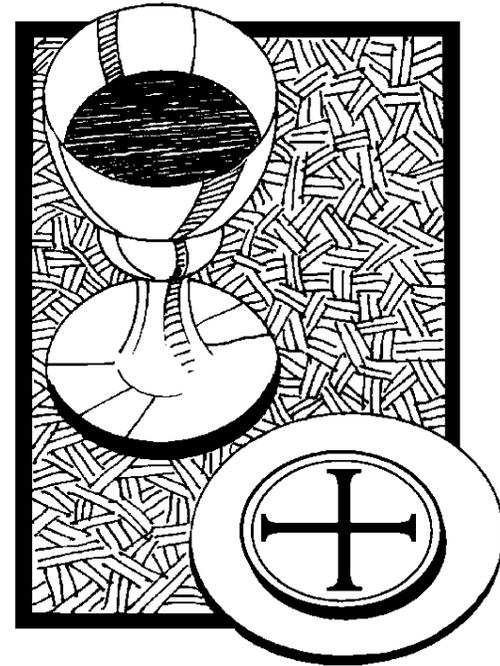


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Guidelines for Pastoral Care of the Sick for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion



Diocese of Metuchen

Endnotes

- [1] Decree on Pastoral Care of the Sick: Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, Prot. no. 1501/72 as quoted in The Rites of the Catholic Church, Volume 1 (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1990), p. 769.
- [2] Second Vatican Council, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* as quoted in Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds In the Dioceses of the United States of America, (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Inc., 2002), #3, p.2.
- [3] Pastoral Care of the Sick: Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, #73.
- [4] Redemptoris Sacramentum. Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, (Washington, D.C. : USCCB Publishing, 2004), #133
- [5] Pastoral Care of the Sick, #73
- [6] Ibid # 46
- [7] Ibid # 47
- [8] Ibid # 63
- [9] Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass: (Catholic Book Publishing Co.: New York, 1976), #23
- [10] Guidelines for Receiving Communion, Bishop's Committee on the Liturgy, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Nov. 14, 1996
- [11] Pastoral Care of the Sick, #74
- [12] Ibid #175
- [13] Ibid #179
- [14] A Companion to Pastoral Care of the Sick, Ahlstrom, Michael et al. (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1990), pg. 33.
- [15] Pastoral Care of the Sick # 215
- [16] Communion of the Sick, (Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1984), p. 4.

First Edition
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***Prayer of Preparation for
Extraordinary Ministers
of Holy Communion***

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Father of mercies and the God of all Consolation. You comfort us in all our afflictions and thus enable us to comfort those who are in trouble, with the same consolation we receive from you.

God of compassion, fill me with the power of your Word and the love of your Holy Spirit as I visit your suffering sons and daughters. Help me so that I may worthily and gracefully share your sacred presence with those who await your coming to them. May the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ heal and comfort us, deepen our faith, and strengthen our hope in the imperishable inheritance you have promised to those who seek you.

Father, I pray to you for myself and for those I visit, in the saving name of Jesus, our risen Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen [16]

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Guidelines for Pastoral Care of the Sick by an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion in The Diocese of Metuchen

“For I was sick and you visited me.” Matt 25:36

INTRODUCTION

“When the Church cares for the sick, it serves Christ himself in the suffering members of his Mystical Body. When it follows the example of the Lord Jesus, who “went about doing good and healing all” (Acts 10:38), the Church obeys his command to care for the sick (see Mark 16:18). [1]”

To serve as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion is a special privilege and ministry to which you have been called. Not only do Extraordinary Ministers perform a service to their community by assisting at Mass but they also participate in the Church’s ministry of healing and caring when they bring Holy Communion to those who are sick and homebound or to hospitals and nursing facilities. To serve in this way is a sacred opportunity to bring Christ in the Eucharist to those in our community who have been separated from us by illness or infirmity and to be Christ for these brothers and sisters by extending the compassionate care of the Church through our own hands and hearts.

As Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, we must take great care in administering the most precious Body and Blood of Christ to the faithful. Whether that be serving at Sunday Mass, daily Mass or bringing Communion to those who are sick or homebound, we must always be conscious of that sacred Presence we hold or carry, and the sacred duty we fulfill. Proper formation of our ministers is important so that we might carry out these responsibilities with respect, reverence and an abiding sense of the sacredness of what we do.

The situations and environments are many and varied when bringing Holy Communion to those who are sick. But the one constant is the abiding presence of Christ in the Eucharist. These guidelines have been prepared specifically for those Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion who bring the Eucharist to those who are sick, homebound and hospitalized. They are intended to serve as an aid and a reference to assist all these ministers in performing their roles in a prayerful, reverent and consistent way. Because the rites will vary depending on the

