

WEEKDAY COMMUNION SERVICES IN THE PARISH

A. COMMUNION SERVICE OUTLINE

- A. Introductory Rites
 - Greeting
 - Penitential Act
- B. Celebration of the Word of God
 - [Reflection by **deacon** (not a lay leader), or sharing on Scripture -optional]
- C. Holy Communion
- D. Concluding Prayer
- E. Concluding Rite
 - (from *Rite of Distributing Holy Communion Outside Mass*)

1. Structural Similarities and Differences between the Mass

Despite similarities, the Communion service has a different structure than the Mass. Clearly the Eucharistic Prayer with the actions of remembering, thanking, invoking the Holy Spirit etc. is missing. There are other more subtle differences however. For instance, there is no Opening Prayer in the rite for a Communion Service as there is at Mass. Nor is there a Prayer After Communion. Rather, there is a Concluding Prayer. The rite offers a variety of these. They give thanks for the gift of the Eucharist, and express our hope that it may strengthen us in living our daily lives. They differ in character from the prayers in the Mass of the day.

Similarities do exist. The Penitential Act has three possible forms and, as in the Mass, the threefold invocations of “Form C” may be modified to reflect the liturgical season. The Liturgy of the Word retains a full complement of Scripture. When the service is held in place of a daily Mass, a complete service of the Word may be celebrated with the texts for the readings taken from the Mass of the Day.

2. Using the Right Rite

The official ritual designated for a communion service is the “Rite of Distributing Holy Communion Outside Mass with the Celebration of the Word,” found in Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass (HCWEOM).

Use of the ritual book Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest is not appropriate.

The Rite of Distributing Holy Communion..., chapter one of HCWEOM, is written in two parts. (*Caution, the ritual book combines part one and two.*) Both parts include texts for a presider who is either a priest, a deacon or a layperson. Our focus is on “Part One”, which is used when an assembly is gathered such as a Nursing Home service. Its purpose is “that the people should be nourished by the Word of God” #26.

“Part Two,” a short version of the rite, is “used when the longer, more elaborate form is unsuitable, especially when there are only one or two for communion and a true community celebration is impossible.”² Such might be the case when a person seeks communion at a time outside the Mass schedule. It is similar to the rite used when in the setting of a hospital or sick room.

The rite offers a variety of prayer options for the “Greeting,” the “Penitential Act,” the “Concluding Prayer,” and the “Blessing.” For the lay presider, the rite often gives a specific option that differs from those for the deacon, e.g., at the greeting and at the blessing. Clearly, lay leaders should be aware of this.

3. Notes on the rite

The rite may incorporate an opportunity for reflections and faith-sharing following the scripture readings.

Music is considered normal at liturgical gatherings, when possible, according to the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy and can add depth and support to the prayer of those gathered.

B. BEFORE HOLDING A COMMUNION SERVICE

1. Prepare the service well.

Communion services should receive the same careful preparation that is expected for the celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The layperson or deacon leader for the communion service should be notified well in advance (when possible) and be thoroughly prepared to lead the service.

Immediate preparation includes placing a corporal on the altar, lighting the candles, etc. Deacons vest in an alb and stole; lay ecclesial ministers attired in appropriate street clothes.

2. Distinguish between Mass and a communion service.

Before the service begins, a brief statement by the leader on the nature of the gathering is helpful. The rite reminds us that, “Sacramental communion received during Mass is the more perfect participation in the Eucharistic celebration” (#13).

Those gathered are “sharers in the sacred banquet” through an extension of the presence, prayer and care of Christ and the community that was established at the Eucharistic celebration where the bread and wine were “taken, blessed, broken/poured and shared.”

3. Provide ongoing formation for leaders.

The leader must be well prepared to lead an assembly in communal prayer. While deacons may have opportunities to receive formal training in leading assemblies at prayer, most lay people do not.

Pastors are to catechize lay ministers on presiding at communion and prayer services. Skills for leading prayer and styles of presiding must be a part of a continuing education program for those who lead communion services. Several resources are available for deacons and lay ministers on developing an appropriate leadership style for prayer that is applicable to communion services.

4. Provide ongoing formation for the assembly.

Assist those who gather for daily Mass to grow in their understanding and appreciation of the Liturgy of the Eucharist and the differences between Mass and a Communion Service.

SAMPLE RITE FOR DISTRIBUTING HOLY COMMUNION OUTSIDE MASS
Weekday Communion Service
LED BY A DEACON

INTRODUCTION TO A COMMUNION SERVICE

Before the Communion Service, the deacon should make an introduction with the following as content:

GOOD MORNING (AFTERNOON) (EVENING)

I AM Deacon (*name*) AND I WILL BE LEADING A COMMUNION SERVICE TODAY. SINCE THE EARLY DAYS OF THE CHURCH, THE EUCHARISTIC BREAD HAS BEEN RESERVED IN ORDER THAT THE FAITHFUL WHO ARE SICK AND THOSE WHO WERE UNABLE TO BE PRESENT FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST MIGHT BE ABLE TO SHARE IN THE FRUIT OF THE EUCHARISTIC MEAL.

