



Catholic Courier

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COMMUNAL CUP

Tompkins advisory sparks questions of health safety

By Mike Latona, Staff writer

As director of the diocesan Office of Liturgy, Joan Workmaster has become accustomed to handling questions about the issue of churchgoers drinking wine from the same chalice.

"Over the course of a couple months, you get some calls saying, 'Should we be doing this?'" Workmaster said.

In recent months, however, the number of calls — and the level of concern — has risen dramatically from the southeast portion of this diocese.

The reason: an advisory issued two months ago by the Tompkins County Department of Health.

The memo — dated May

11 and issued to all Tompkins County churches — asked for those with a communal-cup policy to abandon this practice because one student each from Ithaca College and Cornell University had died earlier this year of meningitis, even though neither case was traced to receiving wine from a communal chalice at an area church.

"Meningococcal disease is spread by sharing nasopharyngeal (nose and throat) secretions," the memo stated. It added that the sharing the same drinking utensil was one activity which promotes this type of exchange, as well as sharing the same eating utensil, sneezing or coughing in someone's face, and kissing.

"As a safeguard to protect yourself and members of your religious organization, we urge you to use individual cups for

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