

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHCs)

History: On January 29, 1973, the instruction *Immensae Caritatis* (ee-men-say carry-tot-ees) was issued by Pope Paul VI. With this instruction, the diocesan bishop was given permission to designate lay men and women to distribute the Eucharist as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. It stated that "...this faculty may be used whenever there is no priest, deacon or instituted acolyte present, or when the ordinary minister is prevented from administering Communion because of other pastoral obligations, ill health, or advanced age, or when the number of the faithful is so great that, unless Extraordinary Ministers assist in the distribution, the celebration would be unduly prolonged."

The Mass is a celebration of the Word and the Eucharist. The Eucharist is a time to share Christ's gift – His Body, and Blood, with members of the parish. An Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (EMHC) has a special role – to share Christ's Body and Blood with those receiving Communion. An EMHC (also called a Communion Minister - CM) is truly holding the Body and the Blood of Jesus Christ. The bread and wine are consecrated by the Priest during the Eucharistic prayer, and as enshrined in the Church's doctrine of transubstantiation, are changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. The actions of the CM should always reflect the special nature of this vital and sacred ministry. This is the one lay ministry during the Mass that is restricted to confirmed and practicing Catholics.

One further note. There is only one Eucharistic Minister at Mass - the celebrant. Priests and Deacons are the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion. The lay faithful are deemed extraordinary ministers.

Guiding Principle: To aid in the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass and to the sick and home bound when ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are unavailable. Ordinarily, CMs do not perform any other liturgical ministry at the Mass at which they serve as an CM. CMs are expected to be committed to Christ and to Catholic belief and practice, be in good standing with the Church, be dedicated to the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, and faithfully fulfill their role as CMs.

Practical Obligations and updates to previous instructions –

1. Dress appropriately considering the reverence for this special role.

2. CM's should make their way to the altar area immediately following the Sign of Peace – do not wait for the "Lamb of God" Sequence.
3. When approaching the altar, please try to do so together, and bow once you step into the altar area (on the carpet), before proceeding to your place - one on each side.
4. Please wait until after the celebrant has received Communion and placed the chalice down before stepping up to the altar.
5. The celebrant will offer Communion to the deacon, if present, and then to CMs.
6. Upon receiving the ciborium from the celebrant or deacon, CM should depart from the altar area and take the Communion station behind the altar rail not occupied by the celebrant or deacon.
7. When distributing Communion:
 - The distribution is accompanied only by the words, "The Body of Christ" or "The Blood of Christ" as appropriate. Do not add other words such as, "Receive" or "This is".
 - CMs are reminded they **DO NOT** offer blessings (make the sign of the cross or extend your hand) over those who come forward but are not receiving Communion. The CM may offer a simple phrase, such as "Peace be with you" or "God Bless You", or "Jesus loves you", for example.
8. Upon completion of the distribution, CMs return their ciboria to the altar and immediately return to their seats. No need to wait for the priest or deacon to dismiss you.
9. CMs are reminded to return to their seats via the side aisles.

Communion for those with unique communion requirements such as low-gluten Host or solely the Precious Blood will be handled by the celebrant or deacon.