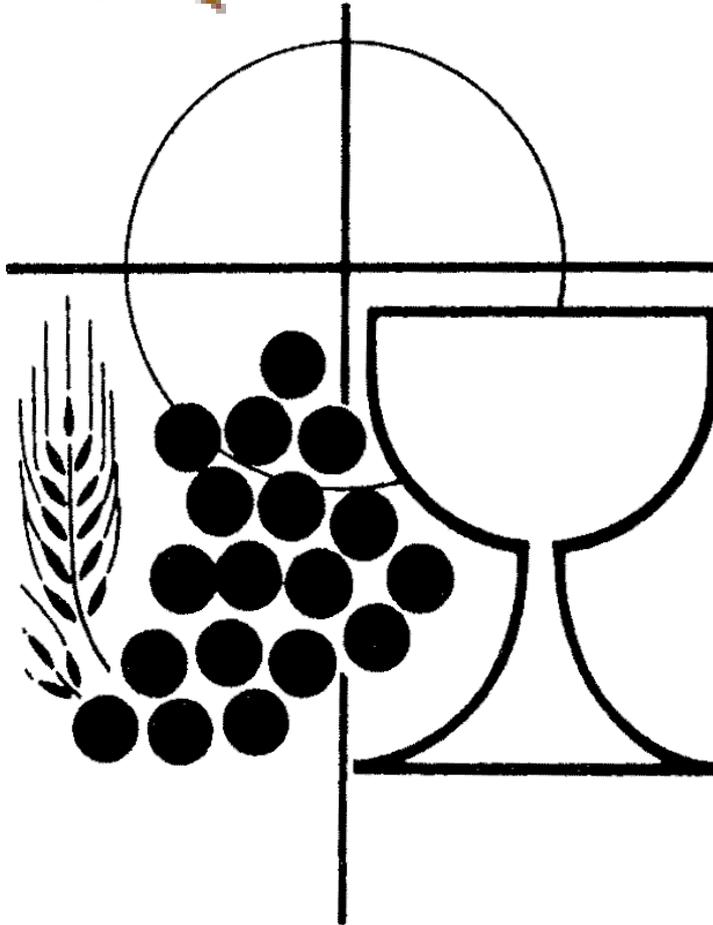
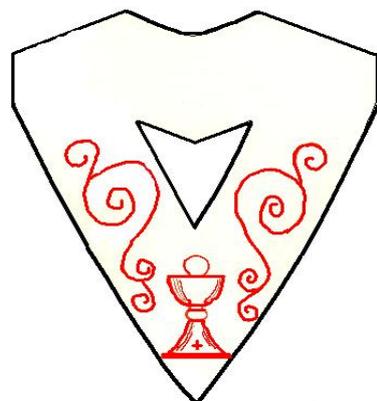


***DIOCESE OF  
NOTTINGHAM***



**Commission for  
Extraordinary Ministers  
of Holy Communion**





**DIOCESE OF NOTTINGHAM**  
**COMMISSION**  
**FOR**  
**EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS**  
**OF HOLY COMMUNION**  
  
**HANDBOOK**  
  
**2012**

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## **Bishop's Foreword**

I am very pleased to introduce this excellent booklet to you. My thanks are due to the Commission for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion who have put so much hard work into its preparation.

One of the great strengths of our diocese is the way in which our Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are prepared and commissioned for their important ministry.

For Catholics, the celebration of the Eucharist is of central significance and profound consequence to the Christian way of life. It is the fount and summit of our discipleship. At the Eucharist, we are drawn by the Lord into the great mystery of his death and resurrection. We become partakers in that ministry and are given power to live it out each day. That is why your ministry is such a great gift, particularly to the sick and housebound.

May God bless you and those whom you serve.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Malcolm".

Rt Rev Malcolm McMahon OP  
Bishop of Nottingham

# PART ONE – BACKGROUND TO MINISTRY

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

At the moment of writing the numbers of parishes without a resident priest is increasing steadily. Two factors must be mentioned at this point.

None of us can forecast the workings of Divine Providence. We can be sure that God always will provide for his Church, and our God is always a God of surprises in that — as Christian, not to speak of Jewish, history shows — his ways are not our ways. There are some who would say that the “shortage” of priests is the occasion, perhaps even the cause, for a new insight into the role of the laity in the ministry and mission of the Church.

The second factor is this. In recent years, through the revised Code of Canon Law (1983) and Church and papal documents — more particularly among these “Christifideles Laici” (1988) — new perspectives of what “parish” is are emerging. A parish is now being seen not primarily as a territory within defined geographical borders but as people, community, and Eucharistic community. Wherever people come from geographically, gathered in the Eucharist they are ‘parish’, a worshipping community.

There are enormous pastoral consequences arising from these perspectives, and they need to be urgently and effectively explored. Added to this is the hard reality that — while it is regularly admitted that the number of priests, according to increasing age and lessening ordination rates, is decreasing — adequate notice may not have been taken of decreasing numbers of *practising* Catholics. It would be foolhardy (as King David discovered to his discomfort) to see the faithful purely in terms of statistics. The ‘little Kingdom’ is a disposition of God to the world, as the yeast is to the batch. Moreover, the yearly custom of counting heads at Mass on a given Sunday is hardly a definitive way of estimating the practice of the Faith in daily life even when it is readily accepted that the Eucharist is the source and summit of all the Church’s activity.

The building of the Body of Christ which is his Church, into which we begin our initiation by Baptism, is completed and realised most perfectly in the Eucharist, the Body of Christ, where Christ is most wonderfully formed in us. This relationship of Baptism and Eucharist underpins our understanding of parish as a Eucharistic, worshipping community with a mission to our world.

In some parishes in the past what might be called ‘parish parallelism’ prevailed. Priest and laity were sometimes content to go their individual ways — each almost independently of the other, separately, for the most part, “doing their own thing”. Tensions now and then arose when one seemed to “trespass” on the other. Peace was generally secured by “respectful distance”. Yet, the reverence and loyalty of laity for priest and the sacrificial commitment of priest for laity in England and Wales were legendary throughout the Catholic World, forged as they were in the crucible of Penal Times.

But the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) set itself to read the signs of the times in the chaos and confusion of post-World War 2 years. One of the central ideas of the Council was that laity and ordained ministers, each in their own essentially different way, participate in Christ’s priesthood — which was a statement of *diversity in ministry*.

At the same time the Council taught that all the baptised (laity and clergy alike) because of their Baptism, and not because of a mission received from bishops and priests, are called to proclaim the gospel, to worship God, and to participate in Christ’s struggle for justice and peace. This common priesthood of all the baptised was a statement of *complementarity in ministry*.

The foundations of what we have come to know as “collaborative” ministry — partnerships in ministry — were truly laid. ‘Parish parallelism’ was to die the death. By Baptism all are called to further the Kingdom alongside each other. And that call is to service, not to status.

The call of the church to you to accept Lay Ministry of Holy Communion is not therefore to be seen as a crisis response to the shortage of priests. The Church is calling forth from her storehouse a treasure which is old (in history) and new (in its application to modern times). Gifted in Baptism, the laity are being commissioned to build up the Body of Christ (the Church) through the Body of Christ (the Eucharist).

Clergy and laity need each other. “They are ordered to one another. Each in their own way share in the one priesthood of Christ”, says the Second Vatican Council. The ordained ministry would be the poorer without the creative initiative of the faithful in church and social life. Likewise the faithful would lose their unity and their means of life if the ordained did not make Christ continually present in Word and in Sacrament/Sacrifice — Christ from whom the community of believers derives its only reason for existence.

As Pope John Paul II reminded us in ‘Christifideles Laici’ (no. 22):

“... Pastors must always acknowledge that their ministry is fundamentally ordered to the service of the entire people of God. The lay faithful must in turn acknowledge that the ministerial priesthood is totally necessary for their participation in the mission of the Church”.

## MEANING OF MINISTRY

In recent times the great emphasis on “collaborative ministry” (“partnership in ministry” or similar title) has been referred to as an “explosion of ministries”. Some have spoken of a “new Pentecost” in the Church, and how these moments of grace have led to a growth of lay involvement in the mission of the Church.

It is already acknowledged that the word “minister” in this context needs to be more clearly defined. Some have asked why it could not be claimed, for example, that we have always had lay people who — through recognised groups and organisations or indeed individually — have shared in the Church’s ministry. An historical overview might shed some light.

‘Servant of God’ was a title given to leaders in Old Testament times (e.g. Moses, Abraham, Isaac, David) to the prophets, priests, indeed the whole people of Israel.

### Ministry in the New Testament

The term ‘ministry’ (in Greek: diakonia) in early Christian times comes to us from *St. Paul*. He acknowledged that his calling was to serve the faithful by preaching the Gospel to them. He was set apart for this service. (Romans 1.1). Elsewhere he makes the point that the community themselves are in turn called to be ministers to the world, not just serving the needs of the “saints” (the faithful themselves) and of “all others”, because of the Gospel, but also flowing outwards in thanksgiving to God and to his glory. There is more than a hint of the generosity needed, even to self-sacrifice, in this work by and among the people. (Interestingly, the word “leitourgeia” — public work — is used by him cf. 2 Corinthians 9. 11-15; from that word we get the English word, liturgy).

Gifts are given to the faithful to carry out — each in a different way and gifted to enable this — the building of God’s Kingdom. (Read 1 Corinthians, chapters 12, 13, and 14). Leadership is given to this work by episcopoi (overseers), diakonoi (public servants, ministers) and presbuteroi (elders). These like “widows” must show in their lives certain qualities as befitting servants of the Gospel, (cf. 1 Tim. 5).

The Spirit of God is active in the Church and her ministries in *Acts of the Apostles*. St. Luke speaks of those commissioned by the spirit of Jesus to continue the Lord’s work in the post-Ascension age even till the end of time and to the nations of the world. Some (like Paul and Barnabas) are commissioned by the laying on of hands. Others are chosen out to meet material needs and indeed a wider service to the Church. Seven such (*not called diakonoi by Acts*) are mentioned in Acts 6.

While the *Gospels* do not show a structured ministry, the essence of ministry is exemplified in Jesus himself, the “Son of Man who came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom in the place of many”. (Read Mark 10, 35-45; John 13, 1-15). Scripture scholars have shown how the ministry of Jesus in St. Mark’s Gospel is one of faithful witness to the Gospel, in St. Matthew a ministry of teaching; in St. Luke Jesus is seen as a minister of God’s Spirit, and in St. John as a minister of the forgiveness of sin in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The *Letter to the Hebrews*, which so influenced the early Church, served to show Jesus as the great High Priest and King “after the order of Melchisedech” (5.10) exercising a ministry vastly superior to the hereditary priesthood of Old Testament times (cf. 8.6).

### **Ministry in the Early Church**

So, from Apostolic times, ministry is rooted in Jesus as its exemplar. It is seen to develop in the early Church communities as needs arise. The structure of ordained ministry (bishops, priests, deacons) was evident in the time of St. Ignatius Martyr (c110), but laymen and women of local communities carried out a ministry of prayer, of care for the sick and needy, a ministry of instruction and preparation for the rites of initiation and so forth. There are instances, for example, of lay people taking Holy Communion to the dying. The clergy on the other hand developed a specific ministry of leadership in the life of the Church.

In later centuries missionary monks (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries) took through Europe not only liturgical ministries of prayer and sacrament but also a storehouse of learning with its ministry of education and scholarship. Mediaeval guilds carried out the works of mercy — nursing the sick, burying the dead, caring for the poor. Tensions began to widen the division between clergy and laity, brought about by different factors, and the liturgy became almost the preserve of the clergy to the exclusion of the laity. Whereas the Protestant “Reformation” insisted on the common priesthood of all believers, the Council of Trent (1545-63) saw the ordained ministry as central to the ministry of the Church.

Where the one emphasised the sacrament of Baptism, the other (for reasons valid to the time) stressed the sacrament of Holy Orders. This basically clerical view of ministry persisted into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But the growing secularisation of society began to call forth Christians prepared to meet the concerns of the world of work, the media, and education.

### **The insights of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65)**

- addressed these 20<sup>th</sup> century issues. In the *Document on the Liturgy*, all the people of God were to take part in the liturgy; functions previously reserved to seminarians or priests were opened up to laity (reading, ministry of Holy Communion, catechesis, etc.). The *Document on the Church* saw the Church not so much in terms of hierarchical pyramid but as community (bishops, priests, laity together) through the mystery of Christ in his Church.

A decree was devoted to the *Apostolate of the Laity* which underlined our sharing (by Baptism of all believers) in the role of Christ as priest, prophet and king within our world. The *whole* Church was a servant to minister in his name to our times. Later the letter “Christifideles Laici” (1988) of Pope John Paul II would tease out the full implications of the revised Code of Canon Law (1983).

Work still needs to be done on the precise understanding of “ministry” — commissioned (or instituted) through the Sacrament of Orders or flowing from the Sacrament of Baptism?

## SPIRIT OF MINISTRY

When we use the term ‘servant’ in secular life (e.g. armed service, civil service, public service) we stress that such people are ‘ministers’ to the public in general in its varying needs. Very often these (e.g. members of parliament) seem to be in a privileged position. Yet — as the Gospel says — when they do their duty, they are merely servants.

**Ministry is about service, not status.** In the coinage of the kingdom the leader is the one who serves (cf. Luke 22. 24-27). For that Jesus will no longer call us servants but friends (see John 15. 12-20) since — unlike slaves — we respond freely to his example.

In the Mass of Commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion in our Diocese, it has been customary during the imposition of the scapulars for the responsory taken from the prophet Micah to be sung:

This is what Yahweh asks of you,  
only this;  
that you act justly,  
that you love tenderly,  
that you walk humbly with your God.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are called:

***to act justly*** : One of the senses in which the word ‘justly’ is used is “to do one’s duty” — to God, to one’s neighbour, to oneself — to give what is due. The great Roman virtue of “pietas”, the Christian value of “piety” — one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit — is a kindred notion. St. Joseph is described as a just man — who did faithfully and dutifully what was asked of him. This demands self-sacrifice. An Extraordinary Minister will treat everyone he/she serves without distinguishing persons. An Extraordinary Minister will dutifully carry out the rituals laid down, remembering he/she is a minister of the Church, allowing Christ to grow while he/she lessens the ‘ego’ that would show itself in celebrating oneself rather than Christ. One who acts justly will be one who acts obediently.

***to love tenderly*** : Love is the true spirit of ministry. The Extraordinary Minister will radiate the warmth of Jesus himself, expressing the Eucharistic Sacrament of love in action. There cannot be, there must not be, a contradiction between the Sacrament that is brought and the one who brings it. The compassion, the healing presence, the outgoing concern of the heart of Jesus must characterise the respectful attitude of the minister towards the person to whom he/she ministers.

