

ST. CECILIA PARISH

Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Brief Theology and History of Eucharist

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 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, doctor of the Church, said this:

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.

On May 29, 1969, in the document *Memoriale Domini* the Church gave permission for the faithful to receive Holy Communion in the hand, provided that abuses can be prevented. This went into effect in the United States on November 20, 1977. Lay people in the United States have the option to receive Holy Communion reverently, either on their tongue or in their hand. Realize that the ordinary way of receiving Holy Communion is on the tongue and kneeling—which is modeled for us at papal masses when the pope distributes communion. If you are to receive in the hand, we must follow the instruction of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem from 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 Extraordinary 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

Description, Selection Criteria, Formation and Training

Description:

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) are properly formed, instructed and commissioned lay persons. Ministers may be male or female. These ministers are appointed at St. Cecilia Parish to aid in the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass when ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are unavailable. Such ministers are not to function apart from their parish community. Ordinarily, they do not perform any other liturgical ministry at the Mass at which they serve as a minister.

As the Church teaches, the bishop is the chief liturgist of his diocese. For this reason, the Archbishop of Portland regulates this ministry and all other liturgical ministries in collaboration with the pastors of the parishes of the Archdiocese.

Selection Criteria:

For a person to be commissioned as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, the following conditions must be met:

- Be a Catholic in good standing with the Church, practicing the faith and fully initiated through the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist
- Be of sufficient age and maturity to perform the duties at Mass. The Archdiocese of Portland has established a minimum age of 16 years old to serve as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion.
- Demonstrate a deep reverence for and devotion to the Eucharist.
- Possess the requisite abilities and temperament to carry out assigned duties.
- Be chosen and appointed by the pastor for the parish entrusted to him.

Formation and Training:

Prior to beginning their ministry, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should be formed and trained in the following:

- Theology of the Eucharist and understanding of the Mass
- Theology and spirituality of ministry
- Universal church, archdiocesan and parish guidelines and procedures for their ministry

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should participate in ongoing ministerial formation at the parish and/or archdiocesan level.

Commissioning, Length of Service, Reverence and Attire

Commissioning:

After preparation for this ministry is completed, a formal commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion takes place by the pastor or his delegate. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are to exercise their ministry only in their own parish. In special

circumstances (a wedding, funeral, etc), an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion may serve in that setting with the permission of the pastor from that location.

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 the parish. The appointment of an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion is a privilege, not a right. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion generally will serve for a period of three years, after which time an evaluation will occur. This evaluation may lead to a determination that the minister:

- be re-commissioned as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion for another term.
- is being called to another ministry.
- leave ministry all together at this time.

St. Cecilia Parish will keep accurate records of the training and the term(s) of service of each Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion.

Reverence and Attire:

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion must show utmost reverence for the Eucharist. This reverence is reflected in their demeanor at Mass (full, active and conscious participation in the liturgy), their attire, and the manner in which they handle 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. The minister's attire should be appropriate and should not detract from that role. Items worn on the hands or arms (dangling bracelets, rosaries, etc) should not distract from or inhibit the distribution of the Holy Eucharist. When approaching the sanctuary, private devotionals should be left in the pew. Attention should not be drawn to ourselves; all attention should be on Christ.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should refrain from using strong cologne, perfume or aftershave because some recipients of Holy Communion have sensitivities to these scents and these fragrances often remain on one's hands and can be transferred to the Eucharist.

Procedures Before, During, and After Mass

Before Mass:

- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should arrive at the church at least 15 minutes before the scheduled Mass to check in and to prepare themselves interiorly for their ministry.
- The individual assigned as captain for a particular Mass is responsible that all stations are assigned, including lectors and altar servers. If there is a lack of such ministers, the captain is to inform the priest or deacon.

