

Blessed John Henry Newman Parish – Warrington

Where Heart Speak to Heart

Ministry of Word and Holy Communion in the Home



Your ministry helps our parish in a very practical and meaningful way to make sure that those who are confined to their homes through sickness, infirmity or age remain close to our community. You have kindly and generously accepted the role of representing all those who gather for the Eucharist in our church. Still more, you have the privilege of ministering Christ's own presence through sharing the Words of scripture and the Sacramental sign of his Body and Blood.

These guidelines are provided to help you carry out this ministry of practical, caring discipleship with confidence, humility, sensitivity and grace.

Please read them not as instructions but as words of appreciation, support, advice and encouragement.

Practical Considerations for Ministers of Communion for the Sick and Homebound

BEFORE VISITING

- Collect the host in a pyx before you make the visit and keep in mind the need for respect and reverence for the presence of Christ. (It is not appropriate to keep the Blessed Sacrament at home unless in exceptional circumstances agreed with the priest)
- If the family suggests setting a simple table with candles and holy water, agree with this but do not insist upon it when the family is not ready or unfamiliar with the practice.

AS YOU BEGIN THE VISIT

- Take proper time for introduction and personal sharing. Listen and observe attentively. Be considerate if there are other visitors or if the person visited seems distracted or distressed.
- Assure members of the family or other visitors that they are welcome to join in the prayers and [if they are Catholics] to receive Communion also.
- It is advisable to carry extra copies of the Visiting Liturgy sheet in anticipation of such circumstances.

THE RITE

- Pace the ritual with sensitivity. Be aware of the other person's ability to follow.
- Adapt to the situation of each visit.
- Take time to pray reverently and to be present with the sick person and the family. Give a small portion of the host to a person who has difficulty swallowing.
- Wait for the person to swallow the host. Offer water if necessary.

AFTER THE PRAYER TIME

- If you think it is appropriate and you have time share some thoughts from the homily and the bulletin if the person shows interest in the parish.
- If the person you are visiting expresses a desire to celebrate the sacrament of penance, encourage them or the family to be in contact with the parish priest. You might also offer to relay the message yourself.

- Be sensitive to the proper time to depart.
- Remember and respect the requirement to keep confidences at all times. [The only exception to this is when you become aware of some concern about abuse of the vulnerable, in which case the matter must be referred to the authorities]

Frequently Asked Questions about Taking Communion to the Sick and the Homebound

WHEN DO I TAKE COMMUNION TO THE SICK PERSON?

It is best to take Holy Communion directly from the community's celebration of Eucharist in the church to the person in the home. If this is not reasonable, and no substitute is available, please take It as soon as possible, showing respect for the presence of Christ.

IF TAKING HOLY COMMUNION IS ONLY PART OF MY VISIT WITH THE SICK OR HOMEBOUND PERSON, SHOULD PRAYER AND COMMUNION BE AT THE BEGINNING OR END OF OUR TIME TOGETHER?

There is no set rule but most people find it more comfortable to spend some time in conversation before sharing prayer and Holy Communion. The conversation could include ideas from the homily and reassurance that the parish community prayerfully supports that person. If the sick or homebound person prefers time for private devotion, it is suggested that you visit before prayer and indicate that you will leave immediately after distribution of Communion so as to allow time for quiet reflection and devotion. This respects the privacy of the person while also honouring the importance of communal prayer as part of Eucharist.

WHAT PRAYERS AND READINGS DO I USE WHEN BRINGING HOLY COMMUNION TO SOMEONE IN THEIR HOME?

The attached prayer liturgy is encouraged for use in our Parish. [It is also possible to use the prayers in the booklet called, *Communion of the Sick*, which is based on Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rite of Anointing and Viaticum, the official rite of the Catholic Church.

Since your focus should be on the needs of the sick or homebound person, you may adapt the prayers to fit the situation. Consider the person's illness, pain level, tiredness, and ability to concentrate; also be considerate of others who are responding to that person's physical needs. If longer readings are

desired, you may use the scripture reading from the day or Sunday or choose any appropriate reading from the Bible. This is particularly appropriate for feasts and seasons.

IF OTHERS ARE PRESENT, SHOULD I INVITE THEM TO PRAY AND RECEIVE COMMUNION?

Yes, others should be invited to join in prayer. All Catholics who are participating may be invited to receive Communion.

ARE THE SICK OR HOMEBOUND REQUIRED TO FAST AN HOUR BEFORE RECEIVING COMMUNION?

No, they may receive Communion at any hour and need not adhere to the normal fasting regulations

WHAT IF THE SICK PERSON IS UNABLE TO SWALLOW THE ENTIRE HOST?

Water may be offered to the sick person receiving Communion to aid in swallowing the host. If warranted, just a small portion of the host can be offered if the person is too ill to receive the entire host. The remaining portion of that host must be consumed by someone who is participating or by you as minister of Communion. Remember that the divine presence in the Blessed Sacrament is the same regardless of the size of the portion of the host. Consult with the family concerning the condition of the person regarding swallowing.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF THE HOST IS DROPPED OR THE PERSON REMOVES IT FROM HIS/HER MOUTH?

If the host is dropped and there are no health concerns, the host may be picked up and consumed. If the dropped host presents health concerns or the person removes the host from his/her mouth, it should be dissolved in water and the water poured directly onto the earth, not down a drain. Of course, if anyone declines or refuses to receive Communion, you would respect this wish.

WHAT DO I DO WITH THE PYX WHEN I AM NOT USING IT TO TAKE COMMUNION TO THE SICK?

The pyx should be kept in a safe and respectful place when not in use. Take the pyx to the community's celebration of Eucharist on the day of visiting the sick. When a minister no longer needs the pyx, it is returned to the parish priest.