

Journey of Faith

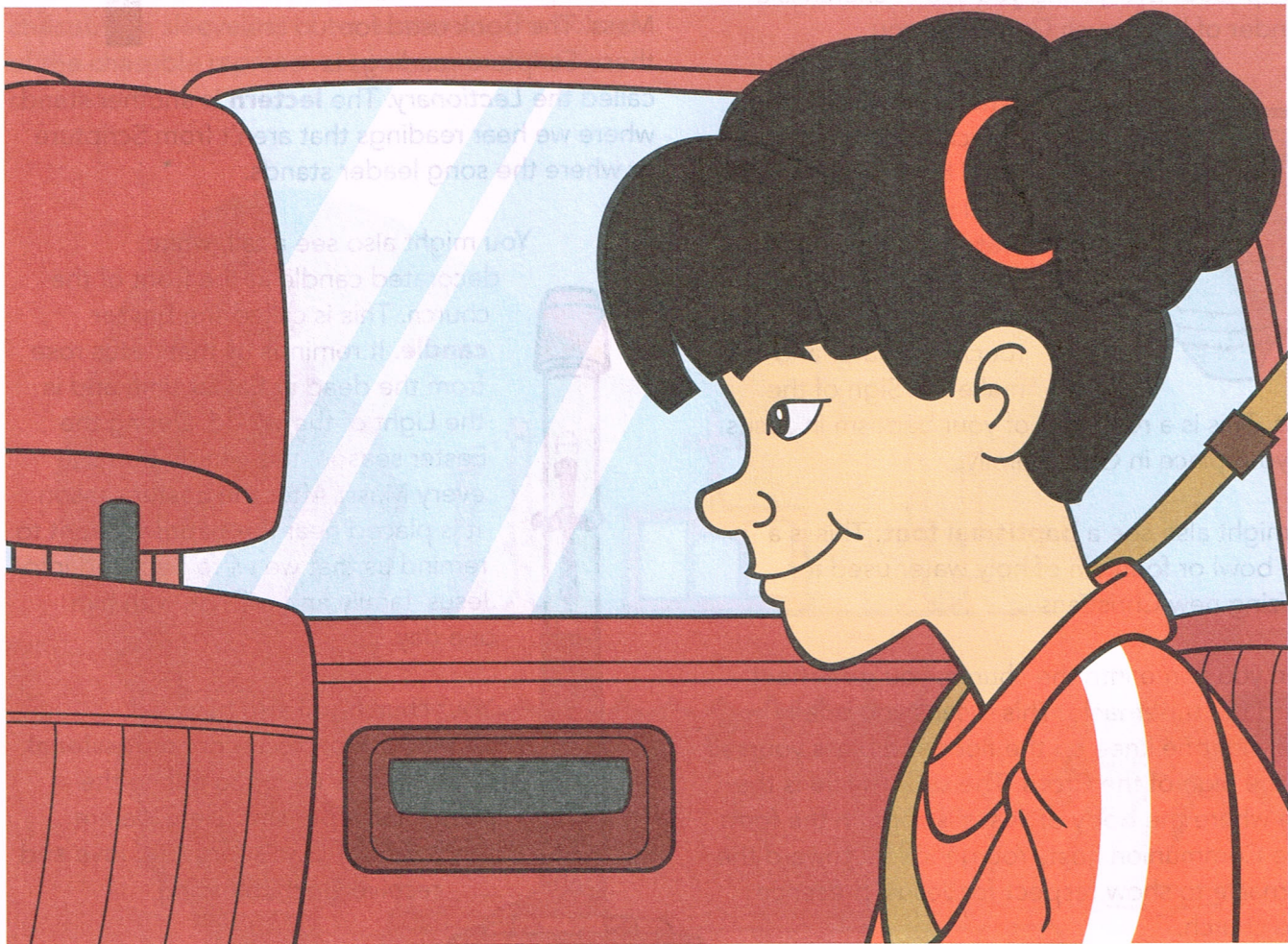
Places in a Catholic Church

"I'm so bored," said Lisa, looking out of the car window.

"Well, why don't you use this time to talk to God?" her mom suggested.

"Like, pray? In the car?"

"Sure! You can pray anywhere. Even in the car."



"I thought we had to be in church to pray," Lisa said.

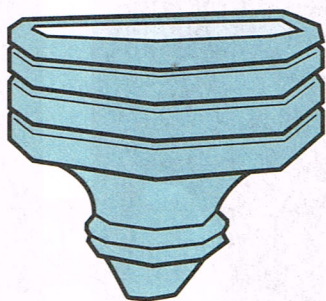
"Nope," her mom said, shaking her head. "The church is just a very special place to pray. It's like going over to God's house to talk to him in person. It's also a place where we can pray with other people altogether."