- If unable to serve at your scheduled Mass, try to arrange for a substitute from the roster or another means. If unable to do so, please notify the captain.
- A binder in the servers' sacristy contains a Schedule of Liturgical Assignments and a Sign-In Sheet for each Mass. Please check off your name on the schedule, sign in for a specific station, and take an appropriate pendant (black cord for ministers of the Body of Christ and red cord for ministers of the Precious Blood) and place it around your neck.

If you are not scheduled for that particular Mass, let the captain know you are available to serve, but do not sign in unless you are requested to do so. At 5 minutes before the start of Mass, the captain will request substitutes for open stations. Scheduled ministers arriving after their stations are assigned will be denied service.

- A "floor plan" of all the stations is posted in the servers' sacristy. Please note carefully your positions: at the area in front of the altar, in the sanctuary, and at your assigned station. (If someone later takes your station by mistake, simply move to an open station.)
- After signing in and receiving your pendant, please sanitize your hands by thoroughly washing with soap and water or applying instant sanitizer in the servers' sacristy.
- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should sit within the assembly; they should not be part of the opening or closing procession, nor sit in the sanctuary.

During Mass:

- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are called, as is the entire assembly, to full, conscious, active participation in the Eucharistic celebration.
- Because Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are models for the ritual behavior of the assembly, they should do all the ritual gestures of the assembly with strength and reverence, and make all verbal and sung ritual responses with faith and enthusiasm.
- If Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion do not regularly model the current church and parish practices during liturgy, they should be counseled, re-trained or relieved of their ministry, if necessary.

Procedures for Distribution:

- After the priest has finished receiving Communion (typically accompanied by the ringing of the bell), proceed to the area in front of the altar and line up according to your assigned position. Make a profound bow in unison with the other ministers before proceeding to your assigned position in the sanctuary. Please stand next to the step at the base of the altar so the priest doesn't have to move far.
- While in the sanctuary, maintain a reverent posture (hands in a prayerful position, etc).

- All should make a profound bow (from the waist) and say “*Amen*” when receiving both the Body of Christ and the Precious Blood. You are modeling the posture of reception for the congregation.
- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are not to self-communicate either the Sacred Body or the Precious Blood, and will not receive the Precious Blood from the priest's chalice. This is reserved only for ordained priests and deacons.
- Ministers of the Sacred Cup will offer the Precious Blood to ministers of the Body of Christ who are near them before proceeding to their station. After Extraordinary Ministers receive Holy Communion, they are given their appropriate vessel by the priest or deacon. Do not take a vessel off the altar.
- At no time should Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion cross between the altar and the tabernacle.
- When moving from the sanctuary to their station or from their station to the credence table, it is not necessary to make a profound bow toward the altar.

At the Communion Station:

- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion proceed reverently to their Communion stations after they receive their vessel. It is recommended that ministers of the Sacred Cup are positioned a sufficient distance from the minister of the Body of Christ to ensure a smooth flow of the Communion procession. This is particularly important when there is only one minister of the Sacred Cup.
- In offering Holy Communion, the minister holds the host slightly above the vessel, looks the communicant in the eyes, and in a clear voice says, “*The Body of Christ,*” to which the communicant responds “*Amen.*” These are the only words to be used. Nothing is to be added or subtracted, for example a name. Then the Sacred Body is placed in the hand or on the tongue according to the manner indicated by the communicant.
- If a communicant begins to walk away carrying a host, the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion should ensure that host is consumed. An easy way is to ask nicely, “Are you Catholic?” If the answer is no, then simply take it back and say “Ok, I’ll give you a blessing then, thank you.” If answer is yes, then nicely ask them, “Please consume it now.”
- In offering the Precious Blood, the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion holds the Sacred Cup up slightly and says in a clear voice while looking the communicant in the eyes, “*The Blood of Christ,*” to which the communicant responds “*Amen.*” These are the only words to be used. Nothing is to be added or subtracted, not even a name. Generally, the communicant should hold the Sacred Cup firmly in both hands and drink from it. However, in the case of a physical disability or weakness, the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion should be ready to assist in holding the Sacred Cup.

