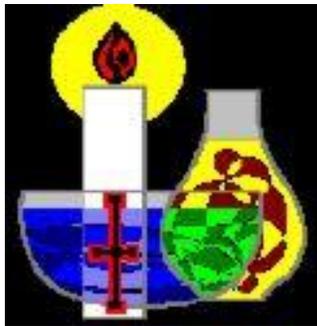




# Guidelines, Policies and Procedures for the Parish Sacristan



August 18, 2021

(Change #1, 09/25/21)

St. Michael Catholic Church

574 Eighth Street, Calhan, CO 80808

(Mailing: P.O. Box 199, Calhan, CO 80808)



## *St. Michael Catholic Church*

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August 18, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Please accept my congratulations and sincere gratitude for your decision to assist the St. Michael Catholic Church and parish community by volunteering your time, talent and skills to the Sacristan Ministry.

As you will soon read in the attached parish-level handout concerning our established Sacristan Ministry Program, it is a vibrant, worthwhile, and tremendous ministry that directly affects the quality, flow and orderliness of our community's daily and Sabbath liturgical celebrations.

Please know that I am available to assist you, answer any questions you may have, and receive your comments or suggestions.

May God bless you abundantly in this ministry at the service of Our Lord and His People.

Respectfully  
Yours in Christ,

Fr. R.G. Newbury Jr.  
Pastor

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**General Information:** By definition (Merriam-Webster Dictionary), a “*Sacristan*” is defined as “a person in charge of the sacristy and church-related ceremonial equipment”. A “*sacristy*” is a room for keeping liturgical vestments (such as the priests’ cassocks, albs, stoles and chasubles and the deacons’ albs, stoles, and dalmatics) and other church furnishings, sacred vessels and ritual books. The sacristy is generally off-limits, except for: the clergy, scheduled sacristan and those assisting with set-up for the Liturgy. Using the sacristy as a location for parishioners to store personal property (e.g., coats, purses, etc.) is strongly discouraged; as it detracts from its primary purpose. Such things are better left in our vehicles and therefore, does not mandate that the sacristan stay in or closely monitor the sacristy to safeguard the personal property items of others.

**Church History:** In ancient times, many of the sacristan’s duties were performed by the *doorkeepers*. The Decretals of Pope Gregory IX (1234 CE) speak of the sacristan as having an honorable office and that their principal duties were to care for the sacred vessels, vestments, etc. Presently, the sacristan is an appointed official in the parish. The “*Cæremoniale Episcoporum*” prescribed that in cathedral and collegiate churches, the sacristan should be a priest, and describes his duties in regard to the sacristy, the Blessed Sacrament, the baptismal font, the holy oils, the sacred relics, the decoration of the church for the different seasons and feasts, the preparation of what is necessary for the various ceremonies, the ringing of the church bells, the preservation of liturgical and sacramental order in the church, and the distribution of Masses. Over the centuries, this practice has been modified to include competently trained members of the laity.

**The Role of the Sacristan:** Our appreciation and understanding of the role of the sacristan has developed together with our growing and understanding of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council (SVC); that all members of the Church “should be led to take a full, conscious, active part in the liturgical celebrations which are demanded by the very nature of the liturgy” (*Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy*, 14). The worshipping community needs lay ministers and one such minister is the sacristan.

The ministry of the sacristan is a bit like the work of a weaver. For all the members of a community of faith to take their full, conscious and active part in liturgical celebrations, there needs to be someone who prepares and oversees “the things” of the liturgy. The sacristan is to know the meaning and purpose of the liturgy, as well as the needs of the liturgical assembly, and to work carefully to see the liturgy’s ends realized by providing the members of the assembly with the tools they need for a meaningful, prayerful and active celebration.

