

Diaconate Ministry of the Elderly, Sick, and Dying



TRAINING



INTRODUCTION

The Retirement Facility Committee compiled these resources to assist you & EMHCs from your parish when visiting the residents of a facility, patient in a hospital or a parishioner who is homebound.

The resources consist of:

- » A brief history of the Communion Ministry (Appendix 1)
- » Frequently asked questions & resource pages.
- » A Training page on conducting a Communion Service.
- » Possible scenarios & situations that could arise during a visit and responses to effectively manage a situation with Pastoral care.
- » A pamphlet template for family members of the resident/patient. Offering the residents' continual prayer in wanting their family member to practice their faith.

The pamphlet is in a Publisher file, so that you can insert your name and parish information. If you do not have Publisher available to you, you can send Amy the information to personalize the pamphlet.

When printing the pamphlet double sided it is best to flip the page on the short edge, so the copy on the 2nd page is right side up.

- » A PowerPoint presentation by Deacon John Volk, MD on issues those who are in the later stages of life face.



DEACON RETIREMENT FACILITIES COMMITTEE TRAINING

I. Training Deacons for Ministry in Retirement Facilities

- a. Developing relationships with Program Managers
- b. Visiting with residents, and their families and developing relationships with them.
- c. Review and understand the training Power Point from Deacon John Volk M.D.

Retirement Facilities Committee-Outline on how a Deacon can preside at a Communion Service in an ordinary situation. (Below attachments in English/Spanish)

II. Communion Service-Ordinary Situation

- a. Introductory Rite
- b. Penitential Rite
- c. Liturgy of the Word -Readings of the Day
- d. General Intercessions
- e. Lord's Prayer
- f. Sign of Peace
- g. Invitation for Communion
 - » Distribution of Communion
- h. Concluding Prayer
- i. Blessing
- j. Dismissal

III. Communion Service-Extraordinary Situation

This is a judgement call by the Deacon based on the individual's situation however, some conversation should always be the first thing to assess if the person is able to receive the Blessed Sacrament worthily.



HOLY COMMUNION OUTSIDE OF MASS

Outline of the Rite

Lay Ministers /Catechesis reflect on the scripture readings, the Sacraments especially Penance and Holy Eucharist. What is sin? Etc. **please do before you begin the Service.** It is easy to dovetail this into giving the guidelines of receiving the Blessed Sacrament in the Catholic Church. We are all part of the universal church and need to mirror what she asks us to do.

Guidelines of receiving Communion in the Catholic Church

(Guidelines of receiving the Blessed Sacrament in the Catholic Church: you have to be Catholic, baptized by priest or deacon; you must be in the state of grace that means no grave sin on your soul. If you have grave sin, you must go to

Confession to a priest before receiving Communion. You should fast for one hour from food and drink, medicine is ok with water.)

- » **Introductory Rites:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
(R) *Amen*
- » **Greeting:** Brothers and sisters, the Lord invites us to his table to share in the Body of Christ: bless him for his goodness. (R) *Blessed be God forever*
- » **Penitential Rite** (includes Confiteor, May almighty God-NO Kyrie)
- » **Liturgy of the Word**
 - Scripture Readings**
 - Psalm**
 - Gospel** (only clergy say “The Lord be with you”)
 - General Intercessions**
 - Lord’s Prayer**
- » **Sign of Peace:** Let us offer each other the sign of peace
- » **NO Agnus Dei -Lamb of God**
- » **Invitation to Communion** (if you are presiding over a Communion Service otherwise, skip)
- » **Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.** (R) *Lord I am not worthy that you enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.*
- » **Distribution of the Blessed Sacrament** (EMHC -DO NOT RECEIVE COMMUNION ON YOUR OWN)
- » **Concluding Prayer**
- » **Concluding Rite:** (Let us pray) O God who have willed that we be partakers in the one Bread and the one Chalice, grant us we pray, so to live that, made one in Christ, we may joyfully bear fruit for the salvation of the world. Through Christ our Lord. (R) *Amen*
- » **Blessing** (Lay ministers: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen)
- » **Dismissal:** GO IN THE PEACE OF CHRIST (R) *Thanks be to God.*



SAGRADA COMUNIÓN FUERA DE MISA

Esquema del rito

Los Ministros Laicos / Catequesis reflexionan sobre las lecturas de las Escrituras, los Sacramentos, especialmente la Penitencia y la Sagrada Eucaristía. Que es el pecado Etc. por favor haga antes de comenzar el servicio. Es fácil encajar esto para dar las pautas para recibir el Santísimo Sacramento en la Iglesia Católica. Todos somos parte de la iglesia universal y necesitamos reflejar lo que ella nos pide que hagamos.

