


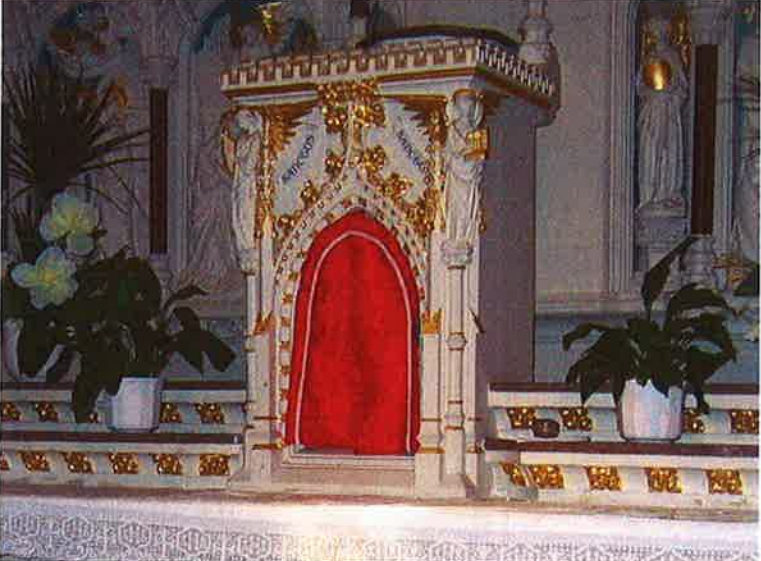


# A Walk Around a Catholic Church

(For a history of St Mary's Church see: [www.stmarysparish.co.uk](http://www.stmarysparish.co.uk))



<p>Holy Water Stoop or Font</p>	<p>Normally in the porch or near the doors into the main body of the church. The water has been blessed by the priest. Catholics entering the church dip their fingers into the font and bless themselves by making the Sign of the Cross with the holy water. Holy water is a 'sacramental', one of many sacred signs instituted by the Church to prepare us to receive the sacraments and sanctify different circumstances of our lives. Water symbolises purifying and re-birth. It is the fundamental sign of our Christian baptism.</p>
<p>Nave, or central aisle</p>	 <p>Nave, leading to the most important part of the church, the altar</p>
<p>Altar &amp; Sanctuary</p>	

<p><b>Altar</b></p>	<p>The table on which the priest, with the people (the congregation), offers the Mass. This is the central act of worship of Catholics and is a sacrificial meal, re-enacting Christ's sacrifice of himself on the cross and his last meal with his disciples. When the priest says the words of consecration in the Mass the bread and wine become Christ's body and blood. At the Communion in the Mass Catholics receive Christ himself, really and truly present, under the forms of bread and wine.</p> <p>The relics of a saint or martyr are put into an altar stone, which is embedded in the centre of the altar itself. These remind us that the Church is a total community of worship, of the people on earth and the saints (everybody) in heaven.</p>
<p><b>Sanctuary</b></p>	<p>The area immediately around the altar, generally elevated a little from the rest of the church.</p>
<p><b>Lectern or Ambo</b></p>	<p>The stand for the book (the Bible or Lectionary) from which the gospel (the 'Good News') and other readings are made, and from which the priest preaches the word of God.</p>
<p><b>President's Chair</b></p>	
	<p>The chair for the bishop or priest (the Celebrant) when he is celebrating and presiding at Mass.</p>
<p><b>Tabernacle</b></p>	
	<p>Tabernacle = literally, 'tent'. The place where the consecrated altar breads (hosts) are kept. May be on the sanctuary, but sometimes in a side chapel where people can come for private prayer.</p>