- After the Blood of Christ has been received, the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion should wipe the rim of the Sacred Cup (not dipping into the chalice) with a purificator (neatly folded, not shook out like a kitchen towel) and turn the Sacred Cup about ¼ turn before presenting it to the next communicant. The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion should be very careful not to wipe in a manner where the purificator is dipped into the Precious Blood.
- The communicant, including the Extraordinary Minister, is never allowed to self-communicate, even by means of intinction (dipping the Sacred Host into the chalice). If a communicant reaches to attempt to do this, place your hand over the chalice, indicating that it is not permitted. This shouldn't happen since the Host minister should stop them before they reach you if they haven't consumed the Host yet.

Moving to the Main Body of Church after the Annex has Finished:

- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion finishing distribution of the Sacred Body should immediately move to the main body of the church, positioning themselves close enough to the center aisle so the communicants can see them.
- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion finishing distribution of the Precious Blood should move to the credence table and wait to replace those ministers whose Sacred Cups become empty but still have communicants to serve.

Giving “Blessings”: (This is subject to change, pending the Archbishop’s directives)

- Only the priest or deacon can give a liturgical blessing for a person at Mass. (Lay people may only bless those they have authority over, such as their spouse and children.)
- You may simply say the words: “May God be with you.”
- To reduce the risk of spilling the Blessed Sacrament, don't bend over to bless children. Because of sensitivity for abuse victims, please DO NOT touch individuals who come up for a blessing.

Extraordinary Circumstances:

- If a communicant requests a gluten-free host, direct him/her to the priest offering them.
- If a communicant requests a Sacred Host for someone who is homebound, make sure they are using a pyx to carry it. If you do not recognize them, please direct them to the priest—we can only give communion to those who have been trained appropriately in our parish.

Accidents During Distribution:

- If a Sacred Host falls to the floor during distribution of Holy Communion, the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion should pick it up immediately and place it on the corporal on the altar. It should never be given to another communicant. If the Precious Blood is spilled, the area should immediately be covered (place purificator on the spot and have someone direct traffic around it). Notify the priest or deacon. The area should be blotted and washed after

Mass with water and a purificator. The purificator should be rinsed and wrung out in the sacarium.

- In every case, do not panic, and do not embarrass the communicant.

Procedures After Distribution:

- If there is NO Deacon: Return all Ciborium to the altar and chalices to the credence table. Since lay ministers may not self-communicate, if there is any Precious Blood remaining, you may give the chalice to one of the other ministers in the same way as giving communion to the faithful. Drape the purificator over the edge of the basket. Do not stuff purificators into the chalices since they still have precious blood in them!
- If a deacon IS present, all vessels containing Precious Blood are returned to the basket on the credence table: Drape the purificator over the edge of the basket. Do not consume any remaining Precious Blood. It will be consumed only by the priest or deacon when purifying the vessels. If there is a lot of Precious Blood left over, please wait to see if the deacon or priest needs help consuming it.
- Extraordinary Ministers of the host purify their fingers in the ablution bowl on the credence table after distribution of Holy Communion and then dry them with the finger towel.
- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should remove their pendants, place them in the pendant basket, and form a line in front of the credence table. All then make a profound bow toward the tabernacle in unison and return to their pews. They should return to their places in a dignified and reverent manner, not rushing or dodging other communicants approaching another minister.

Schedule of Liturgical Assignments:

A schedule of Liturgical Assignments is generally prepared quarterly. A few weeks before the current schedule ends, participants are encouraged to review their personal calendar for the next period and submit dates they will be unavailable to serve. Assignments are adjusted accordingly. The schedule is published on the St. Cecilia Parish website at www.stceciliachurch.org/eucharistic-ministers-amp-lectors. The scheduler will e-mail a copy of the schedule to participants, along with a phone number roster to help them contact a substitute. Hard copies are generally available in the servers' sacristy.