

English Church Ceremonial
According Principally to
Percy Dearmer and the Alcuin Club
Adapted for the
1928 American Church Tradition



*PROCESSION
GENERAL EPISCOPAL CONVENTION
PORTLAND ORE. SEPT. 6, 1922*

Introduction

This guide adapts the traditional English ceremonial of the Holy Communion for use with the 1928 American Book of Common Prayer. Its purpose is not to impose one universal arrangement, but to preserve the shape and logic of the older ceremonial while making it usable within the American rite.

The principal ceremonial sources are the Alcuin Club's A Directory of Ceremonial (1921) and Ceremonial Pictured in Photographs (1924), supplemented by Percy Dearmer's The Parson's Handbook. For the American rite, the 1928 Prayer Book is controlling, and Massey H. Shepherd Jr.'s Before the Holy Table is used as an important American ceremonial guide. Where the American rite differs from the English order, the ceremonial is adjusted accordingly.

The governing principle is to change as little as necessary. Where the 1928 Prayer Book requires no alteration, the inherited Alcuin ceremonial is generally retained. Dearmer is used for clarification, and Shepherd where he illuminates American practice. His versus-populum arrangement is not adopted; this guide retains an eastward-facing celebration.

Some adaptations reflect practical parish conditions: Morning Prayer may flow directly into Holy Communion; Taperers may also sing in the choir; a separate Clerk may not be available; one Service Book may contain the Epistle and Gospel; and the size of an altar or its steps may require slight positional adjustments. The diagrams therefore show liturgical relationships and ordered movement rather than inflexible floor-marks.

The aim is simple: to preserve the inherited English ceremonial as fully as possible while adapting it honestly and intelligibly to the 1928 American Prayer Book.

The chart on the next page gives a pointed way of remembering how to follow this ceremonial.

Please ignore the false details in the images (i.e. too many steps). For more details on how to read this manual, go to page 34, or just go to the page that describes the movements.

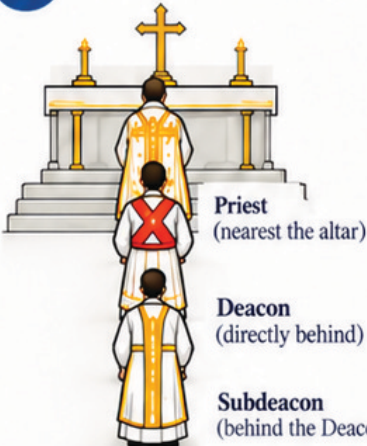
How to Read the Ceremonial

The formation follows the liturgical action.

A. EVERYDAY RULES

These are the rules you will use throughout the Mass.

1 Eastward Prayer = Line Up



Line up means one behind another: the Priest nearest the altar, the Deacon directly behind him, and the Subdeacon behind the Deacon, each on his own step, all facing east.

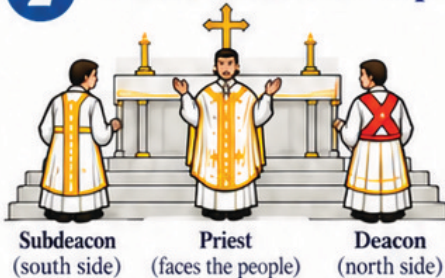
Examples:

- Collect
- Prayer for the Church
- Preface
- Consecration
- Lord's Prayer

MEMORY RULE:

If the Priest is praying eastward, return to the line.

2 Priest Faces the People = Clear the Centre



Example: at the Sursum Corda, the Deacon moves somewhat south and the Subdeacon somewhat north, leaving the Priest clear in the centre.

MEMORY RULE:

Priest turns west – clear his lane.

3 Different Jobs = Different Stations

- **Epistle:** Subdeacon reads; Priest and Deacon sit.
- **Gospel:** Deacon proclaims; Subdeacon holds the book.
- **Communion:** Priest has the paten; Deacon has the chalice.
- **Ablutions:** each Minister has his own task.

MEMORY RULE:

Same action = formation. Different jobs = stations.

B. SPECIAL FORMATIONS

These are particular positions to memorize.

4 The Great Acclamations: Three Abreast



At the great corporate acts of praise or profession of the Church's faith, the sacred Ministers come together side by side before the altar.

Examples:

- Creed
- Sanctus
- Gloria in Excelsis

MEMORY RULE:

When the Church speaks together = three abreast.

Creed • Sanctus • Gloria

5 Kneeling Devotions: Flank the Priest



For the principal kneeling devotions, the Priest kneels at the centre before the altar, the Deacon kneels at his right, and the Subdeacon at his left, each on his own proper step.

Examples:

- General Confession
- Prayer of Humble Access

MEMORY RULE:

Kneeling devotion = flank the Priest.

The Reset Rule



Ask: What is the Priest doing next?

If he is praying eastward at the altar, return to the normal line:

Priest → Deacon → Subdeacon.

FIVE RULES TO REMEMBER

1

Eastward prayer
— line up.

2

Priest faces
the people —
clear the centre.

3

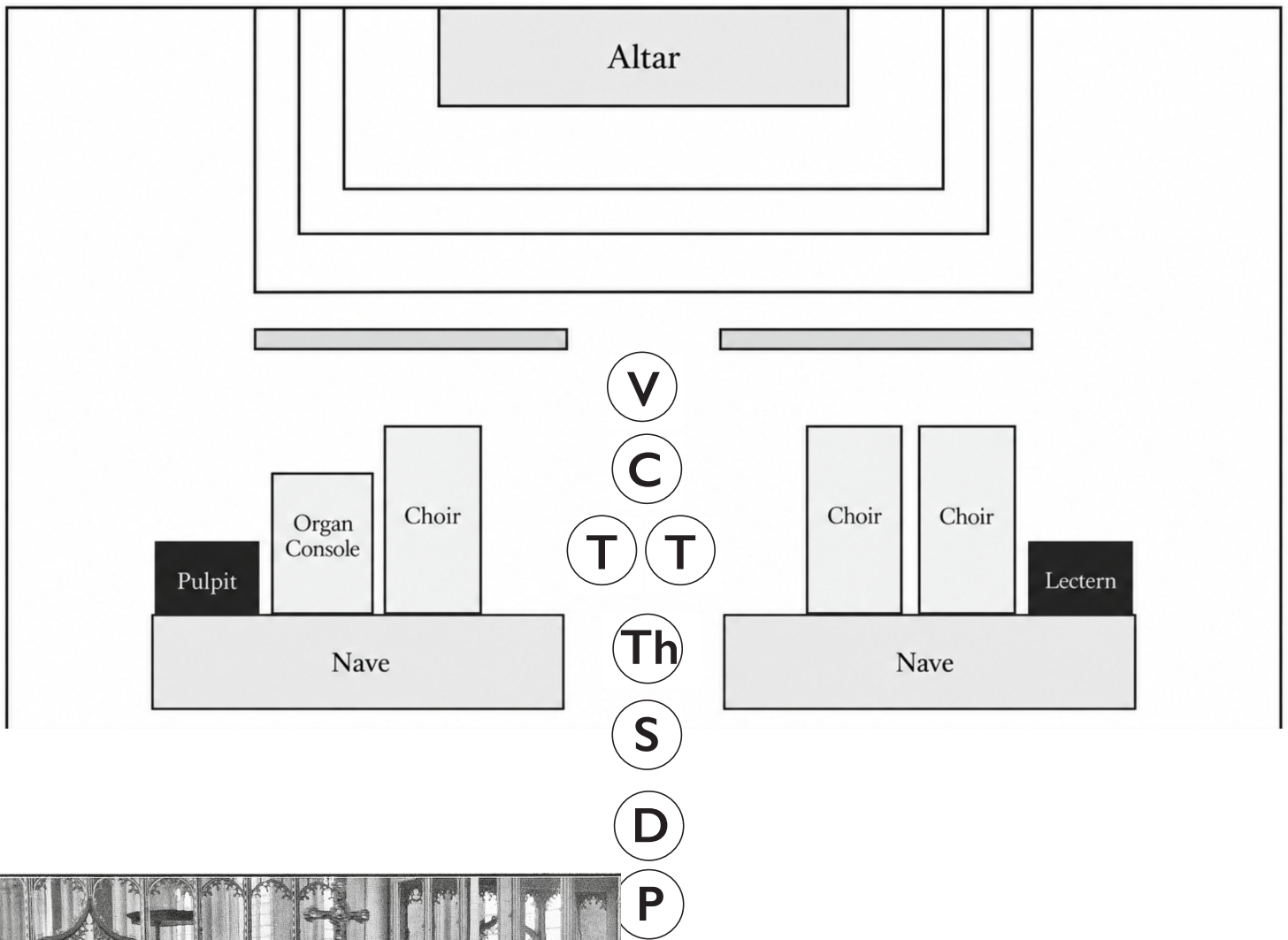
Different jobs
— go to stations.

4

The Great
Acclamations —
three abreast.

5

Kneeling devotion
— flank the Priest.

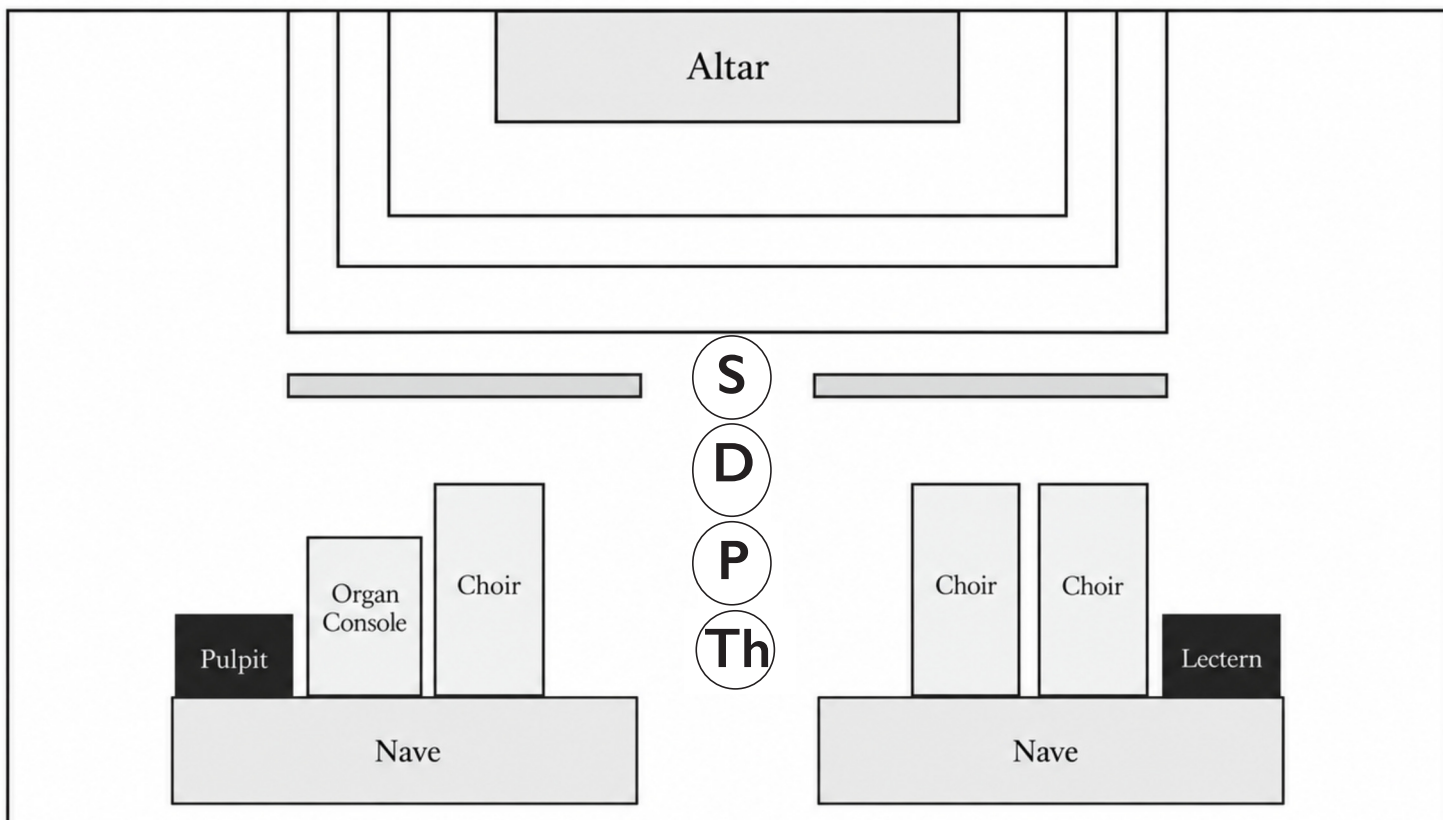


The Procession From West End to Altar

The Ministers process from the west end of the church toward the altar in the following order:

Verger → Cross-bearer → Taperers → Thurifer → Subdeacon → Deacon → Priest

The Verger precedes the procession, carrying his staff, as far as the choir gate. The Cross-bearer follows with the processional cross. The two Taperers walk side by side carrying their candles. The Thurifer follows with the censer, with incense burning in it, and the boat. The Clerk carries the Service Book. The Subdeacon carries the Gospel Book. The Deacon follows, and the Priest comes last.



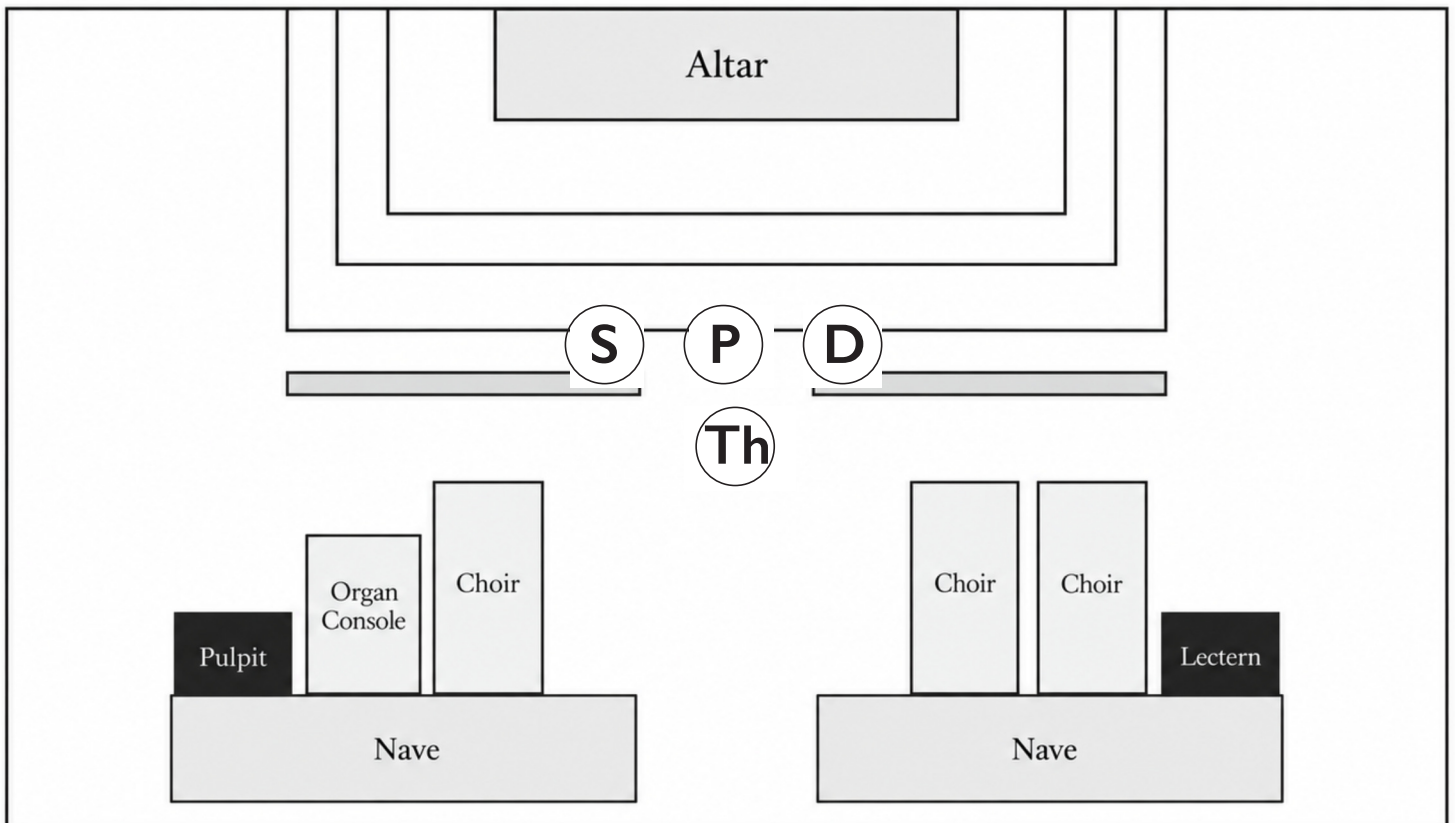
The Entrance into the Sanctuary

When Morning Prayer immediately precedes the Holy Communion, the full procession from the west end takes place at the beginning of Morning Prayer.

On reaching the chancel, the Crucifer places the processional cross in its accustomed place. The Taperers put down their torches in their appointed places and then take their places in the choir for Morning Prayer. The Thurifer and other servers likewise take their appointed places.

Morning Prayer proceeds without interruption into the Holy Communion.

At the beginning of the Holy Communion, the sacred Ministers enter the sanctuary in their appointed order followed by the Thurifer with the thurible and incense boat.



