

A Short Tour Around a Catholic Church



Introduction

For this presentation I have borrowed extensively, but not exclusively, from a couple of excellent Roman Catholic Internet sites:

<http://www.faithfirst.com/html/catechist/tour/tour.asp>

and

<http://www.request.org.uk/main/churches/buildings/catholic/catholic01.htm>

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The Entrance

This is the entrance to a church. On the right you can see the holy water font....

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Holy Water
Font

Holy water fonts are placed at the entrance to Catholic churches. The font contains water which is blessed by the priest and is used by Catholics to remind us of our baptism. When we enter the church we dip our fingers in the holy water and then make the sign of the cross. We do this to remind ourselves of our baptism and that we are entering the presence of God in the church. When we leave, we do the same but this time to remind ourselves that we are being sent out into the world by Jesus to bring his love to others.

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The Sanctuary

This area is called the sanctuary. Sanctuary means 'a holy place'. In the centre you can see the altar. On the wall behind the altar is a special place called the tabernacle. Hanging from the wall on the left is the Sanctuary Lamp. The lectern is usually located on the sanctuary to the side.....

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The Lectern



This is the lectern. The book on the lectern is called the Lectionary. The Lectionary contains parts of the Bible. The Lectionary is read during the first part of Holy Mass which is called the Liturgy of the Word. A Reader reads a passage from the Old Testament, one of the Psalms, and a non-Gospel passage from the New Testament. The Priest or Deacon will then read part of one of the Gospels. The Gospels tell us about Jesus' life and teaching. The Priest or Deacon also preaches at the lectern.

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The Altar

This is the altar. During Holy Mass it is covered with an altar cloth and has candles on it. The Liturgy of the Eucharist takes place at the altar. The word 'Eucharist' means 'Thanksgiving'. We offer our gifts of bread and wine during the second part of Holy Mass. Through consecration, they become the body and blood of Jesus. When we share in the Eucharist, we are sharing in Jesus' body and blood.

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The Tabernacle

The box you see on the stand in this picture is called the tabernacle.

The Eucharist is kept in the tabernacle. For this reason Catholics believe that the tabernacle is the holiest place in the church. Catholics genuflect to show reverence and respect for the Eucharist.

The candle to the right of the tabernacle is lit when the Eucharist is present. It is called the sanctuary lamp. The lamp is always lit night and day except for Good Friday and Holy Saturday. These are the only two days in the year when Holy Mass is not celebrated in Catholic churches and when Eucharist is not kept in the tabernacle.

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The Ciborium

Inside the tabernacle the Eucharist is kept inside a ciborium.

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The Monstrance

For certain services, especially Benediction, the Eucharist is placed inside a monstrance.

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Holy Statues

Many Catholic churches have statues of Saints in them. Almost every church has a statue of Mary inside. Mary is very special because she is the Mother of God and the Mother of the Church.

Often, when you look at the altar, the statue of Mary is on the left-hand side. Sometimes it is on a small side altar with seats in front so people can come to church and pray quietly.

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Baptismal Font

The place where people are baptised is called the baptistry. The large pool of water is called the baptismal font. Water is used as a sign of new life.

During Jesus' time and for a period after that, people were baptised in rivers, lakes, and pools. They were totally immersed in the water!

The large candle beside the font is the Easter candle, or Paschal candle....

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Paschal Candle

This is the Paschal Candle. Every Easter a new paschal candle is placed in the church. The candle is a symbol of Jesus' resurrection from the dead on Easter Sunday. It reminds us of the light of Christ

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Stations of the Cross

In Catholic churches there are pictures around the walls which are called the Stations of the Cross. They tell the story of how Jesus suffered and died on the cross. There are 14 Stations of the Cross – depicting the stages of this event. The Stations of the Cross are a type of pilgrimage. A pilgrimage is a prayerful journey. You can journey through the events that led to Jesus' death and follow the last few hours of his life. We use these to help us pray especially during the time known as Lent, just before Easter.

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Crucifix

In every Catholic church you will find a crucifix. This is a cross with the figure of Jesus on it. It is usually on the wall behind the altar.

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Thurible

The thurible is a container inside which charcoal is burned. It is suspended from chains and is also swung on the chains. The thurible holds burning charcoal on to which grains of incense are placed. The incense is held in a container called a boat. Incense has been used since early times to honour people and things. For this reason during the thurible is used to incense the people and priest, the altar, the Book of Gospels and the Blessed Sacrament..

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This is a confessional. This is where were Catholics are able to partake in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The Confessional

From the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

¹⁴²⁴ It is called the sacrament of confession, since the disclosure or confession of sins to a priest is an essential element of this sacrament. In a profound sense it is also a "confession" - acknowledgement and praise - of the holiness of God and of his mercy toward sinful man.

It is called the sacrament of forgiveness, since by the priest's sacramental absolution God grants the penitent "pardon and peace."

It is called the sacrament of Reconciliation, because it imparts to the sinner the life of God who reconciles: "Be reconciled to God." He who lives by God's merciful love is ready to respond to the Lord's call: "Go; first be reconciled to your brother."

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The Sacristy

The sacristy is where the priests, deacons, and altar servers prepare for Holy Mass. The vestments of the priests and deacons are kept here. Each season of the church year has a different colour for the vestments.

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Clerical Dress



From the Code of Canon Law:

Can. 284 Clerics are to wear suitable ecclesiastical dress, in accordance with the norms established by the Episcopal Conference and legitimate local custom.

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The Roman Catholic

RCIA Resource Site:

<http://www.rcia.co.nr>

email: catholic@blueyonder.co.uk