

Tridentine Community News

July 6, 2014 – Fourth Sunday After Pentecost

Sacristies

Have you ever wondered what's in that mysterious set of rooms next to the sanctuary where the priests and altar servers go? It's known as the *sacristy*. Every church has one; it's where most of the supplies and vestments are stored.

Every sacristy has some common elements: There is usually a locked cabinet or safe where valuable objects such as chalices, ciboria, and a monstrance are kept. One often finds a refrigerator where altar wine and water are stored. Vestments tend to be scattered about: frequently-used vestments are kept in a convenient location, while more rarely used chasubles, copes, and dalmatics are kept either upstairs or in a more remote cabinet. Valuable old Roman vestments are sometimes kept in drawers, laid out flat, rather than hung from hangars.

Metalwork and related supplies and can take up a lot of space: Candlesticks for the altar and for altar servers to carry; Benediction candelabras; torches for servers to hold during the Canon; Sanctus bells; wooden clappers for the Triduum; Communion patens; a Eucharistic canopy set and/or an *ombrellino* (Eucharistic umbrella) for processions.

Linens such as amices, corporals, purificators, and lavabo cloths (finger towels) are kept in designated drawers. Altar breads for the priest and people must be kept stocked at all times.

Seasonal decorations, such as Christmas and Easter trimmings, and artificial flowers are often stored in sacristies. It's not unusual to find the area behind the High Altar conscripted for storage of certain objects, but sometimes one discovers a delightfully clean space there, for example the spotless area behind the High Altar of St. Paul on the Lake Church in Grosse Pointe Farms.

Churches that hold Tridentine Masses need extra supplies: an Altar Missal and Roman Ritual; Red, White, and Grey Missals for the congregation; hymnals; handouts; cassocks and surplices for altar servers; and specialized vestments. Latin Mass supplies tend to be assigned their own storage area.

Some sacristies, especially older ones, have the traditional Latin vesting prayers from the Extraordinary Form Missal mounted either on a sacristy cabinet door or on the wall. The National Shrine of the Little Flower in Royal Oak even has kneelers before their vesting prayers.

Many sacristies have a *sacrarium*, a sink which drains directly into the ground. This is used to dispose of Holy Water, blessed water used at Mass, and to rinse out sacred vessels. If there is a risk of a bit of the Precious Blood or Holy Water being present, it's always safer to drain liquid into a *sacrarium*, or if one is not present, directly into the soil outside. It would be unfitting to drain such sacred liquids into the sewer system via a standard sink.

Like humans and their houses, sacristies to some extent reflect the churches they are in. Some are messy jumbles; others are models of organization. Some are tiny (St. Stephen, New Boston and Holy

Family, Detroit come to mind); others are expansive (St. Alphonsus, Windsor and St. Hyacinth, Detroit). Some have every imaginable supply (Assumption, Windsor), while others are sparsely stocked. Some are downright surprising (the historic Serra Chapel at Mission San Juan Capistrano in California has a clean, modern, neat sacristy, not what one would expect at the oldest functioning church in the state).

Some sacristies have separate areas designated for servers to dress and prepare for Mass. These can be range from humble corridors to virtual "lounges" (St. Josaphat, Detroit).

One practical tip for volunteers who maintain sacristies: Altar servers are often called upon to find objects at a moment's notice. A choir member might need a hymnal or *Liber Usualis*. In the middle of a Mass, the celebrant might need a missing item at the altar. After Mass, ritual blessing books may be needed. The only way such items can be located quickly is if things are stored in predictable, designated locations. Thus it behooves everyone to take the time to file things carefully where they belong.

Some dioceses maintain super-sacristies, storage facilities where surplus goods from parishes open and closed are stored. The Diocese of Toledo, Ohio, for example, has a gymnasium-sized facility, replete with everything from tacky 1970s vestments to beautiful liturgical books for the Extraordinary Form. Of course, one man's trash is another one's treasure. Who gets to pick through this inventory? It's usually restricted to parishes from the diocese.

You are welcome to tour our sacristies and storage areas. Just ask an altar server after Mass.

Sacristies of the World Blog

Curious to see what's in others' closets? The Sacristies of the World Blog contains an enormous treasure trove of photos of sacristies from the humble to the magnificent, urban to rural, modern to historic. One recent photo [adjacent] showed a beautiful Baroque sacristy from Weingarten Abbey in Baden-Württemberg, Germany.



Take a look at their web site at: www.sacristies-of-the-world.com and their Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Sacristies-of-the-World/580187925353707>

Tridentine Masses This Coming Week

Mon. 07/07 7:00 PM: Low Mass at *St. Joseph* (Ss. Cyril & Methodius, Bishops & Confessors)

Tue. 07/08 7:00 PM: Low Mass at *St. Benedict/Assumption-Windsor* (St. Elizabeth of Portugal, Queen & Widow)