

TAKE and EAT

Southwark Liturgy Commission

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THE EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER OF HOLY COMMUNION IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

You have been chosen to become an extraordinary minister of Communion and you are probably wondering just what it means and what your role will be. It has become a very important part of parish life since Pope Paul VI introduced it in 1973. He issued an Instruction *Immensae Caritatis* which addressed various aspects of the Eucharist. As part of his desire that the Eucharist should be at the centre of the Christian life, he introduced Extraordinary Ministers of Communion in these words:

Present day conditions, however, demand that, while the greatest reverence towards this Sacrament is constantly maintained, easier access to Holy Communion should be made possible. Thus the faithful, by sharing more fully in the fruits of the sacrifice of the Mass, may dedicate themselves more readily and effectively to God and the good of the Church and of mankind. (Immensae Caritatis, n.2)

Since then, the role of the Extraordinary Minister has developed. The Rite of Pastoral Care of the Sick emphasises the importance of the sick being able to receive Holy Communion frequently and especially on Sunday, the Lord's Day. In addition, the occasions on which Holy Communion under both kinds may be received have been extended so that at most celebrations of Mass, everyone may receive Communion in this way. In most parishes this means that more extraordinary ministers are needed.

LEV 16 → Holy & H.W
Only one High Priest -
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When may Extraordinary Ministers exercise their ministry?

The extraordinary ministers are chosen from and are at the service of the community. They are used when ordinary ministers are not present in sufficient numbers to allow the distribution of Communion to be carried out in an efficient and prayerful manner. The ordinary minister of the Eucharist is a bishop, priest or deacon.

However, there will be many occasions when you will be needed to help with the distribution of Communion at Mass, or to take Communion to the sick, especially on Sunday.

Most parishes have a rota of extraordinary ministers covering the various celebrations of Mass. But, even when there is a rota, extraordinary ministers are used if the number of people receiving Communion is such that the celebration of Mass would be unduly prolonged. The idea is not to shorten the Mass or to make it more 'efficient', but to give each part its proper value and to ensure that Communion is seen as a special encounter with Christ, and is received in a calm and recollected manner, without any rushing or queuing. The Communion procession is intended to express the unity of the whole congregation and also expresses the humble patience of the poor moving forward to be fed, the alert expectancy of God's people sharing the paschal meal in readiness for their journey, the joyful confidence of God's people on the march towards the Promised Land.

Communion under both kinds shows forth the fullness of the signs given us by Jesus at the Last Supper. Although Christ is received, body, blood, soul and divinity under either the form of bread or the form of wine, the Church teaches that the fullness of the sign is seen when Communion is received under both kinds, and this is now the norm in many parishes of the diocese. Permission has been given in this diocese for Communion under both kinds to be given at Sunday and weekday Masses. There are some occasions when this would not be appropriate, whether because of the sheer number of communicants, being in the open air or because of the design and the logistics of the place where Mass is being celebrated.

On occasion you may be asked to lead a Eucharistic Service in the absence of a parish priest.

The Extraordinary Minister at Mass

As an extraordinary minister of Communion, you undertake a task on behalf of the community from within the community. That is why the Church wishes it to be made clear that extraordinary ministers should not receive Communion ‘apart from the other faithful, as though concelebrants’ (*Instruction on certain questions regarding the collaboration of the non-ordained faithful in the sacred ministry of priests, n.8*).

The latest General Instruction on the Roman Missal and the official commentary on it by the Bishops of England and Wales, *Celebrating the Mass*, give instructions on the duties of Extraordinary Ministers during Mass.

