

Sample Formation Session

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

to the Sick & Homebound

Recommended Resource: **A Ritual for Laypersons**, published by The Liturgical Press
Handbook for Ministers of Care, published by Liturgy
Training Publications

I. Welcome & Introductions

II. Opening Prayer

(Pray together the “Prayer of a Minister of Communion to the Sick and Homebound”,
Handout A)

III. Presentation I: The foundation for this ministry in Scripture.

References from Scripture and Lessons from the Scriptures

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 1 Cor 11: 23-25

As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. Now the body is not a single part, but many. 1 Cor 12: 12-14

“Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone in good spirits? He should sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint (him) with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven.” James 5:13-15

Lessons from Scripture

1. We receive the Eucharist that is truly the Body and Blood of Christ.
2. We, the assembly of the baptized, also become the Body of the Risen Christ.
3. This becoming unites us in love, and should change our lives.
4. Just because an individual is ill, homebound, or unable to be present at the assembly of the baptized, that person does not stop being a member of the Body of Christ. Just because a baptized member of Christ is sick and homebound, that person does not stop functioning as a member of the priesthood of Christ.
5. We believe in the Communion of Saints.
6. We should not view ministry to the homebound solely as a service TO the sick. This is a ministry of the Body of Christ to the Body of Christ. It is the members building

up one another. Ministry TO the sick is just as much ministry BY the sick. Those ministering, and the assembly itself, are blessed and built up, by the presence of those to whom one ministers.

IV. Presentation II: Opening Exercise: Practices while visiting

Point out the idea that our ministry to the sick and the homebound calls for great sensitivity and care. To involve people in thinking about the ministry, invite them to look at *Handout B*. Point out the list of eleven practices. Some are effective and good while others need to be avoided. Check or cross out those that we want to avoid. (Allow about 2 or 3 minutes.)

Ask the participants to turn to their neighbor. Discuss why they think that five of the practices are improper. Allow about 6 min. Call them to attention and end on a positive note by pointing out the 5 **proper practices**.

V. Presentation III: Personal Reflection and Small Group Sharing

Ask the participants to take time for reflection on the gifts that God has given them to share in this ministry. Use Reflection Questions on *Handout B*. A leader reads the two questions. Take 3 minutes to reflect privately. Then allow 5 minutes to share with 2 other neighbors. End with thanks to God for gifts.

VI. Presentation III: Procedure for bringing Communion to the sick & homebound

Review Handout C with the participants.

Ask the participants to read the Questions and Answers at home (Handout D).

VII. Presentation IV: Closing Remarks and Commitment Prayer

- Ask if anyone has any questions/concerns.
- Together pray the Closing Prayer: “Prayer of Personal Commitment” (*Handout A*).

Handout A

Opening Prayer:

Prayer of a Minister of Communion to the Sick and Homebound

Gracious God,
I am in your Sacred Presence
about to take the Bread of Life to those who
are unable to participate in the parish
celebration of the Eucharist.
Thank you for the honor to carry Christ to them.
Bless my hands that they may be
fitting instruments of this Holy Visitation.
Bless my heart, that I may prayerfully carry
the Bread of Life to those in need.
May my attitude, my reverence and
my concern for others be of Your divine heart.
I ask this in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ,
who lives with You and the Holy Spirit
now and ever. Amen.

Closing Prayer:

Prayer of Personal Commitment

I remember with gratitude that I have been entrusted with
the ministry of taking Communion to the sick and the homebound.
I have accepted this responsibility of being an example of Christian
living in faith and reaffirm my desire to strive for greater holiness
through this sacrament of unity and love.
I remember that, though many, we are one body because we share
the one bread and the one cup. I resolve as an Extraordinary Minister of
Communion to the sick and homebound to serve my brothers and sisters with
utmost care and reverence.
I ask God to bless me in this my ministry of care that strengthened by
God's grace, I may continue to be of service to those in need.
Amen+

Commissioning Blessing **Book of Blessing** Chapter 63

Handout B

Opening Exercise

The following list contains 5 items that are improper for a visit with the sick or homebound.

Check the five items that are practices we want to avoid.

