

Understanding the Mass Sacristy

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 **Sacristy**.*

At the back or the side of the church, you will see the entrance to a room that is not used during the Mass itself. This is the **Sacristy** - from the Latin *sacer*, or “sacred” - the area in which the priests and altar servers vest (get dressed) before Mass.

This room is also where we keep the bread and wine, sacred vessels, the books we use during the Mass, the hymn books, and the vestments...everything needed in the celebration of the Mass.

The sacristy has been part of the church since the first places of public worship were built in the fourth century.

It is built so that it is large enough for the priest and ministers to prepare for Mass, as well as allowing for any other preparations before Mass takes place.

The sacristy looks a little bit different in each church, and will also be found in different locations.

In some churches, it is at the back of the church, while in other churches, it is at the side.



Many sacristies also have a small sink called a *sacrarium*, which drains directly into the earth. The *sacrarium* is for the reverent disposal of the water that is used to clean the sacred vessels after Mass, and of holy water. We will learn more about the sacred vessels in a future chapter of “Understanding the Mass”.

1. Where is the sacristy in your church? _____

2. Have you ever been inside your church’s sacristy? _____