*to walk humbly with your God* : The Extraordinary Minister will show the disposition of Mary carrying in her womb the Incarnate Son of God on her way to visit Elizabeth, walking humbly with her God. Mary herself magnified the Lord for regarding the humility of his handmaid, and for thereby doing great things through her, working miracles of grace. God gives graces to the humble, and repudiates the arrogant, the conceited, the proud and self-sufficient.

From the Ancrene Riwe (mediaeval rule of life for women “hermits” in England) prayer to be addressed to the Blessed Sacrament:

Hail, author of our creation!  
Hail, price of our redemption!  
Hail, viaticum of our journey!  
Hail, reward of our hope!  
Hail, consolation of our time of waiting!  
Be thou our joy who art to be our reward.  
Let our glory be in Thee throughout all ages forever.

O Lord be always with us.  
Take away the dark night,  
wash away all our sins,  
Give us thy holy relief.”

## HISTORY OF THE MINISTRY OF HOLY COMMUNION

When *St. Justin, Martyr* described the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist in his time (c.150 A.D.) we learn how in the earliest years of Christianity deacons carried Holy Communion from Mass to those who were absent from the assembly. The Eucharist in this way became a two-fold communion: communion with the Lord and communion with the assembly in their worship.

We go a stage further through the writings of *Hippolytus* (c.215 A.D.) As yet the celebration of the Eucharist did not take place on weekdays. (This would later develop from the cult of the early Christian martyrs and the liturgy for the dead). Everyone of the faithful, Hippolytus writes in “Apostolic Tradition”, should take care of the Eucharist and protect it from being profaned in their homes by unbelievers or animals. The Eucharist was taken home on Sundays for communion during the week. This practice in Rome in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century clearly did not necessitate an ordained minister.

It would also seem from Hippolytus that communion included the reception of the cup, though this “blessed” cup could be an early example of the practice of “consecration by contact”, placing a portion of the consecrated bread into unconsecrated wine in the belief that the wine was sanctified, if not consecrated, thereby.

*St. Cyprian* (c.250 A.D.) accepted the custom of the faithful taking the Eucharist home and keeping it there in a receptacle. He was concerned about the worthy reception of the sacrament at home, perhaps daily. Holy Communion demanded repentance and reconciliation in sinners beforehand. The effects of worthy reception would include protection from danger and courage in the face of martyrdom.

By the time of *Tertullian* (c. 160-225 A.D.), the Eucharistic Liturgy was celebrated on “station days”, possibly Wednesdays and Fridays, marked by penitential fasting throughout the day. Some felt unhappy at attending the Eucharistic feast without receiving because of the penitential fast. Tertullian recommended they carry home the Eucharist and receive it after sundown when the fast had ended. In the case of a Christian married to a pagan, to safeguard the Eucharist it would be necessary for the Christian to receive it secretly.

The first note of caution against the custom of the faithful taking the Eucharist home, reserving it there reverently, and receiving it during the week, comes with *St. Jerome* (c.340-420 A.D.). He condemned the abuse whereby Christians not properly disposed to receiving the sacrament in Church nonetheless communicated at home.

Writing about the same time, *St. Basil of Caesarea* (c.379 A.D.) speaks of the practices at Alexandria and in Egypt where “each one of the laity for the most part keeps the communion at home”.

The communicant in the home receiving it with his own hand must believe “that he duly takes and receives it from the hand that first gave it” (the priest’s). The link between communion in the liturgical gathering and communion in the home must never be overlooked.

The *Council of Saragossa* in Spain (379-381 A.D.) decreed: “If anyone is found guilty of not consuming in church the Eucharist he has received, let him be anathema”. In this the council was expressing its grave concern lest people carrying home the sacrament might expose it to falling into heretics’ hands.

In other cases, lack of respect for the Eucharist by the faithful themselves was condemned. *Novation* (+ C.258 A.D.) referred to a Christian who, on the way home from the liturgy, had attended a pagan “spectacle”, while carrying the Eucharist.

Whatever the anxieties about the proper care and celebration of the Eucharist, examples persisted through these early centuries (up till the 9<sup>th</sup> century at least) of the laity ministering Holy Communion.

*Eusebius* (260-340 A.D.) tells of a 3<sup>rd</sup> century Alexandrian Christian, Serapion by name, who had lapsed from the faith in time of persecution. As he lay dying he asked his grandson to send for a priest. The priest was unable to come because of illness, but gave the grandson a portion of the Eucharist to place in Serapion’s mouth. After receiving, Serapion died.

We learn from *St. Gregory the Great*, who was Pope from 590 A.D. to 604 A.D., that St. Benedict though a layman gave himself Holy Communion as his death approached. Benedict himself had earlier sent a Sacred Host to be placed on the corpse of an errant monk to secure his proper burial.

Ample evidence is given from monastic history that monks even if not ordained were ministers of Holy Communion. A requirement is recorded in the time of *St. Bede* (673-735 A.D.) whereby the faithful, especially monks, know how to baptise those about to die, as yet unbaptised, and that they carry the Eucharist with them wherever they went on distant journeys.

From the *Life of St. Comgall* (+ 602 A.D.) and of *St. Molua* (+ 609 A.D.) carrying the Eucharist was urged for two reasons, as protection and to provide viaticum for the dying. *St. Ambrose* tells us how his catechumen brother, *Satyrus*, used the Eucharist as protection in time of peril, since fellow travelling Christians were carrying it with them, by securing it to his body.

This second reason was considered of utmost importance since *the* sacrament of the dying was considered from earliest times to be viaticum. The custom of placing the Sacred Host in the mouth of the deceased was a Christian response to the pagan practice of placing a coin in a dead person’s mouth as a safeguard on the journey after death through the underworld. (Because of various abuses, the Church would soon ban the use of the Sacred Host in this way.)

Religious women, for example *St. Odelia* at her death c.720 A.D., also ministered Holy Communion to themselves.

However, restrictions were in place by the 9<sup>th</sup> century. *Theodore of Studite* (+ 826 A.D.) emphasised that anyone not a priest could not minister unless in urgent necessity.

Councils of the Church had already ruled that the laity were forbidden to give communion when bishops, priests, or deacons were present (Trullo 692 A.D.) and had ordered the clergy to place the Eucharist in the mouth of laymen or women rather than in their hands (Rouen 650 A.D.).

In earlier centuries St. Ambrose had been concerned that the Eucharist be available as viaticum; by contrast St. Jerome had seen the Eucharist as a sign of communion with the Church, feeling uneasy that the discipline observed in church could be violated in the home.

The tension continued through the Middle Ages. On the one hand the *Council of Westminster* (1138 A.D.) was willing to allow any lay person to take Eucharist to the sick “in the case of pressing necessity” whereas other writers like *Hincmar of Rheims* (806-82 A.D.) and *Ratherius of Verona* (931 A.D.) positively condemned the practice of lay people taking Communion out. *Regino of Prum* complained: “Some presbyters hold the divine mysteries in such careless disregard that they hand over the holy body of the Lord to laymen and women . . . The priest himself should communicate the sick”.

The *Diocese of York* decreed (13<sup>th</sup> century): “Presbyters should diligently visit the sick on all Sundays and festivals. Nor should they . . . send deacons with the Eucharist to the sick while the presbyters devote themselves to drinking and other delights of the flesh. The presbyters should personally go to the sick and solicitously hear their confessions . . .”

Similarly the *Diocese of London* in the same century also excluded even deacons except in the case of necessity.

This position prevailed down to the 20<sup>th</sup> century into the Code of Canon Law in 1917. Canon 845 decreed that the ordinary minister of Holy Communion is the priest alone. Deacons are extraordinary ministers under certain conditions. (The revised Code of Canon Law in 1983 of course acknowledged later developments in this area.)

The question may well be raised as to why these restrictions came in. There are several reasons, some of which are:

1. The practice of frequent Holy Communion had diminished considerably by the early Middle Ages. The Liturgy had become the preserve of the clergy by and large, and those at Mass had become (in the later phrase of St. Pius X) passive and silent spectators.
2. The growing emphasis on the holiness of God and the sinfulness of fallen human nature led to a deep sense of unworthiness that would later be orchestrated by the Jansenists. In answer to this, it became necessary in the 13<sup>th</sup> century for the Church to command Holy Communion at least once a year and that at Eastertide.

3. As is evident from the restrictions mentioned earlier, prohibitions against lay people and even deacons taking Holy Communion to the sick were disciplinary. The Church feared that priests would fail to carry out their responsibilities through indolence or indifference. There is no real evidence that the theological legitimacy of non-priests acting as ministers of the Eucharist was questioned.

4. Various Eucharistic practices had died out almost universally: communion under both kinds and communion in the hand. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century respect for the Eucharist led to lay people being forbidden even to touch the Host. Only in the rarest situations could they do so — to protect the Eucharist from profanation or destruction by accident or in times of persecution, for example in Mexico in the late 1920's.

5. The (minor) order of acolyte permitted ministry at the altar involving Holy Communion, in assisting the deacon or priest. It is not clear historically how that extended to ministering the Eucharist to others.

### **“Immensae Caritatis” 25<sup>th</sup> January 1973**

The Church recognised by 1973 that modern conditions demanded easier access to Holy Communion, while still preserving the reverence due to the Sacrament. It was feared that reception of the Eucharist might become impossible or difficult (especially for the sick) because of insufficient ministers.

So Rome issued certain norms in the document called “Immensae Caritatis”; 25<sup>th</sup> January 1973. The document covered four issues:

- (a) Extraordinary Ministry of the Eucharist
- (b) Holy Communion more than once a day
- (c) The Eucharistic Fast
- (d) Holy Communion in the hand

### **Section concerning Extraordinary Ministers reads:**

“First of all, provision must be made lest reception of communion become impossible or difficult because of an insufficient number of ministers. The sick must not be deprived of spiritual consolation by being impeded from receiving Holy Communion because of the law of the fasting, which they may not be able to observe even though it is already very moderate.

After study of the recommendations of certain episcopal conferences, the following norms are issued:

### **Extraordinary ministers for the distribution of Holy Communion.**

There are various circumstances in which there is an insufficient number of ministers for the distribution of Holy Communion:

*during Mass*, because of the size of the congregation or a particular difficulty in which a celebrant finds himself;

*outside Mass*, when it is difficult because of numbers / distance to take Communion to the sick and housebound. This can include viaticum to the sick in danger of death, and the sick in hospitals and similar institutions.

So that the faithful, who are in a state of grace and who with an upright and pious disposition wish to share in the sacred banquet, may not be deprived of this sacramental help and consolation, it has seemed appropriate to the Pope to establish “extraordinary” ministers, who may give Holy Communion to themselves and to other members of the faithful under the following specific conditions:

- i. Local ordinaries have the faculty to permit a qualified person individually chosen as a special minister for a specific occasion or for a time or, in case of necessity, in a permanent way, either to give the Eucharist to himself or to other members of the faithful or to take it to the sick who are confined to their homes. This faculty may be used when:
  - (a) there is no priest, deacon or acolyte;
  - (b) these ministers are prevented from administering Holy Communion because of another pastoral ministry or because of ill health or advanced age;
  - (c) the number of the faithful requesting Holy Communion is such that the celebration of the Mass or the distribution of the Eucharist outside Mass Since would unduly be prolonged.
- ii. Local ordinaries also have the faculty to permit individual priests exercising their sacred office to appoint a qualified person to distribute Holy Communion. These faculties are granted only for the spiritual good of the faithful and for cases of genuine necessity, priests are to remember that they are not thereby excused from the task of distributing the Eucharist to the faithful Communion on a specific occasion, in case of genuine need.
- iii. The above mentioned local ordinaries may delegate these faculties to auxiliary bishops, episcopal vicars and episcopal delegates.
- iv. The qualified person to whom Nos. i. and ii. refer shall be designated according to the following order: reader, student of major seminary, male religious, woman religious, catechist, man or woman. This order, however, may be changed according to the prudent judgment of the local ordinary.
- v. In oratories of religious communities of either sex the office of distributing Holy Communion in the circumstances described in No. i. may properly be given to a male superior who does not have major orders or to a woman superior or to their respective “vicars”.
- vi. If time permits, it is fitting that the qualified person individually chosen by the local ordinary for administering Holy Communion, as well as the person appointed by a priest having the faculty spoken of in No. ii., should receive the mandate according to the rite appended to this instruction; they are to distribute Holy Communion according to the liturgical norms.

Since these facilities are granted only for the spiritual good of the faithful and for cases of genuine necessity priests are to remember that they are not thereby excused from the task of distributing the Eucharist to the faithful who legitimately request it, and especially not from giving Communion to the sick . . . .”

Subsequent documents spelt out further developments extending the ministry to new situations. The reduction considerably of the Eucharistic Fast, the increasing frequency by which people were receiving Holy Communion (even to twice within a given day in a Eucharistic setting) and the consequent growing need for people so accustomed to this frequency to be served in times of illness, added to pressures on diminishing numbers of priests, were among the factors crying out for an ‘easier access to Holy Communion’ through greater use of lay ministers.

Apart from “*Immensae Caritatis*”, the following official documents dealt with lay ministry of the Eucharist (at least to some degree):

26<sup>th</sup> May 1967

“*Eucharisticum Mysterium*” dealt with various aspects of worship of the Eucharist — the need to instruct people on the Eucharistic mystery, the way in which the community should celebrate Eucharist; the celebration of the Eucharist on Sundays and weekdays; communion regulations inside and outside of Mass; the celebration of the Eucharist in the life of bishop and priest; concelebration; the worship of the Eucharistic Sacrament and its reservation (exposition, congresses).

30 April 1969:

The Instruction “*Fidei Gustos*” laid the foundations for ‘*Immensae Caritatis*’, indicating who may authorise lay ministers and under what general conditions; the qualities required, and the order of preference to be followed, in candidates being chosen; who may commission (bishops principally; priests only on particular occasions). This document also insists on the greatest reverence for the sacrament.

17 May 1970;

Letter on the missionary activity of the laity spoke of the sharing in missionary situations of catechesis and Eucharistic ministry.

5 September 1970:

“On the orderly carrying out of the Second Vatican Council document on the Liturgy” (“*Liturgicae Instaurationes*”) Para. 524 anticipated ‘*Immensae Caritatis*’ by suggesting a mandate by Rome for the appointment of those other than priests, deacons, or acolytes to assist with Holy Communion under both kinds.

9 March 1971:

Authorised lay ministers of communion in the USA in general (the Diocese of Duluth had been given permission from 25 June 1969).

*7 December 1972:*

“Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum”: when no priest is available a duly commissioned lay person may take viaticum to the sick using the rite they ordinarily use for Communion with the special words for viaticum suggested in the ritual.

*29 January 1973:*

“The Rite of Commissioning Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion” by the bishop (or his delegate); for a single occasion; the rite to be observed by an Extraordinary Minister in giving Holy Communion was also indicated, including a directive to use the vesture laid down locally.

