

The **GROTTO**: a shrine to the Virgin Mary (Marian Shrine) marking the apparition or other miracle ascribed to the Blessed Virgin Mary, or a site on which is centred a historically strong Marian devotion. The well-known apparitions of Our Lady of Lourdes to Bernadette Soubirous took place in a grotto, which is visited by many Catholics. It was through the Blessed Virgin Mary that Jesus came into the world, and it is also through her that he must reign in the world

"We never give more honour to Jesus than when we honour his Mother, and we honour her simply and solely to honour him all the more perfectly. We go to her only as a way leading to the goal we seek - Jesus, her Son."

—Saint Louis Marie de Montfort

'Mary having co-operated in our redemption with so much glory to God and so much love for us, Our Lord ordained that no one shall obtain salvation except through her intercession.'

—St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori

"Men do not fear a powerful hostile army as the powers of hell fear the name and protection of Mary."

—St. Bonaventure

"Never be afraid of loving the Blessed Virgin too much. You can never love her more than Jesus did."

—Saint Maximilian Kolbe

—votive candles:

Psalm 27:4 One thing I ask of the Lord; this I seek: to dwell in His house all the days of my life. To gaze on the Lord's beauty, to visit His Temple.

While the Catholic Church building is legally owned by the bishop, it is a special place — a home — for the parishioners, and they are the stewards of it.

A Catholic church is filled with things that visually grab our attention — stations of the cross, stained glass windows, statues, sanctuary furniture, and so forth. The primary reason for this beautiful things is that they remind us of God's beauty and that God speaks through our senses. In Judaism, a person prays and worships with his entire being, with all of their senses. You will find that in the Catholic Church, as well; when you enter the church, all of our senses are employed. It might be touching Holy water, or the Eucharist, or it might be visually seeing all of these beautiful things that remind us of the presence of God. It is hearing beautiful music, smelling the candles, flowers, incense. It is tasting the communion. All of our senses are used.

The **VESTIBULE**: the main doors of the church, usually lead into a vestibule (**narthex**). It can be used as a gathering area where the beginning of some church services take place. In essence it is a sort of a barrier between the outside world and the place of worship. Some things that are generally found in the Vestibule are:

— **Baptismal pool/fonts** but in our case we have these in the main part of the church.

— **Holy water fonts**: these remind us of our baptism, and we are invited to dip our

fingers into the Holy water and make the Sign of the Cross, remembering that we were baptised, "In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." (Mt 28:19). Thus, it is through the waters of baptism that we enter the church.

- **paintings and statues of saints**
- **information about the parish, bulletin boards**

In some architecture there are usually steps leading to the vestibule from the main door to signify us ascending

The **NAVE**: It is the main body of the church and comes from the latin word meaning BOAT. Many early Christian writers referred to the Church as a boat. Hippolytus wrote— "**The Church... is a ship tossed on the waves of this world, agitated by storms, but never wrecked, having Christ as her pilot, and the Cross of Christ as her mast, and the Word of God as her rudder, and the precepts of Christ as her anchor...**"

Next, we notice in the Nave, the **PEWS**. Despite the fact that we have fixed seating, we must remember to be "doers" of the Word and not just "listeners" at Mass (James 1:22). Along with the pews we have **KNEELERS**, just like in Judaism, Catholic worship and prayer involves the whole person.

Next, you also find in the Nave, the **STATIONS OF THE CROSS**: St. Francis of Assisi is credited with the bringing of this devotion to the church, since all could not afford a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. It consists of fourteen (14) stations of our Lord's Passion on the road to Calvary. It is an invitation to meditate and pray over the various moments of our Lord's Passion.

The **CONFESSIONAL**: where the sacrament of Reconciliation is celebrated. These rooms give the penitent the choice to go anonymously (behind a screen) or "face-to-face".

The **CHOIR AREA**: a designated area for musicians and singers. In some churches you have a "choir loft" at the back of the church and in others you have it on the floor level.

You can also see **SACRED ART**: this includes sculptures, paintings, statues, usually of Jesus and the saints. We do not worship these objects, they are there to help us remember those who are important to us. All worship is directed towards God, but we are called to honour and remember the best of the qualities and attributes of these saints and imitate them. The **Stained Glass** windows: these often depict bible stories, or the lives of saints and were used for catechesis or as presentations during homilies.

The **BAPTISMAL AREA**: **Baptism** is our "door" or entrance into the Church, the Body of Christ. Therefore, many Catholic churches symbolically put their baptismal pool or font at the entrance of the church. Here you also find the **Pascal candle (Easter Candle)**. It is a visible reminder of the Resurrection of Our Lord and that each of us are called to be the **Light of the World**. The Pascal candle is used at the Easter vigil, and thereafter at every baptism wherein we light a baptismal candle from the Pascal candle reminding the newly baptised that the light of Christ now burns in his heart. It

is also used at every funeral.

