

St. Anthony de Padua
Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

It is a sacred responsibility and a beautiful privilege to minister the Body and Blood of the Lord to your fellow Catholics. It is a role ordinarily reserved to those who are ordained, but when a large congregation of faithful is present and when both species (host and the chalice) are to be offered, you are asked to be extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. In fulfilling this ministry, there are things to remember before Mass, during Mass, after Mass, and at all times.

Before Mass:

When are assigned as a Eucharistic minister, you should dress neatly and modestly, and avoid clothing or decor which might draw attention to yourself, and thus be a distraction. You should arrive prior to the beginning of Mass (and not rush in at the last minute), come to the sacristy and check in, say a prayer, and then seat yourself in a place which makes access to the sanctuary/altar easy and unobtrusive.

During Mass:

Once the sign of peace has been exchanged and the Lamb of God is being sung or recited (your cue), you should make your way to the sanctuary/altar. You are to gather together in a line on the left or right side of the altar. As you approach make a simple bow before receiving each species; we teach best by doing, and when members of the congregation see this, they will follow your lead. Extraordinary ministers should therefore not enter into the sanctuary until the celebrant has received both the Body and Blood of Christ. Extraordinary ministers may, however, come forward during the singing of the Agnus Dei and discreetly wait outside the sanctuary steps (and if feasible, remain kneeling with the rest of the congregation) until the celebrant has received both the Body and Blood of Christ.¹ It is also a commendable recent practice for extraordinary ministers discreetly to apply hand sanitizer prior to entering the sanctuary, for the sake of hygiene.

Once the priest has consumed from the chalice, he will begin to minister communion to the Eucharistic ministers. If there is no priest or deacon assisting, the first minister to receive the Body will also be given the Lord's Blood. Once you have received, a ciborium (which contains the consecrated hosts) or a chalice (and a purificator, the napkin which you will use to wipe the cup) will be handed to you by the priest or deacon; you are then to go directly to one of the positions.

While you are carrying the Blessed Sacrament, you are not to stop, visit, engage in conversation of the like. You have a sacred duty to fulfill and the way you carry yourself and the way you handle the ciborium and chalice reflect our belief in the real presence. If you are to minister the Lord's Body, to each communicant who comes forward, you are to present the host and say simply "the Body of Christ." If you are ministering the chalice, you are to present it and say

¹ Revised rules for EMHC for Diocese of FWSB 2013; Jan 28, 2013 (#30)
<http://www.diocesefwsb.org/Data/Resources/344ab45a1befdc0704c9b4e11c9e6703-EMHC-Norms-FW-SB.pdf>

simply, “the Blood of Christ” (once the person returns the chalice to you, carefully wipe the lip of the cup with the purificator before presenting it to the next communicant).

If someone approaches with arms crossed or who says “I cannot receive” or “a blessing only, please,” or if a small child approach, you may say in these or similar words: “May the Lord bless you.” *This should be said without any accompanying gesture or action with the hand or with the sacred host.* If you are in doubt as to whether a child is old enough to receive, simply as “Have you made your first communion?” If it is still unclear, simply give the child a blessing.

Physically touching someone who is not receiving Holy Communion (e.g., by touching someone’s head or forehead) should not be done, both because of hygiene concerns and also because of the real possibility that small particles of the Eucharist may be transferred from one’s hand.²

In a rare instance when you or a communicant drops a host, you are to bend down immediately and consume it, giving them another. If the precious Blood happens to spill, you are to wipe it up immediately, carefully, and reverently with the purificator. If you become aware that you are “running low” on host, you may break them each in half, and offer the half to the communicant.

Distribution of Holy Communion by intinction (dipping the host into the chalice to receive both species) is not encouraged in this diocese, because of the potential to spill some of the Precious Blood.

Once the communicants at your station/position have all received, you may look around to see if you might be of help elsewhere in the church. If you are a minister of the Lord’s Body and you are finished distributing, walk reverently back to the altar, hold the ciborium near the altar until the priest or deacon arrives to consolidate the remaining consecrated hosts. Genuflect or bow towards the Eucharist on the altar. Return all vessels to the altar so that the priest or deacon may purify the sacred vessels. If there remains Precious Blood in the chalice and you are finished distributing, cover it with the purificator, walk back to sanctuary near the altar and you or another (priest or deacon) may consume what remains. The Precious Blood is never to be poured down the sacrium nor left standing.

At All Times:

First of all, even the language we use is important. DO NOT say: “I handed out bread at Mass” or “I did the wine.” We teach by the language we use: refer to the “The Lord’s Body” or “The Host,” not “bread” and to “the Lord’s precious blood” or “the chalice,” not “wine.” You are becoming a recognized minister in the Catholic Church. Everything you do and say – your lifestyle – must reflect your commitment to the faith. Be careful in your daily prayer and practice of the faith. Attend Mass faithfully, and receive the sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) several times a year. We teach best by the way we live. As St. Paul warns the

² Revised rules for EMHC for Diocese of FWSB 2013; Jan 28, 2013 (#42)

Corinthians, “I do not want you to be partners with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons” (1 Corinthians 10:20b-21).