

# GESU: Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

## **Preface**

The ministry of assisting the priest (and deacon) in the distribution of Holy Communion during Mass and at other times outside of Mass is an invaluable service to the parish community. These ministers in collaboration with the priest bring Christ to the faithful during the Mass and at times of illness or near the time of death.

## **Goal**

The goal of this document is to explain the role of an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (EMC) during the celebration of the Mass. It will explain the theory behind the ministry and the practical function of EMCs during Mass at Gesu.

## **Ministry: Ordinary and Extraordinary (cf. Can. 910)**

The ordinary minister of communion is the ordained priest. He presides at the Eucharistic celebration and in dialogue with the people gathered for Mass prays on behalf of the local parish, the diocese and the universal Church. Through his ministry Christ is made present to the Church in the proclaimed Word of God and the Eucharistic bread and wine. The deacon assists the priest at celebrations of the Mass and is also considered an ordinary minister of communion. The deacon normally distributes the Precious Blood from the chalice (cup) but also distributes the Body of Christ during Mass when needed.

Extraordinary ministers of communion are members of the parish community who by virtue of their baptism and full membership in the Church (by virtue of their Confirmation and reception of Holy Communion) collaborate with the priest to assist him in his ordinary duties.

These ministers distribute communion during Mass at their home parish and also can bring communion to the sick and dying, and expose Holy Communion for public prayer and adoration (cf. Can. 943). Their ministry is extraordinary in the sense that it is a supporting and significant role in the liturgy. The priest and deacon cannot reasonably distribute communion to the entire congregation without disrupting the flow of the Mass. The extraordinary minister provides the support a priest and/or deacon needs to carry out his ministry in both a dignified and orderly manner.

## **Role**

The Extraordinary Minister of Communion (EMC) helps at weekend and weekday liturgy primarily in distributing the Body and Blood of Christ to the Assembly. Extraordinary Ministers of Communion also are welcome and often do take Communion to the sick.

## **Duties**

The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion must understand that it is her/his first responsibility to pray for the people of Gesu for whom s/he ministers. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should pray before coming to Mass that they may see Christ in the people to whom they distribute Christ who is present in the Eucharist.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are encouraged to spend time in prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. A special time to do this usually takes place each First Friday of the Month at Gesu, and can also happen prior to or after Mass. This form of prayer in the presence of the reserved Blessed Sacrament should lead all people from contemplation of the gift of the Lord's presence into community with fellow parishioners. It should lead all people from meditation into active ministry.

The EMC should make it a point to arrive 15 minutes before Mass begins. If an EMC is not able to attend the Mass for which s/he is scheduled, a substitute should be contacted prior to Mass. Please check off your name in the priests' sacristy on the schedule which is found on the bulletin board.

The number of EMCs needed is: 7 plus the priest for the 4 PM and 11:30 AM and 8 plus the priest for the 9 AM Mass (one person designated only to go to the choir loft).

**After the priest invites people to offer the Sign of Peace, Ministers of Communion should move to the front and line up in a single file row on the floor level at the first step that leads up to the sanctuary.** This will give the presiding priest and other Ministers of Communion present a chance to see if a last minute substitute is needed. **The priest will offer the sign of peace to the servers as usual and go to the tabernacle to retrieve the Ciborium.**

***The priest (and deacon) will receive Communion. After the priest receives Communion the EMCs come up two by two to receive Communion forming a line on the left side of the altar and leaving from the right side. The priest will give you Communion, and then immediately give you the bowl/patten or cup.***

You then may take your station, please follow these procedures:

A. The first two ministers take the Body of Christ and Precious Blood to the back station on the Sacred Heart side of the church. They proceed to the back, up the side aisle so they are able to minister to any handicapped persons before arriving at their station. They may be in the first row or in the last pew before the side doors. The next two ministers go to the other back station, up the center aisle. (Same procedure for all Masses)

B. At all the Masses, the next two ministers will take the Body of Christ and the Precious Blood to the front station on the Sacred Heart side of the church. **The final two ministers (the priest and one other EMC) will distribute Communion to the servers - the Priest with Eucharistic bread, the EMC with the Cup - and then will take the front side closest to the statue of Mary.**

Communion is distributed by saying, "The Body of Christ" or "The Blood of Christ," depending on which form of Communion the EMC is handling. An EMC may add the name of the person to whom they are distributing Communion. No other additions or other phrases should be used on the distribution of Holy Communion (for example,

“Receive the Body of Christ” or “The Body of Jesus”) as they do not accurately state our faith in and understanding of the Eucharist.

The Body of Christ is generally distributed on the hand of the person receiving it. If a person wishes to receive the Body of Christ on his/her tongue, simply hold the edge of the host and place it on the tongue gently and slowly to avoid dropping it.

The Blood of Christ is received by drinking from the cup. Intinction (dipping the host into the cup) is not permitted by anyone but the priest. Regardless some people will do this. Do not embarrass the person. Simply allow the person to carefully do this. Remember never to draw attention to yourself or to the person receiving Communion.