*21 June 1973:*

“Holy Communion and the Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass” dealt with times and situations when Holy Communion could also be given outside Mass; the ritual, and dispositions required. It also dealt with Eucharistic Exposition, processions, and congresses.

*6 June 1976:*

In a letter to the Bishops of the USA Pope Paul VI emphasised that the ministry of Holy Communion is ‘extraordinary’ to the laity, and (as in an address to them on 15 June 1978), is an “honoured pastoral function”.

*17 April 1980:*

“Inaestimabile Donum” re-emphasised the principles of “Immensae Caritatis”, underlined the responsibility of the priest concerning the Eucharist, spoke of some apparent abuses, and indicated norms concerning Eucharistic worship.

*6 August 1983:*

“Letter on Some Questions on the Minister of the Eucharist” — only the ordained priest can “confect” the Eucharist (celebrate Mass).

*12 May 1988:*

“Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of the Priest” while not specifically designating the Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist as leader of the Sunday liturgy in such circumstances would give guidelines as to how such a person might preside and arrange the liturgy concerned.

\*\*\*Obviously many other documents and statements were issued on the Eucharist during this time; these largely are the ones that specifically relate to the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion.

In effect these various documents have led to an extension of the role of the Extraordinary Minister from giving Holy Communion within Mass in certain circumstances and taking the Eucharist (even Viaticum) to the sick — under the guidance of the priest, as is presupposed — to leading a Liturgy of Holy Communion on weekdays (in urgency, also on Sundays) in church, and providing for exposition of the Blessed Sacrament (perhaps even leading Eucharistic prayer during times of exposition).

Practice in our Diocese has also indicated that Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion have been asked by their priest to assist in other non-sacramental or para-liturgical situations (e.g. distribution of ashes, veneration of the cross, leading the Way of the Cross). The Order of Christian Funerals as promulgated in 1990 also leaves the possibility open of lay ministers being invited to help in certain funeral prayer vigils and services other than those reserved to a priest or deacon. Because of a pastoral relationship with the deceased and the bereaved already established by an Extraordinary Minister, it would seem that the Extraordinary Minister concerned would be the most appropriate person to lead such services although it is emphasised that local arrangements are a matter between the Parish priest and the E.M. concerned

## THE EUCHARIST AND LIFE

*The following article has been presented by Father Terry Fellows:*

1. What is going to be said must inevitably be somewhat superficial — volumes have been written on the Eucharist.
2. We cannot discuss the Eucharist in isolation from the total Christian vision of life. It is only by seeing the total picture (very briefly) that we can see where the Eucharist fits in.
3. This article is about the *theology* of the Eucharist. “The essential thing about theology is that it has to do with God — but it can’t be about God alone because all we know about God, by revelation or reason, comes to us through human people, including the Person above all others — Jesus Christ. *We discover God in man*. So theology is the study of the *relationship* between God and man, and from this we discover things about God and things about man, but essentially *as related*.” (Rosemary Haughton ‘The Theology of Marriage’).

Christian theology is about man’s *Salvation*, that is attaining his total fulfilment — his completeness — his growth to “the maturity of Christ”. In what way does man attain his completeness?

“Man . . . the awareness of his aloneness and separateness, of his helplessness before the forces of nature and society; all this makes his separate, disunited existence an unbearable prison. He would become insane could he not liberate himself from this prison and reach out, unite himself in some form or other with the world outside.”

“The experience of separateness arouses anxiety; it is indeed the source of all anxiety. The deepest need of man is the need to overcome separateness, to leave the prison of his aloneness.”

“ . . . man . . . of all ages and cultures is confronted with the solution of one and the same question: the question of how to overcome separateness, how to achieve union, how to transcend one’s own individual life and find at-onement . . . The history of religion and philosophy is the history of these answers.” (Erich Fromm ‘The Art of Loving’).

“A thought transfixed me: the first time in my life I saw the truth as it is set to song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth that love is the ultimate and highest goal to which man can aspire. Then I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: *The Salvation of Man is through love and in love*.” (Victor Frankl ‘Man’s Search for Meaning’).

“One thing is clear. All psychological theory, teaching or therapeutic technique has established this fact beyond all doubt, that which heals and promotes human change and growth is a one-to-one relationship of love.” (John Powell, S.J. ‘The Secret of Staying in Love’).

“The problem of life is really the problem of love. Anybody who thinks otherwise has not faced much of life yet.” (Father Eugene Kennedy ‘A Time for Love’).

SO THE ART OF LIVING — OF MAN’S SALVATIO — IS LEARNING  
THE ART OF LOVING.

### THE CHRISTIAN INSIGHT INTO MAN’S GROWTH

Jesus came that we may have life and have it more abundantly. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Through his preaching and life experience he teaches us that we are loved and accepted by his loving Father — we are the children of God. He loves us with a love that is beyond our understanding.

Love respects the uniqueness of each individual yet seeks deep unity. Through revelation we know that in God there are three Persons, each retaining his uniqueness, yet there is such a dynamism of love, a love that is beyond all human love, there is a complete and mysterious oneness we call *The Mystery of the Trinity*.

We are created in the image and likeness of God which means that we too must, in love, work to bring about a unity that is a kind of reflection of the Trinity. It is therefore only in relationship, in love, that we are truly like God. Man *alone* is not the image of God.

“May they be one, as you and I are one.”

“Where there is love, there is God, because God *is* love.”

Thus as we grow in love — it is the only way we can grow as a complete person — we grow into God himself who is the source of our being — our ultimate destiny. We are created to be one with God, a unity of love. But it is through the human we reach the divine.

“If you do not love your neighbour whom you can see, how can you say you love God whom you cannot see?”

“If anyone love me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him . . . As the Father loved me, so I have loved you. Remain in my love . . . I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you . . . May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you . . . I have given them the glory you gave to me, that they may be one as we are one. With me in them and you in me may they be so completely one that the world will realise that it was you who sent me and that I have loved them as much as you loved me . . . I have made your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and so that I may be in them.”

(Read St. John’s Gospel, Chapters 14-17)

It is *only* through love and in love that we attain our destiny, our maturity, our fulfilment.

“If I have all the eloquence of men or of angels, but speak without love, I am simply a gong booming or a cymbal clashing. If I have the gift of prophecy, understanding all the mysteries there are, and knowing everything, and if I have faith in all its fullness, to move mountains, but without love, then I am nothing at all. If I give away all that I possess, piece by piece, and even let them take my body and burn it, but am without love, it will do me no good whatever . . . Love does not come to an end”.

(1 Cor. 13)

This growth into love and therefore growth into God breaks through the barrier of time itself, overcomes death and moves into eternal life.

“I am the resurrection. If anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live. And whoever lives and believes in me will never die”. (Gospel of St. John, Chapter II)

This communication of God’s love (i.e. Himself) to us we call the life of *Grace*.

## **CHRIST THE SIGN OF GOD’S LOVE FOR US**

Love is relationship; to relate we need to communicate; we communicate through signs and symbols e.g. speech, touch. To be effective the sign must be understood. Christ is the effective sign given to us of God’s love for us. “God so loved the world he sent his only begotten Son.” “He who sees me, sees the Father.” We use a special word to describe God’s effective sign of his love:

## **SACRAMENT**

### **Christ is the Sacrament of God’s love**

**The Church.** The sign of God’s love for us and our vocation to live the life of love.

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know I am with you always, yes, to the end of time.” (Matt. 28:19)

“As the Father sent me so I send you.”

“By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples.”

“May they be so completely one that the world will realise that it was you who sent me.”

Christ communicates his love through his community, the Church.



The initial response to love perceived and accepted is *Thanksgiving and Praise*. The word Eucharist means thanksgiving. ‘Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give him thanks and praise’ ‘We come to you Father with praise and thanksgiving’ ‘All glory and honour is yours, almighty Father, for ever and ever, Amen.’

To be aware of being loved brings a deep sense of self-worth, peace, joy, freedom, self-acceptance. Thus we need to *Celebrate*. The Church refers to the Mass as a celebration. How can we express this sense of celebration at our Sunday Eucharist? Is singing essential?

‘Do this in memory of me’. Our thanksgiving and praise comes about because we remember what the other person has done for us on our life journey; how that person has shown love. We like to recall those special moments, those precious times we have shared, those peak experiences we want to hold on to. To be forgotten means that the love is going, the relationship is getting weaker. We are afraid to be forgotten by those we love. So with Jesus. He devised a special celebration in which we could especially remember him and what he did for us, those peak events when his love was especially manifest (i.e. his death and resurrection). ‘Father, we celebrate the memory of Christ, your Son. We . . . recall his passion, his resurrection from the dead and his ascension into glory.’

Within the unity of love there grows an ever increasing dependency — ‘There is no joyful future without you’. This dependency brings about a commitment which is usually expressed and formulated (e.g. the wedding vows). We call this a *Covenant*. A covenant is a love pact which can survive even if one side fails to live up to it. Thus a mother will continue to love her child even if the child runs away. This is the type of covenant God has with us. We see this covenant being formulated in the Old Testament and perfected in the New, (Testament means Covenant) in Jesus Christ. (Read Eucharistic Prayer IV) ‘Take this all of you, drink from it; this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant’.

Our response to the gift of love is essentially an attitude of self to the other — an ‘orientation’, a basic direction of our being. A growing openness and awareness of the other. Our reaching out in love involves *giving of oneself*. ‘Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, that man will save it’ (Luke 9:24). This giving of oneself in love to the other, for the sake of the other we call *Sacrifice*. This is frequently symbolised by the giving of a gift. The gift represents oneself (e.g. wedding ring). Man’s religious experiences always include offering sacrifice to the god. Being a ‘social animal’ this act is performed within a group or community. A representative of that group acts on their behalf — we call him the *Priest*.

The sacrificial act expresses, symbolises, the community’s belief, faith and values in their relationship with God and each other. Here lies the danger that the Liturgical Constitution attempted to deal with:

- a) a ritual act that continues through mere habit, custom or fear.
- b) the ritual becomes so complicated and removed from people's lives that it becomes virtually impossible for most of the community to understand what is happening so everything is left to the officials. 'It is of the greatest importance that the celebration of the Mass be so arranged that *everybody* may take their own proper part in it . . . The best way to achieve this will be to consider the particular character and circumstances of the community, and then organise the details of the celebration in a way which will lead them to full, active and conscious participation. This implies a participation that will involve them in both body and soul, and will inspire them with faith, hope and charity.'
- (Introduction to the Roman Missal Ch. 1, Nos 2 & 3)

At the Last Supper Christ transformed the ritual act of that meal into a memorial of his own sacrifice — his death and resurrection. The broken bread and the red wine represent the separation of the body and blood of Christ. We need to remember that when the word 'body' is used in Semitic language, the whole man is meant. Likewise with the word 'blood' — it signifies the whole, vital force of the person. The Eucharist was instituted by Jesus at the Last Supper and when we celebrate it we do what the Lord did. 'On the night before he suffered he took bread in his hands. Giving thanks he broke it, distributed it saying: Take and eat of it, all of you. For this is my body. So too he also blessed the cup of wine, passed it round and said: Take and drink of it, all of you, for this is the cup of my blood, of the new and eternal testament which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins'. The bread and wine are really changed into the body and blood of Christ. Memory is used to recall past events — it keeps those events alive, but we cannot really share in those events again. But in the celebration of the Eucharist, Christ is not only remembered; he is *truly present* so that the community can share in those events. God breaks through time and space.

Whenever we celebrate we have a special celebration *Meal*. To share in the meal means you are invited to share in the celebration itself; through the sharing you become more aware that you belong, that you are accepted in a special way. The celebration of the Mass includes a meal. A table is set with bread on a dish and wine in a cup. We hear the words 'take and eat' 'take and drink'. The Eucharist as a meal signifies that the Lord nourishes us (growth, fulfilment, eternal life), makes us one with him (Consummation of love which is a continuing process) and it makes us one with each other. Thus the word *Communion*. 'The bread which we break, is it not participation in the Body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the same bread'. (1 Cor.1:16-17) 'There is one body, one spirit, just as you were called into one and the same hope when you were called. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God who is Father of all, over all, through all and within all . . . If we live by the truth and in love we shall grow in all ways into Christ . . . So the body grows until it has built itself up, in love' (Eph. 4:5,15). So when we celebrate we must be

conscious that we are *Community*. Mass is not a private affair where I exclude my brothers and sisters. 'Now you together are Christ's body' (1 Cor. 12:27). We need to create an atmosphere of welcome, openness, sharing and love. How is this done? What is your experience of the Mass? What importance does the 'Sign of Peace' have in your celebration? What about Communion under both kinds?

To love someone means to show that person respect and be aware of his presence. So with Christ in the Eucharist we need to respect and be aware of his special presence among us. How? 'This cult of worship which ought to be bestowed on the Sacrament of the Eucharist has been offered by the Church outside as well as within the rites of the Mass; she still does so by using the greatest care in preserving the consecrated Hosts, presenting them to the people for their solemn veneration, carrying them in procession to the joy of the people in their crowds'. Liturgical laws prescribe that the Blessed Sacrament be kept in churches with the greatest honour and in the most distinguished position. The faithful should not fail to pay it an occasional visit. Such a visit is a proof of gratitude, a pledge of love, an observance of the adoration due to Christ the Lord present in the Blessed Sacrament'. (*Mysterium Fidei*, Nos. 56,66)

*Thank you, Father Terry, for allowing the reproduction of the above article.*

## PART TWO – THE MINISTRY IN PRACTICE

### Foreword

One could not wish for a greater epitaph on one's tombstone than the simple message: "He (or she) has done all things well".

St. Mark recounts in his Gospel (7:37) that the crowds summed up the works of Jesus with these words: 'Bene omnia facit . . . He does all things well' - For us followers of Jesus trying to pattern our lives on his, there could be no better challenge.

There is a certain *wholeness*, completeness, about work well done. It is the sign of a person fully alive; St. Irenaeus points out that 'the glory of God is man fully alive'.

There is a certain *holiness* about work well done. Again, as Jesus prayed at the Last Supper, 'Father, I have given you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do'. (John 17:4)

A well known phrase of Sr. Theresa is often used to define everyday holiness: "To do the ordinary things extraordinarily well".

When lay ministry of Holy Communion was introduced universally in 1973 (it had been available in the United States for some while before that), those called by the Church to this ministry were designated as "Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion". The Latin word was translated into English as "extraordinary". The purpose in mind was to distinguish "ordinary" ministry by priests, deacons and instituted acolytes from that now committed in "extraordinary" situations to the laity.

There was a subtle distinction here. Whereas some ordinary ministries could be within the province of the laity in their own (baptismal) right in the case of Ministry of Holy Communion the laity would exercise ministry only - as it were - by default i.e. in the absence or incapacity of ordinary ministers. Hence the laity would be "Extraordinary" Ministers.

