

D5 HOLY COMMUNION

Hygiene and the Chalice

Public concern about AIDS has aroused fears among some people that the sharing of the common cup might be a possible means of infection.

The advice of the medical authorities, through the Archbishops' Circular 1986, is that such fears are groundless. The virus which causes AIDS may be present in saliva, but research has shown that saliva inhibits the activity of the virus and that it has not been transmitted by being swallowed. There is therefore no reason to take special precautions when administering the chalice other than those listed below.

People who are infected by the virus or who have AIDS will be unusually susceptible to other infections and may wish, and should be allowed, to receive communion by intinction or in one kind.

Research on the chalice as a possible means of transmitting other types of infection has shown that the risk is extremely small. This can be reduced even further by the application of the normal rules of hygiene:

- A chalice of gold, silver or other suitable metal is to be preferred to pottery, particularly unglazed pottery.
- The rim of the chalice should be firmly wiped with a purificator after it has left the lips of each communicant. The same part of the purificator should not be used repeatedly, nor should it be allowed to become sodden.
- Anyone with cuts, sores or abrasions on their lips should receive communion by intinction or in one kind.
- In addition to ritual ablutions, the chalice should be thoroughly cleaned after use.
- Sacramental wine should have enough alcoholic content to be an effective antiseptic.

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