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**SACRAMENTAL WINE:  
FRUIT OF THE EARTH**

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# **Sacramental Wine: Fruit of the Earth**

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## ABSTRACT

Among the Jewish people wine has been a symbol of joy and so significant in their sacred rituals that on feast days they were obligated to see that everyone regardless of means was provided for. Among Christians wine in abundance dates from the marriage feast at Cana.

In the following we address sacramental wine from a secular perspective. Our efforts are intended to answer the following questions. What types and brands of sacramental wine are produced, who are the producers, and how much do they charge? What procedures are used by the Roman Catholic Church to validate the wine for use at Mass? How is the wine marketed and distributed? It's not so much the technology behind the process that differentiates wine for sacramental use from wine for secular use. It's the people and their connectedness to the end use of the wine.

Our research leads to three principal conclusions. First, the production of sacramental wine is in the hands of five vineyards and wineries that likely will remain in production for some time to come: Cribari, Joseph Filippi, Mont La Salle, O-Neh-Da, and San Antonio. Second, the distribution of altar wine through Catholic supply stores also appears to be assured for years to come, though some may fail under competitive pressure from direct sales, supermarkets, and other wine-specialty stores. Third, retail prices today for sacramental wines and mustum are relatively inexpensive, ranging from \$60 to \$80 per case.

Our research leads to three unanswered issues. First, do all wines labeled "altar wine" or "sacramental wine" comply with the Church's validation specifications? Second, how big is the market for sacramental wine? Third, which winery is the oldest producer of sacramental wine?

Keywords: sacramental wine, production, validation, distribution, retail price.

## 1. Introduction

1.1. Among the Jewish people wine has been a symbol of joy and so significant in their sacred rituals that on feast days they were obligated to see that everyone regardless of means was provided for. Wine in abundance is a theme that runs through the Old Testament from Deuteronomy to Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Jeremiah, Joel, and Amos (McDonald 2012).

Among Christians wine in abundance dates from the marriage feast at Cana where according to John (2: 1-11, New American Bible 1970). Christ at the urging of his mother who notices that the host has run out of wine for the guests miraculously turns the water in six stone jars (at least 90 gallons) into wine. At the Last Supper wine takes on a much more meaningful significance. According to Luke (22: 14-20), Christ

... taking bread and giving thanks, he broke it and gave it to them saying: "This is my body to be given for you. Do this as a remembrance of me." He did the same with the cup after eating, saying as he did so: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which shall be shed for you."

In the old countries on December 28, the feast of John the Apostle and Evangelist, it is customary to bless the table wine used at home at meal time (Catholic Culture 2020). The prayer reads in part ...

Let us pray. Be so kind as to bless and sanctify with Your right hand, this cup of wine, and every drink. Grant that by the merits of Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist, all who believe in You and drink from this cup may be blessed and protected.

1.2. Catholics are taught that during Mass the priest blesses the bread and wine which miraculously are transformed into the body and blood of Jesus (USCCB 2020). Today, two-thirds of Catholics reject this teaching and consider the priest's blessing as merely symbolic (Smith 2019). Writing to a friend in 1955, traditional Catholic writer Flannery O'Connor famously wrote: "Well, if it's a symbol, then to hell with it." She went on to explain that the Eucharist "is the center of existence for me; the rest of life is expendable" (O'Connor 1979, p. 125). Many Catholics today are of the same mind.<sup>1</sup>

1.3. In the following we address sacramental wine from a secular perspective. Our efforts are intended to answer the following questions for the United States only. What types and brands of sacramental wine are produced, who are the producers, and how much do they charge? What procedures are used by the Roman Catholic Church to validate the wine for use at Mass? How is the wine marketed and distributed? While our perspective is secular, we probably would not have undertaken this inquiry if the bread and wine were merely symbolic.

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the sacred uses of wine see Westerville Public Library (2020).

