

Introduction

The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (EMHC) performs a great service to the Church, by distributing Holy Communion to God's people on those occasions where there is an insufficient number of priests and deacons to distribute Holy Communion to the people present at the Mass, and to the homebound. It is an honor and a privilege to serve the Church in this capacity and requires careful preparation on the part of the EMHC.

Permission to use EMHC was made universal with the instruction *Immensae Caritatis* in 1973. Pope Paul VI noted that in some places there was a shortage of ordinary ministers of Holy Communion (priests and deacons) and provided for the institution of extraordinary ministers in certain circumstances.

What is an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion?

An EMHC is a lay person or religious who has been deputed by the bishop for a period of time, or by a priest or deacon for a single occasion, to assist the priest and deacon in distributing Holy Communion to the faithful on those occasions where a shortage of ordained clergy makes it impossible for them to distribute Holy Communion to all the faithful in a reasonable way (See GIRM 162). It is thus a privilege to which the Church invites certain individuals under given circumstances, and not a right. EMHC is to be looked at as the exercise of a function that is proper to the ordained priesthood, but which, of necessity, must be carried out by others. This highlights the **extraordinary** nature of this service, which, rather than being part of the structure of the Church, is instead tied to particular needs arising from the limited number of clergy.

When Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are Called

In the Instruction, *Immensae Caritatis*, there are four occasions when the Church calls upon the service of an EMHC: **At mass, when the presider is physically unable to distribute Holy Communion; at communion services when no ordained minister is available; at masses where the great number of faithful prevents the priests and deacons from distributing Holy Communion to all of them; and to the sick when they are unable to be visited by a priest or deacon.** In the absence of a priest or deacon, the instruction, *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass*, allows for an EMHC to publicly expose and later response the Blessed Sacrament for the purpose of adoration of the faithful.

Qualifications to Serve as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion

It is important that those individuals selected to serve as extraordinary ministers are chosen carefully. The instruction *Immensae Caritatis* describes them in the following manner: "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."

The Diocese of Portland has given concrete expressions of these norms, namely that an EMHC must:

- be a fully initiated, practicing Catholic of at least 16 years of age
- be in a valid Catholic marriage, if married
- be compliant with the Diocesan Safe Environment Policies
- be properly trained for ministry, certified by the pastor, and approved by the Bishop
- be commissioned by the pastor for a three-year period of ministry

Way of Life for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

An EMHC should seek, like all Christians, to cultivate holiness, especially through frequent confession, personal prayer, especially before the Blessed Sacrament, and attendance at daily mass if possible. They should seek to have a good knowledge and appreciation for the thought and beliefs of the Church, especially through study of scripture and Church teaching.

Initial Training and Formation for Serving as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion

- Training is held year-round as the need for and interest in serving as an EMHC arises.
- Training includes understanding of the Church's Teachings on the Mass and the Eucharist as well as training in the ministry of the EMHC.

Commissioning

- In the Diocese of Portland, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are Commissioned for three years. St. Michael Parish will commission Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion annually at all Mass on the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ (*Corpus Christi*).

Ongoing Training and Formation for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

- Enrichment workshops, classes, and programs will be held annually.

Diocesan Safe Environment Process

All EMHC will complete the following:

- ✓ Volunteer Application
- ✓ Diocese of Portland Code of Ethics Acknowledgement Form
- ✓ Diocese of Portland Background Check Authorization Form
- ✓ Maine Department of Health and Human Services Authorization Release Form (every 5 years)

Those EMHC visiting the Sick and Homebound (Private Residences, Rehabilitation and Nursing Homes, and Hospitals) will also completing the following:

- ✓ Complete a Protecting God's Children Training Class (In Person)
- ✓ Create a Virtus Account (Parish does this for you and will give you the log-in information)
- ✓ Complete Monthly Training Bulletins (Online in Virtus)
- ✓ Complete the Annual PGC Refreshes Classes (Online in Virtus)

Procedures Before Mass

- Dress appropriate for Mass. (Norms #29)
- Arrive at least 10 minutes before Mass. Present yourself to the priest, deacon, or sacristan for service. Details will be given as to the anticipated needs at that Mass. (*At this time, we will begin distributing the Consecrated Host at two stations at the front of the Altar at St. Denis, St. Francis, St. Joseph, and Sacred Heart and at four stations at St. Mary and St. Augustine*)
- Genuflect toward the Tabernacle while preparing before Mass (not during Mass).
- Take your place within the assembly and spend some time in prayer.
- Participate fully in the Mass by singing, praying, listening, etc. (GIRM #18)
- When we resume scheduling, please contact another EMHC to assist if you are unable to serve.

