by the celebrant, and the Blessed Sacrament is distributed to the assembly.

Lord's Prayer (Our Father) - the prayer of petition for both daily food (which means the Eucharistic bread for Christians) and the forgiveness of sins.

M

Magisterium - the official teaching office of the Church.

Mass - the common name for the Eucharistic liturgy of the Catholic Church. Also referred to as Eucharist, Celebration of the Liturgy, Eucharistic celebration, Sacrifice of the Mass, Lord's Supper.

Master of Ceremonies - one who assists in the preparation of the celebration and is present during it to facilitate the movement of the entire rite.

Minister - from the Latin word for "servant," in the ecclesiastical sense a minister is (1) an ordained cleric or (2) one who has the authority to minister to others.

Ministers of Communion - Those who assist in the distribution of communion.

Miracles - generally miracle is used to refer to physical phenomena that defy natural explanation, such as medically unexplainable cures. An apparition is a supernatural manifestation of God, an angel or a saint to an individual or a group of individuals.

Miter (MY-ter) - a headdress worn at solemn liturgical functions by bishops, abbots and, in certain cases, other clerics.

Monastery - an autonomous community house of a religious order, which may or may not be a monastic order. The term is used more specifically to refer to a community house of men or women religious in which they lead a contemplative life separate from the world.

Monk - a member of a monastic community such as Benedictine, Carthusian, Trappist, etc. Monks tend to live lives more separate from society to pursue, under a formal rule, a life of prayer and work for God's glory, for personal sanctification, and for the good of the Church and world. Monastic communities may have some outside works connected with them, such as a college or retreat house, but their primary ministry is prayer, especially the Liturgy of the Hours.

Monsignor - an honorary ecclesiastical title granted by the Pope to some diocesan priests. In the United States, the title is given to the vicar general of a diocese. In Europe, the title is also given to bishops.

Mortification - acts of self-discipline, including prayer, hardship, austerities and penances undertaken for the sake of progress in virtue.

N

National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) - Episcopal conference of U.S. bishops. The membership is comprised of diocesan bishops and their auxiliary bishops. The conference decides matters of ecclesiastical law and issues policy statements on political and social issues.

Newman Apostolate - an apostolate to the Catholic college and university community, now commonly known as "campus ministry."

Nun - a member of a religious order of women with solemn vows

O

Offertory Song - music used during the procession of gifts to the celebrant and as the altar is prepared.

Opening prayer - this prayer by the celebrant expresses the general theme of the celebration.

Ordain - the proper terms in Catholic usage for references to the conferral of the sacrament of holy orders on a deacon, priest or bishop.

Order, Congregation, Society - religious orders is a title loosely applied to all religious groups of men and women. A society is a body of clerics, regular or secular, organized for the purpose of performing an apostolic work. Congregation is any group bound together by common rules.

Ordinary - diocesan bishops, religious superiors, and certain other diocesan authorities with jurisdiction over the clergy in a specific geographical area, or the members of a religious order.

Ordination - the act that enables a person to act on behalf of the Church through Word, Sacrament, and leadership. A bishop is ordained to represent Christ. Priests share in the bishop's role of representing Christ the Shepherd. Deacons collaborate with the bishop in his role as representative of Christ the Servant.

P

Pall (PAHL) - the stiff, square, white cover that is placed over the paten when it is on the chalice.

Pallium - special stole made of lamb's wool worn over the chasuble by the Pope and archbishops; it signifies communion of archbishops with the Holy See.

Papal Infallibility - The end result of divine assistance given the pope, wherefore he is prevented from the possibility and liability of error in teachings on faith or morals.

Papal Representatives - the three types of representative of the Roman Pontiff are:

1. Legate - An individual appointed by the Pope to be his personal representative to a nation, international conference, or local church. The legate may be chosen from the local clergy of a country.
2. Apostolic Pro-Nuncio - In the United States, the papal representative is sent by the Pope to both the local church and to the government. His title is Apostolic Pro-Nuncio. Although he holds the title of ambassador, in U.S. law he is not accorded the special privilege of being the dean of the diplomatic corps. In countries where he is dean of the diplomatic corps, his title is Apostolic Nuncio.

3. **Permanent Observer to the United Nations** - The Apostolic See maintains permanent legates below the ambassadorial level to several world organizations. Since the Papal Legate does not enjoy the right to vote within the organization, his title at the United Nations is that of Observer.

