

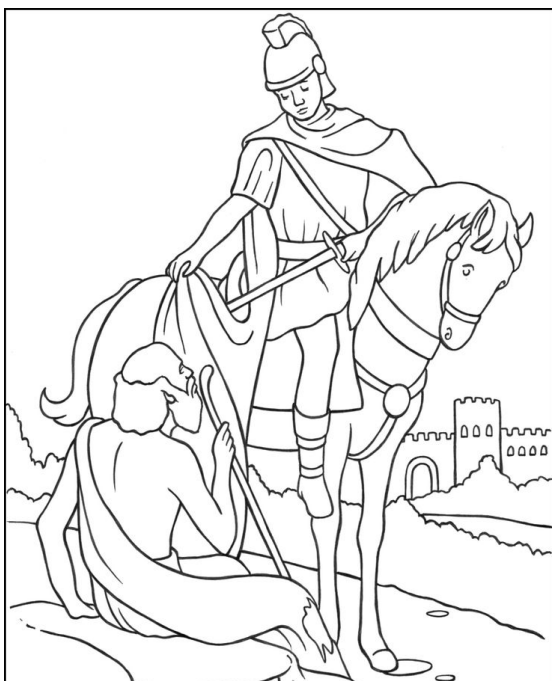
Understanding the Mass

Lady Chapel

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 **Lady Chapel**.*

In many Catholic churches, there are small **chapels** or parts of the church that are dedicated to prayer. The **Lady Chapel** is specially dedicated to Our Lady: Mary the Mother of Jesus. This term is very common in the United Kingdom; in other countries, it may be called a Mary chapel or Marian chapel.



The word **chapel** comes from a story about Saint Martin of Tours, who lived in the 4th century. While he was a soldier, Saint Martin cut his cloak in two to give half to a beggar in need. He kept the other half and wore it over his shoulders as a *cappella* ("small cape"). Later on, the beggar appeared to Saint Martin and revealed himself to be Jesus, and Saint Martin became a Christian.

Saint Martin's cape was passed on as a **relic** (an item of religious significance). It was kept by early French kings in a tent while they fought in battle. The tent was called the *capella* and the priests who said daily Mass in the tent were known as the *capellani*. From these words, via Old French, we get the names "chapel" and "chaplain".

Even if there is no Lady chapel in your church, you will see a statue or painting of Our Lady in all Catholic churches. This is because Mary is very special to us.

Mary is a wonderful example of saying "yes" to God, as she did when the angel told her that she would be the mother of Jesus. And Jesus gave Mary to all of us, through Saint John, when he died on the Cross, saying "Behold your mother."

We call Mary "Our Lady" because Jesus gave Mary to us, to be our mother too. And just like we have photos of the people we love at home, we have a picture or statue of Our Lady in our church because we love her as our heavenly mother.

