

AVE MARIA CATHOLIC CHURCH

POLICY AND PROCEDURE HANDBOOK FOR CLEANING LITURIGAL LINENS AND GARMENTS



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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“Liturgy is the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed” (Sacramentum Concilium, #10). Hence, anyone involved in our parish’s liturgical celebrations is called to fully understand their awesome ministerial responsibility. By “awesome” I mean “awe-inspiring” and deserving of the greatest degree of respect and care we can offer.

The Mass, while celebrated in the present, displays a timeless quality. *“It is in this eternal liturgy that the Spirit and the Church enable us to participate whenever we celebrate the mystery of salvation in the sacraments.”* (CCC, #1138)

The purpose of this instructional booklet, *Parish Policy and Procedure Handbook for Liturgical Linens and Garments*, is to afford a uniform set of guidelines for all members of the parish’s Altar and Rosary Society who are involved in the laundering, ironing, and care of the parish’s liturgical-related linens and garments.

Thank you for your interest and desire to serve Our Lord and the Church in this ministerial capacity.

Yours in Christ,

Fr Don Brownstein
Pastor

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ALTAR LINENS

By altar linens, we refer to those cloths which are used to cover the altar and those used in the conduct of the Mass liturgy. Liturgical law requires that there be three separate linens, symbolizing the burial cloths of Our Lord on the altar. The bottom undercloth must be large enough to cover at least the altar top surface (called the *mensa*). The middle one should cover the length of the altar without draping the sides. And the top one, which remains visible, runs the length of the altar and must hang all the way over the sides of the altar edges. This one may have lace or other colored liturgically appropriate decorations along the front.

If you have difficulty removing wine stains, many religious supply stores (such as Gerkins Religious Supply on S. Sante Fe Drive in Denver) sell a product called *Red Wine Away*. Spray a little on the stain, let it dry, and then apply again. After three or four times, the wine should completely disappear. Another useful product may also be wax-remover.

Be comforted in knowing that any work you do for the Church will be greatly meritorious. We are meant to love the altar and sanctuary and everything that pertains to it. Remember that even the smallest details do not go unnoticed or unrewarded by our beloved Master.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Alb [alb]

A long white linen robe with tapered sleeves normally worn by a priest or deacon at the Mass or other liturgical services.

Amice [am-is]

A white linen shoulder cloth that the priest may wear under the alb to cover any clerical tab/collar shirt, etc.

Altar Cloth

A white, cloth of fine linen that covers the top of the altar and hangs down at/over each side.

Burse [bur-s]

From the Greek word “byrsa” meaning “a bag”, it is a folding case made with two squares of rigid material covered in cloth. In the Latin Rite, it is placed on top of the chalice, paten and veil, and serves to hold a corporal and/or an extra purificator. The burse and veil normally match the color of the season or liturgical day.

Chasuble [chaz-uh-buhl]

A sleeveless outer tunic worn by the priest during the Mass.

Cincture [singk-cher]

A rope or cloth girdle the celebrant wears around the waist during Mass or other liturgical services.

Cope [kohp]

A long vestment worn over the alb or surplice in some liturgical processions.

Corporal [kor-per-uhl]

From the Latin word “corpus”, meaning “body”, because it is used to catch any particles of the consecrated Host, which might fall from the paten during the Eucharist. It is laid on top of the altar cloth at Communion and the chalice is placed in its center. It should be folded and ironed inside-out, so that when it has been used at the Eucharist, it can be folded up easily with the right side inwards, to hold any fragments of the Host.

Credence Cloth [kreed-ns claw-th]

Is the cloth that is placed on/over the credence table.

Credence table [kreed-ns table]

A small side table, shelf or niche for holding articles in the sanctuary (e.g., chalice, paten, etc).

Dalmatic [dal-mat-ik]

The vestment with sleeves worn over the alb by the deacon.

Humeral Veil [hyoo-mer-uhl vay-el]

An oblong scarf worn over the shoulders of the priest or deacon during Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

Lavabo Towel [lah-vah-bo tah-well]

Literally, “I will wash”; this is an absorbent rectangular, shaped linen used to dry the priest’s fingers/hands during the Mass.

Mensa [men-suh]

The flat surface forming the top of the altar (usually made of stone or precious wood).

Pall [pahl]

A square, stiff, linen-covered cardboard or piece of plastic used to cover the presider’s chalice during the Mass.