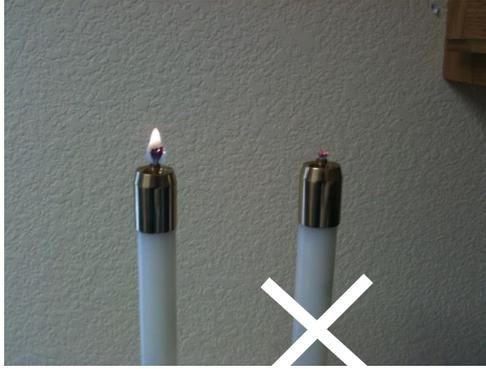
Since the SVC, more-and-more of these previously reserved priestly sacristan responsibilities have been delegated to trained and appointed member/s of the laity. At the St. Michael Catholic Church, we have trained and appointed Mass sacristans, who skillfully fulfill these liturgical functions, duties and responsibilities.

**Desired Qualities/Qualifications of a Parish Sacristan:**

- Must be a baptized Catholic in good standing and a registered member of the St. Michael parish community.
- Has a basic knowledge and experience of liturgical rites (e.g., the Order of Mass; Communion Service; Eucharistic Adoration; Baptism; Funerals; Reconciliation Service; etc.) and is aware of the requirements of the liturgical position.
- Understands how to use the ecclesiastical region's published Ordo.
- Is willing to work with a variety of religious traditions and cultures.
- Is able to work, liaison and communicate well with others involved in:  
(a) pastoral leadership; (b) liturgical planning, and (c) liturgical practice.
- Is a "team member" and a "team player".
- Is capable of being formally commissioned, ideally during a Sunday Mass, utilizing a blessing taken from the Book of Blessings (*Chapter 62, Order for the Blessing of Altar Servers, Sacristans, Musicians, and Ushers*).
- Is able and willing to learn about liturgical principles and to put those principles into practice.
- Is self-motivated and possesses an ability to delegate and follow-through.
- Is able to request needed repairs/replacement through the parish's pastor, parochial administrator or deacon.
- Is able to work on Sundays, Holy Days of Obligation and is flexible throughout the year, as needed (e.g., Holy Week; Advent and Lent Reconciliation Services; etc.).
- Is open to finding spiritual nourishment and enrichment within the ministry.

**Sacristan Guidelines:** Generally, the role of the sacristan is to oversee and keep in good order the Worship Space (including the Sanctuary area, the Worship Space (or nave), the Gathering Area (or narthex)) and the sacristy. They must have a reverence for the sanctuary and for all articles and sacred vessels used in Catholic worship and liturgical activities. The sacristan is the person, who is appointed to be available to prepare everything needed for the liturgy. The tasks could include (but are not limited) to:

- Make sure the furniture in the sanctuary area is clean, appropriately positioned and not cluttered. This includes the altar, ambo, lectern, presider/deacon chair, baptismal font and other liturgical articles/furnishings in the sanctuary.
- Work with the priests, deacons, liturgist and other liturgical ministers.
- Be familiar with the Ordo, Roman Missal, Lectionary and other ritual books needed in the liturgy and sets them up properly in preparation for the scheduled liturgies.
- Be responsible for the order and cleanliness of the sacristy.
- (The Lead Sacristan) Be responsible for the ordering (through the parish office) of all supplies and materials (e.g., unconsecrated/approved sacramental hosts and wine; candles; altar linens; liquid wax; purificators; incense; charcoal; etc.) required for liturgies. Note: This responsibility may be shared or delegated to other parish individuals or groups (e.g., the Parish's Altar/Rosary Society; etc.) with the pastor's/parochial administrator's knowledge and approval.
- Make sure that processional candles are clean and functional, with wicks trimmed periodically, as needed. (please refer below)



