

# TRAINING GUIDE

## EUCCHARISTIC VISITATION MINISTRY

### ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA, THE WOODLANDS

Rev 1, 25 June 2015

This guide has been prepared for use with the red booklet, "*Administration of Communion and Viaticum by an Extraordinary Minister*," by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (Ref. 1). It provides the Ordinary Rite of Communion of the Sick, as well as the Shortened Rite, both in English and Spanish.

The red booklet discusses pastoral guidelines in performing the ministry, and inner qualities a visitation minister should possess. It also provides brief Sacred Scripture passages that may be used with the Rite. However, Eucharistic Visitation Ministers may bring daily Gospel readings with them with a Mass aid such as the *Magnificat*, or *Word Among Us*. Daily gospel readings can also be found on online Catholic sites (e.g. the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops website, [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)).

#### **HISTORY**

In the early to mid 1900's parish priests expended a major portion of their time bringing communion to the sick and homebound. They tried to visit dozens of the ill and confined at least once a month, often on First Fridays. More frequent visitation was not possible due to large number of parishioners and a limited number of priests.

The practice changed radically after January 29, 1973 (Ref. 2). At that time Pope Paul VI issued an instruction on "*Facilitating Sacramental Communion in Particular Circumstances*." This document and a subsequent section published for inclusion in the Roman Ritual, "*Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass*," approved the creation of special or extraordinary lay ministers for the Eucharist.

As a result, where insufficient numbers of ordinary ministers (priests or deacons) were available, trained and commissioned laypersons were permitted to assist at the Mass to distribute Holy Communion. In addition, commissioned lay ministers could also bring communion to those confined at home because of illness or other factors.

Implementation of these decrees was swift in the United States. It is estimated that within a decade, extraordinary lay Eucharistic ministers numbered several hundred thousand. The end result was the development of a ministry that took on an inspiring and positive life of its own.

#### **BACKGROUND**

The receipt of Communion outside of Mass is not ideal and should be discouraged unless the recipient cannot physically attend Mass due to illness or other serious issues. Sacramental Communion received during Mass is a more complete participation in the Eucharistic celebration

because it is best to celebrate with a priest and the whole parish community. However, those legitimately unable to attend Mass may be united with the Lord's sacrifice, as well as the love of their Catholic brothers and sisters, through the communion rite offered by an Extraordinary Visitation Minister.

The Communion of the Sick book (the "Red Book", Ref 1) includes the *Ordinary Rite of Communion of the Sick* (page 8; page 34 in Spanish), as well as the *Short Rite of Communion of the Sick* (page 15; page 41 in Spanish). Please note that the Viaticum (page 17) is for Communion in conjunction with Anointing of the Sick. It is only to be administered by bishops and priests, so the Viaticum section can be ignored.

The visitation minister may be the only "church experience" that the sick or elderly person receives all week. In addition, people being visited may be lonely and appreciate a period of conversation, as well as a kind touch by holding their hand during the Our Father. So, when possible spend quality time with recipient, and use the longer rite that covers more components of the Mass. These components include a Greeting, the Penitential Rite, Reading of the Word, the Our Father, and Holy Communion. The entire rite takes only 5 minutes.

Regarding individual components of the rite, the booklet provides different lettered selections for different parts of the rite (for example Penitential Act: A, B, or C). Therefore, one can choose any of the options A, B or C for each section. EVMs may also read a generic Short Reading of the Word (page 11 and 12) or choose the actual daily Gospel provided in a worship aid (e.g. the Magnificat; The Word Among Us; or, USCCB: [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)).

If the person you are visiting is not feeling well, you may select portions of the *Ordinary Rite* (page 8), or use *The Short Rite of Communion of the Sick* (page 15).

