



The Monstrance

Monstrance comes from the Latin word *monstrare*, meaning “to show.” The purpose of the monstrance is to put on display a consecrated Host for those present to adore and venerate. The development of the monstrance can be traced back to the 13th century, when Eucharistic processions rose in popularity connected to the new feast of Corpus Christi.

At first, the Eucharist was carried in these processions in a closed ciborium (gold container) and it wasn't until later that the ciborium used in the procession was elongated and included a clear section containing a single Host.

In the central cylinder a large Host was placed, being kept upright held in device constructed for the purpose. Many medieval monstrances of this type are still in existence. Soon, however, it became clear that the monstrance could be better adapted to the object of drawing all eyes to the sacred Host itself by making the transparent portion of the vessel just of the size required, and surrounded, like the sun, with rays. Monstrances of this shape, dating from the 15th century, are also not uncommon, and for several hundred years past this has been by far the commonest form in practical use. The centre section, was removable and consisted of two hinged windows. This is called the lunette.

The monstrance is meant to highlight and draw attention to the king of kings, Jesus Christ, present in a real and substantial way under the appearances of bread. This is why a monstrance is typically gold and ornamented in a special way, in recognition of the divine mystery it holds and reveals.

When the Monstrance contains the Sacred Host, the priest does not touch it with his bare hands, but instead, holds it with a *humeral veil*, a wide band of cloth that covers his shoulders (humera) and has pleats on the inside in which he places his hands.

At all other times, the reserved Sacrament or the lunette is kept locked in the Tabernacle, so that the faithful may pray in the presence of the Sacrament.