

Memo

To: Priests, Deacons, Pastoral Administrators, Liturgy Directors

From: Bishop Kevin W. Vann

Subject: Purification of Sacred Vessels

Date: January 29, 2008

Decree on purification of Sacred Vessels

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has determined that **it is not permissible** for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to purify the Sacred Vessels at Mass.

Previously the Bishops of the United States sought and received from the Holy See special permission, by way of an indult, to permit the priest to receive the help of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion in purifying the Sacred Vessels. The indult granted to the dioceses of the United States was originally granted for three years, and at the direction of the Holy Father, it **will not** be extended. This change in practice regarding purification of Sacred Vessels reflects a movement to bring the practices of the United States more in line with the practices of the Catholic Church around the world.

As Bishop of Fort Worth, I hereby decree that the following liturgical norms and practices are to be observed by all parishes, missions, and institutions in the Diocese of Fort Worth during the celebration of Holy Mass.

1. The Sacred Vessels are to be purified only by a priest, deacon, or an instituted acolyte. (GIRM 163, 183, 192, 279)
2. The Sacred Vessels are to be purified at the altar or at the credence table. (GIRM 183)
3. When the number of Sacred Vessels would unduly lengthen the celebration of Holy Mass, they may be purified immediately after Mass. In this case, the Sacred Vessels should be placed on a corporal on the credence table, and should be covered with large corporal or with a purificator. Immediately after Mass the Sacred Vessels are purified by a priest, deacon, or an instituted acolyte. (GIRM 163)
4. Method of purification: The paten is held over the chalice and wiped clean with a purificator. The purification of the chalice is done with water alone, which is then drunk by whoever does the purification. (GIRM 279) When there are several cups for the distribution of the Blood of Christ, water may be poured from one cup to the next and then consumed after the last cup is purified.
5. After the Sacred Vessels are purified (GIRM 279), and the ablution is consumed, the Vessels should be washed appropriately. The washing of the Sacred Vessels may be done by a lay person who is an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion.

These norms are not an attempt to discourage communion under both species. Neither are they meant to denigrate the role of the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, but to more clearly express the reality of their “extraordinary” ministry as they assist the “ordinary” ministers of the Eucharist.

These norms come into effect immediately. I would ask that these norms be implemented by the Second Sunday of Easter, Divine Mercy Sunday, March 30, 2008 in all parishes, missions, and institutions within the Diocese of Fort Worth. This decree is to be communicated to extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion and a copy posted in every Sacristy.

The process of composing these norms began over a year ago. In composing these norms, our Office of Worship has consulted the USCCB and other dioceses in Texas, including Dallas, Austin, & Tyler.

I thank you for your patience, efforts, and help, in implementing these norms. I pray that all who assist in the distribution of the Body and Blood of the Lord have a very blessed Lenten Season.