



Praenotanda

From the Office of Divine Worship

PURIFICATION OF VESSELS

Recently, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments refused the petition of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to extend the indult permitting lay ministers to purify the vessels after Holy Communion. Instead, all dioceses in the US have been asked to follow the universal norms found in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal which states that only priests and deacons may purify vessels.

There is a distinction between purifying vessels and cleaning the vessels. By purifying vessels, the Congregation for Divine Worship means putting some water in the vessels and then consuming the remains of the consecrated bread or wine. This is what is restricted to priests and deacons. By cleansing or cleaning the vessels, the Congregation for Divine Worship allows us to continue the practice of lay ministers washing the vessels with soap and water after the priest or deacon has purified them.

* Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under both Species

- Both the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, and the United States document, Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds for the Dioceses of the United States, uphold the principle that “Holy Communion has a more complete form as a sign when it is received under both kinds. For in this manner of reception a fuller sign of the Eucharistic banquet shines forth.” (GIRM, #281, Norms, #20)

- Distribution and reception of Holy Communion under both species has been the practice in the parishes of the Diocese of Rockford for the last 20+ years, to the benefit of the faithful.

- There should be no change to this laudable practice and Communion from the Chalice should continue and be encouraged for all the faithful.

* Purification of vessels after Holy Communion

- In March of 2002 the bishops of the United States received an indult from the Congregation of Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments to allow extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to purify vessels after the distribution of Holy Communion at the discretion of the local bishop.

- In 2006 the United States bishops sought an extension of that indult and it was denied.

- Thus, purification of the vessels after Holy Communion is to be carried out by the priest or

deacon, or in the absence of a deacon, by an instituted acolyte (GIRM, #182, 192).

* Options to consider in the purification of vessels after Holy Communion

In General

- Bishop Doran has extended permission to Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to consume what remains of the Precious Blood from their chalice of distribution, at that time purification is to be left to the Deacon, Instituted Acolyte, or Priest.
- For a large number of Communion vessels, it is permissible to wait until after Mass has ended, rather than to purify them at the altar or the credence table during Mass (cf. GIRM, #183).
- In this case, the vessels are set on the credence table, suitably covered with an appropriately clean cloth. After Mass, they may be taken to the sacristy where they are purified by either the deacon or the priest after he has greeted the people. After they have been purified they can be washed by the sacristan or other minister as usual.
- As part of the ongoing formation of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion and sacristans, these directives should be made known and explained to them at an opportune time prior to December 3.

In Parishes and Institutions where there is a deacon(s) assigned

- At Masses where a deacon is scheduled, it is most appropriate that, after Mass, he should purify the vessels before they are washed as usual.

In Parishes and Institutions where there is no deacon assigned

- The chalices and other Communion vessels may be taken to the sacristy after the completion of the celebration of Mass.
- If there is a large number of chalices to be purified, or if time constraints warrant it, the priest may purify by pouring water into the first chalice, swirling the water around in the customary manner, and then pouring it into the next chalice, and then into the next, etc. After he has done so with the last chalice to be purified, he consumes the ablution. The vessels may then be washed by the sacristan or other minister as usual.
- The priest celebrant may be assisted by other priests of the parish in the purification of the sacred vessels after Mass.