## 2. Production

It's not so much the technology behind the process that differentiates wine for sacramental use from wine for secular use. It's the people and their connectedness to the end use of the wine.

2.1. Will Ouweleen is vintner at O-Neh-Da Vineyard's authentic sacramental wines.<sup>2</sup> O-Neh-Da is the parent winery of East Crest Vineyards. The parent was established by Bishop Bernard McQuaid in 1872 to produce sacramental wine from grapes grown in the Finger Lakes region of New York. Today it is privately owned and claims to be the oldest winery in the United States producing sacramental wine.<sup>3</sup>

O-Neh-Da produces 10 different varietals with Pink Delaware its top seller. East Crest Vineyards produces a premium dinner wine sold locally. About 95 percent of the production of the combined vineyards is sacramental wine which Ouweleen guarantees is valid and licit for use at Mass (Pronechen 2019; O-Neh-Da 2020). O-Neh-Da is a member of the Finger Lakes Wine Alliance (2020) which directs its efforts to "increase the visibility and reputation of the Finger Lakes AVA, its wines and wineries."

2.2. Santo Cambianica, an Italian immigrant and devout Catholic, founded San Antonio Winery in the Little Italy neighborhood of Los Angeles in 1917. He named the winery after the patron saint of his home in Padua. The local bishop awarded the winery a contract that raised production from 2,000 cases per year to 25,000 cases by the time Prohibition was repealed in 1933. San Antonio was one of a small number of wineries in Los Angeles that survived Prohibition.

During Prohibition and in the years following the principal market for their sacramental wine business was southern California. In the 1960s a railroad threatened to tear down the winery but it was rescued by public-relations campaign mounted by a priest who was a regular customer of San Antonio's. Today, while it produces other wines for secular use, San Antonio Winery produces 60,000 cases of sacramental wine for distribution to churches in St. Louis, New York, and Chicago. It remains a family business and still operates from its original location on Lamar Street in Los Angeles (Heffernan no date; Scattergood 2012).

2.3. Robert Seelig and Tom Richardson in 2006 urged the Diocese of Oakland to undertake a project to beautify the diocesan cemeteries by planting grape vines on unused land at half the cost of installing turf instead. With the approval of the bishop and the advice of local experts, Bishop's Vineyard was established. The cemetery in Hayward was designated to grow Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Primitivo, the one in Antioch to grow Cabernet Sauvignon and Zinfandel, and the one in San Pablo to grow Pinot Noir, Merlot, and Sangiovese (Bishop's Vineyard 2020; Coetsee 2016).

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<sup>2</sup> O-Neh-Da is Iroquois for hemlock lake.

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.eaglecrestvineyards.com/team/will-ouweleen/> and <https://www.onehdavineyard.com/>

At first, the grapes were crushed and bottled at Brutocao Cellars and the sacramental wine was offered free to parishes in the Oakland Diocese. In 2013 a deal was brokered with Rock Wall Wine Company to produce a new sacramental wine (Pacciorini 2015). Rock Wall Wine Company is located in a 40,000 square foot hangar at the decommissioned Alameda Naval Air Station (Rock Wall 2019).

More recently, Bishop's Vineyard continues to maintain the vineyards strictly for aesthetic but not for yield/harvest purposes. There is no expectation that production will return in the near term. The Vineyard no longer produces wine for commercial use. An inventory of sacramental wine remains and is distributed to local parishes on demand (Gies 2020).

2.4. The Christian Brothers community in 1882 established a winery in Martinez, California to produce sacramental wine. During Prohibition they were allowed to continue operating because they were producing sacramental wine. They relocated to Napa Valley in 1932 where for more than 45 years Brother Timothy Diener served as winemaker and cellar master.

Heublein purchased the winery and vineyards from the Christian Brothers in 1989. At the same time, four executives formerly associated with the Christian Brothers winery purchased the sacramental wine brand and established Napa Valley Specialty Wines which identifies on the internet as Mont La Salle Altar Wine Company. Under a contractual agreement with Gibson Wine Company, the new company produces 150,000 gallons of wine annually for distribution across the United States, Mexico, Canada, and Pacific Rim countries.

