

# Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion



Archdiocese of Adelaide  
Revised in 2023





# Forward

The Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian life and making the celebration of the Eucharist available to all communities in ways that will nourish and enrich the lives of all the faithful – lay and ordained – is a major priority for me as Archbishop.



In 1973, Pope Paul VI issued the instruction *Immensae caritatis* on facilitating Eucharistic ministries both during and outside the celebration of Eucharist, so that lay persons could assist in the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass when there was too large a community for the priest to attend to on his own and could also take Holy Communion to the sick and house-bound. He used a most beautiful image to describe the service of those who administer Holy Communion to their brothers and sisters, speaking of them as “Ministers of Immense Love.” Over the past five decades this ministry has been taken up in our Archdiocese by many faithful people in our churches, hospitals, nursing homes, schools and religious communities.

Those who are commissioned as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion ought to understand that this ministry of service flows from the power of Baptism. As baptised persons we have ‘put on Christ’ and it is with Christ’s eyes and heart that we must act. In everything that Christ did, he was moved by love; it must be the same for us. I would encourage you to pray often and let the Scriptures guide your lives. If you have hearts open to God’s Holy Spirit, then your ministry will transform your life so that it is marked with both reverence and joy.

Whether it is distributing Holy Communion within Mass or taking the Body and Blood of our Risen Lord to the sick or homebound, may you see the face of Christ in each person, and give thanks each day for the wonderful privilege that this ministry affords you. Take as your model Christ himself, who, by washing the feet of his disciples at the Last Supper (Jn 13) showed us that the true meaning of loving is to be found in service.

I commend these Guidelines to you and ask that all who so willingly give of their time and talents as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion enjoy God’s abundant blessings.

+ Pat O'Regan

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Archbishop of Adelaide



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum concilium*) was the first document published by the Second Vatican Council in December 1963. It contained the important principle the “all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations that is demanded by the very nature of the Liturgy (CS #14)

1.2 In the years following the Council there was a growing sense of Baptism as the source of all ministry, so that no longer was the concept of “ministering” restricted to the clergy but extended to all the baptized. In the area of liturgy, lay people began to assume particular roles beyond that of sacristan and altar server. In 1973, with the promulgation of the Instruction on Facilitating Reception of Communion in Certain Circumstances (*Immensae caritatis*), Pope Paul VI authorized that “fit persons” might be appointed by the local bishop to take Communion to the sick and housebound and to assist in the administration of Communion at Mass where the number of faithful present was great.

1.3 Since the “ordinary” minister of Holy Communion is the priest, laypersons appointed to this ministry are known as “extraordinary” ministers. In order to avoid any confusion about this role, the title is “Extraordinary minister of Holy Communion” not “Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist” nor “Special Minister of the Eucharist”.<sup>[1]</sup> It cannot be assumed that Extraordinary Ministers will be needed at every Eucharist; indeed, they are only needed when the congregation is too large for the priest to minister to on his own. On those occasions where several priests concelebrate, there will generally not be any need to call on Extraordinary Ministers.

1.4 It is in the light of the call to participation in worship and commitment to ministry that these guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are given.

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[1] Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Instruction on certain matters to be observed or to be avoided regarding the Most Holy Eucharist, *Redemptionis sacramentum*, March 24, 2004, # 156.

## **2. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS: Take and eat; Take and drink...**

2.1 The gospels provide many examples of Jesus sharing meals with people (e.g. Mt 9:10-13; Lk 7:36-50; Jn 2:1-12). He ate with tax collectors and sinners, with friends, with people he met on his travels. For Jesus, meals demonstrated the fellowship, communion and forgiveness that characterize the reign of God. The final meal for Jesus and the most significant for us was the Last Supper. Mark describes the event: 'While they were eating he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said "Take it, this is my body." Then he took a cup and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many" (Mk 14:22-24). Here Jesus was anticipating the total act of self-giving that would be realised in his dying on the cross.

