Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion Handbook

A History of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion in the Catholic Church

“When the size of the congregation or the incapacity of the bishop, Priest, or Deacon requires it, the celebrant may be assisted by other bishops, Priests, or Deacons. If such ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are not present, “the Priest may call upon extraordinary ministers to assist him, that is, duly instituted acolytes or even other faithful who have been duly deputed for this purpose.”


Qualifications

Those who assist with the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass and/or bring Holy Communion to the sick in hospitals, nursing homes or their own homes should meet the following qualifications for this ministry:

- Be **fully initiated and practicing members** of the Catholic Church.
- Attend Mass **regularly**.
- Give **positive witness** to the Christian life.
- Have a **knowledge** of the Order of the Mass.
- Show **reverence for the sacredness** of the Body and Blood of Christ by their manner of dress and decorum while assisting at liturgy.
- Be **fully aware** of the manner of preparation, distribution and disposition of the Body and Blood of Christ.
- Participate in the ongoing formation and training program.
- Be approved for commissioning by the Diocese of Austin.
- Be commissioned at a parish liturgy.
- Be regular to the schedule and be willing to serve when needed and where requested.
- Youth, 16 years or older may be designated as EMHCs at the pastor’s discretion.
Training

Any training of Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion must include catechesis on:

- The ecclesial nature of the Eucharist as the common possession of the whole Church.
- The Eucharist as the memorial of Christ's sacrifice, his death and resurrection, and as the sacred banquet.
- The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharistic elements, whole and entire, in each element of bread and wine (the doctrine of concomitance).
- The kinds of reverence due at all times to the sacrament, whether within the Eucharistic liturgy or outside the celebration.
- Directives of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal and the Norms for the Distribution of Communion under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States.
- Be compliant with the Diocesan Ethics and Integrity in Ministry requirements.

Prayers for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Anima Christi

St. Ignatius Loyola

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.

Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O good Jesus, hear me.
Within Thy wounds hide me.
Suffer me not to be separated from Thee.

From the malignant enemy, defend me.
In the hour of my death, call me.
And bid me come to Thee.
That with Thy saints I may praise Thee.
Forever and ever.
Amen.

To Jesus hidden in the

Most Blessed Sacrament

Saint Faustina Kowalska

"I adore You, Lord and Creator, hidden in the Most Blessed Sacrament. I adore You for all the works of Your hands, that reveal to me so much wisdom, goodness and mercy, O Lord.

You have spread so much beauty over the earth and it tells me about Your beauty, even though these beautiful things are but a faint reflection of You, incomprehensible Beauty.

And although You have hidden Yourself and concealed your beauty, my eye, enlightened by faith, reaches You and my souls recognizes its Creator, its Highest Good, and my heart is completely immersed in prayer of adoration."

Amen.
Guidelines for Service to those in the Hospital, Nursing Home or to the Homebound

After commissioning, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may be designated to distribute Holy Communion at Mass or to bring Communion to hospitals, the sick and elderly in nursing homes, private homes and institutions approved by the pastor.

- It is especially desirable that Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion take the Holy Communion from Mass to the patients, residents, and homebound, as an extension of the community Liturgy.
- Patients and staff of institutions and families of the homebound must receive a careful explanation before initiation. This includes:
  - Explanation of the extension of the liturgy from the community to the patients.
  - Description of the ritual.
  - Planning for place, time, assembly of patients, and bedside arrangements.
  - Assurance of regular pastoral visitation and availability of a priest.
  - An explanation to the families of institutional patients, where possible.
- The communicants must be
  - Initiated in the Church.
  - Persons of genuine Eucharistic faith.
  - Must have no impediment to sacramental reception.

Specific Directives

- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion do not communicate themselves when they assist the priest at Mass.
  - After the priests have received communion in the usual way, the ministers receive communion from the celebrant.
  - As Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion exercising their ministry, should receive communion under both kinds unless there is a medical reason.
  - The priest or deacon offers the chalice to the Extraordinary Minister.
  - The minister then receives a chalice or ciborium from the priest or deacon and distributes to the faithful with the words "Body of Christ" or "Blood of Christ". No other words are to be used when distributing the Precious Body or Precious Blood (BCL 3/77).
- An Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion fulfills his/her function in a Mass only when there are not a sufficient number of ordinary ministers present.
  The Pontifical Commission indicated that when ordinary ministers (bishop, priest, or deacon) are present at the Eucharist, whether they are celebrating or not, and are in sufficient number and are not prevented from doing so by other ministries, the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are not allowed to distribute communion either to themselves or to the faithful. (Apostolic Pro-Nuncio Letter, September 21, 1987)
• Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should be appropriately dressed when distributing Communion during the liturgy.