Gradually, these lay ministers of Holy Communion in our countries became known as "Special Ministers" but the Vatican has asked that the title should be "extraordinary ministers"

The word 'holy' in Hebrew is Qados. It means - in biblical terms - 'extraordinary', 'separated' for God's use and glory. This handbook is a call to all Ministers of Holy Communion — whether 'ordinary' or 'extraordinary' — to be special, to be holy, to do all things well. To the glory of God and to the Building up of the Body of Christ which is the Church through the ministry of the Body of Christ which is in the Eucharist.

## **Prepare the Way of the Lord**

‘On the first day of the Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the paschal lamb, his disciples said to Jesus: “Where do you wish us to go to prepare the Passover supper for you?” He sent two of his disciples with these instructions: “Go into the city and you will come upon a man carrying a water jar. Follow him. Whatever house he enters, say to the owner, The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples? Then he will show you an upstairs room spacious, furnished, and all in order. That is the place you are to get ready for us. The disciples went off. When they reached the city they found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover supper . . .”

(Mark 14:12-16)

The instructions given for the proper celebration of Liturgy, found in the introductory notes to a ceremony or integrated into the text of the rite, are often called “rubrics”. Following a custom of the Romans, these instructions were on occasion written in red, hence the word ‘rubric’.

In recent times ‘rubrics’ has become a very nasty word. The term was used to denote all that was detestable in the ritual of earlier times - a rigorous code of law, allegedly verging on pharisaical legalism, that often became more important than the spirit of the law itself. The freedom by which the Second Vatican Council liberated the liturgy from such legalism was welcomed. Unfortunately, this liberty in some cases, in some places, and by some people, became a licence. Much that would safeguard liturgy as an act of Christ in the Church was abandoned. Instead of a celebration of the Church, liturgy sometimes became a projection of the (human) celebrant.

It’s interesting to note how Jesus insisted on ‘orderliness’ as almost the essential setting of Eucharist-related Gospel events. The Upper Room for the Last Supper had to be ‘well-prepared’, “all in order”, “just so”. The celebration of the Last Supper itself had to be set within a Jewish ritual; it had a rhythm about it that was stylised in several other related situations, as described to us by the Gospel-writers.

In the multiplication of the loaves and fishes for the five thousand and more, all the Gospels record Jesus as taking charge of the event, a sort of master-of-ceremonies, indicating that the people be seated. St. Luke specifies Jesus as saying to his disciples: “Have them sit down in groups of fifty or so”. “The people”, St. Mark goes on to add, “took their places in hundreds and fifties, neatly arranged in rows”. And the rhythm of the Last Supper - taking, giving thanks, sharing out - is resonated in the feeding of the four thousand (Matthew 15:32 ff, Mark 8:1-10), in the feeding of the five thousand (Matthew 14:13 ff, Mark 6:34 ff, Luke 9:10 ff, John 6:1 ff), and in the crucial recognition of the Risen Christ in the breaking of bread at Emmaus (Luke 24:13 ff).

Given the Jewish ritual into which the Last Supper was set - a ritual of prayer, readings from their scriptural heritage, reflection on these, responsories to them in psalm and hymn - it is clearly the mind of the Gospel writers that the will of Jesus was for a Eucharist 'well-prepared, orderly, rhythmical, that orders itself to a real, realistic renewal here and now of the sacrifice and sacrament of his Body and Blood. So much must this be so that the presence of Christ must radiate itself from the heart of Eucharistic celebration; "This presence of Christ is proclaimed not only by the words of consecration, by which Christ is made present through transubstantiation, but also *by the sense of deep reverence and adoration which are evident in the liturgy of the Eucharist*". (Introduction to the Missal No. 3). Christ must increase, and all the "me" of celebration must thereby decrease. Rubrics are a means to that end.

This is not to deny the individual character and charism of the one who "celebrates" the Eucharist, but rather to suffuse that celebrant with the richness of Christ himself authenticating what is done in his memory.

Ministers of Holy Communion, whether ordinary or extraordinary, should value the rubrics because they are our guide to an authentic celebration of the liturgy. By following the rubrics, whether we agree with them or not, we ensure that what we are celebrating is what the Church wants us to celebrate and not our own version. Without these guides the Mass and other liturgical celebrations might well become parodies of what is intended with everyone "doing his own thing". We are ministers, servants, of the Church and must do what the Church asks us to do. Our humble obedience as servants of the Church must reflect the other memorialisation of the Last Supper as recorded by St. John (13:1-17). The 'do this in memory of me' that was the Eucharist was paralleled by the request of the Lord and Master, washing the feet of his disciples in all the humility of a Slave and Servant, that we do that as well after his example.

## RITUAL

### GENERAL DIRECTIVES

(for 'he', 'his', 'him' substitute 'she', 'her', 'hers' as appropriate)

1. A minister of Holy Communion is a *servant*. Therefore he must not intrude. Nothing in his manner, appearance, deportment, must detract from this. The Eucharist alone is at the centre of his ministry. The giver must never become more "important" than the Gift, even if - in a sense - he is part of that Gift as the chosen means by which the Gift is given.
2. *Manner*: Aptly are the words of Micah applied to the 'manner' in which the minister will carry out his ministry: (Micah 6:8)  
    "This is what the Lord asks of you: that you act justly,  
    that you act tenderly, that you walk humbly with your God."  
    acting justly: fulfilling your ministry correctly  
    loving tenderly: with warm, gentle, unconditional love  
    walking humbly: a ministry not of status but of service
3. *Appearance*: Not drawing attention to ourselves by dressing inappropriately. For Extraordinary Ministers cleanliness is next to godliness, modest, neat, tidy clothing, hands, nails, clean. Somebody has referred to the example of a butler, presentable, competent but unnoticed. Our outward appearance must show something of the internal dispositions by which our ministry is valued. In an emergency a minister might be called upon to assist even though, returning from work, he is wearing work-clothes. The priest will advise.
4. *Deportment*: A moderate, reverent pace, not rushing nor dawdling. A dignity about our demeanour. Calm, deliberate, meaning what we are doing. Liturgy is symbolic in that it expresses an inner reality; as ministers we particularly contribute to that symbolism. For many people, Holy Communion is the main important single personal act in Mass - we can make it or mar it for them. Every single communicant is to be treated as an individual, not as part of a number to be "got through" as quickly as possible.

### **In our Diocese, the scapular is to be used by Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion in the actual exercise of their ministry.**

This will always be the case in church, convent, school—except in the case of an extreme emergency when one didn't foresee being called onto minister.

In going from church to minister to the sick it is obviously not necessary to wear it publicly, but once arrived at the actual place of ministry, the scapular must be worn throughout the communion of the sick service.

The scapular is so designed as to avoid a "clericalisation of the laity" (which is apparently feared even more than a "laicisation of the clergy" when it comes to apparel). It does raise the act of ministry beyond the level of the everyday ministry of one's vocation, and highlights its significance.

## **THE MINISTRY WITHIN MASS**

In the following text where there is a reference to the male gender it also includes the female.

The Rubrics for the distribution of communion and is given in “The General Instructions on the Roman Missal” (GIRM) published April 2005. The relevant clauses are given below in full, however it should be remembered that the practice of giving communion by Intinction is not practiced in England and Wales.

### **Distribution of Communion**

160 GIRM. The priest then takes the paten or ciborium and goes to the communicants, who, as a rule, approach in a procession. The faithful are not permitted to take the consecrated Bread or the sacred chalice by themselves and, still less, to hand them from one to another. The faithful communicate either kneeling or standing, as determined by the Conference of Bishops. When they communicate standing, however, it is recommended that they make an appropriate sign of reverence, as determined in the same norms, before receiving the Sacrament.

161 GIRM. If Communion is given only under the species of bread, the priest raises the host slightly and shows it to each, saying: Corpus Christi (The Body of Christ). The communicant replies: Amen, and receives the Sacrament either on the tongue or, where this is allowed and if the communicant so chooses, in the hand. As soon as the communicant receives the host, he or she consumes it entirely.

If, however, Communion is given under both kinds, the rite prescribed in nos. 284-287 is followed.

284 GIRM. When Communion is distributed under both kinds:

a. the chalice is usually administered by a deacon or, when no deacon is present, by a priest, or even by a duly instituted acolyte or another extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, or by a member of the faithful who, in case of necessity, has been entrusted with this duty for a single occasion;

b. whatever may remain of the Blood of Christ is consumed at the altar by the priest or the deacon or the duly instituted acolyte who ministered the chalice. The same then purifies, wipes, and arranges the sacred vessels in the usual way. Any of the faithful who wish to receive Holy Communion under the species of bread alone should be granted their wish.

285 GIRM. For Communion under both kinds the following should be prepared:

a. If Communion from the chalice is carried out by communicants drinking directly from the chalice, a chalice of a sufficiently large size or several chalices are prepared. Care should, however, be taken in planning lest beyond what is needed of the Blood of Christ remains to be consumed at the end of the celebration.

b. If Communion is carried out by intinction, the hosts should be neither too thin

nor too small, but rather a little thicker than usual, so that after being dipped partly into the Blood of Christ they can still easily be distributed to each communicant.

286 GIRM. If Communion of the Blood of Christ is carried out by communicants drinking from the chalice, each communicant, after receiving the Body of Christ, moves and stands facing the minister of the chalice. The minister says: *Sanguis Christi (The Blood of Christ)*, the communicant responds: *Amen*, and the minister hands over the chalice, which the communicant raises to his or her mouth. Each communicant drinks a little from the chalice, hands it back to the minister, and then withdraws; the minister wipes the rim of the chalice with the purificator.

287 GIRM. If Communion from the chalice is carried out by intinction, each communicant, holding a communion-plate under the chin, approaches the priest who holds a vessel with the sacred particles, a minister standing at his side and holding the chalice. The priest takes a host, dips it partly into the chalice and, showing it, says: *Corpus et Sanguis Christi (The Body and Blood of Christ)*. The communicant responds: *Amen*, receives the Sacrament in the mouth from the priest, and then withdraws.

#### COMMENTARY

In order to comply with the above rubrics the following procedure should be followed: -

- a. The Extraordinary Minister should come to the Sanctuary wearing the scapular from the pews in accordance with local custom. This is normally either at the Our Father or Agnus Dei.
- b. In some parishes it might be required that an Extraordinary Minister bring a ciborium from the tabernacle and place it on the altar table.
- c. Where it is the practice in the parish the E.M.s purifies their fingers in bowl of water and dries them.
- d. The Extraordinary Ministers take up the agreed position on the Sanctuary away from the Altar.
- e. After the Priest has received the Host and Chalice the Extraordinary Minister should approach the Altar in accordance with local practice to receive Holy Communion.
- f. After the Extraordinary Minister has received Holy Communion, the Priest should hand him a ciborium (or bowl) or a chalice and purificator. The E.M. then goes to the pre-determined people or position of distribution.
- g. On completion of the distribution of communion the vessels should be returned to the altar where the priest / deacon consume the remains of the Precious Blood and cleanse the vessels. The Extraordinary Minister may consume the remains of the Precious Blood should it not be possible for the priest / deacon to do so.

- h. The Extraordinary Ministers leave the sanctuary together, bow, and return to the pews.

**Points to note:**

1. The scapular should be put on while the E.M. is in his place before and not while he moves to the altar.
2. If there are several E.M.s coming to the altar to assist they should enter the sanctuary with dignity (in two's), bow together (or in two's) and go to the customary place on the sanctuary. The same dignity should apply to their departure, with a bow together at the foot of the sanctuary before returning to their seat. This pattern should be followed regularly so as to preclude the embarrassment and irreverence that could otherwise arise.
3. In some places there is the practice whereby the E.M. arriving at the altar before giving Holy Communion purifies his fingers in a bowl of water and dries them. However it may be assumed that an E.M., knowing he is to administer Holy Communion, will have ensured that his hands are clean.
4. If the EM has brought the ciborium to the altar then the veil and lid should not be taken off together as hosts could be scattered from the ciborium. First remove the veil.
5. At Mass only a priest may give himself Holy Communion. The Priest then gives Holy Communion to the Deacons and Extraordinary Ministers. An Extraordinary Minister only gives himself / herself Holy Communion when he / she is the main Minister of Communion at a Celebration of Word and Communion.
6. Extraordinary Ministers should only assist in the distribution of Holy Communion if there are not enough other priests and deacons present.
7. Extraordinary Ministers should not approach the Altar until after the priest has received Holy Communion.
8. Although this could rightfully not be the responsibility of the E.M., it is sometimes desirable that - before Mass - the E.M. check that the ciborium or the chalices to be consecrated are not over-filled or unnecessarily filled.
9. Experience shows that a rehearsal before a first exercise of ministry is indispensable. The E.M. should be clear as to the order in which people receive Holy Communion (e.g. servers, choir, ministers, general congregation and disabled) and the location of distribution points in the sanctuary or church.
10. The normal pattern is for two ministering chalices for every one ministering the Host. The chalice ministers will normally be to the left and right of the Host minister though at some distance away

from him to prevent crowding. A passageway should always be left for those who, after receiving the Host, do not wish to receive from the chalice but are returning to their pews.

11. It is always desirable that (certainly on major occasions) ushers (verggers, sidemen) be at hand to facilitate reverent approach to and departure from the receiving of Holy Communion. E.M.s should not be expected to direct movement while in the act of giving Holy Communion.
12. In all that is done, it is important that the E.M. cultivate a deliberate slowness which does not however become a tardiness of action. Any sign of impatience or distraction in the E.M. will diminish the sacredness of the moment considerably.
13. A coeliac is unable to take a normal Host due to the nature of their condition. The Bishop has recommended that Coeliacs who suffer this problem receive from the chalice only. Of course it is essential that a chalice which does not contain a small particle of the host is consecrated for this purpose.
14. Cross contamination is a very serious problem for Coeliacs, which is not always appreciated by those who do not suffer from the condition. It is therefore our responsibility as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to do all we can to avoid this. If there are two chalices we should see that a coeliac sufferer receives from the one without the particle of the host in it.
15. For those coeliacs who can take a low gluten host we should never put the low gluten host in a ciborium that contains ordinary hosts. Also to avoid contamination by touch we should offer the vessel containing the low gluten host to the coeliac for them to take the host from it. We have to rely on the sacristan not to have caused contamination when preparing for the Mass.
16. The rubric (GIRM 161) indicates several stages in the giving of the host.

The E.M. *goes* to the communicant

- *before* each one (i.e. in front of that person whether standing or kneeling).
- *raises* the host slightly (i.e. to the range of the communicant's area of vision).
- *shows* it to him (which implies the communicant should look at the Host). *saying* "The Body of Christ" (audibly and distinctly to the communicant) -
- The communicant *replies* "Amen" (as his profession of faith, his 'yes' to the Eucharist and indeed his 'yes' to the Church).

