

Wednesday, 19 October 2022

Dear Sisters and Brothers

Returning to the Common Cup and Related Matters

At the National Bishops' Meeting in Melbourne I discussed with the Primate and other Diocesan Bishops the matter of returning to the Common Cup.

I am now prepared to allow a return to the **Common Cup** in the Diocese of Grafton in those ministry units that choose to do so. While in some dioceses this has been left up to the Parish Council, I feel that as a worship matter it can be the decision of the incumbent. However, it would be wise to gauge the opinion of the Wardens and Parish Council before proceeding. The Pandemic is not over, just not spoken about as much, so I hope that incumbents can assess their context and act accordingly.

If you decide to offer the chalice there are a number of important issues you should carefully consider before proceeding.

Reports from other dioceses indicate that a large percentage of communicants will not want to drink from the chalice. Clear communication needs to take place to ensure that people know what to do if they don't want to drink the wine. If they are offered the chalice and do not wish to drink from it they can simply hold onto it reverently for a moment without drinking from it, or simply reverence it, before walking away.

If you are offering the chalice, is the presiding priest or other minister prepared to consume the remaining wine? If not, you shouldn't reintroduce it.

While no transmission of COVID-19 from the chalice has been reported, there remains a clear risk. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7439816/#bib6>

For reasons of hygiene please do **not** allow people to intinct their wafer in the chalice. If you are going to allow intinction please ensure that it is done by the priest or other minister who has been trained to do so hygienically.

A return to the Common Cup will also mean multiple touches of the chalice. This makes hand sanitisation immediately prior to, and after, receiving communion very important.

Those ministry units that are currently using individual cups may wish to continue to do so for the time being instead of, or as well as, offering the Common Cup.

On **related matters** there are no longer any restrictions or advice against the use of other multiple touch surfaces such as Prayer Books, Hymn Books, Collection Plate and so on. Many have already returned to using these but once again, the liberal use of hand sanitiser is important. The same applies to the **Greeting of Peace**. Should you wish to return to this, if you haven't already done so, be sensitive to the fact that some may not want to participate.

Perhaps suggest that people pass the Peace only with those sitting nearby and ensure the use of hand sanitiser after the Greeting of Peace and before Communion.

It has been a long time since we were able to drink from the Common Cup in Grafton Diocese and I would like to thank all clergy, other ministers and congregations for their patience and understanding. Some say I have been overly cautious in suspending the cup for so long, but our intention all along in Grafton has been to make our churches safe places to worship during the pandemic.

I'm sure that in whatever way you choose to proceed you will take careful and responsible steps to protect those attending worship, given that there are still thousands of new cases and several deaths every day in NSW from COVID-19.

Please don't hesitate to let me know if you have any questions regarding this matter.

Yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Murray".

Dr Murray Harvey
Bishop of Grafton

