

# **A SCHOOL'S GUIDE TO PREPARING THE PLACE FOR MASS**

## **WHAT IS EXPECTED?**

### **THE PLACE OF CELEBRATION IS FIT FOR ITS USE**

Take into consideration things such as 'is this in a church or a gym/sports hall?' When it is clean, tidy, and appropriately decorated, the place of celebration shows us the importance and holiness of the Mass. Proper space must be provided for the dignified ministry of clergy, readers, musicians and others - and for the easy circulation of the assembly at the time of distribution of Holy Communion. The place of worship must help the gathered assembly realise the unity it shares in Christ.

## **WHAT ITEMS ARE NEEDED?**

### **AMBO**

The Lectionary  
(Text for Prayer of the Faithful)

### **ALTAR**

White altar cloth  
White altar candles - 2, 4, or 6 (7 if the bishop is presiding!)  
Crucifix (cross and corpus) - standing or flat on altar  
Altar Missal (& concelebrants' books, if there are to be concelebrants)

### **CREDESCENCE TABLE**

Corporal  
Chalices, as needed  
Purificators - one for each chalice  
Jug of water  
Bowl for priest to wash his hands  
Lavabo towel  
Ciboria, as needed

### **OFFERTORY TABLE**

Large altar bread for the priest to use  
Additional small altar breads  
Jug of wine

### **ALSO**

Chasuble and stole for priest  
Processional candles for servers (optional)

## **AMBO**

The ambo (lectern) is the Table of the Word. Where possible the design of the ambo should reflect the design of the altar - the Table of the Lord's Supper - but it should be noted that although it may have design features that are similar, it should look like a place of proclamation not a miniature altar (*Consecrated for Worship* 183).

It should be of a suitable size for the readers.

It should face (at least the majority of) the assembly. It should be easily seen by all.

If a microphone is to be used, readers should be made familiar with the best way to use it in good time before Mass begins.

The dignity of the ambo means that it should be reserved for the proclamation of the Word - in readings, psalm, homily - and the Prayer of the Faithful. Another place should be found for other announcements.

## **ALTAR**

The altar should be at a proper height for the priest to stand at it. It should be large enough to hold with dignity all the things that need to be placed there, and the actions that take place there. The altar should be stable and dressed with dignity, fitting its sacred function. The altar fittings - candle stands, crucifix - should be of a size appropriate to the size of the altar.

## **USE THE RIGHT BOOKS**

The Church requires that the Liturgical books used be fitting for the sacred Liturgy. Therefore, the official editions of Lectionary and Missal should be used, and not Sunday or Weekday Missals. When Mass is in school, the study edition of the Lectionary and the Chapel edition of the Missal may be used. If a school does not have the right books (perhaps the parish could gift them?), then do ensure that readings on a sheet are placed inside a firm and worthy folder.

## **CREDENCE AND OFFERTORY TABLES**

These should be dressed with a white cloth and have enough room for the various items that need to be on them. There should not be lighted candles on these tables.

The credence table should be easily accessible from the altar but not right next to it. The sensible place to put the offertory table is usually near the entrance to the place of worship.

## **GETTING THE NUMBERS RIGHT**

### **NUMBER OF ALTAR BREADS**

It is important to try and ensure that the number of altar breads brought to the altar for consecration match the number of communicants. This is especially important when there is no tabernacle at the place of celebration.

### **NUMBER OF CIBORIA**

The time of distribution of Holy Communion should not be rushed. Neither should it be unduly extended. If there are more than 50 communicants, it is best to have a second minister to assist with the distribution of hosts.

## **NUMBER OF CHALICES**

When Holy Communion is being ministered under both kinds it is usual to have two Ministers of the Chalice for each Minister of the Hosts. In a school situation it may be more appropriate not to have communion under both kinds, to avoid the risk of accidents.

## **NUMBER OF MINISTERS OF COMMUNION**

Ministers of Holy Communion should be commissioned for ministry in the school as needed. The responsibility for approving, training and instituting of ministers lies with the local parish priest. However, he is likely to be ready to approve the use of ministers who are already commissioned for the distribution of Holy Communion elsewhere in the diocese. If new ministers are to be commissioned, there is no minimum age set by the Church but ministers must have been confirmed and be in good standing with the Church.

## **CHAIRS FOR PRIEST(S) AND SERVERS**

The presider's (or priest's) chair is designed to be a place from which he presides at the Liturgy. Therefore, it is good to place the chair where he is free to move and can easily have eye contact with the congregation.

It should generally not be behind the altar but, ideally, to the side of it or, if necessary, in front of it.

The seats for altar servers should be placed close to the credence table. Seats for concelebrating clergy may be placed near the servers.