

## **GUIDELINES FOR EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION**

### **Christ Our Redeemer Catholic Church**

Bishops, Priests, and Deacons distribute Holy Communion by 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 ordinary ministers requires it, Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (EMHC) may assist in the distribution of communion, i.e., formally instituted acolytes or even some of the faithful who have been mandated by the bishop and commissioned according to the prescribed rite. In case of necessity, the Priest may also commission suitable members of the faithful for a single occasion.

#### ❖ **Becoming An Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (EMHC)**

- It is essential that those selected to serve as EMHCs be chosen carefully.
- The instruction *Immensae Caritatis* describes the qualifications: *“The faithful who are special ministers of communion must be persons whose good qualities of Christian life, faith, and morals recommend them. Let them strive to be worthy of this great office, foster their own devotion to the Eucharist, and show an example to the rest of the faithful by their own devotion and reverence toward the most august sacrament of the altar. No one is to be chosen whose appointment the faithful might find disquieting.”*

#### ❖ **In the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, the following norms also apply:**

##### ➤ **Age and Sacraments**

- Must be a fully initiated Catholic: baptized, confirmed, and received First Communion.
- Must be at least 16 years of age (at least 18 years of age if visiting the sick and homebound).

##### ➤ **Faith and Practice**

- Must be a practicing Catholic in good standing with the Church.
- Regularly participate in Sunday Mass and the sacramental life of the Church.
- Live in a manner consistent with Church teaching (for example, if married, in a marriage recognized by the Church).

##### ➤ **Character and Disposition**

- Should be of good moral character and show respect for the Eucharist.
- Known to the community as faithful, dependable, and reverent.
- Willing to serve humbly, without drawing attention to themselves.

##### ➤ **Training and Commissioning**

- Must receive proper formation/training in Eucharistic theology, reverence, and practical procedures.
- Mandated by the bishop and commissioned by the pastor.
- The mandate is for five years. If the mandate expires, it may be renewed with a new request.
- Mandated individuals should not consider their position as EMHC as a lifetime appointment.

##### ➤ **Liturgical Role**

- EMHCs serve only when there are not enough ordinary ministers (bishops, priests, deacons).

- EMHCs and instituted acolytes ministry is always an extraordinary service, not a right.
  - **Must be mandated by the Bishop**
    - The pastor submits a list of trained candidates to the Office of the Director of Liturgy of the Diocese, who will then submit the list to the Bishop. When the mandate from the Bishop is received, they must first be commissioned before they are allowed to function as an EMHC.
- ❖ **Scheduling:**
- EMHCs are assigned via the Ministry Scheduling Program (MSP); enter your availability / non-availability during the middle of the month for the following two months. Deadline dates for schedule inputs are the middle of the following months:
    - September for October-November
    - November for December-January
    - January for February-March
    - March for April-May
    - May for June-July
    - July for August-September
  - If you are serving as EMHC and Visitation, please remember to update MSP and indicate your availability for each ministry.
  - You should always be aware of any changes to your plans and consider updating your profiles accordingly. A minister can go into their profile at any time and update their “can’t serve” dates. If something comes up with their schedule that will take them away from serving, they should open up their MSP app and update their profile. It takes a few seconds to do it.
- ❖ **Considerations Before And During Mass**
- An EMHC who is unable to serve is required to find a substitute.
  - EMHCs should dress in a manner that is dignified and respectful of the Blessed Sacrament, the assembled community, and the function they are performing.
  - Clothes should be clean and neat, modest in appearance and coverage of the body and reflect the importance of the celebration of the Eucharist. Generally, this is done by dressing more formally.
  - As a minister, an important principle to always follow is that nothing should be worn that would draw attention to oneself or be distracting to the community.
  - The EMHC should ensure that their hands are clean.
  - They should also refrain from using cologne, perfume, or aftershave on their day of service, as some people have sensitivities to these scents, and these fragrances often remain on one’s hands and can be transferred to the Eucharist.
  - In the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, an EMHC does not wear any special liturgical garb or symbols nor participate in the entrance procession of the Mass.
  - At least 15 minutes before Mass, the EMHC will sign in using the form in the Bride’s Room. The liturgical ministers will gather in prayer shortly before Mass begins.
  - If the minister does not sign in 15 minutes before the Mass, a substitute will be recruited and the sub will serve even if the original minister arrives late.

