

For Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

An Important Office of Immense Love

1. You have been called to a most beautiful ministry. Take time to reflect on its meaning and practice will deeply enrich your own awareness of the mystery of Christ and that of the people you serve.
 - without regard for status in the community or for distinctions of class, sex, age or race. *All* who gather at the table of the Lord do so as sisters and brothers in the Lord, and must be welcomed there as such.
2. The communion rite is the heart and center – the ritual climax – of the entire Eucharistic liturgy. The gathering of the community, the proclamation of God's word, the remembering and thanksgiving and offering in the eucharistic prayer - all are directed toward the moment of communion in which we many, fed with his own body and blood, are made one in the Lord.
3. "Would you understand the body of Christ? Hear the Apostle saying to the faithful: 'You are the body and members of Christ.' If, then, you are Christ's body and his members, it is your own mystery, which you receive. It is to what you are that you reply 'Amen,' and by replying subscribe. For you are told, 'The body of Christ,' and you reply, 'Amen.' Be a member of the body of Christ and let your 'Amen' be true." - St. Augustine.
4. The communion into which Jesus invites us is a personal communion, a communion of persons. It is your ministry to make the moment of communion as personal as possible.
5. A primary qualification for ministers of communion, then, in light of the above, is that they be by nature interested in, caring about, at ease with other people
6. An important principle for ministers of communion is do not rush. Allow this moment its full ritual beauty.
7. This is *not* a ministry for efficiency experts, nor for those who are unable to look another in the eye with comfort or to touch another person with ease. Nothing is more important in this ministry than the ability to focus your attention on the person to whom you are ministering. The meeting of minister and communicant is only for a moment. If you are looking down the approaching line or scanning the congregation instead of giving full attention to the person before you, half the value of the encounter will be lost. You must be able to disregard everything and everyone else in that moment, to look at the person before you with undivided attention. The look should be one of warmth and friendliness. You are greeting a brother or sister in Christ.
8. Speak to that person – not to the air or to the bread or to the cup. Hold up the bread or the cup and, looking the person in the eye, say, "The body of Christ"; "The blood of Christ." Wait for his or her response: "Amen." The meeting will be even more personal if hands touch in the act of ministering.

9. Even though the meeting between minister and communicant is personal, it must also emphasize the unity and communion with the Lord and each other. So, we do *not* say the person's name when we say "The body of Christ." This practice is to heighten the awareness of the communicant that we are all one through the body of Christ.
10. Place the bread in the outstretched hands or on the tongue of the person – allowing each the opportunity to indicate the manner in which (s)he wishes to receive. Hand the cup to the communicant, allowing your hands to touch. When the cup is returned, carefully wipe the rim with a purificator; then raise your eyes to welcome the next communicant.
11. Your reverence for the persons you serve and for the sacrament will show itself in all your actions:
 - a. In the way you walk (slowly, with dignity) as you approach the altar.
 - b. In the way you stand when you take your position at a communion station – with good posture, but relaxed, without stiffness. Remember that this is not a business transaction, but a family meal, an act of personal communion.
 - c. In the way you hold the plate – carefully with one hand while ministering with the other.
 - d. In the way you hold the cup – with one hand, using the other to hold the purificator with which you wipe the rim after each communicant has received.
 - e. In the way you minister – with unhurried, deliberate movements.
12. You who serve in the ministry of communion are exercising the role of hosts and servants at the Eucharistic banquet. As such, it is appropriate that you receive first because you cannot give what you have not first received.
13. The liturgy of the Eucharist is never self-contained but in its deepest meaning reaches out to the entire world, to the feeding of the hungry and healing of the afflicted. Those who carry Holy Communion to the sick and persons otherwise confined, therefore, continue the community's act of worship, extending its embrace to include those unable to be physically present.
14. In this cluster, besides bringing communion to individuals who are homebound, we also serve the spiritual needs of several local nursing homes with communion services. If you are interested in serving your parish in this way, please contact Kathy Williamson and she will direct you to the right person. And, thank you!