Purificator [pyoor-uh-fi-kay-ter]

From the Latin word “purus” (pure) and “facare” (to make), it is a small white linen cloth used during the Mass to cleanse and dry the chalice, paten, or other sacred vessels. It is so ironed so that when preparing the altar for Communion, the purificator is opened half-way and put over the chalice, so that its sides hang down over both sides. The patent, with a priest’s host, is then placed on the purificator, and the pall is placed over it. A purificator is also used to clean/wipe the rim of the chalice after each communicant during Communion.

Sacrarium [suh-krair-ee-uhm]

A sink designated as a place where sacred things may be disposed of (e.g., holy water, ablutions, etc.) This sink is connected directly to the ground, not to public sewage systems.

Surplice [sur-plis]

A loose-fitting, broad-sleeved white garment worn over the cassock.

GUIDELINES AND TIPS

Here are a few simple guidelines that have been compiled and proven to work over the years to care for liturgical linens. If you are not sure how to do something, it is best to speak with an experienced launderer or a parish priest for assistance. Always err on the side of caution, as linens tend to be expensive.

LAUNDERING

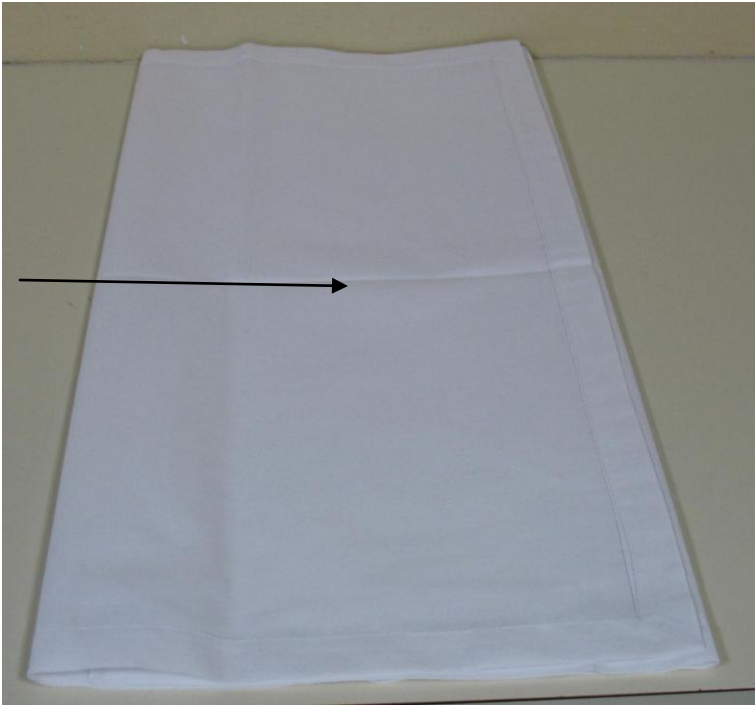
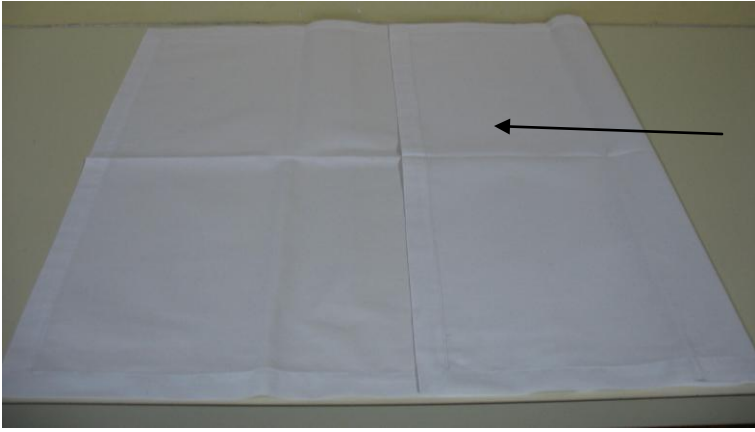
- Linens need to be washed as soon as possible after use, so that wine and other stains do not become permanent.
- Wine stains should be removed by soaking in COLD water (hot will make them set in the material) with salt or vinegar or an efferdent tablet or stain remover. Consider using “Wine Away Red Wine Stain Remover” also if available.
- After the wine stains have been removed, linens should be washed by hand with a small amount of unscented, mild detergent, then rinsed until all detergent is gone. Fabric softeners are not advised and bleach and bluing may damage the delicate fabric fibers.
- After rinsing clean, the linens may be laid flat on a clean linen towel, which is then folded over them and pressed to remove excess water. They are then ready for ironing (damp).
- Never dry by machine, as the heat from the dryer may damage the delicate fabric. If necessary, excess water may be removed by rolling the linen in a terry cloth towel.