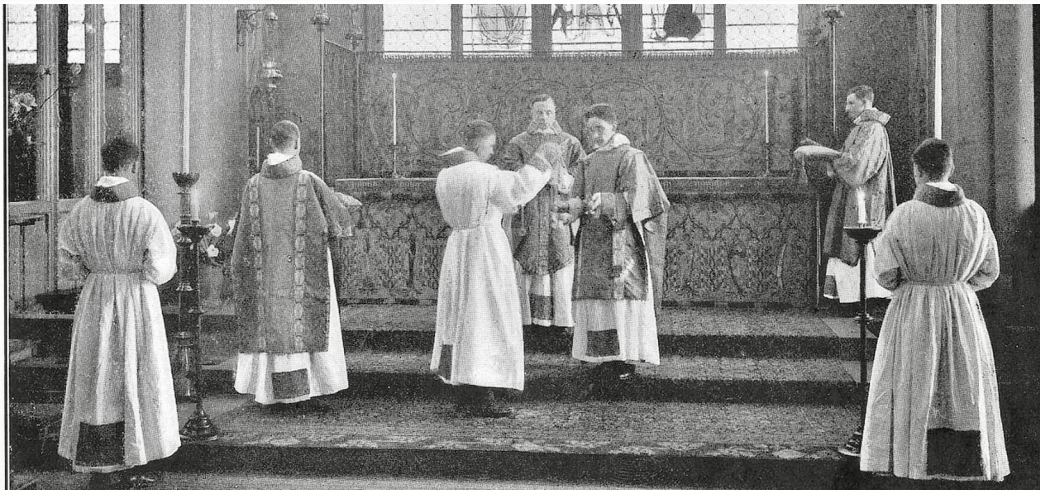
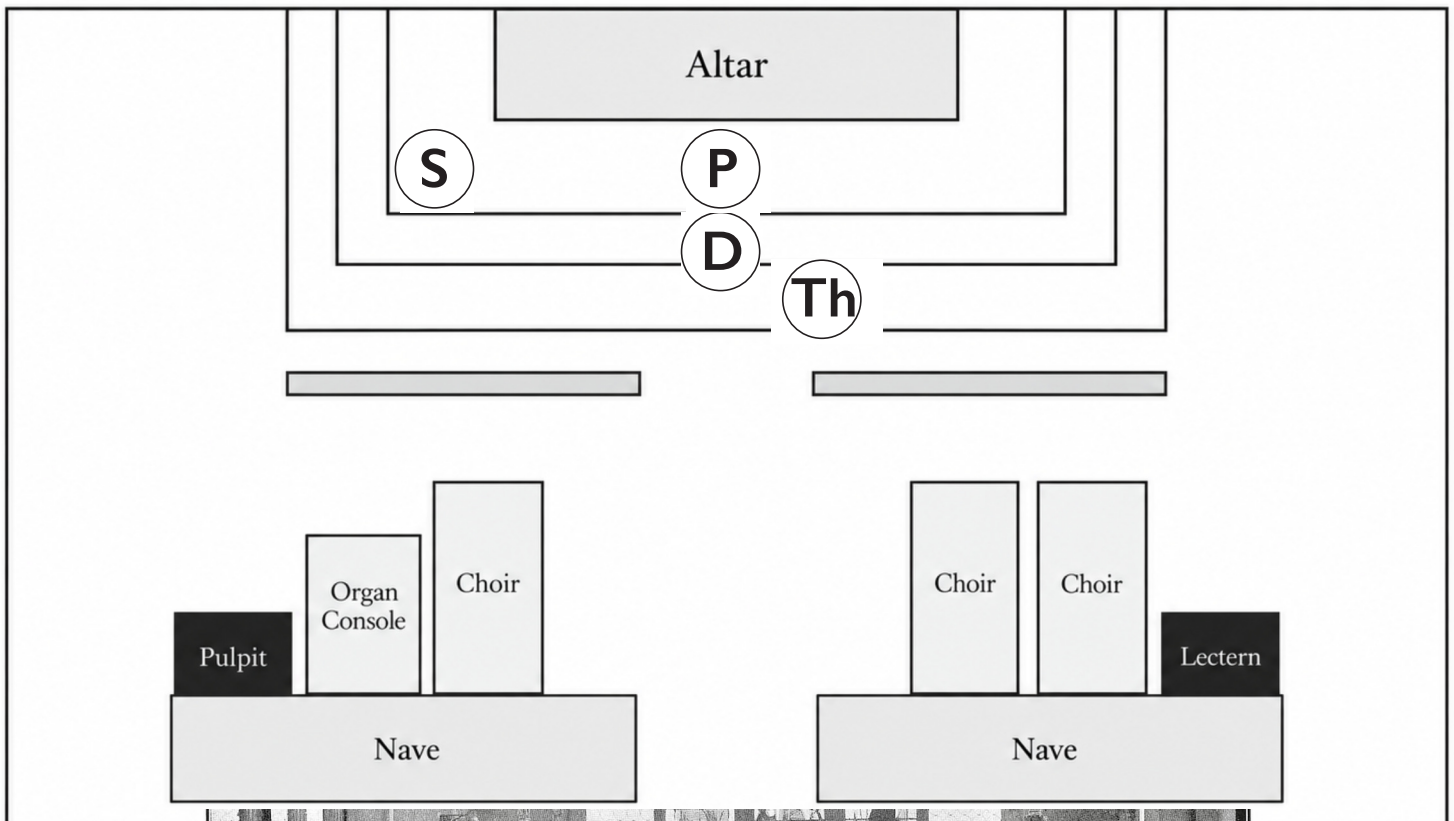
The Introit

At the foot of the altar-steps they form the prescribed line and all bow.

Subdeacon — Priest — Deacon

The Thurifer stands behind them, ready to bring the incense forward for the blessing and censing of the altar.

At the foot of the altar-steps all bow



The Reverence and Blessing of Incense

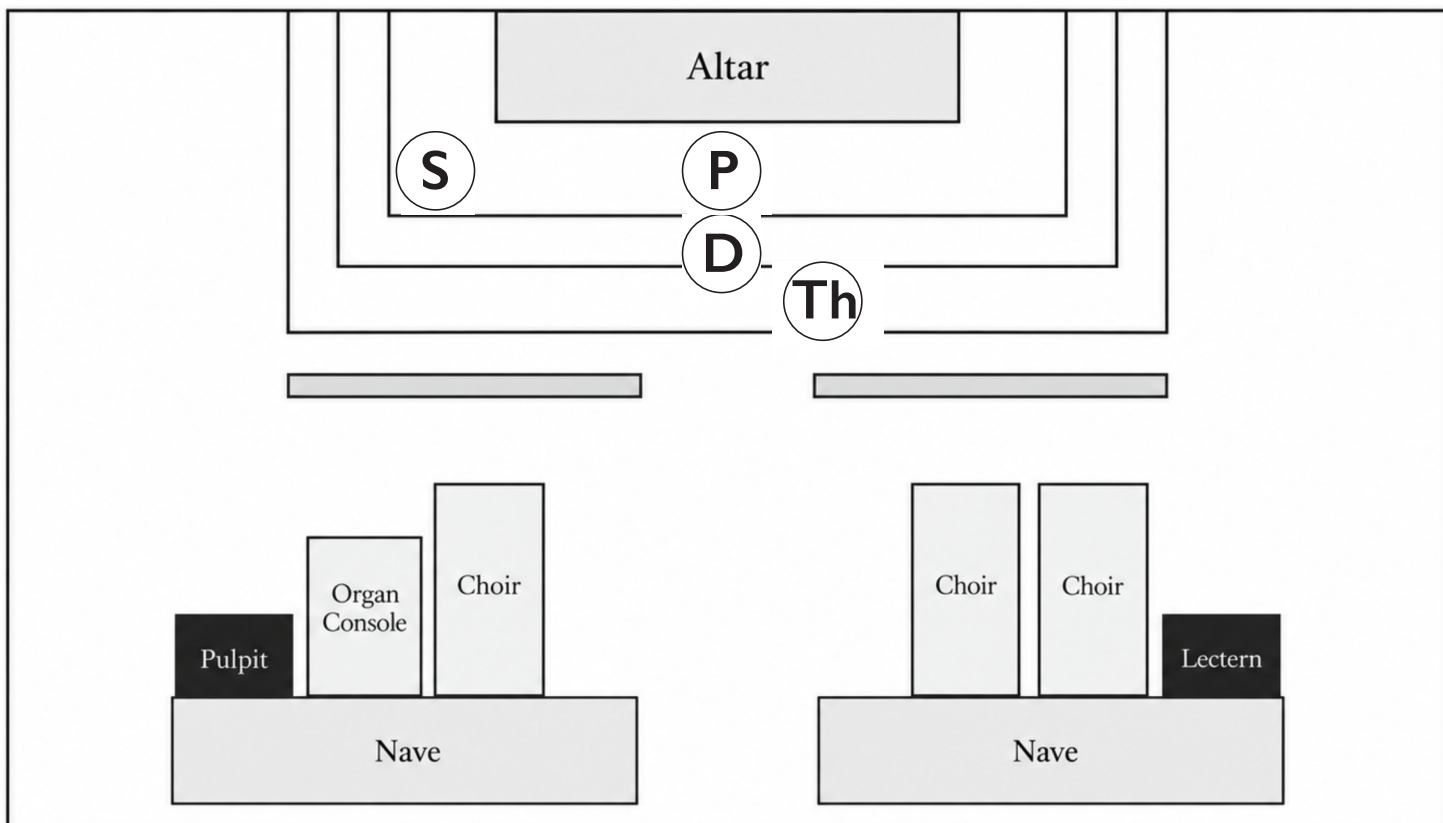
Priest: goes to the midst of the altar, rests his hands on it, and either bows or kisses the mensa. He then turns to bless the incense.

Deacon: takes his place on the step immediately below the footpace, receives the boat from the Thurifer, and puts incense into the censer.

Subdeacon: carries the Gospel Book in procession. Where a separate Gospel Book is used, he places it at the north corner of the altar, according to the traditional ceremonial, and remains at the north end of the footpace during the censuring of the altar.

Where no separate Gospel Book is available, the Subdeacon carries the Service Book containing the Gospel, places it at the south corner of the altar for the opening prayers, then passes to the north end of the footpace, where he remains during the censuring of the altar.

Thurifer: brings the boat and censer to the Deacon, opens the censer to receive the incense, then hands the censer to the Deacon.

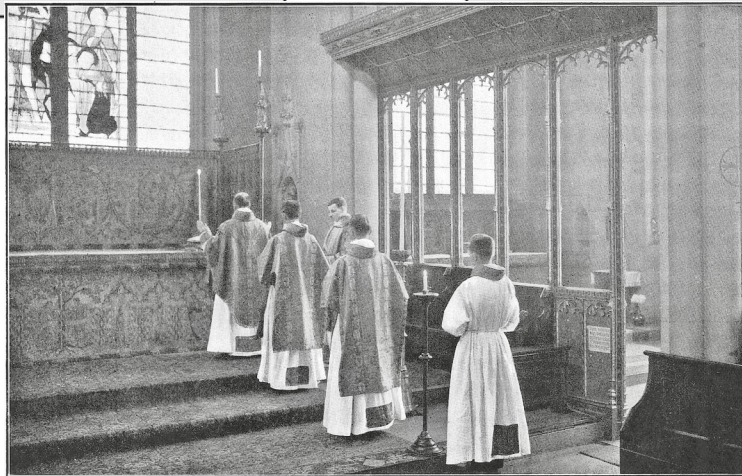
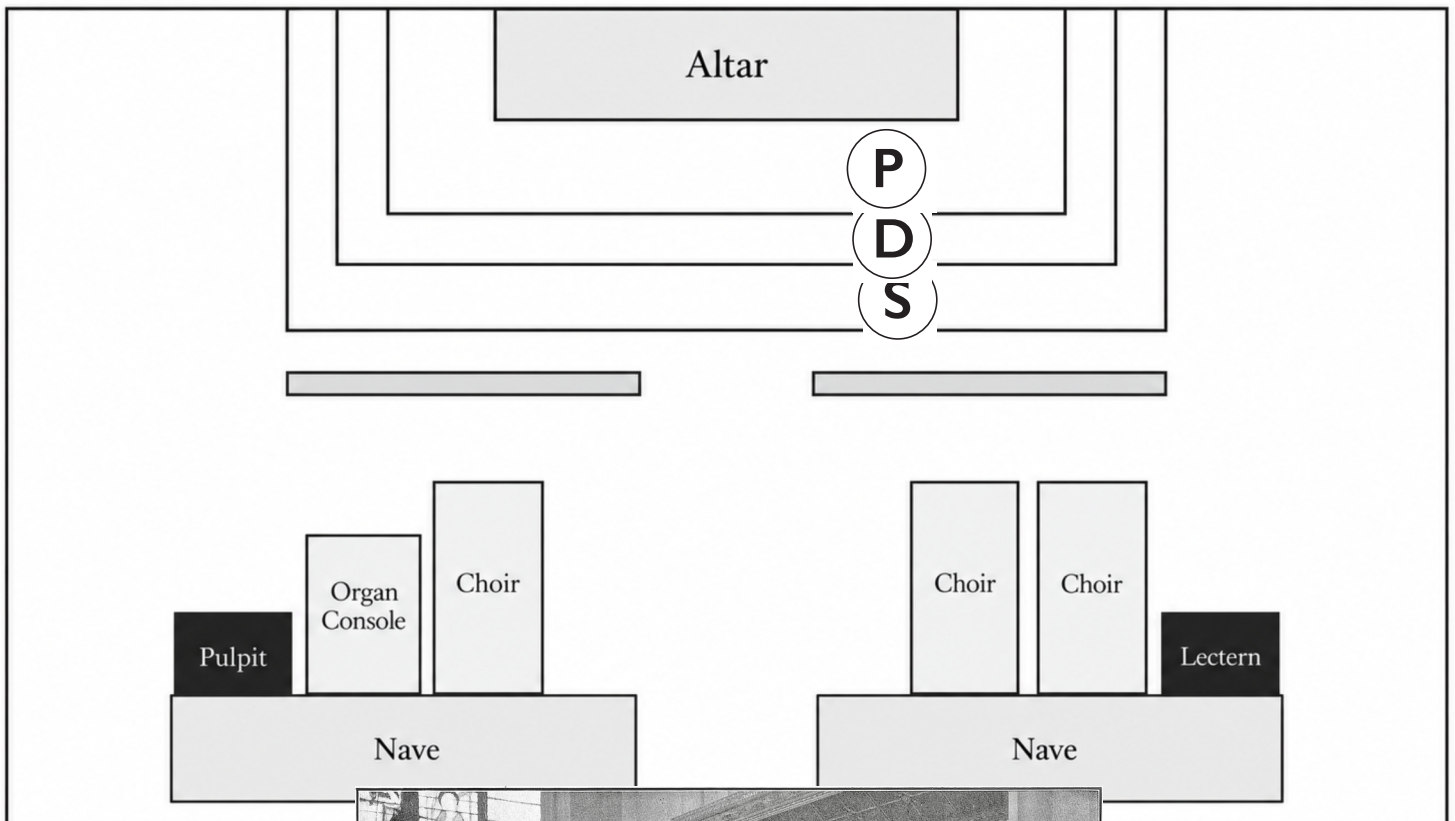


The Censing of the Altar

The Priest takes the censer from the Deacon and censes the altar: three times in the midst, three times toward the right, and three times toward the left. He then returns to the south corner and gives the censer back to the Deacon.

The Deacon receives the censer and censes the Priest, then returns the censer to the Thurifer.

Meanwhile, the Subdeacon remains at his place.



The Lord's Prayer and Collect for Purity

The Priest goes to the south side of the altar (traditional medieval English parish usage noted by Dearmer), facing east, and says the Lord's Prayer and the Collect for Purity.

The Deacon and Subdeacon stand behind him in a straight line, each on his own step, also facing east.