5. The baptismal profession of faith is unique to this rite of viaticum and replaces the usual profession of faith. “Through the baptismal profession at the end of earthly life, the one who is dying uses the language of his or her initial commitment, which is renewed each Easter and on other occasions in the Christian life...it is a renewal and fulfillment of initiation into the Christian mysteries...” [13]
6. When giving Communion as viaticum, the form for viaticum is used rather than the usual “This is the Lamb of God...” For example, Form A reads: “Jesus Christ is the food for our journey; he calls us to the heavenly table.” Use either form A or B in the rite.
7. Allow some time for silent prayer after Communion.
8. The rite ends with the sign of peace. The minister and others present give the dying person the sign of peace. “The sign of peace during the celebration of viaticum can be an outpouring of love for the dying person and for the family. These gestures deal in a natural way with the pain of parting.” [14]
9. While the situation is urgent, do not try to rush through the rite. Praying with the dying is a great comfort both to them and the family and friends who will be taking leave of the beloved. However, be mindful of the particular circumstances and adapt as necessary.
10. Chapter VI of Pastoral Care of the Sick is the Commendation of the Dying and includes scripture texts, prayers and litany which can be used with the dying person. “These texts are intended to help the dying person, if still conscious, to face the natural human anxiety about death by imitating Christ in his patient suffering and dying.” [15] It also includes prayers that can be used immediately following death.
11. Chapter VII of Pastoral Care of the Sick contains Prayers for the Dead. These prayers are intended to be used if the minister has been called or arrives after the person has already died. You may need to explain to the family that the person cannot be anointed at this point. The sacraments are intended for the living. You can make a sign of the cross on the forehead of the deceased along with the prayers you have chosen.
12. Be aware, compassionate, consoling and present to the dying person and loved ones as the hands and heart of Christ. Let the Holy Spirit guide you.

**Viaticum Outside Mass
Outline of the Rite**

INTRODUCTORY RITES

- Greeting
- Sprinkling with Holy Water—only by priest or deacon
- Instruction
- Penitential Rite
- (Apostolic Pardon) - only by a priest

LITURGY OF THE WORD

- Reading—use selections contained in the rite
- Homily—explanation of the reading
- Baptismal profession of faith
- Litany

LITURGY OF VIATICUM

- The Lord's Prayer
- Communion as viaticum
- Silent prayer
- Prayer after Communion

CONCLUDING RITES

- Blessing
- Sign of Peace

Some notes to consider about the rite:

1. It is helpful if this rite can be celebrated with family and friends. Involve the family in planning the celebration; have them participate by doing the reading, songs, prayers to foster their full participation.
2. Where possible, it is best if the rite is celebrated such that the dying person can participate, understand and respond. You should have the same items available for conducting this rite as in the rite for **“Communion under Ordinary Circumstances.”** (See page 8)
3. The *apostolic pardon* is only given when a priest is conducting the rite.
4. For the Liturgy of the Word, there are four specific readings suggested that would be appropriate for the circumstances. In addition, Part III of Pastoral Care of the Sick is a section that includes other selections of readings, responses and verses from scripture that would also be suitable.

particular circumstances, these guidelines have been broken down to address several main settings which include visiting the homebound; ministry in hospitals, nursing homes or other institutions; conducting a Communion Service on site in a chapel or other gathering space.

These guidelines are not intended to represent an exhaustive list and assumes that the Extraordinary Minister has received basic formation and training at the parish or through the Pastoral Care Department at the hospital or institution where they are serving. Questions about any aspect of serving as an Extraordinary Minister should be directed to your Pastor and/or Pastoral Staff for clarification. The Catholic Chaplain or Pastoral Care Office at the institution can also be a resource to assist with particular questions or circumstances that may arise.

1) MINISTER PREPARATION

A) The Power of Prayer

As with all ministry, the most important way to prepare oneself to serve is through prayer. Spend some time in prayer during the week ahead or on the day you are scheduled to serve. Pray for the needs of the people you will visit and meet and for their families. Remember those who care for the sick. Pray also for yourself as minister that you might be an instrument of God's healing grace and a source of comfort and compassion.

Spend some time with scripture; consider using the readings of the day which can be found in various missalettes or daily word publications and on a number of websites including www.usccb.org. Read the psalms or a favorite Gospel passage and reflect on Jesus' healing ministry. Do some spiritual reading or spend some quiet time with the Blessed Sacrament. Avail yourself of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. There are so many ways to direct your mind and heart to God. How you pray is not as important as *that* you pray. Find a way to make it part of your regular preparation to serve as an Extraordinary Minister.

B) Scheduling

Whether you are part of your parish pastoral team that brings Holy Communion to those who are sick and homebound or serve at a particular institution, your service is counted on and people are depending upon you. In

APPENDIX I: VIATICUM TO THE DYING

committing to serve in bringing Holy Communion to the sick, you have also taken on a serious responsibility to fulfill. Each parish or institution will have its own unique way of scheduling its ministers. Please consult the parish or organization to find out how you will be scheduled and how often. Having a sufficient number of ministers available to serve is an important dimension to effectively attending to the spiritual needs of those whom you will visit. Each minister is responsible to fulfill assignments or arrange for substitutes if necessary.