- The communicant receives.
17. It is not within the E.M.'s brief to dictate whether people stand or kneel to receive, or whether to receive the Host in the hand or on the tongue. Questions on such issues should be referred to the priest(s). Sometimes however, the E.M. may have to indicate in a gentle and discreet way the course of action to be taken in an emergency.
  18. If the E.M. has good reason to believe that the (Catholic) communicant, who obviously expects to receive communion, is not eligible to receive he should give Communion and then see the PP about the incident after Mass. While the E.M. is a guardian of the Eucharist, he should of course remember that there may be circumstances that he does not know nor is he expected to know. He will try to act conscientiously in the situation, and place all further decision in the province of the priest.
  19. The Host, held between the thumb and forefinger of the E.M., may be placed on the communicant's tongue or in his hand with either the thumb or forefinger on top to press the Host slightly on the tongue or rest it in the hand. The moisture of the recipient's tongue will make the Host adhere. The E.M. should also be aware of moisture on his own fingers which would attach the Host unduly to them.
  20. While the freedom of the communicant to receive either on the tongue or in the hand must be respected, the E.M. will be aware that for those receiving on the tongue he should wait till the response 'Amen' has first been made before giving the Host, and that for those receiving in the hand, the E.M. should be alert to the danger of a receiving hand held (incorrectly) flat; should be prepared to indicate (discreetly and prudently) to the communicant who tends to move away before placing the Host in his mouth that he should firstly place the Host in his mouth before returning to his place.
  21. Experience will show that the cleanliness of people's tongues or hands might leave something to be desired. The E.M. must be careful not to react in these situations.
  22. It is well to emphasise that particular problems should always be referred to the priest who is competent to deal with them as he judges fit. It is useful to share these problems with other E.M.s (of the parish) so that a common procedure can be adopted under the guidance of the priest. In some cases it is valuable for the priest to give a gentle reminder at public Masses from time to time on the standards expected in reverently receiving Holy Communion
  23. If the number of Hosts is running out, remember to mention this to the priest, so that arrangements can be made for consecration of further hosts at a later Mass. If the number of Hosts runs out while the E.M. is distributing Holy Communion, he should return to the

altar and replenish as necessary (from the tabernacle). It is not considered desirable to transfer Hosts from one ciborium to another away from the altar. Nor should small Hosts be broken unless this is absolutely necessary; in which case it is better done at the altar unless experience enables it to be done otherwise with due care.

24. "The communicant *stands* . . ." It would appear that the GIRM expects the chalice to be received standing. It has been noted by experience that dangers are increased if people try to receive from the chalice as they kneel.
25. "facing the minister". Both E.M. and communicant should stand on the same level, again to minimise the risk of accidents.
26. An even greater deliberateness of action is required in the giving of the chalice than of the Host. Time should be taken. The E.M. should particularly be alert to hesitancy and nervousness, and should make provision for children, old people, and those afflicted by any trembling of hands or indeed body. In these cases the E.M. will be wise to offer the chalice to the communicant but as much as is practically possible to retain a hold on the chalice for safety sake.
27. The communicant drinking directly from the chalice is the normal means of receiving the Precious Blood. To receive by intinction (dipping of the Host in the chalice first) is forbidden.
28. Since the size of the chalice cup, its stem, and the 'nodule' usually halfway along the stem, and the base of the chalice can vary quite considerably, some chalices are easier for congregation use, and these obviously would be preferred
29. The E.M. should be alert to the amount of wine put in the chalice to be consecrated. Wine should never be filled above more than one inch below the rim of the chalice.
30. Once the Extraordinary Minister has distributed Holy Communion, he / she is to return the vessels to the Altar, where the priest or deacon consumes any of the Precious Blood which remains, returns the ciborium containing Hosts in the Tabernacle and cleanses the vessels.

### **Purification after Holy Communion**

Whilst it is not normally the duty of an Extraordinary Minister to cleanse the vessels it might be necessary to cleanse some after a celebration of Word and Communion. It might also be necessary to deal with any spillages of the Precious Blood during Mass.

278 GIRM. Whenever a fragment of the host adheres to his fingers, especially after the fraction or the Communion of the faithful, the priest is to wipe his fingers over the paten or, if necessary, wash them. Likewise, he should also gather any fragments that may have fallen outside the paten.

279 GIRM. The sacred vessels are purified by the priest, the deacon, or an instituted acolyte after Communion or after Mass, insofar as possible at the

credence table. The purification of the chalice is done with water alone or with wine and water, which is then drunk by whoever does the purification. The paten is usually wiped clean with the purificator. Care must be taken that whatever may remain of the Blood of Christ after the distribution of Communion is consumed immediately and completely at the altar.

280 GIRM. If a host or any particle should fall, it is to be picked up reverently. If any of the Precious Blood is spilled, the area where the spill occurred should be washed with water, and this water should then be poured into the *sacrarium* in the sacristy.

#### COMMENTARY

- a. Once an EM has distributed Holy Communion, he/she is to return the vessels to the Altar, where the priest or deacon consumes any Precious Blood which remains and, if necessary, places the ciborium containing Hosts in the Tabernacle (GIRM 163). The vessels are then to be purified, reverently but inconspicuously, at the altar or credence table by the priest or deacon before the Prayer of Communion.
- b. With regard to fragments of Host, care should be taken to collect them from wherever they fall. These fragments may be placed on the paten until after the Communion and cleansed into the chalice to be consumed in the water (or wine) ablutions. If a larger particle or even a complete Host falls on a dirty or wet surface it may be placed in the purificatory bowl or other bowl with water in and left to disintegrate, or this disintegration may be expedited by the particle being held under water and gradually dissolved by the friction of the thumb and index finger holding it. The water thus used should be poured down the “sacrarium”, the special soak-away drain leading directly into the earth which is usually found in the sacristy or sanctuary area. (It is important to know the whereabouts of this special sink). Where a sacrarium is not available water used in these cases should be poured directly into the earth.
- c. Should the Precious Blood be spilled or splashed the area where it has fallen should be covered with a purificator or other suitable cloth. At the end of Mass the area should be washed with water as specified in 280 GRIM above.
- d. Normal care is the rule, not excessive scrupulosity. In rare cases where accidents occur, the priest can always be consulted for further guidance.
- e. If the Host falls into the communicant’s clothing, the person concerned can be invited to retrieve the Host themselves and consume it.

- f. Ciboria with remaining Hosts should be covered (lid, then veil) and then (re)placed in the Tabernacle by the priest or Deacon. It is not permitted for an EM to approach the Tabernacle to replace the ciborium at Mass
- g. When ciboria are to be purified *either* water can be poured into them, the water moved about to collect the particles and then transferred into the chalice to be consumed and the vessels dried, *or* sufficient water can be put into the ciboria to allow fingers to dissolve the fragments by friction and then the inside of the ciboria to be dried. (For ‘ciboria’ read ‘bowls’ if applicable).
- h. It is particularly recommended that Holy Communion be taken to the sick from the Sunday Mass. After the Communion Silence and before the Post-Communion prayer the priest should present the pyxes to the E.M.(s) who would process in dignity through the centre of the church. The priest may use a formula of prayer or an invitation to prayer for the sick concerned and all the parish sick as the E.M.s leave. By leaving now with Holy Communion for the sick, the E.M. will avoid the distractions of mixing with the congregation as they leave after Mass. Sometimes this procedure could be followed after the notices (and again before the blessing) to ensure the E.M. knows of any special notices.

**Points to note:**

1. If the consecrated wine runs out before the Holy Communion from the Host has been completed, the E.M. simply returns to the sanctuary and places the chalice on the Altar / Credence Table for it to be purified. If too much wine has been consecrated for actual needs, the E.M. should return to the altar, and place the chalice on the altar for the priest/deacon to consume the remaining Precious Blood. In some parishes due to the quantity of Precious Blood remaining the EM will be required to stand near the altar and consume it reverently.
2. From time to time, matter or insects fall into the chalice. These should be removed with the help of a corner of the purificator (subsequently washed) or a cruet spoon, and the removed material washed down the sacrarium. Any such removal should be done at the side table, with the use of the purificatory bowl if necessary.

## Various other points

### **Intinction:**

Although GIRM 287 describes a procedure for receiving the Body and Blood by intinction (the partial dipping of the host into the Precious Blood by the priest), this method is not without its drawbacks. The sign-value of eating and drinking would not seem to be expressed. The communicant can receive only on the tongue. There is the danger of a moistened host disintegrating before actually reaching the communicant's mouth. Furthermore in 'Instructionem Redemptionis Sacramentum' (March 2004), Para. 104, states that it is forbidden for the communicant to intinct the host himself in the chalice, or to receive the intincted host in the hand.

*In this Diocese Intinction is not allowed by the Bishop.*

## **Temporary Commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion**

There are three classes of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion that may require temporary commissioning. This is normally done by the Parish or Resident Priest.

The classes are: -

- ‘Ad Hoc’ Ministry
- Parish trained but not yet attended a Formation course
- Attended a Formation Course but not able to attend the Commissioning Day

### ***‘AD HOC’ COMMISSIONING***

Sometimes an Extraordinary Minister will be required for an unforeseen real emergency. The priest may ‘commission’ a suitable person there and then to help in this particular occasion. For this, the Rite of Commissioning an Extraordinary Minister to distribute Holy Communion on a Single Occasion (“ad hoc”) must be used:

“During the breaking of the Bread and the commingling, the person who is to distribute Holy Communion comes to the altar and stands before the celebrant. After the ‘Agnus Dei’ the priest blesses him (or her) with these words:- Today you are to distribute the body and blood of Christ to your brothers and sisters. May the Lord bless + you, N.

R. Amen.

When the priest has himself received Holy Communion in the usual way, he gives Communion to the minister. Then he gives the minister the ciborium (or chalice) to give Communion to the people.”

### **Points to note:**

1. It is emphasised that this faculty be used only in a case of *real* emergency. The norm is that all Extraordinary Ministers undergo the study and formation according to arrangements within the Diocese of Nottingham. This is the expressed wish of the Bishop.
2. In more prolonged cases of urgent need for the help of an Extraordinary Minister, the Bishop may permit the parish priest to appoint ministers under two conditions: (a) that the priest (or some other qualified person) give the essential training necessary before the ministry is exercised, and (b) that the Extraordinary Minister thus appointed be enrolled for the very next Formation/Training Weekend to be held under the direction of the Nottingham Diocesan Commission for Extraordinary Ministers.

3. In the case of Extraordinary Ministers commissioned in other dioceses, the present practice required is that the Extraordinary Minister concerned undertake the Formation Weekend provided by the Nottingham Diocese. This uniform practice prevents the necessity of invidious judgements on training already given.
4. When the appropriate Formation Weekend has been undertaken, the Extraordinary Minister involved should offer himself/herself for the subsequent Rite of Commissioning. In this Diocese such events have always been carried out by the Bishop at our Cathedral.

#### **TEMPORARY COMMISSIONING FOR PARISH TRAINED MINISTERS**

There will be a need from time to time for a Parish Priest to require Extraordinary Ministers to serve in the Parish for a period of up to a year but is not able to send them to a Weekend Formation course. In these circumstances he may temporarily commission ministers until such time as they can attend a formation course. Unless the ministers in question have CRB clearance for parish work they may only minister at Mass.

The commissioning of these ministers shall take place immediately after the creed on a Sunday and shall take the following form: -

#### **Deacon or a Commissioned Extraordinary Minister:**

Father, we ask you to commission (Names) as Temporary Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion for \*\*\* months until such time as they may attend a formation course and be commissioned by the Bishop.

*\*\*\* State time. Note they may only be commissioned for a maximum of 12 months.*

#### **Parish Priest**

(Names) have been entrusted with the important duty of distributing Holy Communion to themselves and to their fellow Parishioners (and of bringing communion to the sick and the dying.) ***Section in brackets only applies to those who have CRB clearance.***

You, my brothers and sisters, have been chosen for an important office and must now strive more earnestly than ever to live the Christian life, to give good example, to take your faith more seriously, and to be devoted to this great mystery which beautifully signifies the unity of the Church and wonderfully brings it about: we who share this one bread become one body in Christ Jesus.

Since you will give Holy Communion to your brothers and sisters in Christ. you must try to practice that fraternal charity which was commanded by our Lord. He gave his body as food to his disciples and told them: “ This then, is what I command: you love one another.”

**Parish Priest :**

Are you resolved to undertake this office of giving the body and blood of Christ to your brothers and sisters for the service and growth of the Church?

**Candidates:** I am.

**Parish Priest :**

Are you resolved to reverence and care for the Holy Communion which you will administer?

**Candidates:** I am. (The *CANDIDATES* now kneel,)

**Parish Priest:**

(The *Parish Priest* then places a folded parish scapular over the shoulder of each minister in turn saying: -

I temporarily commission you as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion for \*\*\* months until such time as you may attend a formation course and be commissioned by the Bishop.

**Parish Priest:**

My brothers and sisters, let us pray to God our Father that these our brothers and sisters chosen to administer the Body of Christ may be filled with his blessing.

(All pray silently for a brief period. Then the Parish Priest continues)

**Parish Priest:**

Father of mercy,  
source of all grace and blessing,  
bless these our brothers and sisters.  
May they faithfully distribute the Sacrament  
to their brothers and sisters,  
be strengthened and comforted by it,  
and one day be found worthy to share  
in the everlasting meal of heaven.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All :**Amen.**

When this has been completed the ministers stand and bow together to the Parish Priest. They then return to their seats.

**The Prayers of the Faithful**

The prayers of the faithful now follow. These can be as prepared in the parish or as the example given below.

## **THE RITE OF TEMPORARY COMMISSIONING OF TRAINED MINISTERS**

This form of commissioning is intended to be used for those Extraordinary Ministers who have been to an approved formation course but could not attend the commissioning by the Bishop.

The commissioning of these ministers shall take place immediately after the creed on a Sunday and shall take the following form: -

### **Deacon or a Commissioned Extraordinary Minister:**

Father, we ask you to temporally commission (Names) as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion until such time as they may be commissioned by the Bishop.

### **Parish Priest**

(Names) have been entrusted with the important duty of distributing Holy Communion to themselves and to their fellow Christians and of bringing communion and viaticum to the sick and those in danger of death.

You, my brothers and sisters, have been chosen for an important office and must now strive more earnestly than ever to live the Christian life, to give good example, to take your faith more seriously, and to be devoted to this great mystery which beautifully signifies the unity of the Church and wonderfully brings it about: we who share this one bread become one body in Christ Jesus.

Since you will give Holy Communion to your brothers and sisters in Christ, you must try to practice that fraternal charity which was commanded by our Lord. He gave his body as food to his disciples and told them: "This then, is what I command: you love one another."

### **Parish Priest:**

Are you resolved to undertake this office of giving the body of Christ to your brothers and sisters for the service and growth of the Church?

### **Candidates:**

I am.

### **Parish Priest :**

Are you resolved to reverence and care for the Holy Communion which you will administer?

### **Candidates:**

I am.

(The *CANDIDATES* now kneel.)

