



*Welcome
to the Catholic Parish
of the Wairarapa*



**'A community living and sharing the Good News of
Jesus Christ.'**

**GUIDELINES
FOR BRINGING COMMUNION
TO THE HOMEBOUND**

HISTORY

The ministry of bringing Communion to the sick and homebound has a rich history that dates back to the early Church. In the New Testament, we see Jesus's focus on the sick and the suffering (e.g., Matthew 25:36) and His instructions to His disciples to care for others. This early spirit of charity was reflected in the practice of the Church, where the Eucharist was brought to those who were unable to attend communal worship because of illness or infirmity.

During the early centuries, this practice often involved deacons or other appointed members of the community, who would take the Eucharist to the sick and homebound, emphasising the communal aspect of faith. By the fourth century, the Church had developed a more formalised structure for this ministry; for example, in his writings, St John Chrysostom encourages the faithful to visit and bring the Eucharist to the sick.

The Middle Ages further solidified this practice, particularly with the rise of monastic communities, such as the Benedictines, who took special care to visit the sick and confined as part of their spiritual outreach. In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council mandated that lay people be allowed to receive Communion at least once a year, and encouraged the Church to find means to ensure access to the sacraments for the infirm.

In the 20th century, particularly after the Second Vatican Council, there was a renewed emphasis on the pastoral care of the sick. Parishes began formalising the role of lay ministers to the sick, often referred to as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC), who are trained to bring the Eucharist to hospitals, nursing homes and the homes of those unable to attend Mass.

This development reflects the Church's commitment to inclusivity and the pastoral mission of Christ, highlighting the belief that the Eucharist is not just a personal sacrament but a communal gift meant to unite all members of the Church,

particularly those who are suffering (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1421).

YOUR MINISTRY

So, thank you for sharing three of the greatest gifts anyone can receive: Eucharist (God Himself), love and community. “We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty” (Mother Teresa).

In your ministry, you are helping to alleviate one of the greatest poverties in the world today. “The faithful who are ill are deprived of their rightful and accustomed place in the Eucharistic community. In bringing communion to them the EMHC 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” (Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rite of Anointing and Viaticum, 73).

COMMUNION KIT

Your “Communion Kit” will contain the following:

- A pyx.
- A Crucifix.
- A white cloth (corporal) to place the pyx and crucifix on.
- The book *You Visited Me*. This is your companion and a source of comfort to the person you are visiting. Please make yourself familiar with this book, especially:
 - pp 31–91 *Prayers and Images*; and
 - pp 92–107 *Words of Hope and Healing*.

- A notebook for recording relevant information about those visited.
- A bottle of hand sanitiser.
- A bottle of holy water.
- A face mask.
- An Ministers' Manual containing:
 - Ministers Guide;
 - your roster;
 - a list of other ministers and their contact details; and
 - other appropriate information.

NOTE: Make sure you also have with you a supply of current newsletter(s).

PHONE MINISTRY

The initial phone call is essential for relaxing the parishioner. It is possible that they may want only “phone ministry” rather than a visit.

Before calling, be aware of any information that will assist you in your ministry.

- Introduce yourself and make friendly conversation.
- Check if there is anything they need.
- Ask if they would like to receive communion:
 - If so, arrange a date and time.
 - If not, say that you will call again and check their availability and situation.

Record in the Comments column any information that will assist ministering. Pass this information on to the coordinator if communion is requested.

PREPARATION FOR A VISIT

- Collect the consecrated host(s):
 - after communion at Mass (preferred); or
 - by signing in at front desk of Parish Office.

Note: Only priests can give Communion to themselves.
- Only receive enough consecrated hosts for those you are ministering to:
 - from the Priest at Mass; or
 - from another minister during a Communion Service.
- Carry the consecrated host in a pyx and place the pyx in a burse. The burse (containing pyx with consecrated host(s)) must be placed around your neck. Please have respect and reverence for the presence of Christ.
- When transporting the consecrated host(s), ministers should avoid any activity not in keeping with the reverence due to the Blessed Sacrament.
- Wear attire appropriate to the ministry.
- Sign in where appropriate (i.e. hospital, TCU, etc.) – including your name and the Catholic Parish of the Wairarapa.
- Comply with proper hygiene – wash your hands before your visit.

