



Procedures for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion for the Sick or Homebound

Holy Trinity Catholic Church, Gainesville, VA

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These procedures explain how instructions in the “Communion of the Sick” manual provided by the Diocese of Arlington are implemented within Holy Trinity Parish. These procedures are not intended to supersede, supplement or in any way interpret the instructions given by the Diocese. If you have any comments or questions, please contact the Homebound or Nursing Home ministry coordinator.

1 General Policies

1.1 Mission of the Homebound/Nursing Home Ministry

The mission of the Holy Trinity Homebound/Nursing Home Ministry is to help the priests of the parish to ensure that “the sick or aged, even though not seriously ill or in danger of death, are given every opportunity to receive the Eucharist frequently, even daily, especially during Easter Time.” (“Communion of the Sick” manual, p. 7).

1.2 Mandates, Training and Attire

All EMCs who minister to the sick and homebound must comply with the general policies of the Holy Trinity Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion ministry with regard to mandates, training and attire. These policies are documented in “Procedures for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion,” available on the Holy Trinity web site at <http://www.holytrinityparish.net/>, on the “Eucharistic Ministries – Mass” page.

1.3 Supplies

EMCs should obtain the following for their visits to the sick and homebound:

- “Communion of the Sick” manual, available from the Homebound or Nursing Home Ministry coordinator;
- Pyx (small vessel in which the Eucharist is carried) and burse (carrying case for pyx), available in Spiritual Treasures gift shop and other Catholic outlets;
- Small crucifix;
- Votive candle and matches (to be used only if bottled oxygen is NOT in use – not for use at Nursing Home), and
- Purificator, a white cloth marked with a red cross to be picked up from the sacristy behind the altar before the Mass at which the Eucharist is obtained. Purificators are kept in the top left drawer of the counter as you face the sink. Ask the sacristan for assistance if needed.

1.4 Health Precautions

EMCs should wash their hands well with soap and water before and after visits to the sick. Minimize the risk of infection by avoiding touching things, especially in the nursing home. You may use hand sanitizer only after purifying your fingers on the purificator; sanitizer should be used sparingly to prevent the transfer of a taste to the host or making the pyx sticky.

2 Scheduling

Visits to homebound parishioners and the nursing home are scheduled by the ministry coordinators. Visits are ordinarily scheduled to occur immediately after Mass. Visits at other times and requests for sacraments of the sick and reconciliation will be handled by a priest.

2.1 Homebound Visit Scheduling

EMC visits to the homebound are assigned by the ministry coordinator based on the EMC’s location, workload and preferences. The coordinator will provide pertinent contact and background information on the person to be visited, including directions to the residence, the number of hosts required (e.g., if a caregiver will receive), and whether the visits will be made on a long term or short term basis.

The assigned EMC is responsible for arranging the frequency, days and times of visits with the homebound parishioner. Visits are generally weekly or monthly (usually on First Friday). Visits during the week of First Friday are scheduled separately from the regular weekly visits. *NOTE: Visits by EMCs should be made as soon as possible after the Eucharist is obtained at Mass. If this is not possible, the EMC should request that a priest make the visit.*

EMCs are also responsible for:

- Notifying the ministry coordinator when they need a substitute;
- Notifying the ministry coordinator when a parishioner no longer needs visits; and
- Notifying a priest when the sacraments of the sick or reconciliation are desired by a homebound parishioner.

2.2 Nursing Home Visit Scheduling

Visits to the nursing home are assigned by the ministry coordinator and typically are made every other week, alternating weeks with Holy Trinity priest(s). Additional visits may be made to patients who request them. The nursing home, Gainesville Health and Rehabilitation Center, is located at 7501 Heritage Village Plaza in Gainesville.

3 Taking Holy Communion to the Sick and Homebound

Official instructions, rites and texts for taking Communion to the sick are found in the “Communion of the Sick” manual provided by the Diocese of Arlington. Specific instructions for EMCs at Holy Trinity Parish follow.

3.1 Obtaining the Blessed Sacrament.

Ordinarily, EMCs obtain the Blessed Sacrament at daily Mass.

- Upon arriving at Mass, obtain a purificator from the sacristy. (See Section 1.3 above.)
- If you are **not** also helping with Communion at the Mass, approach the altar as the priest returns to the altar after Holy Communion. Give the priest your pyx and quietly tell him how many hosts you need (10-12 for nursing home visits). If you have just assisted with Communion at Mass, be sure to purify your fingers first before giving the priest your pyx.

If you are also helping with Communion at the Mass, place your pyx on the altar when you go up the steps at the “Lamb of God” to signal the priest that hosts will be needed for sick and homebound visits. After Communion, purify your fingers and then return to the altar, tell the priest the number of hosts needed, and receive your pyx with the Eucharist from the priest.

