

Communion of the Sick in Ordinary Circumstances

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 toward 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.

The links between the community's Eucharistic celebration, especially on the Lord's Day, and the communion of the sick are intimate and manifold. Besides remembering the sick in the universal prayer at Mass, those present should be reminded occasionally of the significance of communion in the lives of those who are ill: union with Christ in his struggle with evil, his prayer for the world, and his love for the Father, and union with the community from which they are separated.

The obligation to visit and comfort those who cannot take part in the Eucharistic assembly may be clearly demonstrated by taking communion to them from the community's Eucharistic celebration. This symbol of unity between the community and its sick members has the deepest significance on the Lord's Day, the special day of the Eucharistic assembly.

We have prepared two simple, but complete, rites for communion of the sick. One, given to you at this training session, is for home visits. The other is for a Communion Service at a nursing home or assisted living residence which is made available to the teams for each home in League City. There are many options allowed in this rite, depending on circumstances. If you wish to have more options, you should buy *Communion of the Sick* published by Liturgical Press (ISBN 0-8146-1368-3). It costs about \$3.00 and is usually available at a Catholic religious goods store or they can order it for you, if it is out of stock. You can also order it over the internet. If you need a Spanish version, *Communion of the Sick* published by Catholic Book Publishing Co. (ISBN 978-0-89942-082-0) is bilingual. New versions of these books may soon be published to be consistent with the *Roman Missal*, 3rd edition. If time is short or if the sick person cannot endure a rite of about 5-7 minutes, then you can reduce the rite to a greeting, the Lord's Prayer, communion, and a final prayer and blessing. *Viaticum*, communion for the dying, has some additional parts, and an EMHC may administer *viaticum*. Rites for *viaticum* are in *Pastoral Care of the Sick*.

The sick may receive communion at any hour. They do not need to observe a Eucharistic fast. Those who care for the sick may receive communion with them, in accord with the usual norms (they should be fasting for one hour). The communion minister should wear attire appropriate to this ministry.

When the Eucharist is brought to the sick, it should be carried in a pyx or another approved container. The parish has several pyxes that you may borrow or you can buy one for yourself, especially if you intend to make this a regular ministry. Because the

consecrated hosts are the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, the EMHC must follow strict protocol to show reverence for the Blessed Sacrament. The Blessed Sacrament is to be taken **IMMEDIATELY** to the residence of the sick person. **DO NOT** obtain the Blessed Sacrament before you attend Mass. **DO NOT** stop to get coffee, go to the bank, shop, converse with a friend or anything else. **DO NOT** obtain the Blessed Sacrament the night before and keep it in your home so that you will not have to go by church the next morning.

Ideally, during the rite, the Blessed Sacrament should be placed on a table covered with a linen cloth (normally a corporal, not a purificator) with lighted candles (two are customary). Care should be taken to make the occasion special and joyful. If any consecrated hosts or pieces of host remain following communion, consume them at that time unless you will **IMMEDIATELY** visit another sick person. Purify the pyx either at the church's sacarium or pour the purifying water on a lawn or garden (not on pavement) so the water will absorb back into the earth.

Sick people who are unable to receive communion under the form of bread may receive it under the form of wine alone. This is so unusual that you must get permission and arrange with our pastor to do this. Sometimes you must give only a small piece of the Sacred Host so that the sick person can consume it. It is good to have a glass of water available to help someone having trouble swallowing.

If the sick person requests to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation, inform our pastor and he will arrange to visit the person when it fits his schedule. He could also give the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, but you should let him discuss this with the person. Many older people still consider this sacrament as a signal that they will soon die. Suggesting that they receive this sacrament may cause them undue anxiety.