

Guidance for Eucharistic Ministers
Christ the King and St Augustine's, Coventry

The formal title for your role is 'Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion'. This recognises that the 'Ordinary Ministers' of Holy Communion are the bishops, priests and deacons. But in recognition that we need lay people to collaborate in this ministry, the Church commissions 'Extraordinary Ministers' to work with the 'Ordinary Ministers'.

Thank you for being a Eucharistic Minister in our parish of Christ the King and St Augustine. Your faithful ministry is greatly appreciated.

What follows is some general guidance both for ministry during Mass and when visiting those who are unable to come to Mass.

Eucharistic Ministry during Mass

- It goes without saying that we ensure our hands are clean before Mass. Whilst hand sanitiser was used during the pandemic, the guidance is for us to cease this during the liturgy. However, you are very welcome to carry personal hand sanitiser to use.
- When you are helping with the distribution of Holy Communion during Mass, you come forward when the congregation recite the 'Lamb of God' prayer (after the sign of peace). You will then be given a sacred vessel with the Hosts for distribution.
- We should only ever distribute what has been given to us. For instance, if we run out of hosts, we should send people to another minister.

Administering Holy Communion

- As Eucharistic Ministers we need to be prepared to give Holy Communion however communicant chooses. An individual communicant may choose to stand or kneel, or receive communion in the hand or on the tongue.
- We show the Host to the communicant and say 'The Body of Christ'. We do not include people's names or any other words.

Administering Blessings

- The only people who can give blessings during Mass are the Bishop, Priest or Deacon. However, you will often find people approaching you, as a Eucharistic Minister, for a blessing.
- To avoid confusion, you should not make a gesture, such as the sign of the cross, over the person.
- We should also never assume that someone is happy for us to touch them. Therefore touching people is not appropriate.
- Simply acknowledge the person with eye contact, nod your head, and say 'God bless you.'

After the distribution of Holy Communion

- Once you have finished distributing Holy Communion, please return the sacred vessel to the altar. There is no need to place it in the centre of the altar, especially as this area can become crowded. Simply place the sacred vessel on the altar and return to where you were stood at the side of the sanctuary.
- Please then purify your fingers with water. In Christ the King Church, you are asked to do this yourself at the credence table. At St Augustines Church, a server will come to you with water.
- Once the priest/deacon has placed the Hosts back in tabernacle, please genuflect (or bow if unable to genuflect) and return to your pew.

Eucharistic Ministry to those unable to come to Mass

General Good Practice

- The person you are visiting should know that you are coming. You may wish to visit them on the same day and at the same time each week, or you may wish to make an appointment.
- Within reason, prioritise the giving of Holy Communion before you settle into a general conversation. Your visits are both sacramental and pastoral, and both aspects are very important. But we seek to prioritise communion.
- As best as you can, practice good boundaries with the time you spend with the person. 20-30 minutes is an appropriate length of time for a weekly visit.

Safeguarding Holy Communion

- Holy Communion is Jesus Christ, and as such, we should always treat it with care.
- When we collect Holy Communion from Mass, ideally you will go straight to the person you are visiting. But this is often not possible. For instance, Mass may be at 9.30am and the person you visit prefers an afternoon visit. In this instance, keep Holy Communion in a safe and dignified place (maybe next to a crucifix in your house) until you make your visit.
- Holy Communion should not be kept in your home overnight, without having first spoken to a priest.
- We should avoid giving ourselves Communion. Any Host or Hosts that haven't been consumed should be returned to Christ the King. But if this is not possible, for instance, if the priests are not in, or you live far from the church and don't drive, then the best thing to do is to prayerfully receive the Host yourself.

The Rite

- The 'Rite of Holy Communion for the Housebound' has been given to you. If you don't have it, please collect a copy from the parish office.
- Ideally, we follow this rite as closely as possible. But sometimes it is appropriate to shorten the rite. At a minimum, we should make the sign of the cross, pray the Lord's Prayer, administer Holy Communion, and pray a 'Prayer after Communion' before ending with a final sign of the cross.