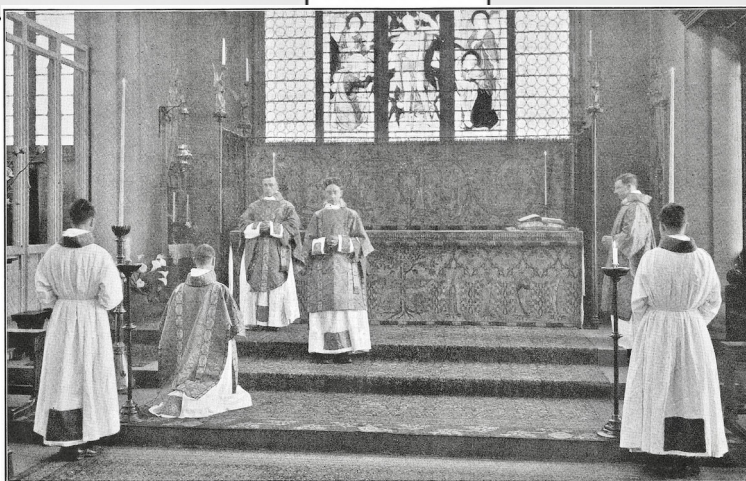
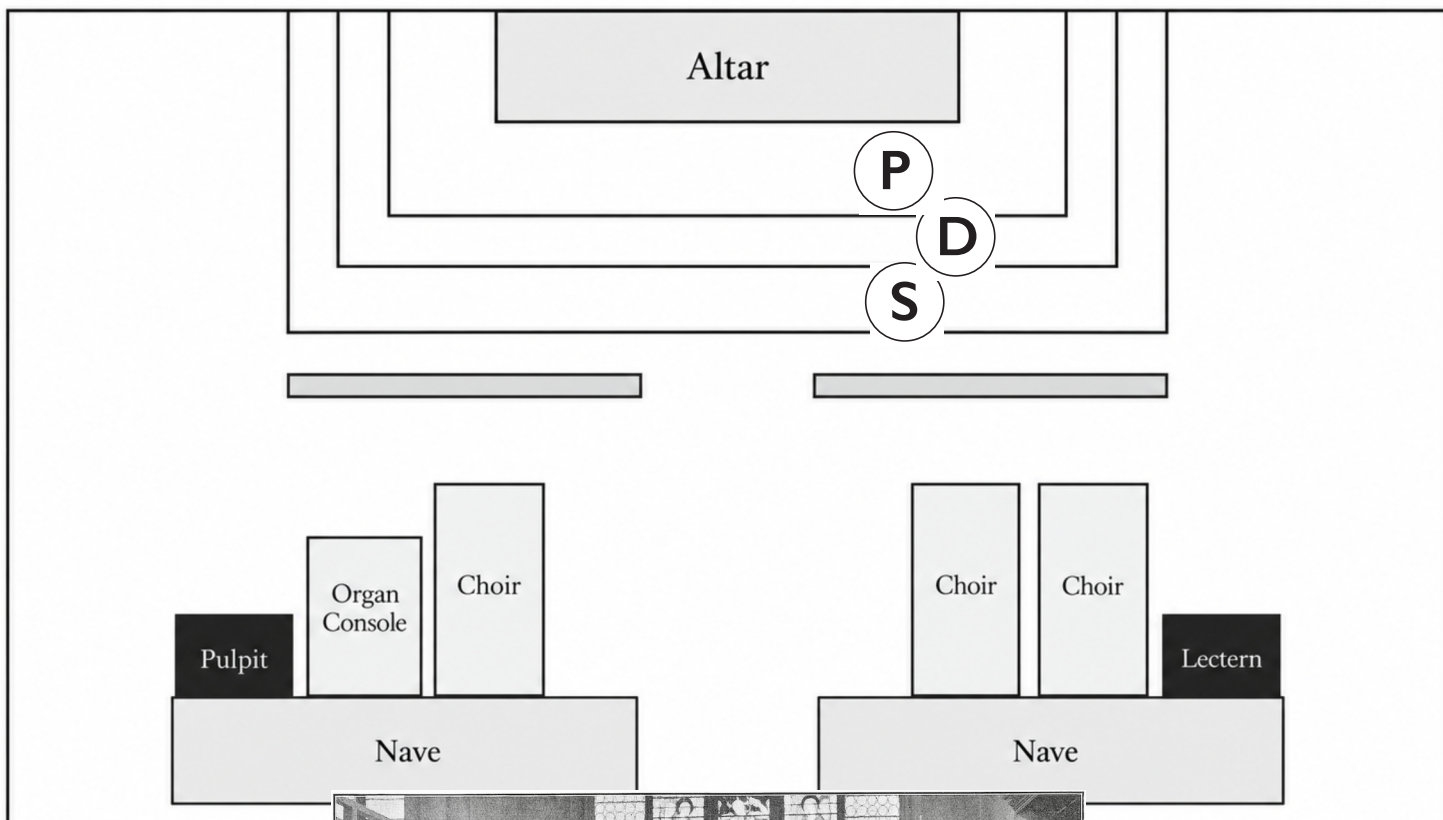
Thurifer, (with censor removed or hanging in its place) and Taperers go to their places.

At the end of the Collect for Purity, the Priest prepares to turn toward the people for the Commandments or Summary of the Law.

For the frame, show the three sacred ministers aligned:

Altar → Priest → Deacon → Subdeacon

all facing east.



****This arrangment here would be on the south side of the altar.*

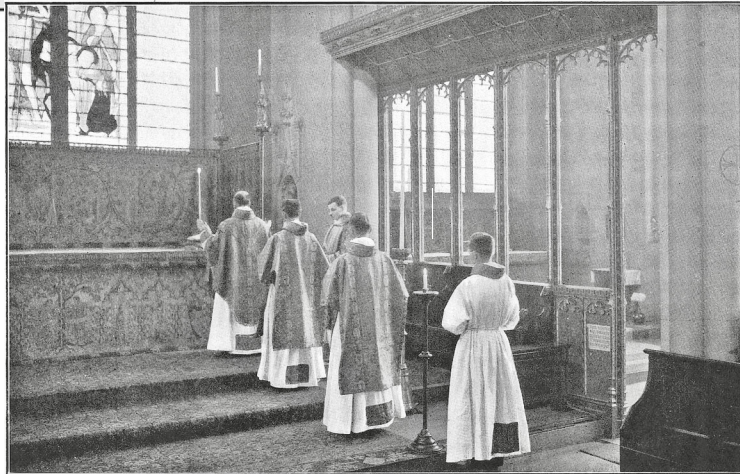
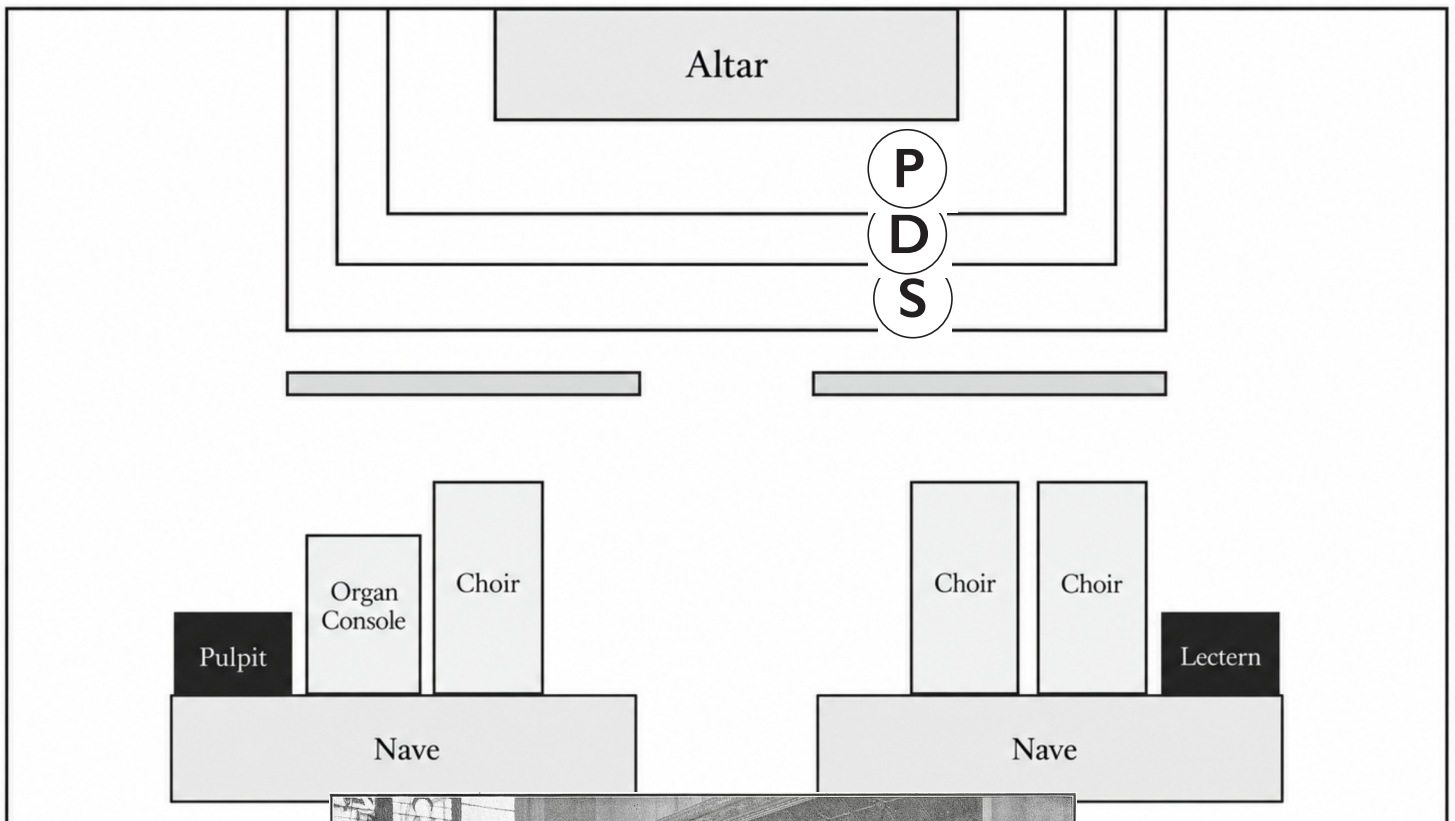
The Commandments / Summary of the Law

After the censing, the Priest stands before the Service Book at the ***south side*** of the altar (note photo has it on the north side—just slide those ministers to the right!). The same ceremonial position is used for the Decalogue and for the Summary of the Law: the Priest turns to face the people; the Deacon stands somewhat to the south, so as not to obstruct him, facing north or, alternatively, facing the people; and the Subdeacon kneels on his own step, facing east.

The Priest rehearses the Ten Commandments, or, when the Decalogue is omitted, says the Summary of the Law. The Summary may also follow the Decalogue.

Response to the Commandments and/or Kyrie

When the Decalogue alone is used, the choir and people say or sing the appointed response after each of the Ten Commandments and the Kyrie after the Summary, if it is used (though usually one or the other). When the Decalogue is omitted and the Summary of the Law is used, the Kyrie follows.



The Collects

After the Decalogue, or after the Summary of the Law and Kyrie when the Decalogue is omitted, the Priest remains at the south side of the altar and turns back toward the altar.

He turns to the people and says, "The Lord be with you." If necessary to avoid obstructing him, the Deacon draws slightly to the south and faces north, while the Subdeacon remains on his own step.

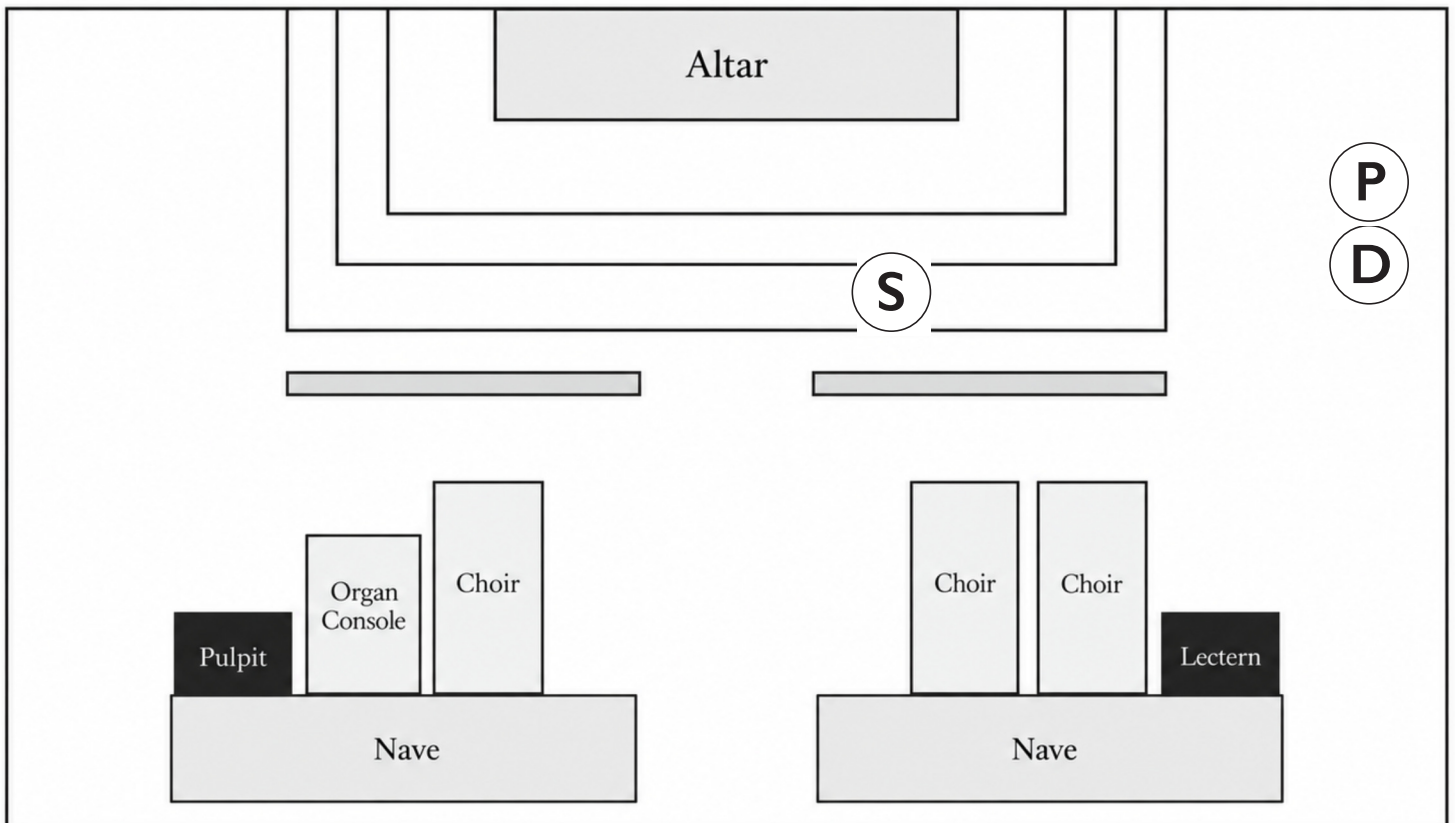
After the response, "And with thy spirit," the Priest turns back to the altar and says, "Let us pray." The Deacon resumes his usual position behind the Priest.

The Priest then says the Collect of the Day, facing east.

The Deacon and Subdeacon stand behind him in a straight line, each on his own step, also facing east.

Altar → Priest → Deacon → Subdeacon

all at the south side, facing east.



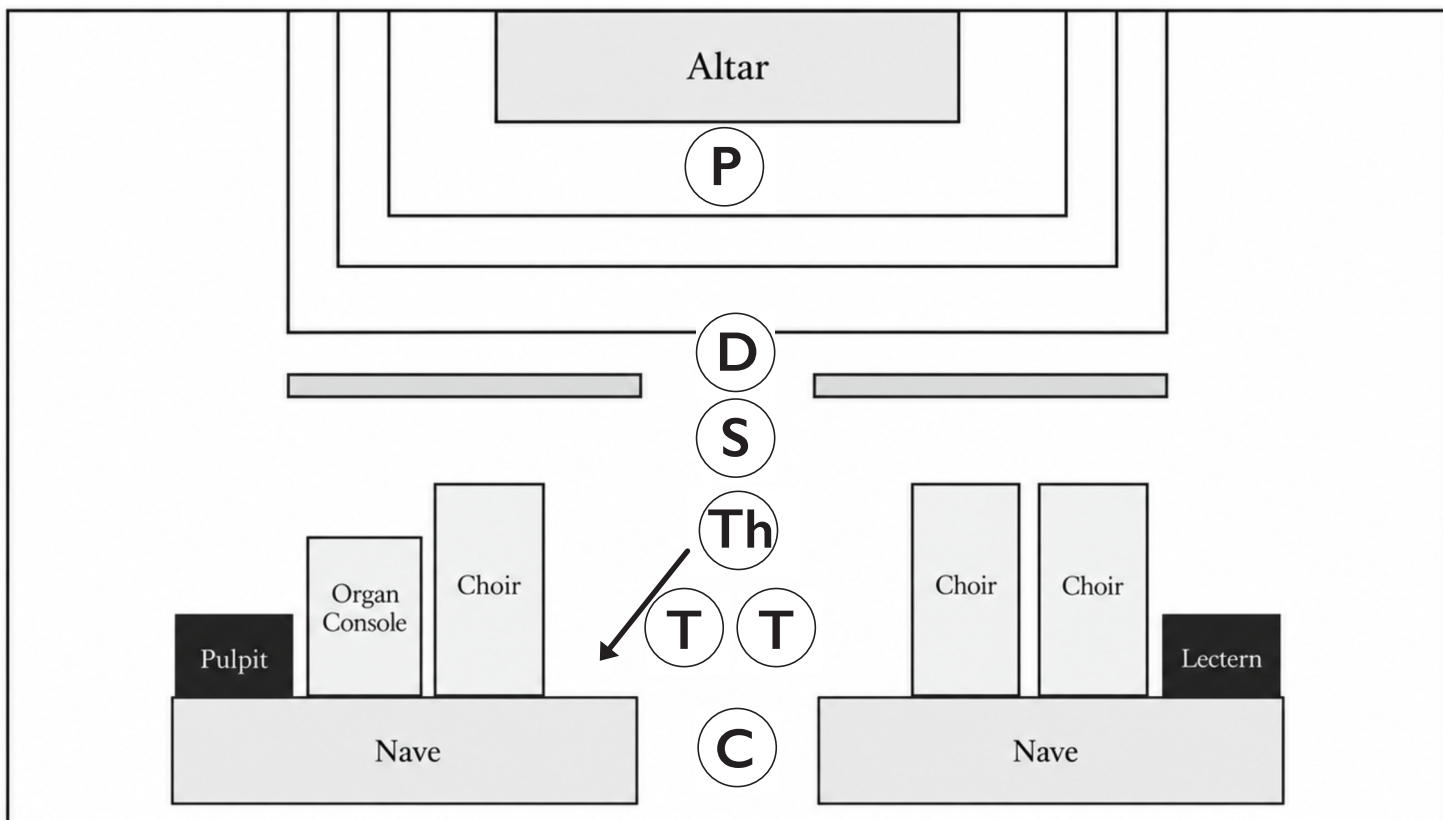
The Epistle

The Priest goes to the sedilia and sits in the easternmost seat.

The Deacon sits immediately to the west of the Priest.

The Subdeacon takes the Service Book, which contains the appointed Epistle and Gospel, and reads or sings the Epistle facing the people, from his own step in the sanctuary.

When he has finished the Epistle, the Subdeacon carries the Service Book to the north side of the altar and places it on the cushion. He then goes to the sedilia and sits.



Gospel Procession

After the censing, the Ministers go in procession to the place where the Gospel is read.

The Crucifer leads with the processional cross. The Taperers follow side by side carrying their torches. The Thurifer follows with the censer, preceding the Subdeacon. The Subdeacon precedes the Deacon, who carries the Service Book upon his left hand.

