

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION AT MASS

Norms & Guidelines

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Parish, Richmond, IN

General Principles

The Holy Mass is a commemoration of Christ's Passover. At every Mass, the one sacrifice of Christ offered once and for all on the cross remains ever present and the work of our redemption is carried out. The Holy Mass is a sacrifice in the most real way because it re-presents (makes present) the sacrifice of the cross. (see CCC 1364-1366). The priest offers the Eucharist *in persona totius Ecclesiae* (in the person of the community, i.e. liturgical prayers) and *in personal Christi* (in the person of Christ, i.e. consecration of the bread and wine)

In every celebration of the Eucharist, there should be a sufficient number of ministers of Holy Communion so that it may be distributed in a reverent and orderly manner. Bishops, priests and deacons distribute Holy Communion in virtue of their office as ordinary ministers of the Body and Blood of the Lord.

When the size of the congregation or the incapacity of the bishop, priest, or deacon requires it, the celebrant may be assisted by other bishops, priests, or deacons. If such ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are not present, "the priest may call upon extraordinary ministers to assist him, i.e., duly instituted acolytes or even other faithful who have been deputed for this purpose. In case of necessity, the priest may also depute suitable faithful for this single occasion (GIRM 162)."

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should receive sufficient spiritual, theological, and practical preparation to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence. In all matters they should follow the guidance of the diocesan bishop (*Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds for the Dioceses of the United States of America*, NDRHC, no. 28).

When recourse is had to Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, especially in the distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds, their number should not be increased beyond what is required for the orderly and reverent distribution of the Body and Blood of the Lord. In all matters such Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should follow the guidance of the diocesan bishop (IBID). All ministers of Holy Communion should show the greatest reverence for the Most Holy Eucharist by their demeanor, their attire, and the manner in which they handle the consecrated bread or wine. Should there be any mishap--as when, for example, the consecrated wine is spilled from the chalice--then the affected area should be washed and the water poured into the *sacrarium* [GIRM, 280]."

Liturgy of the Eucharist:

As the *Agnus Dei* or *Lamb of God* is begun, the Bishop or priest alone, or with the assistance of the deacon, and if necessary of concelebrating priests, breaks the Eucharistic bread. Other empty ciboria or patens are then brought to the altar if this is necessary. The deacon or priest places the consecrated bread in several ciboria or patens, if necessary, as required for the distribution of Holy Communion. If it is not possible to accomplish this distribution in a reasonable time, the celebrant may call upon the assistance of other deacons or concelebrating priests.

If extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are required by pastoral need, *they should not approach the altar before the priest has received Communion*. After the priest has concluded his own Communion, he distributes Communion to the extraordinary ministers, assisted by the deacon, and then hands the sacred vessels to them for distribution of Holy Communion to the people.

All receive Holy Communion in the manner described by the *General Instruction to the Roman Missal*, whether priest concelebrants (cf. GIRM, nos. 159, 242, 243, 246), deacons (cf. GIRM, nos. 182, 244, 246), or Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (cf. GIRM, no. 284). Neither deacons nor lay ministers may ever receive Holy Communion in the manner of a concelebrating priest.

After all Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion have received the Eucharist, the bishop or priest celebrant reverently hands vessels containing the Body or the Blood of the Lord to the deacons or extraordinary ministers who will assist with the distribution of Holy Communion. The deacon may assist the priest in handing the vessels containing the Body and Blood of the Lord to the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. (NDRHC, 40).

The proper and only permissible form for distributing Holy Communion is to offer the consecrated bread by saying, "The Body of Christ" and to offer the consecrated wine by saying, "The Blood of Christ." No other words or names should be added; and the formula should not be edited in any way. (Cf. GIRM, 161; 284-287).

If the Eucharistic bread or some particle of it falls, it should be picked up reverently by the minister. The consecrated bread may be consumed or completely dissolved in water before being poured down the *sacrarium*.

Should there be any mishap, for example, if the consecrated wine is spilled from the chalice, the area should be washed and the water poured into the *sacrarium*.

In those instances when there remains more consecrated wine than was necessary, if needs dictate, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may consume what remains of the Precious Blood from their cup of distribution with the permission of the diocesan bishop. The sacred vessels are to be purified by the priest, the deacon or an instituted acolyte. The amount of wine to be consecrated should be carefully measured before the celebration so that none remains afterward. It is strictly forbidden to pour the Precious Blood into the ground or into the *sacrarium*. (NDRHC, 51-55).