OBTAINING THE CONSECRATED HOST (BODY OF CHRIST)

Communion to the Sick ministers are enjoined to attend either the vigil or one of the morning Masses on Sunday. If this is not possible, they can come for Mass on their scheduled day of distributing communion. If this is still difficult, arrange a time to collect the consecrated host(s) with the priest. Attending Mass

maintains the link between the parish liturgical celebration and the individual. If done on a Sunday or any day on which attending Mass is possible.

- Arrive at church at least fifteen minutes before the start of Mass;
- Quietly enter the Sacristy;
- Sign the *Homebound Ministry* book.
- Get the required number of unconsecrated hosts from the tightly sealed box.
- Take only the exact number of hosts you need for the number of people you will be taking communion. If you are aware that the person has family members/friends with them, include them in your count as they may like to receive as well.
- The unconsecrated hosts should be placed in a pyx, which you must then place upon the altar before the start of Mass.
- Before the dismissal, the priest will take the pyx and give it to you in front of the altar and give you a blessing.
- Be sure that you receive the pyx that belongs to you as sometimes there are many of you making visits that day.
- Put the pyx back into the kit.
- Never leave the consecrated host(s) unattended. If possible, go directly to the home that you are visiting.

Ideally, the consecrated host(s) should never be taken home overnight to be distributed another day. The EMHC should consume any consecrated hosts that cannot be distributed the same day that they are picked up. Taking the EMHC to the sick is a most sacred duty and we need to be reverent with the Blessed Sacrament.

BEFORE A VISIT FOR COMMUNION

FOR A FIRST VISIT

- record the client's details on your roster,
- record any other information that may assist your ministry, and
- discuss the visit with your mentor and ask them to accompany you if you feel the need.

FOR SUBSEQUENT VISITS

- refresh your memory of the person's situation and how it affects your ministry; and
- phone the person,
 - have a friendly conversation; and
 - make a day and time for your visit.

THE VISIT

ARRIVAL

- Arrive on time - do not disappoint.
- Come as a friend, be yourself, remember you are a guest.
- If this is your first visit, introduce yourself in a friendly way.

SETTING THE TONE

- Progress slowly, listen to the person's needs and concerns.
- Let the person know that whatever they tell you is in total confidence unless they give you permission to share it.
- Be a listener, do not dominate the conversation, allow it to develop naturally and include all those present.
- After listening to the conditions and desires of the person who is sick, ask if the person desires Communion at this

time. Invite the family members who are Catholic to receive Communion also.

BEFORE THE COMMUNION RITE

- Ask if they can consume the entire host.
- Have water on hand if there is a need.
- Offer extra copies of the “Rite” for the person and family to follow along.

THE COMMUNION RITE

- Pace the ritual with sensitivity, be aware of the sick person’s ability to follow.
- Adapt to the situation of each visit.
- Give only a small portion of the host to a person who has difficulty swallowing.
- Wait for the person to swallow the host.
- Offer water if necessary.
- Be prepared with a cloth in the event that the person has problems.
- If the person is unable to consume the entire host, you must consume the remainder of the host before leaving.
- If the person is physically unable to receive the host, it is appropriate to make a ‘Spiritual Communion’ by extending your hand over their forehead and reciting:

Lord Jesus, I believe that You are in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Come into my heart and never leave me.

May You be in his/her heart and mind to bring him/her peace and take away all fears and answer all his/her hopes and bless him/her by spiritually nourishing his/her heart with His Body and Blood.

THE END OF THE VISIT

- Ask if they would like to be on the parish prayer chain.
- Ask if there is anything else you can do to help.
- Hand out a parish newsletter, offer a copy to everyone who would like one.
- Don't overstay your welcome, leave while they still want you to stay.
- If you feel unsafe, make an excuse to leave and advise your coordinator immediately.

AFTER THE VISIT

- Record in your notebook any change in the person's status affecting your ministry.
- Update your roster with this information.
- NOTE: If the information is particularly personal you may need to obtain the person's permission.
- Contact your mentor and discuss anything that may be concerning you.
- Contact your coordinator immediately if you and your mentor consider the matter to be serious.
- Advise your coordinator if:
 - the person would like communion brought to them; or
 - they have any new needs.

WHAT IF...

- A. The person you are visiting says they need to go to confession before they receive Communion.**

EMHC do **not** hear confessions. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is **only** to be administered by an ordained priest.

- B. If the person does ask to see a priest, for any reason.**

Contact the parish office and leave the person's name, contact details and home address.

- C. The person or a member of the family requests that they receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick**

Only a priest can administer the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Please contact parish office.

