

## Chalices for First Communion Students

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As part of our First Communion classes, we had the students make their own specially designed communion chalices. We bought a long-stemmed, glass wine goblet for each student. They picked a classical Christian symbol from the list below. They were given both the description of each symbol and an enlarged picture they could cut out and tape on the inside of their goblet.

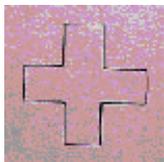
Several colors of glass paint were available for them that we got a craft store like Ben Franklin's. The students painted their chalice and we "set" it in the oven according to the directions on the tube of paint.

The students also each wrote a paragraph about why they chose the particular symbol and then read those to the congregation on the morning of their First Communion.

When they came up for Holy Communion with their family, they were given the Blood of Christ in their own chalice and then took their glasses home with them as a keepsake from their First Communion.



**The Celtic Cross** sometimes called the Irish Cross or Wheel Cross, has a circle signifying eternity or everlasting life around the middle part of the cross. This type of cross is often seen on covers of hymnals and other publications, on tombstones in cemeteries, on church steeples, altars, and church doors.



**The Greek Cross** has four arms of equal length. The Red Cross organization uses this cross for its symbol. When five Greek crosses appear together it refers to the five wounds of our Lord's crucifixion.



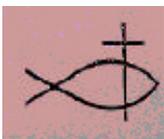
**The Maltese Cross**, has four arms of equal length, but each arm becomes progressively broader as it leaves the center in slanting, rather than curved lines. There are two points at the end of each arm, eight in all, representing the beatitudes (Mt. 5.3-10). These beatitudes tell us what some of the best goals are for Christian living. The Maltese Cross is also an emblem of John the Baptist, who baptized Jesus at the beginning of Jesus' ministry.



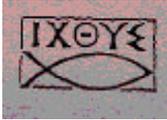
**The Descending Dove** is the most common symbol for the Holy Spirit. When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit descended on him like a dove. It also represents the innocence of people who have died before us. Jesus told his followers to be as "innocent as doves" (Mt. 10.16).



**The Butterfly** is a symbol of the resurrection, or new life, which is ours in Christ. The butterfly transforms itself from a lowly caterpillar while it is in its cocoon...something like being in a tomb. It reminds us of Jesus' resurrection after his death and the new life which is ours when Jesus claims us as his own.



**The Fish** has been used as a symbol of Christ since the earliest days of Christianity. In those days when it was dangerous to be a Christian, the followers of Jesus resorted to secret signs and symbols to keep from exposing themselves unnecessarily to the foes of Christianity. For example, a person sometimes drew the picture of a fish in the sand while talking with another person. If the figure was recognized to signify more than an unconscious movement during the course of a conversation, the two would identify each other in the Christian faith.



**ICQUS** During the days when Christians had to worship in secret, visiting Christians could find their way to the worship center in the long underground passageways by simply looking at the fish on the wall pointing in the direction in which they were to go.

The Greek word for fish, pronounced "ik-thus", is spelled "**ICQUS**". Christians found a way to describe Jesus using that word as a code. In English, it translates "Jesus Christ (IC), God's Son (QU), Savior (S)". It was precisely because the symbol was difficult to understand that it was so precious. It was a protection from non-Christians.



**The Crown** represents Jesus as Lord and King. It refers also to the reward of a faithful Christian life, as suggested in I Peter 5.4: "And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested you will obtain the unfading crown of glory".



**The Grapes** remind us of the source of the wine and grape juice we drink at Holy Communion. We believe that Jesus is present in the wine or grape juice. When we drink the wine or juice, we hear the words, "The Blood of Christ shed for you." It reminds us of the great gift of life Jesus gave us on the cross and helps us remember that the life we get came at the cost of his blood.

(Many of the above descriptions came from the book "Our Christian Symbols", by Friedrich Rest, published by The Pilgrim Press.)

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