2.2 The Last Supper that Jesus shared with his disciples was a unique moment and was the basis of the Eucharist. Every time we celebrate Eucharist we remember and participate in the sacrifice of Jesus, his suffering, death and resurrection. But our Eucharist also derives meaning from Jesus' practice of sharing meals throughout his ministry, since after his resurrection he continued to share meals with his disciples.

2.3 Jesus' followers completely understood this. In fact, eating and drinking together were characteristic, defining features of Jesus' disciples after the resurrection. In the Acts of the Apostles we read: 'Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people' (Acts 2:46, 47). St Paul too regarded the action of eating and drinking at the Lord's Supper as fundamental to their lives as Christians. In his first Letter to the Corinthians he writes: 'For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes' (1 Cor 11:26).

2.3 We gather around the altar, which is the Communion table of the Lord, to remember, to give thanks and praise, to call down the Holy Spirit on the bread and wine, and then to take and share the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation. It is in the eating of the Bread and drinking of the Cup that we encounter or crucified and risen Lord. It is from the Communion table that we are sent forth in faith and love, to live what we proclaim.

### 3. LITURGICAL RENEWAL AFTER THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

3.1 The call to full and active participation of the faithful (SC, #14) includes the call to the more complete form of participation in the Eucharist that is achieved when both eating and drinking take place in the reception of Holy Communion: ‘Jesus said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you...” (Mt 26:26-27)

3.2 The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, first issued in 1970 and most recently revised in 2002, speaks of the unique contribution that the chalice adds to participation in the Eucharist:

‘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 and clear expression is given to the divine will by which the new and eternal Covenant is ratified in the Blood of the Lord, as also the relationship between the Eucharistic banquet and the eschatological banquet in the Father’s Kingdom.’ (GIRM, # 281)

3.3 In Australia, permission for Communion under both kinds is extended to all celebrations of the Eucharist, where it can be carried out with respect and dignity.



#### 4. A CALL TO SERVICE

4.1 The bread and wine are transformed through the power of the Holy Spirit into the body and blood of Christ during the Eucharistic Prayer are then given to the community during the Communion Rite as spiritual food and drink. With the invitation to take and eat his body and blood comes the challenge from Christ to acceptance, forgiveness and humble service. This is made clear in John's account of the Last Supper: 'You call me teacher and Lord – and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you' (Jn 13:13-15).

4.2 The Second Vatican Council took up this challenge in its Constitution on the Church (*Lumen gentium*): 'Each individual layperson must be a witness before the world to the resurrection and life of the Lord Jesus, and a sign of the living God. All together, and each one to the best of their ability, they must nourish the world with spiritual fruits.' (L.G. # 38)

4.3 Through the action of eating and drinking as Jesus asked us, we, the Eucharistic assembly, are drawn into a deeper communion of faith and life. We become more truly Church: a community sharing together in the one Jesus, strengthened to live the values of the gospel. The sick and homebound too, even though they are not physically present, are part of the praying, worshipping community, and are joined to us when they receive Communion consecrated at that celebration from the Extraordinary Ministers who are sent forth at the end of Mass.

4.4 It is in the light of these reflections that the reception of Communion under both kinds is encouraged, so that by both eating and drinking the Eucharistic meal can be expressed most fully.

## 5. PASTORAL CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 Canon Law permits that where the needs of the Church require and Clergy are not available, lay people can be appointed as ‘Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion’ to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion (c.230 §.3). This is a privileged task and the person chosen should be in full communion with the Catholic Church and in good standing.

5.2 In order to avoid confusion about this role, an ‘Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion’ is not to be called a ‘Special Minister of Holy Communion’ nor an ‘Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist’ nor a ‘Special Minister of the Eucharist’.