Their wines are produced with no gluten or wheat products and are labeled "approved for sacramental use" which means they comply with Canon Law. The company also produces mustum grape juice from Concord grapes, with no sugar added, which is endorsed by the National Clergy Council on Alcoholism.<sup>4</sup> The company claims that it is the "oldest continuing producer of altar wines in the United States" (Mont La Salle Altar Wines 2015; Mont La Salle Altar Wines 2017). Mont La Salle Wine Company and Napa Valley Specialty Wines share the same street address in Napa.

2.5. Giovanni Filippi in 1934 founded Joseph Filippi Winery and Vineyards in Guasti in southern California. Twelve years earlier the Filippi family began growing and selling grapes in Fontana. They began producing wine in Guasti after the repeal of Prohibition. The winery was sold following the death of Joseph Filippi in 1993. In the following year brothers Gino and James relocated the winery to leased space in Rancho Cucamonga. Another brother, Joey, became sole owner of the winery around 2015 following a legal dispute with his brothers. Today, the company proudly proclaims itself a fourth-fifth generation family enterprise and identifies itself as "Joseph

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<sup>4</sup> Mustum, which is not fermented, was validated for use by alcoholic priests by the Congregation of the Faith in 1994 (McNamara 2006).



Filippi Winery & Vineyards Since 1922, Cucamonga's Premier Winery" (Joseph Filippi Winery Collection; Joseph Filippi Winery 2015). Its sacramental wines are marketed and sold under the Guasti label. Its most popular sacramental wine is Angelica (Joseph Filippi Winery 2015a).

2.6. Beniamino Cribari in 1902 purchased 40 acres in a location known as "Paradise Valley" and began producing wine for family and friends. His business expanded with the help of his sons Fiore and Angelo who made sales calls and bought grapes traveling across California on a motorcycle. Before Prohibition, Cribari added vineyards and a winery in what is now Morgan Hill and survived by producing sacramental, medicinal, and salted wines for cooking. Over the ensuing years the family business grew and prospered by merger and acquisition of more land and vineyards. In 1966 the merged company was sold and Cribari Vineyards was launched (Cribari 2020).

The fifth-generation Cribari Vineyards is located in Fresno where all of its sacramental wine is produced in compliance with Canon Law and the approval of the local bishop. Its sacramental wines are a pure grape product from grapes grown in California, not derived from "raisins, dried grapes, dried berries, or other dried fruit, nor imitation or substandard wine" (Cribari Premium Altar Wines 2020). Rosato is the company's best-selling altar wine (Pronechen 2019).

2.7. Brotherhood Winery was established in 1839 in Washingtonville NY where it continues to operate today. Brotherhood claims to be the oldest winery and the oldest producer of sacramental wines in the United States. The winery has a "small aesthetic vineyard" suggesting that most of its grapes come from other vineyards. It produces a Rosario but does not label it as an altar wine. Instead the website says it was "developed initially for the Church as an altar wine." Brotherhood's Rosario is available direct (Brotherhood 2020) and from a supplier where it is described as having been developed as a sacramental wine (Total 2020).

Angel Direct is an Atlanta-based store that provides "churches, worship centers, and individuals across the United States with liturgical items for their worship and devotional needs." Its affiliate Choice Brands Wines and Spirits is an authorized dealer for altar wines that lists only one wine from Brotherhood Winery – its Rosario Altar Wine which is a blend of Niagara and Concord grapes. The label does not indicate whether the wine is validated for sacramental use. Angel Direct also offers altar wines produced by Cribari and Mont La Salle (Angel Direct 2020 and 2020a).