Procedures during the Communion Rite

Please note that the Bishop has not yet resumed the Distribution of Holy Communion under both species. The following guidance will be updated if we receive any changes from the Bishop.

- Approach the sanctuary **after** the priest receives Holy Communion. Reverence the Altar with a bow. (GIRM # 49). Sanitize your hands and stand to the side of the Altar. (Norms # 38, 39)
- As the priest or deacon offers you the Consecrated Host or Precious Blood, make a bow of the head as a sign of reverence, responding “Amen”. (GIRM # 162B)
- Receive the vessel for distribution from the priest or deacon. (Norms # 38, 40)
- Walk reverently holding the sacred vessel with both hands. (Norms # 22, 25)
- If ministering the Cup, stand far enough away from other ministers to avoid congestion and to allow the Communion procession to move.
- Be alert to the way in which individuals approach Communion:
 - Be friendly in your approach to each communicant. Look attentively at each person.
 - Allow each person time to reverence the Sacrament with a bow of the head, the designated gesture of reverence in the USA. (GIRM. #160B)
 - Be aware that the Bishops have designated standing as the normative posture for receiving Communion. (However, do not deny Communion to anyone who kneels.)
 - Note that persons may receive the consecrated Host in the hand or on the tongue. *However, due to the current pandemic, Bishop Deeley has asked that the faithful receive only in the hand at this time.* (Norms # 41 GIRM. # 160C)
 - Allow time for the Communicant to say “Amen” before presenting the Host or Cup. (Norms # 14, 46)
 - After each person receives from the Cup, dry both sides of the rim of the Cup with the purificator. Then turn the Cup ¼ turn. Unfold the purificator to allow for a clean surface. (Norms # 42, 45)
 - When distributing the Consecrated Host, say “*The Body of Christ*”; when distributing the Precious Blood, say “*The Blood of Christ.*” (Norms # 41, 43)
 - Do not change, delete, or add to the words of presentation.
 - Avoid using the individual person’s name when sharing Communion.

- Keep your voice loud enough for the communicant to hear, but not so loud as to distract others who are receiving Communion.
- If the amount of Precious Blood in a Cup is not sufficient, stop and return the Cup to the Credence Table. Assist other Ministers of the Precious Blood if your cup has not been exhausted.
- Check that all who desire Holy Communion have received before returning to the Sanctuary.
- When finished ministering the Precious Blood, go to the Credence Table and consume what remains of the Precious Blood from your Cup. If a large amount of Precious Blood remains, the EMHC may share in consuming it. Never pour the Precious Blood onto the ground or into the sacrarium. Return the Cup to the priest for purifying. (Norms # 52, 54, 55)
- When finished ministering the Consecrated Host, return the vessel to the priest at the Altar. The priest or deacon will repose the remaining Consecrated Hosts in the Tabernacle. (Norms # 22)
- After returning the vessel, walk reverently with hands folded to your place, bowing in reverence in front of the Altar. (Norms # 22, 25)

Special Circumstances

- Ensure that each communicant fully consumes the Eucharist.
- If unsure that the communicant is Catholic or has made their First Communion, simply ask them.
- Church norms state that “any baptized Catholic who is not prevented by law must be admitted to Holy Communion.” The EMHC should not make a judgment on the worthiness of an individual to receive Holy Communion. Consult the pastor with any questions.
- EMHC are unable to confer blessings. If a person approaches seeking a blessing, it is appropriate to respond with a prayer that is clearly distinct from the blessing given by a priest. You may say “Receive the Lord Jesus in your heart”, “God bless you”, etc. Especially during this time, it is best to not touch the person with the fingers used for distributing Holy Communion.
- While every care should be taken to avoid accidents involving the Blessed Sacrament, the EMHC should be prepared to respond to them should they occur.
- The most common sort of accidents involves a particle of the Consecrated Host or a portion of the Precious Blood falling on the ground or another object.
- If a particle of the Consecrated Host falls on the ground, 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), it may be placed on the Corporal on the Altar to be dissolved in water later. It is best to alert a sacristan, priest, or deacon should this be necessary.
- A greater difficulty is presented if some of the Precious Blood should fall to the ground. The EMHC should ensure that no one steps on the spot, perhaps by delegating an individual to guard it. A clean purificator should be used to cover and mark the spot. Then, with the sacristan, priest, or deacon’s assistance, water should be brought and poured over the spot. The water should be collected in a non-consecrated vessel (a lavabo bowl, for example) using purificators; it should then be poured down the sacrarium. The purificators should also be soaked in the sacrarium before being laundered. If some of the Precious Blood should drop on an individual’s clothing or possessions, it should be treated in the same way, with due respect for the individual involved.