5.3 All Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion must first be nominated by the competent authority (Parish Priest/Migrant Chaplain/School Leader) and then mandated by the Archbishop of Adelaide, using the template documentation provided by the Archbishop’s Office. Provided the nominated person meets the identified criteria, the person will be commissioned for ministry for a set time determined by the Archbishop, normally two years. For those ministeries in schools, the commission is for one year.

5.4 In accordance with Diocesan Policy, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are classed as ‘volunteers’ and must comply with all Diocesan and Legislative requirements.

To that end, before the Nomination Form can be submitted every nominated person must meet the following requirements:

- Undergo Formation Training
- Hold a current Working With Children Check (WWCC)
- Have attended ‘Child-Safe Environment for Children and Young People’ training or equivalent certification (or will attend such training within a nominated timeframe)

5.5 Training for this ministry will be conducted in the local parish or deanery either by the Parish Priest/Migrant Chaplain or his delegate, or by a member of the Diocesan Office for Worship.

Extraordinary Ministers are commissioned at the Sunday parish Mass or within the School community in the case of those ministering in the school context.

(See Appendix for commissioning ritual.)

5.6 At the conclusion of the set mandated time it is possible for a person to be re-nominated. However, the opportunity for wider participation is provided if ministers do not have continuous terms for extended periods. As many as possible should have an opportunity to undertake this ministry. Re-appointed ministers are encouraged to undertake the training session again as a refresher.

5.7 Care is to be taken in the selection of ministers, so that a cross-section of the community is represented (e.g. young, old, women, men, people from different cultural backgrounds). Extraordinary ministers will be chosen from baptized Catholics who are active in the life of the parish, motivated by a desire to serve, and willing to collaborate with the parish leadership and other ministers. Nominated persons are to be at least eighteen years old, except for Schools and Colleges when 16 years and over is acceptable.

In nominating persons for this ministry, care should be taken to avoid causing scandal or harm to the community.

5.8 Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are commissioned for service in their own parish but may exercise this ministry in another parish if required, on the invitation of the parish priest of that parish.

5.9 School communities should collaborate with the parish priest of the parish in which they are situated in commissioning Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion for service in the school. If such ministers are appointed from the school they are to serve only in the school community. However, if they are already commissioned for their own parishes, they may also carry out this ministry in the school community with the acknowledgement of the principal or parish priest.

5.10 At Diocesan events or special gatherings, Extraordinary Ministers from a number of parishes may be needed to serve at that particular time.

5.11 A person may be especially deputed to take Communion to a sick relative or friend on a specific occasion.

## **6. SUGGESTED PROCEDURE at EUCHARIST**

6.1 Having arrived at least 15 minutes before Eucharist is due to commence, report to the priest or ministry coordinator and clarify whether you are to minister the hosts or the chalice and from which communion station you are to do this.

6.2 Ideally, if you act as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion at Mass it is not appropriate for you to undertake any other designated ministry at that Mass. However, especially in very small communities, this may not always be possible.

6.3 As a liturgical minister, you must ensure that you dress suitably for the occasion and act with the reverence the celebration requires.

6.4 With the priest celebrant, altar servers and readers, you may take part in the entrance procession and then take your place in the congregation.

6.5 At the conclusion of the Sign of Peace, move forward to the edge of the sanctuary. Make a bow of reverence together with any other Extraordinary Ministers, then sanitize your hands. If you are to minister the chalice take a purifier before moving to the side of the altar (but not right next to it).

6.6 There is no need to go to the tabernacle, since hosts consecrated at Mass are to be distributed to the congregation.

6.7 Once the presiding priest has communicated, he will give you Holy Communion (under both forms) and then hand you the vessel containing either the body or blood of Christ.

6.8 You then proceed to your Communion station: there are generally two ministers of the cup for every minister of the host.

6.9 Both a minister of the host and a minister of the cup are to ensure that any persons with disabilities are included in the distribution of Holy Communion. Parishioners who are coeliacs also need to be considered and arrangements made directly with the Parish Priest to arrive at the best solution in each individual case.