2.8. John C. Meier and his son John established J.C. Meier Juice Company in the Cincinnati area in 1895. The company survived Prohibition by selling its products to churches and to the wider community. The juice company was re-organized and re-named Meier's Wine Cellars in 1938 producing wine from grapes grown on its own land. It was sold in 1976 to Paramount Distillers in Cleveland but continued to operate under the Meier name. Today it produces a line of wine products from grapes that are purchased from other vineyards along with a line of juice products. It claims to be "the oldest and largest winery in the state of Ohio" (Meier's Wine Cellars 2020; Gaffney 2019).

There is no evidence that Meier's Wine Cellars produces an altar wine. Though not listed on Meier's website, three brands of mustum -- Pink Catawba, White Catawba, and Concord -- are produced there (Generations 2020).

2.9. Thirteen local businessmen combined their holdings in 1860 to form what today is known as Pleasant Valley Wine Company in Hammondsport New York. The original company, known first as Chandon Wine Company and then as New Urbana Wine Company, changed its name to Gold Seal Products Company at the start of Prohibition, then re-organized itself when it was repealed and changed its name to Urbana Wine Company. The company, which over the years also has been known as the Great Western Winery, survived Prohibition by producing wine for sacramental and medicinal use.

It remained under family control until 1955 when it was sold to a New Jersey businessman, sold again in 1977 to Coca-Cola, again six years later to Seagram and in 1987 to Vintners. It came under new family ownership in 1995. Throughout those ownership changes Pleasant Valley has operated from Hammondsport.<sup>5</sup> With current vineyard holdings of 500 acres, the company claims to be the oldest winery in the Finger Lakes region. (Cahal 2018 and Pleasant Valley 2020a).

Pleasant Valley lists for sale four wines under its Gold Seal brand. One of the four is labeled "Gold Seal Altar Red" which is listed as being from its archives suggesting that it no longer produces this wine (Pleasant Valley 2020b). On its website Pleasant Valley markets its Altar Red as "not just for church!"<sup>6</sup> Mustum is not listed among its products for sale.

2.10. The Vineyard at St. Joseph has been located on a 25-acre site in Traverse City Michigan since 2015 when the 100 year-old St. Joseph Catholic Church was moved there and refurbished and enlarged (St. Joseph Church 2020). A cemetery also is located on that site. The vineyard was the vision of a couple who were members of the parish and owned a local winery. When the vineyard became a reality it was named "The Sacramental Wine and Vineyard Ministry."

The Vineyard at St. Joseph is located in a region of other private vineyards and wineries, some of which were helpful in launching this new church ministry. The Vineyard has three separate sections, one for the Rieslings, a second for the Gamay Noir, and a third for the Marquette. The vineyards are maintained by volunteers who prune, tie, tuck, weed, mow, thin, hedge, net, and hand harvest. Expenses are offset by the sale of 65 percent of the grape yield to local wineries. The Gamay Noir which represents the balance of the yield is designated for sacramental use and for a private label. Expected total yield in 2019 from all three sections was estimated at roughly 12,000

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<sup>5</sup> It is not entirely clear if the company throughout its history always retained "Pleasant Valley" in its name.

<sup>6</sup> In 2019 a bottle of Pleasant Valley's Great Western brand Extra Dry Champagne was used to christen the aircraft carrier John F. Kennedy (CVN 79) (Pleasant Valley 2019).

pounds. About 120 cases of sacramental wine were produced in 2019 (Vineyard at St. Joseph 2020; Gibbons 2019).

The Gamay Noir grapes are crushed, bottled, and sold by Chateau Chantal, the local winery owned by the same visionary couple who launched the parish ministry. The table wine which is known as Sagrada Familia (given a Spanish Name as a tribute to the many Hispanics who work in the area) is sold commercially. The sacramental wine is produced for use at St. Joseph Church and several other churches in the Traverse City area (McWhirter 2018). In an email message the pastor of St. Joseph Church stated that "... I have spoken personally to the winemaker and have been assured that our wine is made according to the norms of the church and without admixture of other ingredients" (Rexroat 2020).

