

Catholic Courier

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Letters Policy

The Catholic Courier wishes to provide space for readers throughout the diocese to express opinions on all sides of the issues. We welcome original, signed letters about current issues affecting church life.

Although we cannot publish every letter we receive, we seek, insofar as possible, to provide a balanced representation of expressed opinions and a variety of reflections on life in the church. We will choose letters for publication based on likely reader interest, timeliness and a sense of fair play. Our discerning readers may determine whether to agree or disagree with the opinions of the letter writers.

We reserve the right to edit all letters for length as well as legal concerns. With respect to errors in submitted text, we will correct spelling only. Anonymous letters and the use of pseudonyms are unacceptable.

Mail letters to: Catholic Courier, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. Please include your full name, phone number and complete address for verification purposes.

Retired dentist offers advice on cup

To the editors:

The communal cup as discussed in your issue of July 20th is really just half of the problem. Consider also the reception of the host.

At present when we receive the host the priest or Eucharistic minister alternates frequently between placing a host on the tongue or by handing the recipient a host. Tongue application not infrequently means dipping his or her fingers in the recipient's saliva. That saliva is then passed on almost immediately to the next communicant either through placing another host on the next tongue or by handing the next communicant a host which is contaminated with the saliva from their fingers.

Equally unsanitary is the communal cup. Almost all of us are taught by about kindergarten age that communal cups are a very dangerous thing and should be avoided. No one should doubt that there are many serious bacterial and viral infections that can be transmitted through saliva. Given that the recipient ahead of you may have bleeding gums or ulcerations of the oral tissues I would also have to consider all blood-borne infections a distinct although perhaps remote possibility.

As a retired dentist my professional training absolutely, categorically, and emphatically denies that viruses and bacteria are destroyed by a fleeting contact with alcohol. That is a specious and almost unpardonable argument constantly used to defend the communal cup. Any present day dentist who attempted to



provide sterility by wiping the instruments with a cloth and dipping them in wine momentarily would lose his or her license to practice as soon as the health authorities were made aware of that fact.

Director of the Diocesan Office of Liturgy, Joan Workmaster, states that it is part of our theology to drink from the common cup. I am forced to wonder how we ever ignored such important theology for all those years when we did not share the common cup. Are we really even sure the apostles shared a common cup at the last supper or did they have individual

cups filled perhaps from a common vessel? My scant knowledge of Jewish sanitary traditions would make me think in terms of individual cups or goblets filled from a common vessel.

My solution, which admittedly will not be appealing to all, is as follows. Priests and Eucharistic ministers, just prior to the distribution of communion, should actually wash their hands well with a disinfectant soap and water in full public view. I like to think Christ, who was raised under the sanitary provisions of Jewish law, would heartily approve if He were with us now and given our present knowledge of bacterial and virus transmission which was totally unknown in His lifetime here on earth.

Under my recommendations all hosts would be distributed by placement in the open palm of the recipient and the practice of the common cup would be discontinued. Small cups which could be washed and sanitized are a

reasonable possibility. Even better in my estimation would be that we recall the past and seemingly still valid theology which holds that Christ's Body and Blood are both fully present in the host.

Some will not like my solution and insist that they must receive the host on their tongue and/or share the common cup. Perhaps we could have an alternate line of communicants for those willing to share saliva with others. You will not find me in that line.

Walter C. Ervin Jr.
West Third Street, Elmira

Sanitation scare misses covenant's sanctity

To the editors:

I was pleased to see you addressing the subject of the Communal Cup in your July 20 issue. But why is there so much emphasis on the sanitation of the chalice? Is it because so many complain that it is not clean? After all, we were brought up to shun drinking from another's cup. How can we now share a cup with so many other people? Surely it must be contaminated — or maybe I myself could contaminate it.

In all the hubbub I don't find attention directed to the sanctity of the Cup — to the urgency of Jesus' directive: "Do this in remembrance of me." In Scripture (Matthew 26:27) when Jesus introduced the Sacrament of His love, that He might remain with us, many of His followers turned away; only the most ardent disciples remained. When I hold the Cup for communicants, I see a stream of people turning away — and I pray the Holy Spirit will help them to know the true meaning of the Communal Cup.

When the Cup is offered to me, I know that Jesus is making covenant with me. He is promising to remain with me always, He is my God and I am one of His people; whenever I call He will answer me. And I make covenant with Him: I believe He is the Son of God, sent by the Father, and I will follow Him wherever He leads me. He will hear my call in time of distress, and I will trust Him to help me to do His will. This is our covenant and He asks that I reaffirm it in Communion, recalling, "Do this in remembrance of

me."

In His infinite wisdom He could have foreseen the Public Health regulations of our day. Instead of saying, "Drink of the Cup that I may remain in you and you in me," He could have said, "Pour some of my blood into your cup and drink that you may have life in you."

Partaking of the Communal Cup is our final test of faith. It is an age-old way of making a solemn covenant in blood.

Mary V. Brown
Grove Street, Elmira

Would view illness as God's will

To the editors:

In regard to your July 20th article "Communal Cup:" I would be greatly saddened if my church ever decided to switch from the traditional communal cup.

Whatever happened to "thy will be done?" I think that if I ever "caught" any-

thing — ranging from a common cold to, yes, even meningitis — from sharing My Lord's sacrificial blood with other members of our parish I would consider it God's will. Enough said.

Joy L. May
Minstead Road
Marion

Questioning cup is evidence of doubt

To the editors:

What has happened to our faith in the Lord. Do you think for one minute that the Lord would make anything happen in the sharing of the Cup? It is "His" blood we are taking. I have always felt that your faith in Christ should be sufficient to answer such a question about passing a disease through the Communal Cup. Does anyone remember the story of Thomas and Jesus?

Vito L. Rimore
Still Meadow Drive, Macedon

Fr. Gauthier provided wonderful example

To the editors:

Again this year, we lost a very dear friend. We will miss Father George Gauthier, whom we have known and loved for over 30 years.



Father was always gentle, kind and generous with his counseling and "good sense" advice to all of our family. He tried very hard to put Vatican II

into practice, and he showed us how to be patient and understanding of those who did not agree.

Father was the epitome of long suffering, but rarely did he ever complain. He seemed to see the best in everyone and blamed no one. He was a wonderful example to all of us.

Blessed is this peace maker, for he shall see God.

Francis and Mary Pierce
East Lake Road
Livonia