- During the Mass, the EMHC sits with the rest of the faithful and should participate fully in the Mass, listening to the readings and joining the community in prayer.
  - The EMHC will approach the altar at the appropriate time indicated in training.
  - After receiving Holy Communion, the EMHC will need to receive a ciborium or a chalice and proceed to the designated location to distribute Holy Communion. They are always to receive the ciborium or the chalice from the Priest or the Deacon.
  - When ministering the Body of Christ, the minister takes the Host and shows it to the communicant, saying, “The Body of Christ.” In the same way, when ministering the Blood of Christ, the minister takes the chalice, saying, “The Blood of Christ.”
  - The EMHC should not, in ordinary circumstances, hold on to the chalice while an individual receives communion. After distributing communion, the EMHC should take the chalice, wipe its lip with the purificator, and rotate it slightly.
  - Although the Church also permits Holy Communion under both species by intinction, that is not a custom in the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee. Additionally, the General Instruction of the Roman Missal says that intinction is to be done by the priest (ministers may assist by holding the chalice for the priest). Furthermore, Redemptionis Sacramentum emphasizes that: “The communicant must not be permitted to intinct the host himself in the chalice, nor to receive the intincted host in the hand.” If someone indicates they want to use intinction, the minister should cover the chalice with the purificator and politely tell the person that intinction is not allowed.
  - If a person is seeking a blessing, it is appropriate to respond with a prayer that is clearly distinct from the blessing given by a Priest. It is recommended to say, “May God bless you.” It is essential that you not use the Host or chalice in giving a blessing, nor should you hold your hand over their head or touch them in any way.
  - If an individual comes forward with a pyx and indicates that they are taking the Eucharist to a family member or someone unable to attend Mass, please respond kindly and respectfully.
    - Politely ask them to see the deacon or priest after Mass to receive the consecrated Host in their pyx.
    - Under no circumstances should the Eucharist be placed in a pyx during the Communion line.
  - After distributing communion, the EMHC should return to the altar and hand the ciborium or chalice to the Priest, Deacon, or Acolyte. It should NEVER be placed on the altar by the EMHC.
  - If the EMHC is distributing the Blood of Christ, the EMHC is permitted to consume whatever remains of the Blood of Christ before returning to the foot of the altar. If the vessel is empty, it is to be placed on the credence table for purification.
  - If the EMHC has been distributing the Body of Christ, he should take the opportunity to purify his fingers of any particles that may have clung to them. For this purpose, a small bowl of water is provided.
- ❖ **Accidents Involving the Blessed Sacrament: (Also See Appendix I below)**
- If a host or particle of the Host falls on the floor, it should be picked up and consumed. If, for some reason, it cannot be consumed (for example, if it has already been in an individual’s mouth who is unable to consume it, pick up the Host and give it to the Priest or Deacon.

- In the case of a spilled Precious Blood, the EMHC should ensure that no one steps on the spot by placing a clean purificator over the spill. Then, (with the assistance of the Deacon or another EMHC) water should be brought and poured over the spot.
- The resulting spill should later be blotted with a purificator to remove as much as possible. If some of the Blood of Christ should drop on an individual's clothing or possessions, it should be brought to the attention of the Priest or Deacon, who will treat it in the same way, with due respect for the individual involved.

**NOTE: As of September 30, 2025, we dispense Holy Communion under both forms only on special occasions.**

**❖ Ministers Needed When the Eucharist is distributed under both forms:**

- Deacons always minister the chalice.
- When the Eucharist is distributed under the single form of the Host, the Deacon assists the Priest in distributing the Host if needed.
- The number of concelebrating Priests and the number of Deacons serving may vary for different occasions; therefore, the number of positions to be covered by an EMHC will vary.

If one Priest and one Deacon are present, as is our norm, the following will apply:

Communion Under One Species:

5:30 pm Vigil Mass 2 EMHC

7:30 am Mass 2 EMHC

10:30 am Mass 2 EMHC

Communion Under Both Species

5:30 pm Vigil Mass 6 EMHC

7:30 am Mass 6 EMHC

10:30 am Mass 10 EMHC

## APPENDIX I Proper Disposal of the Consecrated Host

### ❖ Primary Norm: Consume the Host:

- Whenever possible, the consecrated Host is to be reverently consumed, especially when:
  - The communicant cannot consume the Host after receiving it (e.g., drops it).
  - Fragments remain in a pyx or on the corporal.
  - A small amount remains after distribution.
- “Whatever remains of the sacred species is to be consumed... after Communion.” GIRM, no. 163

### If the Host Is No Longer Fit for Consumption

### ❖ If a consecrated host is:

- Soiled (e.g., dropped and stepped on)
  - If just dropped, then consume
- Contaminated (e.g., mixed with dirt or mucus)
- Corrupted (e.g., moldy or decaying)
  
- **Then it should be:**
  - Placed in the Ablution Cup and allowed to dissolve completely.
  - *Immediately Text “Host placed in ablution” to (850) 502-0684.*
  - Ablution cups are in the Sacristy and in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel next to the tabernacle.
  - Once fully dissolved, the Priest, Deacon, Acolyte, or Sacristan will reverently pour the water into the ground in a designated location.

