

Part 2: Vessels used in mass: Chalice & Paten

Last week we talked about Vestments worn during Mass. This week we'll look at some of the vessels used and the significance of them. All vessels used during the mass are consecrated for sacred use since they hold Jesus, our greatest treasure—our Lord! The **Chalice** is the main cup that is used by the priest for the consecration of the wine into the blood of Christ. Often it is more elaborate than the cups used for general distribution of the precious blood. The chalice that I use was a gift from my parents and has a lot of scriptural meaning. On the base are three carved figures: Moses, King David, and the priest Melchizedek.



All of these Old Testament characters acted as priests, prophets, and kings. They were *types* and shadows of Jesus Christ, who would most perfectly be Eternal High Priest, Prophet, and King of Kings. Around the top of the chalice are three scenes from the passion: the Trial before Pontius Pilate (the scene is known as 'Ecce Homo' in Latin, meaning, 'Behold the man'), the scourging of Christ, and the piercing of His heart on the cross. In this chalice, then, we see both the Old Testament and New Testament, moving from the bottom to the top, finding the climax in the piercing of Christ's heart, out of which flowed blood and water, symbolizing the sacraments and the Church. This is the image of meditation for me as I drink from the chalice: as I receive the merciful blood of Christ from his heart, I must pour out my own heart for you. If Jesus poured out his blood for us as high priest, I must do the same since I have been configured to His priesthood by sacramental ordination. Indeed, all of us must be willing to pour out our hearts in love for our neighbor if we are to imitate Christ most fully.



The second vessel is the **Paten**. The paten is the dish that holds the main host to be consecrated at Mass. Mine is simple, with the exception of an engraving on the bottom of a lamb, standing on a book with 7 seals. The image is taken from the book of revelation, chapter 5:

"Then I saw in the right hand of the one seated on the throne a scroll written on the inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals...Then I saw... a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered...He went and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne. When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. They sing a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth." Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, singing with full voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing, "To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the elders fell down and worshiped." (Rev 5:1-14)



This image from Revelation should be present to our minds whenever we are at Mass. Christ, the true Lamb of God who was slain for us, breaks open the Word of God to us and feeds us with his life giving body and blood, bringing us eternal life. And, after reception of Holy Communion, WE become sacred vessels—containing Jesus in our very bodies. "We hold this treasure in earthen vessels." (2 Cor 4:7) Just as the angels and elders in heaven rejoiced at this and fell down in worship, so should we in the face of such a great gift.