

# THINGS INSIDE A CATHOLIC CHURCH

(A simple explanation)

Older Catholic churches were usually built in the shape of the cross and facing eastwards. Modern churches are usually designed to be more effective at bringing closer together the congregation and any religious ceremony, making it easier for all to actually take part in the services.

Any Catholic church has three special areas:

1. The Sanctuary.
2. The Nave.
3. The Sacristy

## THE SANCTUARY

This is where the rites and rituals of the Catholic Church are exercised, such as:

- The Mass. Baptisms. Marriages. Ordinations
- Benediction, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

Within the Sanctuary are special objects such as:

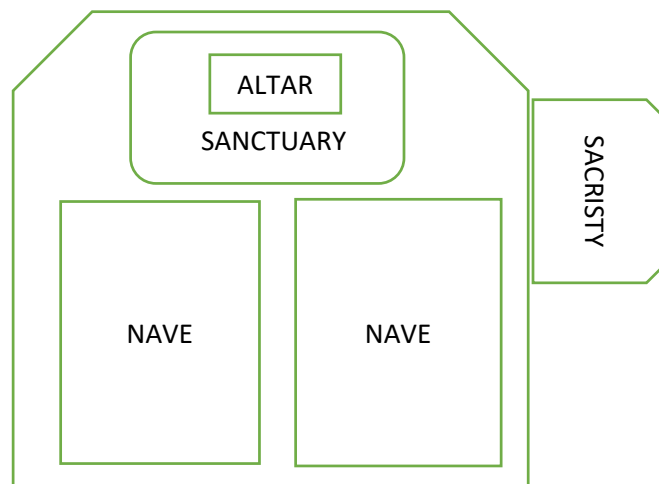
- The Altar
  - Used by the priest from which he conducts services such as the mass. Part of the definition of a priest is one who administers sacrifices, and an altar is needed for offering up a sacrifice, such as the mass.
  - The altar contains relics of a saint.
- The Tabernacle
  - Used to contain any consecrated hosts (Blessed Sacrament) left over from a previous mass. These can be used to take to people too ill to get to mass.
- The Sanctuary Light.
  - When lit, it indicates that the Blessed Sacrament is in the nearby Tabernacle
- Credence table
  - Contains all the cruets needed during services.

Normally, only the priest, his assistants and Eucharistic Ministers occupy the Sanctuary during a service.

## **THE NAVE**

This is the area within the church reserved for people attending services or visiting a church to say private prayers.

It usually consists of rows (called PEWS) of chairs and kneelers facing the SANCTUARY.



## **THE SACRISTY**

This is a room or rooms where the priest and his assistants usually dress appropriately for the relevant service to be conducted in the church.

It can also be used to house the sacred vessels and cloths to be used during a religious service.

When a priest is ready to start a religious service, he and his assistants walk ceremoniously from the Sacristy to the Sanctuary to start the service.