- For plain linens, or linen with simple lace, a delicate-wash cycle is best. If it has elaborate lacework, you must hand wash the linen. For larger altar linens, you may have to spot clean some areas with some stain-removing formula. If your linen is heavily soiled with stains that are not able to be removed, burn or bury the cloth.

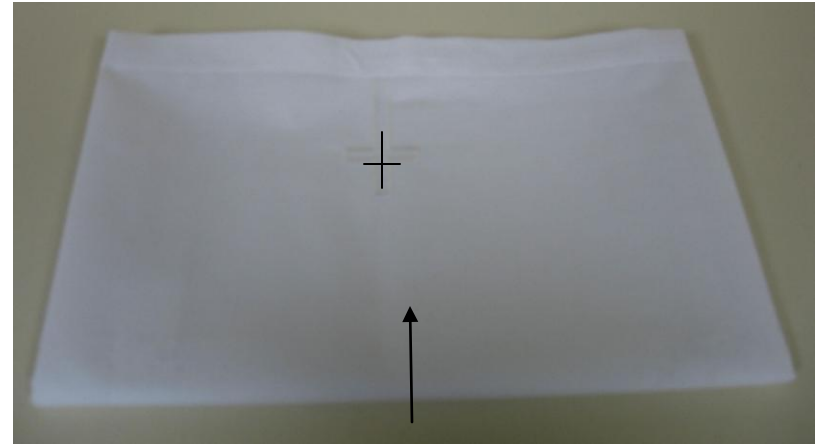
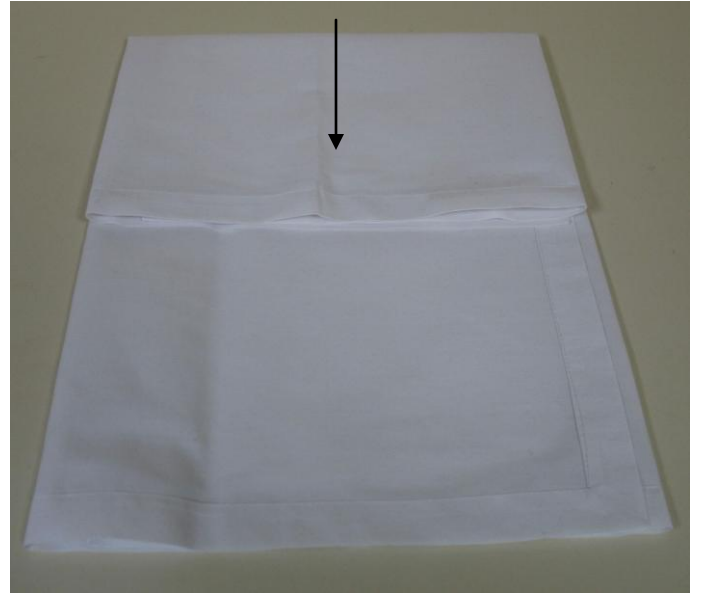
IRONING

- Press the damp linens upside down to raise the embroidery.
- Corporals: The linen is folded in thirds, with the “right side” folded to the inside as follows:
 - Place the corporal on the ironing board right side up, with the cross is near you.
 - First, fold in thirds, folding the right side to center, then the left side to center. Finger press creases at the folds.
 - Now fold the top down (toward the center), and finally, the bottom side up (to the center). Again, finger press creases.
 - Then it is ready for ironing the creases.



