



DIOCESE OF WORCESTER

Office for Divine Worship
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MEMORANDUM

To: All Priests and Deacons
From: Msgr. Robert K. Johnson *R.K.J.*
Re: Liturgical Clarifications - Purification of the Sacred Vessels - Inclusion of St. Joseph in the Eucharistic Prayer
Date: June 21, 2013

Recently the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops sent two clarifications which effect the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy. The first concerns the Purification of the Sacred Vessels by the Deacon at Mass and the Second Concerns the Decree *Paternas Vices* from the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments which has issued new texts of the four main Eucharistic Prayers including the name of St. Joseph. These texts and this clarification are effective immediately.

On May 1, 2013, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments promulgated the decree *Paternas Vices* by the authority of the Supreme Pontiff, Pope Francis. The decree instructs that the name of Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, should be inserted into Eucharistic Prayers II, III, and IV. Already on November 13, 1962, Pope John XXIII had inserted the name of St. Joseph into the first Eucharistic Prayer (the Roman Canon), and now that work has been carried forward to the other three Eucharistic Prayers, initially by Pope Benedict XVI and now confirmed by Pope Francis.

Pious and liturgical devotion to St. Joseph is first recorded with certainty in the seventh century, though reference to him is made in Sacred Scripture and multiple patristic texts earlier than that. A full liturgical Office was established for him on March 19 in the 13th Century, and in 1870 he was proclaimed Patron of the Universal Church. Many church writers and several Popes have written of St. Joseph, including the apostolic exhortation by Pope John Paul II entitled *Redemptoris custos* (August 15, 1989).

The decree *Paternas vices* draws some of its language from this exhortation, expressing in concise words the role of St. Joseph in the economy of salvation, stating, for example, that St. Joseph, "stands as an exemplary model of the kindness and humility that the Christian faith raises to a great destiny, and demonstrates the ordinary and simple virtues necessary for men to be good and genuine followers of Christ. Through these virtues, this Just man, caring most lovingly for the Mother of God and happily dedicating himself to the upbringing of Jesus Christ, was placed as guardian over God the Father's most precious treasures."

The Congregation has provided the Latin texts, which are now considered the *typical edition*, as well as official translations in the major western languages, including English and Spanish.

Texts to be Added

English

Eucharistic Prayer II

Have mercy on us all, we pray,
that with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God,
with blessed Joseph, her Spouse,
with the blessed Apostles,
and all the Saints who have pleased you throughout
the ages,
we may merit to be coheirs to eternal life,
and may praise and glorify you
through your Son, Jesus Christ.

Eucharistic Prayer III

May he make of us
an eternal offering to you,
so that we may obtain an inheritance with your elect,
especially with the most Blessed Virgin Mary,
Mother of God,
with blessed Joseph, her Spouse,
with your blessed Apostles and glorious Martyrs
(with Saint N.: *the Saint of the day or Patron Saint*)
and with all the Saints,
on whose constant intercession in your presence
we rely for unailing help.

Eucharistic Prayer IV

To all of us, your children,
grant, O merciful Father,
that we may enter into a heavenly inheritance
with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God,
with blessed Joseph, her Spouse,
and with your Apostles and Saints in your kingdom.
There, with the whole of creation,
freed from the corruption of sin and death,
may we glorify you through Christ our Lord,
through whom you bestow on the world all that is
good.

Spanish

Plegaria Eucarística II

Ten misericordia de todos nosotros,
y así, con María, la Virgen Madre de Dios,
su esposo san José,
los apóstoles
y cuantos vivieron en tu amistad
a través de los tiempos,
merezcamos, por tu Hijo Jesucristo,
compartir la vida eterna
y cantar tus alabanzas.

Plegaria Eucarística III

Que él nos transforme en ofrenda permanente,
para que gocemos de tu heredad
junto con tus elegidos:
con María, la Virgen Madre de Dios,
su esposo san José,
los apóstoles y los mártires,
(san N.: *Santo del día o patrono*)
y todos los santos,
por cuya intercesión
confiamos obtener siempre tu ayuda.

Plegaria Eucarística IV

Padre de bondad,
que todos tus hijos nos reunamos
en la heredad de tu reino,
con María, la Virgen Madre de Dios,
con su esposo san José,
con los apóstoles y los santos;
y allí, junto con toda la creación
libre ya del pecado y de la muerte,
te glorifiquemos por Cristo, Señor nuestro,
por quien concedes al mundo todos los bienes.

The Purification of Sacred Vessels by the Deacon at Mass

In the *Roman Missal, Third Edition*, the role of the deacon has been considerably elaborated. The need for clarifications, however, are still present, and so the Secretariat of Divine Worship would like to offer the following elucidation, admittedly minor, regarding the purification of vessels by deacons.

One of the ways that the Church seeks to avoid confusion between the office of deacon and priest regards the manner of service at or near the altar. Service at the altar has many forms. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) states that the deacon “ministers at the altar, both as regards the chalice and the book” (no. 171b). GIRM no. 173 states that he may lay the *Book of the Gospels* on the altar and no. 178 states that he “prepares the altar” for the Liturgy of the Eucharist; he may also remove the corporal and sacred vessels from the altar after Communion. Purification of sacred vessels, however, is not something that the deacon does at the altar, but at the credence table, perhaps to avoid the appearance of the deacon doing a ministry alone at the altar that is other than preparatory or in assistance to the priest.

Paragraph 163 of the GIRM, which describes Mass without a deacon, describes the purification by the priest as being done either at the altar or at the credence table: “Upon returning to the altar, the Priest collects the fragments, should any remain, and he stands at the altar or at the credence table and purifies...” This contrasts, however, with the instruction found in paragraph 183, which describes Mass with a deacon:

When the distribution of Communion is over, the Deacon returns to the altar with the Priest, collects the fragments, should any remain, and then carries the chalice and other sacred vessels to the credence table, where he purifies them and arranges them as usual, while the Priest returns to the chair. Nevertheless, it is also permitted to leave vessels needing to be purified on a corporal, suitably covered, on the credence table, and to purify them immediately after Mass, following the Dismissal of the people.

Here, the deacon is at the altar with the priest to collect the fragments, but when the priest returns to the chair, the deacon carries the sacred vessels to the credence table to purify.

Although the 2004 Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* might seem to confuse these straightforward rubrics of the GIRM when it states, “Where a Deacon is present, he returns with the Priest to the altar and purifies the vessels” (no. 119), this actually coincides with GIRM no. 183, which similarly says that the priest and deacon return to the altar, and that the deacon purifies the vessels at the credence table. GIRM no. 183 makes clear what is left unstated by *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, that purification by the deacon takes place not at the altar, but at the credence table.

This clarification of the deacon’s role helps to bring forth a further expression of our theology of liturgy and holy orders, matters which are indeed central to our life in the Church.

The above document explains that there will be an ongoing need for clarifications with regard to the rubrics of the Sacred Liturgy.

Here the distinction between the role of the deacon and that of the priest in the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy is highlighted, particularly regarding ministry at the Altar.

The deacon thus will purify the Sacred Vessels only at the credence table and no longer at the altar.