

One of the greatest blessings of the Church is the gift of Jesus Christ in Holy Communion. Where necessary the Church allows lay people to assist in giving Communion to their brothers and sisters in Christ. Such people are called Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. The Bishop of the Diocese ensures that appropriate individuals chosen to carry out this ministry are adequately prepared and that good practice is followed. The rules of the Church and Civil Society help shape the practices that the Diocese follows.

An Instruction from the Vatican, *Inaestimabile Donum*, and the *Code of Canon Law (Canon 230 para3)* allow that lay people may be commissioned as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion when necessary. The Catholic Bishops of England clearly explain '*Bishops, priests and deacons are the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion. If a large number are to receive Communion, the ordinary ministers will frequently need assistance in distributing Communion, so that the Communion rite is not unduly long. It will regularly be needed when Communion is given under both kinds, the form of Communion in which the Eucharistic banquet is more clearly signified. This assistance is given by extraordinary ministers... formally commissioned for a given period or, in case of necessity, deputed by the priest celebrant for a particular occasion.*'

Celebrating the Mass No.45

Given below are the practices followed in Hexham and Newcastle Diocese. They help clarify situations and aim to protect the individuals involved. Please read them through carefully. If you have any further questions do not hesitate to contact the diocesan Safeguarding or Liturgy Departments.

General Regulations

Those who are commissioned as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion in Hexham and Newcastle Diocese are baptised and confirmed members of the Roman Catholic Church. They go through training so that they can properly assist in their parish when required to distribute Holy Communion during Mass or administer it to the Sick and give it as Viaticum to the Dying.

The training is provided by the diocese and prepares candidates to carry out both the role in Church and the role in the home of a sick person.

Though an individual minister may come to a private agreement with the Parish Priest to exercise the ministry in a more limited way (e.g. distribution during Mass only) the training and commissioning always allows for the possibility of the circumstances changing.

Only those who have been through the requirements of the Diocesan Safeguarding Department may act as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy

Communion. **A person who has been trained and commissioned may not minister until they have been through the required safeguarding checks.**

The minimum age is normally 18 at which a person may exercise this ministry in the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.

Ministers are commissioned for a period of five years. They are expected to attend a period of recollection each year and renew their commitment to ministry within their parish on or around the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Our Lord (Corpus Christi). After five years a person may be Re-commissioned. This is carried out by the Parish Priest at the agreement of both parties. Copies of the Re-commissioning ceremony can be obtained from the diocesan Liturgy Department.

A minister is commissioned for a particular parish or cluster of parishes. They may not serve regularly in another parish for which they have not been commissioned without the explicit permission of the parish priest and having given their details to parish Safeguarding Representative of that other parish.

Upon moving from one parish to another within the Diocese a minister may only carry out the ministry with the explicit permission of the parish priest and upon re-registering with the Safeguarding Representative of the new parish. Such ministers are not required to repeat the training course.

Those Extraordinary Ministers who have been trained and commissioned in other dioceses are required to register with the parish Safeguarding Representative before they may carry out the ministry. It is for the parish priest to decide if he wishes the new parishioner to attend a diocesan training course.

Schools and Chaplaincies

Some lay people may be commissioned as Extraordinary Ministers to serve in a chaplaincy (e.g. School, Hospital). They undergo the training and safeguarding checks provided by the Diocese as well as any further requirements of the appropriate institution.

We are blessed in our Diocese with several University Chaplaincies. As a feature of their worship it is possible, with the agreement of the Chaplain, for students to be trained and commissioned as Extraordinary Ministers. University students will, as a rule, be over 18 years old and so the requirements of the Safeguarding Department apply to them.

An adapted form of training is offered for those Students attached to University Chaplaincies who may be asked to act as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. The ministry they exercise is restricted to distribution of Holy Communion at Mass and they are not commissioned to take the Blessed Sacrament to the Sick.

Students who are commissioned may only serve in Acts of Worship in the Chaplaincy and their ministry comes to an end when they cease to be students at the University.

Those who have served as Extraordinary Ministers at a Chaplaincy would be required to undergo an adapted form of training if they are asked to serve also in a parish or to take Holy Communion to the sick. The usual requirements of the Safeguarding Department would need to be fulfilled.

Under 18s

In approved situations candidates who are between 16 and 18 may be commissioned to distribute Holy Communion in school or at a parish Mass. They may not take Holy Communion to the Sick. These candidates receive an adapted form of training.

A record of those commissioned for service in school must be kept in the school. The Diocesan Safeguarding Office is to be informed by the school of any commissionings.

The usual rules apply that a person commissioned for a particular parish or school may not help with Holy Communion in another location without permission of the Priest in charge and if the situation is to be repeated the Diocesan Safeguarding Office is to be informed.

The ministry of those commissioned to serve in school ceases when they leave the school.

On reaching their 18 birthday ministers must fulfil the Diocesan Safeguarding procedures for adults. If they are to take Holy Communion to the Sick in their parish they are to undergo further training. Candidates are not permitted to extend their ministry to the Sick until they have been commissioned and fulfilled the requirements of the Department for Safeguarding.

The newly commissioned ministers thereafter adhere to the diocesan procedures followed by other adult Extraordinary Ministers.

Anyone seeking further clarifications or permissions in connections with these Regulations should contact the Department for Safeguarding or the Department for Liturgy.

Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Regulations