



Our Lady of Perpetual Help

Policies & Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

VISION: Our Lady of Perpetual Help is an inviting and welcoming community that is committed to deepening our relationship with Jesus Christ through the Sacramental graces we receive so as to bring all to know, love and serve our God.

Revised: 6.4.15

Extraordinary Eucharistic Ministers of Holy Communion

- I. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion - Brief Theology and History of Eucharist
- II. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion - Description, Requirements, Function, Formation and Training
- III. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion - Commissioning, Length of Service, Reverence and Attire
- [IV.](#) Procedures for Distribution
- V. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion - Sample Rite of Commissioning
- VI. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion - Bibliography and Publishers of Resources
- VII. Appendix



Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church & Academy

June 4, 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

"But you are a 'chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises' of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light".

All liturgical ministers are, first and foremost, members of the Body of Christ. Through their baptism they are the "holy people and royal priesthood" whose right and privilege it is to participate in the ministry of Christ. How the lay faithful exercise this ministry in the world varies, but the fullest and most fundamental expression of it has always been "conscious, active and fruitful participation in the mystery of the Eucharist" (General Instruction Of The Roman Missal - GIRM, Introduction #5).

Since the celebration of the Eucharist is the "action of the whole Church" (GIRM, Introduction #5), everyone in the assembly has "an individual right and duty to contribute their participation" (GIRM #58). Some of the faithful are called to serve God's people in a more particular way through one of the many liturgical ministries that have flourished in the Church since the Second Vatican Council. This diversity of roles, functions and ministries enriches our celebrations and assists us in our prayer. Serving in one of these ministries is both an honor and a responsibility, and those who commit to it need nurturing and support. This handbook has been prepared to help you grow in a deeper understanding and love for the liturgy, your ministry and ultimately the Lord whom we all serve.

In Jesus' Love,

Fr. Frank X. Martinez, STL

I. Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion Theology

Introduction

The ordinary Minister of Holy Communion is a bishop, priest or deacon (canon 910, n. 1). However, other members of the faithful, known as Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, may be commissioned to assist with the distribution of the Sacrament as needed (canons 230, n. 3 and 910, n. 2).

The following are guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion serving at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in the Diocese of Corpus Christi. This new text reflects changes in both the universal law governing the Eucharist, as well as the particular law for the United States, and the Sacramental Guidelines and it must be read and interpreted in a way harmonious with these texts.

Theological Content

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, “The Eucharist is a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Father, a blessing by which the Church expresses her gratitude to God for all his benefits, for all that he has accomplished through creation, redemption and sanctification” (CCC 1360).

Catholics actively participate in the Eucharist as the source and summit of their Christian life. This active participation manifests itself by:

- gathering with a community of believers each Sunday and Holy Day,
- praying together at Mass in word, gesture and song,
- listening together to God’s Word,
- giving thanks and praise to God together for the gifts of creation, and in a special way, for the gift of Jesus Christ—his life, death and resurrection, and sharing in and becoming the Body of Christ through reception of Holy Eucharist at Mass.

Catholics believe that through active participation in the Mass and in a special way, through the reception of Holy Communion at Mass, they are filled with the real presence of Christ, and are therefore sent to be Christ’s presence in the world until he comes again in glory. St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo, put it this way in the 5th century:

What you see...is bread and a cup. This is what your eyes report to you. But your faith has need to be taught that the bread is the body of Christ, the cup the blood of Christ...If then, you wish to understand the body of Christ, listen to the Apostle as he says to the faithful, “You are the body of Christ and His members”...You reply “Amen” to that which you are, and by replying you consent... Be a member of the body of Christ so that your “Amen” may be true... Be what you see, and receive what you are”.

Centuries later St. Thomas Aquinas gave us an explanation of how this mystery happens. He called it *transubstantiation*. By that he meant that the “accidents” (the visible reality) of bread and wine remain, but the “substance” is changed into Christ’s Body and Blood.

This has also come to be understood as what Catholics mean by the “real presence” of Christ in the Eucharist.

The Church has always celebrated and revered the Eucharist. In its early history the members of the Christian community did what Jesus told them to do - they took and ate and drank knowing in faith that this was indeed a sharing in the Body and Blood of Christ.

The sacred bread was taken in hand and the sacred cup was shared by all. As time went on and the Church no longer consisted of members who had actually seen and known the Lord, and for many cultural and historical reasons, Eucharistic practices slowly began to change. By the 9th century the language of the Mass was no longer that of the people, as it was in the early Church. The altar table was moved from the midst of the people to the back wall of the church. The presider no longer faced the people as he led them in prayer. The Eucharist became so removed from the people that the Christian community came to see themselves as unworthy of this precious gift, even though they were baptized and redeemed by the Lord. Few people received Holy Communion, and only then on the tongue. By the 13th century the cup was no longer shared with the people. As a result of these and other practices, the people’s main contact with the Eucharist was through the elevation of the Eucharistic species which was actually added to the Mass. For the people this elevation was their opportunity to “receive” for “seeing” became “receiving.” Jesus’ command to his followers to “take and eat, and take and drink” seemed to no longer apply to all believers.

