

# **Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion**

*“The Eucharist is the Source and Summit of the Christian Life”*

## **I. Introduction:**

The ordinary Minister of Holy Communion is a Bishop, Priest, or Deacon. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion perform a service to the Church, by assisting in 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 Mass. To serve in this capacity is a privilege, not a right!

Part of ministry is to help “set the pace” for all who take part in the Mass. What you do there and how you do it can help other people to understand the Mass better and make their love for God stronger. Our involvement in the Mass serves as an example and an encouragement for others to be actively involved.

You are asked to take this ministry seriously and to realize that it is done as a response to God’s call to service in the church. It is also understood that as a minister of this sacrament of unity that you will work to build up and unify the community of St. Peter’s and be a positive presence within this parish.

## **II. Requirements:**

- Be at least 18 years old;
- Be a Catholic who has received First Holy Communion and Confirmation, and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be assumed;
- Not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;
- Be reverential, respectful of his/her faith and the Blessed Sacrament, and of good moral character; and

- If married, be in a valid marriage according to the law of the Catholic Church.

### **III. Expectations:**

A. Ministers should be at the Church at least 15 minutes before Mass begins. At this time, spend a few minutes to pray in Church, to ask the Lord to help you serve well, and to give a good example to other parishioners. Then, confer with the other ministers in the vestibule to ensure that your respective ministries are carried out smoothly.

B. Ministers are expected to fulfill their obligation to serve at their assigned time. Please find your own replacement for Mass if you cannot make it for whatever reason. Upon arrival, please sign in. Since these sign-in sheets are used as an attendance record, please make sure your signature is legible. If you are consistently absent you may be asked to step down from the ministry. If you inform the ministry head of your special request before the 15th of the prior month, it will be honored.

D. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should show the greatest reverence for the Most Holy Eucharist by their demeanor, their attire, their participation in the Mass, and the manner in which they handle the Sacred Hosts or Precious Blood. The focus at the liturgy is the Eucharist. Anything that detracts or calls attention to oneself and away from that central point should be avoided.

E. Attire: Since this ministry is an exercise of the Baptismal priesthood of the faithful, and because EMHCs are seated in the assembly and not wearing vestments, it is appropriate that they dress neatly in lay apparel that is consistent with the dignity of their ministry.

- For men, appropriate attire would include either a suit or sports jacket and dress slacks. A necktie, while most appropriate and encouraged, is not required. Jeans, shorts, open shirts, sports jerseys, sneakers, and other such casual dress are inappropriate and do not meet the standards for assisting at the Eucharist. A nice polo shirt and dress slacks are permitted in warmer weather.

- For women, appropriate attire would include dresses, dress slacks, skirts and blouses (or sweaters) and suits. Dresses and skirts should be modest in length (i.e. to the knee). A modest neckline is appropriate for dresses, sweaters, and blouses. Short skirts or dresses, revealing blouses or shorts of any length do not meet the standards for assisting at the Eucharist.

## **IV. Procedures:**

A. Shortly before the beginning of Mass, the Presider will assemble the ministers for the Mass for a brief prayer. After the prayer, line up directly behind the altar servers and lectors for the procession. Obtain a hymnal from the pews so you may sing during the procession. Process in two by two. When you reach the sanctuary steps, genuflect and then move to your pew. If you are physically unable to genuflect, you may bow from the waist, but both priests desire genuflection when at all possible. Even if your partner in the procession cannot genuflect, you are still encouraged to do so.

B. As Mass continues, remember that as a minister your participation and reverence are a model to all parishioners.

C. After the Lamb of God, Father will receive Communion. As soon as he picks up the Host, all ministers should come forward and stand at the bottom of the altar steps so that they are in place when the Priest is ready to distribute Communion to them. Please stand close to the altar servers and close together. This makes it much easier for Father to come around and give Communion to everyone.

D. Once all ministers have received, wait for Father to go to the front of the altar and then take your assigned place. Please step back several spaces so to avoid a backlog of Communicants who are not receiving from the Cup. At the present time at St. Peter's all EMHCs will be distributing the Precious Blood, and Father and the Deacon (or, in the absence of a Deacon, the Mass Coordinator) will distribute the Sacred Hosts.

