

## Guidance for the Pastoral Care of the Sick

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### Introduction

Home visits can now take place by priests, deacons and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. Extreme caution should be taken to avoid any possibility of passing infection between the the visitor and the housebound parishioner. It is important that the Government Guidance for people working in, visiting or delivering to other people's homes is followed. Of particular note is whether those visiting (the priest, deacon or EMOHC) fall into the Government categories of clinically extremely vulnerable people or clinically vulnerable people.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Before entering the home*

The priest should prepare all that he needs for the home visit before entering the home. This would include any Ritual Text being printed on a once-only use card or paper and a cotton bud with the Holy Oil impregnated into it. He should have a sealable plastic bag into which he would place any single-use material for post-visit disposal. Face coverings should be worn by visitors in others' homes.

#### *At the home*

On arrival, he should wash his hands for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before entering the room with the sick person; it is advisable that disposable paper towels are used to dry hands. During the Rite, he should maintain a distance of 2m from the sick person, and avoid any physical contact (he should extend the hands over the sick person for silent prayer at the appropriate point). The anointing should be done at arm's length, and afterwards, immediately withdraw to a distance of 2m. Before leaving the room, after the Rite is complete, he should place all materials into a plastic bag and seal it. Before leaving the house, he should wash his hands again or use hand sanitiser.

He should dispose of the materials used in the Rite by burning, if possible.

#### *Holy Communion in the Home (also applies to EMOHC)*

The minister going to visit the sick or housebound person should ask that they prepare a table with a clean cloth in the room where the person is, upon which the Blessed Sacrament should be placed when entering the room.

In the Sacristy of the church, the person making the home visit should prepare a clean pyx. They should wash their hands for a minimum of 20 seconds or apply hand sanitiser before going to the Tabernacle to remove a consecrated Host. This should be placed into the pyx, which should then be closed and not opened again until Communion is to be given.

On arrival in the home, they should wash their hands again for a minimum of 20 seconds or apply sanitiser; it is advisable that disposable paper towels are used to dry hands. They should place the pyx onto the table which should be away from the sick person. The service should be short and any Ritual Text should be printed on a once-only use card or paper. During the service, the minister should remain at 2m distance from the sick or housebound person. They should only approach the sick person to give them Holy Communion in the hand. They should then withdraw to 2m and place the pyx immediately into a sealable plastic bag.

They should wash their hands again before leaving the home or apply hand sanitiser, and when in their own home, they should sterilise the pyx by washing it in hot water with a neutral soap, and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5eb967e286650c2791ec7100/working-safely-during-covid-19-other-peoples-homes-200812.pdf>

drying it thoroughly. The Ritual Text should be disposed of carefully (either by bagging and disposal or by burning).

In order to minimise contact time between the visitor and those in the house, offers of refreshments made by the household to the visitor should be politely declined.

Rev. Canon Christopher Thomas  
21<sup>st</sup> August 2020  
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