

Questions for reflection

1. What ways of learning about the faith have you found most helpful in the past? What further support would you most value?
2. What particular gifts do you feel you are already able to bring to your ministry? What particular skills and talents do you feel you need help to develop?
3. What resources does your parish already provide that you can draw on? What further help do you think might be provided, either in the parish or elsewhere

Resources

Over recent years the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales has issued a range of documents which provide an introduction to the Church's teaching on the Mass and the Scriptures, and on ministry in the Church.

- *One Bread One Body*. This teaching document on the Eucharist in the life of the Church seeks to help Catholics to a greater understanding of the Mass and the Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.
- *The Gift of Scripture*. This teaching document introduces how we might read the Old and New Testaments, learning to more deeply hear and live by the word of God.
- *Celebrating the Mass*. This pastoral introduction offers a resource to help the Church consider how it prepares, celebrates and lives from the Mass.
- *The Sign We Give*. This report has been approved by the Bishops' Conference and issued to encourage the Church in England and Wales to think more deeply and imaginatively about the theology and practice of collaborative ministry.

One Bread, One Body; *The Gift of Scripture*; and *Celebrating the Mass* are published by the Catholic Truth Society, www.cts-online.org.uk. *The Sign We Give* is published by Matthew James Publishing Ltd.

Westminster
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Commission

Ministers of Holy Communion is one of a series of resources prepared by the Liturgy Commission to support the continuing formation of liturgical ministers in Westminster diocese. Other resources can be downloaded from www.rcdow.org.uk/liturgy

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Ministers of Holy Communion

An introduction for ministers of Holy Communion
in Westminster Diocese

Ministry in the Church

All ministry in the Church is ordered to the building up of the Body of Christ. It is there to assist humankind to enter more fully into the communion of love that is God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The focus of all liturgical ministry is to assist people's communion with God through their fruitful participation in the worship of the Church.

Ministering Holy Communion to the Church

The highpoint of Catholic worship is the celebration of the Eucharist, for in it Christ associates his Church and all her members with his sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving offered once for all upon the cross to his Father.

The culmination of the Eucharist is our reception of the gifts of the Lord's Body and Blood in Holy Communion. Ministers of Holy Communion assist the Church receive these gifts reverently and fruitfully.

What are 'extraordinary' ministers?

In this case 'extraordinary' has a technical meaning. It simply means 'out of the ordinary', rather than 'great' or 'remarkable'. It is used to distinguish the 'extraordinary' minister from the 'ordinary' or 'normal' minister.

The 'ordinary' ministers of Holy Communion are Bishops, priests and deacons. At Mass Holy Communion is made available to us from the elements over which the priest celebrant has offered the Thanksgiving. It is therefore important that the connection between our Communion and the Sacrifice of the Mass is made clear. One of the ways in which this is achieved is by Holy Communion being distributed by the priest celebrant. Other priests or deacons will assist the priest, if necessary.

When there not enough other 'ordinary' ministers present, then the priest celebrant may be assisted by 'extraordinary' ministers. These will normally be ministers that, with the approval of the Cardinal, have been carefully chosen, prepared and commissioned to exercise this ministry in a particular parish or chaplaincy.

When and why?

There are a number of circumstances both during and outside of Mass when a priest will need the assistance of assistant ministers of Holy Communion.

During Mass

- To assist with the distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds
- When the size of the congregation is such that without their assistance the Communion Rite would be unduly long

Outside of Mass

- To minister Holy Communion to the sick and housebound
- To expose and repose the Blessed Sacrament
- To assist at a Celebration of Word and Holy Communion in the absence of the priest (when such celebrations have been authorised by the bishop)

Ministering with care and reverence

Guidance in some of the practical aspects of the ministry will be found in Ministering the Body and Blood of Christ, another leaflet in this series. However underlying all these should be the prayerfulness and reverence of the minister.

Of particular importance is the way a minister prepares him or herself for service. The following practices may be helpful

- Look at the readings and prayers of the Mass and use them for your prayer. What do they say to you of the Mystery of God's love, and of the Communion that God invites you to share in and minister?
- Call to mind the people you will be ministering to. Remember that, together with you, they are members of the Body of Christ.
- Pray for them, for yourself, and the other parish ministers —that together you will find deeper communion with Christ and each other through your sharing in the Church's liturgy and sacraments
- If you are to minister in the church, be sure that you will be at church in good time to carry out any necessary preparations before Mass begins.
- If you are to take Holy Communion to the sick and housebound be sure that you arrive at the expected time, and have prepared the readings and prayers you will use.



I am the living bread which has come down from heaven.
Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever;
and the bread that I shall give is my flesh,
for the life of the world.