

“YEAR OF THE EUCHARIST”—“WHAT’S THAT CALLED? (PART 3) BY FR. STEVE LAPE

We continue our “What’s THAT called” series of articles, having already looked at names for things worn or used at Mass. This series is meant to help us appreciate and understand the many wonderful things, large or small, that help to enhance the experience of Eucharist for all worshippers. For Part 3, we look at the names of the various parts of the church building.

SANCTUARY (SANG-chew-air-ee): the special, sacred, front section of the church where the altar (and usually the tabernacle) is located.

ALTAR: the table in the center of the sanctuary where the bread and wine are consecrated (becoming the Body & Blood of Christ.)

SACRISTY or VESTRY: the room where the priest, servers, and other ministers dress and prepare for Mass.

NAVE: the large, central part of the church where the pews are and worshippers gather for celebrating Mass.

VESTIBULE (VEST-ub-yule): the entranceway or gathering space at the front or side of the church.

BAPTISTRY: the area where the baptisms are celebrated. The holy water for baptizing is placed in the **font**.



CHOIR LOFT: the balcony in the back of the church where the choir sings near the main organ.

RECONCILIATION ROOM or CONFESSIONAL: the room in which the Sacrament of Reconciliation is celebrated (confessions heard).

CREDESCENCE (CREE-dense) TABLE: There are two—one is where the gifts of bread & wine are placed before Mass at the back of the center aisle. The other is the table in the sanctuary where items which the priest & servers use during Mass are kept.

TABERNACLE (TAB-burr-nackle): highly decorated receptacle, often with a golden appearance, used for reserving Eucharistic hosts (Jesus’ Body). Whenever one walks by a tabernacle in a Catholic church, it is proper to bow or genuflect in front of it as a sign of respect, mindful of Jesus’ Real Presence in it.



PULPIT (also called LECTERN or AMBO): the stand at which the readings are read and the homily is given.

AMBRY: the special place (usually in the sanctuary) where the 3 holy oils are kept. The holy oils, which are used in certain sacramental celebrations, include: the Sacred Chrism (“Sacrum Chrisma” in Latin, SC on the container), which is used for baptisms, confirmations, and priestly ordinations; the Oil of Catechumens (OS on the container, which stands for “oleum sanctum,” or “holy oil” in Latin), which is used for the initial anointing before Baptism; and the Oil of the Sick (OI on the container—initials for “oleum infirmorum,” which is Latin for Oil of the Sick), which is used to celebrate the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.