

GUIDELINES FOR EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION
GESU ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH
TOLEDO, OHIO

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 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 Congregation. Currently at Gesu, EMCs also help by retrieving extra communion from the tabernacle and by replacing any left over Communion in the tabernacle after Communion is finished. They also cleanse (purify) the communion bowls and cups after Communion.

Duties

The EMC should make it a point to arrive 10 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. The number of EMCs needed is: **7 plus the priest** for the 4 PM and 11:30 AM and **12 plus the priest** for the 9 AM Mass (one person designated only to go to the choir loft

The EMC should begin to approach the altar **during the sign of peace**. S/he may give the priest and/or the deacon and servers the sign of peace. The ministers then begin to line up behind the priest as close as possible to the steps leading to the tabernacle. The first person arriving should go to the tabernacle and retrieve whatever Communion is in it and either hand it to the priest or deacon, or place it directly on the altar.

The priest and deacon will receive Communion and then begin to distribute Communion to the EMCs. Once the priest has finished distributing Communion to the EMCs, they should approach the priest in pairs to receive the bowl and cup. If the priest or deacon does not direct you to your station, please follow these procedures:

- A. The first two ministers take the Host 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. 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 the 4 PM and 11:30 AM Masses, the next two ministers will take the Precious Blood to minister to the front of the Church center aisle. The priest and the other minister will take the Host to minister at the center aisle.
- C. At the 9 AM Mass, once the four ministers have left for the back stations, the next two ministers will take the Host and Precious Blood to the right side station (Sacred Heart altar side) and then the next two ministers after that will take the Host and Precious Blood to the left side station (Blessed Virgin shrine).

If you get mixed up, look around and use common sense. The idea is to make the reception of the Eucharist convenient but reverent as well.

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 servers table and pours a bit of water into the cup and consumes the water. The purificator is then used to dry the cup. It can then be left on the table. If the Communion cup is not empty, the left over Precious Blood should be consumed. It should not be poured down the drain (cf. Can. 1367). The Sacramentum is generally only to be used to dispose of rinse water after consuming the left over amounts of the Eucharist. If you are

unable to consume what is left over, you may dilute it significantly with water and consume it and/or you may also ask other ministers to help you consume it. To purify a Communion bowl, simply pour a small amount of water into it and consume the water by pouring it into a Communion cup. After you have finished distributing Communion and purifying the Communion bowl or cup you may then return to your seat in the church.

Any portion of the Eucharistic bread which remains after distributing Communion should be taken to the Tabernacle and placed in the Ciborium. If there is no Ciborium, you may place the bowl in or near the Tabernacle and one minister should wait until the Ciborium is returned, so that any remaining Eucharistic bread can be placed in the Ciborium. If there is too much for the Ciborium, combine what you can in one of the Communion Bowls, and after Mass, ask the priest or deacon about getting another Ciborium.

If the EMC with the Eucharistic bread begins to run out and still has people to distribute Communion to, s/he should take (if possible) some hosts from the minister closest to her/him. If this is not possible, seek out the next closest minister, or simply return the Communion bowl to the servers table.

If EMCs at the back or side stations are finished, s/he may go and assist others. Try to stand far enough away to assist but not block the procession of people coming forward for Communion.

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 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. After Mass, you must make sure the Host is dissolved in the water and poured down the Sacarium. Replace the water in the cup and put it back next to the tabernacle.

If the Precious Blood is spilled, calmly cover the area with a purificator(s) and ask an usher to (or you may yourself) 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 normal good hygiene. Wash 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. If you need to wash your hands again just before you approach the altar, simply go to the sacristy just before the sign of peace, remembering that there are several ministers for each Mass so if everyone does this, the priest will likely be left waiting.

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.

Glossary of Terms Pertaining to Extraordinary Ministers of Communion (EMC)

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

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

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 pour water into it as described above. 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.

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.

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

Sacristy – The room where the vessels and books are kept for use during Mass. This is also the room the priest and/or deacon store their vestments for Mass.

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 and during the purifying of the Communion bowls and cups. You should not pour significant amounts of either form of the Eucharist down this sink without significantly diluting it and/or attempting to consume or share the consumption of it with others (cf. Can. 1367).

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

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.

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