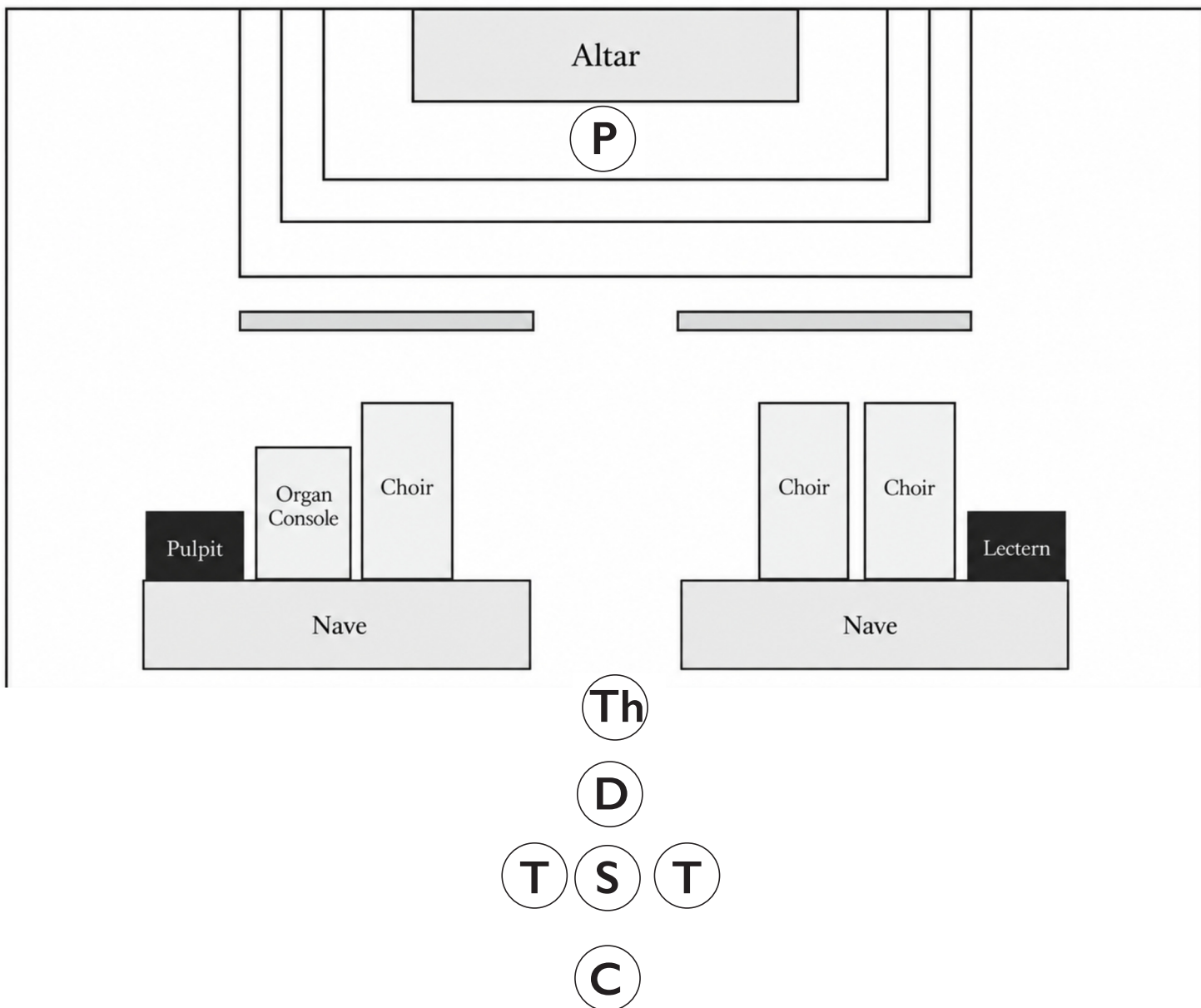
The processional order is:

Crucifer → Taperers → Thurifer → Subdeacon → Deacon

Where the Gospel is read farther down the nave, the Thurifer may step aside as the procession enters the nave, allow the Subdeacon and Deacon to pass, and then fall in behind the Deacon. This allows him to arrive naturally at his appointed position behind the Deacon at the Gospel station.

The Priest remains at the midst of the altar, facing west.

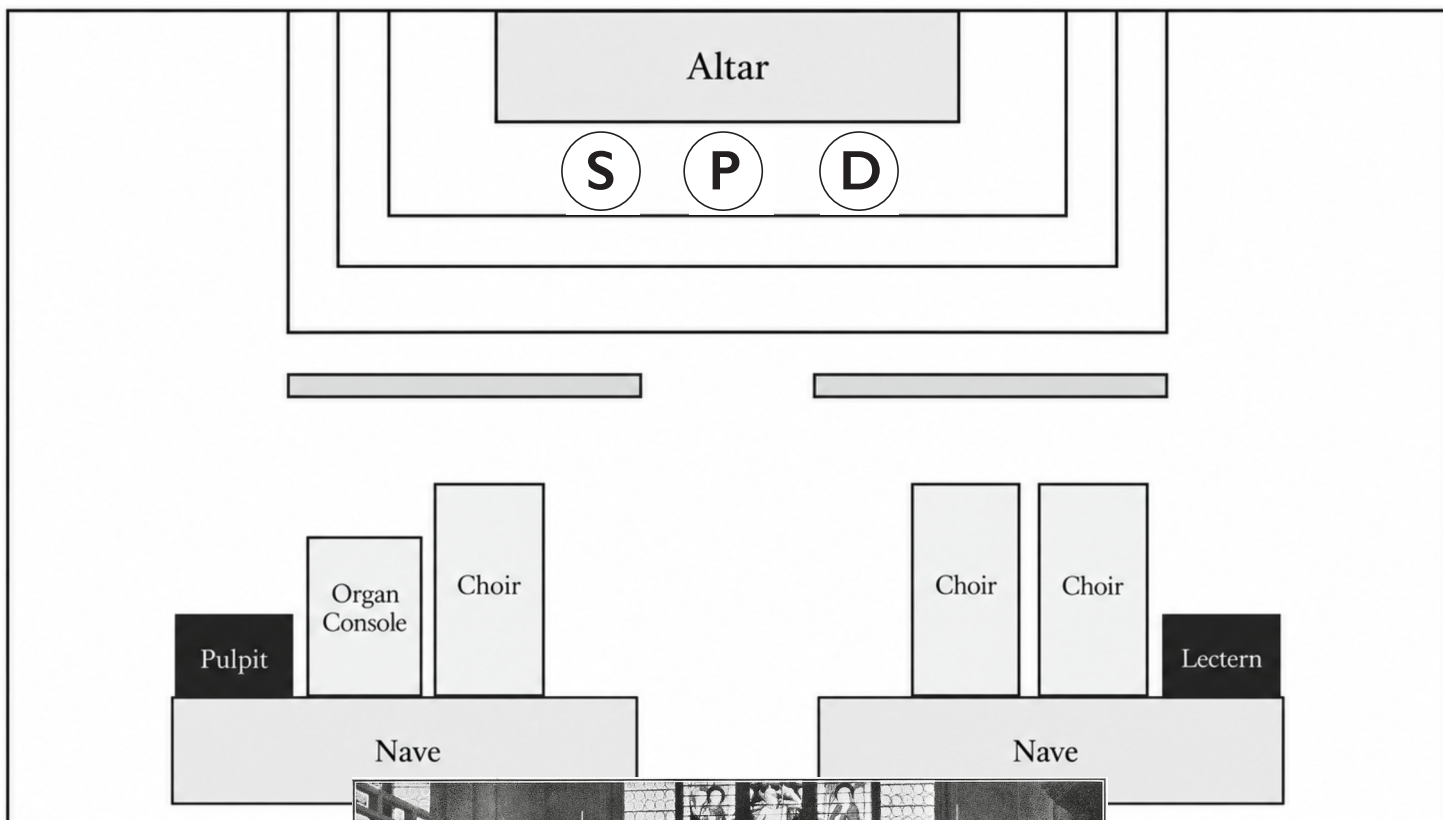
On reaching the Gospel station, the Subdeacon turns to face the Deacon and receives the Service Book, holding it open for the Gospel. The Taperers stand on either side of the Subdeacon, facing inward. The Crucifer stands behind the Subdeacon. The Thurifer stands behind the Deacon, gently swinging the censer.



Final Gospel Position and Reading/Chanting

The Deacon stands facing west and announces the Gospel, signing the Gospel/Service Book and himself. The Subdeacon stands opposite him and holds the Gospel/Service Book open. The Taperers stand on either side of the Subdeacon, facing inward. The Crucifer stands behind the Subdeacon. The Thurifer stands behind the Deacon, gently swinging the censer.

The Priest, standing at the midst of the altar, turns east and answers, "Glory be to Thee, O Lord," then turns to face the Deacon for the reading or chanting of the Gospel.



The Return from the Gospel and the Creed

At the conclusion of the Gospel, the Deacon kisses the Gospel/Service Book at the Gospel station, closes it, and carries it in the return procession.

The Subdeacon precedes the Deacon back to the sanctuary. On reaching the altar, the Deacon hands the Gospel/Service Book to the Subdeacon, who places it at the north side of the altar.

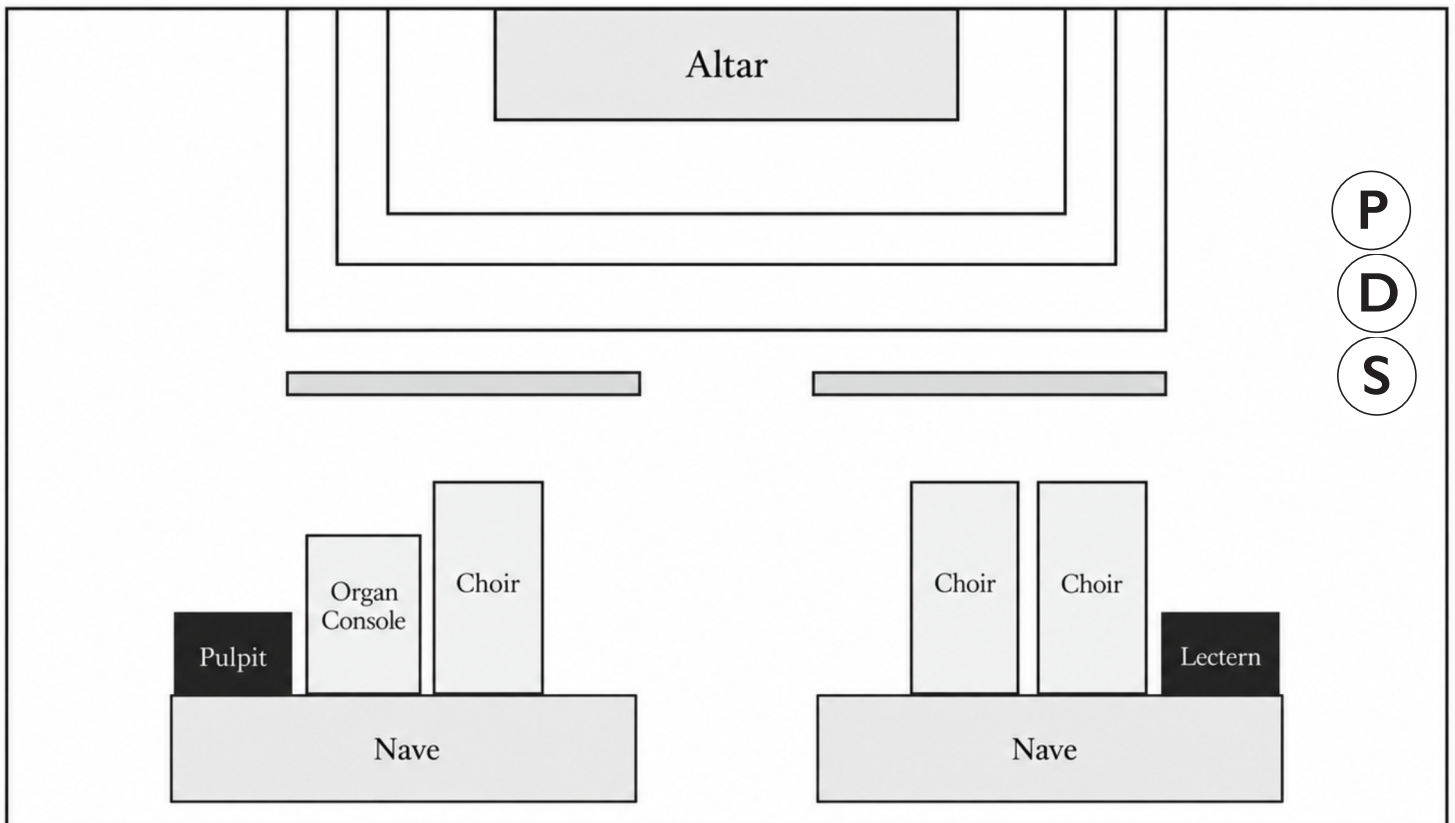
The Priest turns again toward the altar and begins the Creed at the midst.

The Deacon takes his place at the Priest's right and the Subdeacon at the Priest's left, all three facing east.

The Crucifer returns the processional cross to its appointed place. The Taperers return their torches to their appointed places and then return to the choir. The Thurifer puts away or hangs the thurible and takes his convenient place until it is next required.

Subdeacon — Priest — Deacon

all facing east.



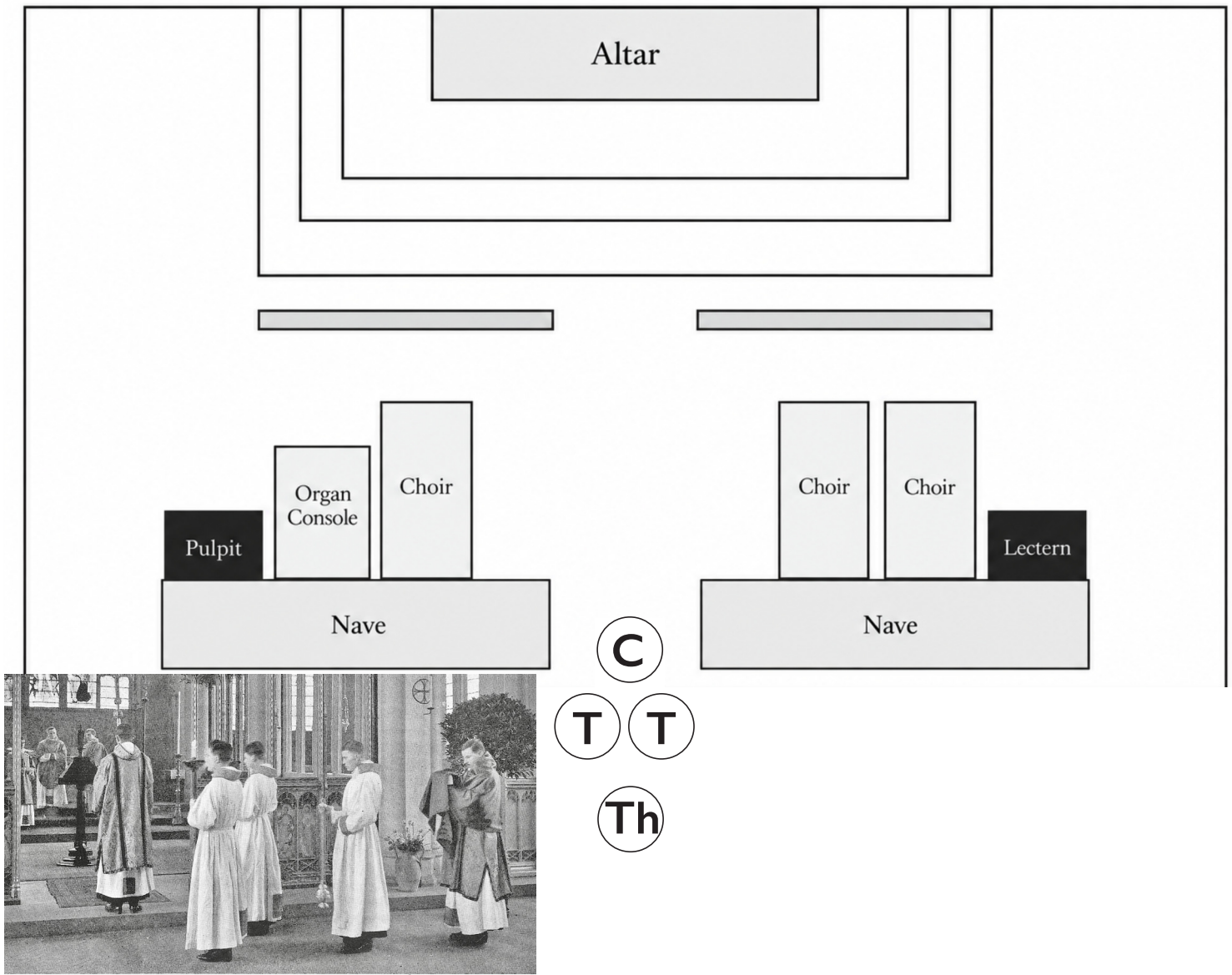
The Sermon

After the Creed, the Priest and sacred Ministers go to the sedilia.

The Priest sits in the easternmost seat, with the Deacon and Subdeacon seated beside him in order.

If the Priest is to preach, the Deacon and Subdeacon assist him in removing the chasuble and maniple (or cope if that is the local custom) before he goes to the pulpit or preaching place.

The Thurifer sits in a convenient place during the sermon.



The Offertory Procession—if used

If the bread and wine have been prepared away from the high altar, they may be brought forward in procession at the Offertory. The older ceremonial also provides for the chalice and paten themselves to be carried forward, veiled, with the bread and wine prepared with them.