SINCE VATICAN COUNCIL II, WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN A RITE FOR “COMMUNION OUTSIDE MASS” WHICH DOES NOT SPECIFY “SICKNESS” OR “INABILITY TO ATTEND MASS,” BUT INCLUDES THE NEEDS OF THE FAITHFUL WHEN THERE IS NOT, OR CANNOT BE, A CELEBRATION OF MASS. TODAY IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF SUCH AN OCCASION, SINCE _____ (reason for service) _____.

THE HOSTS THAT WE WILL USE WERE CONSECRATED AT MASS. IN THIS COMMUNION SERVICE WE WILL LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD, AND SHARE THIS EUCHARISTIC BREAD AS FOOD FOR OUR FAITH JOURNEY. WE PARTAKE OF THE BREAD OF LIFE, SO THAT AS GOD’S HOLY PEOPLE WE MIGHT BECOME MORE AND MORE THE BODY OF CHRIST IN OUR TIME AND PLACE.

(The Communion Service begins)

A. GREETING [several alternative greetings are available]

Deacon: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

People: And with your spirit.

B. PENITENTIAL RITE [several options are offered for the penitential act]

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

You brought us to salvation by your paschal mystery: Lord, have mercy.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: You renew us by the wonders of your passion: Christ have mercy.

People: Christ have mercy

Deacon: You give us your body to make us one with your Easter sacrifice: Lord have mercy.

People: Lord have mercy.

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

People: Amen.

C. LITURGY OF THE WORD

—The readings for the Mass of the Day may be taken from the Lectionary.

First Reading *(may be read by a lector or other member of the assembly)*

Psalm – sung or spoken *(A seasonal psalm may be sung in place of the psalm of the day)*

Gospel Acclamation *(This acclamation should be sung if at all possible – if not sung, omit)*

Gospel Reading *(read by the deacon)*

Homily *(given by the deacon or silent reflection)*

General Intercessions

Deacon: *(The presider introduces the intercessions by addressing the people)*

“We bring our needs and requests before our God.”

Reader: *(The intentions are directed to the people.)*

“For peace in our troubled world, ... (pause).... we pray to the Lord”

Assembly: “Lord Hear Our Prayer”

Deacon: *(The presider closes the intercessions with a prayer addressed to God)*

Lord God of all creation,

You have given us every good thing.

We trust in your constant care for us.

Hear these petitions we bring before you.

We ask this through your son Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with
you forever and ever.

Assembly: Amen.

D. HOLY COMMUNION

After the prayer, the leader goes to the place where the sacrament is reserved, takes the ciborium containing the Body of the Lord, places it on the altar and genuflects. The leader then introduces the Lord’s Prayer.

1. LORD’S PRAYER

Deacon: At the Savior’s command and formed by divine teaching, we dare to say:

Assembly: Our Father who art in heaven ...

(“Deliver us...” and “For the kingdom...” is OMITTED)

2. SIGN OF PEACE

Deacon: Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

(All make an appropriate sign of peace.)

3. DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

(The deacon genuflects, takes the host, raises it slightly over the vessel and facing the people says:)

Deacon: Behold the Lamb of God

Behold him who takes away the sins of the world.

Blessed are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb.

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

(The deacon says the following quietly and consumes the Body of Christ:

Deacon: May the body of Christ keep me safe for eternal life.)

(The presider then distributes communion to the assembly saying: The Body of Christ. All respond: Amen)

(Afterward, a period of silence may be observed or a psalm or song of praise may be sung by all.)

E. CONCLUDING PRAYER [many alternate prayers are available]

Deacon:

Pour on us, O Lord, the Spirit of your love,
and in your kindness
make those you have nourished
by this one heavenly Bread
one in mind and heart.
Through Christ our Lord.
Assembly: Amen.

F. CONCLUDING RITE [an alternate invocation is available]

Deacon: The Lord be with you.

Assembly: And with your spirit.

Deacon: May almighty God bless you,
The Father, + and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Assembly: Amen

Deacon: Go in the peace of Christ.

Assembly: Thanks be to God.

SAMPLE RITE FOR DISTRIBUTING HOLY COMMUNION OUTSIDE MASS

Weekday Communion Service LED BY A LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTER

INTRODUCTION TO A COMMUNION SERVICE

Before the Communion Service, the lay leader should make an introduction with the following as content:

GOOD MORNING (AFTERNOON) (EVENING)

I AM (name), AN EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER OF HOLY COMMUNION AND I WILL BE LEADING A COMMUNION SERVICE TODAY.

