

Pastoral Home Care – Pastorale des Malades – Dispositions

FAQ – When I bring Holy Communion to a sick, elderly, or otherwise shut in person, may I bring a Host for myself and take Holy Communion with the person?

It is possible that in the formation you have received, you may have been encouraged as a visitor to bring a Host for yourself and to receive Holy Communion with the one being visited. If so, this is a novelty and quite wrong. This is never allowable. The only situation in which a lay person or Deacon can take Holy Communion for himself or herself is under dire circumstances, such as to save the Blessed Sacrament from desecration in a raid by violent people. Not even for pastoral reasons are laity allowed to bring or take Holy Communion for themselves, because this involves our understanding of not only the Holy Eucharist but also Holy Orders. Only Bishops and Priests may take Holy Communion for themselves at every Mass. The Deacon may drink only from the Cup on his own after everyone else has received, because it is his proper place to serve at table.

I have come across elderly folk who were told or given permission, or at least they had the impression that they had been told or given permission to bring home several Hosts for their sick spouse to take Holy Communion everyday all week. This is always clearly and unequivocally an abuse of the sacrament of Holy Eucharist. Serious harm can be done to their faith by this practice.

Jesus has given us this august mystery in order to fulfill the promise He made given in Matthew 28:20 that He would remain with us all days until the end of the world. The place for all of us to receive Jesus in Holy Communion is during the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy in church or in any other place authorized by the Bishop. From the earliest days Jesus inspired his bishops to make provision for those who were ill and could not bring themselves to the Sacred Assembly, where Jesus gathers us around Himself in the person of the Bishop or Priest. Deacons and also Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion – who are given a mandate by their Pastor for one to three years – bring Holy Communion to those deprived of the Lord for no fault of their own.

Those who stay away from the Assembly and so “miss Mass and Holy Communion” for any reason other than serious illness or debilitation do so for mere convenience and are committing an offence against the Lord and his Bride the Church by depriving us of their presence and prayerful participation. When people are enslaved by their employment and are powerless to free themselves for the Sunday Mass they are under obligation to do all they can to find a Sunday Mass that it is possible for them to attend or if this is not at all possible, then a weekday Mass as close to Sunday as possible. In some countries, due to the Muslim religious government of the state, the bishops have made provisions to observe the Lord’s Day on Friday, the same holy day as the Muslims.

The faithful must keep in mind countless generations of our forebears who endured gladly the hardship of walking for hours in inclement weather and other deprivations with a generous and humble spirit of self sacrifice for the privilege of attending Mass and celebrating the wonders of the Lord’s mysteries among us. This is a powerful demonstration and practice of faith and hope in God.

By honouring the Lord in this way, you will not be blessed any less, but will actually find yourself blessed more deeply, as you become entirely there for the sake of the one you visit. Your communion will be with Jesus who came to serve and not be served in that moment. He will open all the antennae of your spirit to the truth and reality of the person in front of you, so that you can attend to them in all simplicity and transparency. Accept the suffering and efforts of the other as their response to the Lord. Our primary path to God is in imitation of Jesus' obedience to his Father.