**Parish Priest**

(The *Parish Priest* then places a folded parish scapular over the shoulder of each minister in turn saying: -

I temporarily commission you as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion until such a time as you may be commissioned by the Bishop.

**Parish Priest :**

My brothers and sisters, let us pray to God our Father that these brothers and sisters chosen to administer the Body and Blood of Christ may be filled with his blessing.

(All pray silently for a brief period. *Then* the Parish Priest continues)

**Parish Priest:**

Father of mercy,  
source of all grace and blessing,  
bless these our brothers and sisters.  
May they faithfully distribute the Sacrament  
to their brothers and sisters,  
be strengthened and comforted by it,  
and one day be found worthy to share  
in the everlasting meal of heaven.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**All : Amen.**

When this has *been* completed the ministers *stand* and bow together to the Parish Priest. They then return to their seats.

**The Prayers of the Faithful**

(*or other suitable petition prayers*)

**Parish Priest:**

We are constantly reminded how God cares always and provides for those whom he has chosen. This gives us great confidence in him as we place before him all our needs.

**Reader:**

Let us pray for our Pope, our bishops and priests that they will be zealous ministers for us of word and sacrament.

**Parish Priest:**

Lord, hear us.

**Reader:**

Let us pray for vocations to the priesthood and religious life, that many more will generously respond to God's call.

**Parish Priest:**

Lord, hear us.

**Reader:**

Let us ask God's blessing on all those who today have been commissioned as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, that they will fulfil their ministry with diligence and great reverence.

**Parish Priest:**

Lord, hear us.

**Reader:**

Let us pray for all to whom the newly-commissioned will minister, that they will grow in love for the Eucharist by more frequently and fervently receiving Holy Communion.

**Parish Priest:**

Lord, hear us.

**Reader:**

Let us now recall in silence before God our own personal intentions.

**Reader:**

Let us turn to Our Lady, Mother of God and Mother of the Church, that she will keep us all in her motherly care.

HAIL MARY

**Parish Priest:**

Lord Jesus Christ, we worship you living among us in the sacrament of your body and blood. May we offer to our Father in Heaven a solemn pledge of undivided love. May we offer to our brothers and sisters a life poured out in loving service of that kingdom where you live with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

## Ministry to the Sick and Elderly

The Apostolic Constitution *Sacram Unctionem Infirmorum* (30<sup>th</sup> November, 1972) strongly emphasises that parish priests “should see to it that the sick and aged, even if not seriously sick or in imminent danger of death, be given every opportunity to receive the Eucharist frequently and even daily, if possible, especially during the Easter Season. They may receive Communion at any hour.” (para. 46). The importance of E.M.s is considerably heightened by these wishes of the Church.

It is of highest value if Holy Communion can be taken to a sick or elderly person on a Sunday or major feast day (Christmas, Easter Sunday, etc.) especially directly from Mass so that the sick or elderly person is able to associate himself with the Mass just celebrated. It is further recommended that in doing so the extraordinary minister bring with him a Mass leaflet of that day’s Mass, and - adapting the text as necessary - integrate his ministry into the Liturgy of the Word and the Communion Rite of that Mass. Many E.M.s also bring with them a copy of the parish newsletter to keep the homebound in touch.

Before an E.M. takes Holy Communion to the sick or elderly, it is essential that either the priest first secure the acceptance of the homebound person, then afterwards introduces the E.M. to the recipient or, when the request comes from the housebound person via the E.M., the consent of the priest is obtained first. The E.M. should always be sensitive to the temperament and condition of the sick or elderly person and should not arrive unannounced or un-notified at that person’s home.

Those who cannot receive Holy Communion in the form of bread may receive it in the form of wine. In this more than ever the advice of the priest is essential. The Precious Blood must be carried to the sick person in a vessel so secured as to eliminate all danger of spilling. The Sacrament should be administered with due regard to the individual concerned, and the Rite for giving Communion under both kinds provides a choice of methods, If all the Precious Blood is not consumed, the minister himself must consume it and then wash the vessel as required.

*Suggested Rite of Sending Out Extraordinary Ministers from Mass with Holy Communion to the Sick and Housebound.*

After the congregation has received Communion, the ministers who will take the Eucharist to the Sick come into the sanctuary. Acolytes with lighted candles stand in front of the altar.

The pyxes containing the Hosts stand on the corporal.

The priest invites the congregation to pray, saying:

As we thank God for the gift of his Son to us in this communion let us remember all those of this parish who are sick or housebound especially those who will shortly be receiving communion through our representatives – the Ministers of our parish.

*(The priest or minister may mention the names of those to whom he or she will take communion.)*

*The celebrant now gives the pyxes to the minister(s) saying;*

Priest; Go, in the peace of Christ.

All: THANKS BE TO GOD.

*The minister(s) leave the church, led by the acolytes who escort them as far as the main doors, or to the Sacristy door.*

*Meanwhile Mass continues with the post communion prayer (if not already said), the blessing and final hymn.*

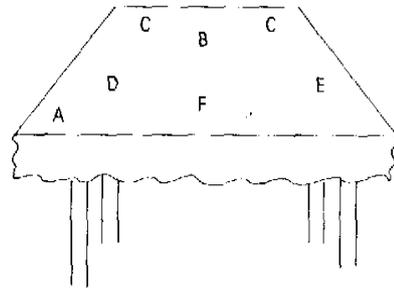
*Shorter versions of this Rite may, of course, be used.*

### Preliminaries

- (i) It is desirable to visit the sick/elderly beforehand. If practical the prayers, the readings, and other details of the Rite could be prepared with them.
- (ii) According to circumstances, broach the question of the sacrament of Reconciliation with them assuring them the priest will gladly come prior to your bringing Holy Communion if so desired.
- (iii) *Never* initiate or respond to a request to take Holy Communion to anyone (or even suggest the possibility of doing so) without consulting the priest.
- (iv) It is well always to remember the special purpose of your visit as you take Holy Communion. While being kind and cheerful, the E.M. will try to avoid descending to mere chatter and generalities; the visit is not a social call. Sometimes the radio or television will have to be turned off; this can be done with sensitivity.
- (v) E.M.s should decline any money offered to them for whatever purpose on their visiting homes, certainly on a Eucharistic visit, unless it absolutely cannot be avoided. Their visit should not be linked with money or the expectation that money be given or received. Collection money in a ‘planned giving’ envelope could be accepted but Mass offerings, etc. can always be deferred until another (non-Holy Communion) visit.
- (vi) It is highly undesirable to accept tea, etc. (*a fortiori* alcohol) on such visits.
- (vii) Punctuality as much as possible in attending the sick is very important. Being late can cause distress and sometimes physical inconvenience. Similarly, protracting the visit can make undue demands on the sick person. A reasonably timed liturgy would take 10-15 minutes in order to be celebrated with reverent prayerfulness. In calculating the timing of a list of visits this should be taken into account as well as travelling time between one house and the next.

- (viii) It is better to have a manageable number of calls to make on each round, rather than be over-ambitious or unrealistic and let people down.
- (ix) Diagram of table to be used ideally (not always possible!):  
Some sick / elderly may have prepared the table in anticipation of the visit. Others will rely on the E.M. to bring the requisites

- A Table covered with clean cloth
- B Crucifix
- C 2 candles (**but not in hospital, care homes or where e.g. oxygen may be present**)
- D Corporal
- E Vessel with holy water and sprinkler
- F Tumbler of water and towel



- (x) The visit or the E.M. to the sick or housebound is essentially, on the occasion of giving Holy Communion, a spiritual and prayerful occasion. For that reason conversation protracted before the Rite commences or conversation following immediately on completion of the Rite is undesirable. In the former case, however, the recipient may be anxious or worried and feel it necessary to ‘unburden’ first. Such anxieties might well form the basis of prayers to be included in the Rite. In the latter case a sufficient time given to silent personal prayer and prayer together will help concentration on the purpose of the visit. The E.M. will learn by experience when discreetly to draw unnecessary conversation to a happy conclusion.
- (xi) The E.M.s’ requisites — scapular, pyx (or sick set), booklets, rituals, are the responsibility of the priest to provide but sometimes relatives or friends of the E.M. might wish to present any of these to him.

## Difficulties

### SPECIAL CASES — HANDICAPPED — VIOLENTLY SICK

Advice ought to be sought on how best to approach the giving of Holy Communion to a handicapped person. The family, medical care team, or some similarly qualified person should be consulted first. Sometimes it will be found more acceptable first to give the Sacred Host to a person more familiar with the recipient to minister the Sacred Host to the handicapped recipient.

Should the recipient find it difficult to swallow the Host (for the giving of the Precious Blood instead, see page 40), it is sometimes a help to break a small particle from the Host and put it on a spoonful (or in a small container) of water and, in that way, to minister Communion to the patient. The help of another person in doing this is of great importance. Many invalids would find it

necessary to sip some water (large amounts may cause violent sickness) after receiving the Host.

If a person is suffering from a sickness that would involve serious difficulty in swallowing, or having swallowed would suffer violent sickness, it is not recommended to try to minister Holy Communion, all other reasonable means being infeasible.

Should the E.M. find on arrival that the sick person is so ill or deeply asleep or sedated or confused that the giving of Holy Communion is inadvisable; the E.M. should return the Sacred Host to the Tabernacle without delay. He should not retain the Blessed Sacrament in his own home awaiting a more successful time to approach the sick. If the patient cannot receive Holy Communion, perhaps it would be possible for the family (suitably prepared) or the E.M. himself to consume the Sacred Host with due ceremony and reverence if it is not reasonably possible directly to return the pyx to the Tabernacle.

### **Care of the Tabernacle Key**

The care of the Tabernacle Key is the grave responsibility of the priest. All who assist the priest in a way that involves access to the Tabernacle must be very conscious of this serious responsibility.

The Tabernacle Key should be returned immediately after use to the safe or to the security of its normal location. On no account should the E.M. carry the Tabernacle Key about on his person, certainly not when going on his ministry outside the church or chapel.

### **Special Considerations**

It is suggested that E.M.s do not over-commit themselves in the frequent visiting of the sick with Holy Communion. Advice should always be sought from the priest on the matter of frequency.

The Rite – (The Extraordinary Minister is provided with a service booklet)

- (i) Sign of the Cross
- (ii) Greeting
- (iii) \*(Sprinkling with Holy Water)
- (iv) Penitential Rite
- (v) Scriptural Reading
- (vi) Lord's Prayer
- (vii) Holy Communion
- (viii) \*(Silent Prayer) (Led Prayers)
- (ix) Invocation of Blessing

\* The parts in brackets *may* be omitted, but not needlessly.

## COMMENTARY:

In general it may be said that experience shows that the E.M. kneel or sit near the communicant, rather than “tower” over him by standing.

- (i) Before making the Sign of the Cross, the putting on of the Scapular can indicate the drawing to a close of any introductory brief conversation on arrival.
- (ii) The greeting format may be similar to that used at Mass.
- (iii) The linking of the Christian Baptismal calling to the following of Christ as he carries his cross into his death and then his resurrection can be valuable as a message of hope for the sick. (*cf* the formula given).
- (iv) Similarly the format used at Mass with its possible variations. (Older people may still use older versions. Let them!)
- (v) The power of God’s presence in his Word cannot be over-emphasised. Many of the pamphlets or books available for the celebration of Holy Communion for the Sick give a rich selection of suitable (longer or shorter) texts from Sacred Scripture.

It sometimes helps to link the sick with the parish celebration or Eucharist if the E.M. can recall at this stage some of the points made in the homily at Mass. Obviously this presupposes the use of some of the scripture texts of the Mass of the day. E.M.s may find it helpful to bring along with them some of the Mass leaflets used at Church.

A time for silent reflection can be recommended.

- (vi) The saying of the Lord’s Prayer together should be reverently slow and deliberate. The acceptance of God’s Will enshrined in it is very appropriate for those who are suffering.
- (vii) The giving of Holy Communion follows the pattern of the Mass, with the introduction to “Lord I am not worthy . . .” (Provision is made for a special formulary in the giving of Viaticum. In practice this will not normally arise as far as the E.M. is concerned)

The giving of a drink of water to the sick may sometimes be required at this point.

If need be, the pyx is purified, perhaps with a finger dipped in water, cleansed about, and then the pyx is dried with the purificator.

- (viii) During the purification period, the sick/elderly may be invited to pray quietly in their own hearts and then when the purification is completed the E.M. might lead short prayers of thanksgiving, adoration, contrition, petition and so on.

It will be remembered that traditional prayers and aspirations that the communicant can join in will be most helpful. What must *not* happen is that the E.M. be carried away in extempore prayer to the irritation or inconvenience of the communicant. The E.M. will always recognise his role as a minister of the Church. It is well to include in these prayers intentions known to be of concern to the communicant.

(ix) The concluding prayer and invocation of blessing again is accorded a variety of options.

### **Points to note:**

1. The family or people attending the sick/elderly can of course join in the Liturgy and - if able to do so - receive Holy Communion if they wish. (The E.M. will obviously need prior notice in order to arrange the appropriate number of Hosts). (See "Eucharistic Fast".)
2. E.M.s will ensure that by experience and custom they vary the prayers and texts used, perhaps adapting them to the season, or feast, or occasion. Thus they will prevent routine and laxity setting in. Much of this use of options will demand a growing in prayer, reading, reflection, and spirituality from the E.M. However, people, especially the elderly, need certain 'sameness'; too much variation confuses them.
3. It is generally accepted that the Host assimilates itself in the communicant by about 15 minutes after receiving. Because of some people's particular difficulties in consuming the Host, it is well to observe them afterwards for that period so that the respect due to the Host may be maintained.
4. Should violent illness (i.e. vomiting) occur, the E.M. should try to gather discharge in tissues or cotton wool, remnants of the Host could be left to disintegrate in water, or perhaps all the material discharged or used could be burnt.

It is important to give reassurance to the sick/elderly person concerned, as they can be very upset at such things happening.

In the case of accidents, etc. it is generally to be remembered that we are dealing with the Real Presence of a Jesus who is compassionate and understanding of involuntary and unavoidable mishaps. Once conscientious care has been taken, those concerned should learn to accept the situation with quiet confidence in that fact.

### **Ministry in Hospitals:**

Some E.M.s will be appointed to minister in hospitals but it is essential to do this only in co-operation of the appropriate authorities (Chaplaincies and Hospitals). Shortened versions of the rite are outlined in the handbook given to every E.M.

## **EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT**

### **GENERAL NOTES**

#### **Relationship between Exposition and Mass:**

It is important for E.M.s to understand something of the theology behind Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

#### **By Exposition**

- we acknowledge the marvellous presence of Christ in the Eucharistic sacrament.
- we are invited to spiritual union with Christ which culminates in Holy Communion.
- the worship due to Christ in spirit and in truth is fostered.

