**SicCarrying Communion to the Sick and Housebound during the Covid Crisis**

**Reflection for those who will carry out this task**

*When we draw near with tender love to those in need of care,*

*we bring hope and God’s smile to the contradictions of the world.*

*(Pope Francis – World Day of the Sick 2014)*

Those who are privileged to bring the Eucharist to the sick and the housebound are invited to reflect on that short piece from the message of Pope Francis for World Day of the Sick 2014. What a beautiful mission to have – to bring hope and God’s smile with us on that journey of love and service. This blessed task inspires us to prepare as best we can to carry Christ’s presence in the Eucharist and to be Christ to those we meet whether it is the one who is expecting us, their family or their carers.

**Inner Preparation**

We begin with our own relationship with Jesus in prayer. Try to spend some time in quiet adoration and prayer in a spirit of openness. There is no agenda. There is nothing to be achieved. All that is asked is the gift of our presence in an encounter with the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. This will require us to go to our ‘quiet room’ wherever that may be – in the church or oratory. Time spent in quiet contemplation is time well spent. It is in these precious moments that we realise that it is not about us or how good we are to be involved in this ministry. It is the place where ‘heart speaks to heart’. If we can let go of the many thoughts and concerns we may have ourselves we will find a precious oasis where we can simply be who we are called to be. We will also fill ourselves with the spirit of Jesus which we will carry with us on our way.(Come adore this wondrous presence…)**e Word of God**

Often we are invited to bring communion to the sick and housebound after Mass in their homes, in the hospital or a nursing home.  Let us also carry the gift of some words of scripture with us on our journey. Following the principle that ‘less is more’ look for one phrase from the readings of the day for example 13th Sunday (A).

The Psalm Response – ‘I will sing forever of your love, O Lord’ (Ps. 88) or the Gospel ‘Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me’ (Matt 10:40). Choose a phrase that you will remember and pray it like a mantra on your Eucharistic journey. Then share that phrase in your prayer time with the one or with those who will receive the Eucharist. Invite some prayer around that phrase but nothing forced – a natural response to the gift of the Word is all that is required.(O that today you would listen to his voice, harden

As one who will carry the Eucharist from the parish celebration, participate as much as you can in that Mass almost as if every prayer, gesture or reflection is being done in the name of those who you will later visit. Bringing them so carefully to mind is an acknowledgement of their presence at the Altar of Sacrifice in a different way to ours. It is as if we are their sponsors – acting on their behalf in the communal gathering until they have their own encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist. (Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God)

**A Representative of the Eucharistic Community**

After the Communion Prayer we are invited to come forward and to be formally sent out to bring the Eucharist to the sick and housebound. We are not acting on our own initiative. In the finest tradition of our Church we are reaching out to those who cannot be present at the Mass as servants of the community and servants of the Eucharist.

We carry with us the Eucharist but also the affection and prayers of the parish community.

**Prayer of Sending Out(**

“As you go to the sick and the homebound, take with you not only the sacrament we have celebrated, but also the Word of God which we have heard, as well as the affection of this parish community. Ask for the prayers of those whom you visit in return. Go, now, with God’s peace and blessing.” **or**

“Brothers and sisters, you are sent from this assembly to bring the Word of God and the Bread of Life to the sick and homebound members of our parish family. Go to them with our love, our care and our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and gentle healer.” ill you let me be your

**Bless this House**

On our way we are conscious that we are carrying the Eucharist in a pyx or a robust envelope and we go directly on our way without any deviation except for the polite greeting of others on our journey. When we arrive at our destination as arranged in advance, we observe current health norms about hand sanitation and use of face coverings. We greet everyone and particularly those who will receive the Eucharist. A gentle reverent presence is a wonderful gift. It is a blessing to all. The unhurried way we greet, we pray, we share the Eucharist and give thanks is itself an expression of communion in the real sense. Some talk and genuine listening can also be a wonderful bonus on such a visit remembering to stay within the recommended time limit.

