

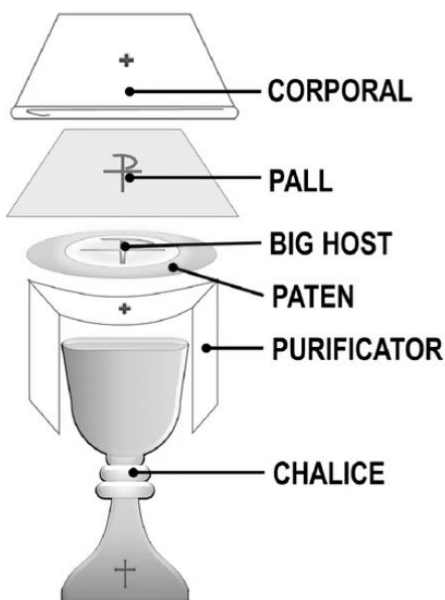
Understanding the Mass

The Preparation of the Altar

*Each week, we are explaining a different part of the Mass - the items that are used, the parts of the church, and the roles of the people who help us celebrate Mass. This week, our topic is the **Preparation of the Altar**.*

You will now see the altar servers (or the priest, if there are no altar servers at your Mass) undertake several tasks, which together are the **Preparation of the Altar** - getting the altar ready for the Eucharistic Prayer by moving items from the credence table (which we learned about last week) onto the altar.

First, the Missal is placed on the altar. Then several very important items are laid out. These are often grouped together on the credence table, and then moved to the altar.



The **corporal** is a little white table cloth that is unfolded on the altar. The sacred vessels are put on the corporal for the whole Eucharist Prayer, so that it catches any spills or crumbs.

The **pall** is a stiffened square card covered with white linen, usually embroidered with a cross. It is used to cover the open chalice so that nothing can drop into it from above. The pall is a reminder to us that we should protect the Body and Blood of Jesus, and treat Holy Communion with reverence and care at all times.

The **paten** is the plate holding the hosts that will become the Body of Christ. It is a beautiful item made of precious metal. It may resemble a plate or a bowl.

The **purificator** is a rectangular piece of white linen with an embroidered cross in the centre that is used by the priest during the Eucharist Prayer.

The **chalice** is a beautiful cup made of precious metal like gold or silver. It is made like this because it holds the wine that will become the Blood of Jesus.

All these items are carefully laid out by the altar servers, the deacon, or the priest as part of the preparation of the altar.