Sacred Vessels

Have you ever paid attention to the purification of the sacred vessels after Holy Communion? If you haven’t, I highly recommend doing so this Sunday. See the care with which the priest handles the chalice and the paten, pouring water into them to cleanse any loose particles of the Body and Blood of Christ. Observe the loving reverence he uses in wiping them dry with a special purificator. It’s a ritual unto itself, and a powerful moment for reflection.

These vessels begin as earthly objects. They are made by human hands. There is nothing special about them — not until they go about the work for which they have been created. Until they contain the Body and Blood of Christ, they are only ordinary objects. But after they have carried within them the Eucharist, they are never the same. They will always be special and deserving of special care.

That’s why partaking of the Eucharist is, for us, an evangelical undertaking. It is both a transformation and a declaration. When we accept this tremendous gift, we are proclaiming what we believe, and we are accepting the grace to follow through on that commitment.

When we are receiving the Eucharist, it is not possible for us to be passive. We become the vessel. We carry Christ into the world with us.

But do we act like it? Do we treat ourselves — our bodies, our souls — with the same respect as the priest cleansing the chalice? Do we treat one another with the reverence we would reserve for a sacred object? When we look at another person with anger or irritation or envy, do we acknowledge the change that we have willingly undergone by receiving Christ’s Body and Blood into ourselves?

— Tracy Earl Welliver, MTS

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