

For all those involved in The Ministry of distributing Holy Communion



1. Will I have to change anything I do?

Only the same changes to sung and spoken responses and prayers as everyone else, so make sure you know what they are. However, if you take Communion to the sick and housebound and share scripture with those you visit, you would find it useful also to take a look at the Ministry handout for Readers.

2. Perhaps there are things I should listen out for?

Well, there is one acclamation after the consecration in the Eucharistic Prayer that speaks especially to Ministers of Communion. It's the one that begins "When we eat this bread and drink this Cup...". Instead of ending "until you come in glory", it will now end "until you come again".

Sometimes it's very easy to sing or say the present words and not really think about what they mean. What does it mean to proclaim the Lord's death? And how will eating and drinking Jesus's body and blood help us to do this more effectively? In our ministry, how can we help to ensure that the act of eating and drinking is an act filled with holiness, and not something that we might start to take for granted? The slight change to the wording is an opportunity for us to renew the meaning that this acclamation should have for us.

And, just before Communion itself, people will now be saying "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed." To anyone who remembers what the first masses in English were like in the 1960s, this will sound very familiar. It recalls the centurion who told Jesus that he was not worthy to have Jesus under the roof of his house. We too can say that we are not worthy for Jesus to enter the "house" that is our body. (Remember St Paul telling us that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit—1 Cor 16:19.) And if we meet anyone thinking that this refers to the roof of our mouth, we can explain what the actual scriptural memory is here.

The centurion asked for healing for his daughter; we ask for healing for our souls, the core of who we are as Christians.

3. What other aspects of my ministry could I look at?



Not through any fault of their own, some people were never offered proper training for this ministry. They were just asked to do it, and started immediately. Others took a 3- or 4-week course. It's good to be sure that you are properly prepared for your ministry.

One of the most important things is the 'five-fold movement' for ministers of the chalice:

- (a) **Give** the chalice to the communicant. While they are drinking from it
- (b) **Move** the purificator along so that you use a different part of it to wipe from the part you used for the previous person.
- (c) **Take** back the chalice from the communicant.
- (d) **Wipe** thoroughly, both inside and outside the rim that the communicant has drunk from.
- (e) **Turn** the chalice a quarter turn, so as to present a new part of the rim to the next communicant.

A proportion of Ministers of Communion were never shown how to do some of the 'movements' — for example, **the two different ways of handling the purificator** — and may not even know that they exist.

In the same way, some training for Ministers of Communion did not cover the particular requirements of **taking Communion to the sick and housebound**, so this could be an opportunity for some further formation.

Useful resources

Our national Liturgy Office website:

<http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/>

especially

<http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/GIRM/Ministry/Communion.pdf>

A sample set of Guidelines for Ministers of Communion:

<http://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/userfiles/Ministers%20of%20Communion%20diocesan%20guidelines%2009%20revision.pdf>

Ministers of Holy Communion

Donald A. Withey, Decani Books, ISBN 1-900314-01-0

Guide for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Kenneth A. Riley and Paul Turner, LTP. ISBN 978-1-56854-608-7 [available from McCrimmons]

Handbook for Ministers of Care (2nd edition)

Genevieve Glen OSB, Marilyn Kofler SP, Kevin O'Connor, LTP, ISBN 1-56854-102-3 [available from McCrimmons]

Liturgical Ministry: a practical guide to spirituality

Donna M. Cole, Resource Publications, ISBN 0-89390-372-8

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