6.10 As you approach your Communion station, be aware of the dialogue of faith in which you will participate with all those who approach to receive Holy Communion.

6.11 Take special care when children receive Communion from the chalice. They are to be encouraged to receive Communion under both kinds from their First Communion onwards.

6.12 Because the Communion chant/hymn begins as soon as the priest celebrant communicates, the musicians are the last to come to Holy Communion. A minister of the host and a minister of the chalice may need to wait for the Communion song to conclude to ensure that musicians are not overlooked in the distribution of Holy Communion.

## 7. DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

7.1 As you raise the host, look directly at the communicant, saying clearly and with faith, “The Body of Christ.” Do not change, delete or add to these words. Wait for the response, “Amen” and then place the Body of Christ firmly onto their hand or gently onto their tongue. It is the decision of the communicant as to whether they receive the host in the hand or on the tongue.

7.2 Be aware that the Australian Bishops have designated standing as the normative posture for receiving Communion. However, do not deny Communion to anyone who kneels.

7.3 A child – or an adult who is not a communicant – who comes forward for a blessing, indicates this by crossing forearms across their chest. Look directly at the person and, without touching him or her, say, “May the Lord Jesus bless you” or “God bless you.” Do not make a Sign of the Cross with the host over anyone; as lay people we do not give blessings.

7.4 If you need more hosts, obtain them from one of the other ministers or, as a last resort, go to the tabernacle and use hosts from the ciborium there.

7.5 If you are a Minister of the chalice stand some distance from the minister of the host, so as to allow an unobstructed flow of people. Look directly at the communicant and say clearly, “The Blood of Christ” and pass the chalice to the person as they respond, “Amen.” When the chalice is returned to you, wipe the rim thoroughly – both inside and out – with the purifier and rotate the chalice a quarter turn. Use the entire area of the purifier so that you are not wiping continually with the same section of material.

7.6 If the contents of the chalice are consumed and there are still more communicants, you may take the priest-celebrant’s chalice from the altar and use that. Do not pour from one chalice to another.

7.7 When the distribution of Holy Communion is complete, any remaining hosts are returned to the altar. The Priest, Deacon or Extraordinary Minister, will place these in the tabernacle. All empty chalices are left on the credence table to be purified after Mass (except in those parishes where the chalices are taken directly to the sacristy.) If your chalice is not empty, reverently consume any remaining Blood of Christ – or ask another minister to do this for you. Do not consume at your Communion station or while walking.

7.8 Return to the foot of the sanctuary and wait until all ministers have arrived, then all bow to the altar together, and return to your place in the body of the church.

## 8. CONCERNS

8.1 If you or a communicant should drop a host, either of you may pick it up and consume it. Otherwise, place it in the hand that is holding the ciborium (or bowl) and after the distribution of Communion, either consume it yourself or ask to priest to do so.

8.2 If the contents of the chalice are spilt, place your opened purifier over the spill and get a clean purifier to continue distribution from the chalice. After Mass the sacristan will pour water on the spill, soak up the spill with the purifier and wash it in the usual manner, ensuring that the water and precious Blood are disposed of appropriately.

8.3 Liturgical law prohibits communion by intinction (dipping the host into the precious blood), except when administered by a priest or deacon. However, if a communicant approaches you with the clear intention of intincting, do not prevent this, but notify the priest afterwards. It is not the place of the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to exclude anyone who presents from the reception of Holy Communion.

8.4 Parishes are actively encouraged to make Communion under both kinds available at Mass, since to share in the Eucharistic Cup is to share more fully the mystery of Christ's suffering and death in our own lives while at the same time opening up for us the promise of eternal life in the Risen Jesus: Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. (Jn 6:54-55)

8.5 Parishes are to ensure that the usual requisites for hygiene and cleanliness are always observed. These requisites include:

- That the chalice be of metal
- That the lip of the chalice be wiped on both sides after each communicant
- That the cup be rotated at least a quarter turn after each communicant
- That the chalices be well cleaned with hot, soapy water after Mass
- That common sense instruction be given about times when a person would refrain from receiving from the chalice (e.g. if they are suffering from a cold, cold sores or gastric upset.)