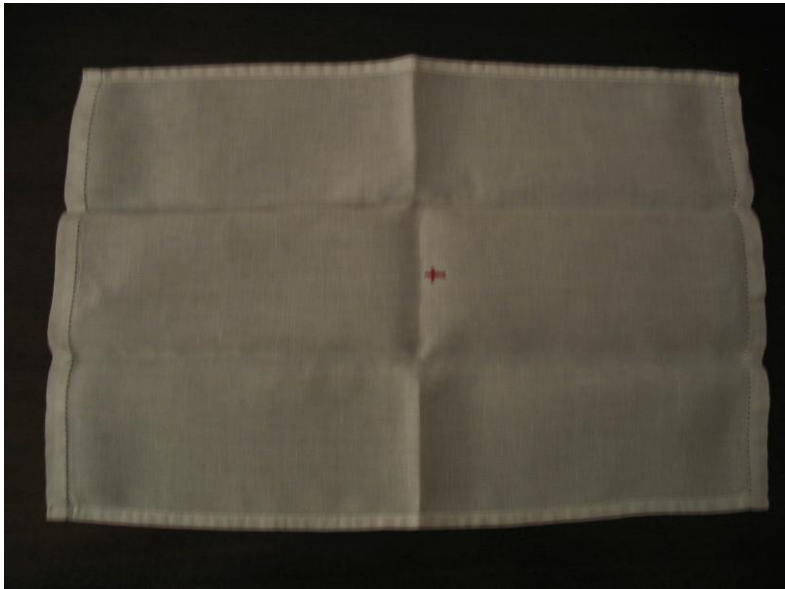


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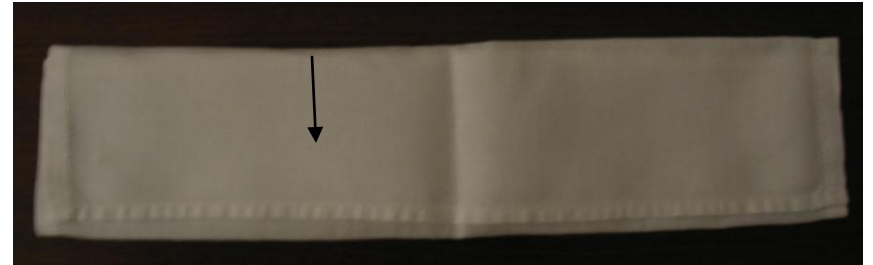
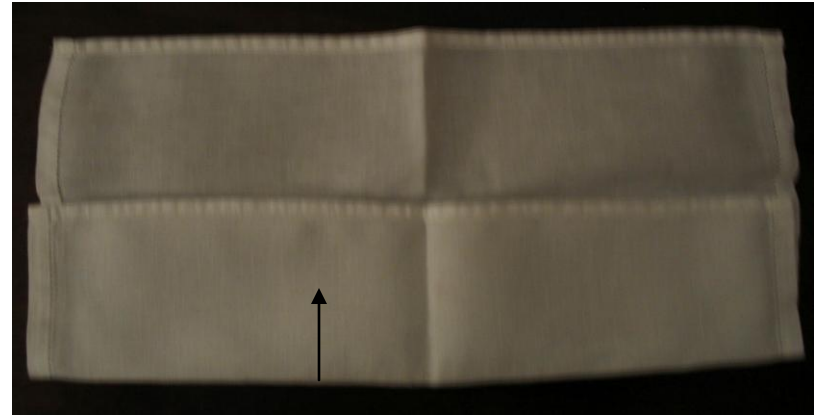


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- Purificators: The linen is folded in thirds, as follows:
 - Place the purificator on the ironing board right side down.
 - Fold in thirds, right to left, left to right, and finger press.
 - Then it is ready for ironing the creases.
 - Then fold the linen in half, so that the red sewn cross is on or near the center of the fold.
 - Iron the remaining top crease.



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- There is a linen setting on most irons. If you have tough creases to remove, try spraying a little water onto the crease or use the iron's steam setting.
- The corporals call for special folding and creasing. The material must remain absorbent; so no heavy starching.
- Keep all edges nice and square and crisp. Any strings such as those on the purificator, should be cut would damage the linen. Lace also needs to be ironed out flat.
- If you find that your linens look wrinkled, no matter how much you iron, try using a thinner ironing pad.

REPAIR/MENDING

- If wax is spilt on the fabric first make the wax as hard as possible, use ice or put the linen briefly in the freezer, then scrape with fingernail or the dull side of a blunt knife to remove the excess. Stretching the linen, wax side down, under hot running water usually works well. If not, consider placing the linen, wax side down on a white blotter, absorbent brown paper or paper towel, and iron with a warm iron, until the wax is absorbed by the paper. Then wash.
- If ash residue is found on the linen, apply liquid detergent to the stain rub gently and rise. Repeat as necessary, then rinse and wash.
- If lipstick residue is found on the linen, apply a little liquid dish detergent on the stain and rub carefully until the grease-based mark is loosened and removed. If the color persists, consider soaking in a half and half mixture of 3% peroxide and ammonia, then rise and wash.
- If you find any small holes in the linens and/or they become otherwise unserviceable, burn or bury them.
- All linens should be free of dangling or loose threads.
- If it seems that a complicated repair is needed, you should ask permission from the parish liturgist or a priest before proceeding. They may have special instructions.