Pautas para recibir la comunión en la iglesia católica

(Pautas para recibir el Santísimo Sacramento en la Iglesia Católica: tienes que ser católico, bautizado por un sacerdote o diácono; debes estar en el estado de gracia que significa que no hay pecado grave en tu alma. Si tienes un pecado grave, debes ir a Confesarse con un sacerdote antes de recibir la Comunión. Debe ayunar durante una hora después de comer y beber, la medicina está bien con agua.

- » **Ritos introductorios:** En el nombre de! Padre, y de! Hijo y de! Espíritu Santo. (R) *Amen*
- » **Saludo:** Hermanos y hermanas, el Señor nos invita a su mesa para compartir el Cuerpo de Cristo: bendecirlo por su bondad. (R) *Bendito sea Dios por siempre*
- » **Rito Penitencial** (incluye Confiteor, Dios todopoderoso ... NO Señor, ten piedad ...)
- » **Liturgia de la palabra**
 - Lecturas bíblicas**
 - Salmo**
 - Evangelio (solo el clero dice que el Señor este contigo)**
 - Intercesiones Generales**
 - Orador del Señor (Padre Nuestro)**
- » **Signo de la paz:** Dense Fraternalmente la Paz
- » **NO Agnus Dei -Cordero de Dios**
- » **Invitación a la Comunión** (si esta presidiendo un Servicio de Comunión de lo contrario, omita)
- » **Este es el Cordero de Dios, que quita el pecado del mundo. Dichosos los invitados a la cena del Señor.** (R) *Señor, no soy digno de que entres en mi casa, pero una palabra tuya bastará para sanarme.*
- » **Distribución de! Santísimo Sacramento** (EMHC -NO RECIBIR COMUNIÓN POR SU PROPIA)
- » **Oración conclusiva**
- » **Rito de conclusión:** (Oremos) Oh Dios, que ha querido que seamos partícipes del único Pan y el único Caliz, concédenos que oremos, para vivir eso, hecho uno en Cristo, podemos dar frutos con gozo para la salvación del mundo. A través de Cristo nuestro Señor. (R) *Amén*
- » **Bendición** (Ministros laicos: Que el Señor nos bendiga, nos proteja de todo mal y nos lleve a la vida eterna. Amen)
- » **Despido:** Pueden ir en paz. (R) *Demos gracias a Dios.*



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Deacons May Ask About Holy Communion to the Sick and Those in Facilities

What is the need for a deacon's ministry while visiting the hospitals, nursing homes, and retirement homes?

Deacons can find a good answer in the following quotation:

“In these and many other formal ways, the deacon leads the community to reflect on its communion and mission in Jesus Christ, especially impelling the community of believers to live lives of service.” The deacon, in effect, sacramentalizes service. “By his own faithful practice of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, the deacon ‘by word and example’...should work so that all the faithful, in imitation of Christ, may place themselves at a constant service of the brothers and sisters.” **(National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States of America, paragraph 34, USCCB, 2nd Ed, 2021)**

The deacon is a **disciple of Christ** as are all baptized Christians. “As a [participant] in the one ecclesial ministry [the deacon] is a specific sacramental sign, in the Church, of Christ the Servant. His role is to ‘express the needs and desires of the Christian communities’ and to be ‘a driving force for service, or *diakonia*,’ which is an essential part of the mission of the Church.” **(National Directory, paragraph 39)**

The deacon's encounter with those who are being cared for away from their homes and parishes is similar to the disciples walking with Jesus on the road to Emmaus; albeit, the disciples in this case are less able to make the journey without the deacon's presence, understanding, love, diligence, and assistance from Jesus Christ. Yet, in many situations, the emotions of the disciples are similar to those who are elderly and sick.