- Wick flames on all the altar candles should be approximately equal in height.
  - \* Occasionally (every few months) the tips of the wicks will naturally become blackened from a buildup of carbon and will start to burn unevenly. Carefully trim (cut) off the top blackened end (edge) of about 1/16" of the wick, pull up about 1/16" to expose some new wick and it should light/burn better.
  - Occasionally, the entire wick will need to be replaced (once it is less than approximately half of the candle stick length).
- 
- Arrange the seating areas for the servers, deacon and celebrant; placing hymnals and binders (containing the Prayer of the Faithful and announcements) at their seats. (\* Ensure the server chairs are forward enough, so that the kneeling server(s) do not kick or otherwise scuff the walls, disconnect a microphone jack, etc.)
  - If incense is to be used, fill the boat with incense, place charcoal in the thurible and light the charcoal approximately 15 minutes prior to the start of the entrance procession; and place the stand for the thurible and boat in the desired location.
  - Ensure enough clean purificators, corporals, hand towels, incense and charcoals are available for the week's scheduled liturgies.
  - Promptly inform the pastor, parochial administrator or the deacon of any liturgical device (chair, book, etc.) which needs repair or replacement.
  - Consider serving as a member of the parish's environment committee to plan and place decorations needed for the different and changing liturgical seasons.
  - Arrange the liturgical book(s) needed for the celebration, marking (via colored ribbons) all the necessary divisions/sections.
  - Lay out the vestments and/or anything else needed for the celebration (such as cruets, chalices, ciboria, linens, oils, processional cross, candles, etc.), as needed.
  - Ensure the church's bells, if installed, are rung to announce the near-start of celebrations to the local community; at least 5 minutes before the liturgy begins.
  - Be responsible for ensuring that those who wash the altar linens do so according to the church's published liturgical norms. (See Attachment #2 for the Norms/Guidelines regarding the cleaning of liturgical linens, clothes and garments.)

- Be responsible for ensuring that those who cleanse the sacred vessels after Communion, do so according to the church's published liturgical norms. (See Attachment #2 for Norms/Guidelines regarding cleaning of sacred vessels.)
- Take care to burn or bury old linens and other objects (as appropriate) that are no longer suitable or serviceable for continued liturgical use.
- Ensure that the tabernacle vigil lamp is always kept burning; and is replaced, if/as needed (at least weekly).
- Ensure that the church's holy water stoups are cleaned and replenished, at least weekly.
- Ensure that the holy water font is cleaned and replenished, as needed.  
Note: If new water is added to the font or additional holy water is needed, please contact the parish priest, as soon as possible.
- If there is a sprinkling rite, ensure the water bucket and sprinkler (*aspergillum*) are prepared and placed on the credence table for use during the Mass.
- Be aware that every priest (pastor or visitor) has differing needs.

Note: # Any liturgical vessel or linen (i.e., purificators, corporals, etc.) that are blessed before being placed into service are categorized as "unserviceable", when they become worn, possess many loose strings/edges, have permanent stains or holes, etc. These unserviceable devices are to be disposed by burning or burying only.

There should be an adequate annual parish budget allocated for the Sacristan Ministry. This budget is usually categorized under liturgy expenses/operations and is the responsibility of the parish's appointed liturgist (or Pastor, in the absence of a Liturgist).

Sacristies usually contain a special wash basin, called a *Sacrarium*, in which the drain pipe's contents flow directly into the ground to prevent sacred materials (such as used baptismal water, ashes) from being washed into the common sewers or septic tanks. At the St. Michael Catholic Church, the Sacrarium is in the sacristy (closest to the rectory). Sacristans must be alert NOT to utilize the sacristy's common sink to dispose of liquids or materials, which need to be poured down the installed sacrarium. The sacrarium may be used to wash linens used during Holy Communion following the parish's sacred liturgies.

At the St. Michael Catholic Church, the cruets, chalices, ciborium and patens are stored in cabinets located in the sacristy. Clean and soiled altar linens are generally stored in the sacristy. The Sacristy is off-limits to the public.

**Closing Comments:** In the event there is conflicting information or instruction, between that provided by a parish liturgist and those clergy associated with a scheduled liturgy, the instructions or requests of the clergy are to take precedence over the liturgist's decisions in all instances. In other words, the presider (priest or deacon) ultimately has the final word in all liturgical matters.

#### **Source References**

- Neff, Christina, Guide for Sacristans, @2001, Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, IL.
- USCCB, General Instruction to the Roman Missal (GIRM), @2020, Washington, DC.
- Zenit, A Sacristan's Duties, Vatican News Article, 08/21/07, Rome, Italy.