2.11. Southern Glazer Wine and Spirits (SGWS) claims to be the largest distributor of wine and spirits in the United States. It traces its origins to the Chaplin family and the Glazer family (SGWS 2020a). SGWS represents a merger between Southern Wine and Spirits, on the one hand, and the Hammond Company and Glazer of Ohio, on the other. Prior to that merger, Hammond and Glazer merged in the late 1990s. The details regarding the dates of the merger between Hammond and Glazer and subsequently between that combination and the merger with Southern Wine and Spirits are a bit murky due in part to URLs that led to unrelated websites.

The Hammer Company was a family-owned wine distributor and retailer originally established in Cleveland in 1914 (Bullard 1998). Their altar wine, which still bears the label "The Hammer Company," is bottled by Rosemont Vineyard in Los Angeles and is approved by the bishop of Fresno California (SGWS 2020b; Nentwich 2020). We have looked extensively for Rosemont Vineyard online and could not find its website or street address, even though Rosemont appears on the label today.<sup>7</sup>

Even though SGWS for years has been a wine distributor, we listed it here as a wine producer because its origins are with the Hammer Company which many years ago produced an altar wine. Today Generations Religious Gifts and Church Supply, located in Columbus Ohio, sells three varieties of The Hammer Company altar wine.

### **3. Validation**

Validation refers to the authenticity of the wine used during the celebration of Mass. The details with regard to valid wine are set forth in §50 of the Vatican document *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (Congregation for Divine Worship 2004).

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<sup>7</sup> On E-bay we found for sale labels from the 1940s depicting Rose Mont California Claret bottled by The Hammer Company, labels for Rose Mont California Port bottled by the Hammer Company, and labels for other wines from this company. The labels indicate that The Hammer Company was located in Cleveland. We also found labels which were quite similar except that Rosemont was spelled as a single word.

The wine that is used in the most sacred celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice must be natural, from the fruit of the grape, pure and incorrupt, not mixed with other substances. During the celebration itself, a small quantity of water is to be mixed with it. Great care should be taken so that the wine intended for the celebration of the Eucharist is well conserved and has not soured. It is altogether forbidden to use wine of doubtful authenticity or provenance, for the Church requires certainty regarding the conditions necessary for the validity of the sacraments. Nor are other drinks of any kind to be admitted for any reason, as they do not constitute valid matter.<sup>8</sup>

One year earlier the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (2003) clarified that those who encounter difficulties consuming normal wine may use mustum “which is grape juice that is either fresh or preserved by methods that suspend fermentation without altering its nature (for example, freezing) is valid matter for the celebration of the Eucharist.”

A few years later, given the present-day reality that sacramental wine increasingly is sold in supermarkets and online, bishops are expected to give guidance to parish priests and rectors of churches about their “responsibility to verify those who provide the bread and wine for the celebration and the worthiness of the material” (Congregation for Divine Worship 2017). Simply put, the bishop is advised to hold the priest who uses the wine at Mass accountable for its validity.

Consequently, for our purposes, validation means that the label on the bottle or information on the company or retail supplier’s website indicates that the wine has been prepared in accordance with the requirement set forth in Canon Law.

Table 1 below summarizes information on the production and validation of sacramental wine.

#### **4. Distribution**

Sacramental wine is distributed through four main channels: specialty winery direct, other winery direct, retail store, and Catholic supply store. Our attention in the following focuses on just five Catholic supply stores.

4.1. F.C. Ziegler was born in South Dakota in 1900 and raised in a traditional Catholic family. At age 29 he started a business in Tulsa, Oklahoma making and repairing jewelry. Following WWII he was approached by local priests who asked him to make chalices and other sacred vessels. He agreed and F.C. Ziegler Co. was established. In 20 years Ziegler became the leading manufacturer of sacred metalware in the United States. The company sells “all needed goods and services for worship, public and private,” including candles, palms, communion wafers, vestments and altar wines all of which are featured in a 500-page catalog. It has retail locations in Oklahoma, Kansas,

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<sup>8</sup> See also Code of Canon Law, §924 (no date).

Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Louisiana, with a warehouse in Maryland. Its headquarters is still in Tulsa.

Ziegler sells sacramental wines produced only by Cribari Vineyards and only to churches and religious organizations. Prices for 12 750ml bottles range from \$67.80 a case for Burgundy Chablis and two other varietals to \$72 for Golden Angelica, Light Muscat, and five other varietals. Its single offering of mustum is priced at \$77. Its four-liter jugs sell for \$80.70 to \$90.30 (F.C. Ziegler 2020).

4.2. Church Supply Warehouse offers sacramental wines from Mont La Salle at prices from \$79.95 to \$89.75 per case and mustum at \$77.75 per case. The company started in 1967 as a simple gift and greeting card business in Wheaton, Illinois where it still operates today. Over time it recognized that its customer base was more interested in religious goods and supplies. In addition to wine and mustum, the company today offers a wide range of goods, supplies, and services, from apparel and investments, to statuary, and refinishing and restoration services for sacramental vessels. Today it is operated by the second generation of the deeply religious family founders.

More information about this company is available at the following URL: <https://www.churchsupplywarehouse.com/st-paul-altar-wine-mont-la-salle.html> The masthead on its website is Church Supply Warehouse but the company is known in the trade as Wheaton Religious Gift and Church Supply.

4.3. James Moroney Inc. is a fourth-generation business, currently under the management of Margaret Moroney McCarty, that sells communion wafers, altar candles, oil candles, but its main business is wine sales. Moroney was established in 1845 when James Moroney sold his first bottle of spirits. Today the company is located in Norristown, Pennsylvania.

Moroney's is exclusive distributor of Gold Seal by Pleasant Valley Wine Company<sup>9</sup> in Philadelphia, Ohio, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, and Wisconsin. Specifically it sells Pleasant Valley's Pink Catawba, American Red, Haut Sauterne, and Notre Dame Rose. Across the board the price is \$71.95 per case. Moroney's sells four varietals of Guasti's from Joseph Filippi Winery: Angelica, Port Wine, Light Sweet Muscat, and Burgundy. Prices range from \$71.95 to \$88.95 per case of 750 ml. bottles. It also sells Meier's Concorde Grape at \$69.95.

4.4. Since the 1970s, Generations Religious Gifts & Church Supply has been operated by the Nentwich family now in its third generation (Generations no date). It proudly presents itself to the public as "Ohio's Premier Catholic Gifts and Church Supply Store" which has been serving an expanding customer base from its location in the Columbus metro area. It offers a full range of religious gifts from bibles and music DVDs to rosaries and scapulars. Its line of church goods and

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<sup>9</sup> Pleasant Valley Wine Company was established in 1860 and is the oldest winery in the Finger Lakes region.

supplies runs from altar bread and hosts to sacred vessels and vestments. In addition it offers clerical shirts and Mass and sick call kits (Generations 2020a).

Generations sells wine from The Hammond Company including its Special Rose, Special Red, and Angelica. All three are approved by the bishop of Fresno, California and are priced at \$59.95 per case. Also available from Meier's Wine Cellars at \$61.80 per case are its Concord Grape Juice Mustum, Pink Catawba Grape Juice Mustum, and White Catawba Grape Juice Mustum. The company's liquor license allows it to ship only to locations in the State of Ohio (Generations 2020b; Nentwich 2020).

4.5. Michael Desider and Martin Ricco incorporated Ste. Emilion Sacramental Wines in the State of New Jersey in 1992. Over the next 18 years the company evolved and expanded its offerings to include a wide range of church goods including church furniture, sacred vessels, altar breads, and vestments. Presently, it also offers metal refinishing and statue restoration services, along with on-site installing and refinishing of pews, kneelers, and kneeler pads. With this expansion the company's principals chose the new name Ste. Emilion Church Goods. It operates from an address in Morristown, New Jersey.