**Viaticum**

In some circumstances, we may be asked to bring Holy Communion to a person who is close to death. This is a sensitive time not only for the person who is dying but also for family and friends who are gathered. The celebration of the Eucharist as viaticum, food for the passage through death to eternal life, is the sacrament proper to the dying Christian. If the person is very ill a simple form of words after communion is apt – such as ‘May the Lord Jesus Christ protect you and lead you into eternal life.’ me when you come into

If possible it is good to give thanks for the grace and privilege of bringing Jesus to others in the Eucharist. A visit to the Oratory or Church if practicable or at least some quiet time wonderfully rounds off this time of grace.

**Order of Prayer with the Sick and Housebound**

Introduction and Explanation to the sick or housebound person: These prayers carry with them a Plenary Indulgence granted by the Holy See for the duration of the Covid-19 crisis. As a condition of receiving the Plenary Indulgence, the person should have the firm intention, when it becomes possible, to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, receive Holy Communion and pray for the Pope’s Intentions. The person should have a Crucifix at hand to hold during the prayers.

1 **In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**

R. Amen.

**N., The peace of the Lord be with you always.**

R. And with your spirit.

**Lifted up among us is Jesus the crucified,**

**sign of God’s steadfast love**

**and pledge of God’s will to save.**

**I ask you, N., to now take the Crucifix in your hands** **and to look upon it with faith as we slowly pray together the Apostles’ Creed:**

**I believe in God,**

**the Father almighty,**

**Creator of heaven and earth,**

**and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,**

**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,**

**born of the Virgin Mary,**

**suffered under Pontius Pilate,**

**was crucified, died and was buried;**

**he descended into hell;**

**on the third day he rose again from the dead;**

**he ascended into heaven,**

**and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;**

**from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,**

**the holy Catholic Church,**

**the communion of saints,**

**the forgiveness of sins,**

**the resurrection of the body,**

**and life everlasting. Amen.**

2 **N., in a moment’s silence now,**

**I invite you to remember your particular needs and prayers today.**

(Short Pause)

**The Lord is always our light and our help.**

**He is with us as we pray in the words of his Son:**

**Our Father, who art in heaven,**

**hallowed be thy name;**

**thy kingdom come,**

**thy will be done**

**on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread,**

**and forgive us our trespasses,**

**as we forgive those who trespass against us;**

**and lead us not into temptation,**

**but deliver us from evil.**

3 **We call to mind the words of the Apostle** **Saint Paul**

**‘Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer’ (Romans 12:12)**

**And we have recourse to the loving embrace of Mary, our Mother,**

**as we pray:**

**Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,  
 that never was it known**

**that anyone who fled to thy protection,  
 implored thy help, or sought thy intercession**

**was left unaided.  
 Inspired with this confidence,  
 I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother.  
 To thee I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful.**

**O Mother of the Word Incarnate,  
 despise not my petitions,**

**but in thy clemency, hear and answer me.  Amen.**

***OR***

**Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy,**

**Hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope!**

**To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve.**

**To thee do we send up our sighs,**

**mourning and weeping in this valley of tears!**

**Turn, then, O most gracious Advocate,**

**thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this, our exile,**

**show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.**

**O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!**

**V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.** R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

4 **Loving and healing God,**

**we implore you** **for an end to the coronavirus;**

**for relief for those afflicted with it**

**and for eternal life for whom the Lord has called to himself.**

**May the Blessed Virgin Mary,**

**Mother of God and Mother of the Church,**

**health of the Sick and help of Christians,**

**our Advocate,**

**help suffering humanity,**

**saving us from the evil of this pandemic**

**and obtaining for us every good necessary**

**for human salvation and sanctification.**

**Loving and healing God,**

**bless N., your beloved.**

**Fill her / him with your abiding presence**

**and grant her / him pardon from her / his sins.**

**Ease her / his mind.**

**Strengthen her / his body.**

**Let her / him be serene in hope,**

**and, at the last, bring her / him to the table of unending joys in heaven.**

**And may the blessing of almighty God,**

**the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit,**

**come down on you and remain with you for ever.** R. Amen.