- When known in advance, particularly in vacation season, inform the Pastoral Care Office or the parish Coordinator of Ministers about days that you will be unavailable to serve so that you will not be scheduled on those days.
- If you cannot serve for the time or day assigned, **it is your responsibility to find a replacement.** Make sure you have a current list of ministers so that you can make arrangements for a substitute in a timely manner.
- It is unlikely that you will be able to reach anyone in the parish office on a Sunday if you are unavailable. Please do not call or leave a message there on the weekend.
- Be willing to serve without a “swap” if asked and you are available. It is a ministry and we should be willing to serve when needed and available. You never know when you might be in need of someone to fill in for you in an emergency!
- If you are visiting a number of parishioners at home, you may want to call ahead so they know what time to expect you. If you are visiting someone new, you may want to allow sufficient time to find the address.
- When serving at a hospital or other institution, try to arrive 10-15 minutes before the appointed time to pick up the list of patients to be visited from the Pastoral Care Department or other designated office along with any other special directions. Depending on the hospital, you may need to allow time to pick up the hosts in the chapel. If so, stop and make a visit to pray before making your rounds.
- Follow the established procedure for obtaining your ministry or patient list.

“Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day.” John 6:54

There may be times in your ministry, although it may be rare, that you are called upon to visit and bring Communion to someone who is dying and near death. Perhaps it is someone that you have been visiting through the course of their illness. This is a difficult moment yet also a very sacred one in which the mystery of our faith bears witness to all we believe in the hope of the resurrection and the passage from death to a new life in Christ. It is helpful to be familiar with the rite ahead of time especially since there are some additional components in it because death is near.

“The celebration of the eucharist as viaticum, food for the passage through death to eternal life, is the sacrament proper to the dying Christian. It is the completion and crown of the Christian life on this earth, signifying that the Christian follows the Lord to eternal glory and the banquet of the heavenly kingdom.” [12]

The Church places great emphasis on the need for the dying to be cared for spiritually and arrangements made for them to receive viaticum as nourishment for their journey. Generally, it is preferred that viaticum be received during a Mass which could be conducted in the home in the company of family and friends. If not in the context of Mass, a priest would still be able to visit and administer the Sacraments of Penance and Anointing as well. However, circumstances may be urgent such that a priest may not be available. An Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion who brings viaticum to the dying would follow the rite for “*Viaticum Outside Mass.*” What follows is an outline of the rite for “*Viaticum Outside Mass.*” You would need to obtain a full copy of the rite to properly conduct this special service. The rite is contained in the book *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass* which can most often be found in the sacristy of your church.

7. **The person has a mental illness, may be under heavy medication and does not appear to understand:** These types of situations require good judgment. If there is some acknowledgement from the person about what is happening and they want to receive, err on the side of giving them Communion but ensure that they consume the host. If you see that their awareness of the Eucharist is not discernable, you may want to simply pray with them or give them a blessing.
8. **The person cannot consume a whole host:** You may break the host into smaller pieces to give them something they can more easily swallow.

2) **PROPER ATTIRE**

“All ministers of Holy Communion should show the greatest reverence for the Most Holy Eucharist by their demeanor, their attire, and the manner in which they handle the consecrated bread or wine.”[2]

What we wear as Extraordinary Ministers speaks, without words, about the respect and reverence we hold for the sacred Eucharist that we hold and carry. It also serves as a witness to those we are visiting, their families and those in public places such as hospitals and nursing homes. Although attire need not always be formal, it should be tasteful, respectful and in keeping with the ministerial role you are playing. Good judgment to fit the circumstances is the best rule of thumb. Below are some general guidelines for all Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion:

Appropriate

For Women

For Men

Modest:

Dresses, skirt suits
(appropriate length)
Pant suits, dress pants
Sweaters & blouses
Shoes (not sneakers)

Dress shirt w/tie
Sport coats
Suits w/ties
Collared shirts
Shoes (not sneakers)

Inappropriate

For Women

Jeans (no matter the cost or label)
Tube or strapless tops, spaghetti straps
Bare midriff
Short skirts, shorts
Thong shoes, flip/flops or beach footwear
Tights, spandex leg coverings
Tight or low cut slacks, form fitting clothes or blouses

For Men

Jeans (no matter the cost or label)
T-shirts (with or without writing)
Shorts (dress or otherwise)
Thong shoes, flip-flops or beach footwear
Sneakers

3) RECEPTION AND RETURN OF THE HOSTS

Whether you are visiting parishioners who are sick in their homes or taking Holy Communion to those in a hospital or other similar institution, most often you will need to pick up a sufficient number of hosts from your parish to complete your scheduled visits. Some Catholic hospitals may have the Extraordinary Ministers take the hosts from the tabernacle in the hospital chapel in which case you should follow the instructions that they have provided to you.

Each parish may have its own procedure for providing hosts to the ministers who will bring Communion to the sick. The procedure may vary depending on whether it is a weekday or Sunday. Become familiar with the parish guidelines.

A suggested and preferred approach, especially on Sundays, is to have the hosts to be taken to the sick consecrated at Mass. As a visible sign of the connection of our absent members to the Eucharistic celebration, the Extraordinary Minister is dismissed from Mass as a public witness to bring the healing presence of Christ and the community to the sick members.

“The links between the community’s eucharistic celebration, especially on the Lord’s Day, and the communion of the sick are intimate and manifold. Besides remembering the sick in the general intercessions at Mass, those present should be reminded occasionally of the significance of communion in the lives of those who are ill: union with Christ in his struggle with evil, his prayer for the world, and his love for the Father, and union with the community from which they are separated.