Parish - a specific community of the Christian faithful within a diocese which has its own church building and is under the authority of a pastor who is responsible for providing the faithful with ministerial service. Most parishes are formed on a geographic basis, but they may be formed along national or ethnic lines.

Parish Administrator - when a parish is without a pastor or a pastor is unable to fulfill his pastoral responsibilities, a priest administrator is appointed by the bishop and is bound by the same obligations and enjoys the same rights as a pastor.

Pastor - a priest appointed by a bishop to attend to the pastoral care of one or more parishes. He is responsible for administering the sacraments, instructing the congregation in the doctrine of the Church, and other services to the people of the parish. The pastor fulfills his responsibilities in the areas of teaching, sanctifying and administration with the cooperation of and assistance from other priests as well as deacons and/or lay persons.

Pastoral Associate – a member of the laity who is part of the parish ministry team. A certified pastoral associate is a generalist serving in a key parish leadership position. He/she assists the pastor or parish director in the daily operation of the parish. This may include the direct coordination of one or more specific ministries, such as sacramental planning, educational formation, pastoral ministry and parish administration. The pastoral associate is hired directly by the parish and is accountable to the pastor or parish director.

Pastoral Council - a group of members of the parish who advise the pastor on parish matters.

Pastoral Team - refers to a group of priests assigned to the pastoral care of a parish or parishes with one of them as moderator. All priests who are members of the team have the same responsibilities and rights as a pastor.

Paten (PAT-en) - a saucer-like disk that holds the bread that becomes the Body of Christ.

Pectoral Cross - a cross worn on a chain about the neck of bishops and abbots as a mark of office.

Penitential Rite - a general acknowledgement of sinfulness by the entire assembly, accompanied by requests for God's mercy and forgiveness.

Prayer after Communion - The final prayer by the celebrant in which he petitions that the sacrament be beneficial for all.

Prayer over the gifts - The prayer by the celebrant asking that the gifts to be offered be made holy and acceptable.

Prayer - the raising of the mind and heart to God in adoration, thanksgiving, reparation and petition. The official prayer of the Church as a worshipping community is called liturgy.

Preface dialogue - the introductory dialogue between the celebrant and assembly in which all are invited to join in prayer and thanksgiving to God.

Preparation of the Gifts - the time in the Mass when the bread and wine to be used in the celebration

are brought to the celebrant, usually by representatives of the faithful.

Presbyterial Council - Also known as the priests' council, this is the principal consultative body mandated by the Code of Canon Law to advise the diocesan bishop in matters of pastoral governance. It consists of bishops and priests serving the diocese.

Primacy - Papal primacy refers to the pope's authority over the whole church.

Processional Cross - the cross carried in the processions.

Profession of Faith - the assembly joins to recall and proclaim the fundamental teachings of the Roman Catholic faith. The Profession of Faith is also called the Creed.

Purgatory - The state or condition in which those who have died in the state of grace, but with some attachment to sin, suffer for a time as they are being purified before they are admitted to the glory and happiness of heaven.

Purificator - a white cloth used to cleanse the chalice.

R

Reader - one who is called upon to proclaim the scriptures during the Liturgy of the Word. A reader may also read the prayers of the faithful at Mass, in the absence of a deacon.

Relics - the physical remains and effects of saints, which are considered worthy of veneration inasmuch as they are representative of persons in glory with God.

Religion - the adoration and service of God as expressed in divine worship and in daily life.

Religious Brother - a man who takes vows and promises to use his talents to serve God wherever the community decides he is needed. Brothers do not get married, live in religious communities, and have many different jobs. They are not ordained.

Religious Order - a community of people with a particular charism, as expressed by its founder, and recognized by the Church is a religious order. There are religious orders of priests and brothers, and religious orders of sisters. Religious communities may also have lay associates. Some religious orders are dedicated primarily to prayer (contemplative), while others focus on apostolic (active) ministries. Religious Priest/Diocesan Priest - religious priests are professed members of a religious order or institute. Religious clergy live according to the rule of their respective orders. In pastoral ministry, they are under the jurisdiction of their local bishop, as well as the superiors of their order. Diocesan, or secular, priests are under the direction of their local bishop. They commit to serving their congregations and other institutions.

Religious Sister - a woman who belongs to a religious community. Religious sisters make vows and serve God according to the charisms of their communities. Sisters are not married and work in many different jobs, according to the needs of the religious community and/or the needs of the local area. A sister in a cloistered religious community is a nun.

