

TAKING HOLY COMMUNION TO THE SICK AND HOUSEBOUND

One of the privileges of being an Extraordinary Minister is to be able to take Holy Communion to those ill or infirm members of the parish who are unable to come to Mass. They are still part of our Eucharistic community and are joining with us in a particular way when they are able to receive Holy Communion directly from Mass.

Those to whom we take Holy Communion after Mass are receiving this sacrament as an extension of the Mass itself and, other than in exceptional circumstances, the minister should go straight to them without any undue delay. It is good to remind the sick person that they are still valued members of the community with their own, unique, part to play.

If you have time, and are not taking communion to another person afterwards, it can be a real gift to the sick person if you are able to spend some moments in conversation with them, perhaps over a cup of coffee. You may well be one of the few visitors they receive. You are their link to their priest and the parish community, someone they can share their concerns with and who will pray with and for them, just as they can do for others.

Ministers must always remember to respect the privacy of the sick person and their right to confidentiality, never passing on information without that person's explicit permission.

A suggested liturgy for taking communion to the sick may be found on the Liturgy Office section of the website at cliftondiocese.com

WHAT IS MINISTRY?

All ministry exercised in the Church is centred on the building up of the Body of Christ. The focus of all liturgical ministry is that of being able to assist people's communion with God through their fruitful participation in the worship of the Church.



Genuine ministry is always about humble service. The model for all ministry is Christ himself, who came 'not to be served but to serve' (Mt 20:28). His command to 'love one another' (Jn 13:34) permeated his life and ministry. The liturgical minister must put aside personal preferences and judgements in order to serve the community and so give true witness to Christ's presence in the celebration. Ministry is not about 'me'; it is about leading people to encounter Christ.

'The common end for which the diverse liturgical ministries work is not a ceremony but a corporate life in faithful communion with all God's holy people and holy things. For this reason liturgical ministers should never be seen to do in the liturgy what they are not regularly seen to do outside the liturgy.'

(Aidan Kavanagh, Elements of Rite, 1990)

Liturgical Ministry

MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

The celebration of the Eucharist is the highpoint of Catholic Liturgy "the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time ... the font from which all the Church's power flows" (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 10).

The culmination of the Eucharist is the reception of the gifts of our Lord's Body and Blood in Holy Communion. The minister of Holy Communion assists the Church to receive these gifts reverently and fruitfully.



PRAYER FOR EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS

Merciful Father,
creator and guide of your family,
bless all Extraordinary Ministers.
May they faithfully give the bread of life
to your people.
Strengthened by this sacrament,
may they come at last to the banquet of heaven.
We ask this through Christ Our Lord. **Amen.**

THE EUCHARIST

Our belief about the Eucharist is central to our faith. In the New Testament we hear that Jesus gathered with his disciples on the night before he died. Even knowing what lay ahead he said to them, 'I have longed to eat this Passover with you before I suffer' (Luke 22:15). He shared the meal with them in which he took bread, blessed and broke it, then gave it to them saying 'This is my body'. He took a cup of wine and shared it saying 'This is my blood'. Having eaten and drunk with his disciples, Jesus said 'Do this in memory of me'. (Luke 22:19)

We gather to do as Jesus commanded us, to eat and drink a sacred meal - his Body and Blood - when we celebrate the sacrifice of the Mass. The Mass is, for us, both a meal and a sacrifice. We are 'caught up' with Jesus in the events of the Last Supper, his Passion, his death on the cross, and his resurrection. We believe that Christ becomes truly present in the bread and wine consecrated at Mass for Jesus said, 'my flesh is real food, and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him'. (Jn 6:55,56)

Eucharist means 'thanksgiving' and we give thanks and praise for all that Christ has done for us. We receive Christ's Body and Blood in the Eucharist in order that we, too, might become his Body and Blood - broken and poured out for our world. We are to be reasons for others to give thanks and celebrate.

'Become what you see, and receive what you are.'
(St Augustine, Sermon 272)

UNDERSTANDING THE MASS

Mass begins with the opening rites that offer praise to God, after which we express sorrow for our sins. In the Liturgy of the Word we listen to God's voice speaking to us in the readings from Scripture and we hear Christ speak to us in the Gospel. A good homily will then explain what these readings might mean to us and how we might apply them to our own lives. Having reflected on the readings and the homily we offer the Prayer of the Faithful (or *General Intercessions*) for the Church and the world.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist follows. The gifts of bread and wine are brought to the altar with our offerings - symbols of ourselves and of our own willingness to offer our lives to be transformed by God. During the Eucharistic Prayer the priest will call down the Holy Spirit upon the bread and wine to transform them into the Body and Blood of Christ. The Communion Rite itself begins with the Lord's Prayer and leads into Holy Communion, when we become one with Christ and with each other.

The entire Mass has led up to this point - the distribution of Holy Communion - and here the Extraordinary Ministers of Communion will exercise their ministry practically, sharing the Body and Blood of Christ with their sisters and brothers.

'Let us pray that participation in the Eucharist may always be an incentive: to follow the Lord every day, to be instruments of communion and to share what we are with him and with our neighbour. Our life will then be truly fruitful.'

(Pope Francis, Homily, Corpus Christi, May 2013)

WHERE DOES MY MINISTRY FIT INTO THE MASS?

'Holy Communion has a fuller form as a sign when it is distributed under both kinds. For in this form the sign of the Eucharistic banquet is more clearly evident...'
(General Instructions of the Roman Missal 281)

The ordinary minister of Holy Communion is the bishop, priest or deacon. If a large number of lay faithful is present at Mass, the ordinary minister(s) may frequently require the assistance of lay faithful, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, ministering Christ's Body and Blood to their sisters and brothers. Such ministers will normally be approved by the bishop, having been carefully chosen and formed, and will be formally commissioned to exercise this ministry within their community.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are lay people - members of the community, ministers who co-operate in the sacred ministry of the priest when they exercise their ministry at Mass. They should therefore prepare for this prayerfully, with the utmost respect and reverence for what they are about to undertake. They should be seated in the assembly and should not be part of the opening or closing processions. It is a powerful sign of calling to see them coming from the midst of the community and returning to that community having served.

'For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him.' (Jn 6:55,56)