The obligation to visit and comfort those who cannot take part in the eucharistic assembly may be clearly demonstrated by taking communion to them from the community’s eucharistic celebration. This symbol of unity between the community and its sick members has the deepest significance on the Lord’s Day, the special day of the eucharistic assembly.” [3]

A) Extraordinary Minister Dismissal at Mass

If you are visiting the sick on weekdays, the same procedure for being dismissed at Mass can apply and is recommended.

- When bringing Communion to those who are sick, the hosts should be carried in a pyx.
- Before Mass begins, make sure the priest or deacon is aware that you will be dismissed and will need to have your pyx filled with the

no confessor is available, he should simply make an act of perfect contrition with the intention of confessing individually, at the proper time, the mortal sins which he cannot confess at present.” [9]

2. **The person who is ill or a member of their family request that they receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick:** Only a priest can administer the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Alert the Pastoral Care Department if there is a Catholic priest Chaplain on staff so that arrangements can be made for the anointing. If you are visiting at home, alert the Pastor or a priest in the parish and request that they make a visit to administer the Sacrament. It would be helpful to let the priest know the urgency of the situation so they can determine how quickly a visit is needed.
3. **Non-Catholics request to receive:** Whether in a home setting or conducting a Communion service in a hospital or institution, you may be asked by people who are Christian but not Catholic if they can also receive. Generally, they should not receive. It is best to gently explain in a diplomatic way that “Because Catholics believe that the celebration of the Eucharist is a sign of the reality of the oneness of faith, life and worship, members of those churches with whom we are not yet fully united are ordinarily not admitted to Holy Communion.” [10] You can offer to pray with the person and give a blessing to them by placing your hand(s) on their head or shoulders and saying a prayer either silently or out loud for them or making the sign of the cross on their forehead. Many will find this a great comfort. Please note that this is not considered the same as the blessing that only an ordained priest or deacon could give.
4. **Cannot receive the host—can they receive the Precious Blood only?** Yes. “Sick people who are unable to receive communion under the form of bread may receive it under the form of wine alone.” [11] It is possible that a sick person may receive the Precious Blood, but this should be arranged through the parish priest or Pastoral Care Office.
5. **The sick person can’t consume the host and spits it out:** Use a purificator or handkerchief to pick up the piece of host and wrap it up and take it with you. When you return to the parish, place the host in the water in the finger bowl used at Mass so that it can dissolve. Once dissolved, it will need to be poured down the sacrarium. Notify the priest, deacon or sacristan that it is there so that it can be properly addressed.
6. **You drop a host:** You can either consume it or if you are not comfortable doing that you can place it in a handkerchief and bring it back to the parish with you. Follow the same procedure in #5 above.

An outline of the rite is included below and can be found in Pastoral Care of the Sick, chapter II beginning at # 62:

- Greeting
- Reading
- Response—may be sung using an age appropriate song
- The Lord’s Prayer
- Communion (if the child is of age)
- Concluding Prayer
- Blessing

When an Extraordinary Minister is conducting the service, at the blessing the minister can make the sign of the cross on the forehead of the child and says one of the prayers provided in the rite. Then the minister can invite each of those present to trace the sign of the cross on the child’s forehead in silence.

Surrounding the child and family with care and concern at this critical time is an important ministry for both the Extraordinary Minister and the parish community.

6) WHAT IF.....

The settings and circumstances for bringing Communion to the sick, hospitalized and dying can be many and varied. Simple guidelines such as these can not possibly cover every unique occurrence. As you become more experienced in this ministry, you will have a better sense for how to handle the different situations you may face. However, there are some common questions that are often asked and we will try to cover some of them in this section. When in doubt about anything, ask your Pastor, priest or someone on the pastoral staff to guide you. It is also important that as prepared and well intentioned as you may be, you may make a mistake from time to time. Don’t panic or be too hard on yourself. Learn from these experiences by talking about them with your Pastor, a member of the pastoral staff or other experienced minister who can clarify things for the future.

What if....

1. **The person who is ill says they need to go to confession before they receive Communion:** If a priest is available on the Pastoral Staff, arrangements should be made for the priest to visit and bring Communion. If there is not a priest on the Pastoral Staff or on call for the facility and there is a sense of urgency: “In urgent necessity and if

needed number of hosts from those consecrated at Mass. Procedures may vary slightly from parish to parish. Find out if you need to fill your pyx prior to Mass with the needed number of unconsecrated hosts or whether you should leave an empty pyx on the credence table before Mass begins which will be filled during Communion.

- After Communion but before the Prayer after Communion is said, the priest will invite you to come forward. He will place the pyx in your hands, say some words of dismissal to send you forth and may give you a blessing as you go on your way.
- Once you have received the pyx, you should immediately proceed from the church to your destination. Do not bow or genuflect as you leave since you are now carrying the sacred Body of Christ with you. You do not return to your seat.
- Great care should be taken in carrying the pyx. It is preferable that it be placed in a carrying case, kept on your person or in a safe place.
- Avoid stopping to chat in the parking lot or stopping at a store or other place before going to your destination. It is acceptable to smile or greet someone as you go. However, be mindful of the most sacred presence you carry and the mission to which you have been called at that moment.. Your reverence for the Blessed Sacrament is a public witness to others. Don’t worry about offending people; people will notice and understand.

