

# **St. Mary's & Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Churches**



## **Eucharistic Minister Handbook**

## **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 actively participate in the Eucharist as the source and summit of their Christian life. This active participation manifests itself by:

- gathering with a community of believers each Sunday and holy day,
- praying together at Mass in word, gesture and song,
- listening together to God’s word,
- giving thanks and praise to God together for the gifts of creation, and in a special way, for the gift of Jesus Christ – his life, death and resurrection, and
- sharing in and becoming the Body of Christ through reception of Holy Eucharist at Mass.

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, bishop of Hippo, put it this way in the 5th century:

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.

The Church has always celebrated and revered the Eucharist. In its early history the members of the Christian community did what Jesus told them to do - they took and ate and drank knowing in faith that this was indeed a sharing in the Body and Blood of Christ.

The sacred bread was taken in hand and the Sacred Cup was shared by all. As time went on and the Church no longer consisted of members who had actually seen and known the Lord, and for many cultural and historical reasons, Eucharistic practices slowly began to change. By the 9th

century the language of the Mass was no longer that of the people, as it was in the early Church. The altar table was moved from the midst of the people to the back wall of the church. The priest no longer faced the people as he led Office of Worship and Christian Initiation them in prayer. The Eucharist became so removed from the people that the Christian community came to see themselves as unworthy of this precious gift, even though they were baptized and redeemed by the Lord. Few people received Holy Communion, and only then on the tongue. By the 13th century the cup was no longer shared with the people. As a result of these and other practices, the people's main contact with the Eucharist was through the elevation of the Eucharistic species which was actually added to the Mass. For the people this elevation was their opportunity to "receive" for "seeing" became "receiving." Jesus' command to his followers to "take and eat, and take and drink" seemed to no longer apply to all believers.

In modern times, the event which began to change this approach to the Eucharist was the election of Pope Pius X in 1903. Pope Pius X knew the great importance of the command of Jesus that believers "take and eat" that he changed the practice of the Church. No longer did a person have to wait until the age of 14 or 15 to be eligible to share in Holy Communion. Children who reached the age of reason, usually about 7 years old, were now welcomed to the altar table of the Lord. By bringing the children to the altar table, Pope Pius X also brought with them their parents and grandparents. Through this action participation in Holy Communion began to be returned to all believers.

Pope John XXIII convened Vatican Council II in 1962. The Council's first document was The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. This fundamental teaching of the Church opened even further the understanding of the Eucharist and many of the practices regarding it.

On May 29, 1969, in the document *Memoriale Domini* the Church gave permission for the faithful to return to the ancient ritual practice of receiving Holy Communion in the hand and the practice went into effect in the United States on November 20, 1977. Lay people could now receive Holy Communion reverently, either on their tongue or in their hand. About this practice, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem wrote in 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 (EM). 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 the Eucharist are properly formed, instructed and commissioned lay persons. EMs may be male or female. They should reflect the cultural diversity of their parish community. These ministers are appointed for a given parish community to aid in the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass and to the sick and homebound when ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are unavailable.

EMs are not to function apart from their parish community. Ordinarily, EMs do not perform any other liturgical ministry at the Mass at which they serve as an EM.

When the situation requires, the priest of the Mass may call upon members of the faithful who are not EMs to aid him in the distribution of Holy Communion on that one occasion. Those called must be Catholics in good standing who are themselves able to receive the Eucharist.

### **Selection Criteria**

In order for a person to be appointed as an EM, the following conditions must be met:

- Be a Catholic living in harmony with the teachings of the Church and be able to receive the Eucharist
- Be of sufficient age and maturity to perform the duties of an EM at Mass or to the sick and homebound in various locations (i.e. private homes, nursing homes, hospitals)
- Be chosen and appointed by the pastor for the parish entrusted to him

### **Formation and Training**

Prior to beginning their ministry, EMs should be formed and trained in the following:

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

EMs should participate in ongoing theological and ministerial formation at the parish and/or diocesan level.

## **Length of Service, Reverence, and Attire**

### **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. EMs generally will serve for a period of at least two (2) years, after which time an evaluation should occur. This evaluation may lead to a determination that the minister

- be re-appointed as an EM for another term,
- is being called to another ministry,
- leave ministry all together at this time.

