

Understanding the Mass

The Presidential Chair

Each week, we are explaining the different parts of the Mass - what is in the church, what we use in the Mass, and why (and how) we celebrate Mass the way we do.

*Today our topic is **The Presidential Chair**.*

The **Presidential Chair**, or Priest's Chair, is where the priest sits during the Mass. It is called this because the priest presides or leads the celebration of the Mass by the whole community, whose leadership finds expression in a life of service, most especially during the Mass. This is why it is one of the most important places in the Sanctuary.

The word "preside" comes from two Latin words: *prae* ("before") and *sedere* ("to sit"). So to preside over something is literally to "sit before" something - and you will notice that even though the position of the Presidential Chair may be different from church to church, you will always be able to see the priest when he is sitting on it!



In many churches, there will be smaller chairs on either side of the Presidential Chair. Sometimes these are used by other priests or by deacons, and sometimes they are left empty.

Presidential chairs are often decorated - sometimes with a cross, or with beautiful carvings if they are made from wood - as a way of reminding us that the priest is leading everyone in our celebration of the Mass together.

During the Mass, the priest will stand before the Presidential Chair when he leads the Introductory and Concluding Rites, and when he says the Prayer after Communion. He will sit in the Presidential Chair during the Liturgy of the Word (except for when he is reading the Gospel).

1. Where is the Presidential Chair in your church? _____
2. Is there just one chair, or are there smaller chairs as well? _____
3. What is your church's Presidential Chair made from? _____