## **9. FOR THOSE WITH COELIAC DISEASE OR GLUTEN INTOLERANCE**

(Guidelines provided by the Australian Bishops Commission for Liturgy, May 2020):

9.1 Coeliac disease is an immune reaction to eating gluten, a protein found in wheat, rye, barley and oats. For those living with the disease, consuming gluten needs to be minimised or completely avoided. Failure to do so can lead to unpleasant and, often, serious health complications. As a sign of pastoral care and hospitality, ministers of Holy Communion need to be fully aware of the reality of the condition, and be prepared to assist those living with coeliac disease or gluten intolerance who come to parishes and seek to receive Holy Communion.

9.2 Communication between those living with coeliac disease/gluten intolerance, parish clergy, sacristans, servers and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion is important in order to establish commonly understood requirements and procedures before, during and after Mass.

9.3 The parish should obtain low gluten hosts from a Catholic supplier. The term “gluten free” hosts should not be used as the Catholic Church requires bread for the Mass to be made from wheat flour (containing gluten) and water [see Code of Canon Law, Can. 924.2; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter of 24 July 2003 (Prot n. 89/78-17498)].

9.4 Store low gluten breads separately from other breads to be used at Mass in order to avoid cross-contamination.

9.5 Before Mass, prepare a special pyx (a metal vessel for carrying hosts) for containing low gluten breads, avoiding contact with other breads, and place on the altar during the Preparation of the Offerings for consecration during the Eucharistic Prayer.

9.6 At Communion time, the communicant approaches the sanctuary to receive the pyx containing the host from the celebrant or an extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, replying “Amen” to “The Body of Christ”.

9.7 If low gluten hosts cannot be consumed, the communicant should request to receive the Blood of Christ from a chalice first, before other communicants, in order to avoid cross-contamination.

9.8 Communicants should be aware that when they receive under the form of the consecrated bread alone or the consecrated wine alone, they receive the “whole Christ” [see *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (2012) no. 282; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992) no. 1390.]



9.9 Cleansing of vessels and purifiers after Mass should take place in the customary way, avoiding any potential for cross-contamination.

## **10. IN TIME OF PANDEMIC**

10.1 In time of pandemic, the number of Extraordinary Ministers distributing Holy Communion should be limited according to the size of the community. Communion from the cup is suspended.

10.2 Extraordinary Ministers will sanitize their hands prior to Mass and again prior to distribution of Holy Communion.

10.3 Communicants may only receive Communion via the hand and not directly onto the tongue. Consecrated hosts are to be placed into the hand of the communicant without touching the hand. Should accidental contact be made, the Minister will temporarily stop the distribution of Holy Communion and re-sanitize hands.

10.4 All consecrated hosts are to be consumed except for those needed for Holy Communion for the sick and dying, for a Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion (should the priest not be available for the celebration of Eucharist) and for reservation for Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

## **11. SPIRITUALITY OF EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF COMMUNION**

11.1 It is important that as an Extraordinary Ministers you are a person of prayer – listening to God’s word each day and bringing the needs of the world to God in prayer.

11.2 St Augustine constantly taught his congregation that sharing in the Body of Christ really formed them into the Body of Christ. As an Extraordinary Minister you must become what you give. There must be an essential unity between your life inside the liturgy and your life outside it.

11.3 The Eucharist is a transformative event. When we are sent forth it should be as people who are changed in some way and eager to share with others the Word we have heard and the Body of Christ we have shared. This is particularly so for Extraordinary Ministers.

11.4 What you do in liturgy should be modelled at home in the way you share meals and make people welcome. The service that you offer away from the liturgy ought to reflect the service you offer when ministering Holy Communion at Mass and extending those bonds of unity to the sick and homebound.

