



NATIONAL
**Eucharistic
Revival**

**Step-by-Step Walk Through the Mass
Do This in Remembrance of Me, Part 75,
Purification of Vessels
by FR. LUKE SPANNAGEL**



While you are praying after Holy Communion, you have probably noticed that there is still visible action at the altar. This is called the **Purification of the Sacred Vessels**. As the Diocese of Peoria instructs, “After communion, there may be a song of thanksgiving or a moment of silence. Often during this time the priest or deacon purifies the sacred vessels used for Mass, although this is sometimes done after Mass, especially in places that use a large number of vessels for the distribution of Holy Communion. Even this aspect of the Mass is ritualized, as nothing in the Mass is insignificant. The sacred vessels used for the Mass are carefully purified to ensure that any particles of the Hosts are collected into the chalice so as to be consumed. While the priest purifies the Chalice he says quietly, ‘What has passed our lips as food, O Lord, may we possess in purity of heart, that what has been given to us in time may be our healing for eternity.’ As we believe in the real presence in the smallest particle of the Host or in even a drop of the precious Blood, this period of purification ensures the proper reverence to the Blessed Sacrament” (*A Study of the Mass*, p. 20).

For me as a priest, purifying the vessels is a very special time of prayer. Of course, I am thinking about how we believe Jesus is truly present in even the smallest particle or even in the smallest drop of remaining Precious Blood. I am thankful for the Lord’s generosity and his humility—that he would come to us in such a gentle and veiled way. I will often pray for specific people at the Mass and for everyone there to be strengthened as they get ready to go forth.

Reverencing the Most Precious Gift

In order to show proper reverence for our Lord’s presence under the species of bread and wine, the priest is obliged to do what he reasonably can to gather up any fragments of the host and any drops of the Precious Blood and consume them himself. According to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*: “Whenever a fragment of the host adheres to his fingers, especially after the fraction or after the Communion of the faithful, the Priest should wipe his fingers over the paten or, if necessary, wash them. Likewise, he should also gather any fragments that may have fallen outside the paten” (*GIRM*, 278). After the priest has drunk from the chalice any remaining Precious Blood, he empties the fragments from the paten into the chalice, which is purified with water. The priest then empties the chalice by drinking the water, which contains the fragments of the consecrated host from the paten and any drops of the Precious Blood remaining in the chalice.

The rite of purification might seem like a trivial detail, but it is actually a great way of bolstering our faith in the true presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. To see priests and deacons carefully consuming leftover particles reminds us just how precious the gift of Holy Communion is, as well as reminding us to always treat this gift respectfully—before, during, and after we have received our Lord in Communion.