Ste. Emilion offers three selections of altar wines from Gold Seal: Catawba Pink, Red Wine, and Notre Dame Rosé All three are available at the same price of \$70.50 per case. In addition it offers six selections from O-Neh-Da: Angelica, Chalice Red, Haut Sauterne, Pink Delaware, Pink Tokay, and St. Michael's White. The six range in price from \$89.99 to \$94.99 (Ste. Emilion 2020).

On its website Joseph Filippi Winery and Vineyards (2015a) states that its Guasti sacramental wines are available at Ste. Emilion Church Goods. However, there is no such listing found on the Ste. Emilion website.

Table 2 below summarizes information on the distribution of sacramental wine.

## **5. Last Word**

5.1. Our research leads to three principal conclusions. First, the production of sacramental wine is in the hands of five vineyards and wineries that likely will remain in production for some time to come: Cribari, Joseph Filippi, Mont La Salle, O-Neh-Da, and San Antonio. Operations at Bishop's Vineyard are not likely to resume in the near term. The Oakland Diocese currently is entangled in a lawsuit alleging molestation of a boy by one of its priests 40 years ago (Hod 2019; Buchell 2018). A settlement could push the Diocese into bankruptcy where it might be stripped of its assets.

Second, the distribution of altar wine through Catholic supply stores also appears to be assured for years to come, though some may fail under competitive pressure from direct sales, supermarkets, and other wine-specialty stores. Further, with the continuing decline in Catholic Church membership, the closing of parishes nationwide, and due to Covid-19 communion having been restricted to the consecrated host, Catholic supply stores are increasingly vulnerable to an erosion of demand not just for their wine products but for all of their merchandise.

Third, retail prices today for sacramental wines and mustum at stores in the United States are relatively inexpensive, ranging in general from \$60 to \$80 per case. Those prices, however, may not include shipping charges.

5.2. Our research leads to three unanswered issues. First, do all wines labeled “altar wine” or “sacramental wine” comply fully with the Church’s validation specifications? Is it possible that some pastors may inadvertently use a table wine that isn’t valid for sacramental use? What procedures are in place assuring that such mistakes do not take place?

Second, how big is the market for sacramental wine? One source claimed that these wines represent less than one-half of one percent of all wine produced in the United States. But the source for that number is four years old (Hines 2016) and there is no telling what production year it refers to.

Third, which winery is the oldest producer of sacramental wine? Our research uncovered claims to that distinction made by more than one U.S. winery. In addition, which one is the biggest in terms of production?

5.3. As we make our final comments it is fitting to refer once more to Will Ouweleen, vintner at O-Neh-Da Vineyard, who said the following about producing authentic sacramental wines.

I grow the soil, the soil grows the vine, the vine produces the grape, and when I harvest the grape and squeeze it, the Good Lord makes the wine (Pronechen, 2019).



### **TECHNICAL NOTE**

In every instance where information is missing on Table 1 and Table 2 , the author went directly by e-mail to the most likely source of the missing information. In those instances where that source, along with others which were approached, did not respond, the otherwise empty cell in the table is marked INA.



**TABLE 1**  
**PRODUCTION AND VALIDATION**

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	<i>Origins</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Exclusive</i>	<i>Varietals</i>	<i>Mustum</i>	<i>Prohibition</i>	<i>FamilyGen</i>	<i>Validation</i>
O-Neh-Da	1872	NY	YES <sup>1</sup>	10	NO	SAVED	NO	YES
San Antonio	1917	CA	NO	4	NO	SAVED	YES 4g	INA
Bishop's	2006	CA	YES	8	NO	n/a	NO	YES
Mont La Salle	1882	CA	YES	13	YES	SAVED	NO	YES
Joseph Filippi	1934	CA	NO	7 <sup>2</sup>	NO	n/a	YES 4/5g	YES
Cribari	1917	CA	YES	11	NO	SAVED	NO	YES
Brotherhood <sup>3</sup>	1839	NY	NO	1	NO	SAVED	NO	NO
Meier's	1895	OH	NO	INA	YES	SAVED	NO	INA
SGWS <sup>4</sup>	1914	US	NO	1	NO	SAVED	YES	YES
Pleasant Valley	1860	NY	NO	1	NO	SAVED	NO	NO
St. Joseph	2015	MI	NO	1	NO	n/a	NO	YES

