

# **Parish of All Saints, Newport**

## **Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion**



## **Ministry in the Church**

All ministries in the Church are ordered to the building up of the Body of Christ. They exist to assist the faithful to enter more fully into the communion with God who is love - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The focus of all liturgical ministry is to assist the faithful's communion with God through their fruitful participation in the worship undertaken by the Church.

## **Ministering Holy Communion to the Church**

The 'source and summit' (*Lumen Gentium, 11*) of the Christian life is the celebration of the Eucharist, the Mass, for it is through this celebration that Christ closely binds his Church and all her members to his sacrifice on the cross. The fullest expression of our participation in the Eucharist is our reception of the Lord's Body and Blood in Holy Communion. Ministers of Holy Communion assist the faithful to receive these gifts reverently and fruitfully.

## **What are 'Extraordinary' Ministers of Holy Communion?**

In this case 'extraordinary' has a technical meaning. It simply means 'out of the ordinary', rather than 'great' or 'remarkable'. It is used to distinguish the 'extraordinary' minister from the 'ordinary' or 'normal' minister. The 'ordinary' ministers of Holy Communion are Bishops, Priests and Deacons (*Code of Canon Law, Canon 910 §1*).

During Mass, Holy Communion is made available to us from the elements over which the Priest celebrant has offered the Thanksgiving. It is therefore important that the connection between our Communion and the Sacrifice of the Mass is made clear. One of the ways in which this is achieved is by Holy Communion being distributed by the Priest celebrant. Other Priests or Deacons will assist the Priest, if necessary.

When there are not enough other 'ordinary' ministers present, then the Priest celebrant may be assisted by 'Extraordinary' Ministers of Holy Communion (**EMHC**). These will normally be members of the faithful who, with the approval of the Parish Priest, have been chosen, prepared and commissioned to exercise this ministry in a particular parish or chaplaincy.

This function is to be understood strictly according to the name by which it is known, that is to say, that of Extraordinary Minister of

Holy Communion, and not 'special minister of Holy Communion' nor 'extraordinary minister of the Eucharist' nor 'special minister of the Eucharist', by which names the meaning of this function is unnecessarily and improperly broadened (*Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 156).

**When and why?** There are a number of circumstances both during and outside of Mass when a Priest will need the assistance of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

**During Mass:** To assist with the distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds; When the size of the congregation is such that without their assistance the Communion Rite would be unduly long.

**Outside Mass:** To assist with the distribution of Holy Communion to those members of the parish who are housebound or in hospital.

**Tabernacle:** Only the Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion go to the tabernacle both during Mass or outside of Mass. Should an EMHC need access to the tabernacle in order to take Communion to the sick, the date and time are to be logged in the register. This register will be kept in the sacristy.

### **How to Serve at Mass as an EMHC?**

- After the Lamb of God, approach the Altar and kneel with everyone for 'Behold the Lamb...'
- When the Priest has received Communion, come forward to receive Holy Communion under both kinds.
- EMHC's are to receive from the hands of the main celebrant the vessel containing either species of the Most Holy Eucharist. They are not to distribute either species to one another.
- When the distribution of Communion has finished, the Priest or Deacon immediately and completely consumes at the altar any of the Precious Blood that happens to remain; as for the Consecrated Hosts, he either consumes them at the altar or carries them to the place designated for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament.
- Upon returning to the altar, the Priest or Deacon collects the fragments, should any remain, and he stands at the altar and purifies the paten or ciborium over the chalice, and after this purifies the chalice, saying quietly the formula '*Quod ore sumpsimus, Domine...*' (What has passed our lips as food...) and dries the chalice with a purificator. Then, the vessels are carried to the credence table by a minister (EMHC or server).

- The EMHC's taking Communion to the sick approach the altar after the final prayer (Post Communion prayer). The Priest will say a short prayer and send the minister, who will leave the Church immediately and go directly to visit the sick.
- After visiting the sick, always remember to purify the pyx with water, this water is to be consumed immediately by the EMHC. The pyx is to be treated with reverence and kept in a safe place at home until the next visit.

### **Continuous Spiritual Development of the Minister:**

Underlying all of this should be the prayerfulness and reverence of the minister. Of particular importance is the way a minister prepares him or herself for service.

The following practices may be helpful:

- Look at the readings and prayers of the Mass and use them for your private prayer.
- What do they say to you of the Mystery of God's love, and of the Communion that God invites you to share in and minister?
- Call to mind the people to whom you will be ministering. Remember that, together with you, they are members of the Body of Christ, the Church.
- Pray for them, for yourself, and the other parish ministers — that together you will find deeper communion with Christ and each other through your sharing in the Church's liturgy and sacraments.
- If you are to minister in the church, be sure that you will be at church in good time to carry out any necessary preparations before Mass begins.
- If you are to take Holy Communion to the sick and housebound be sure that you arrive at the expected time and have prepared the readings and the prayers that you will use.

Above all: Remember that this Ministry is conferred on you by the Parish Priest, it is a service undertaken by you for the whole parish.