The relationship of Eucharistic Exposition with Mass must be clearly expressed. The Eucharistic presence of Christ is the fruit of the consecration at Mass. In a sense, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for the worship due to Christ in his real presence is a prolonging of the moments when the Sacred Host and Chalice are elevated for veneration during Mass.

A practical application of this is given for the reverencing of the Eucharist in an identical way whether at Mass or reserved in the Tabernacle or exposed for public adoration:

- a similar number of candles is used
- a single genuflection is made to the Blessed Sacrament

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament should carefully avoid anything which might somehow obscure the principal desire of Christ in instituting the Eucharist, namely to be with us as food, medicine and comfort.

If Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament is prolonged for an entire day or over several days it is to be interrupted during the celebration of Mass. Mass may be celebrated in a chapel distinct from the area of exposition if at least some members of the faithful remain in adoration.

**Lengthy period of Exposition:** Sometimes once a year, even if then not continuously, may take place only if suitable numbers of the faithful are expected to be present. If there are too few worshippers present, the Blessed Sacrament may be replaced in the Tabernacle meanwhile, but this may be done not more than twice during the day. Adoration and prayer led by the minister should accompany the exposing and reposing of the Blessed Sacrament.

**Brief periods of exposition** are to be arranged in such a way that suitable periods for scriptural readings, hymns, prayers and silent prayer be allowed. A blessing with the Blessed Sacrament is given only by a priest or deacon. But exposition exclusively for the giving only of the blessing is expressly prohibited.

**Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion** are permitted in the absence of a priest or deacon to expose and repose the Blessed Sacrament (whether in the monstrance or in the ciborium). In doing this, they must wear the scapular.

## **RITE**

The format of the Rite is as follows:

- (i) Exposition: (hymn)
- (ii) Adoration: (readings, reflection, prayers, hymns *ad libitum* or Prayers of the Church)
- (iii) Benediction: (Eucharistic hymn, prayer) (blessing only by priest or deacon)
- (iv) Reposition: (hymn or acclamation)

### **Exposition:**

If the Tabernacle is distant from the altar of exposition, the E.M., when carrying the Blessed Sacrament, should be accompanied by servers or some people with lighted candles.

A hymn may be sung.

If a monstrance is used in the Exposition, the E.M. may incense the Blessed Sacrament, kneeling.

If the Exposition is to be lengthy the E.M. may then withdraw.

### **Adoration:**

There should be prayers, hymns and readings to direct the attention of the faithful to the worship of Christ the Lord. The Rosary should not be said publicly during exposition.

A prayerful spirit should be encouraged by readings from scripture, by singing, and by “religious silence”.

Part of the Prayer of the Church (Liturgy of the Hours) may also be celebrated.

### **Benediction:**

Towards the end of the period of exposition, a hymn may be sung.

The E.M. may incense the Blessed Sacrament if a monstrance has been used.

Then the E.M. rises and leads a prayer (various alternatives are suggested in the available books). The E.M. of course, does not give a blessing.

### **Reposition:**

The E.M. reposes the Blessed Sacrament while a hymn is sung or an acclamation is made.

## **Celebration of the Liturgy of the Word and Holy Communion**

### **a) In the absence of Ordinary Ministers**

The contents of this section have been influenced by the document “Directory on Sunday Celebrations in the absence of a Priest” (Rome, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1988). This document was followed up by “Celebrations of the Word & Communion for Sunday & Weekday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest”. (Approved for interim use from Advent 1996 by the Department for Christian life & Worship of the Bishops’ Conference of England & Wales). This booklet is no longer in print but may be downloaded and printed from:

[www.catholic-ew.org.uk/liturgy/Resources/CWC/CWAC.pdf](http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/liturgy/Resources/CWC/CWAC.pdf)

The Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales is preparing a ritual book for these celebrations which hopefully will be published soon. At present these celebrations of word and communion are relatively rare on Sundays. At the moment in our Diocese, the E.M. will be invited to assist largely at weekdays at a Liturgy of the Word and Holy Communion outside Mass, but at times of urgency and emergency on Sundays and Holydays it has already been found necessary for E.M.s to be prepared to assist at Sunday Celebrations also.

There should be no more than one Celebration of Word and Communion in any parish on any given day. A Service of Word and Communion may not be held in a parish if Mass is being celebrated in the parish church or chapel of ease on that day, unless the two churches are more than ten miles apart unless permission has been given. In an unexpected emergency those concerned must act according to their conscience at the time. A Mass held in a school is considered to be outside the parish due to the security regulations that exist at many schools

It will be noted that in the documents mentioned the leader of the Liturgy should be determined as follows:

1. The leader must be a ‘trained person’. Although the leader does not have to be an E.M., in our diocese the only ‘trained persons’ at present are those who have attended a Crich Formation/Training course for E.M.s. since 1996 or one of the update courses which were offered to existing E.M.s shortly after the publication of the 1996 Interim Document. It is recommended that the leader does not exercise several ministries within one liturgy but will be assisted at least by other ministers such as reader(s) and a Minister of Communion. The leader will make “the necessary adaptations according to the number of participants”.
2. The document indicates that a deacon would be the most appropriate person to lead this liturgy. In this case the deacon, vested accordingly, would carry out the leadership in keeping with his diaconal role.
3. “A lay person who acts as leader should be like one among equals, as occurs in the liturgy of the Hours when an ordained minister does not preside, and in

Blessings given by a lay person ('May the Lord bless us', Let us bless the Lord ...'). He should not use the words reserved to the deacon or priest, and should omit those rites which directly recall the Mass, such as the greetings, especially 'The Lord be with you' and the dismissal, the use of which would make a lay person seem like an ordained minister."

4. "The lay person who acts as leader should be dressed in a way befitting the office. The scapular would only be worn by the E.M. who administers Holy Communion. The presidential chair must not be used but another chair should be provided. The altar must only be used to place the ciborium on before it is distributed.

"In the preparation of the celebration the tasks should be shared out as appropriate . . ." (paragraph 40 of the National Document)

- 5 Preparation: This will be dependent on the amount of notice and whether it is a 'Sunday' or 'Weekday' celebration. However the Leader must check the 'Ordo' and ensure that there are arrangements in place for:-

- collecting various church keys
- readers to prepare readings
- musicians, singers to prepare appropriate hymns etc.
- (where applicable) ushers to carry out their normal functions, welcome, collection etc.
- servers to prepare the altar by lighting candles, placing finger bowl and towel on altar.
- ensuring that the tabernacle key is in place and that there are sufficient consecrated hosts
- providing adequate lights etc.
- a corporal to be spread on the altar

### **The Rite:**

- (i) After the Sign of the Cross and greeting the Leader introduces the celebration as set out in the booklet, which emphasises that the Holy Communion in this situation is seen as the result of an earlier Eucharist, and the faithful will be led to see the necessity of praying for priestly vocations and for all priests. The leader will announce whether it is a particular feast day in a sentence prepared beforehand.
- (ii) The Penitential Rite follows (as normally done).
- (iii) The leader says the opening prayer using the Prayer of the (day's) Mass *unless* this suggests that the service is actually a Mass in which case one of the opening prayers suggested in the booklet should be used.
- (iv) The readings from Sacred Scripture follow. These may be from the Mass of the day, from the votive Masses (Holy Eucharist, Precious Blood, or for various needs). There may be two or more readings, the first followed by a psalm or chant or silence. It is recommended that

- some explanation be given of these readings and that a sacred silence be afforded to enable those present to absorb the word. A homily may be given only by a priest or deacon. An E.M. may give a reflection. The priest is encouraged to supply beforehand whatever is necessary for these points to be carried out.
- (v) In the General Intercessions the normal pattern is followed but should include regularly a prayer for vocations to Holy Orders, for the bishop, and for the parish priest.
  - (vi) The Leader may invite the people to exchange a Sign of Peace at this point.
  - (vii) The Minister of Communion brings the Blessed Sacrament to the altar from the place where it is reserved, places it on the corporal on the altar, genuflects, invites all present to give thanks for the presence of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and then introduces the Lord's Prayer.
  - (viii) Then the Minister of Communion shows the host to the people saying either "*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.*" The people respond saying "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed." The Minister of Communion would then normally receive Holy Communion, saying inaudibly "May the body of Christ bring me to everlasting life." He then distributes communion in the customary way.
  - (ix) Ideally for Holy Communion, altar breads consecrated that same Sunday (brought from Mass celebrated elsewhere) should be used. In practice, it will normally be Hosts from an earlier Mass reserved in the tabernacle.
  - (x) The purification (of fingers, vessels, etc.) follows - as described elsewhere.
  - (xi) After Communion a period of silence should be observed then all stand for a song of thanksgiving, e.g. the Gloria, Magnificat or the Benedictus. The Gloria will be known by the people, but if it has been said already because it is a particular Feast day then the words for other prayers or a hymn will need to be made available. A concluding prayer follows from the booklet.
  - (xii) Announcements where desirable
  - (xiii) The conclusion is led by the leader invoking God's blessing (crossing himself). "May almighty God bless us, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit" R. Amen.
  - (xiv) Dismissal  
 Let us go in the peace of Christ  
 Or Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
**R.** Thanks be to God.

Comment: If the celebration of Word and Communion is being celebrated

on an occasion when hymns are normally sung they should be incorporated into the service. The Song of Thanksgiving should be a hymn on such an occasion.

## **b) Liturgy of Holy Communion Outside Mass**

### **Introductory Notes**

The normal - and more perfect - participation in the Eucharistic celebration is of course to receive Holy Communion within Mass. But priests are reminded of the availability of Holy Communion to the faithful who ask for it for good reasons outside Mass (cf. Canon 918; “Eucharisticum Mysterium” 33a). Where this happens, communicants should be instructed on the close link between the Lord’s sacrifice and their sacramental sharing in it now.

Though Holy Communion can be given outside Mass on any day, at any hour, it is proper however to determine a time convenient to people so that the liturgy concerned can be celebrated with greater spiritual benefit

However

- a. On Maundy Thursday, it may be given only during Mass, though it may be brought to the sick at any time.
- b. On Good Friday, it may be given only during the Solemn Liturgy, and as viaticum.
- c. On Holy Saturday, Holy Communion may only be given as Viaticum. If any ordinary minister is not available (through absence, sickness, old age, pastoral obligations elsewhere), E.M.s in our diocese have been given the faculty by our Bishop to give Holy Communion for the pastoral benefit of the faithful - under the direction of the priest concerned.

Generally this ministry will be carried out in church or chapel of ease, but circumstances may indicate other locations as directed by the priest responsible.

The structure of the rite is as described in the previous section (page 52).

Liturgy of Holy Communion outside Mass should not be celebrated if mass has been said or is planned on the same day.

## **Additional Notes**

### **Eucharistic Fast**

1. Canon 919 indicates:

“1. Whoever is to receive the Blessed Eucharist is to abstain for at least one hour before Holy Communion from all food and drink with the sole exception of water and medicine.

“2. A priest who on the same day celebrates the Blessed Eucharist two or three times may consume something before the second or third celebration, even though there is not an hour’s interval.

“3. The elderly and those who are suffering from some illness - *as well as those who care for them* - may receive the Blessed Eucharist even if within the preceding hour they have consumed something.”

Please note that the directives of the 1983 Code somewhat alter earlier directives, e.g.

- a. the fast should be undertaken for at *least* one hour.
- b. *all* foods, not just solid foods, and beverages are excluded, excepting water and *‘medicine*.
- c. it would appear that the elderly, the infirm, and all those who care for them, are no longer obliged even to “about a quarter of an hour” (cf “*Immensae Caritatis*” 1973).

As a rule of thumb, it is suggested that “elderly” should cover old-age pensioners, Senior citizens.

### **Holy Communion more than once a day**

Canon 917: “One who has received the Blessed Eucharist may receive it again on the same day only within a Eucharistic celebration in which that person participates

Canon 921.2 says that those in danger of death should communicate again even if they have already received Holy Communion that same day.

A clarification issued by Rome limited “again” to a second time (11<sup>th</sup> July, 1984).

### **Important Reminder**

It is not permissible - at house Masses or other Masses - for the faithful to take the Sacred Host from the ciborium themselves (or indeed for that purpose to pass it around among themselves) or to take the chalice from the altar themselves to receive the Precious Blood. The Sacred Species *must be ministered to them* (as an act of “taking” by them) by a priest, deacon acolyte, or an extraordinary minister.

The act of giving Holy Communion outside Mass should always be set within the context of the Liturgy. On no account should an E.M. go to the Tabernacle and - taking out the ciborium - give himself or others Holy Communion without carrying out the rite as indicated. The same applies to the Rite of Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

### **Holy Communion under both kinds**

When Holy Communion is given under both kinds, the sign of the Eucharistic meal appears more clearly. However, receiving under one kind only does not deprive communicants of any grace necessary for salvation. As the Council of Trent taught, the whole Christ is received in a genuine sacrament whether under the species of bread or wine.

The availability of Holy Communion under both kinds is widely practised in many parishes of our diocese.

### **Assisting in Schools**

A commissioned E.M. may be invited to minister by a School Priest Chaplain with the prior consultation of the Head of the School and others concerned with the religious education of the school. The minister will refer questions on his ministry to a School Priest Chaplain.

It is important that before he initiates his ministry, adequate catechesis on the role of the E.M. be given to both staff and pupils of the School. When the minister is a member of staff, he will be even more conscious that his normal relationship with pupils in the school reflects his awareness of the dignity and privilege that are his as an E.M. If possible, the minister concerned should not be a member of staff responsible for matters of discipline. It is suggested that perhaps a retired member of staff or a governor be considered for this particular ministry.

At all points he will be mindful of the routine and protocol of the school.

### **Assisting in Convents or Institutions**

The E.M. will be nominated by the Chaplain concerned in consultation with the Superior or Matron or appropriate authority. The usual rules of ministry will apply but it is to be noted that care will always be taken to respect the normal routine and protocol of the convent or institution concerned.

### **Assisting in Hospitals, Care Homes etc**

Before taking up a ministry in hospital, convalescent home, old people's home, nursing home, or their equivalent, the E.M. should have been introduced to the appropriate authorities beforehand, and the nature and scope of the ministry explained. An appointment with the persons in charge should be sought to this purpose, and these persons asked, in turn, if the necessary go-ahead is given, to advise ward staff and others of the nature of the ministry.

It is desirable that an authentication card be used by the E.M. The E.M. will also be anxious to observe all the protocol and formalities required in visiting such places, and be prompt in showing appreciation for the facilities accorded.

Under no circumstances should an E.M. undertake work in such places without the prior understanding and agreement of the appropriate authorities.

In this particular apostolate of care of the sick, the E.M. frequently will discover Catholics in the hospital. He will make sure that the Chaplain is informed of this, and should take directions first from the Chaplain before any commitment to ministry is given.

It might also be added that an E.M. should not take Holy Communion to a hospital, especially when situated outside the E.M.s parish, without the prior explicit approval of the Chaplain concerned. This approval is best sought first, before the E.M. makes any suggestion to the patient concerned.

