

THE MEANS OF GRACE

THE NATURE OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

ACTIVITY

UNDER THE BREAD AND WINE

Theme: Although congregations use a variety of Communionware and may have varying customs regarding serving Communion, the Sacrament of the Altar is a sacred meal of bread and wine in which those who partake receive Christ's body and blood for the forgiveness of sins.

Materials: Paper, pens or pencils, Communion wafers, Communion wine, chalice, paten, flagon, ciborium, Communion tray, fair linen, a pastor's individual Communion set for serving shut-ins, materials used for cleaning the Communionware, cards labeling and describing each piece of Communionware. (Perhaps you'd also like to have a representative of the congregational committee in charge of preparing and cleaning the Communionware present and ready to assist.)

Procedure: (30–45 minutes)

To introduce your students to the practice of the Sacrament of the Altar and its significance for the Christian life, have available the Communionware used in your congregation. Divide the class into small groups, and instruct the students to examine each piece carefully and discuss what it might be used for, what it is made of, what the designs (if any) might mean, and what it suggests about the Sacrament. Have students list their observations and ideas on a sheet of paper and include the reasons for their thinking. After the students have written their ideas, give them a card with the correct name of the object and other information related to that piece. Have each group present their information to the rest of the class.

After these reports, ask, **What really is the Sacrament of the Altar?** Note that the most important thing about the Sacrament is not the altar cloths, the utensils, the shape of the bread, the kind of wine (so long as it is the fruit of the vine), or the distribution practices. The most important aspect of the Sacrament is that when the eating and the drinking of the bread and the wine is done in conjunction with the words "Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you" and "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins," we in faith receive the forgiveness of our sins, new life, salvation, and freedom from spiritual death and eternal punishment in hell. Those who receive the Sacrament receive strength to live a new life in Jesus, our Lord. These are the most important blessings of the Sacrament. Any breadbasket and any cup could be used to distribute the Sacrament, but congregations use special Communionware and take special care of it to show that this Sacrament is very important to our Christian faith.

Then explain how to properly clean and store the various pieces, and have the class do this to help them develop a sense of ownership and appreciation for the Sacrament, the various objects that are used in the Sacrament, and for those who assist in preparing for the Sacrament.