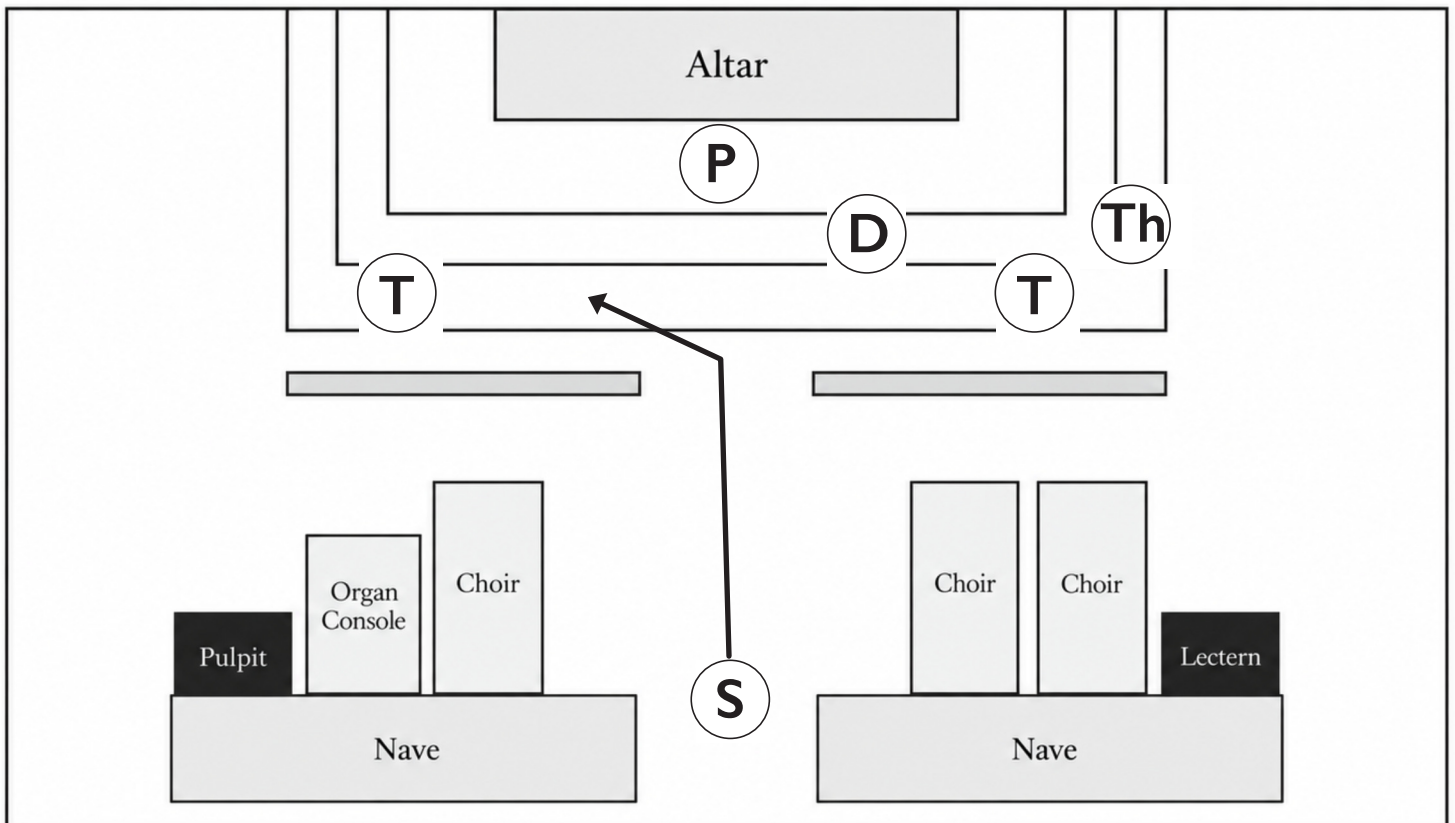
Where the vessels are brought forward: an appointed Server places the offertory veil over his shoulders and carries the chalice and paten, his hands covered by the veil. The Thurifer accompanies him with the censer. The Taperers take up their torches and precede the gifts; where the processional cross is used, the Crucifer leads.

Where the chalice and paten are already upon the altar: appointed Servers may instead carry forward the bread and wine, ordinarily in the bread-box or other suitable vessel and the wine cruet. The same processional order may be used.

The procession therefore moves in this order: Crucifer → Taperers → Thurifer → Server or Servers carrying the gifts

On reaching the altar, the gifts are presented to the Deacon, who receives them and assists the Priest in preparing the oblations.

Where the chalice and paten are already prepared upon the altar, they remain there and only the bread and wine are brought forward. Where the fuller traditional form is used, the vessels and elements may all be brought forward together.



The Offertory

At the end of the Sermon, the Priest goes to the midst of the altar and faces west to read the Offertory sentence.

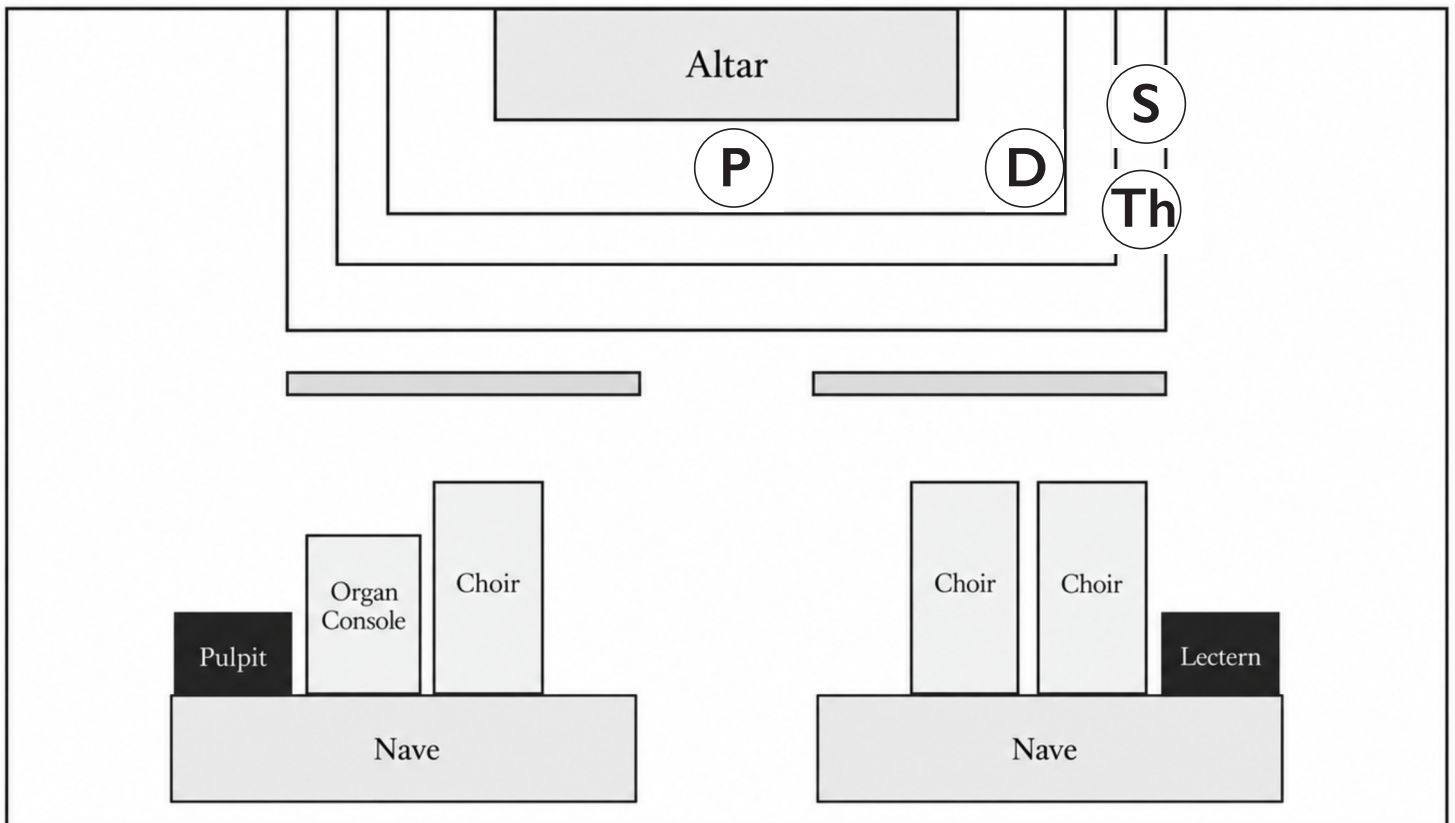
While the alms are being collected, the sacred Ministers begin the preparation of the altar and oblations. The bread and wine are prepared as required.

When the collection is complete, the *Subdeacon receives the alms at the choir gate, carries them to the altar, and presents them to the Priest*, who places them toward the south side of the altar. *He then returns to his place.*

Where an Offertory Procession is used, the bread and wine—or, according to the fuller traditional form, the chalice and paten with the elements—are brought forward and received at this time.

The Priest then completes the preparation of the oblations, placing the paten upon the corporal and the chalice behind it.

In this 1928 American adaptation, the preparation of the altar and oblations begins while the alms are being collected, following common American and local parish custom rather than Alcuin's more strictly sequential order.



The Censing of the Oblation and Ministers

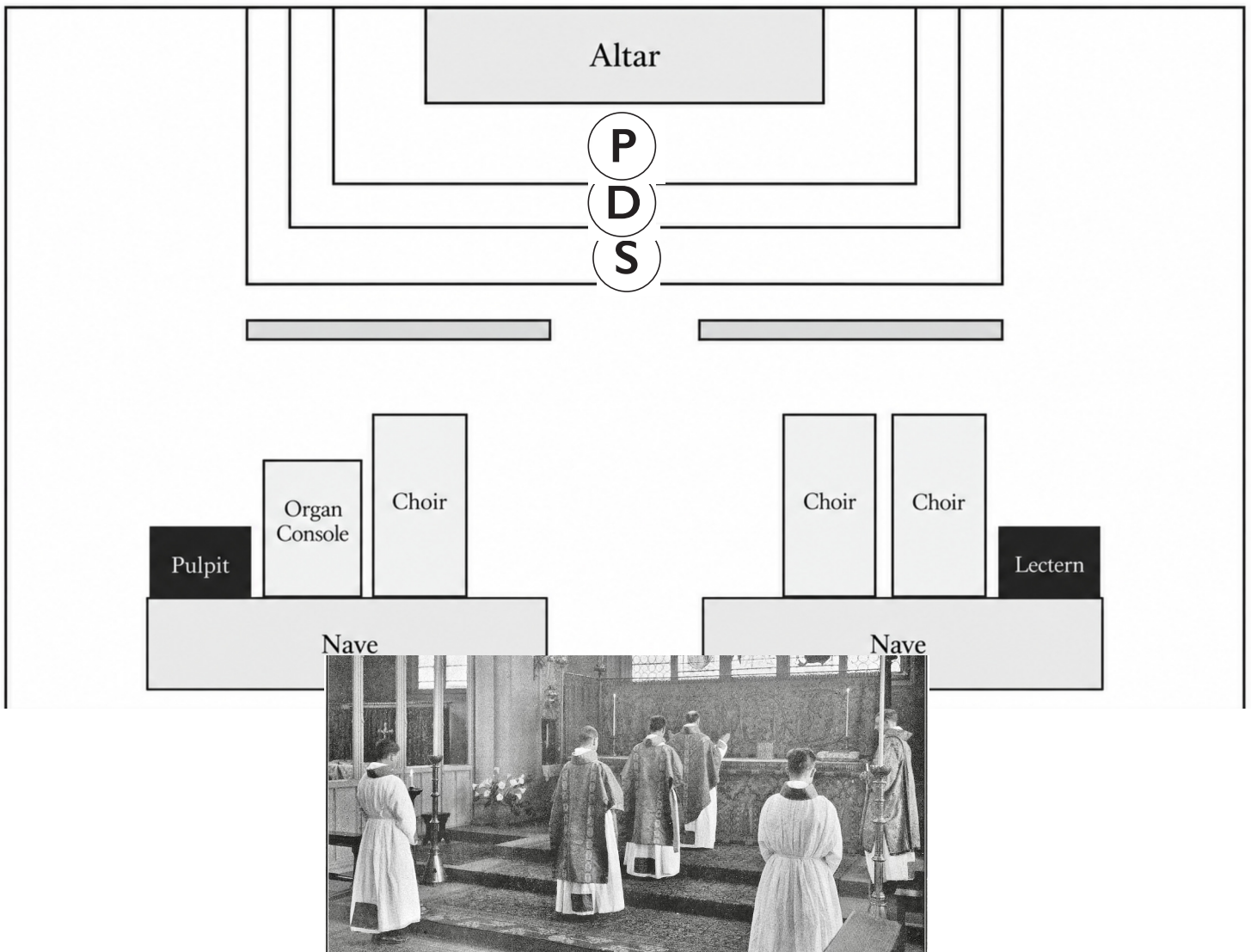
Following the traditional Sarum manner of censing the oblation, the Priest takes the censer from the Deacon and censes the oblation: three times in the form of a cross, three times in a circle, once on each side of the oblation, and once in the space between himself and the altar.

He then gives the censer back to the Deacon at the south corner.

The Deacon censes the Priest, then gives the censer to the Thurifer.

The Thurifer censes first the Deacon and then the Subdeacon, giving three double-swings to each, and then resumes his appointed place.

The Priest then goes to the south corner to wash his hands. The Subdeacon ministers the water, assisted by another server if necessary. After the lavabo, the Priest returns to the midst of the altar.



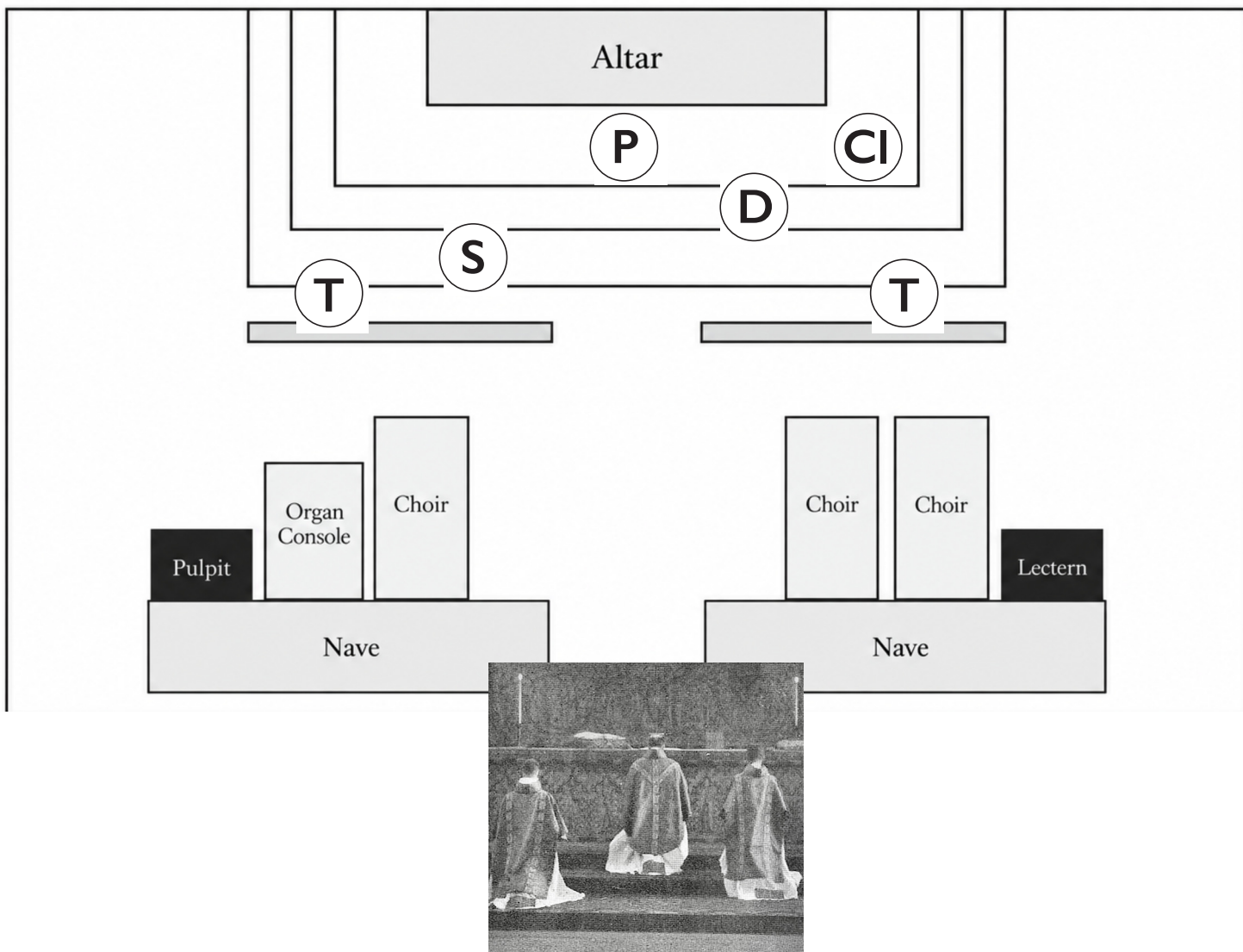
The Prayer for the Church

The Priest turns to the people and says, “Let us pray for the whole state of Christ’s Church.” He then turns back to the altar, stands at the midst, facing east, and says the Prayer for the Church. At “alms” he lays his hand upon the alms; at “oblations” he lifts the chalice and paten.

The Deacon turns with the Priest toward the people for the bidding, then turns back and stands behind the Priest.

The Subdeacon moves slightly north while the Priest gives the bidding, then turns back and stands behind the Deacon, facing east.

The three sacred Ministers again form an eastward-facing line at the midst of the altar:



The Exhortation and Confession

The Priest turns toward the people to give the Short Exhortation. As he turns, the Deacon and Subdeacon move out from the central line to their respective sides, leaving the Priest unobstructed as he addresses the people.

The Deacon stands to the Priest's right and the Subdeacon to his left during the Exhortation.

At the conclusion of the Exhortation, the Priest turns back toward the altar and kneels. The Deacon and Subdeacon likewise kneel on their own steps, remaining to the Priest's right and left.

