
**DIOCESE OF EDMUNDSTON
DIOCESAN COMMISSION ON LITURGY AND CULTURE**

REFERENCE GUIDE FOR AUXILIARY MINISTERS OF COMMUNION

Introduction:

The Apostle Paul writes: « Is not the cup of blessing we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ ? And is not the bread we break a sharing in the body of Christ ? » (1 Cor. 10:16-17) And so, we who are baptised are members of the same body and, therefore, members of one another (1 Cor. 12:27; Rm. 12:5).

As members of the Body of Christ, some among us are called to function as auxiliary ministers of communion.

It is obvious that this ministry is service to the assembly, a service which must be carried out with the greatest care and the utmost respect. Since communion time is an important part of the Eucharist, we could never stress enough the importance of the function of distributing this communion to our brothers and sisters.

The Eucharist is a gift. As such, we do not take it ourselves: it is given to us. Christ himself is the giver of this divine benefaction, freely and generously offered to us. This was what happened at the last Supper: Jesus gave the bread and wine to his disciples. He was the one who gave it.

So as to give its full meaning to holy communion, we present you the following pastoral guidelines regarding the choice and appointment of auxiliary ministers of communion, as well as suggestions for carrying out this ministry both in church and with the sick and the shut-in.

1. Choosing Auxiliary Ministers of Communion

The *Guide canonique et pastorale au service des paroisses* published by the Québec Bishops' Conference states that the ministers « shall be chosen with care and instructed on how to carry out their service to the community in a proper and dignified manner. » In this way they shall gain the respect of the community, as their faith life is found to harmonise with the meaning of the action they are carrying out. To promote this objective, one should avoid on-the-spur-of-the-moment appointments, calls for volunteer ministers, both of which could attract inadequate candidates. The pastoral leader seeks the advice of his pastoral team and the liturgy committee before inviting individuals to become ministers of communion.

2. Official Appointment of Auxiliary Ministers of Communion

Communion ministers are « officially » appointed. Such an appointment is an indication of the importance of this ministry, it motivates the members of the Christian community to take its responsibilities seriously, and highlights the « liturgical » dimension of the task. The auxiliary minister helps in a sacramental ministry to which a priest or deacon has been ordained. It is altogether fitting that this appointment take place within the Sunday Eucharistic celebration, following a proper format (see the Appendix for an example).

We stress the importance that it be these ministers who take communion to the sick and shut-ins in our Christian communities, who ask for it. However, family or friends of the sick may also be approved as ministers of communion, and they should not be deprived of this official designation. The important point to remember is that, in any case, adequate training be given to all involved.

3. Guidelines for Auxiliary Ministers of Communion

The ministers approach the altar at the Lord's Prayer which signals the beginning of the Communion Rite. The priest gives communion to the ministers and all take communion together (at the same time), (or else) the priest takes communion first, followed by the ministers.

Since the minister of communion is not a dispenser of hosts, he/she takes the time to offer the body of Christ to

his/her brothers and sisters. This means that the minister takes the time to look at the communicant and offer the consecrated bread, saying the words, « The body of Christ. »

If someone approaches communion and asks for a host for someone in the church, it is the minister him-/herself who brings communion immediately after the communion of the other faithful.

4. General Meaning of Communion to the Sick and the Shut-In

Taking communion to the sick and the shut-in is a gesture of faith and a service of the Christian community which reaches out to its members who cannot make it to church.

It is Christ himself who, through the agency of another, reaches out to a member of his suffering Body, to comfort him/her and support him/her with his presence.

Through this gesture, the sick or shut-in person remains joined to the Christian community, is supported by the Word of God, the Body of Christ, and the brotherly action of the bearer of communion.

Due to the loftiness of such a service, it is important to prepare the sick and the shut-in as well as the one carrying out this ministry. At the house, there should be a proper prayerful atmosphere, one that is conducive to recollection in the Lord.