### **Reverence and Attire**

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

EMs do not wear albs or any other special liturgical garb.

## **Procedures Before, During, and After Mass**

### **Before Mass**

- EMs should arrive at the church at least 15 minutes before the scheduled Mass to both check in, and prepare themselves interiorly for their ministry. This interior preparation includes joining the priest and the other ministers in prayer before Mass in the sacristy. EMs should take one of the crosses designating them as an EM and wear it during Mass.
- EM assignments are made by the parish council and are published monthly in the bulletin. If you are designated to serve at a particular Mass and are unable to do so, **it is your responsibility to find a qualified replacement EM.**

## **During Mass**

- EMs are called, as is the entire assembly, to full, conscious, active participation in the Eucharistic celebration
- Because EMs 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

## **Procedures for Distribution**

- EMs may enter the sanctuary (on the 1<sup>st</sup> step) during the Fraction Rite (immediately after the sign of peace), but should not approach the altar until after the priest has received Holy Communion.
- EMs receive Holy Communion after the priest (and deacon) have received, and before the reception of Holy Communion by the assembly; all should make a bow of the head while saying “Amen” when receiving both the Body of Christ and the Precious Blood.
- If there is no deacon, an EM may assist the priest in distributing Holy Communion to the other EMs after he or she has received communion; EMs are not to self-communicate either the Sacred Body or the Precious Blood.
- After EMs receive Holy Communion, they are given their appropriate Communion vessel by the priest or deacon.
- Once all EMs have their vessels, they proceed reverently to their Communion stations.
- In giving Holy Communion, the minister holds the host slightly above the vessel, looks at the communicant, 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, not even 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 the host, the EM should say in a subdued voice, “Please consume the host now.” Be mindful of children who may not have made their first communion and report any concern or incident to the priest after Mass.
- Distribution of Communion under Both Kinds is recommended in all celebrations of the Eucharist; but it is the communicant’s option to receive from the Sacred Cup.
- In giving the Precious Blood, the EM holds the Sacred Cup up slightly and says in a clear voice while looking at the communicant, “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 EM should be ready to assist in holding the Sacred Cup.

- After the Blood of Christ has been received, the EM should wipe the rim of the Sacred Cup, inside and out, with a purificator and turn the Sacred Cup slightly before presenting it to the next communicant. The EM should be careful not to wipe in a manner where the purificator is dipped into the Precious Blood.
- The Sacred Cup is always ministered to the communicant; it may never be left for self-communication, except in the case of concelebrating priests.
- Ministers of the Sacred Cup are to stand a sufficient distance from the minister of the Body of Christ to ensure a smooth flow of the Communion procession.

### **Accidents During Distribution**

- If a host falls to the ground during distribution of Holy Communion, the EM should pick it up immediately and consume it then, or after distribution is over. It should never be put back in the vessel to be given to another communicant.
- If the Precious Blood is spilled, the area should immediately be covered with the purificator. It should then be blotted and washed after Mass with water and a purificator. The purificator should be rinsed and wrung out in the sacarium.
- In either case, do not panic, and do not embarrass the communicant.

### **Procedures After Distribution**

- Once an EM is done with distribution of the Precious Body, any ciborium containing hosts should be returned to the altar where the priest/deacon will combine all remaining hosts into a single ciborium which is then placed in the tabernacle. The key is then removed from the Tabernacle and returned to the credence table.
- Once EMs are done distributing the Precious Blood, any remaining Precious Blood should be immediately consumed and the cups are returned to the altar.
- A priest, deacon, or instituted acolyte should purify the vessels but EMs may purify the vessels when a sufficient number of priests, deacons, or acolytes are not available.
  - A vessel is considered purified when there are no recognizable amounts of the Precious Body and Blood. This is not a thorough cleaning – **you only need to remove recognizable amounts of the Body and Blood.**

- Vessels which contained hosts should be wiped cleaned with a purificator while holding the vessel over one of the cups so that all fragments fall into the cup. The purificator should then be wiped on the lip of the cup to release any fragments clinging to it.
- A small amount of water is poured into any cup or chalice which contained the Precious Blood. The water should be swirled slightly in the cup to remove any drops of the Blood clinging to the side. The water is then consumed by the person purifying the vessels.
- The credence table should be left in an orderly fashion.
- EMs should return to their places in a dignified and reverent manner, not rushing

### **Procedure After Mass**

- After the EMs are responsible for returning mass all of the vessels to their appropriate place in the sacristy. Linens used during mas should be placed in the designate laundry. Note: the corporal does not need to be changed after every mass – it should only be placed in the laundry if it was stained during mass.