Texts are given as an appendix to this book, but in practice extraordinary ministers are to be used when there are not sufficient ordinary ministers (bishops, priests, deacons) to

distribute Communion under both kinds or even under one species. In this case, ministers should come to the sanctuary and be in position by the end of the exchange of the sign of peace. When the priest has received Communion, the extraordinary ministers approach the altar and receive Communion from the priest(s) and deacon(s). They are then given a paten or a chalice and go with the priests and deacons to distribute Communion. When Communion is ended, the extraordinary ministers return the paten and chalice either to the altar or to the credence table. It is the duty of the deacon or priest to deal with any of the Eucharistic elements left over, either by returning the ciborium to the tabernacle, or by consuming the Precious Blood. When Communion is completed, the altar table is cleared again and the Eucharistic vessels are purified. The purification of the vessels should be performed with reverence, though briefly and inconspicuously. Especially if there are several vessels, their purification is preferably left until after Mass.

If possible, the cleansing is carried out at the side table. If it is necessary that it be done at the altar, it should take place at the side of the altar rather than at its centre.

In some parishes, extraordinary ministers wear specially designed collars to show that they have a special role in the celebration. Parishes should ensure that these collars do not resemble the stoles worn by priests and deacons and thereby cause possible confusion. Ministers should remember the importance of their ministry and dress appropriately. Smart, rather than casual, is the safest choice.

Guidelines for Communion under both kinds

The Church in her liturgical documents emphasises how important it is that the people should be able to receive Communion from hosts consecrated at the Mass they are attending. It should not be the norm to give hosts from the tabernacle. The principal functions of the reservation of the hosts in the tabernacle are to take Communion to the sick; for adoration, and as a reserve in case insufficient hosts are consecrated at Mass.

Although Christ is received, body, blood, soul and divinity under either the form of bread or the form of wine, the Church teaches that the fullness of the sign is seen when Communion is received under both kinds, and this is now the norm in many parishes of the diocese.

The most efficient way of distributing Communion under both kinds is for there to be two chalices for each ciborium or paten. The chalices are prepared by the deacon at the Preparation of the Gifts.

After you have received Communion, you go with the priest and deacon to distribute Communion. If you are ministering the chalice, you offer it to the communicant, saying **The Blood of Christ** and give it when the communicant has answered **Amen**. The communicant should take the chalice from you as this minimises the risk of any spillage. You may have to hold the chalice for children or the very old. When the communicant has received from the chalice, you take it back, wipe the rim and turn the chalice slightly before offering it to the next communicant.

Distribution of Holy Communion under one kind

Customs vary from parish to parish, but the sign of sharing in the one bread is stronger when the hosts are contained in one paten or ciborium. They would be transferred to other patens or ciboria by the celebrant and/or deacon.

After the extraordinary ministers have received Communion from the priest or deacon, they are given a paten or ciborium and go with the other ministers to distribute Communion. The minister shows the host to each communicant, saying **The Body of Christ**. The communicant should answer **Amen** before receiving the host. **The communicant may receive either in the hand or on the tongue, standing or kneeling. You should make sure that the host is consumed before the communicants make their way back to their places.**

When everyone has received Communion you return to the altar. Any hosts remaining are placed in a ciborium and taken to the tabernacle.

Celebration of the Word and Communion outside of Mass in the absence of a priest

In addition to taking Communion to the sick, you may occasionally be asked to give Communion outside Mass on a weekday. There is also provision for Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest. This is not necessary in our diocese at present, and if it should become necessary, special training will be given.

You will find the necessary texts and instructions in *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass*. This book also deals with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. For

Holy Communion, the celebrant may be a priest or deacon, or an Extra Ordinary Minister of Holy Communion. If you are asked to conduct a Communion service, you do not preside and you do not use the Presidential Chair. The service is very simple:

Introductory rites

Greeting and Penitential Rite (from the Missal)

Liturgy of the Word

Readings (from the Lectionary for the day/ or Votive Mass of the Eucharist or Precious Blood)

General intercessions (bidding prayer)

Holy Communion

The Lord's Prayer

Sign of peace

Communion

Silent prayer of thanksgiving

Concluding prayer (from the Missal)

Concluding rite

Blessing

Dismissal

You should note that there are proper texts of the greeting and blessing for use by extraordinary ministers.

Eucharistic Ministry to the sick and housebound

Since the introduction of extraordinary ministers, one of the most valuable parts of their ministry has been the bringing of Communion to the sick, especially from the Sunday Mass.

