

# The Ministry of distributing Holy Communion



## An Introduction to the New Words of the Mass *Ashbourne-Donaghmore Parish*

Eucharistic Ministers are called to serve God's holy people by sharing the Body and Blood of Christ with the community of brothers and sisters united by a common faith. They assist the priest in distributing the body and Blood of Christ during the Communion Rite at Mass. Eucharistic Ministers are trained lay ministers with a deep understanding of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the bread and wine. Eucharistic Ministers are called not only to minister the Body and Blood of Christ, but also to take on Christ's likeness. The ministers accomplish this by strengthening their faith from within and sharing it with the faithful at communion.

The present role of the Minister of the Eucharist is the revival of a privilege that belonged to the laity up to the 8th century. At that time it was normal procedure for lay people to distribute the Eucharist at home, in case of necessity, and to the sick. Since Vatican II the Church has taken many steps which have changed the layperson's role within it. The term Eucharistic Minister began with a call to serve the community in a new and heartfelt way. It began with a willingness to be of a greater service to others and quickly became a deep commitment, a real dedication.

### **1. Will I have to change anything I do?**

You will need to know the same changes to sung and spoken responses and prayers as everyone else. Apart from the new texts of the Order of Mass, most other things should remain unchanged.

If, as a minister of Holy Communion, you take Communion to the sick and housebound and share scripture with those you visit, an additional parish resource with greetings, prayers and scripture readings will be available to assist ministers with distribution of Holy Communion to the Sick.

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

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*". What does it mean to proclaim the Lord's death? And how will eating and drinking Jesus' 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.

Just before Communion itself, people will now say "*Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.*" 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. 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?

It is important to be sure that you are properly prepared for your ministry.

- Hands should be clean.
- The minister should prepare spiritually before fulfilling their ministry during the celebration of Mass.

The following ‘five-fold movement’ should be followed by ministers distributing holy communion:

#### **Distribution of the Host:**

- **Stand** before the communicant.
- **Elevate** the host above the ciboria and present the host to the communicant.
- **Invite** them to make their act of faith by clearly and audibly saying: “The Body of Christ” or “The Blood of Christ” where communion is distributed under both ‘species’.
- **Wait** for their declaration of faith ‘Amen’ [*Amen is an Aramaic word. It is pronounced “Ahmeen,” and it means, “So be it” “I agree.” “I believe.” “It is the Body of Christ.” That’s what the “Amen” means: “I honestly believe that when I receive, it is Christ, and so I say Amen.”*]
- **Move** to the next communicant.

#### **Distribution of the Precious Blood.**

- **Give** the chalice to the communicant after saying “The Blood of Christ”. *While they are drinking from it.*
- **Move** the purificator through your fingers preparing a clean part to wipe the chalice.
- **Take** back the chalice from the communicant.
- **Wipe** thoroughly, both inside and outside the rim that the communicant has drunk from.
- **Turn** the chalice a quarter turn, so as to present a new part of the rim to the next communicant.

*Do not rush from communicant to communicant. It is not a race! Distributing holy communion is not purely a functionary role or one of convenience, but a spiritual role.*

#### **The Minister of Holy Communion:**

- Has responsibility to ensure the host is received properly, either on the tongue or on the hand.
- Must ensure the host is consumed by the communicant before leaving the Communion station.
- If a communicant presents themselves for Communion chewing gum, the minister should ask them to remove and dispose of the gum before receiving Communion.

During Mass [during the Our Father] Extra-ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are to approach the Altar, wash their hands, take their positions and receive Holy Communion from the celebrant. The Host is distributed to the minister during the Lamb of God. It will be placed into the **palm**, not into the minister’s fingers. Do not consume it until the priest consumes the host. The priest will then present a ciborium to the minister who commences the distribution of Holy Communion to the gathered faithful at the appointed station. After Communion, the minister places the ciborium in front of the tabernacle.

#### **Useful resources**

- ⇒ <http://www.liturgy-ireland.ie/Romanmissalfinal.htm>
- ⇒ *Special Minister of Holy Communion*,  
CTS, publisher Veritas, ISBN 1-860822-13-4
- ⇒ *Ministry of Communion*,  
Michael Kwatera, publisher CMD Book Source, ISBN 0-814629-58-X
- ⇒ *Heart of the Christian Life: Thoughts on the Holy Mass*,