E. While administering the Precious Blood of Christ to a communicant, the minister says, “The Blood of Christ.” The communicant responds, “Amen.” No other words should be added or used. Addressing the communicant by name should be avoided. While this may seem like a sign of hospitality, it inadvertently creates an atmosphere of exclusivity if we cannot address *everyone* by name. Keep it simple and welcoming for all. Smiling is allowed.

F. After each communicant has received the Blood of Christ, the minister carefully wipes both sides of the rim of the side Chalice with a purificator. This action is a matter of both reverence and hygiene. For the same reason, the minister turns the side Chalice slightly after each communicant has received the Precious Blood.

G. If a child, or someone other than a child, approaches you with arms crossed, simply say, “Peace be with you.” This should not be accompanied by any gesture or touching the person.

H. Self-intinction is not allowed by lay people. It would be a form of “taking” rather than “receiving” Holy Communion. If someone comes to you and wants to dip the Host in your Cup, tell them that it is not permitted and ask them to consume the Host first. You may then offer them the Cup. Also, if an EMHC should happen to notice anyone walking away without first consuming the Host, he or she should go after the person and tell them they must consume it.

I. As soon as the EMHC’s side Chalice is empty, he or she should go to the credence table. There is no need to wait for the priest or deacon. If any of the Precious Blood remains, the EMHC should consume it while holding the side Chalice with both hands. Place the side Chalice, covered with the purificator, on the credence table. Then stand well off to the sides of the credence table so not to be in the way of the Priest or Deacon and face the Tabernacle. When the Blessed Sacrament is reposed in the Tabernacle, the priest and deacon will genuflect. EMHCs should genuflect at the same time as the Priest and Deacon and then go immediately to their seats. If you are physically unable to genuflect, you may bow from the waist, but both priests

desire genuflection when at all possible. EMHCs can go sit with family members at this time if they prefer.

J. Stay in your place until after the final hymn is completed. It would also be good to stay a few minutes after Mass to offer a prayer of thanksgiving again remembering that you are setting an example for all parishioners. Then proceed to the sacristy where you will clean the purified vessels and either put them away or set up for the next Mass. Please be attentive to noise levels as some parishioners will stay behind for a few minutes to pray.

K. If an accident occurs: If a Host is dropped, the minister should reverently pick it up and either consume it immediately or hold it in the palm of his or her hands until after Communion. If any of the Precious Blood should spill: If it is a small spot stand in front of the spill being careful to stand in a way that the Precious Blood won't get stepped on and continue to distribute from the Cup. When finished, place the purificator over the spot. You may then walk back to the sacristy and get a wet cloth and wipe up the spill. Or, you may wait until the end of Mass making sure someone stands over the spot. If it is a large spill, the EMHC will need to go immediately to the sacristy for towels to clean it up. After Mass, the spill should be washed with water, and the purificator rinsed in the sacrarium.

L. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are asked to be careful of their language when referring to the Precious Blood and the Body of Christ. Proper terms are Precious Blood, Body of Christ, Host, or Cup but not bread and wine.

These guidelines have been prepared as an aid to assist all ministers perform their roles in a prayerful, reverent, and consistent way. These guidelines are not intended to represent an exhaustive list. Questions about any aspect of serving as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion should be directed to the Pastor, Pastoral Staff, or ministry head for clarification.

Thank you for volunteering to serve the parish in this way. This ministry is one of the most visible roles of service at liturgy. We appreciate all of you who are willing to take this ministry seriously. Thank you again for taking the time to serve your fellow parishioners.

Barbara Remack

November 16, 2015 (revised February 9, 2020)

Approved by:

Father Gary S. Linsky, V.F., Rector

Father Andrew Fryml, Parochial Vicar

February 9, 2020

*Lord Jesus Christ,  
You are the Word of God and Bread of Life.  
Help me to bring your gospel message  
and Eucharistic Presence to others.  
Help me to do so with faith and reverence,  
with love and concern.  
May I carry out this sacred ministry  
comfortably, but not casually,  
Relaxed, yet with awesome respect.  
All praise to you,  
the God who is, who was, and  
who is to come at the end of the ages.*