Any community can be judged on how it cares for its weakest and most dependent members and this applies in a special way to the Christian community and its care of the sick and the housebound. Many of these were regular mass-goers and are suddenly cut off by illness or old age from taking their part in the church with their brothers and sisters. Many feel very lonely and sometimes afraid, especially when they have lost their husband or wife. When you bring them Communion, you are bringing them not only the Body of Christ but also the love, the prayers and the companionship of the parish community. The Church spells out your role very clearly:

Priests with pastoral responsibilities should see to it that the sick or aged, even though not seriously ill or in danger of death, are given every opportunity to receive the Eucharist frequently, even daily, especially during the Easter season. They may receive Communion at any hour. Those who care for the sick may receive Communion with them, in accord with the usual norms. To provide frequent Communion for the sick, it may be necessary to ensure that the community has a sufficient number of extraordinary ministers of Communion. (Pastoral Care of the Sick, n. 72)

Parish communities are reminded that we must remember the sick in the general intercessions and of the need for prayer at other times for the sick of our parish. These prayers are put into action, in a way, when after Communion; extraordinary ministers take Communion to their sick brothers and sisters.

When you take Communion to the sick, you should remember that you are bringing two special gifts. The first, and infinitely most important, is the gift of Jesus really present in the Eucharist. The second is the gift of yourself and of your time. Please don't under-rate yourself. Your visit and your friendship are of great importance to the sick person. The visit should never be rushed. You should give time for the sick to experience the loving care of Jesus. It should be a time of loving and caring. For people confined to their homes or a hospital bed any visit is special but this visit can be made even more special by the way you celebrate the sacrament.

Bringing Communion to the sick and housebound

After Communion you come forward to receive the Blessed Sacrament from the celebrant of the Mass. The Host is contained in a small container called a pyx. You must take the greatest care of the pyx and treat it reverently. Ideally the minister should leave the church as soon as she/he receives the pyx, but this may not always be possible. Nevertheless the minister should go to the sick person as soon as possible.

The rite is very simple and follows the rite of Communion outside Mass given above. However, it may be simplified, depending on the condition of the sick person.

The most important parts are:

- The greeting and penitential rite
- A short reading
- The Lord's Prayer
- Communion
- Prayer of Thanksgiving

but even these may be shortened as it is important not to tire the sick person. There may be occasions when the person is well enough to listen to the Gospel of the day and to join in the intercessions.

If possible, the family of the sick person should be asked to prepare a small table with a white cloth and candles, or you can bring a white cloth and crucifix with you. This will not always be possible and the minister may have to make arrangements to find a suitable place for the Blessed Sacrament. It is important not to worry the sick person but to make the best of conditions in the house.

It is good to bring the sick person a copy of the parish newsletter and to allow time to talk to the sick person.

Although you will take Communion to a person regularly, you should always make provision for a priest to visit. The sick person may wish to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, especially during the Easter season. You should also be aware of the person's condition and, if you notice any deterioration, you should consult the family and the sick person about receiving the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. You should explain that this is not the 'last rites' but a sacrament of strengthening for people who are seriously ill and who would benefit from its reception. The Anointing may be given only by a bishop or priest.

Communion of the sick in hospital

Conditions will vary from hospital to hospital. This is the recommended rite to be followed:

In a chapel or the first room to be visited, the minister may read a short antiphon. In each room she/he greets the sick person and if time permits reads a short passage of scripture. If possible the Lord's Prayer is said and Communion is given in the usual way. The concluding prayer is said in the last room or the chapel. The rite may be adapted by shortening it or lengthening it, depending on circumstances.

It should be noted that candles should not be lit in hospital wards!

Always seek permission from the chaplain before you take Communion to someone in hospital.

Viaticum

Viaticum is the sacrament which a dying person should receive if at all possible. It is the Eucharist received as food for the journey through death to new life. It will normally be given by a priest or deacon but in case of emergency, extraordinary ministers may celebrate it. The rite is basically that of Communion to the sick but one of the distinctive features is the renewal of the baptismal profession of faith by the dying person. This takes place after the homily (if there is one) or after the Gospel. A short litany is also provided, and immediately after Communion, the minister says: **May the Lord Jesus protect you and lead you to eternal life.** The extraordinary minister may also lead the prayers for the dying.