• In bringing Communion to the sick or home-bound, the Body of Christ (Host) is to be placed in a pyx and carried in a burse hung around the neck.
  o It is not to be carried in a handkerchief or any other receptacle or hung around the neck in a pyx without a burse.
  o If Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion accept the Host for the sick during Communion time, they are to go immediately to the sick at the conclusion of Mass.
  o It is not respectful or proper for an EMHC to have the Sacred Host with him or her while visiting after Mass with other parishioners.

• It is gross negligence to leave the Host in a room for the sick person to receive at a later time.

• Hosts are to be brought to the sick immediately. For no reason should any EMHC carry the Host around while shopping or engaged in any other activity, nor should it be kept in one’s home overnight.

• Hosts that are not consumed by the recipient are to be returned to the tabernacle immediately or if distance or other circumstances prevent, the Host may be consumed by the EMHC.

• The EMHC cannot give a liturgical blessing to those who do not receive Holy Communion.

**Before Mass**

  o Check in at Ministry sign-in at least 20 minutes prior to Mass.
  o Put on your ministry cross and wait in the ministry room aka library for the ministry prayer.
  o Ministry prayer is prayed at 15 minutes before Mass.

**During Mass**

  o Sit on a center aisle seat within the first 4 pews in any of the 4 sections.
  o When Father consumes the Precious Blood from his chalice, this is your signal to move up to the front and step up into the sanctuary*, the EMHC chalice bearers will be on the Tabernacle side (the Gospel side of the sanctuary) lining up next to the crucifer (altar server who bears the cross) and those with the Precious Body will line up on the ambo side (the Epistle side of the sanctuary) by the cantor and accompanist who are next to the altar servers. (See attached diagram).

*{If you are unable to step into the sanctuary, you may wait at the bottom of the steps to receive communion and your chalice/ciboria.}
Chalice Specific Responsibilities

- The chalice from which you receive communion will be the chalice that you will use to distribute communion.
- In addition to distributing the precious blood, those who serve in this role also monitor for consumption of the consecrated Host.
- If your chalice is empty, you may proceed to the sacristy by the nearest door or wait with your chalice covered while facing the communicants. Place the purificator across the top and not in the chalice. The chalice is placed on the corporal next to the window, and the candle is lit signifying that Christ is still present in the residuals of the chalice and on the purificator. Exit by the sacristy door closest to your seat in the nave of the church.

Host Specific Responsibilities

- If you run out of consecrated hosts, approach the nearest minister (priest or deacon) to obtain additional.
- Only the consecrated Host is taken to those who need communion brought to them in the pews.
- Give the ciboria to Father, the Deacon, or place on the altar when your line is finished and return to your pew.
- Low gluten hosts – when you are distributing the Low-gluten host, it is preferred that you receive on the tongue to prevent cross-contamination of wheat onto the low-gluten host. You will wait in the chair by the ambo until the priest line is nearly completed then approach with the ciboria to distribute communion to those who receive a low-gluten host.

Commonly Asked Questions

If the communicant’s hands are shaking, what do I do to prevent a spill, and if a spill occurs, what do I do? One can hold onto the chalice as they drink. If either the Blood of Christ spills on the clothing or drops onto the floor inform the deacon as soon as communion finishes. Cover the spot on the floor with a purificator. There is an extra purificator on the credence table.

What if the Body of Christ is dropped? You can either pick up the Host and bring to the sacristy to the deacon for dissolving or consume it yourself on the spot.

What if a person comes forward with their arms crossed what do I say? The EMHC cannot give a blessing, so say “May God Bless you,” or “the Spirit of Christ be with you.”

What if someone does not consume the host? They should either be stopped or asked to consume or return the host. IF you are unable to approach them, watch where they go to sit, notify the deacon who will check to be sure that it has been consumed and is not left in the pew.

What if I find I unconsumed host? Pick up and take to either the deacon or the priest.
Sanctuary layout for Start of Mass

AS – Altar Servers
D – Deacon
C – Candles
CT – Credence Table
L1 – Lector One
L2 – Lector Two
P – Priest
Sanctuary layout for EMHC Communion

AS – Altar Servers    C - Candles    CT - Credence Table
D – Deacon             L1 - Lector One   L2 - Lector
Two
P - Priest

AS C1 C2 C3 C4 C5 C6 C7 C8

AS AS AS AS AS M M LGH H1 H4

AS

Rug

Altar

Lectionary Table

Ambo

Bells

P4

D1
Sanctuary layout for Distribution

AS – Altar Servers  C - Candles  CT - Credence Table
D – Deacon  P – Priest  C# - Chalice and position
H# - Host and position  LGH – Low Gluten Host
(*Comes forward when father is finished with Hosts for those needing Low-gluten.)
Serving at Daily Mass (Chalice Only)

- Sign in at table to the left in the Chapel Narthex.
- Check with Sacristans to see if there are any special instructions.
- Sit on inner aisle pew end.
- When Father begins to consume the Precious Blood, move forward to receive. When Father gives the chalice to you, also take the purificators as this will be your chalice for distributing the Precious Blood.
- When all are finished, consume any remaining Precious Blood and place the chalice on the credence table.