- ___ 1. Begin the prayers with the Sign of the Cross, the sign common to all prayer.
- ___ 2. Comment on how the house needs to be better organized for the sick person.
- ___ 3. Talk about the last visit to another house and comment about its cleanliness.
- ___ 4. Be aware of the sick person's ability to follow the prayers and the ritual.
- ___ 5. Comment on the lack of interest of the parish priest in visiting the homebound.
- ___ 6. Show respect and reverence for the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.
- ___ 7. If the person cannot receive Communion, offer a blessing.
- ___ 8. Follow the Catholic Rite for Communion to the Sick but adjust as needed.
- ___ 9. Question family members about their worthiness to receive communion.
- ___ 10. Ask who pays for their care and then give advice for saving money.
- ___ 11. Assure the sick/elderly person that their parish remembers them in prayer.

**Share your results with a person near to you.
Discuss why these practices are improper.**

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What is your personal experience in relating to those who are ill, or in visiting the elderly or homebound that has called you to this ministry at this time in your life? Please share a personal experience.
2. What gifts did God give you that will help you in this ministry?

Procedure for Bringing Communion to the Sick and the Homebound

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Know that the relationship with the person who is sick is a key factor. The minister brings the comfort and concern of Christ.
- Be aware of feelings that may arise when you enter a person's home or room. If you find it difficult to look at the person because of their physical condition, concentrate on their eyes.
- Take proper time for introduction and personal sharing. Listen attentively so you are aware of what the sick person desires or prefers before beginning the Communion Rite.
- If the person does not wish to share Communion at this time, ask if they would like to share in a short blessing.
- Be aware of making referrals when other services are needed (confessor, counselor, doctor, etc.) Do not try to solve problems.
- If the sick person wishes to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation, encourage the family to contact the parish priest or offer to relay the message yourself.
- Keep confidences at all times.

BEFORE VISITING

- Collect information about the person who is sick and other helpful information for your visit to the home or hospital.
- Make an appointment. Even if you have a regularly scheduled time for visiting, call to confirm since the situation may change. The person may not be up for a visit because of various circumstances. You may also want to ask if additional family members or the caretaker want to receive communion.
- Spend some time in prayer if you are going to be bringing communion to the sick.
- Carry the host in a pyx. Have respect and reverence for the presence of Christ. When transporting the Eucharist to the sick, ministers should avoid any activity not in keeping with the reverence due to the Blessed Sacrament.
- Don't visit if you are sick. Because of its frequency today the common cold or flu may cause serious complications for a person who is already ill. Call to cancel your appointment if you are not feeling well.
- Wear attire appropriate to the ministry.

AS YOU BEGIN YOUR VISIT

- Be friendly but not too overpowering. Be careful not to let natural shyness give you the appearance of being remote or distant.
- Share greetings and introductions, give some ideas from the homily if you are taking Communion after a Liturgy. If the person is interested in the parish, share the bulletin news with them.
- You will be a better visitor if you are able to be flexible as interruptions may happen.
- Be confident and personal in your ministry of service but remember that the other person's needs are primary.

- After listening to the conditions and desires of the person who is sick, ask if the person desires communion at this time. Invite the family to receive Communion also. Choose a scripture reading suited to the person. Be aware of the need for short and comforting passages. The reading and homily should help those present to reach a deeper understanding of the mystery of human suffering in relation to the paschal mystery of Christ. PCS, 72

PROCEDURES FOR THE COMMUNION RITE

- Knowing the conditions and desires of the person who is sick, choose a Scripture reading suited to the person. Be aware of the need for short and comforting passages. The readings and the homily should help those present to reach a deeper understanding of the mystery of human suffering in relation to the paschal mystery of Christ. PCS, 72
- Carry the host in a pyx. Have respect and reverence for the presence of Christ. When transporting the Eucharist to the sick, ministers should avoid any activity not in keeping with the reverence due to the Blessed Sacrament. Go directly from tabernacle / Mass to the pastoral visit.
- If the family suggests setting a simple table with candles and holy water, agree with this but do not insist upon it if the family is not ready or unfamiliar with the practice.
- Begin with the sign of the cross. It is a common call to prayer. Be a prayerful presence with a purpose.
- Pace the ritual with sensitivity. Be aware of the sick person's ability to follow.
- Give a small portion of the host to a person who has difficulty swallowing. Check with the nurse or doctor in cases of special feeding.
- Wait for the person to swallow the host. Offer water if necessary. Be prepared with a cloth in the event that the person has problems.
- Take time to pray reverently and to be present with the sick person and the family. Be sensitive to the proper time to depart.