Some general points

Please don't at Mass:

- Give Communion to yourself
- Take the sacred vessels yourself
- Genuflect to the tabernacle if you are carrying the ciborium or chalice containing consecrated Hosts and the Precious Blood

Please do:

slow

- Minister with care. Look out for slippery floors, trailing cables, and children.
- Minister with dignity. You are serving God's people and ministering God's grace to them through the sacrament of the Eucharist.
- Minister with love. Keep in mind your loving service to those to whom you are ministering the Lord's Body and Blood.
- Minister with joy. Our Communion with the Lord is a joyful event. Be welcoming.
- Minister regularly. If you are due to assist as an Extra Ordinary Minister of Holy Communion, make sure you are there. If you can't, make sure that someone takes your place or that the priest is informed.

And if you...

- drop a host on the ground, pick it up and consume it immediately. Or place it on a corporal on the altar and draw the priest's attention to it.
- spill the Precious Blood, mop up what you can with a purificator, cover the area with other purificators and after Mass reverently clean the area.

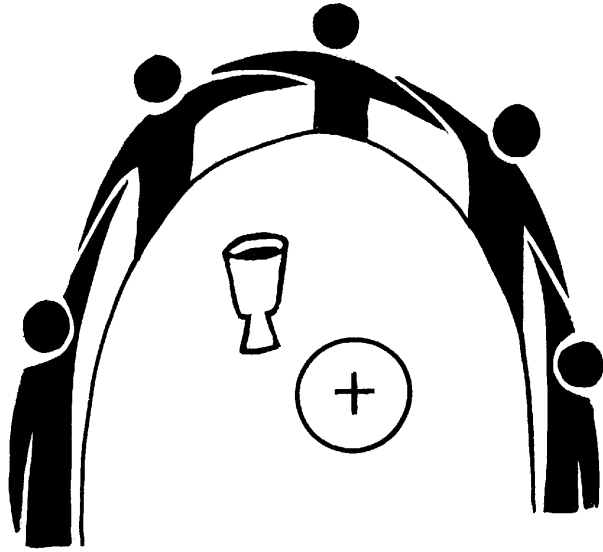
- have a large amount of the Precious Blood left over after Communion; ask the priest or deacon to help you to consume it.

Other ministries

Extraordinary ministers of Communion are often readers or altar servers. Except in case of absolute necessity, you should not exercise more than one ministry at a celebration.

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

Extraordinary ministers of Communion may expose and repose the Blessed Sacrament. They may not give the blessing with the Blessed Sacrament.



FORMATION OF EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS

Introduction

In preparing people to be Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, formation needs to include an understanding of the theology and spirituality of Liturgy as well as practical aspects of being a minister. The Bishops in the Document “Celebrating the Mass” say; “The formation of liturgical ministers is both spiritual and technical. Although this formation varies in extent and depth depending upon the nature of the particular ministry, it will normally have liturgical, biblical and technical components.

Through training in the particular skills of their ministry they learn to make the best use of their personal gifts and strengths in order to communicate the person and message of Christ by the reverent use of word, gesture or movement.”

In working with adults it is important to try to draw from their experience and knowledge as well as have some input.

Five sessions

Session One: This is Sunday

We reflect on why it is so important that as Catholics we attach so much importance to celebrating the day of resurrection by the celebration of Mass. Perhaps to begin we can reflect on our own experience of celebrating Mass on Sunday.