5. Practical Suggestions for Communion to the Sick

There are different ways for the auxiliary minister of communion to receive the consecrated bread to be taken to the sick and the shut-in:

- a. Following Mass, the minister goes to the tabernacle where another minister distributes the eucharistic bread to those designated to take communion to the sick and the shut-in.
- b. When distribution of communion to the assembly is ended, those appointed come to the front of the sanctuary where the priest presents them with the eucharistic bread and, on behalf of the community, sends them forth to the sick and the shut-in.
- c. Before Mass, the pyxes are placed on the altar . The priest then distributes the bread he has consecrated, and hands out the pyxes to those appointed, either after communion or following the Mass.

For communion to the sick and the shut-in, **it is very important to have a pyx** to carry the consecrated bread.

Once communion has been brought to the sick and the shut-in and one's ministry is finished, any left-over consecrated bread must be returned to the tabernacle; the Eucharist is not kept at home.

6. Celebration with the Sick

A minimum of preparation is recommended. A clean tablecloth is placed on a table or side thereof (not too cluttered); a crucifix is placed on the tablecloth, along with a candle or votive light. A small bouquet of flowers can be added (possibly brought by the communion minister).

The celebration comprises a number of elements:

1. **Opening of the Celebration:**
A friendly greeting to the sick and those attending, leading to the usual « The peace of the Lord be with you. »
2. **Penitential Preparation:**
A call to repentance which usually comprises the three invocations used at Mass: Lord, have mercy..., or another form of confession, for example, « I confess to almighty God... », an act of contrition, followed by the prayer of forgiveness: « May almighty God have mercy on us... »
3. **Word of God:**
A reading from the liturgy of the day or a text which is better suited to the occasion and disposition of the

sick/shut-in.

4. Common Prayer:

Maybe the Mass's prayer of the faithful, or a spontaneous prayer. The condition of the sick or shut-in person should determine the length of the prayer or its dispensation altogether.

5. Communion:

Includes the Our Father, and the formula: « This is the Lamb of God... », followed by giving communion to the sick person either in the hand, on the tongue or, if it is the only way possible, with the consecrated wine. This is followed by a prayer of thanksgiving.

6. The conclusion includes the blessing:

« May almighty God bless you... » This can be followed by a Hail, Mary or a song. Take note that the blessing, as well as the prayer of forgiveness, are the official formulas, except that the word « you » is replaced by « us » if said by a lay person (« May almighty God forgive us... »).

N.B. The Simple Rite

Comprises only the welcome and the words « This is the Lamb of God... », followed by « Lord, I am not worthy to receive you... ». Communion then takes place.

This rite may be used:

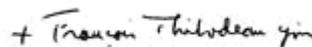
- when the minister of communion has many places to visit
- when the sick person is too tired
- when the place of communion requires discretion as, for example, in a hospital ward or a semi-private room.

A final Note:

It would be useful for those who have accepted this ministry to the sick to meet together from time to time in order to talk about their experience, their joys and disappointments, to ask questions, and to continue their formation.


Soeur Yvette Morneau f.m.a.

Diocesan Liturgy Commission
Chairperson



+ François Thibodeau, C.J.M.
Bishop of Edmundston

Appendix

Rite of Installation of Auxiliary Ministers of Communion

(Calling to candidates to come forward.)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, you have been called to take on the important task of distributing holy communion.

By accepting such a great function, endeavour to strengthen your faith and let your conduct be blameless in the sight of others, that you may truly experience the mystery of the unity of the Church.

Since you know that by eating the Body of Christ and drinking his Blood we proclaim his death until he comes, may your lives be a spiritual offering pleasing to God through Jesus Christ.

Since you are ready to commit yourselves to this ministry, it is proper that you announce it to the community. And so...

This ministry given to you to offer the Body and the Blood of Christ to your sisters and brothers, do you take it on for the service and growth of the Church ?...

- I do.

Do you want to make the Bread of Life your spiritual nourishment, and to conform to Christ's sacrifice ?...

Is it your decision to carry out your eucharistic ministry with the utmost care and respect ?...

Blessing (with outstretched hands):

May God almighty, the source of all grace and blessing, bless + you as you are given the charge of serving the Body of Christ: while dispensing faithfully the bread and the cup to your sisters and brothers, may you be strengthened by this sacrament, and share someday in the eternal heavenly feast. AMEN.
(Presentation to the congregation)

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