### **Assisting at Extra-Parish Events**

E.M.s will sometimes be sought to assist in events outside their own parishes and *within* the Diocese, for example at a place of pilgrimage or some similar religious event. E.M.s will be happy to assist in such circumstances when requested by the appropriate authority. The scapular of course will be worn, if possible.

In events *outside* the Diocese should such a need arise and a request for help is expressed by the priest or appropriate person in charge E.M.s will equally respond to that invitation. With regard to the use of the scapular, E.M.s will follow the custom of that diocese.

### **Assisting at non-Eucharistic Ceremonies**

In the absence of sufficient ordinary ministers of Holy Communion, E.M.s may be invited to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion. Where this shortage of ordinary ministers can be foreseen, E.M.s should bring along their scapulars. Should E.M.s happen not to have their scapulars with them, it might be suggested that the priest indicate publicly beforehand that the people assisting him are duly commissioned E.M.s of the Eucharist.

In non-Eucharistic situations, we distinguish assisting the priest or deacon in the carrying out of a rite or devotion (e.g. imposition of ashes, Stations of the Cross, Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday) - which would seem permissible - from occasions of assisting the priest or deacon where a blessing is being administered (e.g. blessing of throats on 3<sup>rd</sup> February). The giving of liturgical blessings is restricted to ordained ministers. This view is an interpretation of the normal liturgical practice (at present).

### **The “Faculty”**

E.M.s will be invested with a ‘faculty’ — a leaflet signed by the Bishop — officially authorising them for their duties.

The ‘faculty’ will subordinate the work of the E.M. to the direction and discretion of the appropriate priest.

The authorisation given on the faculty extends for 3 years from the Commissioning date (to the 31<sup>st</sup> December in that 3<sup>rd</sup> year) and the E.M. should then request the appropriate priest to sign the faculty to renew it indefinitely.

It is important to emphasise that E.M.s must exercise their ministry only under the direction of and within the competent jurisdiction of their own priest.

In the event of a new (parish) priest being appointed, the E.M. will present himself and his credentials to the priest as soon as possible -

### **The “Scapular”**

The regulation for our diocese is that the scapular conferred during the Commissioning Ceremony be worn whenever the E.M. is ministering ‘Eucharistically’. This is to be regarded as a serious obligation.

Reasonable exceptions to this rule would be in journeying from the church (or chapel) to the home of the sick or elderly or to the place of ministry while carrying the Blessed Sacrament - E.M.s would not be required to wear the scapular publicly. Should the E.M. be stopped by anybody while he is carrying the Blessed Sacrament, with due charity and prudence he can indicate that he is on his way to carry out his ministry. Rarely will any offence be given by his curtailing an unnecessary conversation.

Many ministers have had a small satchel or case (or plastic zip cover) made to keep the scapular clean. There is no need to underline the desirability that the scapular be regularly laundered and ironed.

In the course of time scapulars will become in need of repair beyond reasonable possibility. A replacement scapular may be bought from an address readily available from a member of your County Secretariat or by reference to the Extraordinary Ministers pages on the Diocesan website.

## **Relationship with Clergy and Laity**

### *With Clergy:*

Holy Communion builds up the Body of Christ. Holy Communion however cannot be realized sacramentally except through the ministerial ordained priesthood. The priesthood of all believers effected through Baptism and Confirmation relies therefore on the ministerial priesthood effected through the Sacrament of Orders. The ministry of an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion is always related to and dependent on the ministerial priesthood,

It might be added here that the priest will support and encourage his E.M.s in their work, not least by communicating to his people his own personal appreciation for and affirmation of their ministry. In response, the E.M. will exercise towards his priest(s) (and through them the Bishop and the Pope) a ministry of collaborative charity, loyalty, and prayer.

### *With Laity*

The E.M. is a servant of the people of God. He will always carry out his ministry therefore humbly and conscientiously. He will remember the importance of being an example of reverence and prayerfulness, not only in his Ministry of Holy Communion, but in his demeanour and behaviour in the church and in the liturgy. He will avoid the danger of growing complacent or haphazard or mechanical in his ministry. If he is to be given a position of service as well as of great privilege in the community of God's people, he must be prepared to accept humiliations whatever their source and whatever their nature in imitation of Christ who came not to be served but to serve and to sacrifice his life as a ransom for many.

Again, the regular use of E.M.s in the Sunday Liturgy will dissipate much of the reluctance that some indicate towards accepting the ministry of the laity in areas hitherto regarded as sacred to the ordained. In this great patience and charity is called for.

### *Ceasing to be an Extraordinary Minister*

by faculty being revoked

by death

by moving out of the diocese

by moving to parishes where E.M.s are not functioning

The faculty of E.M.s may be revoked by the Bishop when its continuance is deemed by him as no longer pastorally desirable or necessary.

The faculty obviously ceases at the death of the E.M. Since the Commissioning of E.M.s is the prerogative of the local bishop, when an E.M. moves out of the jurisdiction of that bishop, the faculty ceases. Clearly the E.M. may request commissioning in his new diocese, but decision on that rests with the local bishop there or his delegate. Should an E.M. later return to this diocese, his faculty must be renewed by the Bishop before he may exercise his ministry here.

An E.M. is commissioned for the diocese to serve a specific parish, convent, institution or school. Should he move out of this area of competence, he may not automatically continue as an E.M. in any other similar situation in the diocese. The priest or chaplain in that E.M.'s new situation may, if he so wishes, avail of the services of the E.M.; in which case the priest concerned will consult the priest to whom the E.M. has been accorded.

On ceasing to practice as an E.M., the minister concerned (his representative if illness prevents him) should return his faculty (with a covering letter) and his scapular to the Chairman of the Diocesan Commission for E.M.s. In the case of death of an E.M., the appropriate priest should undertake to see that this is done.

Those commissioned in another Diocese are not automatically eligible to minister within this Diocese should they move here. The Bishop (of Nottingham) requires all E.M.s to be commissioned by him in the service of this Diocese. This also normally involves taking part in a formation weekend as a spiritual preparation as well as an instructional "refresher".

## **Appendix**

### **Being an Extraordinary Minister of the Holy Communion**

#### **Beforehand**

Practices differ in the various dioceses. In the Diocese of Nottingham, the Bishop announces in an “Ad Clerum” (letter to the Clergy) details of forthcoming Formation Weekends as arranged by the Nottingham Diocesan Commission for Extraordinary Ministers. A form of application is sent to all parish priests by the Director of Formation under the authority of the Priest-Chairman of the Commission.

Depending on the pastoral needs of the parish, the parish priest may approach suitable parishioners and invite them - in discussion with their families - to consider becoming an E.M. If this is agreed, the necessary C.R.B. clearance will be sought, “for voluntary parish duties” usually via the Parish Child Protection Officer. Once the CRB clearance has been obtained the Director of Formation shall be informed of the CRB registration number as this is a pre-requirement for taking communion to the sick and housebound.

In due course a list is drawn up of all the candidates and they are notified personally of the arrangements for the Formation Weekend. (The Parish Priest is also informed). Candidates are invited to arrive before supper time on Friday evening (usually at The Briars, Crich) and are reminded that they are expected to remain through the whole weekend until the following Sunday afternoon teatime. The proposing parish is responsible for the fee concerned in the Formation Weekend; the Diocese strongly holds the view that no candidate should be expected to pay for himself. The possibility of each suitable person being able to take part is thereby ensured; no such person can be excluded because of financial restraints.

#### **Formation Weekend**

The weekend consists of prayer, celebration of the Liturgy (Mass, Prayer of the Church) instruction and reflection on the nature of the Church, the meaning of ministry, and the Eucharist, Sacrament of Love. The weekend includes, of course, training in the practical aspects of Extraordinary Ministry of Holy Communion within Mass, Leading a Celebration of Word & Holy Communion, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, and Ministry to the housebound at home, in Care Homes and in Hospital. There is also a talk on ‘The tools of the Trade’. Due time is allowed for social sharing and relaxation. During the weekend there is opportunity to avail of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and consultation with members of the Training Team.

At the end of the weekend each candidate is given a form inviting them to go away and reflect prayerfully on what is entailed (as indicated through the weekend) and to talk things over with those at home and with his priest. He is given a couple of weeks or so to decide whether he wishes to accept commissioning or not, his decision is sent via this form to The Director of Formation or other indicated person.

Candidates wishing to be commissioned will have been notified of the date and time of the Mass of Commissioning. This is usually celebrated at the Cathedral Church of St. Barnabas, Derby Road, Nottingham - most frequently 1130 a.m., on a Saturday (Candidates are asked to be in place 30 minutes beforehand).

In the Diocese of Nottingham our Bishop has indicated his wish that he himself commission Extraordinary Ministers. This is very happily understood by all concerned - and appreciated by them- as evidence of the role Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion play in building up the local church, the Body of Christ, in the Diocese of Nottingham.

The actual ceremony of Commissioning takes place after the homily when each candidate is called forward by name and - after the Prayer of Commissioning - invested with the scapular and given their Faculty. It is usual for members of the candidate's family, relatives, fellow-parishioners to be present on this occasion in sincere prayer and solidarity with the candidate.

### After Commissioning

The newly-commissioned E.M. is formally introduced into the parish or community in which he will minister. The ceremony *suggested* is as follows:

## **Ceremony of Introduction of the Minister into the community**

1. The Mass will be that of the occurring Sunday -In school, it is suggested that the Introduction take place in a School Mass before which the necessary catechesis of staff and pupils has taken place.
2. After the Gospel a homily ought to be preached “which should stress the pastoral reasons for this office in the Christian community”. The “faculty’ of commissioning might be read at this point and the people invited to assist and pray for the minister.
3. After the homily the Prayers of the Faithful should include a petition for the minister, that he (she) may carry out the duties of his (her) ministry fruitfully.
4. Mass -continues as usual.
5. During the breaking of bread and the mingling, the minister may go to the altar and stand before the celebrant. After the ‘Agnus Dei’ the celebrant may bless him:

May Almighty God bless you + for the distribution of the  
Body of Christ to your brothers and sisters.

*Minister: Amen*

7. After the priest’s communion in the usual way he gives Holy Communion (under both kinds) to the minister (if he is to communicate). Then he gives him the ciborium (or chalice) and both go to minister to the people.
8. The celebrant may consider it opportune to present the pyx (sick call set) (without hosts) to the minister before the Blessing (or at some other point of the Mass).

### **Ministering**

It is suggested that, where there are already E.M.s, that these be kind enough to take the newly-commissioned minister with them on some of their Holy Communion visits (with the prior consent of the communicant) as additional support and instruction as he begins his ministry. It is also very useful that the new E.M. be given the opportunity of practice in distributing Holy Communion using unconsecrated altar breads and wine before his first public ministry.

### **Continuing Practice**

In our Diocese there is a growing custom of periodic meetings between priest and E.M.s in his parish to review, discuss, and pray about their sharing in the Extraordinary Ministry. Many parishes also have begun the practice of a monthly Holy Hour or period of Eucharistic Prayer led by them in the presence of the Exposed Blessed Sacrament, with the special (though not necessarily exclusive) intention of Prayer for Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life.

## **Annual Practices**

It is the express wish of the Bishop that:-

Yearly, on the Weekend of the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of the Lord, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion in each parish renew their commitment before their parish community.

The following is *suggested*:

**Priest:** Our brothers and sisters have been entrusted with the important duty of distributing Holy Communion to themselves and to their fellow Christians and of bringing communion and viaticum to the sick and those in danger of death.

You, my brothers and sisters, have been chosen for an important office and must now strive more earnestly than ever to live the Christian life, to give good example, to take your faith more seriously, and to be devoted to this great mystery which beautifully signifies the unity of the Church and wonderfully brings it about: we who share this one bread become one body in Christ Jesus.

Since you give the Eucharist to your brothers and sisters in Christ, you must practise that fraternal charity which was commanded by our Lord. He gave his body as food to his disciples and told them: "This then, is what I command you; love one another."

Are you resolved to persevere faithfully in this office of giving the body of Christ to your brothers and sisters for the service and growth of the Church?

Candidates: I am.

Priest: Are you resolved to reverence and care for the Eucharist which you administer?

Candidates: I am.

*The following may be added:-*

Priest: My brothers and sisters, let us pray to God our Father that these our brothers and sisters chosen to administer the Body and Blood of Christ may be filled with his blessing.

*(all pray silently for a brief period. Then the priest continues):*

Priest: Father of mercy, source of all grace and blessing, bless + these our brothers and sisters. May they faithfully distribute the Sacrament to their brothers and sisters, be strengthened and comforted by it, and one day be found worthy to share in the everlasting meal of heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

## **The Constitution of the Commission**

Our Diocesan Bishop is the President of the Commission. The Bishop appoints a Priest-Chairman and a Priest-Vice-Chairman.

The Chairman appoints an Executive consisting of a Director of Formation, a Director of Aftercare, a Secretary and a Treasurer.

There are also 12 elected members, three to represent each County area. Ideally a member is selected from each deanery of the diocese.

## **Communications within the Commission**

The deaneries of the Diocese have been divided into four 'County' Groups (Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire/Rutland, and Lincolnshire). Each deanery is asked to elect one E.M. representative who becomes a member of the relevant County Secretariat for a period of four years. (Re-election is permissible). In each parish one E.M. is asked to be the 'Parish Contact' with the County Secretariat for communication purposes. The County Secretariat is responsible for maintaining an up-to-date address and status (e.g. 'active', retired, left, deceased) list of E.M.s in their County Group so it is important for Parish Contacts to notify the County Secretariat of any changes in their parish list.

## **Renewal Days**

It is the Bishop's express wish that all E.M.s attend an Annual Day of Renewal. The County groups are charged with arranging these Annual days of Renewal in suitable locations. Currently each County arranges two or three of these in different locations to provide choices for E.M.s to attend. E.M.s may attend a day of renewal in another county if that is more convenient. We would earnestly ask all concerned to respond promptly to whatever correspondence is sent to them by the County Secretariat on this or other matters. It would be very regrettable if members of the Secretariat did not meet the utmost co-operation in courtesy and charity in eliciting replies to their letters.

E.M.s are asked to make prompt reply indicating whether they are or are not able to take part.

The full Commission normally meets 3 times per year. Additionally, County Secretariats meet as necessary, e.g. to arrange Days of Renewal.

## **Commission Website**

Courtesy of the Diocesan Website ([www.nottingham-diocese.org.uk](http://www.nottingham-diocese.org.uk)) there is a link under 'Diocesan Commissions' to the E.M Commission where much useful information may be found.

## Acknowledgements

It is necessary to reprint and update the Original Handbooks (which were in 2 volumes) which were compiled and produced by Monsignor Martin Cummins in 1991 and 1993. He modestly acknowledged the contribution given by others who had done great service to the Diocese of Nottingham in the formation of our laity as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

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*Michael Gastwood.*