Liturgical Terms and Definitions

Acolyte: The acolyte is instituted for service at the altar and to assist the Priest and Deacon. It is his place principally to prepare the altar and the sacred vessels and, if necessary, to distribute the Eucharist to the faithful as an Extraordinary Minister.

Altar: Place of Sacrifice; central location for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Altar Cloth: The cloth that covers the entire altar during the celebration of the Eucharist.

Ambo: Place where the readings from the Sacred Scripture are proclaimed during Mass; the central location for the Liturgy of the Word.

Ambry: The small box in the Sanctuary where the Holy Oils (Oil of the Sick, Oil of Catechumens, and Sacred Chrism) are kept.

Blessed Sacrament: The Consecrated Hosts and Precious Blood of Jesus Christ.

Boat: A boat shaped liturgical vessel in which incense is kept.

Book of the Gospels: A book which holds the Gospel readings for Mass.

Burse: 1. Square cloth envelope of the liturgical color of the day, in which the corporal may be placed when not in use. 2. A small pouch for carrying a pyx, with a cord which goes around the neck.

Ciborium (Ciboria. plural): Sacred vessel with a lid for holding consecrated or unconsecrated hosts.

Chalice: Sacred vessel in which wine, after Consecration, becomes the Precious Blood.

Chalice Veil: A cloth in the liturgical color of the day which may be placed over the chalice and paten. The burse may then be placed on top.

Communion Plate: A metal plate, sometimes with a handle, which is held by an altar server to catch any fragments of the host that might fall during Holy Communion. Also called a communion paten.

Corporal: Linen square which is unfolded on the altar during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The chalice and paten are placed on the corporal. It is folded in a way that captures any fragments of the host that might have fallen. Before being placed in the laundry, it is soaked, with the water being poured down the sacarium.

Credence Table: Table near the altar on which are located the various sacred vessels, the lavabo bowl and towel, the water and wine cruets, etc., used during the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Cruets: Glass vessels that hold water and wine for Mass.

Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion: Either an instituted acolyte or a lay person who meets criteria of CIC can.230.

Genuflection: A gesture of reverence in which one goes down on the right knee and makes the sign of the cross.

Host: A small wafer of unleavened bread, which is consecrated in the Mass so as to become the Body of Christ.

Incense: A grainy substance made from the resins of various plants that gives off an aromatic fragrance when burned in a Thurible.

Instituted Acolyte: A man who has been permanently commissioned to assist at the altar, and who, by virtue of his office, is an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion.

Lavabo Bowl and Pitcher: A bowl and pitcher used to wash the priest's hand during Mass.

Lectionary: Book which rests on the ambo, containing the Scripture readings for Mass.

Liturgy: The Church's public worship; the main Catholic liturgy is the Mass.

Luna: Round glass case within which is kept a large, consecrated host so that it may be inserted into the center of the monstrance.

Monstrance: Sacred Vessel which holds the luna with the consecrated host for adoration and benediction.

Narthex: The area in a church between the main entrance and the nave, sometimes called the gathering space or vestibule; the gateway between the outside world and the church.

Nave: The main body of the church's worship space where the congregations sits and prays.

Ordinary Minister of Holy Communion: A bishop, priest, or deacon who by virtue of their office ordinarily distributes Holy Communion.

Pall: Square of stiff material covered by linen which is used to cover the chalice and paten.

Paten: Small metal plate on which hosts are consecrated during the Mass.

Precious Blood: A term for the real presence of Jesus Christ under the appearance of wine.

Purificator: Small linen cloth folded three ways, which is used to purify a chalice when Holy Communion is received. Before being placed in the laundry, it is soaked, with the water being poured down the sacarium.

Pyx: Small metal container used to carry sacred Consecrated Hosts when communion is taken to the sick or homebound; it is carried in the burse with cord around neck.

Ritual Books: Any official book approved by the Church, containing the rites used in the liturgy and the administration of the sacraments.

Roman Missal: Ritual book containing the prayers recited at Mass by the priest.

Tabernacle: Locked and secured place of reservation of the Blessed Sacrament.

Sacrarium: A sink-like receptacle in the sacristy, which drains directly into the ground, rather than into a sewage system. It is used for disposing of water which may have come into contact with sacred things.

Sacred Vessels: Any vessel which is used to hold the Blessed Sacrament. Sacred vessels must be made out of certain materials and are to be blessed according to the rites of the Church.