### **Miscellaneous**

- Prepare yourself spiritually before Mass. Arrive as early as possible to avoid rushing through your spiritual preparation and physically preparing the sacred vessels.
- All EMs are reminded to wash their hands before Mass begins.
- The sink in the sacristy is exclusively used for washing the sacred vessel and preparing them for Mass

## **Ministry to Sick and Homebound**

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMs) who take Communion to the sick and homebound have a role in sharing the Church's total ministry to the sick after the manner of Jesus. In bringing Communion to the sick and homebound, the EM represents Christ and manifests faith and charity on behalf of the whole community toward those who cannot be present at Sunday Mass. This ministry is a sign of support and concern shown by the community for its members.

Patients who are in the hospital find it a comfort and source of healing to have Holy Communion brought to them as often as possible. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may make Communion visits any day of the week in accordance with the schedule and the protocol of each hospital or long-term residential facility.

The EM becomes a vital link between the parish community and the member who is sick or homebound. It is beneficial for visits to the sick and homebound to occur after Sunday Mass so



that the link between the parish liturgical celebration and the parishioner is maintained. Taking a parish bulletin also helps maintain that link.

EMs do not replace the ministry of the priest to the people, but rather extend and expand it so that all will have more regular contact with Christ in Holy Communion. EMs who minister to the sick and homebound should be empathic and compassionate. They should be sensitive to the sick and homebound person's needs including the spiritual, emotional, and material. They should always take care to maintain the confidentiality and dignity of the individual. They should also maintain contact with the pastor and/or parish pastoral care coordinator and inform them if the person is in need of sacramental anointing, the sacrament of reconciliation, or a pastoral visit. In addition, if EMs observe a particular physical or social need of a homebound person, they should bring this need to the attention of the pastor as well so that the parish may respond appropriately.

According to the document *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass*, "The Eucharist for Communion outside of church is to be carried in a pyx or other covered vessel; the vesture of the minister and the manner of carrying the Eucharist should be appropriate and in accord with local circumstances". EMs should dress in appropriate lay attire when bringing Communion to the sick or homebound. Consecrated hosts are usually taken from the tabernacle immediately before making a visit.

If the sick/homebound person is well enough to participate in the full ritual, "Communion Under Ordinary Circumstances" (Appendix B), use that ritual. If the person is not very well, use the shorter ritual "Communion in a Hospital or Institution" (Appendix C).

EMs serving in hospitals or institutions should always be sure that they are giving Holy Communion to the correct person. If there are Catholic family members or Catholic staff present, the EM should ask them if they would like to receive Holy Communion as well.

When EMs have completed their assigned distribution, they should return any extra hosts to the hospital Tabernacle or consume the hosts privately.

Extraordinary Ministers of Communion who are taking Holy Communion to the sick, homebound or to those in hospitals are to present the host in a prayerful manner. They are not to make judgments regarding the suitability of the person to receive the Holy Communion; such concerns are to be referred to the pastor.

### **Dos and Don'ts of Bringing Communion to the Sick and Homebound**

#### **Do:**

1. Make an appointment to visit. Ask how the person is feeling and if there will be others present so you will have sufficient hosts for all to receive.
2. Use the ritual "Communion of the Sick" and bring a Bible to read the scripture readings.