The deacon carries to the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity (Jesus Christ) to those Catholics who need HIM in their time of deep need.

The deacon will be the conduit for the Lord to nourish and bless those who are not able to be with their parishes for Holy Mass.

The deacon is the person who understands what is needed to assist the person when the occasion warrants a priest for Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick.

The deacon's presence may help influence through charitable evangelization those who witness the work of the Savior for his loved one.

The deacon's visit ought to be an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to influence someone who is away from the Church to return.

The deacon is the servant representing the Mystical Body of Christ alive through the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

The deacon participates in the Ministry of the Word and of the Liturgy; however, he also embodies the Church's Ministry of Charity: “Educating and helping in the exercise of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy by the Church; fostering by facilitation, motivation, and organizations the Church's social justice ministry and the preferential option of the poor.” **(National Directory, paragraph 13)** The deacon can be a bridge of Christ the Servant in serving those unable to come to the Sacraments and Holy Mass.



Where does a deacon receive his ministry to visit hospitals, nursing homes, and retirement homes (H-N-R), conducting Communion Service as needed?

The deacon is appointed by his Decree of Stable Appointment to Diaconal Ministry to be available and conduct ministerial duties in hospitals, homes, and retirement homes within the Archdiocese of Denver but in particular cases will need a letter of good standing to minister as a Deacon.

What information or training guide is available for a deacon to reference regarding the H-N-R mentioned above?

The Office of Liturgy (ref: Archden.org under Offices) has assembled an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion Training Booklet (September 2018) to instruct lay persons in this ministry on how to accomplish their mandated service. The deacon, of course, is an Ordinary Minister of Holy Communion; he should find practical guidelines for actions outside of Holy Mass. (You can find a picture of this booklet in the *Resource Guide for Holy Communion Outside of Mass* on this website. *These and other books can be purchased at Gerken's Religious Goods from their online catalog or contact: sales@gerkens.com or (303) 534-8233. The books are located conveniently on one page of the catalog. They have a book specialist who can answer your inquiries.*)

What other sources are available for a deacon for information and guidance?

In addition to the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion Training Booklet (mentioned above), the Archdiocese of Denver Pastoral Handbook has a section on Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (Section 5.4.10) which gives guidelines apropos to their ministry. It can serve to help the deacon understand the EMHCs and the Archdiocese's guidance for these men and women. **(You can access this booklet online at Archden.org and click on Offices and then find the Office of Liturgy, click on that link, and look for the link to the booklet, current 2018 edition.)**

What kind of books or booklets are available for the deacon to help in his H-N-R (hospitals, nursing homes, and retirement homes) ministries?

The Office of the Diaconate has provided a *Resource Guide for Holy Communion Outside of Mass* listing books and pamphlets to use in this diaconal ministry. (This resource guide also provides pictures of the books and pamphlets.) It is important to have a book like the ***Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum***, in case you are taking viaticum to someone who is dying.

What book should a deacon use in his ministry to visit hospitals, nursing homes, and retirement homes (H-N-R) the homebound?

The ***Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum*** is the book used by deacons for visit to hospitals, nursing homes, and retirement homes or visits to private homes.



RESOURCE GUIDE FOR HOLY COMMUNION OUTSIDE OF MASS

The following list are books or booklets available for Holy Communion Outside of Mass. These can be tailored for Deacons and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. **(Pictures of the books or pamphlets are provided for visual reference.)**



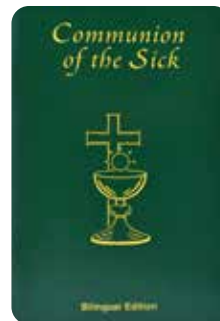
A Ritual for Lay Persons*
 Liturgical Press
 ISBN 978-0-8146-6505-3
 (Lexide cover)
 2012



Administration of Communion to the Sick by and Extraordinary Minister, Order of Saint Benedict
 Liturgical Press
 2011
 Small pamphlet-hard paper



Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum**
 Catholic Book Publishing Corp. (T-156)
 1983
 ISBN 978-0-89942-156-8



Communion of the Sick
 (bilingual)
 Catholic Book Publishing Corp.
 (T-82)
 ISBN 978-0-89942-082-0
 2013
 Green cover





Administration of Communion and Viaticum by an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion

(bilingual)
USCCB
June 2018
ISBN 978-1-60137-335-9



Communion of the Sick

Liturgical Press
ISBN 978-0-8146-3455-4
2012
Navy cover



Holy Communion Outside Mass Order of Saint Benedict

Liturgical Press
2012
Small pamphlet-soft paper

*Expensive book (Lexide cover) at approximately \$16.95. The more expensive fake leather book is \$29.95.