Here are some quotations from various Church documents:

Catechism of the Catholic Church, n.2174

“Jesus rose from the dead "on the first day of the week." Because it is the "first day," the day of Christ's Resurrection recalls the first creation. Because it is the "eighth day" following the Sabbath, it symbolises the new creation ushered in by Christ's Resurrection. For Christians it has become the first of all days, the first of all feasts, the Lord's Day, Sunday: We all gather on the day of the sun, for it is the first day [after the Jewish Sabbath, but also the first day] when God, separating matter from darkness, made the world; and on this same day Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church, nn.2175 and 2176

“Sunday is expressly distinguished from the Sabbath, which it follows chronologically every week; for Christians its ceremonial observance replaces that of the Sabbath. In Christ's Passover, Sunday fulfils the spiritual truth of the Jewish Sabbath and announces man's eternal rest in God. For worship under the Law prepared for the mystery of Christ, and what was done there prefigured some aspects of Christ:

Those who lived according to the old order of things have come to a new hope, no longer keeping the Sabbath, but the Lord's Day, in which our life is blessed by him and by his death.

The celebration of Sunday observes the moral commandment inscribed by nature in the human heart to render to God an outward, visible, public, and regular worship "as a sign of his universal beneficence to all." Sunday worship fulfils the moral command of the Old Covenant, taking up its rhythm and spirit in the weekly celebration of the Creator and Redeemer of his people.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church, n.2177

“The Sunday celebration of the Lord’s day and His Eucharist is at the heart of the Church’s life.

Sunday is the day on which the Paschal mystery is celebrated in light of the apostolic tradition and is to be observed as the foremost holy day of obligation in the universal Church

Also to be observed are the day of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Epiphany, the Ascension of Christ, the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, the feast of Mary the Mother of God, her Immaculate Conception, her Assumption, the feast of Saint Joseph, the feast of the Apostles Saints Peter and Paul, and the feast of All Saints.”

Pope John Paul II - Dies Domini, n.7

“Sunday is a day which is at the very heart of the Christian life. From the beginning of my Pontificate, I have not ceased to repeat: “Do not be afraid! Open, open wide the doors to Christ!” In the same way, today I would strongly urge everyone to rediscover Sunday: Do not be afraid to give your time to Christ! Yes, let us open our time to Christ, that he may cast light upon it and give it direction. He is the One who knows the secret of time and the secret of eternity, and he gives us “his day” as an ever-new gift of his love. The rediscovery of this day is a grace, which we must implore, not only so that we may live the demands of faith to the full, but also so that we may respond concretely to the deepest human yearnings. Time given to Christ is never time lost, but is rather time gained, so that our relationships and indeed our whole life may become more profoundly human.”

***Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution,
Sacrosanctum Concilium, on the Sacred Liturgy, n.10***

“Nevertheless the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows, for the goal of apostolic endeavour is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of his Church, to take part in the Sacrifice and to eat the Lord's Supper.

The liturgy, in its turn, moves the faithful filled with "the paschal sacraments" to be "one in holiness"; it prays that "they hold fast in their lives to what they have grasped by their faith." The renewal in the Eucharist of the covenant between the Lord and man draws the faithful and sets them aflame with Christ's insistent love. From the liturgy therefore, and especially from the Eucharist, grace is poured forth upon us as from a fountain, and the sanctification of men in Christ and the glorification of God to which all other activities of the Church are directed, as toward their end, are achieved with maximum effectiveness.”

***Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution,
Sacrosanctum Concilium, on the Sacred Liturgy, n.17***

“Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy, and to which the Christian people, "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people" (1 Pet. 2:9, 4-5) have a right and obligation by reason of their baptism.

In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy the full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else, for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the

true Christian spirit. Therefore, in all their apostolic activity, pastors of souls should energetically set about achieving it through the requisite pedagogy.”

Questions

1. In our experience is Sunday different from other days? How do we as a family or individually make it special?
2. In what ways do I show a conscious, active participation in the Sunday Mass?

Session Two: Foundations for ministry

The Bishops document, *Celebrating the Mass*, has a section on Liturgical Ministry: nn. 25 to 32. It states, with reference to the General Instruction on the Roman Missal:

“The faithful should not refuse to serve the people of God gladly whenever asked to perform some particular ministry or role in the celebration. Women and men, young and old, people of every race and way of life should avail of these opportunities so that the liturgy may be seen to be the work of the whole body of Christ.”
(*Celebrating the Mass*, n.27).

