**New Purification Protocol**

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, the official “How-To” guide for the Mass, states that “The sacred vessels are purified by the Priest, the Deacon, or an instituted acolyte after Communion or after Mass, in so far as possible at the credence table.” (279) An Indult (a special permission) had been given by the Vatican in 2002 to the United States Bishops permitting commissioned Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to do this as well. It stated, in part:

"[F]or grave pastoral reasons, the faculty may be given by the diocesan bishop to the priest celebrant to use the assistance, when necessary, even of extraordinary ministers in the cleansing of sacred vessels after the distribution of Communion has been completed in the celebration of Mass. This faculty is conceded for a period of three years as a dispensation from the norm of the *Institutio Generalis, edition typica tertia* of the Roman Missal."

In 2005 and again in 2006 the US Bishops asked for the indult to be renewed. After consulting with the pope, the Cardinal Prefect of Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments finally responded and declined the request, asking the US Bishops to ensure that GIRM 279 was properly instituted throughout their territories.

In the celebration of the Mass, there are different offices and roles which are proper to each. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may be called upon during a time of need to assist the priest (and deacon) in distributing Holy Communion. No other elements are included in this role, such as purification, because they belong to the priestly office during Mass. At other times, when no priest is present, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion can assist in otherwise irregular ways: such as retrieving the Blessed Sacrament from the tabernacle for adoration, or taking communion to the sick, or leading communion services on Sundays. They can even purify the vessels afterward if needed – because no priest is present. When the priest is present, he should fulfill his office, which in the Mass, includes the purification of the sacred vessels.

**As such, the priest will now purify the sacred vessels. If there is a long communion hymn, he may purify the bowls and chalice at the altar. The MC or an altar server should bring the water cruet to the altar during the distribution of communion for this to take place. The priest will purify the remainder of the vessels (the cups, and if not done during Mass, the bowls and chalice) at the credence table at the conclusion of Mass after he has greeted the people. The cruet of water should be left there for him to do this. The MC is to watch to see if any of the vessels are purified during Mass. After Mass the MC can take those vessels which the priest has already purified to the sacristy to be washed. Those which were not purified during Mass will be left on the credence table for the priest to purify after he greets the people. Once he has purified them, these can be washed. Only the MC will move the sacred vessels from the credence table as he or she knows which have been purified.**

By leaving the vessels on the credence table and having the vessels only moved by the MC who has ease of access to watch the priest during Mass, we eliminate any confusion as to what has been purified and what hasn’t in order to safeguard the Eucharist. Also, this way the vessels won’t be in the sacristy, containing our Lord, while people are carrying out their other duties – they won’t have to worry about showing the proper reverence, etc.

Thank you for your help and assistance.

Father Oakland

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