## **GUIDELINES**

- 1) Each EVM is required to purchase their own PYX. A PYX is a special metal, closed vessel in which to carry the Holy Eucharist to shut-ins, nursing homes, and hospitals. Other containers are not acceptable.
- 2) Extra PYX and unconsecrated host are located in Work Sacristy in the tall cabinet immediately to your left when you enter the room. EVM materials are also located on the same shelf within the first set of doors (clearly marked). The extra PYX are for borrowing should you forget yours. Please return any borrowed PYX as soon as practical to the Work Sacristy.
- 3) How to Obtain the Eucharist for a Visit to the Aged, Sick, or Homebound:
  - The preferred method to obtain the Eucharist is from Mass. This is termed the **Solemn Process** where extraordinary visitation ministers get unconsecrated hosts from the work sacristy prior to Mass, place them in their PYX, and then place the PYX on the Credence tray before Mass starts (ideally at least 10 minutes early for both weekend and daily Mass). The Credence Tray is on left side of the altar in the alcove to the right of the Mary Chapel. You can also ask the Sacristan for help. The presiding priest will consecrate the host in the PYX during Mass. Visitation ministers then come forward following the Prayer after Communion when called by the priest at

the end of Mass. He gives EVM's their PYX, provides a blessing, and then sends them forth to proceed directly to those receiving Communion.

- If you are visiting the sick when it is not possible to obtain the Eucharist from Mass, you may obtain the Eucharist from the Tabernacle. You will be shown where to find the Tabernacle key in the Work Sacristy during EVM training. If you are unfamiliar with opening the Tabernacle, you can have one of the office staff assist you during weekday working hours (Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:00pm).
  - When approaching the Tabernacle it is very important to do so reverently by **GENUFLECTING**. Unlatch, unlock and open the Tabernacle. Fill your PYX with the appropriate number of hosts. **GENUFLECT AGAIN**. Close and lock the Tabernacle. Return the key to the Work Sacristy. Proceed directly to those who will receive Communion.
- 4) Determining the Number of Host to Take - For the first couple of visits, it is suggested that you contact others who have previously ministered to the same community. After you have experience at the nursing home or home visits, you will get a feel for the proper number of Hosts needed. Note that one can always subdivide the Eucharist if you start to run short (i.e. break it into 3 or 4 pieces).
- 5) What to do with extra Eucharist - if a few Eucharist remain after visits, the EVM should consume them before leaving the home, hospital or nursing home. To avoid taking too many, remember that you can always break the Host into 3 or 4 pieces.
- 6) Purifying your PYX – if after visits your PYX contains small unconsumed particles, or if it is not clean, you should purify the PYX. The proper procedure is:
  - go to the Work Sacristy between the church and the chapel;
  - open the Sacarium sink (the one with the stainless steel cover (it drains directly to the earth, NOT the sewer system).
  - Rinse the PYX with a small amount of water to remove any particles. Make sure all particles are washed down the drain. Because the sink drains directly into the ground; do not use large amounts of water and do not let the water run for long. Dry your PYX with a towel from the cabinet adjacent to the sink.
- 7) How to determine if someone is mentally and physically able to receive:
  - First, special notes or instructions may be posted on the hospital or nursing home door (for example NPO, nil per os, which is Latin for “nothing by mouth”).
  - Those without specific instructions may be “confused” or simply be mentally unaware (Alzheimer patients in particular). Others may have a feeding tube or have difficulty swallowing. A resident may also be undergoing tests and, as a result, may not be permitted to eat or drink.
  - If the person cannot focus during a short prayer or asks, “What is that” when you hold up the Eucharist, they are not cognizant enough to receive Communion. Say a few prayers with them and visit as needed (see Sacramental Communion in Q&A section).
  - The mental or physical state of individuals can vary from visit to visit, depending on medications, disease progression. Therefore it may be necessary to judge the capability of the person to receive Communion at each visit.

8) Blessings – When you conclude the rite, note that EVM's are not permitted to “bless” others with the sign of the cross (only priests or deacons can do this). Instead, one can say the words of the blessing while making the Sign of the Cross on themselves not the patient. In other words you can say “may the Lord bless **“us”** NOT “may the Lord bless **“you”**” while making the sign on yourself. The person being visited will likely follow and make the Sign of the Cross on themselves.

9) Appropriate Places to Celebrate the “Rite of Communion of the Sick.”

- When visiting the homebound, you may celebrate Communion of the Sick at a person's bedside, in their living room, or anywhere they are comfortable.
- Nursing home residents may be in their room, a TV room, the hallway, or a physical therapy room. It is preferred to offer Communion in the quiet of their room. If they are elsewhere, take them to their room or a quiet place nearby.