OUTLINE OF THE RITUAL

Use the ritual: *Administration of Communion and Viaticum to the Sick* (see [A Ritual for Laypersons](#)). The outline includes: **Introductory Rites, Liturgy of the Word, The Communion Rite and The Concluding Rite.**

ENDING THE VISIT

- Be sensitive to the proper time to depart.
- End with appropriate verbal encouragement such as “Thank-you for allowing me to visit with you today.” “Please pray for our parish that God will be with all of our families and parish leaders.” “Please keep me in your prayers and you will be in mine.” These can be encouraging words, since it helps the person offer service back to you through prayer.

The parish staff or trainer of communion ministers for the sick should be available to those visiting the sick in order that they might share their feelings and experiences.

Handout D

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS CONCERNING DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION OUTSIDE OF MASS TO PERSONS WHO ARE SICK OR ELDERLY

1. Who may bring Holy Communion to persons outside of Mass?

Besides priests and deacons, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may bring Communion, provided they are installed as Extraordinary Ministers and authorized to do so by the priest of the parish or the Catholic chaplain of the hospital or other institution where the Extraordinary Minister will bring Communion.

2. What procedures do Extraordinary Ministers follow to take Communion from church or chapel?

The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion may be called forward after the Communion Rite at Mass, receive the pyx containing host (s), and be sent from the church or chapel with a blessing or go to the tabernacle after Mass, put the host (s) in the pyx and depart.

The Extraordinary Minister will then proceed directly from the church or chapel to the place where Communion is to be distributed.

3. What Rite is to be used when giving Communion?

The Rite of Communion of the Sick is to be followed.
(See separate section below on Rite of Communion of the Sick)

4. Is there a period of fasting before Communion for persons who are sick?

Persons who are sick and those who take care of them are not bound to any Eucharistic fast.

5. What does the Extraordinary Minister do if the person being visited cannot receive the whole host?

A small portion of the host may be given to persons who can receive the host but not the whole host. The extraordinary minister may consume the remaining portion of the host.

6. May a person who is sick and unable to receive Communion under the form of bread, receive Communion under the form of wine?

Only sick people who are unable to receive Communion under the form of bread may receive it under the form of wine alone at the discretion of the priest. If not consecrated at a Mass in the presence of the sick person, the Blood of the Lord is kept in a properly covered vessel and is placed in the tabernacle after Communion. The Precious Blood should be carried to the sick in a vessel that is closed in such a way as to eliminate all danger of spilling. If some of the Precious Blood remains after the sick person has received Communion, it should be consumed by the minister, who should also see to it that the vessel is properly purified. (Norms # 54)

7. Is it necessary to follow the policies and procedures of hospitals or other institutions when bringing Communion?

When bringing Communion to persons in hospitals or other institutions, it is necessary to follow the institution's policies and procedures. These may include: observing isolation procedures and any NPO signs. NPO means Nothing By Mouth. If in doubt about giving Communion because of a person's medical status, ask the person's nurse before giving Communion, whether the person is physically able to receive Holy Communion.

8. What does the Extraordinary Minister do with a host that is not properly consumed?

If the host is not properly consumed by the communicant, the host may be placed in a clean tissue or handkerchief and returned to church or chapel where the host is placed in a designated vessel with water.

9. After Communion is distributed, what does the Extraordinary Minister do with any remaining hosts?

Care should be taken to bring only the amount of hosts needed for distribution. Any remaining hosts are to be returned directly to the tabernacle. If this is not possible, then the remaining hosts are to be consumed by the Extraordinary Minister. Hosts are not to be kept in a house, in a car or on one's person.

10. Can Communion be given during the Triduum?

Communion to persons who are sick may be given at any time on Holy Thursday and Good Friday. On Holy Saturday, Communion may only be given as Viaticum for those in danger of death.

11. Should candles be used during the Communion Rite?

The custom of using lit candles in the home while the Blessed Sacrament is present may be continued. Lit candles may not be used if there is an oxygen tank or oxygen machine present. Lit candles are not to be used while bringing Communion to persons in hospitals or other institutions without the authorization of the institutions.

