



Church of Ireland

GUIDELINES FROM THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS
TO ALL PAROCHIAL CLERGY
THE CARE OF COMMUNION VESSELS AND LINEN

In the exercise of its pastoral responsibility to the clergy of our Church the House of Bishops is concerned to encourage adequate care of the vessels and linens used during celebrations of the Holy Communion in all parishes. Clergy are aware of the concerns often expressed throughout society on the risks of spreading infection, and, therefore, the Bishops feel that proper care and cleanliness of Communion vessels should be a priority for all their clergy. The seemly and proper care of vessels and linen is of course vital within the context of the best possible presentation of Holy Communion to our people, but the House feels that it is an opportune time to emphasise to all clergy the importance of the detailed care of such articles.

In this connection the Bishops would request that the following procedure should be normal practice in each parish of the Church of Ireland. It is suggested that the information on the correct care and use of the Communion linen might be given to parishioners who would volunteer or agree to care for the linen on a regular basis:

THE COMMUNION VESSELS

1. All Communion silver should be carefully and thoroughly cleansed before and after all Celebrations of the Holy Communion.
2. In particular, the greatest care should be exercised in the cleaning of chalices before and after all Celebrations of the Holy Communion.
3. During the administration of the bread and wine the chalice should be wiped frequently. Ideally a chalice should be wiped between its use by each communicant, but where large numbers are concerned, this may be unrealistic.
4. It is helpful if the chalice can be rotated, as well as being wiped, after use by each communicant.
5. After each celebration the Communion silver should be thoroughly washed in hot and cold water before storage.
6. In parish churches where running water is not available, a flask of hot water should be brought to the Vestry for this purpose.
7. Where a new chalice is being purchased for a parish, a design should be chosen which does not involve a lip or ridge around the vessel, as this can be a potential source of infection.
8. It has been widely accepted in medical circles that the use of wine with normal alcohol content in vessels of noble metal (silver or gold) has a sterilising effect, and risk of infection is barely possible. Pewter or earthenware Communion vessels which have become fashionable has no such effect.

THE COMMUNION LINEN

THE FAIR LINEN CLOTH

This cloth is usually of good heavy linen, the same width as the Communion Table, the hems being approximately 1 1/2 inches, and usually it hangs to within 6 to 9 inches of the floor on either side of the Table. The hem at these points is often 3 to 4 inches deep..

The Fair Linen Cloth is often identified by five crosses or other emblems, one at each corner of the Communion Table and one at the centre of the cloth matching the centre of the Table.

It is recommended that this cloth be laundered at frequent intervals and rolled rather than folded after ironing. The cloth should be moderately starched when laundered.

It is also advisable that, when the Fair Linen Cloth is not in use, especially during weekdays, it should be covered with a coloured linen cloth. (The colour could be chosen to match the existing soft furnishings of the Church). This will greatly help in keeping the cloth clean for longer periods of time.

OTHER LINENS

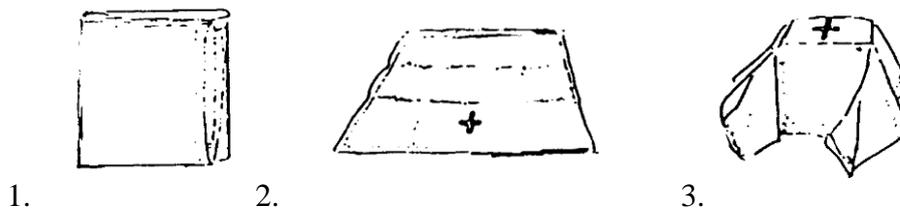
In many instances these consists of

- (1) Two 'Corporals', one often called the 'Veil', which should be distinguished from the coloured veil denoting the liturgical colour for the appropriate Church season, where these continue to be used
- (2) A 'Pall', being a type of linen envelope with a square card or piece of perspex inserted to make it stiff.
- (3) Purificators, used for cleansing the vessels during the Administrations and at the time of the Ablutions.

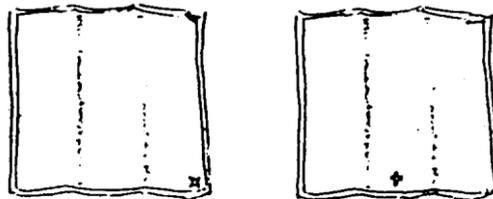
The Corporal and Veil are of a similar size, about 20 inches square, but with a half-inch hem on all sides (hemstitched in many instances) and usually bearing a cross or other symbol. The Corporal bears the marking along the centre of one side, and the Veil is marked similarly but in the exact centre.

The Corporal should always be folded in the same way into six parts. First, the front side is folded over the middle part; then the back is folded over these; then the right side of the strip is folded over the middle; and, lastly, the left side is folded over the rest leaving a square (about 6 1/2 inches). See Diagram No. 1.

Diagram No. 2 shows the Corporal open. NB. When the Corporal is being laundered, it should be folded so that each part folds inwards when flat on the Table. This is the cloth on which are placed the chalice and paten.



The Veil is folded in the same way but the symbol is outside and in the middle. See Diagram No. 3. This is used to cover the chalice after the Communion, the Pall first being placed on the chalice.



Purificators are often of a softer linen than the other linen and can be about 13 inches square, hemmed all around and possibly marked with a symbol, either in one corner or along the centre of one side. See Diagrams 4a and 4b. They are ironed into three folds each way.

Many parishes now seem to be replacing purificators with paper tissues in order to save extra laundering. This cannot be described as seemly practice but, if resort is made to it, great care should be taken to ensure that the tissues are burned when disposing of them. It is infinitely preferable to use properly laundered purificators.

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