Sacristy: Room where sacred vessels are kept and where the priest and deacon vest when there is not a separate vestry

Sanctuary: Area of the church building set aside for the celebration of the sacred rites. The altar and ambo are placed within the sanctuary.

Sanctuary Lamp: A fixture containing a candle or an oil lamp, usually suspended by a chain or affixed to the wall. It is located near the tabernacle. When lit, it indicates the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle.

Working Sacristy: The room next to or opposite the sacristy where the Altar Servers vest and where additional liturgical supplies are stored.

Resources

Primary Sources

- *Catechism of the Catholic Church, Second Edition*, USCC, Inc.-- the full, complete exposition of Catholic doctrine.
- *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium)*, Second Vatican Council—one of the constitutions of the Second Vatican Council whose principle aim was emphasizing the need for greater participation of the lay faithful in the liturgy.
- *General Instruction of the Roman Missal (Third Typical Edition) 2002*—detailed directives on how the Mass is to be celebrated.
- *Instruction on the Eucharist (Redemptionis Sacramentum)*, Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 2004—document addressing certain matters to be observed or avoided regarding the Eucharist.
- *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America*, USCCB, 2002--describes the methods of Holy Communion under both kinds and establishes norms for reverent and careful distribution.
- *Introduction to the Order of Mass, A Pastoral Resource of the Bishop's Committee on the Liturgy*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops--This pastoral introduction provides scriptural and historical context for the acts, objects, materials, symbols, rites, and prayers of the Mass-and in so doing helps all reach fuller and more active participation.
- *Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum*--contains the complete texts of the official rites for the infirmed of the Church, including Communion of the Sick, and Viaticum within and outside Mass.
- *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass*--includes the Rite of Distributing Holy Communion outside Mass, Administration of Communion and Viaticum to the Sick by an Extraordinary Minister, and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.
- *Book of Blessings*--this liturgical book includes blessings pertaining to persons, to objects, and to various occasions, as well as blessings and services connected with official parish events.
- *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest*--addresses the growing reality of declining number of priests and their availability to celebrate Sunday Mass by providing the appropriate ritual to be used in the celebrating community.

Pamphlets or Articles

- *"The Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist: Basic Questions and Answers."* Published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Secretariat for Doctrine and Pastoral Practices, June 15, 2001.
- *"Guidelines for the Reception of Communion."* Published by the USCCB and available on their website (www.usccb.org)

Books & DVDs

- Champlin, Joseph M., *The Breaking of the Bread: An Updated Handbook for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion*, Paulist Press, 2005 – provides practical ritual information as well as spiritual formation for the role of the EMHC.
- Gaillardetz, Richard, *Broken and Poured Out: A Spirituality for Eucharistic Ministers*. Ligouri Publications, Ligouri 2002-- discusses the communal aspects of liturgy, the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the idea of Eucharist as sacrifice, and the role of the EMHC.
- Barron, Robert, *Eucharist* (DVD and Study Guide) and *Eucharist: Catholic Spirituality for Adults* (Book). Word on Fire Catholic Ministries, Skokie 2008--This fresh look at the Eucharist brings to light its reality as sacred meal, the sacrifice necessary for communion with God and the real presence of Christ.

Resources for Spiritual Development

Extraordinary Ministers of Communion are encouraged to develop a habit of personal prayer and spiritual reading. Some suggestions are periodicals about liturgy or prayer, books about the Eucharist or the lives of the saints. Below are some other suggestions for personal prayer:

- The Liturgy of the Hours: the official prayer of the Church marking the different parts of the day, usually prayed by all clergy and religious communities throughout the world. Available in a 4 volume set or an abridged version called *Christian Prayer* or an even more abridged version called *Shorter Christian Prayer*. USCCB article providing a brief overview of the Liturgy of the Hours can be found at <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgy-of-the-hours/>
- Annual/Monthly Resources for Reflections on the Sunday Readings: consider reading and reflecting on the Scripture passages for the upcoming Sunday Mass. You can use your bible or find the prescribed scripture readings for any Sunday or weekday at www.usccb.org.
- Prayers before the Blessed Sacrament: Spend some time in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament before or after Mass or at our Holy Hours. A collection of Holy Hours for various intentions that contain prayers before the Blessed Sacrament can be found at www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/eucharistic-devotion/index.cfm

Service

As Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, we are called not only to offer the Body of Christ to others, but also to serve the Body of Christ outside of Mass. There are numerous service opportunities in our parish and in our community. Consider volunteering to feed the homeless in a soup kitchen or help with the collection and organization of a food bank. Preparing a meal at home for someone in need or alone, welcoming new neighbors with food, or having regular dinners with family are other ways we can feed and build up the Body of Christ.