

Understanding the Mass Pews and Kneelers

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.

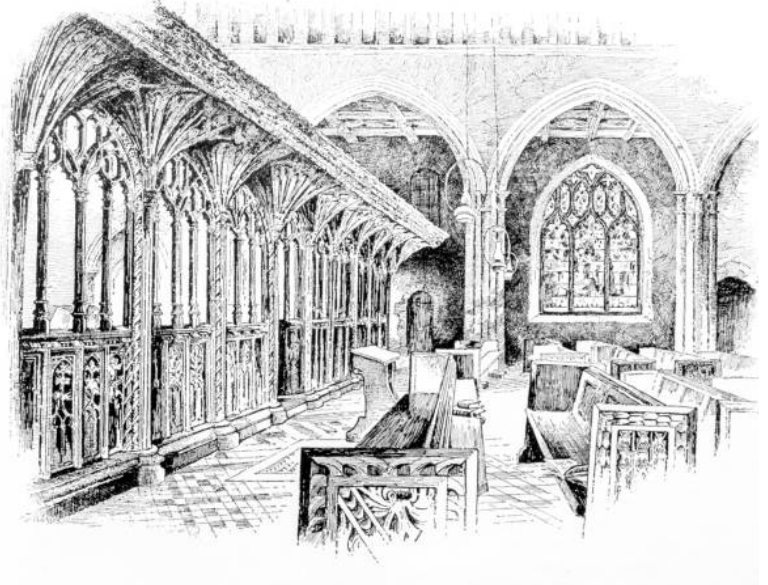
*Today our topic is **Pews and Kneelers**.*

Once you have entered the church, and genuflected or bowed to Jesus in the tabernacle, you will sit in a **pew**, which is a long bench seat.

The word pew was first used in the 1300s and comes from the Latin word *podium* (“elevated place”) because the very first pews in church were elevated, or raised up high.

Pews are commonly made of wood, and are placed in rows facing the altar. They may have slots or shelves to hold Bibles, Missals, hymn books and prayer books.

In most Catholic churches, a pathway is left between the pews for the priest to enter and leave, and also for people to go up to receive Holy Communion.



As you sit in the pew, you may also see **kneelers**, which are either single cushions or long pieces of wooden furniture (sometimes covered with material) that are used for when we kneel down during the Mass or during prayer, so that we are not kneeling on the floor.

In England and Wales - and in many countries around the world - we kneel in Mass during the Eucharistic Prayer as a sign of respect and recognition that Jesus becomes truly present to us in Holy Communion.

Pope Benedict XVI wrote that Catholics kneel because Jesus knelt when He prayed, and that kneeling “is an act of humility, recognising our own littleness before the Creator of the world. The act of kneeling prepares our hearts to receive God within our souls, striking down our pride with a physical reminder of what our soul should be like spiritually.”

Circle which statement is correct for you today

I am sitting in a pew on the right side of the church.	YES	NO
I am sitting in a pew on the left side of the church.	YES	NO
I have a kneeler to kneel on.	YES	NO
I have a cushion to kneel on.	YES	NO

¹ *Spirit of the Liturgy*, by Pope Benedict XVI (2000); *Consecrated for Worship*, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales (2006)