*“A Priest or Deacon, or an extraordinary minister who takes the Most Holy Eucharist when an ordained minister is absent or impeded in order to administer it as Communion for a sick person, should go insofar as possible directly from the place where the Sacrament is reserved to the sick person’s home, leaving aside any profane business so that any danger of profanation may be avoided and the greatest reverence for the Body of Christ may be ensured. Furthermore the Rite for the administration of Communion to the sick, as prescribed in the Roman Ritual, is always to be used.” [4]
(Redemptionis Sacramentum #133)*

B) Obtaining Hosts Outside of Mass

There will be times when your Communion call to those who are sick does not neatly coincide with regular Mass times or the circumstances may necessitate a visit at a time convenient for the person to be visited. In these cases, parish procedures for obtaining hosts will vary and you should make arrangements with the pastoral staff to pick up hosts. The same guidelines apply as listed under ‘A’ above. A few additional notes are worth listing here:

- Go directly from church to the communicant without stops. It is not appropriate to stop at home or anywhere else after picking up the hosts. Please arrange to pick up the hosts from the parish at a time that will enable you to go directly to the person to be visited.

C) Returning Hosts

- If you should have hosts remaining after you have made your rounds, you should bring them back to the church immediately so that they can be returned to the tabernacle. Notify the priest or deacon that you have hosts to be returned to the tabernacle. In some parishes, the Extraordinary Ministers are permitted to take and return hosts to the tabernacle. Follow the instructions of the parish. **Please note: the hosts should never just be left alone in the sacristy or other place.** You should always stay with the Blessed Sacrament until the hosts can be properly reposed.
- If it is not possible to return the hosts to the tabernacle, remaining hosts may be consumed but may never be reserved in the home.
- Once the pyx is empty, it should be purified. If there is no priest or deacon available to purify the pyx when you return, use good judgment and, if necessary, purify the pyx yourself. If you are using your own personal pyx, it should also be purified after each time you use it.

4) VISITATION GUIDELINES FOR VARIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES

“The faithful who are ill are deprived of their rightful and accustomed place in the eucharistic community. In bringing communion to them the minister of communion represents Christ and manifests faith and charity on behalf of the whole community toward those who cannot be present at the eucharist. For the sick the reception of communion is not only a privilege but also a sign of support and concern shown by the Christian community for its members who are ill.” [5]

As an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion who brings Holy Communion to the sick, you may be called upon to make home visits, make rounds in a hospital or institutional setting or to conduct a Communion service in a chapel or other designated area in such a facility. It is important to be familiar with the Rites appropriate to all of these settings. In this section, some general guidelines and principles will be provided to assist you in each of these settings or situations. In whichever setting you serve, you should always carry a copy of the blue booklet called **Communion of the Sick** (published by The Liturgical Press) which provides the rites, prayers, readings and intercessions that can be used and adapted as appropriate. (The various rites will be referenced in this section but not reproduced here.)

have been able to attend the Communion Service. Or, if you are serving at a psychiatric facility or institution that treats mental illnesses, you may need to visit the various units to bring Communion. For these visits, you would use the rite of **“Communion in a Hospital or Institution.”**

- If you have hosts remaining, follow the established procedure for returning the hosts to the parish. As has been mentioned in other sections of these guidelines, do not leave a pyx with hosts unattended at the parish. Wait to give them to a priest or deacon or, if it is the parish practice, return the hosts to the ciborium in the tabernacle yourself. Be sure that the empty pyx is purified.
- Pray specially for those you served that day.

5) VISITING A SICK CHILD

“Let the children come to me; do not keep them back from me.” Luke 18: 16

Depending on the age of the child, there may be times when you are asked to make a pastoral visit to a sick child which may or may not include Communion. It is important for the Extraordinary Minister to prepare for the visit and consider how to adapt the rite in an age appropriate way to better suit the circumstances. “Every effort should be made to know the child and to accommodate the care in keeping with the age and comprehension of the child. In these circumstances the minister should also be particularly concerned to help the child’s family.” [7] A visit to a child should only take place with a parent or guardian present.

It will be important for the minister to make the child feel as comfortable as possible. Spend time in the beginning chatting with the child and building some rapport. “If the child does not already know the minister, the latter should seek to establish a friendly and easy relationship with the child. Therefore the greeting that begins the visit should be an informal one.” [8] It will also help if the parent(s) have prepared the child for the visit by explaining who you are.

The rite can be as simple as a brief Liturgy of the Word if the child has not yet received First Eucharist. If the child is to receive Communion, the Liturgy of Communion is added. There are several suggestions for appropriate Gospel readings in the Pastoral Care of the Sick # 66 that would be helpful to use with a child. These stories involve Jesus’ healing of children. Other Gospel passages about healing might also be appropriate. What is probably most important is that the minister not just follow the rite but rather adapt the visit to the needs of the child so that they can understand Jesus’ healing presence and love even though they are hurting or ill.

