

## **LIFE IN OUR CATHOLIC CHURCH**

Have you ever wondered.....

- ❖ How the holy water stoup never runs dry?!
- ❖ What happens to the sacred vessels after Mass has ended?
- ❖ How the altar linen always looks so clean and fresh?

In a one word answer:

## **SACRISTAN!**

Look inside for an outline of the essential role of Sacristan in our community.

### **The role in the words of our own sacristans**

“It’s a very satisfying role; when I see the Mass has gone through perfectly, and run smoothly for the priest, the servers and the congregation I find it facilitates reverence for us all.”

“The role of sacristan is so very rewarding”

“The church has become my second home; my role as sacristan is a form of prayer, just as every other ministry and role, however small, is a form of prayer”

“In a sense, although I am not on the sanctuary throughout the Mass, I am there in a special way because it is my handiwork that prepared it”

“Being a sacristan is a privilege; the more invisible my work, the more effective I have been.”

### **The Sacristan in our Parish of Hunstanton**

**We have a team who work as  
Sacristans in our parish of  
Hunstanton.**

**At our patronal church of Our  
Lady and St Edmund in  
Hunstanton, our Sacristan is  
ELIZABETH HOWE supported by  
TOM and ELIZABETH KONING.**

**At St Cecilia’s church in  
Dersingham, FRED GRIMLEY is  
currently our Sacristan,  
supported on Sundays by  
PEG HUNTER.**

**Being a sacristan is a very beneficial way to serve your church community, and an active way to participate in Mass.**

The starting point for all sacristans is a deep love for the Eucharist.

**Who can be a sacristan?**

The sacristan must be a baptised Catholic and a member of the church. He/She must also have basic knowledge and experience of the liturgical rites performed in the church.

The role of the modern sacristan developed from the teaching of the **Second Vatican Council**, that all members of the Church should: “be led to take that full, conscious, and active part in the liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy ... in the restoration and development of the sacred liturgy the full and active participation by all the people is the paramount concern” (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 14). It can be argued that sacristans have been with us since the beginning. If the role of the sacristan is to prepare what is needed for the celebration of the Mass, and if the Last Supper was the first Mass, then the first sacristan was the person who arranged the cups and dishes on the table before Jesus and the disciples arrived.

Since the Second Vatican Council the role of the contemporary sacristan in the life of the parish has been an active one involving creative skill, liturgical knowledge, organisational abilities and diplomacy. The sacristan has become a minister in his/her own right and a member of the liturgical team.

The sacristan first and foremost prepares the church for Mass to ensure that the priest can celebrate the Mass or service with absolute confidence that all everything is in place to enable a smooth, reverent and holy Eucharistic service. A sacristan is a lay member of the Catholic ministry who is responsible (often on a rota basis) for maintaining the sacristy where the church's liturgical items are kept including vestments, sacred vessels and books etc.

Under the general direction of the clergy, the sacristan undertakes the overall preparation for liturgical celebrations. Specific duties include:

- Preparing the Holy Eucharist for the celebration of the Mass. This includes readying the wine, water and bread and putting them in place before the start of Mass, and making ready the correct vestments and altar colour (the colours change depending on the season or day).
- Setting up the altar. Sacristans may also arrange the Lectionary and lector notebooks.
- Assisting the altar servers and other liturgical ministers with directions or questions. Sacristans ensure that all liturgical positions are filled for the Mass.
- Cleaning the holy materials after Mass. The holy containers for the water, body and blood are cleaned and stored in the sacristy. Everything is set back in place before sacristans leave the church.

The sacristan undertakes - or leads others to undertake - other activities that are the foundation to enabling the smooth preparation and celebration of the Mass. These include:

**Maintenance**

- Keeping liturgical items clean, in good repair, and stored properly
- Maintaining holy water fonts and candles

**Sacristy**

- Keeping order
- Maintaining storage and use of space

**Security**

- Opening and closing the church
- Operating the intruder alarm
- Turning on and off lights and heating
- Ensuring the church is secure after services

**Supplies**

- Monitoring and replenishing supplies like bread, wine, candles, and incense

**Other duties**

- Assisting with special services like baptisms, Easter fires, and processions
- Coordinating with Altar Servers
- Other activities on request of the priest

**One of the greatest benefits of being a sacristan is that the tasks are carried out around the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle – an opportunity that offers a unique closeness to the Lord in both the tasks and time spent in ministry.**