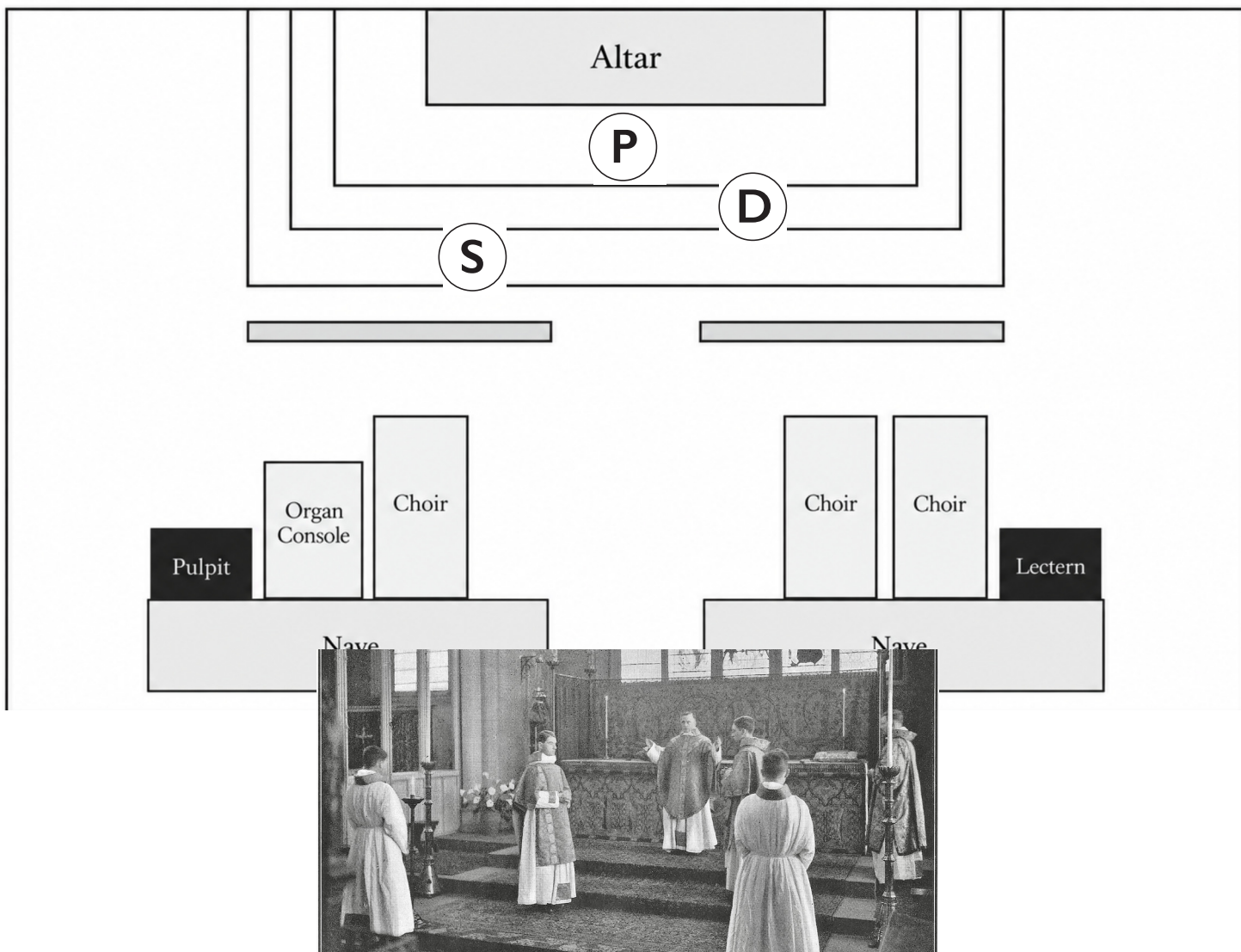
The Priest then leads the General Confession, together with all who intend to receive Holy Communion.

The Absolution and Comfortable Words

The Priest rises and turns to face the people. He pronounces the Absolution, raising his right hand at "Have mercy upon you."

The Deacon and Subdeacon remain kneeling during the Absolution and through the comfortable words.

The Priest then remains facing west and says the Comfortable Words.



The Sursum Corda, and Preface

The Priest remains facing west toward the people after the Comfortable Words and sings, “Lift up your hearts,” raising his hands.

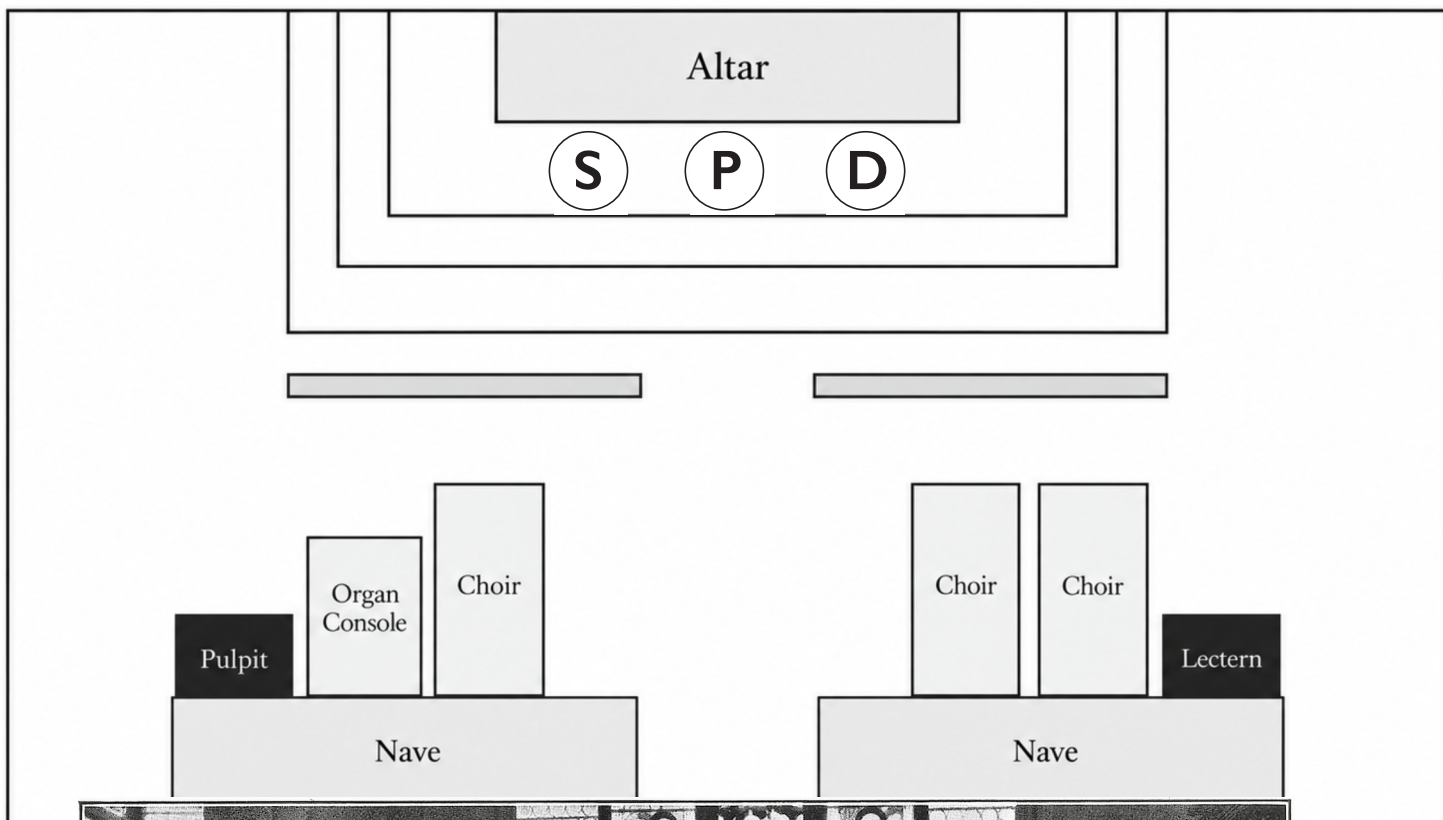
At this point the Deacon and Subdeacon rise from their kneeling positions and draw apart laterally, leaving a clear space around the Priest. The Deacon moves somewhat to the south and faces north, while the Subdeacon moves somewhat to the north and faces south.

At “Let us give thanks unto our Lord God,” the Priest joins his hands and turns east toward the altar.

As the Priest begins the Preface, the Deacon and Subdeacon move back in behind him, each on his proper step, forming the usual eastward-facing line:

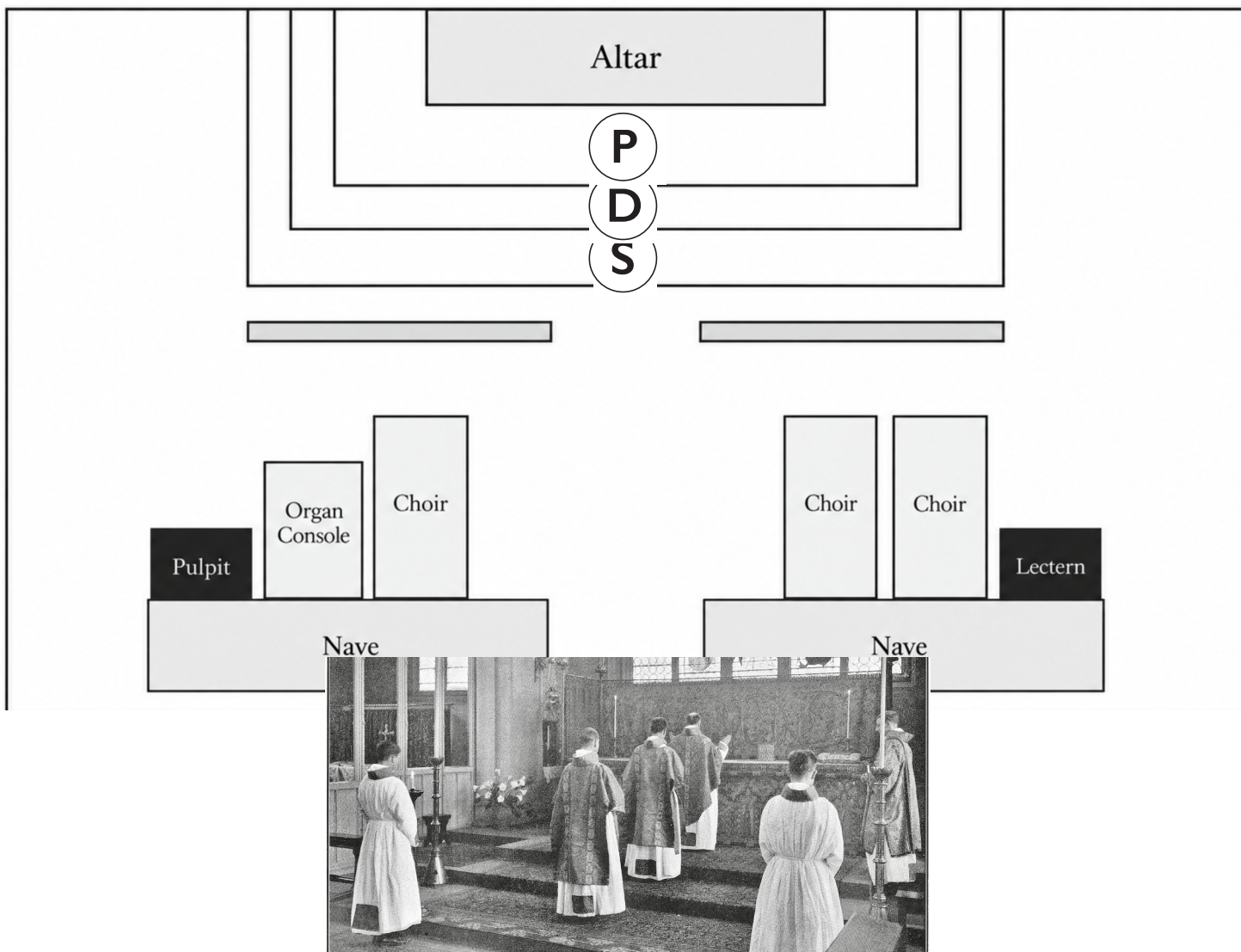
Priest → Deacon → Subdeacon

During the Preface, all three sacred Ministers face east.



Sanctus

At the Sanctus, the formation changes again. The Deacon comes up to the Priest's right and the Subdeacon to the Priest's left, so that the three sacred Ministers stand side by side before the altar, all facing east. They bow together.



The Prayer of Consecration, Oblation, and Invocation

The Priest stands at the midst of the altar, facing east, and says the Prayer of Consecration solemnly and deliberately.

The Deacon stands directly behind the Priest, and the Subdeacon directly behind the Deacon, each on his own step.

When the Priest bows, the Deacon and Subdeacon bow with him. Alcuin also permits the Deacon and Subdeacon instead to kneel throughout the Prayer of Consecration.

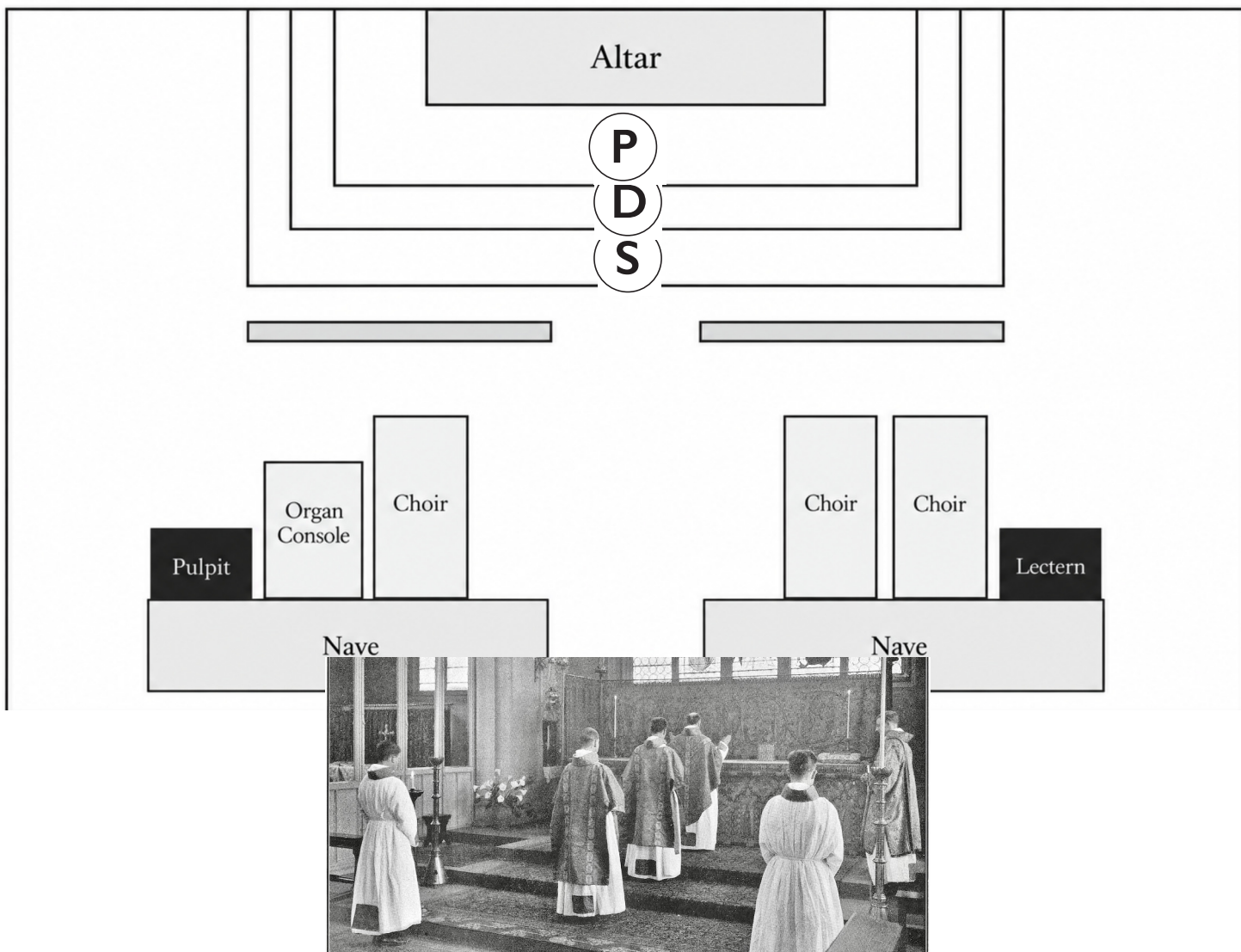
At the appointed words, the Priest performs the prescribed manual acts with the bread and chalice. At “Do this” he elevates the paten, and later elevates the chalice.

The Prayer continues through the Oblation and Invocation, according to the order of the 1928 American Prayer Book.

All are oriented eastward.

Altar → Priest → Deacon → Subdeacon

in one straight line.