The **AMBRY** is also found near the baptismal area. This is a small cabinet or niche in the wall where the three sacred oils are kept.

- Oil of catechumens (oil of exorcism, usually used in the rite of baptism)
- Sacred Chrism (used for baptism, confirmation and ordination. It also contains balsam as perfume)
- Oil of the sick

These oils are made from olive oil and are blessed by the bishop the week before Easter.

The **SANCTUARY**: it is the front area of the church, and it is usually elevated by two or three steps. You find here the altar (eucharistic table), the **tabernacle**, the **ambo**, the **presider's chair** (in the principal church this chair is called **Cathedra**).

The **ALTAR** is the sacred table where the Eucharist is celebrated. It is meant to convey two theological ideas— the table of the Last Supper and the altar of sacrifice. The altar brings together both **Supper** and **Sacrifice**. Most altars contain the relics of one or more saints. Most of these relics are a tiny part of the body of a saint. This is a reminder to us that our freedom to worship is built upon the faith of the Christian men and women who have gone before us. It is reminiscent of the times of persecution when Masses had to be celebrated in the catacombs, on the tombs of the Christian martyrs.

The **AMBO**: also known as the lectern, is the place where sacred scripture is read during Mass and at other liturgical celebrations.

The **PRESIDER'S CHAIR**: where the priest or presider sits during the liturgy.

The **TABERNACLE**: or latin for **TENT** is where the **Blessed Sacrament** is kept. Just as the Jews kept the **Torah**, the Word of God in a tabernacle, we keep **Word made Flesh**, the **Eucharist**, in a tabernacle.

The **SANCTUARY LAMP**: is the candle, usually red, that burns near the tabernacle to indicate to those who are in the church that the Blessed Sacrament is present. When the Eucharist is kept in a separate chapel, the sanctuary lamp will be in that chapel. It is like a lighthouse indicating where the King of Kings is enthroned in our parish, and that we should bend our knee in genuflection to Him.

The **EAST WALL**: it is the wall behind the altar as viewed from the Nave. It is called the East Wall no matter which direction you are actually facing. In olden days, all church buildings faced east or towards Jerusalem, an ancient practice inherited from Judaism of facing Jerusalem during prayers. So a person who enters the church goes from west to east which symbolises going from the evil of the present world to the glory of the new Jerusalem to come.

one of the most noticeable differences between Catholics and protestant churches is the presence of a **Crucifix**, which is a Cross with the body of Christ on it. This is important to Catholic theology because it reminds us of the price that was paid for

our salvation. At the top of most crucifixes are the letters "INRI" which is the latin abbreviation for "Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews."

— the **CANDLES**: they are a visible reminder of the Light of Christ. They represent peoples prayers and the importance of our prayers.

— The **CHAPEL**: some churches have a smaller places of worship called Chapels. These may be used for smaller services like daily Mass, baptisms, or small weddings. In some churches have a special area where the Blessed Sacrament is exposed for personal reflection. The chapels are called Eucharistic Adoration Chapels. When these chapels are open 24/7 they are known as "Perpetual Adoration Chapels".

— The **SACRISTY**: it is a room attached to the church where the things needed for Mass are kept, including unleavened bread, wine, liturgical vessels and vestments. There is a sink called a *sacrarium* which is used to wash the priest's hands and for disposing of any blessed water. The drainage pipe of this sink goes directly into the earth as is prescribed for the disposing of holy things.

Let's end this session by praying together a prayer based on 1 Peter 2:4-5—

Christ, we come to You, a living stone, rejected by human beings
but chosen and precious in the sight of God, and, like living stones,
let us be built into a spiritual house
to be a holy priesthood,
to offer spiritual sacrifices
acceptable to You through Jesus Christ.

TRADITION: Taken from a homily by St. John Chrysostom, regarding the importance of letting the beauty of a church building be merely a reflection of the beauty of our charity.

“Do you wish to honour the body of Christ? Do not ignore him when he is naked. Do not pay him homage in the temple clad in silk, only then to neglect him outside where he is cold and ill-clad. He who said: ‘This is my body’ is the same who said: ‘You saw me hungry and you gave me no food’, and ‘Whatever you did to the least of my brothers you did also to me’... What good is it if the Eucharistic table is overloaded with golden chalices when your brother is dying of hunger? Start by satisfying his hunger and then with what is left you may adorn the altar as well.”