**Do not know if this is updated to 2011 changes to the Roman Missal.

The Vendors are listed with the books, they can also be purchased locally at Gerken's: Gerken's Religious Supplies (gerkens.com)



SITUATIONS & SCENARIOS IN MINISTRY TO CARE FACILITIES

Communion Services

Are there guidelines to help me with my visit?

The Archdiocese Liturgy Office should be contacted about the guidelines they provide for training Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion(EMHC). The Archdiocese of Denver “EMHC Training Booklet” can be found here: <https://archden.org/office-liturgy/ministry-guidelines-policies/>. Keep in mind, that if a priest or deacon is present, they have precedence and should administer the Sacrament of Eucharist as they are Ordinary Ministers and are “ordered” to administer the Eucharist.

When coordinating volunteer Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) to offer communion at a particular retirement facility where the volunteers are from across multiple parishes, is there standardized training to be provided by the ministry lead serving the retirement facility?

The Archdiocese Liturgy Office should be contacted about the guidelines they provide for training Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion(EMHC). The Archdiocese of Denver “EMHC Training Booklet” can be found here: <https://archden.org/office-liturgy/ministry-guidelines-policies/>.

Should each EMHC be mandated and currently serving at their parish?

Yes. Their service at the parish may include parish Masses or may be exclusive to communion services in a care facility setting or visiting the homebound.

How often should the retirement ministry volunteers be retrained?

Retraining for the ministry is at the discretion of the ministry coordinator based on identifying need, new volunteers, and changes in ministry protocols. Retraining may coincide with the need to mandate/re-mandate ministers as based on the Archdiocese of Denver guidelines.

COVID precautionary protocols: how to address/involve those volunteers who decline to receive Covid vaccinations (or observe masking protocols) when they are barred from entry into the retirement facility?

While they are unable to serve in-person, perhaps they can be involved in a virtual meeting or a recorded presentation. They could also be involved praying for the ministry, those serve and moreover, the residence of the Retirement facilities.

In a communion service, there may be present non-Catholics and non-practicing Catholics. There can potentially arise uneasiness or friction between them and the minister. This is especially noticed when praying and in the offering of communion, where these residents may feel excluded and unwelcome.

This can be a pastorally (a statement prior to your Communion Service explaining the guidelines of receiving Communion prior to starting the Communion Service is very helpful.) approach by putting more emphasis on the Word of God and prayers, inviting those who cannot receive communion to participate fully in these parts of the service. At the time of communion, the recitation of the prayer of Spiritual Communion would be appropriate. Personal contact with these residents, outside of the service, either before or after, can help in expressing care and charity toward them. Where necessary, simply express the reality of the Eucharist and why it is necessary for those not in position to receive, to simply ask for a blessing.



In celebrating a scheduled communion service at a facility, the center personnel do not invite and help the residents to attend, nor do they assist by setting up the area with table(s) and chairs.

This situation may be worked out with requesting the specific help needed from the care facility personnel. There may be a need for the minister to do some advanced set-up and invitations to residents. There may be fewer attendees present for the service, and therefore the need to visit more residents room-to-room.

After removing the Eucharist from the parish tabernacle and taking the pyx to the retirement facility to distribute Holy Communion, if there are additional consecrated hosts left after the visit. Is it more reverent/appropriate to personally consume the hosts or to bring the consecrated hosts back to the parish to be reposed with those already present in the tabernacle?

In all moments and situations, reverence for the Body of Christ must be maintained. This includes the time of receiving or taking hosts from the tabernacle, transporting them without delay to the communicant(s) and, immediately afterwards, returning them to the tabernacle or consuming the remaining hosts. A general rule can be to return them to the tabernacle, if access is possible, if there are five or more hosts. If there are less than five hosts remaining, they may be consumed by the minister. This consumption of the remaining hosts should be done in a way that is not observed by residents. If possible, to avoid a large remaining number of hosts, as accurate a count as possible of the number of people who will be receiving communion should be known beforehand.

