

## Ritum Officialum pro Lavandis Pedibus Femminilibus

(Official Rite for the Washing of Female Feet)



### Preamble

A woman we know, who works for the church and therefore wishes to remain anonymous, submitted the following document for publication. She and her fellow workers in the vineyard were amused (she did not say they were edified) on reading it. The observant reader (and probably everyone else) will notice that this woman's Latin is lacking probably because she never had to study for the priesthood. Her liturgy, however, speaks for itself...

To All the Bishops of the World  
Beloved Brother and Son:

THIS MATTER of women's inclusion in the Rite has been sufficiently and exhaustively and fraternally and paternally treated in the recent document on the subject issued by the Sacred Congregation and titled *Quid Nunc Cupiunt?* ('What Do They Want Now?') However, as a gesture of our pastoral concern for both female persons (femminilibus) and clergy (clericis), who will now be called upon to participate in the Rite together (assieme et insieme), we have judged it expedient, prudent and vigilant to issue the following safeguards through the establishment of a liturgical vestment appropriate to the Rite:

1. This vestment shall now in perpetuity be called the *sox sanctorum*; or, in the vernacular, the sacred sock.
2. All female persons participating in the Rite of Footwashing shall be duly vested with the sacred sock according to the following liturgical rubric, prior to the Rite.
3. Similarly, the clerical celebrant of the Rite shall *cum omne cura* (with every care) perform each phase of the Rite in order to assure its validity and legitimacy.

## **Instructiones pro Femminilibus**

(Instructions for Female Foot – washees)

I. Female persons shall vest the sock, which must be of opaque fabric, pink in colour (clearly indicating and distinguishing their s\*\* and gender).

II. The sock must be worn on the right foot by the female footwashee *cum ditis pedibus extendis* (with only toes showing) and reaching as far up the leg as possible to prevent distraction by the clerical footwasher.

## **Instructiones pro clericis celebratis**

(Instructions for Clerical Foot – washers)

Upon approaching the female footwashee, the cleric celebrant footwasher shall grasp the extended right foot (recognisable now by the pink sacred sock) and shall *cum omne cura* pour water on the extended toes and in the instep area marked by the white cross only.

## **Pastoral Notes**

Pastoral Note 1.

If the toes of the aforementioned female foot (*pedis femminilis*) exhibit any ornament or nailpolish, the footwasher may, with great discretion and prudence, also pronounce an exorcism; but this must be done *in pectore* and *sotto voce* (in his heart and silently).

Pastoral Note 2.

The footwasher shall exercise great care in pouring water over the open area of the sacred sock, being diligent that the aforementioned water touch only the foot itself and not the fabric of the sock, lest he inadvertently confect a sacramental.

Pastoral Note 3.

In the latter case, the female footwashee shall be duly and pastorally instructed to bury or burn the sock after the Rite is completed. Since one is dealing with female persons, known to be deficient in the superior male virtues of wisdom and knowledge, the celebrant shall paternally and fraternally exhort the female footwashee to first remove her foot from the sock before burning or burying the aforesaid vesture.

Pastoral Note 4.

Remembering the example and word (*exemplum et verbum*) of the Lord, who instructed Mary Magdalene (a female person) '*Noli me tangere*' (Do not touch me) the clerical celebrant footwasher may, out of personal devotion and prudence, also choose to wear gloves when washing the female feet (*pedem femminilem*) even when such feet are appendages of consecrated persons.

Pastoral Note 5.

In the latter case, consecrated female persons (*religiosae, virgines, etc.*) must be fraternally and paternally exhorted to wear a distinctive sock, clearly distinguishable from those of lay female feet (*pedibus laicis femminilibus*). Such socks must be simple, poor, hygienic and modest, and at the same time becoming (cf. *Perfectae Caritatis*).

For validity, all official sacred socks must conform to this Vatican approved model (enclosed) sent with a benevolence to all the bishops of the world and especially to those of the United States, who are reportedly drafting a pastoral letter on the concerns of female persons (which topic is also treated at length in this Sacred Congregation's pastoral exhortation "*Quid nunc cupiunt?*" op. cit., and in the quasi apostolic fraternal and pastoral instruction these same bishops of the United States published in Italian as *Ma dove nel mondo andiamo?* ('Where on Earth Are We Going?'), soon to be available in English.

Anything to the contrary notwithstanding (or sitting).

Given at the Vatican this 19th day of March, 2000, Feast of St. Joseph, and promulgated by this Sacred Congregation for Decorous Worship and Women's Concerns and Other Miscellaneous Stuff Not Currently Handled by Existing Vatican Congregations.

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