Responsorial Psalm - the psalm that is spoken or sung between the first and second readings. The response is repeated after each verse.

Retreat - a period of time spent in meditation and religious exercise. Retreats may take various forms,

from traditional closed forms, to open retreats which do not disengage the participants from day-to-day life. Both clergy and lay people of all ages participate in retreats. Houses and centers providing facilities for retreats are retreat houses.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) - the norms and rituals of the Catholic Church for people who wish to join the Church. Part of the book is intended for baptized Christians who wish to become Catholics. The term is used in a general sense to refer to the process of entering the Catholic Church.

Roman Curia - the official collective name for the administrative agencies and courts, and their officials, who assist the Pope in governing the Church. Members are appointed and granted authority by the Pope.

Rosary - a prayer of meditation primarily on events in the lives of Mary and Jesus, repeating the Our Father and Hail Mary. It is generally said on a physical circlet of beads.

S

Sacramentary – the book used by the celebrant at Mass, containing all the prayers for the liturgy of the Mass, including the opening prayer, prayer over the gifts, prayer after communion, and solemn blessings, Eucharistic prayers and prefaces for all of the Masses, including special occasions.

Sanctuary - the part of the church where the altar is located.

Second Vatican Council - a major meeting of the bishops of the world convened by Pope John XXIII to bring about a renewal of the Church for the second half of the 20th century. It ran from 1962 to 1965 and produced important documents involving liturgy, ecumenism, communications and other areas.

Secular Institutes - societies of men and women living in the world who dedicate themselves to observe the evangelical counsels and to carry on apostolic works suitable to their talents and opportunities in every day life.

See - another name for diocese or archdiocese.

Seminary - an educational institute for men preparing for Holy Orders.

Shrine - erected to encourage private devotions to a saint, it usually contains a picture, statue or other religious feature capable of inspiring devotions.

Sign of Peace - before sharing the body of Christ, the members of the community are invited to express their love and peace with one another.

Sign of the Cross - a sign, ceremonial gesture or movement in the form of a cross by which a person confesses faith in the Holy Trinity and Christ, and intercedes for the blessing of himself, other persons, and things.

Sodality - a group of laity, established for the promotion of Christian life and worship, or some other religious purpose.

Stole - a long, cloth scarf that marks the Office of the priest or deacon according to the manner in which it is worn. A priest wears it around the neck, letting it hang down in front. A deacon wears it over his left shoulder, fastening it at his right side.

Superior - the head of a religious order or congregation. He or she may be the head of a province, or an individual house.

Surplice (SIR-plis) - worn over the cassock, this is a wide-sleeved garment that when slipped over the head, covers the shoulders and extends down below the hips.

Synod - a gathering of designated officials and representatives of a church, with legislative and policymaking powers.

I

Tabernacle - place in the church where the Eucharist or sacred species is reserved.

Theologate - an institution which provides the last four years of study for candidates for priesthood.

Theology - the study of God and religion, deriving from and based on the data of Divine Revelation, organized and systematized according to some kind of scientific method.

Titular Sees - dioceses where the Church once flourished but which later died out. Bishops without a territorial or residential diocese of their own, e.g., auxiliary bishops, are given titular sees.

Tribunal - a tribunal (court) is the name given to the person or persons who exercise the Church's judicial powers.

Triduum - the three days of the liturgical year which incorporates the celebrations of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil.

V

Vatican Councils - councils called by the pope of all bishops of the Church. These councils are usually called to discuss specific matters of interest to the Church.

Vatican Congregation – a Vatican body which is responsible for an important area in the life of the Church, such as worship and sacraments, the clergy, and saints causes.

Veneration of the altar - the reverencing of the altar with a kiss and the optional use of incense.

Vespers - a portion of the Church's divine office recited each day by priests. Also called Evening Prayer.

Vestment - the vesture the ministers wear.

Vow - a promise made to God with sufficient knowledge and freedom, which has as its object a moral good that is possible and better than its voluntary omission. Vows that religious take include the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

W

Washing of Hands - an expression of the desire for inward purification. The celebrant washes his hands in symbolic cleansing to prepare himself just as the gifts have been prepared as an offering to the Lord.

Witness, Christian - practical testimony or evidence given by Christians of their faith in all circumstances of life--by prayer and general conduct, through good example and good works, etc., being and acting in accordance with Christian belief, actual practice of the Christian faith.

Z

Zucchetto (zoo-KET-oh) - the skull cap worn by the Pope (red), bishops (purple) and cardinals (red).