

Holy Cross Parish Catford



Taking Holy Communion to the Sick and Housebound

BEFORE VISITING

- Make sure that your ministry is coordinated with the priest or co-ordinator of parish training in order to provide a comprehensive pastoral care in the parish community and to avoid any duplication or “lone-ranger” ministry within the community.
- Collect information about the person who is sick and other helpful information for your visit to the home or hospital.
- Make sure the visitation to the sick and/or homebound is scheduled in advance and invite family members and/or others to be present.
- Carry the Blessed Sacrament in a pyx. Have respect and reverence for the presence of Christ.
- When transporting the Blessed Sacrament to the sick, ministers should avoid any activity not in keeping with the reverence due to the Blessed Sacrament.
- Wear attire appropriate to the ministry.

AS YOU BEGIN THE VISIT

Share greetings and introductions; give some ideas from the Sunday homily and the weekly newsletter (if the person shows interest in the life of your parish).

After listening to the person who is sick, ask if the person desires Communion at this time. Also, invite the Catholic family members to participate and receive Communion.

Bring and offer extra copies of the liturgical rite of worship for the sick and/or homebound, as well as for family members to follow along.

THE RITE

Pace the ritual with sensitivity.

Be aware of the sick person’s ability to follow and participate.

- Adapt to the situation of each person and each visit.
- 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.
- Give a small portion of the host to a person who has difficulty swallowing. Check with the family, nurse or doctor in cases of special feeding issues.
- Wait for the person to swallow the host and 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.

A Sample Rite for Distribution of Holy Communion to the Sick and Homebound

INTRODUCTORY RITE

GREETING

All: In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen

Minister: May the peace of the Lord be with you (and all who live here) always.

All: And with your spirit.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Minister: My brothers and sisters, to prepare ourselves for this celebration, let us call to mind our sins.

[Option A:]

All: 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,

[And, striking their breast, they say:]

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.

[Option B:]

Minister: Lord Jesus, you healed the sick: Lord, have mercy. **All:** Lord, have mercy.

Minister: Christ Jesus, you forgive sinners: Christ, have mercy. **All:** Christ, have mercy.

Minister: Lord Jesus, you heal us and bring us strength: Lord, have mercy. **All:** Lord, have mercy.

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

All: Amen.

READING OF THE WORD

[The Minister may proclaim the day's reading(s) and Gospel; or may choose a short reading or one of the following verses from Scriptures:]

- † Jesus says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart. Your soul will find rest, for my yoke is easy and my burden light." [Matthew 11:28-30]
- † Jesus says, "I am the vine, you are the branches. If you live in me and I in you, you will produce abundantly. Apart from me you can do nothing." [John 15:5]

- † Jesus says, "I myself am the bread come down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread he shall live forever; the bread I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." [John 6:51]
- † Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me." [John 14:6]
- † "We have come to know and believe in the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him." [1 John 4:16]

RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Minister: Now let us pray together to the Father in the words given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

[The Minister holds up the Host:]

Minister: 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.

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

[The Minister distributes Holy Communion.]

Minister: Body of Christ. **All:** Amen.

CONCLUSION

Minister: Let us pray

[The Minister recites the "Prayer After Communion" of the day or other prayer(s) for health and healing, such as:

Loving God, we thank you for the nourishment you give us through your holy gift. Pour out your Spirit upon us, and in the strength of this food from heaven, grant us strength, healing, and peace. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.]

All: Amen

Minister: *[And making the Sign of the Cross:]*

{ + } May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen

When do I take communion to the sick person?

It is best to take Holy Communion directly from the community's celebration of Eucharist (either Sunday or a weekday Mass) in the parish church to the person in the home. If this is not reasonable, and no substitute is available, please take the Blessed Sacrament 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 do I say when I take communion to the sick?

The attached prayer liturgy is encouraged for your use. It is also permissible to use the prayers in the booklet, 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.

If others are present, should I invite them to pray and receive communion with the sick person?

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 in the prayer 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 into the church **sacrarium**, 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 sacristy so that it is available for others.

Remember to take a copy of the weekly Parish Newsletter when you bring Communion to the sick or housebound so that they can continue to keep in touch with the Parish Community.