***If the EMC runs out of the Precious Blood or is finished distributing it, s/he simply returns the Communion cup to the altar and returns to her/his seat.*** Please try to consume any remaining Precious Blood if you are able. ***If the Communion cup is not empty, the left over Precious Blood should be consumed. It should not be poured down any drain. The Sacarium is generally only to be used to dispose of rinse water after consuming the left over amounts of the Eucharist.*** If for any reason you are unable to consume what is left over, you may ask the priest or other ministers to help you consume it or simply leave it on the altar. Someone will take care of it for you.

***After the EMC is finished distributing the Body of Christ, s/he returns the Communion bowl (whether empty or not) to the altar placing it near the center of the altar and then returns to her/his seat. Do not wait for the priest or another minister to meet you at the altar unless you are distributing Eucharistic bread next to the priest.***

***The Minister of Communion who distributes Eucharistic bread standing next to the priest should remain standing at the side of the altar, even if s/he finishes distributing early.***

***Once the priest is finished distributing and all the Communion bowls are returned to the altar, any portion of the Eucharistic bread remaining will be placed in the ciborium by the priest at the altar.***

***The Minister of Communion who distributes Eucharistic bread standing to the side of the altar will then take the ciborium to the tabernacle, close the tabernacle and genuflect (as s/he is able).***

***That same Minister of Communion will then provide assistance to the priest as needed so he may purify the Communion vessels at the altar. The MC and/or cross bearer will help by bringing water and by returning the purified Communion bowls and cups to the side table using the small wooden tray. If the MC and/or cross bearer does not do this, the remaining Minister of Communion should do it.***

**Spills, etc.**

If a portion of the Eucharist bread (one or several hosts) is dropped, simply pick it up and consume it. If too many hosts are dropped to consume, simply return them to the Communion bowl they fell out of and replace them in the tabernacle. If the host cannot be consumed, for example, it is dropped into some tracked in water, hold it in your hand while you finish ministering the Host at your station. Then bring it to the water cup next to the tabernacle and place it in there.

If the Precious Blood is spilled, calmly cover the area with a purificator(s) calmly direct people around the spill. Speak to a priest after Mass to ensure the area is properly cleansed.

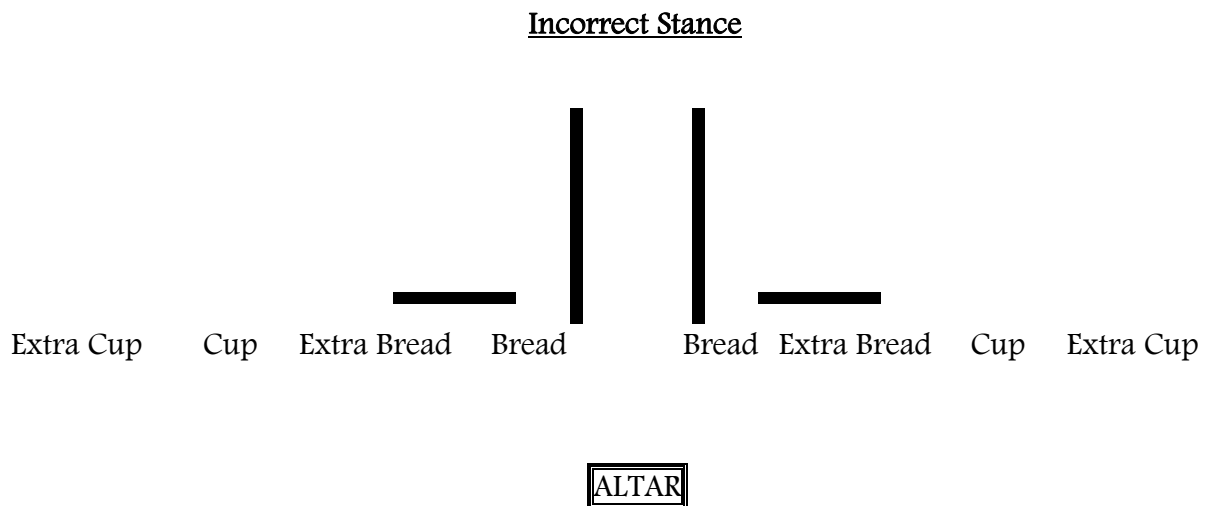
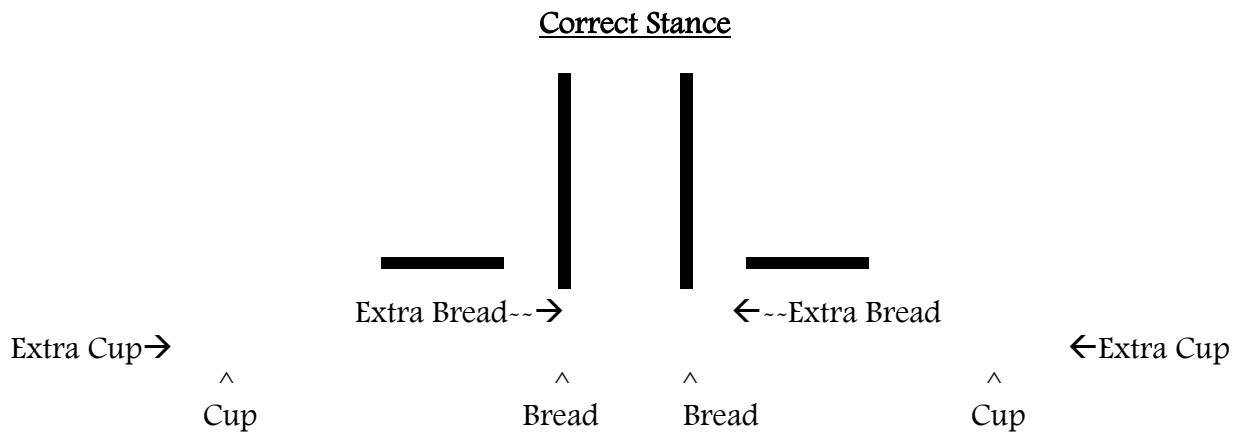
All ministers should remember to practice good hygiene. Wash your hands before you leave home for Mass (or you can wash them before Mass in one of the rest rooms). If you have a cold or the flu, please get a substitute.