## **DEFINITION OF TERMS (GLOSSARY)**

<u>Ablution cup:</u>	A covered dish of water (with a cover/top) normally positioned on the side of the tabernacle; that is used by the priest, deacon, acolyte or EMHCs to wash their fingers after distributing Communion.
<u>Alb:</u>	A white cloth gown worn by altar servers, acolytes, deacons and priests when performing official functions at the altar or sanctuary.
<u>Ambo:</u>	Place where the Word of God is proclaimed (i.e., the “pulpit”).
<u>Ambry:</u>	The storage case or container, which contains the sacramental Holy Oils.
<u>Aspergillum:</u>	A container (usually a bucket) with a handle that holds Holy Water for sprinkling.
<u>Boat:</u>	The vessel that contains the incense that is burned in the censor (thurible).
<u>Book of the Gospels:</u>	The Book that contains the Gospel readings used in the church’s liturgies. It is carried in the entrance procession (by a Deacon or the First Reader) and is used by the Priest or Deacon to read the Gospel passage.
<u>Book Stand:</u>	A metal or plastic stand: (a) in the front, center of the altar used to hold up (in the standing position) the Book of the Gospels, and/or (b) Upon which the Roman Missal of the Mass prayers is placed.
<u>Burse:</u>	A pouch designed to hold a communion pyx. A cord is usually attached, so that the pyx may be placed inside and then worn about the neck, close to the heart of the minister carrying the Blessed Sacrament to an individual (usually sick, homebound or hospitalized).
<u>Cassock:</u>	A black or red, linen gown worn by altar servers, acolytes, deacons and priests, when performing official duties at the altar or sanctuary during liturgies such as: Mass, funeral services, etc.
<u>Censer (thurible):</u>	The metal container (with a movable top) hung at the end of a chain; that contains burning charcoals meant to burn incense.
<u>Chalice:</u>	A cup made of precious metal that holds the wine, which is transubstantiated into the Blood of Christ during the sacred consecration of the Mass.
<u>Ciborium:</u>	A large cup or container made of precious metal, which holds the Body of Christ after the consecration for distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful. This is commonly stored and secured in the Tabernacle to enable the priest, deacon or acolyte to: (a) later visit and distribute communion to the sick, hospitalized or homebound themselves, or (2) distribute to mandated EMHCs for this same purpose.
<u>Corporal:</u>	A white-colored, sacred cloth (folded into multiple squares) upon which is placed the gifts of bread and wine during the Mass Liturgy of the Eucharist. (This is also used on the Credence Table upon which the sacred vessels are placed and purified.) Used to

protect any particles of the Precious Body or Blood of Christ from falling to the altar cloth. It is always folded and unfolded, to protect any particles from falling onto the floor or carpeting.

Credence Table:

A table in the sanctuary area (near the altar) where the water/wine cruet(s), chalice(s), paten(s), purificator(s), etc., are kept for use in the Order of the Mass following the Presentation of the Gifts.

Crucifix:

A cross containing a figure of the crucified Jesus Christ nailed to it.

Cruet:

A small container normally used to store water and/or wine to be used in the liturgy.

Gifts Table:

A table at the rear of the Worship Space, where the paten of unconsecrated unleavened bread and flagon or decanter of wine are placed before the liturgy begins. These gifts of bread and wine are later carried forward by the faithful to the priest or deacon; to be presented to God during the liturgy as a covenantal sacrifice for the expiation of our sins.

Holy of Holies:

(Hebrew: קֹדֶשׁ הַקֳּדָשִׁים *Qōḏeš HaQōḏāšîm*) or **HaDvir**  
(Hebrew: הַדְּבִיר, "[The] Sanctuary [place in which God resides]" )

In the Latin translation of the Bible (the Vulgate), it is referred to as: *sanctum sanctorum* and *sancta sanctorum*.

In the early days of the Church (started to be written down circa the 8<sup>th</sup> Century CE), the priest said all the offertory prayers inaudibly facing east toward Jerusalem, because only he should enter the Holy of Holies to offer the sacrifice before God. The prayers then followed with: “*Orate, fratres et sorores ...*” (Pray, brethren that ...) inviting the entire congregation to now join him and participate.

This *Holy of Holies* within the modern-day Order of the Mass is traditionally understood to include an area encompassing: behind the altar, to and including the Tabernacle.