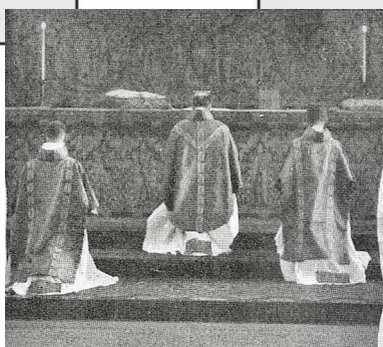
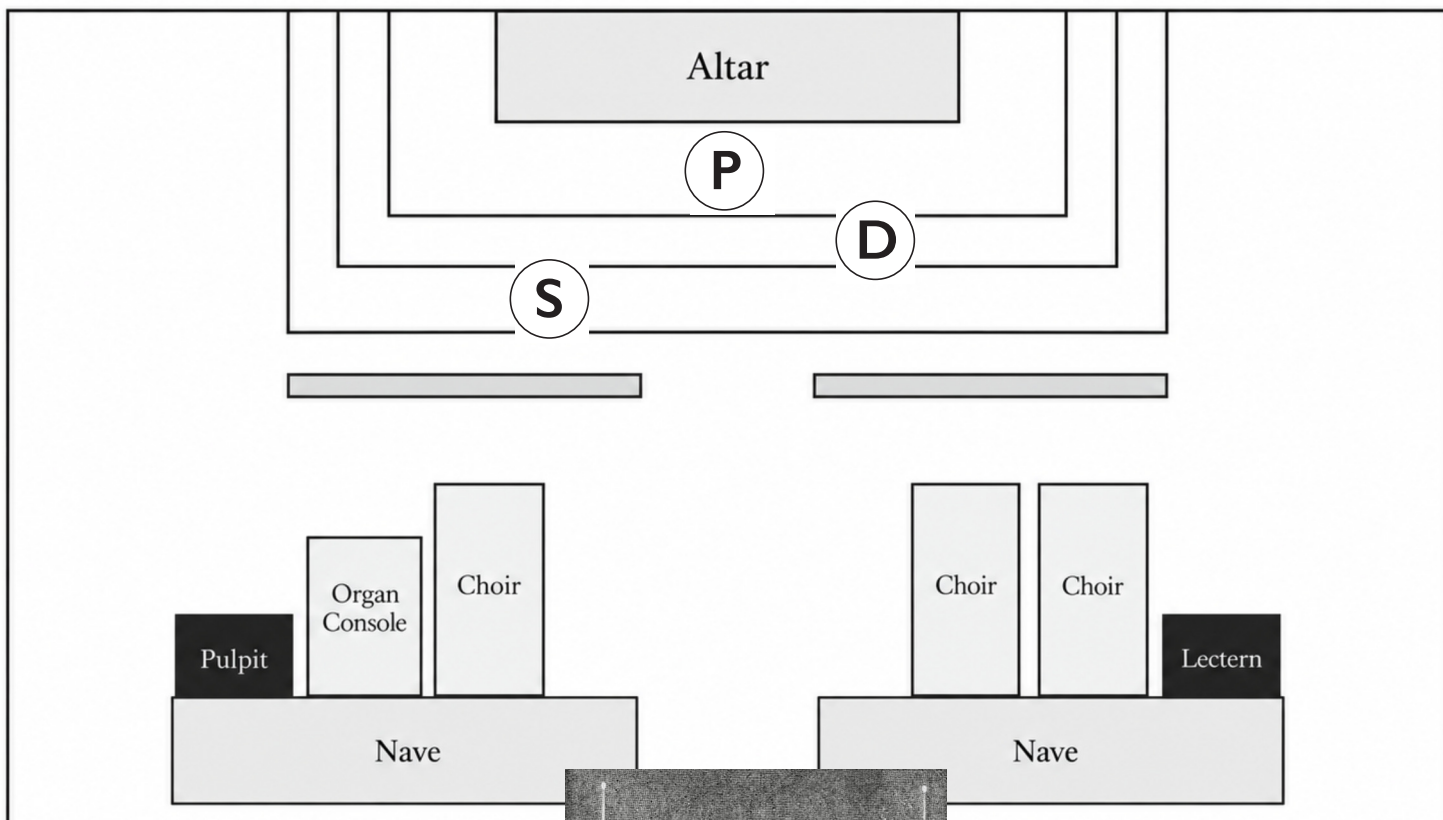


The Lord's Prayer

After the Prayer of Consecration, Oblation, and Invocation, the Priest remains at the midst of the altar, facing east, and says or sings the Lord's Prayer.

The Deacon and Subdeacon remain behind him on their own steps, also facing east.

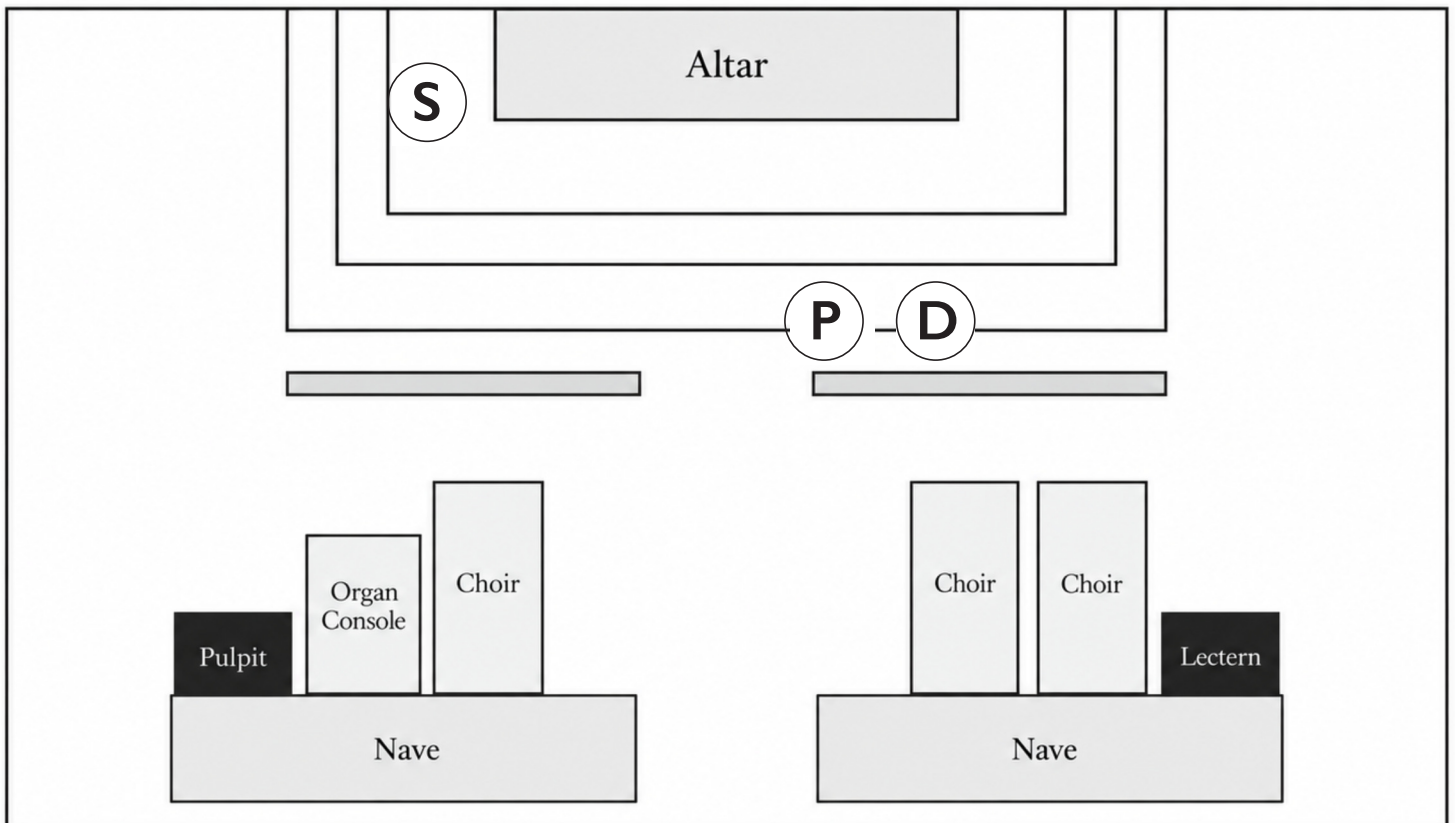
Altar → Priest → Deacon → Subdeacon



The Prayer of Humble Access

The Priest kneels before the altar and says the Prayer of Humble Access with his hands joined.

The Deacon kneels on his own step at the Priest's right, and the Subdeacon kneels on his own step at the Priest's left.

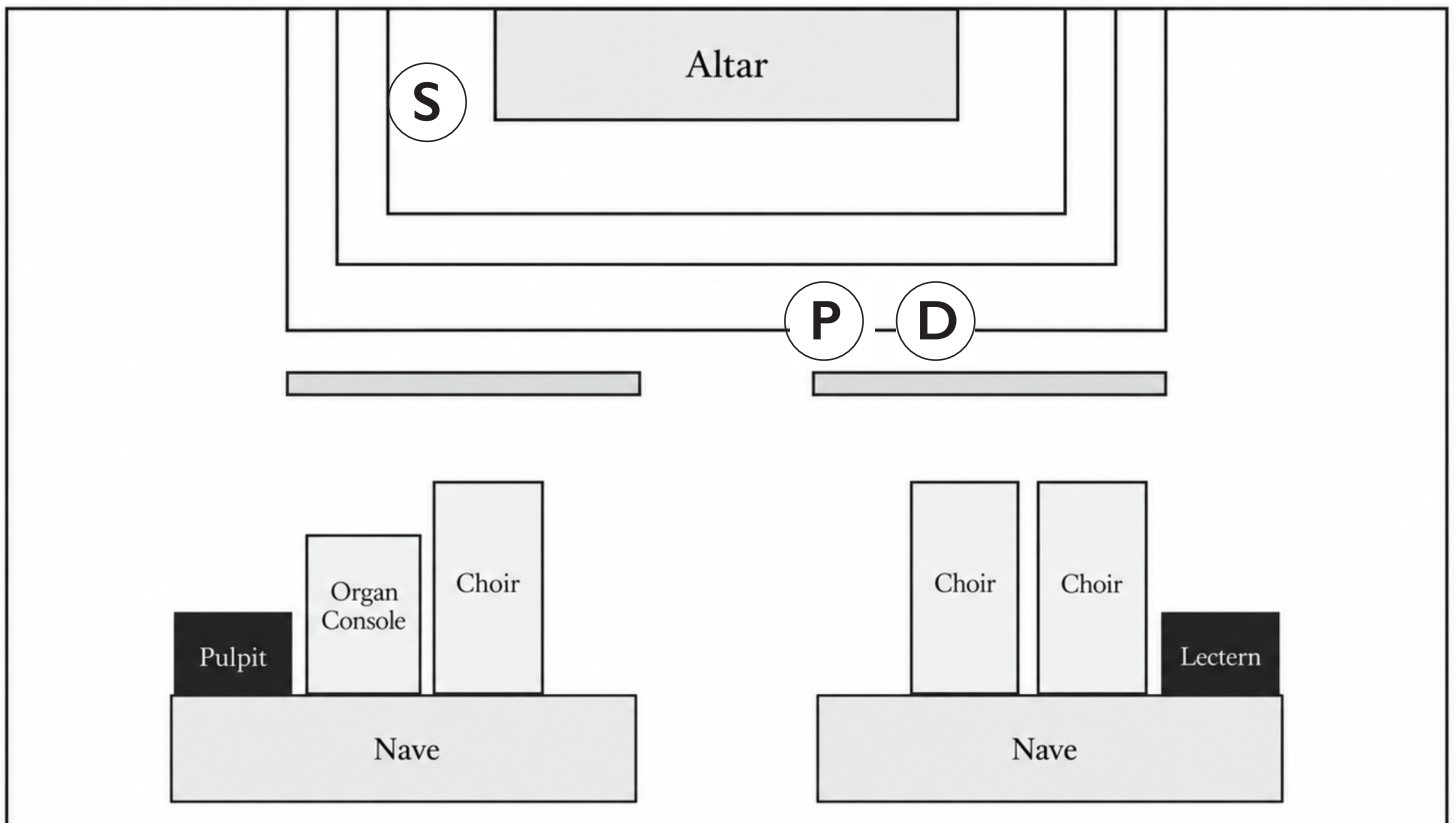


The Communion of the People

After communicating himself (and other sacred ministers), the Priest takes the paten and goes to communicate the people.

The Deacon goes up to the footpace, makes the appointed reverence, receives the chalice from the Priest, and follows him in communicating the people.

The Subdeacon goes to the north side of the altar and stands facing south, or in another convenient place, provided that he does not turn his back on the Blessed Sacrament.



The Post-Communion Thanksgiving

The Priest returns to the midst of the altar and reverently places what remains of the consecrated Elements upon the altar.

He then covers the Blessed Sacrament with the appointed covering.

The Service Book is placed at the south side of the altar, clear of the Blessed Sacrament.

Standing at the midst and facing east, the Priest says, “Let us pray,” followed by the Post-Communion Thanksgiving.

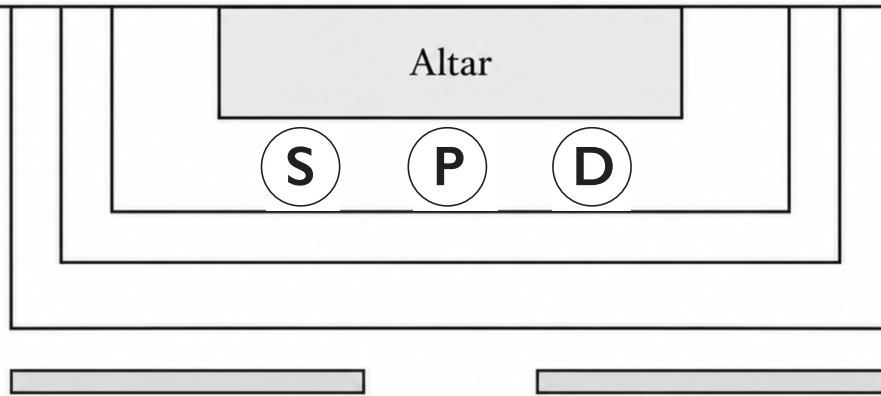
The Deacon and Subdeacon form the usual eastward-facing line behind the Priest, each on his own step:

Altar → Priest → Deacon → Subdeacon

The Deacon and Subdeacon kneel in this order, facing east. Where the narrowness of the steps requires it, the Deacon may kneel slightly to the south and the Subdeacon slightly to the north, while preserving the same ordered line.

At the conclusion of the Thanksgiving, the Deacon and Subdeacon rise for the Gloria in Excelsis.

Note: The ceremonial arrangement given here is an adaptation based upon the best available evidence from the Alcuin Club and Percy Dearmer, supplemented by traditional American Anglican ceremonial sources. Because the 1928 American Prayer Book does not prescribe the exact positions of the sacred Ministers at this point, the arrangement shown preserves the older English eastward-facing pattern while adapting it to the American post-Communion Thanksgiving.



The Gloria in Excelsis

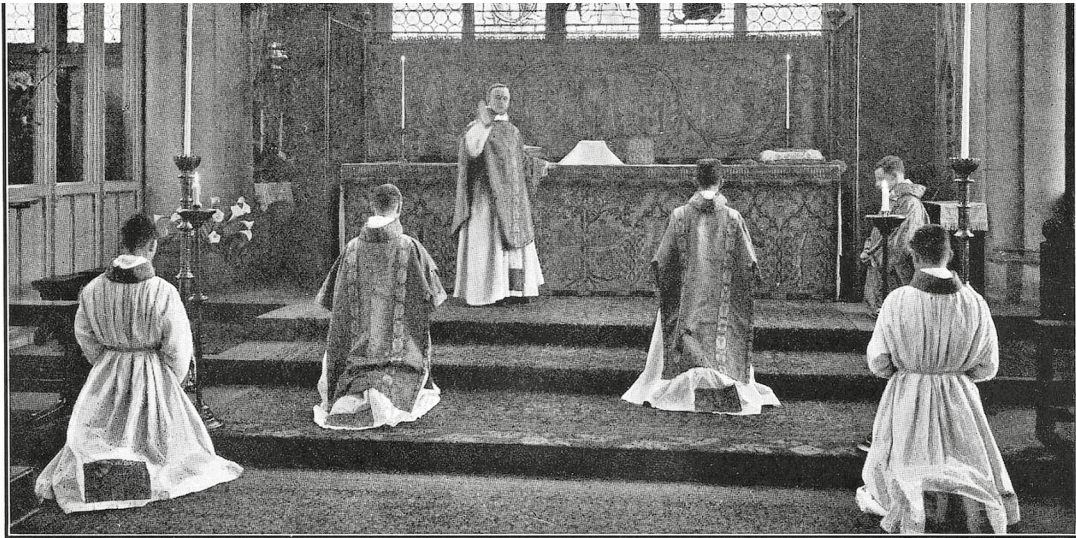
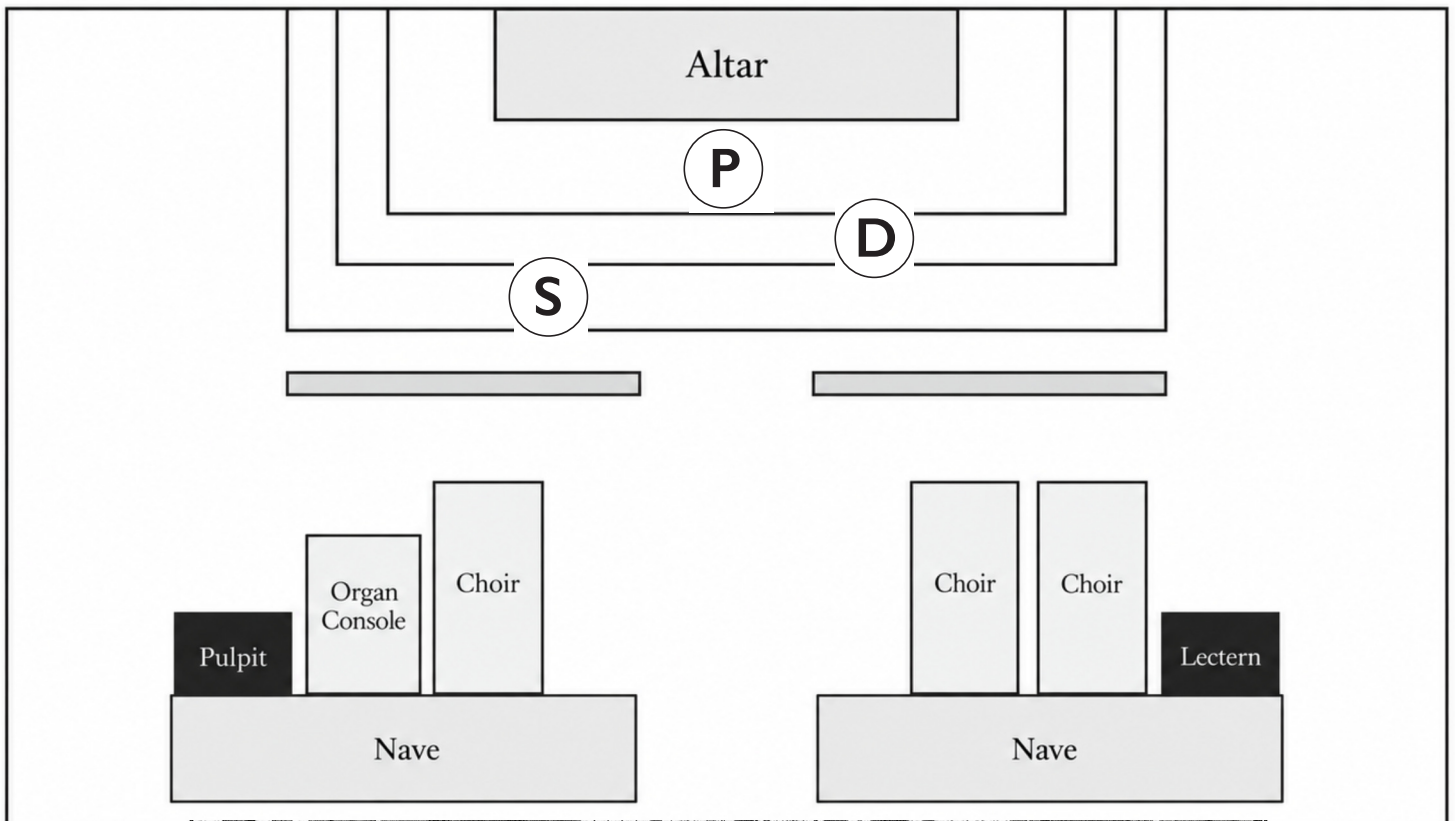
At the conclusion of the Post-Communion Thanksgiving, the Deacon and Subdeacon rise.