***Please stay after Mass and check to see if someone is washing the Communion bowls and cups in the sacristy. If no one is doing this, please stay a few minutes and wash them with light dish soap and warm water. Hang them to dry in the rack above the sacrarium sink.***

Haste is the Ministers' of Communion worst enemy. Keep calm; remember you are carrying out an essential ministry and handling the Body and Blood of Christ – The Eucharist.

## Extra Help

***During Communion if EMCs at the back stations are finished, they may go and assist others. If you are helping distribute the Body or Blood of Christ at a second station, do not stand next to the person you are helping. Stand at a 90 degree angle so you do not block the flow of the Communion procession:***



## Terms Pertaining to Liturgical Ministers

**Ambo (or lecturn)** – the area where the scriptures are proclaimed during Mass. It is usually a prominent and/or decorated podium raised a bit above the floor level it is placed upon. The Greek root word for ambo refers to an elevation or mountain.

**Body/Blood of Christ –or- Eucharistic Bread/Wine – or - Eucharist** – terms used often interchangeably to describe the Blessed Sacrament under the form of bread or wine.

**Can.** – An abbreviation for the Code of Canon Law, the law that governs the Roman Church, including all its liturgical and temporal practices.

**Chalice (or Communion Cup)** – a cup made generally of some sort of metal that is used to contain and distribute the Blood of Christ during Mass.

**Ciborium (pl. Ciboria)** – a container usually made of precious metal that holds the Eucharist while it is reserved in the tabernacle.

**Host** – portions of unleavened bread used during Mass that the priest consecrates during the Mass to be distributed as Communion.

**Lectionary** – the book containing the scripture readings for Mass

**Missal** – the book containing the prayers and instructions for Mass – also called the *Sacramentary* – it usually has tabs along the side of the pages to make it easier for the priest to find the pages he needs.

**Patten (or Communion Bowl)** – a dish or vessel used to hold the Body of Christ so it can be distributed to people during Mass.

**Presbyterium** – the area in a church where the altar is located, also referred to as the Sanctuary.

**Purificator** – a small linen napkin used to wipe the rim of the chalice and to dry it after it has been cleansed. Generally a purificator has a small cross stitched into it.

**Purify** – to cleanse a dish (vessel) used in the distribution of Communion. A small amount of water is poured into a paten or communion bowl and then poured carefully into a chalice and consumed. For a chalice if it is empty a small amount of water is poured into it and it is consumed. If the chalice is not empty and the minister is able s/he should consume the left over Blood of Christ. If s/he is not able, s/he should ask another minister(s) to consume it and then place it on the altar. After this has been done the communion bowl (paten) or cup (chalice) may be gently washed with warm water (and if available) a very small amount of dish soap.

**Sacramentary** – *see Missal*

**Sacrarium** – A small sink in the sacristy (usually with a cover) that is used to dispose of rinse water after the left over elements of the Eucharist have been consumed or water left over once a consecrated host has been dissolved. (cf. Can. 1367).

**Sacristy** – room in a church where vestments and Communion vessels and other supplies used during the celebration of Mass are kept.

**Sanctuary** – *see Presbyterium*

**Tabernacle** – The large (sometimes decorated) box in which the Body of Christ is contained. It is kept here so it can be taken later to the sick. Because it is contained here, a person should genuflect or make a bow toward the tabernacle when passing by unless this sign of reverence would draw more attention to the person than to the Body of Christ. If you are carrying the Eucharist or any other item, you do not need to genuflect or bow when you pass the tabernacle.