

Ask Fr. James

Why do some parishes remove Holy Water from their Fonts during Lent?

On March 14, 2000, the Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship clarified that the "removing of holy water from the fonts during the season of Lent is not permitted." The congregation cited two reasons: water and baptism are frequently mentioned in the Lenten liturgical readings, and avoiding use of the Church's sacramentals is in no way part of the abstinence encouraged during the days of Lent. However, holy-water fonts are emptied on *Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday*, because each of these days invites us to look forward to the blessing of the baptismal water at the Easter Vigil.

It is encouraged that we all bless ourselves with holy water as we enter the church's sacred space daily. For centuries, churches have celebrated a solemn rite of blessing of waters. The blessings requested when the priest says the ritual of the blessing upon the waters as he deeps the paschal candle into the baptismal water at the Easter Vigil, asks God to:

...Make it a source of incorruption, a gift of sanctification, a remission of sins, a protection against disease, a destruction to demons...that all who draw from it and partake of it may have it for the cleansing of their soul and body, for the healing of their passions, for the sanctification of their dwellings, and for every purpose that is expedient.

Holy water Fonts at the entrances of churches and the baptismal fonts have always been integral parts of church's identity. Holy water in church ritual derives from blood and water flowing from Christ's body on top of the cross when his side was pierced by the soldier's lance. This ritual symbolism is recreated when the priest deeps the paschal candle in the baptismal waters and the believers' immersion is a participation in the body and blood of Jesus. The blessings received through participation in the blessing of the waters capture and express the goal of the Christian life: protection from temptation, and bodily and spiritual cleansing, with holiness as the ultimate goal.

You may email/send your faith questions to Fr. James and he will answer them in our Sunday Bulletins.