- You should not leave the Blessed Sacrament unattended for any length of time.
- Depending on the setting or the age of the people at the service, you might want to ask for some volunteers to assist you with the readings. If there are no volunteers, you will do the readings yourself.
- Consider using music or a tape with familiar hymns on it. People who are away or absent from their home parish communities will appreciate the feeling of “going to church”. You’ll be surprised at how willing they are to sing if you get them started!
- When it is time to begin the service, introduce yourself and be clear that you are the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion and that you will be conducting a Communion Service. Be welcoming and hospitable and convey a message of joyfulness in being with them.
- Follow the rite provided which includes:
 1. Introductory Rites
 2. Liturgy of the Word (On Sunday: two readings, responsorial psalm, Gospel, brief reflection (Optional) and intercessions.
 3. Liturgy of Holy Communion (Lord’s Prayer, Communion, Silent prayer and Prayer after Communion)
 4. Concluding Rite
- Prepare and read the readings ahead of time. If you are comfortable, you might want to provide a brief reflection after the Gospel reading. If you have been dismissed from Mass, you might also want to include some thoughts from the homily you heard at Mass. If you do include a reflection, be sure it is brief but relevant to the readings. Even if you just leave them with a thought or nugget to reflect on during the coming week, that would be helpful. This is a great opportunity for you to share your faith.
- You may want to use the intercessions provided in the rite or add or customize them depending on the season or occasion.
- Depending on the type of facility and/or the particular physical setup of the room, explain how Communion will be administered either by people coming up to receive or by you going around to each person.
- After Communion, allow some time for silent prayer before the Concluding Rite.
- Once the service is over, you may want to hand out bulletins from the parish since people like to feel connected to what’s going on.
- You may also be called upon to bring Communion to some individuals in their rooms since, for various reasons, they might not

In whatever setting you find yourself visiting those who are sick, be mindful of the importance of praying with the person who is ill. In your role as Extraordinary Minister, you will be called upon to be a leader of prayer. “Those who visit the sick should help them to pray, sharing with them the word of God proclaimed in the assembly from which their sickness has separated them.” [6] Be familiar with the psalms, scripture passages or other favorite prayers that would be appropriate. Do not be afraid to ask the person if they would like to pray. The Holy Spirit will guide you!

A) Communion to the Sick at Home

When bringing communion to the sick in their home, be mindful of your sacred mission and the privileged moment you will share with the one who is ill and their family. The guidelines below address the most typical scenario of visiting a sick person at home. As can happen, there may be some extenuating circumstances involved in your visit. Those “what if” questions will be handled separately in Section 6 in the booklet.

- Try to arrive at the scheduled time of your visit to respect the routine or needs of the person who is ill or recovering.
- Ask the family or sick person to have some things ready for the visit:
 1. A table prepared with a linen cloth to put the pyx on;
 2. A candle(s) which will be lit;
 3. A small crucifix would also be appropriate.
 4. A cup of water (in case the communicant may have difficulty swallowing the host)

In case these items are not available in the home when you visit, you might want to carry these things with you. If necessary, borrow a corporal from the parish so that you can put your pyx on it when you arrive.

- Consider bringing a bulletin from the parish.
- Be joyful and pleasant in greeting the sick person and other family members. Be sensitive and caring. Your pastoral concern and compassion is an important part of the healing ministry to which you have been called.
- Generally, for a home visit, it would be appropriate to use the rite for **“Communion in Ordinary Circumstances.”** This includes:
 1. The Introductory Rites
 2. The Liturgy of the Word
 3. The Liturgy of Communion
 4. The Concluding Rite

(Please see the blue booklet for the full rite.) Depending on the severity of the sick person’s condition, you may need to use your judgment as to whether you need to adapt or shorten this rite.

- Invite family members or friends present to take part in the rites. Ask if someone might be interested in doing one of the readings or reading the intercessions. Readings can be chosen from those selections in the booklet. If it is a Sunday, make use of the reading(s) of the day. (For this it might be helpful to have a seasonal missalette or other liturgical aid with you that contains the readings.)
- If you are new to the ministry, take some time ahead of time to become familiar with the rite so that you can be comfortable in conducting the prayer and communion service.
- After the Gospel reading, you may want to provide a brief explanation of the reading. If you use a reading from the blue booklet, there are also explanations of those readings that you can share included in one of the appendices. If you were dismissed from Mass, perhaps you might include some thoughts from the homily that you heard. Remember that the Word of God is an important source of nourishment for all of us and particularly for those who are ill and separated from the community.
- The General Intercessions are an important opportunity to pray for the sick person and all who are ill. There are several options in the blue booklet that can be used and adapted as necessary. The minister can also provide other appropriate prayers and might also invite those present to offer their own intentions.
- For Communion, it is important for the minister to show the host to those present using the appropriate words provided in the rite, *“Behold the Lamb of God...”* It is helpful for the minister to say the response with the sick person (*“Lord I am not worthy...”*) since they may have difficulty remembering. (Use responses from *Third Edition of the Roman Missal 2011*)
- Administer Communion to the sick person and any others present who are to receive. Be mindful of the sick person’s condition. Sometimes they might only be able to receive a small piece of the host and you may need to break it. Also, it might be helpful to have a cup of water handy in case they need to take a drink after receiving to help them consume the host.
- Allow some quiet time after the person has received Communion for prayer. This also provides the minister with an opportunity to pray for the sick person.
- After the concluding prayer, spend some time chatting or talking to the person you are visiting. Perhaps bring a bulletin from church to give them and keep them current on what is happening in the parish. The pastoral concern and interest you show will be most welcomed by the sick person and family members. They still want to feel connected to the community even though they are absent.
- Be ready to listen. Beyond the Eucharist which they have received, this may be the greatest gift you can give them.

