

Good Shepherd Parish
Guidelines and Instructions for
Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC)
Ministry to Sick and Homebound

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHCs) who take Communion to the sick and homebound have a role in sharing the Church's total ministry to the sick after the manner of Jesus. In bringing Communion to the sick and homebound the EMHC represents Christ and manifests faith and charity on behalf of the whole community toward those who cannot be present at Mass. This ministry is a sign of support and concern shown by the community for its members.

Patients who are in the hospital find it a comfort and source of healing to have Holy Communion brought to them as often as possible. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may make Communion visits any day of the week in accordance with the schedule and the protocol of each hospital or long-term residential facility.

The EMHC becomes a vital link between the parish community and the member who is sick or homebound. It is beneficial for visits to the sick and homebound to normally occur after Sunday Mass so that the link between the parish liturgical celebration and the parishioner is maintained. Taking a parish bulletin also helps maintain that link. EMHCs do not replace the ministry of the priest to the people, but rather extend and expand it so that all will have more regular contact with Christ in Holy Communion.

EMHCs who minister to the sick and homebound should be empathic and compassionate. They should be sensitive to the sick and homebound person's needs including the spiritual, emotional, material. They should always take care to maintain the confidentiality and dignity of the individual. They should also maintain contact with the pastor and/or parish EMHC scheduler and inform them if the person is in need of sacramental anointing, the sacrament of reconciliation, or a pastoral visit. In addition, if EMHCs observe a particular physical or social need of a homebound person, they should bring this need to the attention of the parish administrative assistant as well so that the parish may respond appropriately.

According to the document *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass*, "The Eucharist for Communion outside of church is to be carried in a pyx or other covered vessel; the vesture of the minister and the manner of carrying the Eucharist should be appropriate and in accord with local circumstances". EMHCs should dress in appropriate lay attire when bringing Communion to the sick or homebound. Consecrated Hosts are usually taken from the Good Shepherd parish tabernacle.

EMHCs serving in hospitals or institutions should always be sure that they are giving Holy Communion to the correct person. If there are Catholic family members or Catholic staff present, the EMHC should ask them if they would like to receive Holy Communion as well. When EMHCs have completed their assigned distribution, they should consume the Hosts privately.

Good Shepherd Parish
Guidelines and Instructions for
Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC)
Ministry to Sick and Homebound

EMHCs who are taking Holy Communion to the sick, homebound or to those in hospitals are to present the Host in a prayerful manner. They are not to make judgments regarding the suitability of the person to receive the Holy Communion; such concerns are to be referred to the pastor or EMHC scheduler.

Ordinarily, the parish EMHC and lector scheduler makes assignments and communicates assignments to the EMHCs and the sick and homebound.

Good Shepherd Parish
Guidelines and Instructions for
Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC)
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Dos and Don'ts of Bringing Communion to the Sick and Homebound

Do:

1. Make an appointment to visit. Ask how the person is feeling and if there will be others present so you will have sufficient Hosts for all to receive. Also ask if they can prepare a table with a cloth, candle, cross or crucifix.
2. Use the ritual "Administration of Communion to the Sick by an Extraordinary Minister" and bring a Bible scripture reference to proclaim the readings.
3. Begin informally. Introduce yourself to those who are present and briefly explain what you have come to do. Pay attention to how the sick or homebound person is feeling.
4. Invite those who are present to participate in the prayers. If they feel comfortable, enlist the help of family or friends to do the readings.
5. Based on the person's strength/attentiveness, share with them the day's homily.
6. Offer them the Host, or a small piece of the Host, and have a cup of water handy if the person has difficulty swallowing. Check with the doctor or nurse in cases of special feeding.
7. Create links to the parish, e.g.: bring a parish bulletin, share news from the parish, ask if there is anything the parish can do for them, if they need to see a priest for the sacrament of reconciliation or anointing of the sick.
8. Be sensitive to the proper time to depart.
9. Thank the person for the opportunity to pray with them and for their hospitality.

Don't:

1. Don't visit a sick person if you are not feeling well yourself. Find a substitute.
2. Don't carry the consecrated Host in a plastic bag, purse, pocket or other unsuitable container. Instead, use a pyx to carry the consecrated Host.
3. Don't compete with a television or radio. Politely ask if these can be turned off during the service.
4. Don't stay too long or take the role of a counselor or confidant.
5. Don't leave the consecrated Host if the person cannot receive it. Instead, consume any consecrated Host and return at a later time to see the sick person. Don't take Hosts home or leave them in your car.

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Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC)
Ministry to Sick and Homebound

Frequently Asked Questions About Taking Communion to the Sick and Homebound

WHEN DO I TAKE COMMUNION TO THE SICK PERSON?

It is best to take Holy Communion directly from the community's celebration of the Eucharist in the church to the person in the home. Receive the Host and place it in a pyx then take it to the communicant directly after church or as soon as possible, showing respect at all times 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 honoring the importance of communal prayer as part of the Eucharist.

WHAT PRAYERS DO I SAY WHEN I TAKE COMMUNION TO THE SICK?

You may obtain a copy of the "Administration of Communion to the Sick by an Extraordinary Minister" from the EMHC scheduler. (A short form of this liturgy follows on page 6.)

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

Good Shepherd Parish
Guidelines and Instructions for
Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC)
Ministry to Sick and Homebound

the size of the portion of the Host. Consult 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 onto the ground in area which does not receive vehicular or pedestrian traffic. 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 the Eucharist on the day of visiting the sick. When a minister no longer needs the pyx, it is to be returned to the parish sacristan or priest.

Good Shepherd Parish
Guidelines and Instructions for
Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC)
Ministry to Sick and Homebound

Liturgy for Sick and/or Homebound

I. GREETING

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

Minister: Peace be with you [and all who live here].

Response: **And with your spirit.**

II. PENITENTIAL RITE

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

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, 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.**

III. LITURGY OF THE WORD: Minister will read the day's reading(s) and/or Gospel.

IV. COMMUNION

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

All: **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.**

Minister holds up the Host and says:

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 enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.**

Minister distributes the Precious Body.

Good Shepherd Parish
Guidelines and Instructions for
Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC)
Ministry to Sick and Homebound

V. CONCLUSION

Minister: Let us pray. (Minister recites prayer after communion and other prayer(s) for health and healing at his/her option.)

O God, who have willed that we be partakers in the one Bread and the one Chalice, grant us, we pray, so to live that, made one in Christ, we may joyfully bear fruit for the salvation of the world. Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen

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

All: Amen