SINCE THE EARLY DAYS OF THE CHURCH, THE EUCHARISTIC BREAD HAS BEEN RESERVED IN ORDER THAT THE FAITHFUL WHO ARE SICK AND THOSE WHO WERE UNABLE TO BE PRESENT FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST MIGHT BE ABLE TO SHARE IN THE FRUIT OF THE EUCHARISTIC MEAL.

SINCE VATICAN COUNCIL II, WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN A RITE FOR “COMMUNION OUTSIDE MASS” WHICH DOES NOT SPECIFY “SICKNESS” OR “INABILITY TO ATTEND MASS,” BUT INCLUDES THE NEEDS OF THE FAITHFUL WHEN THERE IS NOT, OR CANNOT BE, A CELEBRATION OF MASS. TODAY IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF SUCH AN OCCASION, SINCE _____ (reason for service) _____.

THE HOSTS THAT WE WILL USE WERE CONSECRATED AT MASS. IN THIS COMMUNION SERVICE WE WILL LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD, AND SHARE THIS EUCHARISTIC BREAD AS FOOD FOR OUR FAITH JOURNEY. WE PARTAKE OF THE BREAD OF LIFE, SO THAT AS GOD’S HOLY PEOPLE WE MIGHT BECOME MORE AND MORE THE BODY OF CHRIST IN OUR TIME AND PLACE.

A. GREETING [several alternative greetings are available]

Leader: Brothers and sisters, the Lord invites us to his table to share in the body of Christ: we bless God for his goodness as we say: Blessed be God forever.

People: Blessed be God forever

B. PENITENTIAL ACT [several options are offered for the penitential act]

Leader: Brothers and sisters, let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves for this celebration.

You brought us to salvation by your paschal mystery: Lord, have mercy.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Leader : You renew us by the wonders of your passion: Christ have mercy.

People: Christ have mercy

**Leader: You give us your body to make us one with your Easter sacrifice:
Lord have mercy.**

People: Lord have mercy.

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

People: Amen.

C. LITURGY OF THE WORD

—The readings for the Mass of the Day may be taken from the Lectionary.

First Reading *(may be read by a lector or other member of the assembly)*

Psalm – sung or spoken *(A seasonal psalm may be sung in place of the psalm of the day)*

Gospel Acclamation *(This acclamation should be sung if at all possible – if not sung, omit)*

Gospel Reading *(read by the leader) (the greeting “The Lord be with you” is NOT said)*

NO Homily or Reflection

General Intercessions

Leader: *(The leader introduces the intercessions by addressing the people)*

“We bring our needs and requests before our God:”

Reader: *(The intentions are directed to the people.)*

For example: “For peace in our troubled world, ... (pause).... we pray to the Lord”

Assembly: “Lord Hear Our Prayer”

Leader: Lord God of all creation,

You have given us every good thing.

We trust in your constant care for us.

Hear these petitions we bring before you.

We ask this through your son Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you forever and ever.

Assembly: Amen.

D. HOLY COMMUNION

After the prayer, the leader goes to the place where the sacrament is reserved, takes the ciborium containing the Body of the Lord, places it on the altar and genuflects. The leader then introduces the Lord’s Prayer.

1. LORD’S PRAYER

Leader: At the Savior’s command and formed by divine teaching, we dare to say:

Assembly: Our Father who art in heaven ...

(“Deliver us...” and “For the kingdom...” is OMITTED)

2. SIGN OF PEACE

Leader: Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

(All make an appropriate sign of peace.)

3. DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

(The leader genuflects, takes the host, raises it slightly over the vessel and facing the people says:)

Leader: Behold the Lamb of God

Behold him who takes away the sins of the world.

Blessed are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb.

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

(The leader says the following quietly and consumes the Body of Christ:

Leader: May the body of Christ keep me safe for eternal life.)

(The leader then distributes communion to the assembly saying: The Body of Christ. All respond: Amen)

(Afterward, a period of silence may be observed or a psalm or song of praise may be sung by all.)

E. CONCLUDING PRAYER [many alternate prayers are available]

Leader: Pour on us, O Lord, the Spirit of your love,
 and in your kindness
 make those you have nourished
 by this one heavenly Bread
 one in mind and heart.
 Through Christ our Lord.⁵
Assembly: Amen.

F. CONCLUDING RITE the leader invokes God's blessing, crosses him/herself and says:

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from evil and bring us to everlasting life.

Assembly: Amen

Leader: Go in the peace of Christ.

Assembly: Thanks be to God.

RESOURCES

A. THE RITE

"Rite of Distributing Holy Communion Outside Mass With the Celebration of the Word,"
 In *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*, Catholic Book Publishing
 Co., New York 1976.

"Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass," In *The Rites of the
 Catholic Church*, Pueblo Publishing Co., New York, 1976.

"Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum," Catholic Book Publishing Co.,
 New York, 1983