

Ten beautifully decorated glasses

Artist: unknown
Date: II – III century A.D.
Dimensions: 5 to 10 cm in diameter
Material: glass and gold leaf
Inventory no: 60702, 60707, 60712, 60726, 60745, 60760, 60778, 60782, 60785, 60789

STATE OF PRESERVATION

Unfortunately, the humidity in the catacombs as well as time have caused much of the deterioration of these cups. Their surfaces bear several fractures which are harmful to the gold leaf. Thanks to the generosity of Patrons of the Arts ten of these glasses have been previously restored; however, these ten need urgent restoration.

RESTORATION PROJECT

- Cleaning and consolidation of the surface
- Analysis of the glass and gold composition
- Consolidation of the fractures and fissures where needed
- Final protection of the surface
- Photographic documentation

Total Cost € 10.670,00

► The Vatican Museums are blessed to have one of the largest collections of colored glass in the world, ten of which we present in this project. These richly decorated pieces were property of Cardinal Flavio I Chigi, Cardinal Gaspare Carpegna, Florentine Senator Filippo Buonarroti, and the Cavalier Francesco Vettori, the first curator of the Christian Museum. They have been a part of the collection and on display since this museum was created by Pope Benedict XIV in 1757. Originally, the glasses were found in the Roman catacombs during excavations in the XIX and XX centuries. The artisans who created these glasses were exceptionally skilled, as the luxuriously refined plates and cups attest. The majority of the cups need repair at the base, where traditional decoration and meaningful scenes are depicted. Figures of persons, animals, or gods were etched out in gold leaf and then enclosed between two sheets of glass.

These pieces represent a mix of early Christian themes and subjects such as the resurrection of Lazarus, the sin of Adam and Eve in the garden, as well as pagan images. They were all discovered in the Roman catacombs inside the walls that enclosed the burial niches. These glasses are not only beautiful artistic pieces, but also extremely important for further and more comprehensive studies about the early development of Christianity.



► This highly refined cup is decorated with the portrait of a female figure. Given that she is not a recognized goddess, it is probable that she represents the person buried in the grave where it was

located. The inscription gives us clues as to the identity of this woman "*Saluti pie zeses cum Donata*" meaning, "Oh Salutius, drink, live with Donata."

Artist: unknown
Date: II – III century A.D.
Dimensions: 6,5 cm in diameter
Material: green glass and gold leaf
Inventory no: 60702



Artist: unknown
 Date: II – III century A.D.
 Dimensions: 8,4 cm in diameter
 Material: two layers of white glass and gold leaf
 Inventory no: 60726

► This plate was donated to Pope Benedict XIV, predecessor of our present Holy Father. The decorations in gold leaf illustrate the resurrection of Lazarus by Jesus in John's Gospel. The figure of Lazarus stands out for its brilliant gold color and figure of a man still wrapped in his funerary bandages.

Jesus' figure is less noticeable; he is depicted holding a staff indicating his authority and his role as good shepherd, which is a recurring theme in John's gospel. Decorative plants symbolizing rebirth fill in the areas around the two figures. The border includes the inscription: "*pie zesel!*" or "drink!"



Artist: unknown
 Date: II – III century A.D.
 Dimensions: 9,5 cm in diameter
 Material: two layers of green glass and gold leaf
 Inventory no: 60760

► Divided into two pieces, this beautiful plate is decorated with the representation of the wedding feast of Cana. Jesus is the principle figure, depicted with a staff in hand. He is surrounded by seven jars, which

perhaps indicates that this miracle happened on the seventh day of the first week of Jesus' public ministry, according to the Gospel of John.