## 12. HOLY COMMUNION FOR THE SICK AND HOME-BOUND

*The faithful who are ill are deprived of their rightful and accustomed place in the Eucharistic community... For the sick, the reception of Holy 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. (Pastoral Care of the Sick #73)*

### A. PASTORAL CONSIDERATIONS

12.1 Ideally, you will take Holy Communion to the sick from the Mass celebrated that day so that the sick person is united to the Eucharistic celebration and to the community. However, in reality, this is not always possible

12.2 You will normally carry the consecrated hosts to the sick person in a durable container called a pyx, carried in a purse or other cover (both usually provided by the parish).

12.3 When you take Holy Communion to the sick in a hospital, hospice or other public place you must make appropriate prior negotiation with the chaplain or management staff.

12.4 If you are mandated to take Communion to the sick, it is only within your own parish. If you, as an Extraordinary Minister, wish to take Communion to someone (e.g. a relative) who lives in another parish, then permission must be sought from your own parish priest as well as the parish in which the sick person resides. This protects the sacrament and respects the pastoral responsibility of both priests.

### B. PROCEDURE

12.5 On the designated day of your ministry to the sick and/or homebound, the ideal situation is that you participate fully in the parish Mass, at which the whole community is fed from both the table of the Word and the table of the Eucharist. Host(s) for the sick are obtained from this celebration of the Eucharist by placing your pyx (with the required number of altar breads in it) on the altar before Mass.

12.6 At the conclusion of Mass the priest may call you forward, present you with your pyx and commission you on behalf of the whole community to take Holy Communion to the sick, using the following or similar words:

My dear friend(s)/ N. ....

Take and share holy Communion with ..... and ensure them of the prayers of our community.

12.7 If it is not possible to collect consecrated hosts at a Mass, then negotiate an acceptable alternative with your parish priest. It is not permitted to obtain hosts from an Extraordinary Minister during the distribution of Communion.

12.8 Any hosts left over after your visit to the sick must be consumed immediately, or returned to the tabernacle that day.

12.9 The visit to the sick person(s) must be carried out as soon as possible after the conclusion of the Eucharist. Please do not carry around consecrated hosts for extended periods of time and especially do not keep hosts overnight in your home.

### **13. TWO FORMS OF THE RITE OF COMMUNION FOR THE SICK**

13.1 As an Extraordinary Minister you need to be familiar with the structure and elements of the two forms of the rite, one for use at home, the other for use in institutional settings.

#### **a) The Rite at Home**

##### **Introductory Rites**

Greeting

(Sprinkling with holy water)

Penitential Act

##### **Liturgy of the Word**

Reading

Response

General Intercessions

##### **Liturgy of Holy Communion**

The Lord's Prayer

Communion

Silent Prayer

Prayer after Communion

##### **Concluding Rite**

Blessing

b) The Rite in a hospital, nursing home or other institution

Introductory Rite

Antiphon

Liturgy of Holy Communion

Greeting

The Lord's Prayer

Communion

Concluding Rite

Concluding Prayer

13.2 When bringing Communion to a sick person in their home, first take time to establish rapport with that person and any others who are present, by means of a warm greeting and brief conversation.

13.3 As soon as possible, make a smooth transition from conversation to prayer, at all times being respectful and attentive to the needs of the sick person (e.g. have a glass of water nearby in case the sick person needs to drink after receiving the host.)

13.4 While the scripture reading can be taken from the Mass of the day, you will need to be alert to the situation of the person receiving Communion and may need to shorten the reading.

13.5 Invite those present to join in the General Intercessions.

13.6 It would be most appropriate to leave a copy of the Parish Bulletin with the sick person, so that they can continue to feel connected with the life of the parish.

13.7 At all times you must maintain confidentiality and appropriate boundaries in your relationship with the sick person.

