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Q: I just got a new pastor, and I found out this morning that he has instructed the deacons to add a small amount of water to the cups as well as to the chalice. I have never seen this done before. I can't find any reference in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal to this practice or in fact to cups—just to the preparation of the chalice. Nor can I find any reference to this practice in either *Redemptionis Sacramentum* or *Sacramentum Caritatis*. Is it permissible/proper/optional to add water to the cups as well as the chalice?

A: There has been some confusion about the issue for some time, largely because most people do not have a good grounding in sacramental theology. In terms of sacramental theology: The matter in the sacrament of the Eucharist is bread and wine. (De fide). Although the ritual requires the addition of a small amount of water in the chalice for liceity, “the validity of the Sacrament does not depend on this.” (cf. Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, 391-392).

Liturgically speaking: the ritual itself is clear the the mixture is takes place in the chalice, not in the cruet or carafe. (*infundit vinum et parum aquæ in calicem*). If the Church meant for all of the communion chalices to be prepared in the same way, that would have been made explicit. Perhaps the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments will in the future give more clear direction. On the other hand, what is clear is

that not even a priest has the right to change the liturgy on his own authority. (cf. IGMR 24, see also Sacrosanctum concilium 22).

How to understand this: the symbolism of mixing the water and wine is meant to remind us of the water and blood that flowed from the side of Christ as he hung on the cross. It turns our attention to the source of sacramental grace, the Paschal Mystery as well as to the birth of the Church, the New Eve taken from the side of the New Adam. I would suspect that the addition of water to all of the chalices in American culture is motivated by the idea of treating all of them the same (so that the people won't feel like they are being slighted by not having water mixed in their chalices like the priest's.) We need to look at this through the eyes of sacramental theology, though, rather than the rules of hospitality and courtesy. The Body of Christ is One, even though there are many different hosts in the ciboria. It is the same Body of Christ even though the wafer given to the people may be round, while the priest consumes a piece which is triangular or demi-lune. We speak theologically of One Bread, even though we see many pieces. In the same way, theologically the Precious Blood in the so-called priest's chalice is the same as the Precious Blood in the other chalices and the water mixed with the wine in the Celebrant's chalice is theologically mixed with the wine in all of the others.

In conclusion: it is not necessary to mix water in all of the communion cups. If you will indulge a pun, it dilutes the symbolism of the one cup since it treats the sacrament as if there were four or six individual cups. The mingling of water and wine is required in the celebrant's chalice, but redundant in the others. (Answered by Fr. Douglas Martis).