530.5 SPECIAL MINISTERS OF COMMUNION IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Updated December 2001

Introduction:

The distribution of Holy Communion within the Catholic tradition is a privileged ministry of service to the community. It is essential that Special Ministers of Communion have suitable formation and training worthy of this ministry.

Guidelines:

1. The Archdiocesan document One Bread. One Cup. (1996) should be consulted. It is available from The Liturgical Commission at the Catholic Centre, 143 Edward Street, Brisbane. The document provides directions for parish communities on the appointment of Special Ministers of Communion. This document is based upon the teachings and liturgical practices of the Universal Church. It is imperative for Catholic school communities to align their liturgical practices with the guidelines established for the Archdiocese.

2. Each Catholic school is to ensure that it has a number of suitably formed and trained Catholic staff to assist as Special Ministers of Communion and who are designated to this ministry within the school community. It is preferable that such staff already be Special Ministers within a parish community. Where this is not the case in parish schools, the pastor is to be consulted on the process for training and designating adequately prepared persons for this ministry. Secondary schools are to consult with the pastor in which the school is geographically located or with the school chaplain.

3. One way that Catholic schools may highlight the importance of this ministry within the Church, and also build stronger links with the parish community, is to involve designated Special Ministers from the parish in school celebrations of the Eucharist. Thus the school may have no designated Special Ministers of its own, but seek involvement of the ministers of the parish. It is recognised that this may not always be possible for secondary schools.

4. When Catholic schools celebrate the Eucharist, there may be occasions when there are genuine needs for Special Ministers of Communion to assist the priest. Special Ministers are to be assigned to this ministry in the planning phase of the celebrations and not immediately prior to the celebrations or during the liturgy itself. The celebrant should always be informed prior to the celebration of the
Eucharist of the Special Ministers and the procedures for the distribution of Communion.

5. Some secondary schools may wish to encourage senior students to participate in this ministry. The guidelines in *One Bread. One Cup.* are to be followed, particularly in relation to suitability, training and the ability of students to "function with dignity" as a Special Minister of Communion in a school setting. Some senior students may already be designated Special Ministers in parishes. Schools may wish to designate them to this ministry in the school setting. Where secondary schools do offer appropriate training and formation strategies for senior students, the student’s pastor should be approached for comment upon the suitability of the student for this ministry. The pastor may indicate the relationship of the student to the worshipping community and/or he may wish to extend this ministry to suitable students within the parish setting.

6. No primary school student should act as a Special Minister of Communion.