10) Hygiene and Nurse/ Doctor's Visits

- When a nurse or doctor enters a patient's room, EVM's should leave because we have no right to listen to discussions with a patient (unless invited to stay such as during a short nurse visit to give a patient medication or some food). However, always confirm with the nurse or doctor that it is OK to stay. Note that if they are in the room while you provide the rite, they also may receive the Eucharistic, if they are Catholic.
- Depending on the type of facility being visited, it is common courtesy to inquire at the nurse's station about any special situations for those you are visiting such as tests being administered, dressings changed, etc.
- Regarding hygiene, one should make sure during visits that your hands are clean for the duration of the visit. Preferably use soap/hand cleaning stations outside of the rooms in the hallway. Another option is to use alcohol based hand cleansers, either posted in hallways or by bringing your own small bottle. Also, hands should be cleaned between visits to avoid passing any germs from one patient to the next.

11) Priest Visitation

- First, determine what they want: confession, anointing of the sick, a consultation, etc.
- Details will be needed by the parish office and the priest assigned to monitor the emergency line (**281-296-2800 both day and night, 7 days a week**). Having this information will greatly help the visiting priest prepare for a visit:
  - a) Name of patient (noting whether they are a STAOP parishioner or non-parishioner)
  - b) Location
    - i. Hospital/Nursing Home – Room Number Phone Number; or
    - ii. Private Residence- Address, phone number
  - c) Expected length of stay
  - d) Type of Visit Being Requested
    - i. Reconciliation
    - ii. Anointing of the Sick
    - iii. Consultation
    - iv. Emergency Baptism
  - e) Priests typically like to know whether the patient's husband or wife, or next of kin, will be present at the hospital or home. Provide name(s) and contact info if possible.

- f) Urgency
- i. Non-Emergency: Can the request wait until they are discharged?
  - ii. Emergency- is the person's health failing or serious surgery pending? Is there a personal crisis such that he or she immediately needs a Sacrament?
  - iii. STAOP priests tend to be very busy. To help them plan visits, please provide optimal time(s) the patient would like to be visited.
- Note that the patient's information is confidential – it should be shared with priests and STAOP staff on a need to know basis (consistent with separate Confidentiality Statement to be signed by all EVM's).
  - EVM's are to arrange visits by STAOP priests. If a patient wants their own parish priest, then they, or family members, are responsible to schedule the visit.
  - As of June 2015, Father Jones is STAOP's (and The Woodlands) Hospital Chaplain. He covers St. Luke's as well as Memorial Hermann Hospital for St. Simon & Jude. You can leave a message on the Priest Emergency Line to reach Father Jones. If he is unavailable and the matter is urgent, another priest will respond.

12) Funeral Questions - If a patient is in very serious or failing health, the family may ask about funeral arrangements. Please have the family contact Sue O'Connell, St. Anthony's Director of Spiritual Life at [832-482-4127](tel:832-482-4127) ([soconnell@staoptw.org](mailto:soconnell@staoptw.org)). Sue handles church funeral arrangements with families.

## **SCHEDULE, SUBSTITUTES, AND HOLIDAYS**

Please coordinate plans with the other ministers scheduled the same day as you. Find out which Mass they plan to attend, how many hosts each minister should pick up, etc. You can visit on your own, in teams, or some hybrid plan as agreed by you and other team members.

You will be provided a quarterly schedule as well as contact information for the other ministers on your team, as well as a substitute list. Please keep track of your scheduled visitation dates. During holidays and summer vacation season, many ministers are out of town. If you will be out of town on your scheduled day, PLEASE trade dates or arrange for a substitute as early as possible. It is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to find a substitute minister.

If you've exhausted all options ONLY THEN contact the EVM Coordinator for help (contact information provided below).

Roger Ingersoll  
 STAOP Eucharistic Visitation Coordinator  
 Cell: 832.443.6178  
 Email: [roger\\_ingersoll@yahoo.com](mailto:roger_ingersoll@yahoo.com)

## **REFERENCES**

- 1) *Administration of Communion and Viaticum by an Extraordinary Minister from Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, ISBN 978-60137-335-9, Second Printing May 2014. [Red Booklet]

- 2) *Communion of the Sick, Approved Rites for Use in The United States of America, Excerpted from Pastoral Care of the Sick and Dying*, Catholic Book Publishing Corp, New Jersey, ISBN 978-0-89942-082-0, 2000. [Green Booklet]

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:**

**Q1** – I need to get a consecrated host outside of the mass schedule. How is this done?

**A1** - The Work Sacristy door will be locked outside of normal mass times, so you will need to enter the door pad code to enter the work sacristy to obtain the Tabernacle key. The Eucharistic Visitation Coordinator (Roger Ingersoll), or a staff member in the Spiritual Life Department can provide the code. You will be instructed during EVM training how to access the Tabernacle. Not all EVMs need the pad code, so access will be granted on a need to know basis.