Visiting Residents

Are you permitted to assist retirement residents with sitting up, retrieving a cup of water, etc. when administering Holy Communion? Or are these activities considered “providing care” and therefore prohibited?

Assisting in moving them physically should not be attempted. Ask facility personnel for help. An exception may be in helping someone already in a wheelchair to attend or otherwise find a place to sit at a communion service. If water is already provided for the resident(s), it may be appropriate to hand them the cup.

Should you give the Eucharist to a resident who is listed as Catholic and marked as desiring to receive the sacrament, but who does not appear to be mentally lucid?

In other words, you are uncertain of whether the individual comprehends the sacrament being received in the host. Yes, it is appropriate, even if they are not mentally lucid at that moment.



How to deal with retirement residents who are asleep when you arrive to their room? Is it appropriate to wake them?

If so, in what fashion? If you know from previous conversations the resident's desire to be awakened, it may be appropriate to try to awaken them. Otherwise, it is better not to awaken a sleeping resident.

It is sometimes difficult to find a family point-of-contact for visits, especially if there are needs with scheduling or with other competing visitors.

When possible, this point-of-contact may be determined through the facility/company. If this information cannot be shared with the minister, the minister may leave their contact information with the facility, asking that it be given to the family and requesting contact.

There is a situation of determining the frequency of requesting priest visits, including the offering of sacraments (Mass, confessions, anointing of the sick).

This may be determined best in consultation with the priest(s) who schedule visits to this facility. Recognize also, that if it is an emergency anointing that the priest should be contacted and a confirmation for the time of his visit should be determined.

We observe a "failure to thrive" situation. Failure to thrive is mainly extremely poor living conditions, soiled bedding, spoiled food, dirty bathrooms, meds not getting dispensed, etc. - it's basically an elderly person being left to fend for themselves when they can't.

This may be the reality of the situation. There may be opportunities to share this information with family members for their consideration. There is a state board that regulates these facilities. Most likely, the state has already given a low rating to the facility, and they are, hopefully, taking steps to improve conditions. Also, recognize that, as Deacons, we are mandatory reporters of elderly abuse. If this is the case, the local law enforcement agency should be notified immediately.

A care facility within a deacon's parish boundaries has previously received ministries, coordinated through the archdiocese, from an order of priests at another parish/high school. These ministries at the facility are subsequently withdrawn. Is the deacon free to coordinate a communion service and other ministries with the facility? And who does he need to inform of the arrangement?

There can be a communication to the archdiocese to request clarification of the situation and, if appropriate, to make known the intention of offering to minister to this facility. The Pastor of the parish whose territory includes this facility should be informed and permission granted by him.



Hospitals

What happens when I find out that the patient being visited, in the hospital, is in isolation?

If you check in with the Charge Nurse or the person monitoring the floor, they will tell you this. They will also inform you whether you can visit or not. If you can visit, they will require you to wear protective clothing provided by the facility. It is helpful to have the liturgical scripts, scripture readings, etc. on a phone or disposable printed copy in case you need to enter a quarantine area where taking a book in and out may not be a good idea. If you cannot, it would be good to meet with a family member, if possible, and assure them of your prayers for their loved ones.

General

Does a deacon need to check in with the receptionist or front desk at any facility or hospital they visit?

It is recommended that a deacon announce himself or (in case of a hospital) check with the Charge Nurse on the hospital floor when visiting patients.

What does a deacon do if he understands from a visit that a priest is needed?

The deacon should check with the hospital chaplain or call the parish covering the facility or hospital. The chaplain may have the contact numbers in hand. They can also check with the pastor of the parish they attend. If they are local, their pastor should be able to anoint and provide an apostolic blessing.

There are times when the laity ask me how to handle giving the Host to someone who has difficulty swallowing. What are some of the options we have for residents?

If the resident has difficulty swallowing, the host should not be given. There is an opportunity to share scripture and to pray with the resident. In some situations, it may be determined that a small fraction of the host may be appropriate. Also, for any resident, having a drink of water available after consuming the host may be appropriate.