12. What is the role of the Extraordinary Minister when visiting persons who cannot receive Communion?

The Extraordinary Minister may offer to pray with the person being visited and invite other persons in the house or room to pray. If the person states that he or she wants to receive the Sacrament of Penance before receiving Communion, offer to contact the parish priest or priest chaplain for the person.

THE RITE OF COMMUNION OF THE SICK OUTSIDE MASS

1. When is this Rite of Communion to be used?

When the Extraordinary Minister gives Communion outside of Mass to persons who are sick, he or she uses the Rite of Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass.

2. What does this Rite include?

The Ordinary Rite of Communion of the Sick Outside Mass includes:

- a) Introductory Rites
 1. Greeting
 2. Penitential Rite
- b) Liturgy of the Word
 1. The short form of the Reading of the Word
 2. Response
 3. General Intercessions
- c) Liturgy of Holy Communion
 1. The Lord's Prayer
 2. Communion
 3. Silent Prayer
 4. Prayer after Communion
- d) Concluding Rite
Blessing

The Short Rite of Communion of the Sick includes:

- a) Introductory Rite
 1. Antiphon
- b) Liturgy of Holy Communion
 1. Invitation to Communion
 2. Communion
- c) Concluding Rite
 1. Concluding Prayer

3. When is the shorter Rite used?

The shorter Rite is to be used when Holy Communion is given in different rooms of the same building, such as a hospital or nursing home, where the presence of Community members is not possible or expected. Elements taken from the ordinary rite may be added according to circumstances.

4. Where can this Rite be found?

This rite is found in various publications, including:

- a) *Pastoral Care of the Sick*
- b) *A Ritual for Laypersons*

VIATICUM

1. What is Viaticum?

Viaticum is Holy Communion given to the dying person. It is the spiritual food for the passage through death to eternal life. It is the Sacrament proper to the dying Christian. It is the final Sacrament.

2. When should Viaticum be received?

When possible, Viaticum should take place within Mass so that the dying person, the family, friends and members of the local community may all share in this sacred moment.

When the full Eucharistic celebration cannot take place, the Rite for Viaticum outside Mass is utilized.

3. Who is able to receive Viaticum?

The Christian faithful who are in danger of death, arising from any cause, are to be nourished by Holy Communion in the form of Viaticum. (Canon 921 - §1)

Even if they have received Communion in the same day, those who are in danger of death are strongly urged to receive again. (Canon 921 - §2)

While the danger of death lasts, it is recommended that Holy Communion be given repeatedly but on separate days. (Canon 921 - §3)

Holy Viaticum for the sick is not to be delayed too long. Those who have the care of souls are to be zealous and vigilant to see that the dying are nourished by Viaticum while they are fully conscious.
(Canon 922)

The Most Holy Eucharist may be given to children who are in danger of death, only however, if they are able to distinguish the Body of Christ from ordinary food and to receive Communion reverently. (Canon 913 - §2)

4. Who are the ordinary ministers of Viaticum?

The ordinary ministers of Viaticum are the pastor and his assistants, chaplains, and the superior in clerical religious institutes or societies of apostolic life. (Canon 911 - §1)

In case of necessity or with at least the presumed permission of the pastor, chaplain or superior, who should later be notified, any priest or other minister of Holy Communion must do this. (i.e., give Viaticum) (Canon 911 - §2)

5. What is the Rite of Viaticum Outside Mass?

The Rite of Viaticum Outside Mass includes:

- a) Introductory Rites
 - 1. Greeting
 - 2. Instruction
 - 3. Penitential Rite
- b) Liturgy of the Word
 - 1. The short form of the Reading of the Word
 - 2. Profession of Baptismal Faith
 - 3. Prayer for the Sick Person
- c) Liturgy of Viaticum
 - 1. The Lord's Prayer
 - 2. Invitation to Communion
 - 3. Communion of Viaticum
- d) Concluding Rites
 - 1. Blessing
 - 2. Sign of Peace

6. Where can the Rite be found?

The Rite can be found in various publications, including:

- a) *A Ritual for Laypersons, Chapter 2*
- b) *Pastoral Care of the Sick—Rites of Anointing and Viaticum, Chapter 5*

