

The Ciborium and Chalice



Ciborium

This is a covered container used to hold the consecrated small Hosts. It is similar to a chalice but more rounded in shape, covered and larger. It is generally used for the distribution of small Communion hosts to the faithful. It can be made of various precious metals, and the interior is commonly gold or gold-plated.

During the Mass, there may be a ciborium on the altar, or one may be brought to the altar in the Offertory Procession.

In the Early Christian Church, Holy Communion was not kept in churches for fear of sacrilege or desecration. Later, the first ciboria were kept at homes to be handy for the Last Rites where needed. In churches, a ciborium is usually kept in a tabernacle. In some cases, it may be veiled to indicate the presence of the consecrated hosts.

During the visit of Pope John Paul II, highly glazed pottery vessels were used during the distribution of Holy Communion. These vessels were later shared amongst the Catholic Churches and we use one every Sunday.

Chalice

A chalice, which is a goblet-shaped wine glass, has long been a symbol of the Christian church. It symbolizes the vessel from which Jesus Christ drank with his disciples during the Last Supper.

According to tradition the chalice, or at least the cup of it, must be made either of gold or of silver, and in the latter case the bowl must be gilt on the inside. However, since the Second Vatican Council, chalices may be of other materials.

The original chalice from the Last Supper is often known as the Holy Grail, and though it has never been unquestionably identified, many chalices have been thought to be the Holy Grail.

The chalice is used at Mass to contain the Precious Blood of Christ. There may be several chalices used during a Mass particularly if there is a large number of communicants wishing to receive the Body and Blood of Christ.