Considering this previous scenario, how should a Host that touches the mouth of the resident and is returned after partially consuming it be handled? At the parish, we have an Ablution Cup to dissolve the Hosts before putting them down the sacrarium. How should the Host be handled if that is not available when a deacon or laity are at a residential care facility or visiting a homebound person?

One possible solution is to enfold the host in a cloth, use a container as an ablution cup, and when dissolved, pour the contents into an area with soil.



Additional Suggestions – This is a Ministry of Presence!

- » Ask if a frequent visit needs to be set up to come back on a regular basis.
- » Can something be brought to the communicant as a connection to the parish? A bulletin, a prayer card, a book, or other gift. This may be dependent on the nature of the need of the person. A small gift can bring joy.
- » Make time. Some people are good with a quick visit. Some may be lonely and may need a friend to just talk to. Bring a positive story, a smile, a laugh that they may encounter Christ in both the Eucharist and in the minister.
- » Ask about personal needs and prayer intentions. Keep a notebook afterwards of what was discussed with people so that the next time you go you can review past notes and follow up on prayer needs or conversations about people.
- » **Listen. And listen. And listen. That seems to be the most important thing to do.**



ENGAGING FAMILY OF THE RESIDENTS IN THEIR FAITH JOURNEY

The Love of Christ and the Good News

We would like to provide support to our brothers and sisters that are living in retirement homes, assisted living care facilities or the homebound and their families with their spiritual needs.

Many times the prayers of the elderly and sick are often focused on their illness or disability and are willing to suffer through pain in an effort to get their children back to church if they are not going to Mass. If you or your family member would like to be contacted by a deacon for prayer intentions or spiritual guidance, please call or email the deacon listed below.

MASS TIMES

CONFESSION TIMES

Prayer for renewed strength

O Lord, my God, Please give me the grace to maintain my hope in you through all of life's changes and to taste and see your goodness.

I praise you for the gifts you have showered on me for so many years.

Help me find joy in a renewed strength of spirit. Please bless me with good health, and inspire me to be a good example to others.

For you are Lord, forever and ever. Amen.



INVOLUCRAR A LAS FAMILIAS DE LOS RESIDENTES EN SU VIAJE DE FE

El Amor de Cristo y las Buenas Nuevas

Nos gustaría brindar apoyo a nuestros hermanos y hermanas que viven en hogares de ancianos, centros de atención de vida asistida o los confinados en el hogar y sus familias con sus necesidades espirituales.

Muchas veces, las oraciones de los ancianos y los enfermos suelen centrarse en su enfermedad o discapacidad y están dispuestos a sufrir el dolor en un esfuerzo por hacer que sus hijos regresen a la iglesia si no van a misa. Si deseas ser contactado por un diácono para intenciones de oración u orientación espiritual, por favor llama o envía un correo electrónico al diácono que se indica a continuación.

TIEMPOS DE MISA

TIEMPOS DE CONFESION

Oracion por una fuerza renovada

Oh Señor, Dios mío, por favor dame la gracia de mantener mi esperanza en ti a través de todos los cambios de la vida y probar y ver tu bondad.

Te alabo por los dones que me has colmado durante tantos años.

Ayúdame a encontrar la alegría en una renovada fuerza de espíritu. Por favor bendíceme con buena salud e inspírame a ser un buen ejemplo para los demás.

Porque tu eres el Señor, por los siglos de los siglos. Amén.



APPENDIX I - BEGINNING THIS MINISTRY

History

A half century ago, parish Priests expended a major portion of their time and energy bringing Holy Communion to the sick or homebound. Each Priest would have a list of a few or perhaps several dozen persons unable to participate in Mass at church. Usually once a month, often trying to make that visit on a First Friday, the clergy would call upon those ill or confined, carefully carrying the Blessed Sacrament to them.

This pattern changed radically and rapidly after January 29, 1973. At that time Pope Paul VI issued an instruction on “Facilitating Sacramental Communion in Particular Circumstances.” This document and a subsequent section published for inclusion in the Roman Ritual, “Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass,” approved extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

Where insufficient numbers of ordinary ministers (Priests or Deacons) existed, trained and commissioned laypersons were now allowed to assist at Mass with the distribution of Holy Communion and to bring the Eucharistic Lord to those confined at home because of illness or other factors.