3. Begin informally. Introduce yourself to those who are present and briefly explain what you have come to do. Pay attention to how the sick/homebound person is feeling.
4. Invite those who are present to participate in the prayers. If they feel comfortable, enlist the help of family or friends to do the readings.
5. Based on the person's strength/attentiveness, share with them the day's homily.
6. Offer them the host or a small piece of the host and have a cup of water handy if the person has difficulty swallowing.
7. Create links to the parish, e.g., bring a parish bulletin, share news from the parish, and ask if there is anything the parish can do for them, if they need to see a priest for the sacrament of reconciliation or anointing of the sick.
8. Thank the person for the opportunity to pray with them and for their hospitality.

**Don't:**

1. Don't visit a sick person if you are not feeling well yourself. Find a substitute.
2. Don't stay too long or take the role of a counselor or confidant.
3. Don't compete with a television or radio. Politely ask if these can be turned off during the service.
4. Don't carry the consecrated host in a plastic bag, purse, pocket or other unsuitable container. Instead, use a pyx to carry the consecrated host.
5. Don't leave the consecrated host if the person cannot receive it. Instead, return at a later time to see the sick person. Consume any consecrated host or return it to tabernacle in the church or hospital chapel. Don't take hosts home or leave them in your car.

## Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

**Chalice** – the main cup that the priest uses to consecrate the wine into the Blood of Christ

**Ciborium** – the sacred vessel which resembles a chalice or communicants' cup except that it has a lid. It is intended to hold the Body of Christ when stored in the tabernacle.

**Communicant's Cup** – extra cups containing the Blood of Christ used by the EMs to minister to the people.

**Corporal** – a large square piece of cloth with a cross embroidered in the lower center of it. It is laid upon the altar during mass in order to catch and fragments of the Body of Christ that may fall on the altar.

**Credence Table** – the small table along the wall of the sanctuary used to hold the sacred vessels during Mass

**Cruet** – small glass bottles used to hold water and wine for mass. These small cruets are normally only used during daily mass.

**Decanter** – a large glass bottle used to hold wine to be consecrated during mass.

**Finger Towel** – our finger towels resemble washcloths and are used to dry the priest's hands after washing.

**Lavabo/Ablution Bowl** – a wash basin or bowl used to wash the priest's hands before the Eucharistic prayer.

**Pall** - a rigid piece of material approximately 6" x 6" and covered with cloth. It is place over the chalice during the Eucharistic Prayer to prevent any foreign material from mixing with the Blood of Christ.

**Paten** – a short round dish used by the priest to hold the hosts during consecration. Sometimes a paten can be flat rather than bowl shaped.

**Purificator** – small towel with a cross embroidered in the center used to wipe the lip of the chalice or the communicants' cups during communion. It is also used for purifying the vessels.

**Sacred Vessel** – any item intended to hold the Body and Blood of Christ. Sacred vessels include the chalice, communicants' cups, paten, and ciborium

## Appendix B

### COMMUNION IN ORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCE

#### INTRODUCTORY RITES

##### GREETING

81. The minister greets the sick person and the others present.

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

℞. And with your spirit.

The minister then places the blessed sacrament on the table, and all join in adoration.

##### SPRINKLING WITH HOLY WATER

82. If it seems desirable, the priest or deacon may sprinkle the sick person and those present with holy water.

Let this water call to mind our baptism into Christ, who by his death and resurrection has redeemed us.

If the sacrament of penance is now celebrated, the penitential rite is omitted.

##### PENITENTIAL RITE

83. The minister invites the sick person and all present to join in the penitential rite, using these or similar words:

My brothers and sisters, to prepare ourselves for this celebration, let us call to mind our sins.

After a brief period of silence, the penitential rite continues.

Lord Jesus, you healed the sick:

Lord, have mercy.

℞. Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you forgave sinners:

Christ, have mercy.

℞. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you give us yourself to heal us and bring us strength:

Lord, have mercy.

℞. Lord, have mercy.

The minister concludes the penitential rite with the following:

May almighty God have mercy on us,  
forgive us our sins,  
and bring us to everlasting life.

R. Amen.

## **LITURGY OF THE WORD**

### **READING**

84. The word of God is proclaimed by one of those present or by the minister (preferably use the Gospel from the Sunday of the week).

### **RESPONSE**

85. A brief period of silence may be observed after the reading of the word of God. The minister may then give a brief explanation of the reading, applying it to the needs of the sick person and those who are looking after him or her.