Where do you like to pray?

What's What in the Church

You can pray anywhere. You can pray in the park. You can pray by your bed. You can pray with your family around the dinner table. God is everywhere, so he can hear you no matter where you are. Churches are special places where we pray and worship God. Everything you see in church is a reminder of how much God loves you.



When you walk in the church door, you'll see a small bowl of water. This bowl is filled with **holy water**. It's holy because it's water that's been blessed by a priest. You touch the water and make the Sign of the Cross. This is a reminder of your baptism in Jesus and your place in God's family.

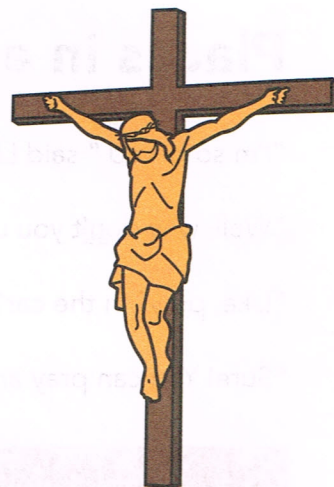
You might also see a **baptismal font**. This is a large bowl or fountain of holy water used for baptizing new Christians.

When you come into the church, you **genuflect** toward the tabernacle. This means you briefly kneel with one knee on the floor and bless yourself with the Sign of the Cross. The **tabernacle** is the place where the Body of Jesus is kept, in the form of the Communion host. You genuflect toward the tabernacle to show respect for Jesus' presence in the church.

Near the tabernacle is a candle that burns at all times. This is the **sanctuary lamp**. It reminds us that Jesus is in the tabernacle and with us always.

Then you sit down on a wooden bench, called a **pew**. All the pews face toward the altar. The **altar** is where the priest offers the bread and wine to God and where the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus. A book of Mass prayers is also used at the altar. This book is called **The Roman Missal**.

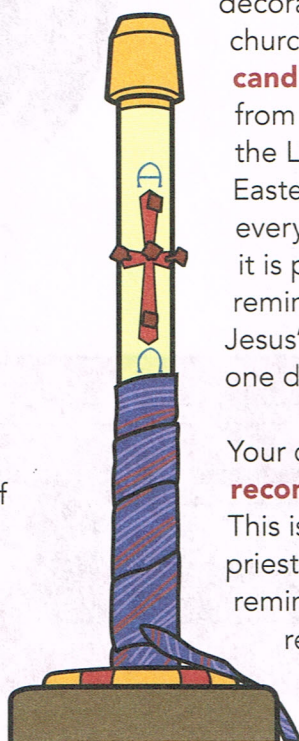
You will also see a crucifix above the altar. A **crucifix** is a cross with the image of Jesus on it. It is a reminder that Jesus loves us enough to suffer and die for us.



Usually in front of the altar and closer to the pews are an ambo and a lectern. An **ambo** is a stand where God's word is proclaimed during Mass. The book used for these Scripture readings is called the **Lectionary**. The **lectern** is another stand where we hear readings that aren't from Scripture or where the song leader stands.

You might also see a tall, white, decorated candle at the front of the church. This is called the **Easter candle**. It reminds us that Jesus rose from the dead at Easter time and is the Light of the World. During the Easter season, this candle burns at every Mass. After the Easter season it is placed near the baptismal font to remind us that we were baptized into Jesus' family and will rise with him one day.

Your church will also have a **reconciliation room** or **confessional**. This is where we go to talk to the priest about our sins. Here we are reminded of God's forgiving love and receive God's blessing.



Priests and Dressing for Church

The priest, deacon, and altar servers wear special clothing during Mass. This clothing is like the other things in the church, a reminder of our faith and how much God loves us. These articles of clothing are called **vestments**. Vestments are put on in the **sacristy**, a small room near the altar.