- After being given the Blessed Sacrament, go to the foot of the altar steps and wait for the priest to repose the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle.
- After the Blessed Sacrament is reposed, go to the back of the church, wait there for Mass to end, and then go immediately to the sick or homebound person or nursing home, without conversing with others.
- Maintain a reverent atmosphere while driving. Do not play the radio or stop to shop, run errands, etc.
- If a visit cannot be made immediately after Mass, wait in your car with the Blessed Sacrament and pray or meditate. Visits that cannot be made within an hour or so after Mass should be made by a priest.

3.2 Home visits.

- When you enter the home, greet those present. (See p. 26 in “Communion of the Sick” manual.)
- In an appropriate location, place the pyx on the unfolded purificator. A small crucifix and lighted candles (if bottled oxygen is not in use) may also be used.

- Conduct the Communion service according to the “Communion of the Sick” manual (pp. 11-21). As a minimum, the Liturgy of Holy Communion and the Concluding Rite (pp. 17-21) should be used. The service may be adjusted, depending on the situation and condition of the recipient. The readings of the day may also be substituted for those in the manual.
- After giving the Eucharist, dab your fingers on your tongue or wipe them on the purificator, and neatly fold the purificator back to its original form to contain any fragments of the host.
- After the visit, follow the instructions in Section 3.4 below.

3.3 Nursing home visits.

- Upon arriving at the nursing home, sign in at the visitors’ log on the table in the foyer. Be sure to wear your EMC cross and nursing home volunteer badge. (Note: When you visit the nursing home for the first time, you will need to visit the Activities Office, fill out a volunteer application and complete a short orientation. You will then receive a volunteer badge. Please contact the Nursing Home Ministry coordinator, PaulaAnn Mancini, at (703) 346-4468 or the nursing home Activities Director, Lynette Esses, at lesse@gainesville-rehab.com to arrange for your orientation.)
- Obtain the latest list of Catholic residents from the Activities Director or her assistant. As you visit each patient/resident, mark the list to indicate the action taken:
 - + - Communion given
 - X –resident not in room, asleep, or did not want Communion
 - V – visited or prayed with only
- The antiphon on p. 25 of the “Communion of the Sick” manual should be said in the first room visited.
- Stop at the living room to see if there will be a Mass or a rosary service. (From the foyer, go to the end of the main hallway – just before the cafeteria – and turn left. The living room is on the left.) If there is to be a Mass, you will not need to visit the rooms of the residents who are gathered in the living room. If there is to be a rosary service and it is not disruptive, give Communion to those present, marking their names on the list with “+”. (Legion of Mary volunteers lead the rosary service and can help you identify the residents present.)
- Visit the remaining residents on the list in their rooms, knocking before entering.
 - The resident may be asleep or absent due to appointments, therapy, etc. If you arrive between 11:30 am and 1:30 pm, the resident may be at lunch (those in the Fairview wing generally go to lunch at 11:30 am; those in the Clairmont wing generally go to lunch at 12:30 pm). If possible, revisit these rooms before departing to see if the resident has become available to receive Communion. If the resident is not available to receive, note this on the list with “X”.
 - If the resident is present, greet him/her and identify yourself by name and as an EMC from Holy Trinity. If there is not an NPO (nothing by mouth) or other notice precluding the taking of Communion, ask if he/she would like to receive the Eucharist. If the resident cannot or does not want to receive, ask if you may say a short prayer such as the Lord’s Prayer with them instead. Note on list with “V” indicating “visited or prayed with only.”
 - If the resident wishes to receive the Eucharist, turn the television or music down or off. If possible, place the purificator on a clean, flat surface such as the window sill or tray table, and place the pyx in the center. You may also place a small crucifix on the cloth. (If there is no appropriate space available, you will have to hold the pyx.) Follow the guidelines in the “Communion of the Sick” manual beginning on p. 23. Depending upon the number of residents taking Communion, you may need to break hosts in half. The host may be broken into very small pieces if that is all a resident is able to consume. Take great care when breaking a host so as to prevent or minimize fragments. Some residents may need a sip of water after receiving Communion. After giving Communion, dab your fingers on your tongue, wipe them on the purificator, and neatly fold the purificator back to its original form to contain any fragments of the host. Note on the list with “+” indicating that you gave Communion.
- The concluding rite on p. 28-29 of the “Communion of the Sick” manual should be said in the last room visited.)

- Upon completion of your visits, return the annotated list of Catholic residents to the Activities Director or her assistant.
- After your visit to the nursing home, follow the instructions in Section 3.4 below.

3.4 After Completing Visits.

- If hosts are left over after your visit(s), they should be returned immediately to Holy Trinity. If that is impossible, you may consume the extra hosts.
- When you return home after completing your visit(s), purify your pyx by carefully pouring water into it and then drinking the water. This should be repeated 1-2 times to ensure that all fragments of the Blessed Sacrament are consumed. Then carefully dry the pyx with an unused corner of the purificator. Carefully refold the purificator and store it in a safe place until you can return it to Holy Trinity. The purificator should be returned as soon as possible, either immediately after your visits or when you next attend Mass, and placed in the basket marked “soiled linens” in the sacristy before or after Mass.