Chalice and paten

Place of origin: England (made)
Date: ca. 1630-1650 (made)
Artist/Maker: Unknown
Materials and Techniques: Silver-gilt, raised, engraved
Museum number: M.1A-1986
Gallery location: Sacred Silver & Stained Glass, Room 83, The Whiteley Galleries, case 4A

Public access description
A chalice and paten were used during the Mass to serve the consecrated wine and bread. The foot of this chalice is engraved with the Crucifixion. The paten is engraved with ‘IHS’ (a contraction of the name Jesus Christ in Greek), with a cross above and a heart with nails below, all within a rayed glory.

The chalice unscrews in three parts so it can easily be concealed. After the Reformation, the Roman Catholic faith was severely restricted in England. Catholics who refused to attend Church of England services were known as recusants and until the late 17th century they had to worship in secret.

Descriptive line
A silver-gilt chalice and paten unmarked by made 1630-1650 for use in secret Catholic communion services.

Physical description
The chalice bowl is supported on an hexagonal stem with a central spherical knop and a sexafoil foot emerging from a hexagonal plate. The foot is engraved with the crucifixion. The circular paten is engraved with the sacred monogram below a cross and above a heart pierced with nails set in a rayed glory.

Dimensions
Height: 17 cm, Width: 10 cm chalice, Diameter: 9.3 cm paten

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Object history note
Purchased in 1986 from H.A.H.King, Powys, Wales

The chalice unscrews into three parts so it can easily be concealed. At this date Roman Catholic worship was severely restricted in England. Catholics who refused to attend Church of England services were known as recusants and until the late 17th century had to worship in secret.

Historical significance: The Catholic plate that survives from before the 1660s is mainly limited to chalices, paxes and pyxes. These earlier pieces are rarely marked. English recusant chalices derived their form from the Gothic chalices in use until the mid sixteenth century. Charles Oman wrote an article on 'The First Gothic Revival in English Church Plate' which was published in The Burlington Magazine', April 1978 in which he identified a group of recusant chalices as late Elizabethan precursors of the more familiar early Stuart chalices; by the 1630s a number of designs for recusant chalices are found, with wide variations in size, engraving and the quality of goldsmiths' work. All have the Crucifixion engraved on the foot and some also bear the symbols of Christ's Passion including the pincers, hammer, ladder and Crown of Thorns.

Historical context note
Secret Catholicism
After the Reformation, the Roman Catholic faith was severely restricted. Catholics who refused to attend Church of England services were known as recusants and until the late 17th century they had to worship in secret. However, the Dukes of Norfolk and aristocratic families such as the Arundells at Wardour Castle encouraged Catholic communities to use their private chapels and so kept the faith alive.

The Catholic plate that survives from before the 1660s is mainly limited to chalices, paxes and pyxes. These earlier pieces are rarely marked. After 1688, Catholic plate was more often hallmarked and the range of forms expanded to include sanctuary lamps, cruets and incense boats.

In London, Catholics could worship openly in foreign embassy chapels. The silver from the Sardinian Embassy chapel can be seen in the case to the right. During the reign of Charles II, Catholic courtiers could also attend the queen's private chapel and that of the Queen Mother, Henrietta Maria.

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