

Helpful Information for Ordinary and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion Related to Persons with Disabilities

Ordinary and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are encouraged to become familiar with the needs of their parishioners. Being mindful of children and adults with disabilities and planning for needed accommodations is encouraged. Along with individuals with intellectual physical, sensory and behavioral developmental disabilities, there are disabilities caused by illness, accident and aging. Accommodations at times are needed to provide effective access to the Sacraments.

Please be mindful that:

- Many children and adults with significant disabilities do receive Holy Communion. If the parent/companion with the individual gives you a nod that is an indication that the person is properly prepared. For some with swallowing issues the person or companion may also indicate to give only a small fragment of the host.
- The aging condition or types of disabilities may cause movement that makes the frequency of dropping the consecrated host increase. If this happens, keeping a calm and respectful demeanor, the Minister of Communion should pick up the host and consume it at a later time. If this is a common occurrence a conversation with the communicant or parent/companion may be able to assist in a strategy that makes this less likely to occur.
- Fidgeting, vocalizations, repetitive movements may be part of the disability. Calmness and patience is helpful. Giving the child/adult with a disability a little extra time to go through the steps of approaching, placing their hands or tongue in the position to receive and saying/signing Amen may be the needed accommodation. Persons who are deaf or have communication disabilities may not voice the Amen response.
- Parishioners with mobility disabilities and wheelchair users may choose to approach the altar at the Communion Procession or they may prefer to have the Communion Minister come to a designated seating area. Parishes can plan for these options in a variety of ways.
- Every effort should be made for those who receive a consecrated low-gluten host to be a part of the Communion Procession without making unnecessary distinctions among communicants. (See full guidelines at www.odwphiladelphia.org)

Other accommodations may be needed. The Office for Divine Worship and the Office for Persons with Disabilities have helpful resources on their website and are also available to assist so that persons with disabilities are welcomed to full participation in the Sacraments.