DRY CLEANING

- Priest chasubles and deacon dalmatics are cleaned professionally by dry cleaning. Albs may usually be laundered.

The Care and Cleansing of Altar Linens, Purification and Cleansing of Communion Vessels

The following guidance is from the U.S.C.C.B.'s Committee on the Liturgy regarding the care of altar linens:

Whatever is set-aside for use in the liturgy takes on a certain sacred character both by the blessing it receives and the sacred functions it fulfills. Thus, the cloths used at the altar in the course of the Eucharistic celebration are to be treated with the care and respect due to those things used in the preparation and celebration of the sacred mysteries. This brief statement reflects on the importance of reverently caring for altar linens which, because of their use in the liturgy, are deserving of special respect. These linens should be "beautiful and finely made, though mere lavishness and ostentation must be avoided." Altar cloths, corporals, purificators, lavabo towels, and palls are to be made of absorbent cloth and never of paper.

Altar linens are appropriately blessed according to the Order for the Blessing of Articles for Liturgical Use. The blessing of a number of such articles for liturgical use may take place "within Mass or in a separate celebration in which the faithful should take part."

Altar Cloths: Just as the altar is a sign for us of Christ the living stone, altar cloths are used "out of reverence for the celebration of the memorial of the Lord and the banquet that gives us his body" and by their beauty and form, they add to the dignity of the altar in much the same way that vestments solemnly ornament the priests and sacred ministers. Such cloths also serve a practical purpose, however, in absorbing whatever may be spilled of the Precious Blood or other sacramental elements. Thus the material of altar cloths is to be absorbent and easily laundered. While there may be several altar cloths in the form of drapings or even frontals, their shape, size, and decoration should be in keeping with the design of the altar.

Unless the altar cloths have been stained with the Precious Blood, it is not necessary that they be cleaned in the sacrarium. Care should be taken, however, that proper cleaning methods are used to preserve the beauty and

life of the altar cloth. (A "sacrarium" is installed behind the altar wall at the Ave Maria Catholic Church. A "sacrarium" is a special sink or basin (used in the Roman Liturgy) used solely for the disposal of ablutions from the Mass. Unlike conventional sinks or basins, the drainage pipe for the sacrarium goes directly into the earth, not into the public sewage system. During or after the Mass, the Blood of the Lord is never to be poured into a drain—even the sacrarium; it must be consumed. After it is consumed and the vessel is purified, the Ordinary and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHCs) are asked to cover the chalices with the purificator and return it to the credence table or the counter top behind the altar for further cleansing after the Mass.)

All ministers of Holy Communion are to show the greatest reverence for the Most Holy Eucharist by their demeanor, their attire, and the manner in which they handle the consecrated bread or wine. Should there be any mishap--as when, for example, the Precious Blood is spilled from the chalice--then the affected "area . . . should be washed with water, and this water [mixture of the Precious Blood and water which has been absorbed into a purificator] should then be poured [or washed out] into the sacrarium [GIRM, 280]" (Norms, 29).

Corporals: Sacred vessels containing the Body and Blood of the Lord should always be placed on top of a corporal. A corporal is spread by the priest, deacon or acolyte in the course of the preparation of the gifts and the altar.

Because one of the purposes of the corporal is to contain whatever small particles of the consecrated host may be left at the conclusion of Mass, care is be taken that the transferal of consecrated hosts between sacred vessels and should always be done over a corporal. The corporal is to be white in color and of sufficient dimensions so that at least the main chalice and paten may be placed upon it completely. The material of corporals is to be absorbent and easily laundered.

Any apparent particles of the consecrated bread which remain on the corporal after the distribution of Holy Communion are to be consumed in the course of the purification of the sacred vessels.

When corporals are cleansed they should first be rinsed in the sacrarium and only afterwards washed with laundry soaps in the customary manner. Corporals should be ironed in such a way that their distinctive manner of folding helps to contain whatever small particles of the consecrated host may remain at the conclusion of the Eucharistic celebration.