Ministry means service – service of God and each other. The foundation of this service is love.

General Instruction of the Roman Missal: n. 95

“In the celebration of Mass the faithful form a holy people, a chosen race, a royal priesthood; they give thanks to the father and offer the victim not only through the hands of the priest but also with him, and they learn to offer themselves. They should make this clear by their sense of religion and their charity to everyone who shares in the celebration. Thus they are to shun any appearance of individualism or division, keeping before their eyes that they should have only one Father in heaven and accordingly are all brothers and sisters of each other.”

1 Corinthians 12:12-14

“Just as a human body, though it is made up of many parts, is a single unit because all these parts, though many, make one body, so it is with Christ.”

When we minister we are serving the entire community not helping Father.

Ephesians 4:1-13

Here St Paul reminds us of the diversity of ministry in the Church. In the Sunday Liturgy there are responsibilities taken on by ordained ministers, bishops, priests and deacons and lay people, extraordinary ministers, servers, commentators, ushers, collectors, musicians, singers, animators and Sacristans. See also 1 Peter 4:10-11

***Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution,
Sacrosanctum Concilium, on the Sacred Liturgy, n.29***

“Servers, readers, commentators and members of the choir also exercise a genuine liturgical function. They, ought, therefore, to discharge their offices with sincere piety and decorum demanded by so exalted a ministry and rightly expected of them by God’s people.

Consequently they must all be deeply imbued with the spirit of the Liturgy, each in his own measure, and they must be trained to perform their functions in a correct and orderly manner.”

Questions

1. What qualities do you bring to the ministry of distributing Holy Communion?
2. Have you any concerns about being an Extra Ordinary Minister of Holy Communion?
3. What are the ways we should prepare for Mass when we are ministering?

Session 3: This is the Mass

Through liturgical formation ministers acquire an understanding of the Mass as a whole, with particular emphasis on the parts of the Mass for which they have specific responsibility. They should especially learn the intimate connection between the two principal parts of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. (Celebrating the Mass, n. 30)

The study guide *With Hearts and Minds* published by the Catholic Truth Society is a fruitful source for this particular topic.

It is good to remind ourselves of the structure of the Mass

1. The Gathering: What the assembly is and how it is called.
2. Table of the Word: Christ continues to speak through his word and in Christ we listen and respond
3. Table of the Eucharist: Thanksgiving. How we participate in Christ's sacrifice of praise.
4. Communion: Our sharing in the gifts of Christ Body and Blood deepens us in Communion.
5. Mission: The Concluding Rites. Nourished by the Word and Holy Communion we are sent forth to be Christ's body in the world.

Questions

1. Recall a good celebration of Mass. Why was it good?
2. How has my understanding of the Mass changed as I have grown older?

Session 4: Skill Training

Ministers' routines at Mass

For instance: It is desirable that ministers should be in place on the sanctuary by the end of the exchange of peace. There should be sufficient number of ministers to assist in the distribution of Communion. This will normally mean two ministers of the precious blood to each minister of the Body of the Lord.

Administration of hosts and chalices

A practical demonstration and practice on how to distribute the host and administer the chalice

The vessels and their cleaning

The purification of the vessels should be performed with reverence, though briefly and inconspicuously. Especially if there are several vessels, their purification is preferably left until after Mass.

Taking Communion to the sick and the house bound

It is fitting for Holy Communion to be taken directly from Mass to the sick or those unable to leave their homes.

Session 5: Ministry to the Sick

It might be useful to look at the general introduction to The Pastoral Care of the Sick.

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 towards 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. (Pastoral Care of the Sick, n.73)

Look at the Rite of Communion of the Sick.

Questions

1. Think about a Sunday Liturgy when you were unable to participate.
2. What effect did your absence have on you?
3. What effect might your absence have had on the rest of the community?
4. Bringing Communion to the sick and housebound is considered a ministry of care. In this ministry, how do you offer care and compassion to someone in need?

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