There was an immediate and swift implementation of those decrees in the United States. Within a mere decade extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion numbered in the hundreds of thousands. It would, to illustrate, not be uncommon today for a large development of a ministry for laypersons bringing Communion to the sick took on a remarkable, inspiring and positive life of its own.

Lay persons began to carry the Eucharistic Lord to those confined at home on a more frequent basis, even on Sundays. Such a desired practice was and is simply not physically feasible for parish Priests. But a corps of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion could, did and continue to do just that.

A 1983 ritual book for the United States, *Pastoral Care of the Sick*, reflects that rapid and enormous development. In its introduction to a chapter on “Communion of the Sick,” the text states that Priests with pastoral responsibilities should arrange that the sick or aged, even though not seriously ill or in danger of death, be given opportunities to receive the Eucharist frequently, even daily, especially during Easter Time and particularly on Sundays.

This was not a possibility 50 years ago. Thanks to the introduction of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, it is indeed possible and has currently become a common reality in American parishes.



Initial Procedure

Those who will for the first time serve as extra-ordinary ministers of Holy Communion to the sick should find the following explanatory steps helpful:

1. A parish Priest or his delegate will identify the who, where and when of the person(s) to receive Communion.
2. The minister needs a special closed vessel in which to carry the host. This could be a metal pyx, a leather container or a cloth burse.
3. The Priest or his delegate will indicate how the Blessed Sacrament host will be obtain, ideally within Mass, but possibly outside a Eucharistic celebration.
4. The extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, if at all feasible, proceeds directly and without delay to the home of the confined person.
5. Upon arrival, the minister may sit down and visit for a few minutes in a friendly way with the sick person and others who are present.
6. After establishing that cordial rapport, the minister shifts the tone of the experience and begins the Communion ritual. The confined person may have prepared a table with white cloth, candles, crucifix, glass of water and spoon. In most circumstances, however, that will not be the situation. In such instances, the minister merely finds a suitable spot upon which to place the Communion vessel, a location where all can see the pyx, container or burse.
7. The minister follows the ritual provided (pages 9-41). Reading through these texts beforehand will provide a greater familiarity with the prayers and readings as well as afford an opportunity to decide which options will be selected during the actual carrying out of the rite.
8. Afterwards, the minister either returns the vessel to the parish or retains it for future occasion
9. If this is to become a continual and regular responsibility, the minister will want to study Appendices II and III, "Pastoral Guidelines" and "Inner Qualities" (pp. 45-51).
10. If time and circumstances permit, it might be very fruitful to read the appropriate Gospel to the Communicant.. Appendix II, Section 4, *Sacred Scripture*, p. 46, and Appendices V and VI (pp. 54-64) will be helpful in that task.



APPENDIX II - PASTORAL GUIDELINES

Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion who carry the Eucharist to those confined at home may find these pastoral suggestions useful.

I. Official Instructions

The “Introduction” to the Rite for Communion of the Sick contains in the typically succinct, but profoundly rich style of Church documents many practical, theological and spiritual truths pertinent to this ministry. Those selected for this noble task would do well to read, study and ponder these few pages (pp. 5-7).

2. Church Community

A close connection does or should exist between the healthy believers gathered for Mass and those confined persons unable to be present. In addition to prayer for the sick during every Eucharistic celebration, two specific possibilities can underscore this link between those in church and those at home.

- a. A Simple Process. The ministers to the sick come forward for Holy Communion with the rest of the community in the usual fashion. However, before their own reception of the host, they open the Communion pyx, container or burse and indicate how many consecrated hosts they need. After placing the filled pyx in their pockets, they receive the Lord themselves and return to their seats, later embarking upon this journey of love to the homebound.
- b. A Solemn Process. In this ideal, but not always feasible procedure, the ministers to the sick leave their pyx, containers or burses before Mass with those arranging the liturgy, indicating how many hosts are required. During the distribution of Communion, appropriate persons place the desired numbers in each container and leave these on the altar. Following the Prayer after Communion, the presiding Priest summons the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion forward and addresses them with these or similar words:

“You special and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to the sick, receive the Eucharistic Lord and carry Christ to our beloved homebound parishioners. Tell them we care about and are praying for them. Mention today’s message (*here the Priest may summarize the Homily in one or two sentences*). Ask them to pray for us and to offer their troubles to God on our behalf.”