Similarly, "consecrated hosts are to be reserved in a ciborium or vessel in sufficient quantity for the needs of the faithful; they are to be frequently renewed and the old hosts properly consumed" (*Code of Canon Law*, no. 939). *Burying hosts or consecrated Eucharistic bread is strictly forbidden*.

[Based upon Roman Missal Formational Materials provided by the Secretariat for the Liturgy of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "2010.]

Selection of EMHC for a parish and their preparation

- The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) and Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in USA, refer consistently to "Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion" – EMHC we may abbreviate as CM.
- This function is to be understood strictly according to the name by which it is known, that is to say, that of Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, and not "special minister of Holy Communion," nor "extraordinary minister of the Eucharist," nor "special minister of the Eucharist," nor "Eucharistic Minister," by which names the meaning of the ministry is unnecessarily and improperly broadened. A simple way to refer to this role is ministers of Holy Communion.
- Since the Eucharist is the "action of the whole Church" (GIRM, Intro. 5), all of us have an "individual right and duty to contribute" (GIRM, 58). Some are called to do so in a more particular way through liturgical ministries, such as Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, Lector, or Altar Server.
- "The persons who have been appointed to be Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are necessarily to be duly instructed and should distinguish themselves by Christian life, faith, and morals. Let them strive to be worthy of this great office; Let them cultivate devotion to the Holy Eucharist and show themselves as examples to the other faithful by their piety and reverence for this most holy Sacrament of the altar. Let no one be chosen whose selection may cause scandal among the faithful" (*Immensae Caritatis*, #6, 1973).
- Being in communion with the Church is important as the Holy Mass is the sacrament of unity.

- Dress Code: At a minimum, “business casual” is recommended. At greater feasts, more formal attire may be appropriate.

Guidelines for EMHC at Mass:

- After exchanging peace, come forward and stand at the altar steps. Once, you are away from your pew, do not exchange peace with your fellow EMHC.
- After the priest and the deacon consume the sacred body and blood of Christ, move forward to the altar.
- Ministers of cup: stand on the left side of priest
- Ministers of bread: stand on the right side of priest
- Ministers of cup should distribute to the ministers of bread
- After you receive the communion, always wait to receive the bowl/cup from the deacon/priest – Do not take it directly from the altar.
- While distributing: Say, “the body of Christ” or “the blood of Christ” – no other words. Please avoid mentioning the names of people.
- For those who come to receive a blessing, say “May you have the peace of Christ,” or “May you receive Jesus in your hearts,” for children, say “Jesus loves you,”
- If you reasonably doubt that someone is not a Catholic, please refrain from giving them the communion, instead offer a blessing – it is always better not to give than to give to someone who might not consume. At the same time, DO NOT refuse to give to someone who is ready to receive it by saying “Amen”.
- Consume the remaining wine at where you are standing, do not drink as you walk.
- Always approach the altar through your left side as you face the altar [try not go through your right side, making a full circle as you return, neither place the cups/bowls from the front] and place the cups on the left (Ambo side) side of the altar.
- Please keep the purificators folded; do not place them over/inside the cup, instead place them by the side. Always folded! Return to your pew.

Guidelines for EMHC at hospital/home:

1. Hand your pyx to the Deacon/sacristans before mass so she/he gets them on to the altar before mass (optional) if you would choose to do so.
2. When you take communion to the hospital or home straight from the church, please do so as quick as possible – Do not go elsewhere or keep the blessed sacrament in your car or in your homes. STRICTLY FORBIDDEN.
3. If for some reason you are not able to go, please do not ask someone else to do. Return the blessed sacrament to the Deacon/priest so they can do it themselves.
4. At homes/hospitals please say the usual prayers in order to prepare the communicants.
5. Please consume the remaining immediately after you are done distributing communion at the place where you go. Do not keep the remaining blessed sacrament in your car or homes. STRICTLY FORBIDDEN.

Thank you for your commitment in being communion ministers. May God bless you and enrich your hearts in the holy mysteries that we are so privileged to celebrate.

In love of Christ and his Holy Church,



Fr. Sengole T. Gnanaraj