In modern times, the event which began to change this approach to the Eucharist was the election of Pope Pius X in 1903. Pope Pius X knew the great importance of the command of Jesus that believers “take and eat” that he changed the practice of the Church. No longer did a person have to wait until the age of 14 or 15 to be eligible to share in Holy Communion. Children who reached the age of reason, usually about 7 years old, were now welcomed to the altar table of the Lord. By bringing the children to the altar table, Pope Pius X also brought with them their parents and grandparents. Through this action participation in Holy Communion began to be returned to all believers.

Pope John XXIII convened Vatican Council II in 1962. The Council’s first document was *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. This fundamental teaching of the Church opened even further the understanding of the Eucharist and many of the practices regarding it. On May 29, 1969, in the document *Memoriale Domini* the Church gave permission for the faithful to return to the ancient ritual practice of receiving Holy Communion in the hand and the practice went into effect in the United States on November 20, 1977. Lay people could now receive Holy Communion reverently, either on their tongue or in their hand. About this practice, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem wrote in the 4th century: “Make your left hand a throne for your right, because your right is going to receive the King; make a hollow of your palm and receive the body of Christ, saying after it: ‘Amen!’ ... Then, after you have partaken of the body of Christ, come forward to the chalice of His blood...”

On January 29, 1973, the instruction *Immensae Caritatis* 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 Extra-Ordinary Ministers assist in the distribution, the celebration would be unduly prolonged.” It should also be noted that when Communion under Both Kinds is offered, the deacon, if present at Mass, is the ordinary minister of the Sacred Cup.

II. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion - Description, Requirements, Functions, Formation and Training

Description

Extraordinary Ministers for the distribution of Holy Communion are properly formed, instructed and commissioned lay persons. EM's may be male or female. They should reflect the cultural diversity of our parish community. These ministers are commissioned for Our Lady of Perpetual Help community, to aid in the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass and to the sick and homebound when ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are unavailable.

EM's are not to function apart from their parish community. Ordinarily, EM's do not perform any other liturgical ministry at the Mass at which they serve as an EM. When the situation requires, the presider of the Mass may call upon members of the faithful who are not EM's to aid him in the distribution of Holy Communion on that one occasion. Those called must be Catholics in good standing whom are themselves able to receive the Eucharist.

As the Church teaches, the bishop is the chief liturgist of his diocese. For this reason, the Bishop of the Diocese of Corpus Christi regulates this ministry and all other liturgical ministries in collaboration with the pastors of the parishes of the Diocese and its Catholic institutions.

Requirements

The following conditions are required for Application as Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (EM).

1. Registered, baptized, confirmed, and participating member in the sacramental life of our parish
2. Eighteen years of age or older
3. Having responded to the call of Eucharistic Ministry
4. Meeting with pastor, parochial vicar or deacon for interview of desire.
5. Must be involved in at least one spiritual renewal program such as bible studies and/or attend a retreat to advance his/hers spiritual awareness.
6. It is mandatory that he/she attend a Liturgical workshop once a year.
7. Must be willing to take the Eucharist to a homebound, hospital or institution of our parish.

Function

The ministers are mandated by reason of pastoral need in the community in which they are called to serve as an extension of the service of the priest. This privilege is not for them, but for the community in need.

Besides service at the celebration of the Mass, the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion must also serve the needs of the shut-ins, sick and homebound of the parish.

Formation and Training

Prior to beginning their ministry, EM's should be informed and trained in the following:

- Theology of the Eucharist and understanding of the Mass
- Theology and spirituality of ministry
- Universal church, diocesan and parish guidelines and procedures for their ministry. EM's should participate in ongoing theological and ministerial formation at the parish and/or diocesan level.

The Formation content will occur in a series of three Orientation Sessions.

III. Classes

INTRODUCTION: A thorough orientation will be provided to all candidates accepted as an EM. This orientation will be presented over several sessions and in a group learning context. Following the orientation, the individual will have opportunity to "shadow" an experienced EM at Mass or while visiting patients, if desired. This opportunity will continue until the individual is comfortable in their ministry.