### ❖ Do Not Dispose Improperly

- The consecrated Host must never be:
  - Thrown in the trash
  - Flushed down a regular sink or toilet
  - Ignored or left unattended
- Such actions are considered grave abuses and may incur severe canonical penalties (cf. Canon 1367).

Reference: Redemptionis Sacramentum, no. 107, USCCB Norms, footnote to no. 55.

“If the sacred species become corrupted... they should be dissolved in water and poured into the sacrarium (ground).”

**APPENDIX II**  
**Training Guide for EMHC**  
**Bringing Holy Communion to the Sick and Homebound**

❖ **Requirements Before Serving**

- Complete a Diocesan background screening, including fingerprinting.
- Complete the Safe Environment Program.
- Attend a special training session for the ministry to the sick and homebound.
- Become familiar with the approved rite ‘Communion of the Sick’ and have a copy of the ritual for use.

❖ **Preparing for the Visit:**

- Before Mass, the EMHC will collect cards from the Sacristy.
- The cards have the names/addresses of those who cannot join us at Mass.
- Prepare your pyx with the appropriate number of Hosts required.
- Before arriving at each home, the EMHC will call the provided number to confirm the visit is anticipated.

❖ **Receiving the Blessed Sacrament**

- Receive the Blessed Sacrament from the priest or deacon at the end of Communion.
- The Host(s) will be placed in a metal pyx, which is carried in a burse (pouch).
- The burse may be worn on a cord around the neck, kept in a shirt pocket, or carried securely on your person.
- Do NOT place the pyx in a purse, handbag, or carry bag.
- Go directly to the homebound person when sent by the deacon after communion. Do not make unrelated stops or hold casual conversations while carrying the Eucharist.
- Never take the Blessed Sacrament home for later use. Doing so is a grave violation of Church norms.

❖ **Ministering to the Sick/Homebound**

- Please introduce yourself and explain why you are here.
- Pay attention to the person’s health and energy level.
- Use the approved rite ‘Communion of the Sick.’ Bring a missalette or Bible for readings.
- Invite family members or caregivers to join you in prayer.
- Share the day’s homily briefly, if the person can listen.
- Connect them with the parish by bringing a bulletin or sharing parish news.
- Thank them for the opportunity to pray together.

❖ **After the Visit**

- *If any Hosts remain, consume them immediately after completing your visits.*
- Return to the Sacristy to purify the pyx.
- Return the pyx and burse.
- Note on the index card whether the Host was received and re-file it in the Sacristy’s system.

❖ **Key Reminders**

- Always treat the Blessed Sacrament with the greatest reverence.
- Go directly from Mass to your visit without delay.
- Use the Church's ritual prayers.
- Maintain a spirit of prayer, compassion, and dignity in all encounters.

## CHANGES IN PROCEDURES WHEN VISITING ASSISTED LIVING AND HOMEBOUND

- ❖ The Diocese has mandated that whenever we visit the homebound or those living in assisted living facilities, we document the following:
  - Who was visited
  - Who made the visit
  - What type of visit was it (*what services were provided*)
  - When it took place
  - This documentation falls under the provisions of "Safe Environment," ensuring the safety of all parties.
- ❖ **To meet the documentation requirements and keep your job as simple as possible, we need to follow these instructions.**
  - Each week, the parish will receive a listing of those individuals who are Catholic living in the assisted living facilities. Additionally, the parish maintains a list of those who require private home visits.
  - Based on this information, 3x5 cards will be made and placed in the Sacristy. There will be separate cards for each home visit. There will be cards made out with a cumulative listing of those living in the assisted living facilities.
  - On Sunday morning, before the 7:30 Mass, the cards will be available, and those visiting the sick will divide the visits amongst themselves.
- ❖ **The cards are designed with six columns and will be dated for the week in which the visits occur.**
  - There are columns for the name of the person visited, room number, and a column marked with an "R" and one with an "A".
  - There is a place for your printed name and a place for your signature.
  - If an individual received communion, then a check mark is made in the "R" column.
  - If the person is unavailable, an "A" is placed in the "A" column.
    - Likewise, in the "A" column, you would indicate prayed with P, refused with R, and sleeping with S.
  - The back of the card is used for notes about the visit.
  - The Private Home cards are slightly different.

If you feel called to this ministry or have any questions, please contact the EMHC Coordinator. If you are an EMHC and would like to visit the sick a few times to help you discern a call to this ministry, please contact Lenny.

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