

Holy Water: Lent and Triduum

The Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments responded to a question (dubium) concerning the removal of holy water from fonts in churches during Lent by a letter dated March 14, 2000.

The response reaffirmed the traditional practice that the holy water font is empty *only* during the Sacred Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday) in preparation for the blessing of new water during the Easter Vigil.

CONGREGATION DE CULTU DIVINO ET DISCIPLINA SACRAMENTORUM

Prot. N. 569/00/L

Dear Father:

March 14, 2000

This Congregation for Divine Worship has received your letter sent by fax in which you ask whether it is in accord with liturgical law to remove the Holy Water from the fonts for the duration of the season of Lent.

This Dicastery is able to respond that the removing of Holy Water from the fonts during the season of Lent is not permitted, in particular, for two reasons:

1. The liturgical legislation in force does not foresee this innovation, which in addition to being *praeter legem* is contrary to a balanced understanding of the season of Lent, which though truly being a season of penance, is also a season rich in the symbolism of water and baptism, constantly evoked in liturgical texts.
2. The encouragement of the Church that the faithful avail themselves frequently of her sacraments and sacramentals is to be understood to apply also to the season of Lent. The "fast" and "abstinence" which the faithful embrace in this season does not extend to abstaining from the sacraments or sacramentals of the Church.

The practice of the Church has been to empty the Holy Water fonts on the days of the Sacred Triduum in preparation of the blessing of the water at the Easter Vigil, and it corresponds to those days on which the Eucharist is not celebrated (i.e., Good Friday and Holy Saturday).

Hoping that this resolves the question and with every good wish and kind regard, I am,

Sincerely yours in Christ, [signed]

Mons. Mario Marini Undersecretary