Vocabulary

Ambo- the stand used for proclamation of the word.

Back Sacristy – where the Sacred Vessels are prepared and cleaned.

Front Sacristy – where the Priest and the Deacons robe for Mass.

Ciboria – A single bowl used for distribution of the Body of Christ (ciborium-plural). It may also be what appears to be a chalice with a lid that is kept in the tabernacle.

Chalice Pall – The fabric covered “board” that covers the Priest’s chalice.

Paten-The saucer-like dish that holds the main host to be consecrated by the Priest.

Purificator- the cloth used to absorb the Precious Blood and wipe the chalice between communicants.

Chalice Veil – the external cover for the Priest Chalice, paten, chalice pall, and purificator.
Patron Saint of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

During his reign, Emperor Valerian cruelly persecuted the Christians. They were forced to meet together secretly in private houses or, at times, down in the catacombs in order to listen to God’s word, pray and celebrate Mass. Even the custom of taking the Eucharist to the imprisoned and the sick was becoming increasingly dangerous. One day, when the priest asked — as was the custom — who was able to take the Eucharist to those brothers and sisters who desired to receive it, young Tarcisius stood up and said, “Send me.” The boy seemed too young for such a dangerous job. “My youthful appearance will be the best protection for the Eucharist,” Tarcisius said. Convinced, the priest entrusted the Eucharist to him and said: “Tarcisius, remember that a heavenly treasure has been entrusted to your care. Avoid crowded streets, and don’t forget that holy objects are not to be thrown to dogs, nor jewels to swine. Will you faithfully and safely protect these sacred mysteries?” Tarcisius replied resolutely: “I will die before I would let go of them.”

As he was walking, he met some friends who approached him and urged him to accompany them. They were pagans, so when he told them that he was not able to do so, they became suspicious and increasingly insistent. They realized he was holding something to his chest that he seemed to be defending. In vain they tried to take it away from him. The struggle became more intense, especially when they learned that Tarcisius was a Christian. They kicked him and threw stones at him, but he didn’t give up. As he was dying, a praetorian official named Quadrato, who had also secretly become a Christian, carried him to a priest. He was dead when they arrived, yet he was still clutching the little cloth in which the Eucharist was wrapped.

He was immediately buried in the catacombs of St. Callixtus. Pope Damasus had an inscription made for St. Tarcisius’ tomb that indicates that the young man died in the year 257. His feast day has been assigned to Aug. 15 in the Roman Martyrology, which also relates a beautiful oral tradition that has been handed down to us: The Blessed Sacrament was not to be found on St. Tarcisius’ body, either in his hands or among his clothing. It explains that the consecrated host, which the young martyr defended with his life, had become flesh of his flesh, thereby forming with his body one single, immaculate host as an offering to God. St. Tarcisius is venerated as an example of loving and heroic devotion to our Lord in the Holy Eucharist.

(Taken from Pope Benedict XVI’s weekly catechesis August 4, 2010.)
Administrative Information

We use the Ministry Scheduler Pro (MSP) to automatically schedule all liturgy-based ministries, including EMHC. Schedules are generated every three months.

If you need an account with Ministry Scheduler Pro (MSP), it’s easy! Once you have been trained, a church staff member sets up an account for you in the system. You will then receive an email that provides you with a user name and password.

Using your user name and password, you will have access to your account and will be able to enter your Mass preferences, ability to serve on Holy days as well as list the dates that you are unavailable to serve. You can also make changes to your address, etc. This will allow MSP to schedule you according to your instructions.

Please note that once a schedule is set for the parish (at the beginning of each 3 month cycle), changing the dates that you cannot serve does not change the schedule and sub requests need to be made as soon as possible.

An email reminder of your service date is sent 5 days prior to your service time/date. If you are unable to serve when you are scheduled, you are responsible for finding a substitute. This can be done by entering a request for a sub in MSP program and if it is not picked up using the roster to contact someone who attends that mass and is not scheduled.

Because people’s schedules change, often unexpectedly, we ask that you check at the ministers’ sign-in table located by the library in the Narthex prior to Mass. It may be that you will be asked to serve in order to fill all of the EMHC slots.

If you change your email or phone number, please go to the website and change that information or please let the office know through an email.

Thank you for your time and especially for joining this important Ministry!
As Extraordinary Ministers, we are answering God’s call to serve our parish community in a vital and sacred way. The Eucharist is how we connect with our God.
What an awesome privilege to be an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion!!!