

Policy #: 120.20

Directives Concerning the Purification of Sacred Vessels After Holy Communion

Approved By: Most Reverend Robert W. Finn, DD

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Effective: January 7, 2007

Revised:

With the expiration of the indult permitting the purification of sacred vessels by Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, many parishes will need to implement new procedures.

Vessels are to be purified only by a bishop, priest, deacon, or instituted acolyte.

**The diocesan directives (disseminated in April 2005) with regard to purification are as follows:**

#### **XX. Purification of Vessels after Communion**

a. When the distribution of Communion is finished, the priest himself (assisted, if appropriate, by the deacon, GIRM 183) immediately and completely consumes at the altar any consecrated wine that remains; when there are extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, they may consume what remains of the Precious Blood from their chalice of distribution. As for any consecrated hosts that are left, he either consumes them at the altar or carries them to the place designated for the reservation of the Eucharist. (GIRM 163, Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America , 52)

b. Upon returning to the altar, the priest collects any fragments ... If the vessels are purified at the altar, they are carried to the credence table by a minister. Nevertheless, it is also permitted, especially if there are several vessels to be purified, to leave them suitably covered on a corporal, either at the altar or at the credence table, and to purify them immediately after Mass following the dismissal of the people. (GIRM 163)

**These directives conform to both the current General Instruction of the Roman Missal, and *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, a subsequent instruction from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.**

<PPurification is described in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal as follows:

279. The sacred vessels are purified by the priest, the deacon, or an instituted acolyte after Communion or after Mass, insofar as possible at the credence table. The purification

of the chalice is done with water alone or with wine and water, which is then drunk by whomever does the purification. The paten is usually wiped clean with the purificator.

**The process for purification is described in a bit more detail in *Redemptionis Sacramentum*:**

119. The Priest, once he has returned to the altar after the distribution of Communion, standing at the altar or at the credence table, purifies the paten or ciborium over the chalice, then purifies the chalice in accordance with the prescriptions of the Missal and wipes the chalice with the purificator.

Where a Deacon is present, he returns with the Priest to the altar and purifies the vessels. It is permissible, however, especially if there are several vessels to be purified, to leave them, covered as may be appropriate, on a corporal on the altar or on the credence table, and for them to be purified by the Priest or Deacon immediately after Mass once the people have been dismissed. Moreover a duly instituted acolyte assists the Priest or Deacon in purifying and arranging the sacred vessels either at the altar or the credence table. In the absence of a Deacon, a duly instituted acolyte carries the sacred vessels to the credence table and there purifies, wipes and arranges them in the usual way.

Given that the prevailing practice in many parishes has been for the sacred vessels to be purified at the end of Mass by Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion while the priest (and deacon) greet and converse with parishioners as they leave church, the practical application of these directives needs to be considered carefully. This contact with parishioners is important for the relationship between the pastor and his parishioners and should be preserved, if possible.

With this in mind, priests (and deacons) should reverently purify the sacred vessels at the credence table or the side of the altar immediately following the distribution of Holy Communion, and before the Prayer after Communion. After Mass is concluded, the purified vessels can be transferred to the sacristy to be washed in hot soapy water by others.

While it is strongly recommended that the purification take place immediately, if the priest or deacon chooses to purify vessels after Mass, the vessels should remain on the credence table in the sanctuary, and not be taken unpurified to the sacristy. Every precaution should be taken so that the unpurified vessels are not disturbed, or neglected after Mass.

The date for completion of implementation will be January 7, 2007, Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord. Requests for an implementation date after this date may be sent in writing to Bishop Finn.

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