



The Episcopal Diocese of Long Island

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TO: CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF LONG ISLAND
FROM: THE RT. REV. LAWRENCE C. PROVENZANO
DATE: FEBRUARY 4, 2020
RE: THE COMMON CUP

It seems that this year's cold and flu season is at its worse. Sinus infections, persistent coughing, running noses, sneezing, bronchitis and even pneumonia have been going around our parishes, our clergy and the diocesan office. And just when it seems to be letting up, it comes back with a vengeance. Every day on the news we hear that there are more cases of the coronavirus in the States. As leaders, you and I are called to do everything possible to keep our people safe and healthy.

I believe that now is the appropriate time to engage in a conversation around safe Liturgical practices. One of the concerns over the past 20 years has been about receiving from the common cup. The Center for Disease Control continues to state that "...no documented transmission of any infectious disease has ever been traced to the use of the common cup...." I hope that the following recommendations will be taken to heart and followed to the best of your ability.

The Cup of Blessing is a powerful and essential symbol of our communion one with another. Just as there is "one bread" so too there is "one cup of blessing which we bless." This symbolism remains powerful even if we do not use one physical loaf of bread (as some liturgists encourage) and even if large parishes and our cathedral often have more than one chalice for the distribution of communion. The Book of Common Prayer explicitly calls for "only one chalice on the Altar" because this symbolism is so central to our identity and liturgy.

Several years ago, the Anglican Church of Canada made the following suggestions:

- There is very little risk in the use of a common cup if a clean purifier is used appropriately. This means wiping both the **outside** and the **inside** of the lip of the cup, with a clean part of the purifier, each time the cup is administered. It is suggested that more than one purifier be readily available for the chalice bearers in larger congregations.
- It is imperative that Eucharistic ministers have clean hands when administering the bread. It is suggested that the lavabo be of an adequate size to accommodate some soapy water in which the hands can be truly cleansed and then rinsed by the pouring of additional water. The use of an alcohol hand sanitizer is also recommended.
- **Intinction by the communicant is strongly discouraged.** If communicants have a personal preference for this manner of receiving the Sacrament, it should be only the person administering the cup, who have utilized the lavabo, who intinct the host.
- Silver has a mildly antimicrobial effect which is beneficial, but it is not sufficient without the above-mentioned precautions.

The Right Reverend Lawrence C. Provenzano, Bishop

36 Cathedral Avenue, Garden City, NY 11530 • 516-248-4800 • Fax 516-877-1349 • www.dioceselongisland.org

- Receiving the Sacrament “in one kind” has always been, and continues to be, an acceptable alternative for communicants. While we promote the use of the common cup, we also want to offer this option for those who prefer it since it too has ancient precedent in our spiritual life. Indeed, this entire message is designed to retain our inclusive community with its rich heritage of commonality.

The Peace

The common practice in most congregations is that members of the congregation greet each other with a handshake. This is a prime opportunity for the spread of germs.

Holding Hands During the Lord’s Prayer

In some of our congregations the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer is an occasion when hands are held, offering yet another opportunity for the transmission of germs. It is noteworthy that this takes place after the priest has ritually cleansed his or her hands at the customary time of ablution.

Specific Recommendations:

In General

If the Celebrant or any of those assisting in the service feel ill, they should excuse themselves from worship that Sunday. The same holds true for members of the congregation who do not feel well; they should excuse themselves from attending Church that Sunday.

The Common Cup

We strongly recommend that all those responsible for congregational life and worship use this occasion as an opportunity to:

- Re-enforce sound Eucharistic teaching, with a special focus on the unifying symbol of the chalice,
- Reassure the faithful that, though mindful of this serious concern, there are options and prudent measures that are, and can be taken, to reduce the risk of infection,
- Offer refresher instructions on the basics of receiving Communion. There should be special emphasis on the protocols around intinction.
- When a communicant comes forward with their arms crossed on their chest, it is the universal sign within the Episcopal Church of receiving a blessing and not the Body and Blood of Christ,
- If a communicant would like the Body of Christ intincted into the Precious Blood, they are to leave the host in the palm of their hands and the chalice bearer will intinct it for them,
- It is to be noted that drinking from the chalice is the preferred way to receive the Precious Blood, for there is less chance of spreading germs,
- Review and amend altar guild procedures (especially as they have to do with ablutions and the provision of hand cleansers for the Celebrant and those administering Communion,
- Review and amend instructions for the ministers of Communion especially as regards the cleansing of their own hands, the proper use of a purificator and the practice of intinction.