1. Session One: Doctrine and Sacramental Review

- A. Welcome and Opening Prayer
- B. Introductions
 1. Information form
 2. EM Checklist review
 3. Diocesan File Record form
 4. EM Guidelines
- C. The Purpose/History of the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion
- D. Basic Catechesis on the Sacraments with emphases on the Most Holy Eucharist, the Mass and the Liturgical Year
- E. Preview of next session
- F. Closing prayer

2. Session Two: Practical Instruction

- A. Welcome and Opening Prayer
- B. Quick review of last session
- C. Review of Sacred Vessels
- D. Practical Instruction on distribution of Holy Communion in a Hospital & Homebound Setting
- E. Proper care of the Eucharist
- F. Preview of next session
- G. Closing prayer

3. Session Three: Practicum

- A. Quick review of last session
- B. General Questions
- C. Role Play
- D. Schedule Commissioning Ceremony for Sunday Mass

IV. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion - Commissioning, Length of Service, Reverence and Attire

Commissioning

After preparation for this ministry is completed, a formal commissioning of EM's takes place during a Mass setting presided by our pastor. EM's are to exercise their ministry only in our parish or institution they have been delegated by the pastor. An "Order for the Commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion" can be found in the Book of Blessings, Ch. 63. *(see also a sample rite at the end of this material)*

Length of Service

Since ministry is a call both from God and the community in which it is exercised, it is appropriate that the choice of ministry and renewal of the term of service be mutually agreed upon by the individual and parish. EM's will serve for a period of three (3) years, after which time an evaluation should occur. This evaluation may lead to a determination that the minister:

- be re-commissioned as an EM for another term,
- is being called to another ministry,
- leave ministry all together at this time.

It is helpful that our parish keep accurate records of each EM's training, ongoing formation and their term(s) of service.

Reverence and Attire

EM's show utmost reverence for the Eucharist. A neat and reverential appearance is in keeping with the minister's role and belief in the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Therefore:

- Make sure your clothes are clean and neat.
- Wear minimal jewelry to focus on the Body of Christ.
- Please do not wear any perfume, cologne, or after-shave when you are homebound or visiting patients.
- Please wash hands before and after serving

V. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion - Sample Rite of Commissioning

(Adapted from the "Order for the Commissioning of Extra-Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion," as found in the Book of Blessings)

Persons designated for the administration of Communion in special circumstances should be commissioned by the diocesan bishop or his delegate (Immensae Caritatis, nos. 1, 6). The rite should be celebrated in the presence of the people during Mass or outside Mass. The pastor is the usual minister of this rite. However, he may delegate another priest to celebrate it, or a deacon when it is celebrated outside Mass.

Order of Commissioning During Mass - Presentation of the Candidates

After the homily the presider explains the reason for this ministry and the meaning of the celebration, and then presents those chosen to serve as Extra-Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to the people, using these or similar words:

Dear friends in Christ,

Our sisters and brothers (N. and N.) are being entrusted with the important duty of administering the Eucharist, with taking Communion to the sick, and with giving it as viaticum to the dying.

The presider pauses, and then addresses the candidates:

In this ministry, you, my sisters and brothers, must be examples of the Christian life, taking your faith ever more seriously and striving to grow in holiness through this sacrament of love and unity. Remember that, though we are many, we who share this one bread and one cup become one body in Christ Jesus.

As ministers of Holy Communion, be, therefore, especially observant of the Lord's command to love your neighbor. For when he gave his body as food to his disciples, he told them: "This is my commandment: Love one another as I have loved you."

Examination:

After the address, the candidates stand in front of the presider, who asks:

Are you resolved to administer the body and blood of the Lord to your brothers and sisters, and so serve to build up the Church?

R/. I am.

Are you resolved to administer the Holy Eucharist with utmost care and reverence?

R/. I am.

Prayer of Blessing:

The assembly stands. The presider invites all present to pray:

Dear friends in Christ, let us pray with confidence to God our Father; let us ask that these our brothers and sisters who have been chosen to be ministers of the Eucharist may be filled with God's blessings.

All pray silently for a brief period.

Gracious God, creator and guide of your family, bless + our brothers and sisters (N. and N.). May they give the bread of life and cup of salvation to your faithful people, be strengthened and comforted by it, and one day share in the everlasting banquet of heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R/. **Amen.**

The Prayer of the Faithful:

An invocation for the newly commissioned ministers and/or those to whom they will minister should be added to the Prayer of the Faithful such as:

For our ministers of Holy Communion, that they witness to the saving mystery of Christ by their deep faith in the Eucharist and by love of their neighbor, let us pray to the Lord...

For the sick who will share in Holy Communion through these ministers, that Christ heal and strengthen them, we pray to the Lord...

For the dying who will share in Holy Communion through these ministers, that as they receive the food for their final journey; Christ may welcome them into heaven, we pray to the Lord...

Liturgy of the Eucharist:

In the procession at the presentation of gifts, some of the newly commissioned ministers carry the vessels with the bread and wine to the altar. At Communion they receive the Eucharist under both kinds.