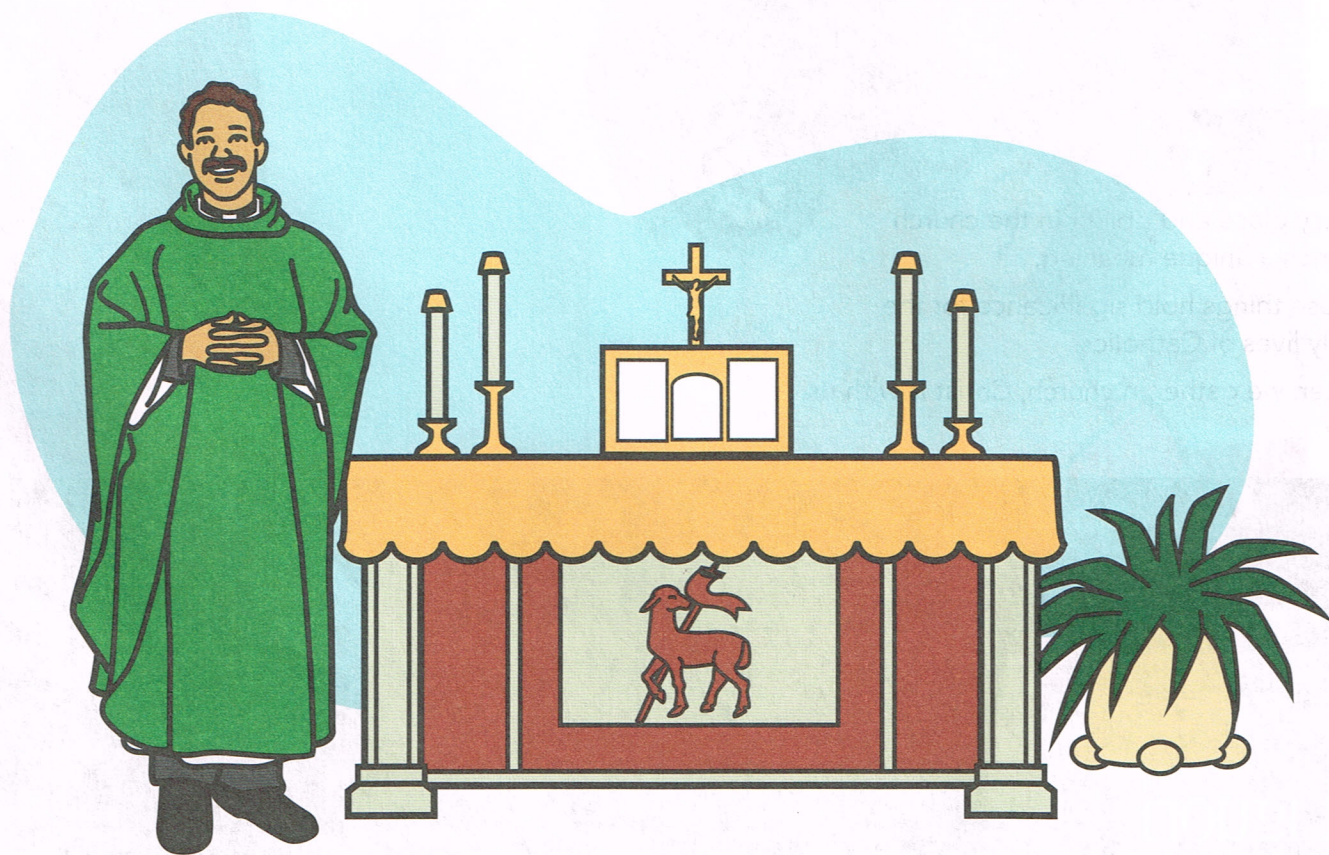
First, priests and deacons put on an **alb**, a long, white garment that reminds us we should approach God with purity of heart. The altar servers also wear albs.

Then the priest and deacon add a **stole**. This is a long piece of cloth to remind us of the yoke of the Lord. A **yoke** is used on farms. It is attached to a plow, which is pulled by an ox or other animal. So the stole is a sign that the one who wears it is doing hard work for God. The priest wears the stole straight down from the shoulders. The deacon wears the stole across one shoulder.

Over the alb and stole, the priest wears a **chasuble**, a sleeveless outer vestment. The colors of the chasuble represent the seasons of the church.

Other Buildings Near the Church

A church, its priest, and its people make up a **parish**. Parishes are named after the Trinity, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Mary, or saints and important church feasts. The other buildings near the church are used to help run the parish. There is often a **parish center** where parish activities are held, like meetings and classes. The **rectory** is the house where the parish priest lives. Your parish may also have a school.





WHERE IS IT?

Find the following things in your church. Then draw a picture of each one under its name.

Holy water font

Altar

Crucifix

Tabernacle

Baptismal font

Sanctuary lamp

In Short

- Every place and object in the church carries a unique meaning.
- These things hold significance for the daily lives of Catholics.
- When we gather in church, Christ is with us.



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Editors of the 2017 *Journey of Faith for Children*: Theresa Nienaber-Panuski and Pat Fosarelli, MD, DMin.

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