October 1, 2019.

Dear Parishioners,

I’m writing in response to the reaction to my announcement on Sunday that the practice of INTINCTION (the dipping of the wafer into the chalice of wine) is not an acceptable practice in this Diocese and many others (as well as other denominations). Because I never administer the cup, I had no idea how many people practice intinction in this parish. I was stunned to learn that many do.

I apologize for springing this on you without preparing you more fully!

Let me give you the history behind the stopping of this practice.

In a letter to clergy on May 6, 2009 in the midst of the H1N1 Influenza A virus outbreak on the Island (also in the world,) our Diocesan Executive Officer at the time, wrote to clergy to inform them that after meeting with health authorities, it was recommended that the practice of intinction be stopped. Our current bishop has recently reiterated this position. From that May 2009 letter I quote,

*“A combination of current literature and expert medical advice concludes that sipping from the common cup and sharing a handshake represent minimal risk of transmission of contagion and fall within the parameters of the normal risks of daily living.*

*On the other hand, the practice of intinction is a higher risk activity; fingertips coming in contact with the bread which is then dipped in the wine or fingertips coming in direct contact with the wine may contaminate the shared wine with pathogens other than those found in saliva. The choice for a communicant, then, is to share the common cup or receive in only one kind (wine or bread). I appreciate that for some of you this may be a change in practice, but it is based upon the very best information and research.”*

It may sound counterintuitive that germs from our hands are of more concern that those from our mouths but the science backs it up.

I can say, that there are other good reasons to drink from the cup: firstly, sharing from a common cup done in memory of someone who ate and drank with friends and strangers is best replicated by actually sharing from the same cup; secondly, the higher alcohol content and the silver of the chalice work to kill any bacteria; and thirdly, I drink the remains of both cups at the end of each service, confident that the Holy Spirit protects me and nurtures me through what I take into my body.

That said, I respect people’s comfort level and habits so I encourage you to make a change if you practice intinction. You could –

* drink from the common cup;
* only receive the bread (this is FULL communion) and cross your arms across your chest to let the person administering the cup know that you do not wish to receive the cup; or,
* hold the host up to the outside of the chalice as it is offered to you.

I know it can be challenging to make a change to something that holds deep meaning for you. And I ask to consider making the change in light of the well-being of the whole community.

If you need to talk this through with me, please don’t hesitate to let me know.

Every blessing,

Selinde