

A teacher's guide to **Ministering Holy Communion**

What is this?

The distribution of the consecrated Bread and Wine to the faithful. What was bread and wine has now become, in truth, Christ's Body and Blood shared with us that we might live in him and he in us.

Ordinary & Extraordinary Ministers

The ministry of Holy Communion is reserved to those who have formally called to this ministry.

There are two categories of ministers of Holy Communion. The first - the ordinary ministers are those called to this ministry by virtue of their ordination. Bishops, priests and deacons fall into this category.

The second are those who are commissioned to exercise the ministry when there are not sufficient ordinary ministers present. These extraordinary ministers are deployed to assist the ordinary ministers, and to avoid the distribution taking take a undue amount of time, for example, or the distribution being restricted to one kind, when circumstances would otherwise suggest Communion should be ministered under both kinds

'Ordinary' and 'extraordinary' are the Church's technical terms used to describe the circumstances in which the ministry is exercised - not the quality of the ministers! Ordinary, in this sense, means what is expected. Extraordinary means what is provided in unusual circumstances. Extraordinary ministers are also commonly referred to as Commissioned ministers.

When there are regularly insufficient ordinary ministers to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion a school should consider having sufficient extraordinary ministers in place.

How many ministers?

There are no hard and fast rules. However having one minister of the Hosts (the Body of Christ), and two ministers of the Chalice (the Blood of Christ) for every 50 communicants seems about right. More than 1 for every forty would probably be too many, and less than 1 for every eighty too few.

It is generally the case that when Holy Communion is distributed under both kinds there should be two ministers of the Chalice for every one minister of the Hosts

Who can be an Extraordinary Minister?

Such ministers should have been confirmed and to be in good standing with the Church. Approval of those proposed for this ministry should be obtained from a priest chaplain or local parish priest, who should also be the commissioning minister (in the absence of a bishop).

Ministers who have been commissioned for service in one parish/chaplaincy properly require a new commissioning for ministry elsewhere.

One Kind or Two Kinds?

Parish Holy Communion programmes generally prepare children to receive Holy Communion under both kinds. So the children should have a good understanding of the Eucharist under both its forms, and be familiar with how to receive Holy Communion in both ways.

So it should perhaps be presumed that unless there is good reason not to, Holy Communion will be distributed under both kinds.

The sort of reasons that would justify not doing so would be

- The room or chapel where Mass is celebrated is too crowded to allow proper space for reverent procession and sufficient stations for the distribution of Holy Communion.
- Too few ministers present to allow for Communion to be distributed under both kinds within a reasonable time.

A teacher's worksheet for **Ministering Holy Communion**

What about those who do not receive Holy Communion?

It is now usual for a prayer for these members of the Assembly to be prayed for during the time of the Distribution of Holy Communion. This may be done in a number of ways.

- When the number of non-communicants is relatively small it is convenient to invite them to come forward with communicants but with their arms crossed before them to indicate they are asking for a 'blessing'. Rather than a Trinitarian blessing being given (which is properly reserved to a priest, and would be an inappropriate blessing to give, for example, to a Jew or Muslim) it is best for the minister (lay or ordained) to pray words such as 'May the love of God be strong in your heart.'
- Where there is a large number of non-communicants - eg a class or number of classes of pupils who have not yet prepared for Holy Communion - it is better to offer the prayer for them *en masse*, before or after ministering Holy Communion to the rest of the Assembly.

Communion for coeliacs?

Communicants with coeliac disease may require a low gluten altar bread to be consecrated for their Communion. Information and guidance can be found at www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Documents/Coeliacs/index.html

Vesture and style of dress

Extraordinary Ministers should be neatly and discretely dressed. There is no requirement that they were anything distinctive to indicate the ministry that they exercise. It is forbidden for them to wear anything resembling a stole.

Ministers of Holy Communion for

Mass for

on

at

in

Coordinator for Mass is.....

Priest is

Who will minister?

Ordinary ministers expected?

Extraordinary ministers expected?

Write names of available ministers above and ring names of those who you intend to ask before Mass begins to minister Holy Communion. Write 'H' beside the names of those who will minister the Host and 'C' beside those who will minister the Chalice.

Who will explain to ministers when to come forward to receive Holy Communion, and where they are stand to distribute Communion?

The list of ministers should be
passed to.....
for approval before.....