After the dismissal of Mass, they join the altar ministers in the recessional.

3. Parish connections

The ministers would do well to pick up a copy or copies of the weekly bulletin and bring these with them to the homebound. In addition, they might tape the Homily or at least make written or mental notes about its major points for use later at the home of those confined. Moreover, they also may recall any practical announcements made at the end of the Mass. This information would be communicated after the reading of Scripture and following the Communion service.



4. Sacred Scripture

The ritual provides five brief excerpts from the Gospel and the first letter of John. As a praiseworthy alternative to these texts, a minister might bring his or her own Bible and read the Gospel designated for that particular Sunday. Appendix V (pp. 54-59) indicates the correct Sunday for every year through 2029. Appendix VI (pp. 60-64) then identifies the proper Gospel for each Sunday and several major Feasts. A pocket-sized New Testament combined with this ritual booklet should make the task relatively simple and easy.

5. Universal Prayer

By paying close attention to the Universal Prayer at Mass, ministers will have some ready-made intentions for the Universal Prayer with the homebound. They, of course, could also create their own petitions and invite further ones from those present. Appendix N offers guidelines and suggestions for them (pp. 52-53).

6. Priest's Presence

Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are both desirable and necessary. But occasional or even regular visits by the parish Priest are equally welcome and even essential. Those homebound persons always will gladly receive their shepherd and usually be most grateful for opportunities to receive the Sacraments of Penance and Anointing of the Sick.

7. Interested Listeners

Many of the homebound have few occasions to interact with others outside the immediate neighborhood. They thus normally will relish the occasion to visit at length with Communion ministers. Being interested listeners in such situations both fulfills Christ's command to love and greatly comforts those often lonely persons confined at home.

8. A Healing Touch

Homebound individuals frequently feel isolated, cut off from the world which surrounds them. A light, gentle touch of hand, brow or head from the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion at some time during the visit helps bridge that gap and makes them feel connected with those outside the home.

9. Hispanic Homebound

Because of the everincreasing number of Hispanic Catholics in North America, this booklet includes the Spanish version of the official ritual for Communion in Ordinary Circumstances and for Communion in a Hospital or Institution.



APPENDIX III - UNIVERSAL PRAYER

We have become familiar over the past quarter of a century with the Universal Prayer or Prayer of the Faithful. As a result of decisions at the Second Vatican Council, the revised Roman Missal in 1969 resurrected this ancient formula, inserting it after the Creed or homily. In it, the people or faithful intercede for or pray for all humankind.

These petitions in general are for the Church, civil authorities, those oppressed by various needs, for all humankind and for the salvation of the world.

Normally, the petitions follow this sequence:

- » For needs of the Church.
- » For public authorities and the salvation of the world.
- » For those oppressed by any need.
- » For the local community.

On special occasions, e.g., Thanksgiving, the Nativity of the Lord, Lent, Easter, summer time, a petition or petitions usually will reflect that season or situation.

As we have noted, by listening carefully to those announced at weekend Mass, the minister will have at hand some current intercessions to use.

There are a variety of available responses. "Lord, receive our prayer" is more suitable than "Lord. The following is a sample Universal Prayer or Prayer of the Faithful:

The response is: "Lord, receive our prayer."

For our Holy Father, the Pope, that the Holy Spirit will give him wisdom and strength, we pray to the Lord.

For our President and all leaders of government, that they may be effective in eliminating poverty and achieving peace, we pray to the Lord.

For our young people, that they may use their talents well for building up the Church and making this a better world, we pray to the Lord.

For those who are ill, that they may be comforted and strengthened by Christ's presence, we pray to the Lord.

For those who have died, that they may now see the Lord face-to-face, we pray to the Lord.

Any intentions you would like to pray for? ...

All-powerful and loving God, you are close to the brokenhearted and near to those crushed in spirit; grant these petitions which with faith we present to you through Christ our Lord. Amen.

