

INSTRUCTIONS FOR HOME VISITATIONS
for
EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION
St. Philip Church (Revised June 2015)

VISITING THE SICK

Thank you for volunteering to visit the sick in our parish! It is a rewarding experience and you will find the parishioners very grateful. If you have any questions not addressed in this document, please contact our parish priest.

GENERAL POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

Those who make Communion visits to the homebound will be referred to as “Visiting EMHCs.”

If you are unable to keep your scheduled assignment to visit the homebound due to illness or last minute travel, it will be your responsibility to obtain a substitute by contacting another EMHC to cover your visits for you.

Sunday Visits

Usually, visits are only done on Sundays immediately following the 10:00 AM Mass. If some extraordinary circumstance arises, special arrangements can be made with the celebrating priest to have an EMHC receive a pyx at another Mass, keeping in mind that never may consecrated Hosts be left overnight or for several hours outside the Tabernacle. Likewise, the pyx containing Hosts should always be on your person until all the Hosts have been given to the sick.



Timeframe for Visits

Following the 10:00AM Mass, the first visit starts around 11:15AM. Visits tend to take about 15 minutes, including travel time, so you could provide estimated time based on 15-minute increments and how many visits you'll be making. (Total time usually ranges from 30 minutes to 1 hour depending how many houses you have to visit.)

Fasting Not Required

Due to their condition, the homebound parishioners we visit are allowed to receive Communion even if they have eaten food within the hour. In addition, they may require water immediately after receiving Communion.

Contacting Homebound When You Cannot Make Your Visits

In the event of severe weather (e.g., snowstorm) and it is anticipated that an EMHC visit would be impossible, it would be good if one or more EMHCs would call our homebound parishioners to let them know not to expect a visit from any EMHCs that day.

Communion Call Burse

The parish provides a Communion call burse for EMHC visits. The burses are found in the sacristy counter drawers. Each burse contains a corporal, a purificator, a Crucifix, and enough space to put the pyx. The burse is picked up before Mass, and then returned to the sacristy after the visits.

Priest Visits

Our priest visits the sick on the First Friday of every month. If a parishioner requests a priest during your visit, please remind them of First Friday visits. If the parishioner cannot wait, let him/her know you will contact our priest about their request.

If the Parishioner requests and wants to talk to the priest, you should not interrupt a Communion visit to contact a priest, unless it is an emergency (i.e., the person is dying at that moment). For non-emergencies, encourage the family to call the rectory, and have them leave message at the office requesting a visit from a priest. The church's main office number is 703-573-3808. Keep in mind that Masses are being celebrated throughout the morning and afternoon until after 5:00 PM, so a priest might not be available for a visit on Sunday.

Caregiver Request to Return Later *(very very rare occasion)*

On occasion, you may encounter a situation where a caregiver requests that you return later for a Communion visit. (This has occurred when extremely ill parishioners are asleep.) Let the caregiver know that you can return later only if:

(1) You have other visits to make and (2) the parishioner will be ready to receive Communion at the conclusion of your other visits. (Provide the caregiver with your estimated return time.) Otherwise, you will not be able to visit the parishioner. We cannot keep a consecrated Host after all visits are completed to return later in the day. The consecrated Hosts must be consumed immediately following the Mass we have left. Our visits serve as a continuation of the Mass and must be done directly upon leaving the church and consecutively. All we can do is make our best effort.

SPECIFIC POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

Before Mass:

- You will need to check in at the sacristy at least 10-15 minutes before Mass.
- Your help may be needed in calling the home bound parishioners to verify that they will be ready for a visit. These calls can be made while in the sacristy, but ought to be done as quietly as possible, so as not to distract others in the sacristy preparing for Mass.
- Once the homebound have been contacted, remove a pyx from where they are stored (in the top counter drawer, in the sacristy).
- Set the pyx on the counter with a note indicating your name and the number of Hosts you will need for your visits.
- The sacristan will make sure the pyxes are available for the priest to fill during Mass by placing the pyxes and the notes on a tray, and then placing the tray on the credence table.

- Take a burse and a prayer book with you when you leave the sacristy to go to your seat. These items can be found in the sacristy counter drawers. When you pick up the burse, make sure it contains a corporal, purificator and Crucifix.

During Mass:

- Try to seat yourself on the tabernacle side of the church before Mass, for easy access to the sanctuary.
- After having given Holy Communion to the congregation, and returned the ciborium to the altar, and purified ones fingers in the ablution cup, the “Visiting EMHCs” go and stand at the sanctuary step.
- After the priest’s chalice has been purified and removed from the altar, the EMHCs will approach the priest in the same way they approached him to receive Holy Communion, and he will give each a pyx and note card; EMHCs will then go back and stand in a line facing the priest.
- Put the pyx into your burse and hang it over to your neck.
- Once all EMHCs are lined up together, the priest will give them a blessing and dismiss them; the EMHCs’ will then leave through the back door from the sanctuary.
- The EMHCs must leave the church immediately to bring the Body of Christ to the sick.