Purificators: Purificators are customarily brought to the altar with chalices and are used to wipe the Precious Blood from the lip of the chalice and to purify sacred vessels. They should be white in color. Whenever the Precious Blood is distributed from the chalice, poured into ancillary vessels or even accidentally spilled, purificators are to be used to absorb the spill. The material of purificators should be absorbent and easily laundered. The purificator should never be made of paper or any other disposable material.

Because of their function, purificators regularly become stained with the Precious Blood. It is, therefore, essential that they should first be cleansed in a sacrarium and only afterwards washed with laundry soaps in the customary manner. Purificators should be ironed in such a way that they may be easily used for the wiping of the lip of the chalice.

Lavabo Towels: The Order of Mass calls for the washing of the hands (lavabo) of the priest celebrant in the course of the preparation of the gifts and the altar. Since it is his hands and not only his fingers, which are washed at the lavabo, the lavabo towel should be of adequate size and sufficiently absorbent for the drying of his hands. Neither the color nor the material of the lavabo towel is prescribed in church norms, though efforts should be made to avoid the appearance of a "dish towel," "bath towel", or other cloth with a purely secular use.

Other Cloths: Other cloths may also be used at Mass. A pall (a piece of square cardboard covered with white cloth) may be used to cover the presider's chalice at Mass in order to protect the Precious Blood from insects or other foreign objects. In order that palls may be kept immaculately clean they should be made with removable covers of a worthy material which can be easily washed in the sacrarium and then laundered.

Chalice veils either of the color of the day or white, may be fittingly used to cover the chalice before it is prepared and after it has been purified.

Disposal of Worn Altar Linens: Consistent with the disposal of all things blessed for use in the liturgy, it is appropriate that altar linens, which show signs of wear and can no longer be used, should normally be disposed of either by burial or burning.

Purification of Sacred Vessels (e.g., Communion patens and chalices): After everyone has received Holy Communion and the precious blood is consumed, EMHCs are asked to return the sacred vessels to the credence table or the counter top behind the altar wall for the clergy to later purify. Purification of the vessels entails the adding of water into the vessels and moving the water around inside it to cleanse all of the remaining particles or droplets from the surfaces. If/as necessary, a purificator may be used on the edge of the instrument to prevent any inadvertent/accidental spillage. Once the vessel has been purified, the water (with the particles and/or diluted precious blood) is to be consumed by the respective clergy member. Soiled purificators, corporals, or other linens must be cleaned as noted above using the Sacrarium.

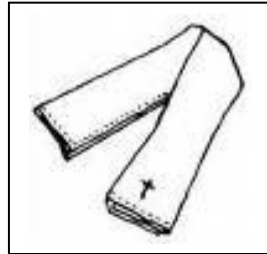
Cleansing of Sacred Vessels: After the Mass has concluded, the sacristans are asked to wipe the sacred vessels used during the Mass before storage. Note, after the 9:30 a.m. Sunday Liturgy, all of the sacred vessels are thoroughly washed using warm water and mild dishwashing detergent. Since the vessels have already been purified before this cleansing, the water from this cleansing process is permitted to drain into the public sewage systems.

Conclusion: The manner in which we treat sacred things (even those of lesser significance than the chalice, paten, liturgical furnishings, etc.) fosters and expresses our openness to the graces God gives to his Church in every celebration of the Eucharist. Thus, by the diligent care of altar linens, the Church expresses her joy at the inestimable gifts she receives from Christ's altar.

QUICK REFERENCE CHART

THE PURIFICATOR

- Rectangular
- Cross in the center (normally)
- No starch
- Divided into thirds, then halved with a cup fold



THE CORPORAL

- Perfectly square
- Folded so cross is in the bottom center
- Heavy starch
- Divided into nine squares



CHALICE PALL

- Cloth covering cardboard or plastic.
- Square
- Starched
- No folding; just restitching, as/if needed.



LAVABO TOWEL

- Rectangular
- May have cross in corner
- No starch
- Divided in half again



REFERENCES

Care and Cleansing of Altar Linens, Purification, and Cleansing of Communion Vessels, @ 2007, USCCB, Washington, DC.

Handbook for Laundering Liturgical Linens, @ 2008, Angelus Press, Kansas City, MO

Parish Liturgical Ministry Guidelines, @ 2009, Ave Maria Catholic Church, Parker, CO