

Holy Communion to the Sick, Homebound, or Hospitalized

It is not always possible for the pastor or his clerical delegate to visit the sick and homebound of the parish on a regular basis. In these cases, the use of extraordinary ministers (EMs) of Holy Communion to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion to the homebound or hospitalized can be of tremendous benefit. While the pastor should always make certain that the needs and spiritual health of his flock are being monitored, availing himself generously to requests for the anointing of the sick and confession by the homebound, commissioning specific members of the community to regularly visit the sick and homebound is always an option so that no member of the community is unduly deprived of the graces of Holy Communion.

An EM making visits to minors or vulnerable adults must have completed the “essential three” before visiting these individuals in their homes or at the hospital. The “essential three” include certifiable Virtus training, signing of the Code of Conduct (which must be renewed every three years), and the satisfactory completion of a background check. Any questions regarding these necessary qualifications should be addressed to Bobbi Daignault (Parish Volunteer Administrator) at 763-755-1020 or bdaignault@epiphanymn.org.

The Sacred Hosts should ideally be retrieved following Holy Mass. The EM can arrange for the sacristan to retrieve the Blessed Sacrament from the Adoration Chapel Tabernacle during Mass. If there is no priest or sacristan available, an EM can retrieve the Hosts themselves from the Tabernacle. The EM should never ask a priest or other EM for Hosts during the Communion service.

While making pastoral visits, the EM is to remember the dignity of the Eucharistic Christ who travels with him or her to the sick, homebound, or hospitalized. The EM should go to visit the sick immediately after receiving the Hosts and should never make unnecessary detours when departing Church. Rather, the EM should travel directly to the place of the visit. There should be no radio, no idle conversation, and no talking on a cell phone. This time should be spent praying for the sick.

A silver or precious pyx is to be used for the visit. It should be carried in a small pouch (called a burse) close to one’s heart (a neck strap is recommended). It is also permissible to carry the pyx in one’s breast pocket. Carrying the pyx in one’s pants pocket or transporting it on the passenger seat or in the glove compartment should be scrupulously avoided out of respect for the Eucharistic Species. If no Hosts are in the pyx it should not be worn around the neck. Wearing it around your neck indicates to all who can see that you are carrying the Body of Christ.

The first thing you should do when you arrive at the place where the sick person is, is the Rite of Holy Communion. During the visit, listen to how they’re doing and reassure them that God is with them, even in this time of suffering. This time with them should not be a time for small talk, but rather a time of deepening their love for God.

Any Hosts that remain following a visit to the homebound should be brought back to the parish and returned to a Tabernacle. If this is not possible, the Hosts should be immediately consumed by the EM with reverence and devotion. They are not to be kept a house or a car for any amount of time.

Any Hosts that remain following a visit to those who are hospitalized should be immediately consumed by the EM with reverence and devotion. They should not be returned to a Tabernacle.

The pyx is to be purified and cleaned after visitations have concluded. This can be done by filling the pyx with water and consuming the water or by pouring the water into the sacrarium (the covered sink in the Sacristy) or directly into the ground. The pyx should be dried with a purificator or air dried.

If you are unable to return the pyx to the sacristy immediately after distributing, the pyx should be purified, kept in a safe and secure place, and returned as soon as possible. If it's the EM's personal property, the pyx should be kept in a safe and secure place when not being used for visits.

In a case where a recipient is unable to swallow the Host, it should be immediately consumed by the EM with reverence and devotion. If this is not deemed prudent, the Host should be placed in a pyx and returned to the Parish for disposition (you may want to consider taking a second pyx with you to place any spit out Host in). ***The Host should not be carried in a tissue.*** The Host should be dissolved by placing it in the small glass cup with the gold cover filled with Holy Water found next to the Tabernacle in the Adoration Chapel. If that cup is not available, there are several small glass dishes in the cupboard above the sinks in the Sacristy. The dish should be placed next to the Tabernacle in the Adoration Chapel.

The liturgical rite to be used by the EM when making pastoral visits is found in the Church of the Epiphany pamphlet "***Called to the Supper of the Lamb.***" Only for exceptional cases should an abbreviated or alternative rite be used. Some period of silence should ideally follow the rite in order to allow the one being visited time to make a proper act of thanksgiving.

The EM should ask the individual if they'd like a priest to visit in order to hear their confession and/or to be anointed, and should communicate to the pastor any concerns or health updates that would warrant an immediate visit by him.

**Thank you for giving so freely of your time and talent
and for your dedicated service to the Lord, the Church
of the Epiphany, and your fellow parishioners in need!**