C) Conducting a Communion Service for a Group of Patients

At some hospitals or other institutions such as nursing homes or rehabilitation facilities, there might be a large number of patients who wish to receive Communion. In these circumstances, it might be best to gather them together in a communal setting to conduct a **“Communion Service Outside of Mass.”** Some places may have a chapel available, others may use a large room to gather the group and you will need to adapt to the particular setting. In these situations, either the patients will get there on their own or the staff will be responsible to bring them to the service. Usually, these services have a set time and schedule at the facility.

If you are new to the ministry or have never conducted such a Communion Service, it might be best to shadow another experienced minister who can show you what to do. In some cases where there is a large group, you may work as a team with another minister to conduct the Communion Service. Find out how it is done in the facility where you will serve.

Below are some general guidelines and principles for Extraordinary Ministers who conduct a Communion Service.

- The basic rite that is used is that of **“Communion in Ordinary Circumstances”** which is similar to that used when bringing Communion to someone at home. In this setting, however, you will likely have a much larger group of people gathered for the service.
- To conduct the Communion Service properly, you should have the following items with you:
 1. Pyx with sufficient number of hosts
 2. Corporal
 3. Candle and match
 4. Small table crucifix
 5. Readings for the Liturgy of the Word
 6. Booklet or outline of the rite that you will use to conduct the service.
 7. Music (optional)
- If you are conducting the Communion Service on a Sunday, it will be helpful to have the Sunday readings and Gospel with you. For a weekday, you might want to have the daily readings of the day. Otherwise, you may choose from the readings included in the blue booklet or other rite book you might be using.
- Try to arrive a little earlier than the appointed time for the service in order to setup the altar or table that you will use. Open the corporal and put the pyx on it. Light the candle and put out the crucifix.
- During the various liturgical seasons, you may want to consider having some other symbol or item to remind people of the season. For example, having a small Advent wreath in Advent.

the patient their privacy, step outside or offer to come back later. If the door is closed, do not open it. If the curtain is drawn, call out to see if it is appropriate to enter. If not, stop back later. You will need to use your best judgment based on your assessment of the situation as to whether the timing is appropriate.

- If the person is unable to receive because of medical fasting or their condition does not allow for it, then you can offer to pray with the person or read a psalm or scripture passage. Encouraging words are always welcome.
- If a person can not receive, it is never appropriate to bless a person with a host by making the sign of the cross with the host over the person similar to what is done at Benediction. However, you can make the sign of the cross on the person's forehead with your thumb.
- It is a natural tendency to want to help people if they are in need or in pain. Be careful, however, in lending assistance. You are not part of the medical staff. Do not try to move a patient. Other than simple requests for a cup of water or the like, the best way you can help is to get assistance from a nurse or other staff member.

Completing Your Rounds

- After making your appointed visits, if you have time, you might want to backtrack to catch any patients you missed or who might have been out of the room when you visited.
- Report back to the Pastoral Care department to turn in your list if that is part of the institution procedure.
- Be mindful of good hygiene practices. Nowadays, in most hospitals or other institutions, dispensers of hand sanitizing lotion are available. Take advantage of using it frequently for your sake and those you are visiting.
- If you have hosts remaining in your pyx, you may need to return them to the tabernacle in the chapel, according to the procedure established by the Pastoral Care staff. Or, you may need to return them to your parish if that is where you received them. You should go directly from the hospital back to the parish to return the hosts according to the parish procedure. You should never just leave the pyx unattended at the parish or church. The pyx with hosts should not be kept overnight in your home or other place. Make arrangements ahead of time, if necessary, for returning the hosts. If it is a practice in your parish, you may be asked to return the hosts to the church tabernacle.
- An empty pyx should be purified after use. If there is no priest or deacon available to purify the pyx, simply pour a little water into the pyx, consume it and then dry the pyx with a cloth.
- After completing your visit, pray for those that you visited.

B) Communion to the Sick in a Hospital or Other Institution

Within a parish boundary or close by there may be a hospital or other type of medical facility. Often times, the parish will have responsibility for ministering to the Catholic patients there or, depending on the size of the hospital, may be asked to provide ministers along with other neighboring parishes to share the pastoral responsibility. In addition, within the Diocese of Metuchen the Coordinator of Hospital Chaplains is responsible to assign a priest chaplain to each hospital so that the sacraments can be administered. Your ministry either on Sundays or weekdays is a great assistance to the priests and other pastoral staff at the facility and vital to our ongoing mission to care for the sick.

