



Invest time each week to expand your vocabulary and deepen your faith.

17 November 2024

## WORD OF THE WEEK

### Presider's Chair \ˈpri-sīd-ərs ˈcher\

Also known as the **presidential chair**, the seat in a parish church from which the celebrant leads the assembly during Mass. Its meaning derives from the **chair**, or *cathedra* in Latin, from which the diocesan bishop *presides* (from Latin meaning “to protect” or literally “to sit before”). The **chair** is a liturgical symbol of authority and pastoral leadership.

*Pronunciation:* <https://tinyurl.com/Take5-presiders-chair>

### CONTEXT

The **chair** reminds us that we have been summoned by God as his people. We are his Church, gathered in unity to encounter Christ Jesus in the Word and in the Sacraments, under the presidency of a pastor who represents Christ himself.

—*Apostolato Liturgico* <http://tinyurl.com/apostolatoliturgico-seats>

The **presidential chair** in the parish church should be placed prominently in a presiding position without suggesting dominance or remoteness.

—*Richard P. McBrien*, *Encyclopedia of Catholicism*

### WHY IT MATTERS

Catholics employ ritual because symbols talk. Our liturgical rituals include sacramental elements like bread and wine but also gestures, postures, movement, and placement. The four main pieces of liturgical furniture—altar, ambo, baptismal font, and **presider's chair**—say much before a word is spoken. By their substance, design, and placement, each station and the actions initiated there would tell a stranger to our rituals that they are significant.

From the General Instruction of the Roman Missal: “The **chair of the priest celebrant** must signify his office of presiding over the gathering and of directing the prayer. Any appearance of a throne, however, is to be avoided” (310).

### RELATED WORDS

Ambo | Altar | Baptismal Font | Paschal Candle

## QUESTION OF THE WEEK

### Why do presiders wear vestments?

Vestments can be ornate and fabulous, not to mention heavy. But when early Christians gathered for worship in homes, they wore no distinguishing clothing. But in the fourth century after Christianity was legalized, public worship raised the visibility of the presider. His vestments resembled secular apparel: first an *alb*, a white tunic worn by all social classes. A ropelike *cincture* held the alb in place. Next the *chasuble*, a colorful poncho-like covering. Over that a *stole*, a scarf denoting authoritative office. Secular fashions advanced. But church vesture remained the same, eventually out of step with what everyone else was wearing. The Second Vatican Council inaugurated a return to simplicity, recommending that a vestment's beauty derive from “material and design” rather than “lavish ornamentation.” The continued use of vestments links our celebrations with previous generations and enhances the dignity of our assembly.

—*Alice Camille*, from *Questions Catholics Ask* <http://tinyurl.com/QCA-vestments>

## REFLECTION OF THE WEEK

THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (NOVEMBER 17),  
WORLD DAY OF THE POOR

### Do more for your friends

At the end of his vigorous career serving the poor, Saint Vincent de Paul was asked what else he might possibly have done. His answer was simple: “More.” Pope Francis, in his message for this day, says, “We are called in every circumstance to be friends of the poor, following in the footsteps of Jesus who always began by showing solidarity when dealing with the least among us.”

READINGS: Daniel 12:1-3; Hebrews 10:11-14, 18; Mark 13:24-32 (158 <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/111724.cfm>). “*He has made perfect forever those who are being consecrated.*”

### FAITH IN ACTION

From alms in the parish poor box to supporting broad initiatives to address the problem of poverty, make a practice of doing one more thing each day to serve the poor.