



## Fr. Daniel's Corner

### Mass Moment: Part 19

#### THE PREPARATION OF THE ALTAR (Part II)

On the Altar are placed the Corporal, the Purificator, the Chalice, and the Missal. We have looked at the two sacred linens, the Corporal and the Purificator, in last week's edition of *Mass Moment*. Now we will look at the Chalice, the Ciborium, and the Missal.

**The Chalice**, a derivative of the Latin *Calix* which literally means "cup," has a special meaning as a sacred vessel that is used in presenting and consecrating the precious blood of Christ. It is not an everyday cup, nor does it merely resemble one. The chalice is paired with another sacred vessel, the Paten, used in presenting and consecrating the sacred body of Christ.

**The Ciborium** is a counter part of the chalice but with a conical cover used in presenting and consecrating the host, and for the reservation of the Holy Communion in the tabernacle. Its Latin derivation word *cibus*, "food," references its use for containing the Heavenly Bread; while its Greek *kiborion*, "cup," points to the original shape of this Eucharistic receptacle.

These sacred vessels should be made of solid materials that can not easily be broken. Understandably, they should also be of a material that is non-absorbent at least insofar as the inside of the cup. Indeed, the form of the vessels should be suited to sacred use and be considered appropriate for divine worship. Thus, it is important to distinguish the sacred from the profane. Thus, Chalices and Ciboria that closely resemble secular wine glasses or cocktail glasses may need to be discouraged. "The Chalice should be covered with a veil, which may always be white." Once the chalice is brought to the altar and readied for use, it is unveiled. The practice of covering the chalice is less often seen today. Nevertheless, it is an ancient custom and emerges from reverence due the sacred vessels. Traditionally they were kept covered when not in use.

**The Missal** is the book containing the formulas and rites for the celebration of Mass together with the text of the ordinary (the text which remains the same in every Mass) and the propers (the text which varies with each Mass). It also contains Masses for special occasions and various blessings. The Missal in the form we know it today does not contain the readings for the Mass of the day. These are contained in a separate book called the Lectionary. However, in times past, the readings were also included in the Missal.

The Missal is used only by the celebrant. In the Tridentine Mass the Missal was on the Altar from the beginning of the Mass to the end. But, in the current liturgy the Altar is not formally "used" until the liturgy of the Eucharist. Hence, the Missal is placed at the preparation of the Altar. This indicates a movement from the celebrant's chair for the Liturgy of the Word to the opening of the second major part of the Mass where the focus of action is the Altar. The Missal is the authoritative source for all liturgical actions of the Mass and must be faithfully followed. This is essential if the Mass is truly to be our source and sign of unity. The Mass belongs to the whole Church and not to an individual priest or congregation. Hence, to alter it is to move against the universal unity of the Church. There are many pastoral problems that can arise due to tampering with the norms and directives or prayers in the missal.

*And that is your Mass Moment for the week.*