

Eucharistic Studies.

The Ciborium.



THE Ciborium is a sacred vase destined to receive the Holy Reserve, that is to say, the hosts that have been consecrated but not consumed. and on this account is subject to certain liturgical rules : It is shaped like a cup, with a cover surmounted by a cross ; it may be fashioned of gold or silver, but in the latter case, at least, the inside of the cup must be gilded ; the entire vase must be covered with a rich white cloth. Sometimes in cases of grave necessity it has happened that bishops have allowed the use of pewter or other metal ciboriums.

In the monastery of Ferrieres the Sacred Hosts were at one time preserved in a ciborium made of ivory.

Some authors claim that the word ciborium is derived from a Latin term signifying nourishment because it contains Jesus Christ who has said : " My flesh is meat indeed." Nevertheless such is not the case ; the word ciborium is from the Greek and means small box, because in the First Ages, as we have already stated, the Sacred Species were enclosed in a small box or cupboard in the sacristy. Later on, by similitude, the vase above which was suspended the silver dove that contained the Eucharistic Reserve was thus called.

In the course of the XI Century, the heresy of Béranger broke out ; he in denying transubstantiation aimed at nothing less than annihilating the Real Presence, and destroying the Eucharistic dogma. Those troubles fomented by the Heretics exposed the Sacred Species to irreverence and profanation, and in consequence the Eucharistic Reserve was taken from the dove suspended above the baldaquin and deposited in a more secure shelter. It was then or about the beginning of the XII Century that the ciborium assumed its present shape and was placed in a locked tabernacle.