- D. A person you visited is dying actively, you have to give Communion to a dying person.**

This may very well be the last time that the patient receives Communion in their life. This is called Viaticum. If the person is unable to take Communion, pray for the person and ask for God's blessing over them. Make sure to ask the Catholic family members if they would like to receive Communion. Suggest to the family to call for a priest to administer the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

- E. Non-Catholics request to receive communion.**

A non-Catholic should **not** receive communion.

You can offer to pray with the person.

- F. The host is dropped or the communicant cannot consume the host and/or spits it out.**

If the host is dropped, it may be picked up and consumed if you are comfortable with doing so.

If the resident spits the host out, use a towel or tissue to pick up the piece of host and securely wrap it. Keep it with you until you finish your visitation. The host should be

dissolved in water and the water poured into the church sacrarium, **not** down a drain.

G. The person cannot consume a whole Host.

Water may be offered to a sick person receiving communion to aid in swallowing the host.

If necessary, 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 EMHC.

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.

Do ***not*** leave the room until the person has consumed the host.

H. There are crumbs of the host left in the pyx.

Remember that the Divine Presence in the Blessed Sacrament is the same regardless of the size of the portion of the host.

An empty pyx should always be purified after each use. Pour a little water into the pyx to dissolve the crumbs of the Blessed Sacrament. Then either:

- consume it the water in the pyx or
- pour the water in the pyx into the Sacrarium (in the sacristy).

Do **not** pour the water from the pyx down a regular sink or leave the host crumbs (Jesus Christ) in the pyx.

Once the water is consumed or poured into the Sacrarium, dry the pyx with a cloth located next to the Sacrarium.

Sanitise the pyx with soap and water after it has been purified.

- I. The person has a mental illness or may be under heavy medication and does not appear to understand.**

Use your good judgment.

If there is some acknowledgement from the person about what is happening and they want to receive, err on the side of giving them communion but ensure that they consume the host before you leave them.

- J. The person has just finished eating or is in the middle of a meal.**

People who are ill or elderly do not need to abstain from food or drink before receiving communion.

- K. The person asks for assistance.**

It is a natural tendency to want to help people that are in need. However, never attempt to move a person or assist them in transferring from a chair to bed or vice versa, use the restroom etc. Always call a family member to assist the person.

THE RITE

GREETING

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

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

Response: And with your spirit.

PENITENTIAL RITE

Minister: My brother(s) and/or sister(s), to prepare ourselves for this celebration, let us call to mind our sins.

Pause for a recollection of sins.

Minister: Lord Jesus, You healed the sick:

Response: Lord, have mercy.

Minister: Lord Jesus, You forgave sinners.

Response: Lord, have mercy.

Minister: Lord Jesus, You give us Yourself to heal us and bring us strength.

Response: Lord, have mercy.

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

All: Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Use one of the readings below or the Sunday or daily Gospel reading.

From the Holy Gospel according to John (John 6:54–55)

He who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has life eternal, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.

From the Holy Gospel according to John (John 6:54–58)

He who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has life eternal, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. The man who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the Father who has life sent me and I have life because of the Father, so the man who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and died nonetheless, the man who feeds on this bread shall live forever.

From the Holy Gospel according to John (John 14:6)

Jesus told him: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me.”

**From the Holy Gospel according to John
(John 14:23)**

Jesus answered: "Anyone who loves me will be true to my word, and my Father will love him; we will come to him and make our dwelling place with him."

**From the Holy Gospel according to John
(John 15:4)**

Live on in me, as I do in you. No more than a branch can bear fruit of itself apart from the vine, can you bear fruit apart from me.

**From the first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians
(1 Corinthians 11:26)**

Every time, then, you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

**From the first letter of St. John
(1 John 4:16)**

We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

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 they name; they kingdom come, they 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:

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

Minister distributes the Blessed Sacrament.

Moment of silent prayer

CONCLUSION

Minister: Let us pray. May this heavenly mystery, O Lord, restore us in mind and body, that we may be coheirs in glory with Christ, to whose suffering we are united whenever we proclaim his Death. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

This blessing is said while the minister makes the sign of the Cross over himself or herself:

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

All: Amen.

Minister: Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your Life.

All: Thanks be to God.

If you feel the above Rite may be too long for a particular resident, at the very least, the Lord's Prayer, Behold the Lamb of God and a Hail Mary after communion should be said.