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<sup>1</sup> Sells wines for other uses through its East Crest Vineyards subsidiary. <sup>2</sup> Sold under Guasti label.

<sup>3</sup> The label on its Rosario altar wine provides no indication as to its validation for sacramental use.

<sup>4</sup> SGWS (Southern Glazer Wine and Spirits) is a nationwide wine and spirits distributor. Their altar wine which bears the label “The Hammer Company” is bottled by Rosemont Vineyard and is approved by the bishop of Fresno California. Through a series of mergers the Hammer Company, which was the original producer/distributor of this wine, became part of SGWS. Source: email from Andy Nentwich, owner, Generations Religious Gifts and Church Supply, October 26, 2020. We have looked extensively for Rosemont Vineyard online and could not find its website or street address. Two families – the Chaplins and the Glasers – are regarded as the founding families of SGWS.

In California alone, the sacramental-wine exception during Prohibition, which required certain permits in order to operate legally, is said to have led to a 700 percent increase in grape production. A 1925 research report sponsored by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ claimed that nearly 300 million gallons of wine had been withdrawn from warehouses for sacramental use. Other sources stated that much of this wine was used for other purposes with priests acting as distributors (bootleggers). Storing the wine in church facilities made them targets for thieves (Hines 2016).

**TABLE 2  
DISTRIBUTION**

	<i>Production</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Wine Priced</i>	<i>Grapes</i>	<i>Distribution</i>	<i>Retail Price<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>Supplier</i>
O-Neh-Da	_____		Pink Delaware	own&other	direct&supplier	\$89.99	Emilion
San Antonio	60k cases		Angelica	own&other	direct	5.95btl	direct
Bishop's <sup>2</sup>	-----	----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Mont La Salle	150k+gals	2015	Chateau des Freres		supplier	79.95	Church
Joseph Filippi	500k cases <sup>3</sup>		Light Sweet Muscat	own&other	store&supplier	88.95	Moroney
Cribari	INA		Rosato	California	supplier	72.00	Ziegler
Brotherhood <sup>4</sup>	INA		Rosario	other	direct&supplier	9.99btl	direct
Meier's	INA		Concord Mustum	other	supplier	61.80	Genera...
SGWS/Genera...	distributors	n/a	Hammer Special Rosé	n/a	direct&supplier	59.95	Genera...
Pleasant Valley	archived	n/a	Gold Seal Altar Red	n/a	direct&supplier	6.99btl	direct
St. Joseph	120 cases <sup>5</sup>	2019	Vineyard at St. Joseph	own	5 local churches	INA	Chateau <sup>5</sup>

*Emilion:* Ste. Emilion Church Goods    *Church:* Church Supply Warehouse    *Moroney:* J.C. Moroney    *Ziegler:* F.C. Ziegler    *Chateau:* Chateau Chantal  
*Genera...:* Generations Religious Goods & Church Supplies

<sup>1</sup> Case of 12, current listing.    <sup>2</sup> No longer operational. Ships sacramental wine from inventory.    <sup>3</sup> All wines.

<sup>4</sup> Brotherhood's website provides no information about its Rosario altar wine. Information was obtained from the website of Angel Direct.

<sup>5</sup> Crushed and bottled by Chateau Chantal from the outset. 120 cases is an estimate. Chateau Chantal is the only source for St. Joseph's sacramental wine and for its commercial offering. See information about the Vineyard at St. Joseph presented above .

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