**Q2** - Where can I purchase a PYX and how large should it be?

**A2** – PYX typically cost between \$15 and \$30 and are usually brass with a secure clip top. Please select one large enough to accommodate our hosts that measure about 1½ inches in diameter. A PYX 1½ inches in diameter by ½ inch tall will hold 7-8 hosts should suffice. Remember, other kinds of containers are unacceptable. The following locations usually have PYX for purchase or you can also investigate online sources:

- Houston Catholic Books & Gifts  
4950 FM1960 Rd W  
Houston, TX 77069  
Phone: 832-249-9354
- Veritas Catholic Bookstore  
2950 Chimney Rock Rd. (between Richmond and Westheimer)  
Houston, TX 77056 Phone: 713-780-2078
- Saccos  
2323 San Jacinto St.  
Houston, TX 77002 (near the Co-cathedral)  
Phone: 713-659-4709  
Website: [www.saccos.com](http://www.saccos.com)
  - *Note that your PYX does not require a special blessing because it is blessed by the priest when he blesses the Eucharist within it.*

**Q3** - Can I return home, run a quick errand, or stop for something to eat after I obtain the Eucharist, but before I make my visit?

**A3** - NO. You must proceed directly to the person(s) you will visit.

**Q4** - Can I obtain the Eucharist at the Saturday evening Mass for a visit on Sunday?

**A4** - NO. You must proceed directly to those you will visit.

**Q5** – Is it OK to take extra Communion home to give to my children when they get home from school or if they are home sick?

**A5** - NO. Consume what is left. It is not a sin for children to miss Mass (and Communion) if they have a short-term illness. Our ministry is meant for the homebound, elderly and those that are seriously ill.

**Q6** - What if the recipient does not consume the Host completely, or spits it out?

**A6** - Remember this is Jesus. If the Eucharist is not consumed and it is moistened by saliva, bring it back to the church in a tissue. Place the Eucharist and tissue in a small glass bowl with water. Stir it with a stick or break it into small pieces and then carefully wash it down the Sacrament sink. Alternatively, you may bury the unconsumed piece and/or water in a secluded section of a garden or a place where people will not trample on the ground. The objective is to reverently return unconsumed Eucharist to the earth. You do not need to consume Communion that has been partially consumed by someone else.

**Q7** - Can the Eucharist be offered to visiting family members at a nursing home or hospital room?

**A7** - Yes, if they are Catholic. Sometimes those we visit will have family members present.

**Q8** - Can we give Communion to non-Catholic family or friends at a home or hospital visit?

**A8** - No. Only Catholic family and friends can receive the Eucharist.

**Q9** - Do fasting rules apply to the sick person (i.e. no food or drink other than water an hour before Communion)?

**A9** - No. The sick or homebound person does not need to fast before receiving the Eucharist. While it is preferable that the family and friends who are visiting have fasted, this also is not necessary for this special circumstance.

**Q10** - Can we discuss a patient's medical situation or condition with anyone outside of our Eucharistic Visitation Team or a priest?

**A10** - NO. All information about a sick or homebound person is strictly confidential. For this reason all Eucharistic Visitation Ministers must sign either the St Luke's Hospital Confidentiality Agreement, or the similar STAOP document.

**Q11** - Can we give anything to patients in the hospital, nursing home residents, or the shut-ins?

**A11** - PLEASE DO! You are encouraged to give a copy of the latest Church bulletin, prayer cards, etc. The bulletin is a great way to help keep them connected to the church community. Considerable free material such as rosaries, prayer cards, and old copies of the *Magnificat* and *Word Among Us* can be found in the EVM cupboard area in the work sacristy.



**Q12** - What if the person being visited is not permitted to have anything by mouth (nil per os)?

**A12** - For those who cannot take anything by mouth, the following **Spiritual Communion** can be offered:

*“My Jesus, (Recipient’s Name) believes You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. (She/ he) loves You above all things and (she/ he) desires to receive You into his/her soul. Since (she/ he) cannot receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into their heart. (Recipient’s Name) embraces You as if You were already there and unites themselves wholly to You. Never permit (her/ him) to be separated from you.*