The Home Visits:

Please bring your cell phone with you, in case one of the homebound who expects your visit does not answer the door. Make your best effort and if you cannot reach them, go on to your next visit.

In those cases when you realize that you have insufficient Hosts for the number of communicants to be visited, please know that you can always divide the Hosts as necessary into halves or quarters (*depending on the number of people you are visiting*).

When you arrive at the home, remove the corporal (the larger cloth) from the burse and place it on the table. Then place the pyx, the Crucifix, and the purificator (the smaller cloth) on top of the corporal. The purificator is used to purify or clean ones fingers after having touched the Body of Christ.

For the prayers during visits, we use the Communion of the Sick prayer book:

From the prayer book, you'll refer to the following pages: 11-21 & 39-42.

1. Greeting: On Page 11, you will select a Greeting (Versions A-D).
2. Penitential Rite: On Pages 12-14, you will select either Version A or B for the Penitential Rite.
3. Liturgy of the Word: On Pages 14-16, you will select a Gospel reading for the Liturgy of the Word, or, bring a Missalette from the church and read the Gospel or the other readings of the Sunday Mass. If you have time, and the homebound person is disposed, you could share some of the thoughts from the homily.
4. The Lord's Prayer: On page 17 lead the parishioner in The Lord's Prayer “Our Father... ” selecting either Version A or B.

5. Present the Precious Body: On Page 18, under Communion, you will select Version A or B as you present the Precious Body. Once you have given Holy Communion, wipe your fingers with the purificator.
6. Prayer after Communion: Following the parishioner's consumption of Communion, you will continue on Page 19 with the Prayer after Communion and select either Version A, B or C.
7. Concluding Rite: On Page 21, under Concluding Rite, you will select a Blessing for a minister who is not a priest or deacon - either Version A or B.
8. After you have finished, fold up the purificator and the corporal, and put them back in the burse. Likewise, return the Crucifix and pyx to the burse, too.

In cases when parishioners are not well enough to participate in all of these prayers, please use a shorter version.

When a Parishioner Exhibits Signs of Dementia

A good rule-of-thumb is that if a parishioner cannot follow a conversation with you, he/she may not understand why you are there and might not be able to receive Communion. However, it is possible that a parishioner will exhibit signs of dementia, and will have difficulty following a conversation with you but still demonstrate an understanding that you are there to distribute Communion. If the parishioner recognizes your purpose in being there, it is appropriate to give him/her Communion.

If he/she seems confused, you would continue to ask if he/she wants to receive Communion and you would show the pyx (containing the Precious Body of Christ). If he/she acknowledges the pyx and indicates he/she wants to receive the Body of Christ, you should give him/her Communion. If he/she shows no sign of recognition, do not distribute Communion. You should let the priest or the rectory know of any parishioners who seemed confused and provide the priest with details after your visits are completed.

Remaining Hosts When Visits Are Completed

If Hosts still remain after all visits are completed, you must return them immediately to the church because we cannot consume them ourselves. ("Immediately" means following your last visit - no running errands, grabbing a bite to eat, etc), so the priest or deacon can repose the Host(s) in the tabernacle.

Remaining Hosts As You Begin Your Last Scheduled Visit

However, if more than one Host remains as you begin your last visit of the day, you may have an alternative to returning to church. If the parishioner is willing and physically able (no difficulty swallowing), your last parishioner can consume all remaining Hosts. (Always verify this with the parishioner before you begin the prayers.)

This alternative may be a consideration if it will be very difficult for you to return to the church in such a way that the Hosts can be properly reposed in the Tabernacle.

After the Visit:

- When all of your visits are completed, and all consecrated Hosts are consumed, ensure the pyx is purified (see below) and return it back to the sacristy drawer. Make sure the “home bound” cards, the prayer book, and the burse are also returned to the sacristy drawers.
- Purify the pyx in the following manner: Fill the pyx very slowly with water, let the water dissolve the leftover fragments, and then drink the water from the pyx, or pour that water into the dry sink (*The right sink with the top covered*) in the sacristy. Dry the pyx with the purificator.
- After drying the pyx, place the purificator in the soiled linen hamper underneath the sink. If the corporal is soiled or appears wrinkly, it should likewise be placed in the soiled linen hamper. The pyx is then returned to the first drawer of the sacristy counter. Replenish the burse with a clean purificator and, if necessary, a clean corporal, and then return burse to the third drawer of the sacristy counter.