The Ciborium

In the Roman Catholic Church, the ciborium (plural ciboria) is a vessel used for the distribution of Holy Communion in church and for reservation of the consecrated hosts in the tabernacle. The ciborium is for the Consecrated Bread/Host, the Chalice is for the Consecrated wine/Blood of Christ.



The shape the ciborium resembles a chalice, but the cup or bowl is round/wider rather than oblong/conical. It has a cover surmounted by a cross or another Sacred design. The bottom of the cup should be a little raised at the center so that any remaining particles may be easily removed and to facilitate the purification.



The ciborium is often made of precious metals, but the interior of the cup must be always lined with gold as it is this that comes into direct contact with the Sacred Host.

The ciborium is blessed by a bishop or priest deputized by him, according to the form given in the Roman Ritual; it is not consecrated.

When the ciborium contains the Sacred Species (the consecrated host) it should be covered with small white veil which is required to be made of silk or of gold color. This indicates the presence of the consecrated hosts. During this time, it may only be handled by Sacred ministers. When empty and purified it may be touched by all clerics and by lay persons, if specially authorized.



Bonus info:

The ciborium is also synonymous with baldacchino as the dome-shaped permanent canopy over a high altar, supported by columns and shaped like an inverted cup.

Left:

Bernini's Baldacchino in St Peter's Basilica, Rome **(photo by Dennis Jarvis from Halifax, Canada)**

Right:

Baldacchino at the Cathedral of San Feliciano di Foligno, Perugia, Italy **(photo by Cantalamessa)**



Sources: newadvent.org; catholicculture.org; catholicdoors.org