Hosts	Altar breads which have been consecrated at Mass. Comes from the Latin 'hostia', victim. Christ was the victim on the cross.
Credence table	Side table on the sanctuary for the bread and wine before they are consecrated.
Candles	Lit on the altar during Mass, and used elsewhere in church. Symbolising light, holiness and prayer. The Paschal candle at Easter symbolises the risen Christ.
Sanctuary lamp	The candle/oil lamp which burns continuously, reminding us that Christ is present in the hosts reserved in the tabernacle. Even when there is not a service, Catholics sometimes pop into church when they are passing to say a prayer, particularly because of the 'Real Presence' of Christ in the tabernacle.
Side Chapel (Blessed Sacrament Chapel or Lady Chapel)	Next to the main body of the church. Dedicated to Our Lady (Jesus mother, Mary), or one of the saints. Used for private prayer, or for Mass or services when the main church is not required.
Baptistery	The area of the church used for baptisms containing the baptismal font, where the catechumens (people preparing for baptism) are baptised and become full members of the Church.
Sacristy	The room where the vestments and sacred vessels are kept, and where the priest vests for the service.
Chasuble	Loose sleeveless outer vestment worn by the priest at Mass. (Latin 'casula', hooded cloak.) Different coloured vestments are worn at various times of the year: Purple in Lent and Advent, White at Christmas and Easter and feasts of Our Lady, Red for feasts of the Holy Spirit or martyrs, Green for 'ordinary' Sundays of the year, Black for requiem Masses.
Alb	Long white vestment worn by the priest under the chasuble. (Latin 'albus', white.)
Stole	Like a long scarf which the priest always wears when saying Mass or administering the sacraments. His 'badge of office'.
Chalice	Cup used at Mass for the wine which becomes the blood of Christ. Often made of a precious metal, generally having gold on the inside, out of reverence for its special use.
Paten	Shallow dish used for the consecrated bread (the Host) at Mass.
Ciborium	Similar to a chalice but with a lid. Used to hold the hosts for distribution at Communion. The hosts in the tabernacle are normally kept in a ciborium.
Monstrance	Ornate vessel to hold the large Host for veneration at special services or on special occasions. This is called 'Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament'.

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Thurible	Vessel for burning incense, used at special services.
Incense	<p>A gum or spice which produces a sweet smell when burnt. The burning incense symbolises the prayers of the people, rising to God.</p> <p>Tradition has it that one of the gifts which the Three Kings brought to the infant Jesus was frankincense (an aromatic gum resin), which reminds us both of his Priesthood and his Divinity.</p>
Sacred oils	<p>The oils which are blessed by the bishop at the cathedral on Holy (Maundy) Thursday and used in administering several of the sacraments.</p> <p>Oil is a sign of consecration (used e.g. in the coronation of a king or queen), of strength and of healing.</p> <p>The <i>oil of catechumens</i> – used to anoint someone who is being baptised.</p> <p>The <i>oil of chrism</i> – used also at Baptism, at Confirmation, and Ordination of a priest. A symbol of consecration for a special task in life.</p> <p>The <i>oil of the sick</i> – used in administering the Sacrament of the Sick to those who are seriously ill.</p> <p>While the oils are normally kept in the sacristy, the specific place they are kept is sometimes called an 'aumbry', which is a small recess in the wall of a church.</p>
Confessional	The enclosed, private area where the priest hears confessions, and administers the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
Stations of the Cross	Fourteen pictures or carvings round the walls of the church representing events in Christ's passion, before which devotions are performed, particularly during Lent.
Crucifix	<p>An image of the cross with the figure of Christ on it. A reminder that Christ died to redeem us.</p> <p>The most important image in Catholic worship. Most Catholics have one or several crucifixes in their homes.</p>

<p><b>Stained glass windows</b></p>	
<p><b>Statues</b></p>	
	<p>Statues and stained glass show us images of Jesus, Our Lady, the saint to which the church is dedicated, or other saints. They are 'visual aids' to help us in our prayers and worship of God. The great medieval cathedrals of Europe are full of these visual aids - 'stories in stone and glass' - which helped the devotions and prayers of people who in general could not read or write.</p>
<p><b>Presbytery</b></p>	<p>The house, normally near the church, where the priest lives. 'Presbyter' means priest or elder of the church.</p>