Therefore, only members of the ordained clergy should walk between the altar and the tabernacle. If lay ministers must walk from one side of the sanctuary to the other, they are asked to please walk in front of the altar.

NB: As they walk in front of the altar, if they are carrying a communion vessel containing parts or particles of the Sacred Body and Precious Blood, they do not need to bow to the altar or tabernacle. If they are empty handed, they need to bow to the altar.

Lavabo bowl:

The bowl or tray used when washing the celebrant’s hands.

Lectern:

Like the Ambo, however, from which all “*non-scriptural*” based prayers, announcements, etc., are read.

Lectionary:

The book that contains the first reading, responsorial psalm and Gospel reading (weekday Masses) and the first and second

scriptural readings, responsorial psalm and Gospel reading (weekend Masses).

- Luna: A thin, circular receptacle, made of precious metal, having a glass face that holds a Consecrated Host used for Eucharistic Adoration (also known as the Blessed Sacrament). It slides into the back of the monstrance on a little track or slide rail.
- Monstrance: This is a large, ornate vessel used to hold and display the Blessed Sacrament for Eucharistic Adoration, Exposition, Benediction, and solemn Eucharistic processions (such as on the Feast of Corpus Christi).
- Narthex The area between the main entry door(s) to the church and the door(s) leading to the Worship Space (or nave).
- Nave: The main portion of the church within which parishioners sit during liturgies (also known as the Worship Space).
- Ordo: An official booklet of Mass daily readings during the liturgical year.
- Pall: A stiff, square, white covered cardboard or plastic device, placed on top of the celebrant's chalice and paten. Also, a white covering placed over the top of a casket during a Liturgy of Christian Funeral.
- Paten: A small saucer-shaped plate of precious metal that holds the Host/s. Used by the priest and/or EMHC to distribute the Body of Christ during Communion and to dry it after purifying or cleansing. (Note: Used purificators **must** always be placed in a container specifically designated for soiled sacred cloths that need to be properly cleansed. The instructions outlined in Attachment 1 of this handbook are to be followed when laundering sacred linens/cloths.)
- Purificator: A tri-folded handheld cloth (with a sewed cross in the center), which is placed over the chalice under the paten (as a cushion). Purificators are used in the Mass by the priest, deacon, acolyte and EMHCs to wipe the chalice rim (inside and outside) after each person receives the Precious Blood.
- Pyx: A metal device, usually the size of a pocket watch, in which consecrated hosts are carried from the parish church to those who are sick, homebound, hospitalized or are otherwise unable to come to church for Holy Communion during a normally scheduled Mass.
- Roman Missal: The book which contains the various prayers used in the Liturgy of the Mass, Service of the Word and other liturgical celebrations.
- Sacrarium: A special sink in the sacristy with its drain going directly into the ground; usually fitted with a cover and lock, which is used for the disposal of the following: the sacred linen wash and rise water; used holy water; used baptismal water; blessed ashes; etc.
- Sanctuary: The most sacred part of the Church in which the altar and tabernacle are located; usually elevated and situated in front of the assembly's pews or seats.

NB: Within the modern-day Holy Order of the Mass, Our Lord is present to all participants in five (5) ways or locations:

1. The Tabernacle (of the New Covenant);
2. The Altar (of the Sacrifice);
3. The Word of God (Proclaimed);
4. The Priest Celebrant (acting in *Persona Christi*); and
5. The Gathered Assembly (as the *Body of Christ*).

The first four (4) of these are specifically located in the Sanctuary area. Hence, why the Sanctuary area is considered the most holy part of the Church.

One consistent Real Presence of the Lord – in the *Holy of Holies* – for us is always: the **Tabernacle**. Veiled like the Old Testament’s temple Holy of Holies.

Stoup: The small holy water fountains or bowls at the entrances of the church.

Surplice: A wide-sleeved, white, linen garment worn over a cassock by priests, deacons, acolytes, seminarians and altar servers.

Thurible: (also known as a Censer) A circular-shaped, metal device used for incensing. Burning charcoal is placed inside it, upon which the priest or deacon places incense to make it burn and smoke before blessing the altar, gifts, object, people or a casket during a funeral Mass.