



CM ALMY GUIDE

TO CARING FOR FINE
CHURCH LINENS

Congratulations on your purchase of Almy's fine church linens. With proper care, your new fair linen, credence cloth or communion linen will grace your eucharistic rites for years to come. Lovely as it is, pure linen is a demanding textile. Fortunately, sacristans over the ages have accumulated and shared valuable knowledge on how best to care for linen. Here are some suggestions we find helpful.

CLEANING LINENS

Always shake linens just removed from the communion table into the sacristy's piscina or outdoors over the ground. This is the proper way to dispose of any crumbs of consecrated bread that may remain on altar or communion linens.

STAIN REMOVAL

As soon as possible after removing linens from the sanctuary, inspect them for stains that may not come out in normal washing. Common stains include:

- ♣ **WINE** Spray the stain with Wine Away Red Wine Stain Remover© which is available from Almy. Let stand for 30 seconds before hand or machine washing. If Wine Away is not handy, cover wet stains with salt, immerse in cold water and sponge; treat dry stains with club soda, vinegar or white wine, cover with salt, immerse in cold water and sponge.
- ♣ **LIPSTICK** Apply Almy Candle Wax Remover® to the stain to dissolve the lipstick, then launder. If color remains, apply liquid detergent and let stand for 15 minutes, then wash. If color persists, soak in a half and half mixture of 3% peroxide and ammonia, then rinse and wash.

♣ **CANDLE WAX** Allow wax to cool and scrape excess away with the dull side of a knife, then apply Almy Candle Wax Remover® to the stain to dissolve the remaining wax, then wash with soap and water. An alternative (once excess is scraped away) is to place the stain between two pieces of blotting paper and press with a medium hot iron: the blotters will absorb the wax.

♣ **SOOT** Apply liquid detergent to the stain, rub and rinse. Repeat as necessary, then wash.

♣ **SCORCH** Rub cut onion into the mark, soak in cold water for an hour, then wash.

♣ **RUST** Apply cream of tartar to the stain and soak in hot water. Let water cool. Remove linen and wash.

♣ **MILDEW** Wash with soap and water, rinse and sun dry. If mildew persists, soak linen in 3% peroxide, then wash.

WASHING

For linens without lace cut work and in good condition, hand wash or machine wash on gentle cycle with pure soap or mild detergent. Wash water can be hot (for medium to heavy weight linen) to warm (for light weights). If needed, use water softener to improve the cleaning performance of the soap. Rinse thoroughly in warm water; rinse water should be clear. For linens with lace cut work, hand washing in warm water is strongly recommended. Chalice palls with stiff plastic linings should be hand washed, using a soft clean vegetable brush when necessary. For linens that have yellowed through age or infrequent use, try washing as

recommended and sun drying. Alternatively, boil yellowed linen for half an hour in a pot containing washing soda and soap. Finally, if bleach seems necessary, use an oxygen-type bleach such as Clorox 2 ©, not chlorine. Chlorine bleach will damage pure linen.

DRYING

Never dry linen “bone dry”—it harms the fiber and makes ironing very difficult. You may sun dry or machine dry until damp, or simply remove from the washer and prepare for ironing—this is especially recommended for linens with lace cut work as it makes stretching the linen back into shape much easier. Either way, ironing will be easier if you smooth and fold (or roll) linens into a clean dry towel and refrigerate the damp linen for several hours.

IRONING

Linen is a very “dynamic” fiber and ironing can be tricky; but these simple guidelines make the job very manageable.

♣ **PREPARATION** Cover your ironing board and surrounding surfaces with clean cotton sheets. Also, have a towel handy to lay beneath embroideries when pressing. Place the ironing near a large surface such as a bed or table on which you can place linens to dry after pressing. All surfaces around the ironing board should be clean. The iron should be hot and clean.

♣ **GENERAL** Iron damp linens on the “wrong side” first, using a steam iron if you choose, keeping hems square. Gently press embroideries and cut work into a towel; do not force the tip of the iron into the embroidery. Set aside to dry. When dry, press again on the “right side” with a dry iron to smooth hems and to create a polished look. Set aside to roll or fold. Never use starch on linen.

♣ **FAIR LINENS AND CREDECE TABLE CLOTHS**

For larger linens that will not fit on the ironing board, begin by arranging the damp linen on the floor next to the ironing board in an accordion fold. Then bring one end of the linen onto the ironing board, iron side to side keeping hems as square as possible, and draw the ironed linen off the board onto the adjoining table or bed to dry. When dry, arrange on the floor again and repeat the process, this time pressing on the “right side.” Roll the linen onto a cardboard roller right side up, keeping a slight tension to prevent wrinkles, and taking care to keep hems straight. Wrap the roll in tissue paper to protect it.

A Special Note about linens with heavily embroidered ends, particularly with lace cut work. If allowed to dry before pressing these will often shrink and twist out of shape. Don’t despair: with effort and help they can be put to rights. Assemble two or three helpers. Make sure linen is damp. Have helpers grasp linen at the hems and stretch while you press embroidery from the center of the linen toward the hems. This is how we do it in our Madeira and Maine shops!

FOLDING SMALL LINENS

♣ **CORPORAL** Place corporal on the ironing board right side up, with cross near you. Fold in thirds, folding the bottom side up, then the top side down. Finger press creases at the folds. Now fold the right side in (toward the left), and, finally, the left side in (to the right). Again, finger press creases.

♣ **PURIFICATOR** Place purificator on the ironing board right side down. Fold in thirds, right to left, left to right, bottom up, and top down. Finger press creases.

♣ **LAVABO TOWEL** Place lavabo on the ironing board right side down. Fold in thirds, right to left and left to right. Then fold in half, top down. Finger press creases.

♣ **CHALICE VEIL** Do not fold veils. Store flat.

STORAGE

Always be sure linens are clean before storing. Store Fair Linens, Credence Table Covers and other large linens on rolls, wrapped in tissue paper or muslin. Communion Linens should be stored folded or flat, wrapped in acid free tissue or muslin. Keep in a cool, dry, well ventilated area. If it is going to be some time before the linens are used, you may wrap them in plastic wrap or keep them in plastic bags. Do not store linens in cedar chests.

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1.800.225.2569 www.almy.com