



## SAINT JOHN FISHER PARISH

March 15, 2016

Dear Parishioners:

In the early years of my priesthood, only priests and deacons could distribute Holy Communion. And there weren't many deacons then. So on the first Friday of the month, the priests would spend a good part of the day bringing Holy Communion to those who, due to illness, were unable to come to Mass at Church. We usually started after morning Mass and finished in the late afternoon. This also meant that the sick received Holy Communion only once a month.

In the 1970s, Rome issued an indult that authorized lay persons to distribute Holy Communion. They were called Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. Soon after Cardinal Timothy Manning promulgated it for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Not only did this take the burden off the priests on First Fridays, but it enabled the sick to receive Communion more regularly, usually every Sunday and in some cases even during the week.

We are blessed with a group of dedicated Eucharistic Ministers here at St. John Fisher. In order to connect the Sunday worshiping community with those who are homebound, there is a ritual during Mass. During the Communion rite, the Eucharistic Minister places on the altar a communion vessel, called a pyx, with a tag indicating how many hosts to place in it. Once the hosts are placed in the various pyxes, the pyxes are left on the altar. Then just before the final blessing, the celebrant calls the Eucharistic ministers to the altar. They take their particular pyx and secure it in a case around their neck. Then the celebrant formally dismisses them to carry it to the sick who could not be with the community for Mass.

From there the Eucharistic Ministers drive to the various homes and institutions where our homebound parishioners live. In the case of large places like The Canterbury and Belmont Village, there is a common ritual for the residents. The Scriptures are read and they receive Holy Communion. In homes it is done individually. A more recent innovation is the livestreaming of the 9:00 Mass. We have arranged to provide the homebound with a device that enables them to view the Mass either while it is taking place or later on. This enables them to see the Mass celebrated from their parish church.

We have presently over 80 homebound parishioners who need to receive Communion. Of that number, 14 are at The Canterbury, 14 at Belmont Village, and the rest in private homes. There are presently 28 Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to the Homebound. Three years ago there were 43. The need has risen over the years, but the number of volunteers to help in this special ministry has dropped. Too few are carrying the burden. I am asking you to consider being a part of this special ministry. If you should be interested, give me a call, and I'll explain it further.

During this Jubilee Year of Mercy, be mindful that one of the works of mercy is visiting the sick. Jesus said, "I was ill, and you cared for me....Amen, I say to you, whatever you did to these least brothers of mine, you did for me." (Mt 25:36, 40) Be a minister of mercy.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Msgr. David A. Sork