The Priest remains at the midst of the altar, facing east, and begins the Gloria in Excelsis.

The Deacon comes up to the Priest's right and the Subdeacon to the Priest's left, so that the three sacred Ministers stand side by side upon the footpace, all facing east. The Deacon and Subdeacon turn slightly inward.

The Priest, Deacon, and Subdeacon make a profound bow at the words "we worship Thee," "Jesus Christ," and "receive our prayer," and again at the conclusion of the Gloria.

Following Dearmer, at the concluding words, "in the glory of God the Father. Amen," the Priest, Deacon, and Subdeacon make the Sign of the Cross.



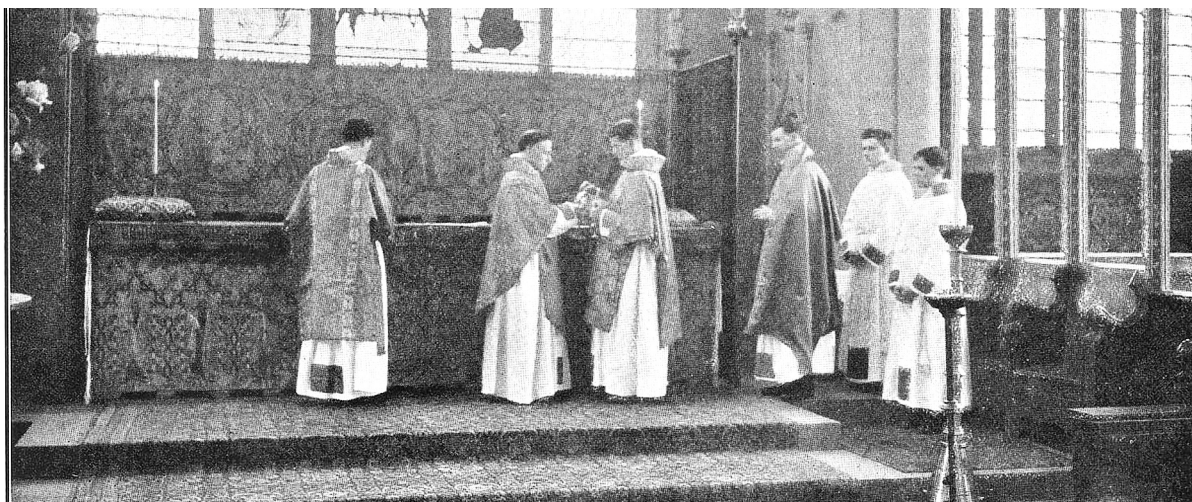
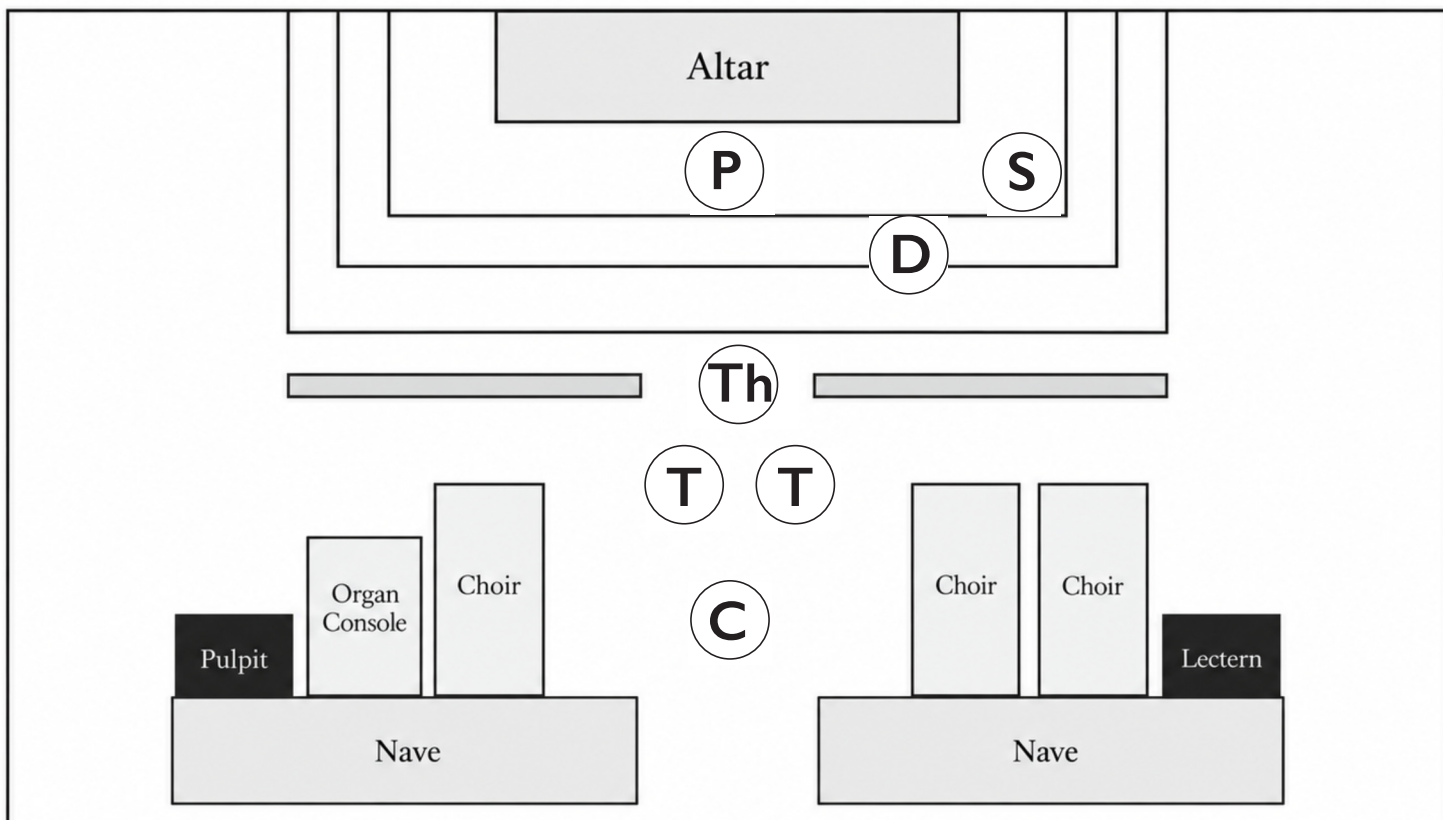
The Blessing

The Priest does not turn squarely west with his back to the Blessed Sacrament.

Instead, he moves to the north of the corporal and stands facing south. At the words “the blessing” he turns toward the people, raises his right hand in blessing, and keeps his left hand resting upon the altar. At “the blessing of God” he makes the Sign of the Cross over the people.

The Deacon kneels on his own step, slightly to the south, and the Subdeacon kneels on his own step, slightly to the north, leaving the Priest clear as he turns toward the people.

The other Ministers kneel for the Blessing.



The Ablutions

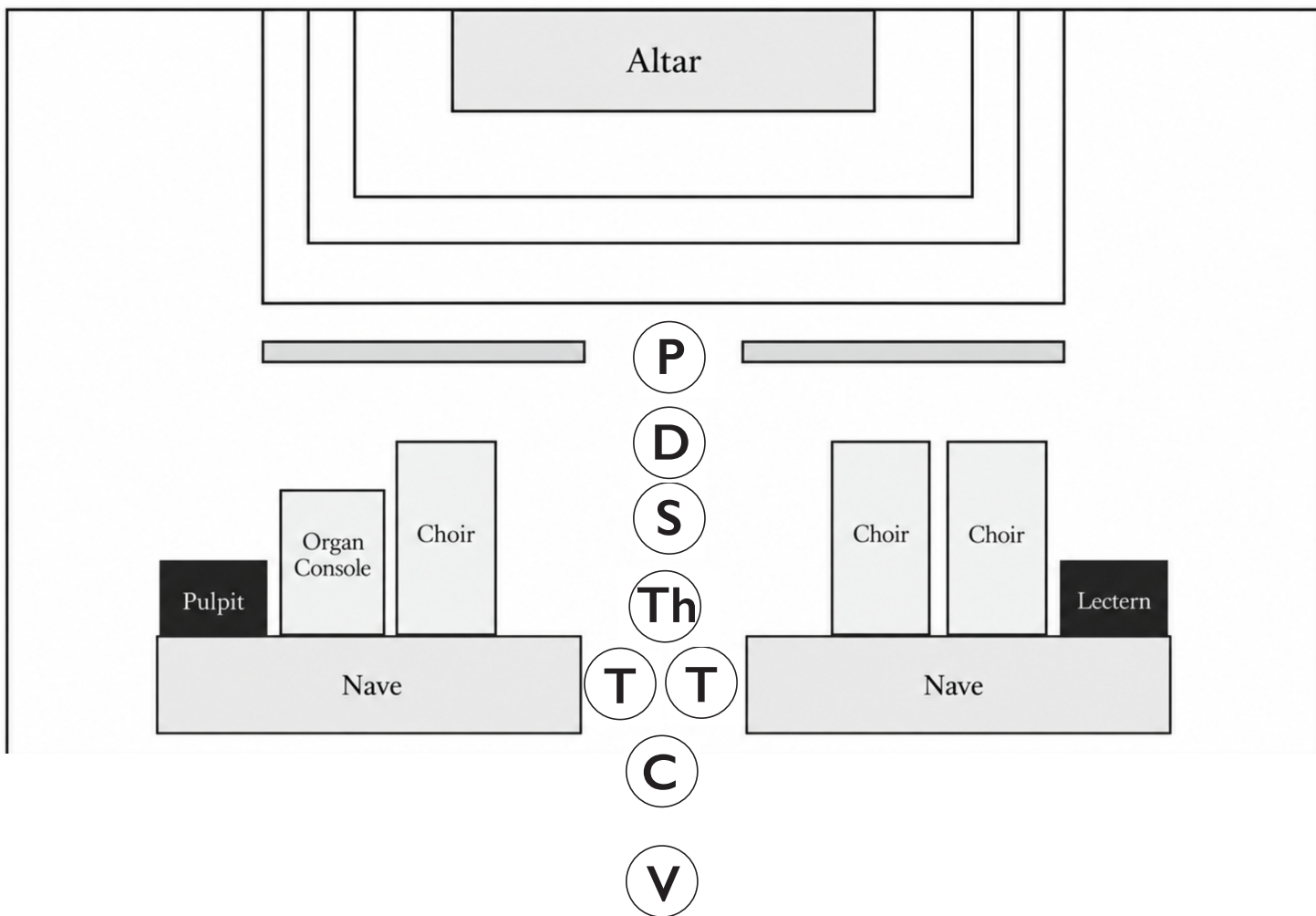
After the Blessing, the Priest turns back to the altar and reverently consumes whatever remains of the Blessed Sacrament. Where the parish follows a practice of reservation, the remaining Sacrament is dealt with according to that custom.

The Subdeacon ministers the wine and water for the ablutions, pouring them as required for the cleansing of the chalice and the Priest's fingers.

The Deacon assists at the altar, folds the corporal and pall, and places them in the burse.

When the vessels have been purified and the ablutions completed, the Ministers prepare for the concluding reverence and departure.

During the ablutions, the Crucifer takes up the processional cross, and the Taperers take up their torches. Together with the Thurifer, they move into position to form the Closing Procession.



The Closing Procession

After the Ablutions have been completed, the Priest, Deacon, and Subdeacon return to the midst before the altar.

The Priest stands at the centre of the footpace, facing east. The Deacon and Subdeacon come up onto the footpace behind him, the Deacon slightly to the south and the Subdeacon slightly to the north, so that the three sacred Ministers form a compact group before the altar without standing directly one behind another.

Facing east, the Priest, Deacon, and Subdeacon bow or genuflect together before the altar.

They then turn, and descend from the footpace to form the recessional procession.

Crucifer → Taperers → Thurifer → Subdeacon → Deacon → Priest, with the Verger preceding where one is used.

How to Read the Ceremonial

The ceremonial becomes much easier to learn once you stop treating it as thirty separate diagrams and instead recognize five recurring spatial patterns.

The normal “home” position is the eastward-facing line. The other formations are variations used when the liturgical action changes.

1. The Default Position: Eastward Prayer = Line Up

When the Priest is praying eastward at the altar, and the three sacred Ministers are participating in the same action, they normally form a straight line:

Altar → Priest → Deacon → Subdeacon

- All face east.
- Each remains on his own step.
- This is the normal position to which the Ministers return after a special action is finished.

Examples:

- The Collect
- The Prayer for the Church
- The Preface
- The Prayer of Consecration
- The Lord’s Prayer

A useful memory rule is:

Eastward prayer = line up.

If the Deacon or Subdeacon is unsure where he belongs and the Priest is praying eastward, the normal answer is: **return to the line.**

2. When the Priest Addresses the People: Clear the Centre

When the Priest turns west to speak directly to the congregation, the other sacred Ministers should not obstruct him.

The precise movement changes according to the action, but the principle is consistent:

Priest faces the people = clear his lane.

Examples:

- Commandments / Summary of the Law:
- The Deacon moves somewhat south so that he is not directly in front of the Priest. The Subdeacon remains eastward.
- Exhortation:
- The Deacon and Subdeacon move outward to the Priest’s right and left as he turns toward the congregation.

- Sursum Corda:
The Deacon moves somewhat south and faces north; the Subdeacon moves somewhat north and faces south, leaving the Priest clear in the centre.

For very brief turns—for example, “The Lord be with you” before a Collect—the movement need only be enough to keep the Priest unobstructed.

When the Priest turns east again, the Ministers normally return to the line.

3. The Great Acclamations: Three Abreast

At several great corporate acts of praise or confession (not of sins), the sacred Ministers come together side by side before the altar:

Subdeacon — Priest — Deacon

All face east.

This formation is used at:

- The Creed
- The Sanctus
- The Gloria in Excelsis

These are not ordinary presidential prayers. The three sacred Ministers are visibly participating together in a great proclamation or acclamation of the Church.

The easiest mnemonic is:

Creed — Sanctus — Gloria = three abreast

After the acclamation is finished, the Ministers return to whatever formation the next action requires.

4. Kneeling Devotions: Flank the Priest

When the sacred Ministers kneel together for a devotional or penitential prayer, they do not *normally* kneel directly behind one another.

Instead:

Subdeacon — Priest — Deacon

with each remaining on his proper level or step.

- Priest remains central.
- Deacon kneels at the Priest’s right.
- Subdeacon kneels at the Priest’s left.

Examples:

- The General Confession
- The Prayer of Humble Access

The mnemonic is:

Kneeling devotion = flank the Priest.

This is quite different from the standing eastward line.

5. Different Jobs: Go to the Proper Station

Sometimes there is no common formation because each Minister has a different liturgical function.

The rule is:

Same action = formation. Different jobs = stations.

Examples:

- Epistle:
Subdeacon reads; Priest and Deacon sit.
- Gospel:
Deacon proclaims; Subdeacon holds the book; the other servers take their Gospel stations.
- Offertory:
Priest prepares the oblations; Deacon assists; Subdeacon presents the alms or ministers as required.
- Communion:
Priest communicates with the paten; Deacon follows with the chalice; Subdeacon remains reverently positioned near the altar.
- Ablutions:
Priest purifies; Subdeacon ministers wine and water; Deacon assists with the vessels and linens.

In these moments, do not worry about preserving a geometric formation. Each Minister goes where his office requires him to be.

The Reset Rule

After any special movement, ask:

What is the Priest doing next?

If the answer is praying eastward at the altar, the sacred Ministers normally return to:

Priest → Deacon → Subdeacon

That is the ceremonial home position.

Five Rules to Memorize

1. Eastward prayer: line up — P → D → S
2. Priest faces the people: clear the centre.
3. Creed, Sanctus, Gloria: three abreast — S — P — D
4. Confession and Humble Access: kneel flanking the Priest.
5. Different ministries: go to the station required by the action.

And the master rule:

When the special action is over, return to the normal eastward-facing line unless the next action clearly requires another formation.