



27<sup>th</sup> November 2009

### Message re Holy Communion

This weekend, the beginning of the Advent Season, we return to usual practices of receiving Holy Communion under both kinds.

Thank God, we avoided the spread of Swine 'flu and our winter 'flu season has passed.

However, this is an opportunity now to address some issues around the distribution and reception of the Eucharist.

1. The Church recently restored the practice of some act of reverence just before we receive the Eucharist. A slight bow is an adequate way of preparation. If you choose to genuflect, it would be safer and more practical to come up at the end of the line.
2. The Church has also recently withdrawn receiving under both kinds by self-intincting – receiving the host and then dipping it in the wine. Technically this is seen as *taking* rather than *receiving* Communion. This practice also risks cross infection from fingers to wine.
3. Those choosing to receive the host on the tongue please do so reverently, respectfully and carefully. Some now hardly open their mouth or put out their tongue at all. Others fully open their mouth and extend their tongue completely. Either of these extremes makes it very difficult to place the host on the tongue carefully or cleanly. Please use a mid-way position with the tongue only extended far enough to place a host safely. Out of consideration for the health of others, you might also consider coming up towards the end of the line.

Now some advice and direction for the Ministers of Eucharist:

1. The words to be said are "*The Body of Christ.*", "*The Blood of Christ.*" It is not necessary to say "*This is .....*" The practice of also adding people's names, when you know them, is an unnecessary personal intrusion, which distracts from the communicant's solemn and intimate Communion with the Lord.
2. The higher alcohol level (18%) in certified sacramental wine, the properties of silver or gold-plated chalices, plus the relative purity of fresh saliva, when taken together are, on medical advice, usually sufficient to overcome health concerns. More porous vessels (wooden or pottery cups and glasses) are less safe and worthy - so are better not used for Communion.
3. Those ministering the chalice should wipe only the place where the person has just received and then turn the vessel slightly. This reduces risk of cross infection rather than wiping the whole rim every time.
4. Given our humid climate, all Ministers of Communion should wash their hands carefully before Mass and then wash/wipe their fingers immediately before administering Communion. (A dish of water and towels or disposable tissues could be made available.)

Much of this may seem rather too precise or pedantic - yet basically - it is a matter of reverence for the Lord and a practical consideration for each other.

Yours truly in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Foley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J".

**James Foley**  
BISHOP OF CAIRNS