13.8 The simplified and shortened version of the rite is used in a hospital, nursing home or other institution, where you need more than ever to be ready to adapt to the circumstances of the sick person.

## 14. VIATICUM

14.1 Most often it is a priest who is called to the bedside of a dying person, to offer them the sacrament of Reconciliation and to give them their final Communion, which is known as Viaticum (from the Latin *via te cum* – on the way with you.) This is the final “food for the journey” to eternal life.

14.2 Sometimes, however, you may find yourself in the position of being with a person you have ministered to over a long period of time as they approach death. You may give them Viaticum. The Rite is structured as follows, but you need to be aware of what the sick person is able to do and say.

In its simplest form, the Liturgy of Viaticum consists of:

The Lord’s Prayer

Reception of Holy Communion

Prayer after Communion

Asking God’s blessing

Sign of Peace

14.3 When giving Viaticum, you hold the sacred host before the person and say as usual, “The Body of Christ” to which they answer, “Amen.” Then you add the beautiful words, “May the Lord Jesus Christ protect you and lead you to eternal life” to which they respond, “Amen.”

Be aware that often the dying are only able to consume a small part of the host.

## 15. APPENDIX 1

### ORDER FOR THE COMMISSIONING OF EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION WITHIN MASS

#### **Presentation**

Priest: I invite all who are entrusted with administering Holy Communion to come forward.

*When those to be commissioned have come forward, the priest continues:*

Dear friends in Christ,  
these brothers and sisters of ours  
are to be entrusted with administering Holy Communion during the Eucharist,  
taking Communion to the sick and homebound  
and giving it as Viaticum to the dying.\*

*He then addresses those being commissioned:*

In this ministry, you must be examples of Christian living in faith and conduct  
and strive to grow in holiness through this sacrament of unity and love.  
Remember that, though many, we are one body because we share the one bread and cup.

As extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion you are called to be especially observant of the Lord's command to love to love your neighbour. For when he gave his body as food to his disciples he said to them, "This is my commandment, that you should love one another as I have loved you.

#### **Dedication**

Priest: Are you resolved to undertake the office of giving the body and blood of the Lord to your brothers and sisters, and so serve to build up the Church?

Response: I am

Priest: Are you resolved to administer Holy Communion with the utmost reverence and care?

Response: I am

## **Blessing**

Priest: Dear friends in Christ, let us pray with confidence to God, our Father;  
let us ask him to bestow his blessings on our brothers and sisters,  
chosen to be ministers of Holy Communion.

Gracious Lord,

You nourish us with the body and blood of your Son,  
that we might have eternal life.

Bless + our brothers and sisters

who have been chosen to give the bread of heaven  
and the cup of salvation to your faithful people.

May the saving mysteries they distribute  
lead them to the joys of eternal life.

We ask this through Christ our Lord

Response: Amen

*Newly-commissioned ministers then return to their seats in the body of the church.*

\* In the case of Extraordinary Ministers being commissioned for ministry  
in a school, the following amendment to the text is made:

Dear friends in Christ,

these brothers and sisters of ours

are to be entrusted with administering Holy Communion  
during Eucharists celebrated by our School Community.

## 16. APPENDIX 2

### AN EXAMPLE OF THE RITE OF COMMUNION FOR THE SICK (IN THE HOME)

#### Greeting

Extraordinary Minister: In the name of the Father, and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit.

May the peace of the Lord be with you always

Response: And with your spirit.

#### Penitential Act

E. Minister: Let us turn to God with confidence  
and ask for the forgiveness of all our sins.  
(brief silence)

#### Option 1:

E. Minister: Lord, have mercy

Sick Person: Lord, have mercy

E. Minister: Christ, have mercy

Sick Person: Christ, have mercy

E. Minister: Lord, have mercy

Sick Person: Lord, have mercy

#### Option 2:

E. Minister and Sick Person together:

I confess to almighty God,  
and to you, my brothers and sisters,  
that I have greatly sinned,  
in my thoughts and in my words,  
in what I have done and in what I have failed to do,  
through my fault, through my fault,  
through my most grievous fault;  
therefore I ask blessed Mary, ever-Virgin,  
all the angels and saints,  
and you, my brothers and sisters,  
to pray for me to the Lord our God.



