Water Is Used Three Times at Mass:



Water is included in the Liturgy of the Eucharistic and the Communion Rite. This is when the priest prepares the bread and wine for consecration to become the Real Presence of Jesus. The altar server serves an important role of assisting the priest in each occasion.

The first time, the server brings water to the altar and the priest (or deacon if in attendance) pours wine and water into a chalice, stating, "*By the mystery of this water...*" The water symbolized the water that flowed from Christ when he was crucified, and the wine represents the blood he shed to save humanity.

The water is Christ's humanity and the wine his divinity. The mingling of the water and wine in the chalice symbolizes the Incarnation of Christ. The Precious Blood. It also recalls Christ's Passion when the soldiers pierced his side with a spear and out flowed blood and water (John 19:34), thus signifying baptism and Eucharist.



The second time, the server pours water over the priest's hands to assist in the washing of his hands. The priest says inaudibly while washing his hands, "Lord, wash away my iniquity; cleanse me from my sin". The General Instruction of the Roman Missal states that "The priest then washes his hands at the side of the altar, a rite that is an expression of his desire for interior purification". Thus, more than cleansing the hands is suggested by this prayer. Many of us tend to believe that the washing of his hands is a physical cleansing of the hands. Rather, the priest's prayer during the washing is about the interior dimension of the priest so that he may be purified. The prayer also confirms this desire so that he may be cleansed from his sin and freed from iniquity. In the prayer, twice "my" is used to express that this is for the priest's personal benefit.

Finally, after Communion, the server brings water to the altar so that the priest can purify the vessels. In the ritual of purification, the priest, standing at the altar or credence table, collects any fragments of the Blessed Sacrament that may remain in the vessels to the chalice. Then, he pours the water into the chalice, saying quietly, *"What has passed our lips as food, O Lord, may we possess in purity of heart, that what has been given to us in time may be our healing for eternity"* and consumes it.

Water is also found in two other places in church:

Water is also used in two different holy water fonts. The first are just inside the doors and the other is the baptismal font.



The blessed holy water reminds us of our baptism. By receiving baptism, we were adopted into God's family, grace was poured into our souls – we became "temples of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:19).

Baptism is administered by the pouring out of blessed water three times, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

When we dip our fingers into the holy water font as we enter a church, and make the sign of the cross over ourselves, we are reconnecting with that mysterious and foundational experience of receiving the sacrament of baptism.



Sources: catholicgallery.org, pastoralliturgy.org, adoremus.org