Some general guidelines and principles are provided here to assist you in this important ministry. While every possible scenario can not be addressed in these brief guidelines, your formation and training as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion will help you to use your common sense and good judgment in special circumstances. As always, consult with the pastoral staff at your parish or at the hospital for clarification at any time you might be uncertain as to how to handle a situation. Pray, too, for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Preparing for Your Ministry to the Hospitalized

- In addition to your parish training as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, the particular hospital or institution may have required training or certification that you must attend before beginning your ministry. You may also need to obtain a badge if that is the practice. Depending on the institution, this process may take up to six weeks. Some hospitals or institutions classify Extraordinary Ministers as volunteers and as such may require them to have a background check. In some cases, because you are visiting patients, you may need to have a tuberculosis test or immunization. You will need to understand the HIPAA regulations about patient privacy. Please consult the Pastoral Care Office at the particular medical institution about specific requirements.
- When visiting those who are sick and hospitalized, patient privacy is something that you need to be aware of particularly if you are visiting a psychiatric unit or other sensitive area. Although you may visit fellow parishioners, their medical situation is not for publication and their privacy should be respected. Confidentiality is critical. Do not make other parishioners, family or friends aware of their situation. Do not add anyone's name to the parish sick list or intercessions. Have a family member contact the parish with that information.
- Understand the scheduling arrangements for serving and follow

those procedures. As an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, people are depending upon you to receive the Eucharist. If you are unable to serve for your scheduled day and time, please use the list of other ministers to find a substitute. **It is your responsibility to find a replacement if you are unable to serve.**

- If you are new in serving at a particular institution, it would be helpful for you to do a survey or orientation visit before your first assignment so that you can become familiar with the hospital and the various units that you might be visiting. Knowing your way around can help reduce confusion or stress so that you can be more relaxed and focused on the ministry. It might also be helpful to shadow a more experienced minister once or twice before going on your own. This will give you a comfort level on what to do and how to do it and the different circumstances you might encounter.
- In a public facility such as a hospital, it might be helpful to wear something that indicates that you are an Extraordinary Minister. There are chains with Eucharistic Minister crosses, lapel pins or other emblems that can be worn to indicate your role at the hospital. It might also help the staff to know who you are and why you are there.
- Upon arrival, follow the established procedures for checking in to the pastoral care department to obtain your patient list.
- Understand ahead of time whether you will need to obtain your hosts from your parish or at the institution. Some Catholic and other hospitals have chapels where hosts are kept in the tabernacle and ministers are able to take the needed hosts directly from the tabernacle. Be sure to have a pyx large enough to contain the number of hosts you need for your rounds.
- If you obtain the hosts from the tabernacle, be sure to genuflect first, open the tabernacle door, remove the ciborium and take the appropriate number of hosts and place them in your pyx. Return the ciborium to the tabernacle; close and lock the tabernacle door. There is no need for an additional genuflection if you now have the pyx with the Blessed Sacrament in hand. Return the tabernacle key to the appropriate place before making your rounds. If you do have the opportunity to get the hosts from the hospital chapel, leave a little extra time in your schedule to make a brief visit to pray for those whom you will meet.
- Be familiar with the names of the Catholic priest Chaplains at the hospital or how they can be contacted if they are on call. If a patient requests to be Anointed or the Sacrament of Reconciliation, you may need to contact them so that they can arrange a visit.

Making Your Pastoral Visits to Patient Rooms

- In addition to the hosts, you should have with you the blue booklet on Communion of the Sick containing the rite. It might also be helpful to have a corporal or other cloth in case you need to put the pyx down.
- Because you are in an institution setting with a larger number of individual patients to visit, you should use the shorter rite for **“Communion in a Hospital or Institution.”** The rite is much simpler and does not include any readings although one can be added if it seems like that would be desirable. Even so, depending on the severity of the condition of the person you are visiting, you may need to adapt or shorten the rite to the basics. **At a minimum, the Lord’s Prayer and the Lamb of God should always be said before receiving Communion.** Over time, you will learn how to adjust to the circumstances.
- Be joyful and greet the patient with a cheerful demeanor. Your disposition is important and a simple, bright smile can mean the world to someone who is ill.
- Ask the person if they would like to receive Communion. If so, introduce yourself as the Extraordinary Minister.
- Conduct the simple Liturgy of Holy Communion as contained in the rite.
- Be mindful of the person’s condition. If they are not able to take a whole host, you may need to break the host into a smaller piece. The person might also need a drink of water to help them swallow the host.
- Be friendly and interested but be mindful of staying too long. You may also have other patients to visit.
- If the patient is concerned about fasting before receiving Communion, given the setting, circumstances and their medical condition, they have a dispensation from fasting and can receive even if they have just eaten.
- If you enter a room and the patient is sleeping or might be gone for a procedure or test, you can leave a note so that they know that the Extraordinary Minister was there. If possible, try to go back after your other visits.
- Be aware of the signs posted outside patient rooms. Sometimes they might be quarantined or require special assistance. Before entering such rooms, check with a nurse or other staff member for guidance. This is both for the patient’s sake as well as yours. A hospital is a busy place. If there are doctors in with the patient or the patient is being tended to, you may need to go back later. Give