### **GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

86. The general intercessions may be said. With a brief introduction the minister invites all those present to pray. After the intentions the minister says the concluding prayer. It is desirable that the intentions be announced by someone other than the minister.

## **LITURGY OF THE HOLY COMMUNION**

### **LORD'S PRAYER**

87. The minister introduces the Lord's Prayer in these or similar words:

Now let us pray as Christ the Lord has taught us:

All say:

Our Father ...

### **COMMUNION**

88. The minister shows the Eucharistic bread to those present, saying:

Behold the Lamb of God,  
behold him who takes away the sins of the world.  
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

The sick person and all who are to receive communion say:

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof,  
but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

The minister goes to the sick person and, showing the blessed sacrament, says:

The body of Christ.

The sick person answers: "Amen," and receives communion.

Then the minister says:

The blood of Christ.

The sick person answers: "Amen," and receives communion.

Others present who wish to receive communion then do so in the usual way.

After the conclusion of the rite, the minister cleanses the vessel as usual.

#### SILENT PRAYER

89. Then a period of silence may be observed.

#### PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

90. The minister says a concluding prayer.

Let us pray.

Pause for silent prayer, if this has not preceded.

God our Father,  
you have called us to share the one bread  
and one cup  
and so become one in Christ.  
Help us to live in him  
that we may bear fruit,  
rejoicing that he has redeemed the world.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

℟. Amen.

#### CONCLUDING RITE

#### BLESSING

91. The priest or deacon blesses the sick person and the others present. If, however, any of the blessed sacrament remains, he may bless the sick person by making a sign of the cross with the blessed sacrament, in silence.

May God the Father bless you.

℟. Amen.

May God the Son heal you.

R. Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit enlighten you.

R. Amen.

May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit.

R. Amen.

A minister who is not a priest or deacon invokes God's blessing and makes the sign of the cross on himself or herself, while saying:

May the Lord bless us,  
protect us from all evil,  
and bring us to everlasting life.

R. Amen.

## Appendix C

### COMMUNION IN A HOSPITAL OR INSTITUTION

#### INTRODUCTORY RITE

##### ANTIPHON

92. The rite may begin in the church, the hospital chapel, or the first room, where the minister says the following antiphon:

How holy this feast  
in which Christ is our food:  
his passion is recalled;  
grace fills our hearts;  
and we receive a pledge of the glory to come.

If it is customary, the minister may be accompanied by a person carrying a candle.

#### LITURGY OF HOLY COMMUNION

##### GREETING

93. On entering each room, the minister may use the following greeting:

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

℟. And with your spirit.

The minister then places the blessed sacrament on the table, and all join in adoration.

If there is time and it seems desirable, the minister may proclaim a Scripture reading.

##### LORD'S PRAYER

94. When circumstances permit (for example, when there are not many rooms to visit), the minister is encouraged to lead the sick in the Lord's Prayer. The minister introduces the Lord's Prayer in these or similar words:

Jesus taught us to call God our Father, and so we have the courage to say:

All say:

Our Father ...

##### COMMUNION

95. The minister shows the Eucharistic bread to those present, saying:

Behold the Lamb of God,  
behold him who takes away the sins of the world.  
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.



The sick person and all who are to receive communion say:

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof,  
but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

The minister goes to the sick person and, showing the blessed sacrament, says:

The body of Christ.

The sick person answers: "Amen," and receives communion.

Then the minister says:

The blood of Christ.

The sick person answers: "Amen," and receives communion.

Others present who wish to receive communion then do so in the usual way.

After the conclusion of the rite, the minister cleanses the vessel as usual.

## **CONCLUDING RITE**

### **CONCLUDING PRAYER**

96. The concluding prayer may be said either in the last room visited, in the church, or chapel.

Let us pray.

Pause for silent prayer.

God our Father,  
you have called us to share the one bread  
and one cup  
and so become one in Christ.  
Help us to live in him  
that we may bear fruit,  
rejoicing that he has redeemed the world.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

℟. Amen.

The blessing is omitted and the minister cleanses the vessel as usual.