

Greetings St. Christopher's,

As our COVID season goes on (and on and on), I want to thank each member who worships with us, whether in real life or on FB Live. Whatever option you choose, Thank You for sharing Sunday morning with us. I do love Sunday mornings and it is a joy to share them with you!

In due course, the Virus will pass. When it does, we will sort out how to re-gather. I think that the new St. Chris's will be more effective on-line, even as we continue our "live" Sunday gatherings. Meanwhile, over the next weeks we will fully implement our newly acquired video and audio tech, to allow continual improvement in the presentation of our on-line services.

An entire congregation lives just outside our doors. Our good work is to help them hear The Good News -- Episcopal Style!

The Virus *has* necessitated some accommodations. Give me a moment to how we celebrate Communion.

I know that many of us miss wine at Communion. Although I was a Catholic high-school seminarian, I married a fine Episcopal girl in 1985, and through my beloved Dana, was led to Episcopal reception in 1989. I am an Episcopal priest.

For me, Eucharist in the wine and the bread, i.e., in both "species", is a pure joy. While I understand that Catholic theology provides for Communion in the bread alone, I miss the Communion wine very much --like many of you!

Yet, the Virus requires us to exercise great caution, if not for ourselves, then for our parish and the people we love. One precaution is limiting our Communion to the bread. The use of a common cup is a plain risk, and consecrated wine must be handled with great respect and care. The distribution of consecrated wine by small plastic cups, or some other means, raises awkward questions of respectful and risk free service, distribution, consumption, collection, and cleaning. Spillage alone is an awful thought.

The service of wine in Communion has not been authorized by our Bishops. With respectful reflection, and knowing well how difficult this circumstantial change is, for many of us, I do concur with our leaders.

Thus, for the time being, our Morning Prayer Sunday worship services will be Eucharist, with bread only. In the right time, we will return to our preferred service.

We Episcopalians are the American branch of the Church of England. Holy Communion is one of our vital sacraments; it is the Lord's Real Presence, and an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. The Eucharist is a sure and certain means by which we receive that grace because it brings Christ to us, in a full sense, whether in both "species" or in the bread alone.

We share, with many other Protestant churches, the understanding that Communion is preferred when offered in both the Wine and the Bread. Yet, we accept the Catholic understanding that God is fully present in one or both species. As such, we bring Eucharist to persons, who are home bound or in hospital, in the Bread alone.

For some of us, Communion without wine may feel incomplete or perhaps a bit sad. It weighs on me, too. Yet, I pray that these hard days may be a reminder of the suffering of Christ's people, in exile, or isolation or persecution, not only in the past, but in our World, today. May we be reminded, in our inconvenience, to pray and to work for those whose suffering and loneliness and grief are real.

With my prayers for the Lord's Peace, and for every Blessing...

I remain your Servant and your Rector,

-Fr. Steve