

Archdiocese of Detroit

Pastoral Adaptation of the Directive Concerning Purification

1. In response to the directive issued by the Congregation of Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, clergy in the United States are to perform the ritual purification of the sacred vessels following the reception of communion. In the past, by an indult from the Holy See, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion were permitted to purify the chalices and ciboria which were used in the distribution. This indult has not been renewed and now the practice in the United States is to conform to that in the rest of the universal Church.
2. Recognizing that this recent clarification may cause confusion or perhaps consternation, this brief monograph has been written to provide both a theological explanation and a pastoral praxis which may be useful in catechizing the faithful.
3. At the outset, a distinction should be made. "Purification" refers to the act of removing any particles of the host or Precious Blood. The paten or ciborium is purified by wiping it clean with a purificator. The chalice is purified by water (or water and wine), drinking the contents and wiping out the remaining droplets of water with a purificator. This is a priestly ritual. "Washing" the vessels refers to the preparation of the vessels for their next use. In this case, the vessels may be washed in hot water using a mild soap to remove any lipstick or germs that may remain. This activity may be done by a non-ordained minister, very often the sacristan. After washing and drying, the vessels are either put away or prepared for use at the next Mass. This is a practical task.
4. According to the 1985 *Sacramentary* and the 2002 *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, "The vessels are cleansed by the priest or deacon or acolyte after the communion or after Mass, if possible at the side table." During the cleansing, the following prayer is to be said: "**Lord, may I receive these gifts in purity of heart. May they bring me healing and strength, now and for ever.**" (1985 *Sacramentary*, see nos. 163, 183, 192, 270, 278, 279 in the GIRM).
5. It should be noted that this prayer is considerably shorter than the purification prayers used in the Tridentine ritual. Also, the act of purification is a *prayerful act* by which the minister asks God to purify him just as he is purifying the vessels.
6. The GIRM offers two options for the purification of the vessels. The first takes place immediately following the communion. The vessels may either be purified at the altar or at a side credence table. The second option permits the vessels to remain on a corporal and suitably covered on a side credence table where they will be purified immediately after Mass following the dismissal of the people.
7. The first option has this merit: By cleansing the vessels immediately, the priest celebrant knows that the task is finished. This also provides some time of silence for the people after their reception of communion. Following the Mass, he may choose to spend time in private prayer, greeting the congregation, or attending to other pastoral matters. The second option has this merit: If there are a large number of vessels to be purified, waiting until Mass is over will prevent the liturgy from becoming unduly prolonged.

However, waiting until the Mass is over may mean that the priest celebrant would need to neglect his parishioners or pastoral duties to purify the vessels. Moreover, if he chooses to wait until the parishioners have left, he may not only have to purify the vessels, but clean and arrange them for their next use as well.

8. In light of these issues, the following procedures are suggested for purification of vessels.

Option #1

- a. As the ministers finish distribution, those who distributed from the ciboria bring the remaining hosts to the altar where they are collected into the ciborium used for reservation. The ciboria are then handed to the priest (or deacon) who wipes them out with a purificator into the main chalice and immediately hands the ciborium back to the minister who takes it to the side credence table. When all the hosts have been collected, an Extraordinary minister of Holy Communion reverently takes the ciboria back to the tabernacle.
- b. Those ministers who distributed the chalices, consume the remaining Precious Blood and then place the empty chalice on the altar. The priest or deacon puts a little water into each chalice, swishes it around, and then pours the water from each chalice into the main chalice. He then drinks the water from the main chalice while saying the prayer **“Lord, may I receive these gifts in purity of heart. May they bring me healing and strength, now and for ever.”** He then wipes out each of the chalices and hands them back to the ministers who take them to the side credence table.
- c. Following Mass, the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion and/or the sacristans carry the purified vessels back to the sacristy where they are washed, dried and arranged for their next use.
- d. This procedure will work for any number of vessels and should not add any great length to the time of the liturgy. (It could probably be accomplished within 3 minutes during which time “a psalm or other canticle of praise or a hymn may also be sung by the entire congregation.” GIRM #88)

Option #2

Should the pastor discover that the above procedure takes an inordinate amount of time, he may choose to implement the second manner of purification which takes place following Mass. In this case, the method would be the same; however, it would take place at the side credence table and the purified vessels would be taken to the sacristy for washing, drying and arranging after they have been purified.

9. Pope Benedict XVI has clearly affirmed the General Instruction (#240): “The sign of Communion is more complete when given under both species, since in that form the sign of the Eucharistic meal appears more clearly.” The Pope did add that “sometimes, however, the high number of communicants may render it inadvisable for everyone to drink from the chalice.” He also affirmed that intinction with reception on the tongue remains a legitimate option. If intinction is to be done, the minister of the Holy Eucharist should be the one dipping the sacred host into the precious blood and placing it on the tongue of the recipient; one does not “self-intinct.”
10. For a more thorough theological and pastoral sense, the reader is invited to consult the *General Instruction* or to call the Worship Office of the Archdiocese of Detroit.