

Key Issues Regarding the Instruction Concerning the Purification of Sacred Vessels

-from Archbishop Buechlein

A. Integrity of Roman Rite:

1. Purification is a part of the rite of the Roman Missal. For that reason the previous indult is not being renewed.
2. The Ritual Purification after Communion is analogous to the ritual washing of hands at the preparation of the gifts.
3. In the Roman Rite the ritual purification concludes the ritual of the Sacred Mysteries. (cf. GIRM, no. 163 and the prayer of the priest on p. 565 in the Sacramentary)
4. The ritual purification is to be completed by the presiding priest (or assisting priest, deacon, or instituted acolyte*).

*Instituted acolytes in the archdiocese are typically those who receive this ministry as they are preparing for the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Our first class of candidates for the permanent diaconate will receive this ministry in September of 2007.

B. Balance of Values:

1. Celebration of the Eucharist under both species provides a more visible symbolism of the Eucharist.
2. Large congregations provide a practical challenge *vis a vis* the General Instruction of the Roman Missal concerning the purification rite.
3. The current absence of deacons in the archdiocese adds to the complication.
4. The value of the recovery of community is a reality.

C. Implementation of the GIRM:

1. Normally, the presiding priest (or assisting priest, deacon, or instituted acolyte) purifies the central paten and chalice.
2. At large celebrations of the Eucharist, the other sacred vessels are removed from the altar and taken to the sacristy.
3. A designated sacristan(s) pours water into the communion chalices, from one to the other.
4. When the presiding priest (or assisting priest, deacon, or instituted acolyte) returns to the sacristy he consumes the water from the remaining cup.
5. The sacristan(s) washes the sacred vessels.

**Guidelines for the purification of sacred vessels after Holy Communion
in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis**
(for implementation by 1 January 2007)

Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under both Species – a key value for Church life

1. Both the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* [GIRM] and the *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds for the Dioceses of the United States of America* [Norms/USA] uphold the value of receiving Holy Communion under both kinds by priest and people.
2. These norms for the United States read in part, “The Council’s decision to restore Holy Communion under both kinds at the bishop’s discretion took expression in the first edition of the *Missale Romanum* and enjoys even more generous application in the third typical edition of the *Missale Romanum*:

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. Moreover there is a clearer expression of that will by which the new and everlasting covenant is ratified in the blood of the Lord and of the relationship of the Eucharistic banquet to the eschatological banquet in the Father’s kingdom.

The *General Instruction* further states that “at the same time the faithful should be guided toward a desire to take part more intensely in a sacred rite in which the sign of the Eucharistic meal stands out more explicitly” [Norms/USA, no. 20 citing GIRM, nos. 281-282; see GIRM, nos. 85 and 283].

3. Distribution and reception of Holy Communion under both kinds has been the practice in the parishes and institutions of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis for over 20 years to the benefit of the faithful and the whole Church.
4. There should be no change to this laudable practice. Communion from the Chalice of the Blood of Christ should continue, have greater participation, and be encouraged for all the faithful.

Purification of vessels after Holy Communion

5. In March 2002, the bishops of the United States received an indult from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments allowing extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to purify vessels after the distribution of Holy Communion at the discretion of the local bishop, and in Advent 2002, Archbishop Buechlein gave this permission to the parishes and institutions of the archdiocese.
6. In 2006, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops sought an extension of the indult, but the request was denied by the Holy See.
7. Thus, the universal law as stated in GIRM, no. 279 now remains in force: “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.”

8. GIRM, nos. 163, 183, 192, and 249 address the different forms of celebrating Mass naming who, where, and when vessels may be purified. GIRM, no. 163 describes the most common procedure:

Upon returning to the altar, the priest collects any fragments that may remain. Then, standing at the altar or at the credence table, he purifies the paten or ciborium over the chalice, then purifies the chalice, saying quietly, *Quod ore sumpsimus (Lord, may I receive)*, and dries the chalice with a purificator. 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.

9. As part of the ongoing formation of ministers and sacristans, these directives should be explained at an opportune time prior to implementation.

Questions regarding the purification of vessels after Holy Communion

What should be done when more of the Precious Blood remains than was necessary for communion?

10. Ordinary and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion consume what remains of the Precious Blood from their chalice of distribution. See Norms/USA, nos. 51-52 for a fuller explanation and other options that remain in force.

How exactly should the sacred vessels be purified?

11. The priest, the deacon, or an instituted acolyte may purify by pouring water into the chalice and by collecting any fragments of the consecrated bread remaining in the paten/plate/bowl/ciborium into the chalice and consuming the ablution. After Mass, the vessels can be washed by the sacristan or other minister in the usual way in preparation for the next Mass.
12. *If there are many vessels to purify, or if time constraints warrant it*, the presiding priest (or assisting priest, deacon, or instituted acolyte) normally purifies the central paten and chalice at the altar, and the remaining vessels are moved to the credence table. Then, after Mass, they are taken to the sacristy. (See GIRM, no. 163)
13. At that time, a designated sacristan (which may be an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion) pours water into the communion patens/plates/bowls/ciboria and chalices, from one to another. When the presiding priest (or assisting priest, deacon, or instituted acolyte) returns to the sacristy, he consumes the ablution in the remaining cup. Once purified, the vessels can be washed by the sacristan or other minister in the usual way in preparation for the next Mass.