

25-11-2011

## Special Ministers of Communion

Also called **extra-ordinary** or special ministers of Holy Communion. The ministry was first established by Pope Paul VI in 1973.

**Ordinary Ministers** are bishops, priests and deacons (those who have been admitted to holy orders).

The special ministers of communion are carefully **selected by the parish priest**. Prior to their designation to the ministry they are required to undertake preparation consisting of liturgical and spiritual formation as well as practical training. They are then **commissioned by a public rite of designation**.

Communion ministers need to be those who **respect all people and a display a caring approach** inside and outside the liturgy; who are comfortable in making contact with people with eyes, words and hands; who are willing to forget themselves in order to serve others.

Communion ministers need to develop the art of **dignified movement** and be able to hold the plate and cup and share the bread and wine **with reverence**. Above all they need the capacity to be truly present to the other in that special moment of communion together as members of "The Body of Christ".

## Some practical guidelines for Holy Innocents' Parish, Croydon

### ***Before Mass:***

- If you are unable to assist in accordance with the roster then please contact another Special Minister to replace you for that particular Mass. Phone numbers of other Special Ministers are on the flip side of our roster.
- If you are unable to assist anymore at all or would like to be rostered less frequently then please contact the Parish Secretary (Nicolle, 9747 4291 Thu/Fri)
- **Dress modestly**, be on time and preferably sit in the front rows of the Church so that disruption to other parishioners is minimal once you get up.
- If you are also rostered to be a Reader (or money collector) then please arrange for someone else to assist with communion since we should not participate in more than one ministry within the same Mass.

### ***Approaching the Altar:***

- As soon as the "Lamb of God" commences (do not wait until the 2<sup>nd</sup> verse!), please go to the front of the Church and line up in front of the step leading to the Sanctuary.
- Wait for the other special ministers to arrive. All bow together and proceed as follows:
  - those rostered to assist with the cup stand **next to the Altar platform** on the lectern side
  - those rostered to assist with the host stand **next to the Altar platform** on the sacristy side

Note: if someone gets it wrong (eg someone who gets up to stand in for a missing special minister who has not bothered to contact someone else) then please do not 'argue' as to who should be where. Similarly, when

there is a supply priest who may do things differently; whether host or cup, we humbly assist the priest and congregation no matter what we do.

- Focus on the Altar; don't look around.
- Once the priest has received the Blood of Christ, he will administer communion to you and give you the vessel containing either species of the Most Holy Eucharist for distribution to the faithful.
- Go down into the Church where you stand in front of the step as follows:
  - Host: about 1 metre away **to the right** of the priest.
  - Cup: go to the far left or far right so that there is a good flow of people.When we have 4 Special Ministers with the Cup then stand approx. 1.5 meters away from the special minister on the far side, again, to allow free movement to receive the Body of Christ.

Note: The priest will give communion to the Altar Servers. If they wish to receive the Precious Blood they will then go to a Special Minister accordingly.

### ***Dispensing Communion:***

#### **Host:**

- With your dominant hand, reverently hold the Host a bit above the vessel, look the Communicant in the eye and say "The Body of Christ". The communicant responds: Amen, receives the Sacrament in the mouth or on the hand, and then withdraws.
- Please allow the communicant time to make a sign of reverence before receiving the Body of Christ.
- Please do not address the communicant with his/her Christian name and do not exchange greetings with other people walking past.
- If you run out of hosts and there are still many more people seeking communion, approach another Special Minister and take some hosts from that vessel. If there are only very few people queuing then move back to the Altar and wait there.

#### **Cup:**

- Hold the chalice with both hands, one hand supporting from the bottom. Look the Communicant in the eye and say "The Blood of Christ". After receiving reply "Amen", pass the chalice to the communicant.
- Please allow the communicant time to make a sign of reverence before receiving the Blood of Christ.
- Please do not address the communicant with his/her Christian name and do not exchange greetings with other people walking past.
- After some of the Precious Blood has been consumed, wipe the Chalice rim inside and outside with the open (!) purifier. Turn the Chalice about 1/4 before offering it to the next person. Also: keep moving the purifier in your hand so that you don't continuously wipe with the same spot.
- Intinction: If Communion from the chalice is carried out by intinction, each communicant, holding a communion-plate under the chin, approaches the priest who holds a vessel with the sacred particles, a minister standing at his side and holding the chalice. The priest takes a host, dips it partly into the chalice and, showing it, says: The Body and Blood of Christ. The communicant responds: Amen, receives the Sacrament in the mouth from the priest, and then withdraws.
  - No one should self-intinct!

- There should be a communion plate for Communion by intinction!
- If the communicant insists on receiving by intinction, gently take the host and dip a small portion of it into the Precious Blood and place the host onto the tongue of the Communicant (not the hand!).
- If you run out of Precious Blood step back and wait at the Altar.
- After the last Communicant has walked past you and, if there is anything left in the cup, please return the chalice to the priest at the altar. The priest may then invite you consume the remaining Precious Blood. Please note NEVER consume it whilst walking back!

***Back at the Altar:***

- Do not bow when walking back to the Altar; you are holding the Blood or Body of Christ; move back to the position/side where you collected the vessel with the Blood or Body of Christ.
- Keep the sacred vessel in your hand; do not place it onto the Altar.
- The priest will take the vessel from you.
- Once all Special Ministers have returned to the Altar and once the priest has collected all sacred vessels then move back into the Church and line up in front of the step where all bow together and then move to their seat.

***Frail, incapacitated, elderly Parishioners:***

- Be accommodating maybe by stepping forward towards someone who needs to hold on to the pew.
- Go to the seat of those who are unable to come forward; generally someone will ask you to do so (go after all other parishioners have come forward).

***Unusual behaviour of Communicants:***

- Occasionally, you may have someone approach you with crossed arms. They seek a blessing only (spiritual communion or blessing). A Special Minister can not give such a blessing. Simply acknowledge their presence by saying **“Peace be with you”** or tactfully refer them to the priest.
- Someone may present you with a pix. As a general rule they should approach the priest. However, if you recognise the person as a parishioner and Special Minister of Communion then you may place the required number of hosts into the pix.
- Some communicants want to receive holy communion by kneeling. They have right to do so. Communion must not be refused to such people.

***Taking Communion to the sick or incapacitated:***

- Procedures are covered in a separate guideline.

## **Conclusion:**

This is a very special ministry. Always be mindful of that. Be neither stern nor jolly but display a tactful mixture of being friendly, inviting and accommodating yet go about this with a sincere reverence that makes it obvious that you yourself believe in this very special ministry of sharing the Body and Blood of Christ with others.