VI. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion - Bibliography and Publishers of Resources

- The Liturgy Documents: A Parish Resource, Vol.1, 4th ed. (English and Spanish) Liturgy Training Publications (LTP) , 2004
- Pastoral Care of the Sick (bi-lingual). (LTP and MACC), 1986
- Communion of the Sick. The Liturgical Press, 1984.

Books

- Fleming, Austin. Preparing for Liturgy. LTP, 1997.
- Foley, Ed. From Age to Age: How Eucharist was Celebrated Throughout the Ages. LTP, 1991.
- Gaillardetz, Richard. Broken and Poured Out: A Spirituality for Eucharistic Ministers. Ligouri 2002.
- Huck, Gabe. Liturgy with Style and Grace. (English and Spanish) LTP, rev. 1998.
- Hughes, Kathleen. Saying Amen: A Mystagogy of Sacrament. LTP, 1999.
- Johnson, Lawrence J. The Mystery of Faith. FDLC, rev. 2003.
- Kwatera, Michael. The Ministry of Communion. Liturgical Press, 2004.
- LTP and MACC, Los Ministros de la Comunión a los Enfermos. LTP, 2002.
- LaVerdiere, Eugene. Comer en el Reino de Dios. LTP
- Mahony, Cardinal. Gather Faithfully Together: Guide for Sunday Mass. (English and Spanish) LTP, 1997.
- Mick, Lawrence. Worshipping Well. Liturgical Press, 1997.

Periodicals

- Rite, LTP
- Liturgical Catechesis, Resource Publications
- Liturgical Ministry, Liturgical Press
- Ministry and Liturgy, Resource Publications
- Parish Life, Celebration Publications
- Pastoral Music, National Association of Pastoral Musicians (NPM)

Pamphlets

- National Pastoral Life Center, “Dos & Don’ts for Eucharistic Ministers”

Videos, Audios, CDs

- A History of the Mass. (video) (English and Spanish) (LTP)
- The Roman Catholic Mass Today. (video) (English and Spanish) (LTP)
- Say Amen to What You Are: The Communion Rite. (video) (LTP)
- The Eucharist as Mystagogy. (5 volume CD) (WLP)
- Training the Eucharistic Minister. (video) (Liturgical Press)

Publishers of Liturgical Resources

- Celebration Publications 1-816-531-0538 www.celebrationseries.org
- Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions (FDLC) 1-202-635-6990 www.fdlc.org
- GIA Publications 1-800-GIA-1358 www.giamusic.com
- Ligouri Publications 1-800-325-9521 www.ligouri.org
- Liturgy Training Publications (LTP) 1-800-933-1800 www.ltp.org
- Liturgical Press 1-800-858-5450 www.litpress.org
- National Association of Pastoral Musicians 1-240-247-3000 www.npm.org

- National Pastoral Life Center 1-212-431-7825 Fax: 1-212-274-9786
- Oregon Catholic Press (OCP) 1-800-548-8749 www.ocp.org
- Resource Publications 1-888-273-7782 www.rpinet.com
- World Library Publications (WLP) 1-800-566-6150 www.wlpmusic.com

VII. Appendix

Celiac-Sprue Disease and the Eucharist

In recent years pastors have received questions from those afflicted with various manifestations of gluten intolerance, such as Celiac-Sprue disease. These questions are in regard to the reception of Holy Communion. Many gluten-intolerant sufferers are unable to ingest wheat flour commonly used in the preparation of communion wafers in the United States. Here are some common questions and answers.

1. Can a person with gluten intolerance receive Communion?

The common advice given to many Celiac-Sprue sufferers and gluten-intolerant patients is to receive only the Precious Blood at Holy Communion. However, even then, the Precious Blood must be carefully ministered to make sure it has not been contaminated with gluten during the commingling rite when the presider places a particle of the host in the chalice, or at any other time. A separate vessel of wine should be reserved for a gluten-intolerant communicant and care should be taken that the wine does not come into any contact with hosts or particles of hosts. The separate vessel of wine can be placed on the altar when the gifts are prepared during Mass.

2. May bread or a wafer made of rice flour be used?

No, because rice wafers are invalid matter for Eucharist according to the *Code of Canon Law* (#924.4). The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) has ruled in 2003 that a completely gluten-free host is invalid matter for the sacrament.

3. Are there any low-gluten hosts that can be used?

The CDF has determined that a low-gluten host is valid matter for Eucharist. As of January 1, 2005, the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration of Clyde, Missouri have developed a truly low gluten host. This product is the only true, low-gluten hosts known to the USCCB Secretariat on the Liturgy and approved for Mass in the United States. The total gluten content of this product is 37 micrograms or 0.01%. It contains unleavened wheat and water and is free of additives. Many gluten-intolerant persons may be able to consume it, or some portion of it. However, sufferers are strongly advised to check with their personal physicians in advance.