*Following Option 1 or 2:*

E. Minister: May almighty God have mercy on us,  
forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life.

Response: Amen

**Liturgy of the Word**

*The following is only an example of a brief Gospel reading. Using a portion of the Gospel from the previous Sunday would also be very appropriate.*

E. Minister: A reading from the holy gospel according to John (Jn 6:51)

Jesus said, "I am the living bread which has come down from heaven.  
Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever,  
and the bread that I shall give  
is my flesh for the life of the world.

*The Response may take the form of silence or an appropriate Psalm, such as the following:*

Psalm 24      Lord, make me know your ways,  
Lord, teach me your paths.  
Make me walk in your truth and teach me  
for you are God, my Saviour.

Remember your mercy, O Lord,  
and the love you have shown from of old.  
In you I hope all day long  
because of your goodness, O God.

**General Intercessions**

E. Minister: Let us now put before God our own needs  
and the needs of all people.

Let us pray for the work of the Church throughout the world.  
May all who rejoice in the name "Christian"  
try to live in the joy of the risen Lord  
and spread his Good News.  
Lord, hear us

Response: Lord, hear our prayer

E. Minister: We pray for men and women everywhere  
 who suffer because of war, injustice or the greed of others.  
 May they take comfort in the knowledge  
 that Christ shared our human suffering.  
 Lord, hear us.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

E. Minister: We pray for ourselves.  
 Give us the eyes to see the Spirit of God in the goodness of people,  
 give us ears to hear the call to service and love in our lives.  
 Lord, hear us.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer

*(If the sick person has any particular intentions to be prayed for, these are named now.)*

E. Minister: Good and gracious God,  
 you always hear the prayers of your people. Be with us  
 as comforter and friend so that we may grow always closer to you.  
 We make our prayer through Christ our Lord

Response: Amen

### **Liturgy of Holy Communion**

E. Minister: Let us pray now as Christ himself has taught us.  
 Together: Our Father, who art in heaven....

### **Communion**

E. Minister (*holding up the host*):  
 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

Response: Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof,  
 say but the word and my soul shall be healed.

E. Minister: The Body of Christ

Response: Amen

*(Brief period of silence for personal prayer)*

## Prayer after Communion

E. Minister: Loving God,  
 may the body and blood of your Son  
 be for us all a lasting remedy for body and soul.  
 We ask this through Christ our Lord

Response: Amen

## Concluding Rite

*The Extraordinary Minister makes the Sign of the Cross, at the same time invoking God's blessing:*

May the peace of God,  
 keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God,  
 and may the Lord bless us,  
 protect us from all evil  
 and bring us to everlasting life..

Response: Amen

## 17. APPENDIX 3

### RESOURCES

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum concilium*), 1963. See *The Liturgy Documents – A Parish Resource*, 3rd edition, Liturgy Training Publications, 1991.

Instruction on facilitating Eucharistic communion in certain circumstances (*Immensae caritatis*), 1973. See *Documents on the Liturgy 1963–1979*, Liturgical Press, 1982.

Instruction on certain matters to be observed or to be avoided regarding the Most Holy Eucharist, (*Redemptionis sacramentum*), 2004.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 3rd edition, 2002.

*Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion*, 2nd edition, Corinna Laughlin, Kenneth A. Riley and Paul Turner, Liturgy Training Publications.

*The Ministry of Communion*, 2nd edition, Michael Kwatera, Liturgical Press 2004.

*Ministers of Care*, Genevieve Glen OSB, Liturgical Training Publications, 1997.

