

*"For I received
from the Lord
what I also
handed on to you..."*

I Corinthians 11:23



Handbook for Extraordinary Ministers of Communion



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Serving as an Extraordinary Minister of Communion at Mass

Attire

Dress in a way that is dignified and shows respect for the Blessed Sacrament and your function as an Extraordinary Minister:

- Wear your “Sunday best”
- Nothing that calls attention to the minister
- No logo shirts or revealing clothing
- No Extravagant jewelry
- No over-the-top manicures
- Wear shoes that allow quiet and reverent movement
- Refrain from strong perfume or cologne.

Procedures before Mass

- Every parish should have clear, written check-in procedures
 - Where and how to check in
 - Diagram of Communion stations
 - How to prepare hosts and wine (if EMs responsibility)
 - Deacon is the minister of the Precious Blood
 - Planned arrangement for reception of Communion especially:
 - Music Ministers
 - Persons with disabilities
- Arrive at least 15 minutes early for your ministry
- Note the station and position you are assigned
- Vest in an alb
 - Symbolic white garment from baptism
 - Reminder of our call to serve
 - Tradition in the Diocese of Scranton
 - Should properly fit (ankle-length)
 - Parish usually provides, although you can purchase your own
- Make sure your hands are clean
 - Wash your hands prior to ministry
 - Use hand sanitizer if available
 - Avoid touching your face, hands, mouth and nose during Mass.
- Such parishes ask Extraordinary Ministers of Communion to serve as Ministers of Hospitality before Mass

- Sitting in church
 - Close to the sanctuary
 - End of the pew
 - Reserved seating
- Prepare internally before Mass
- Participation during Mass
 - The obligation of Catholic Christians is not simply to “attend” Mass but to “participate in” (Canon 1247)
 - This includes the singing of the hymns and acclamations, responding confidently, praying and reflecting during moments of silence, and staying focused on the sacred action.
 - Extraordinary Ministers of Communion should model proper participation for others
 - Bowing and genuflecting at appropriate times

Distribution of Holy Communion

- DO NOT HURRY YOUR ACTIONS!
- Receiving your vessel
 - Approach the altar once the priest has consumed the host
 - Know what vessel you are to receive
 - Know specific position to stand for each minister
 - Priest or deacon will hand you your vessel
 - Host ministers will receive ciborium/bowl
 - Precious Blood ministers will receive chalice and purificator
 - Distribution should begin when the priest is in place
- Distribution of Holy Communion
 - The Communicant
 - has the option to receive in the hand or in the mouth
 - has the option to receive from the cup
 - Should bow slightly before receiving
 - Should not be denied if kneeling to receive
 - Normal postures is standing
 - Pastor should address such instances
 - Hold host over the ciborium so that you are less likely to drop it on the floor
 - Holding and placement of the host
 - Overhand placement (recommended)
 - Underhand placement
 - Exact wording: “The Body of Christ” “The Blood of Christ”

- Announce with meaning and faith
- Establish eye contact with the Communicant
- No names are to be used when addressing the Communicant
- Blessing of children or adults is discouraged
- If the Communicant does not say “Amen,” say it for them.
- Administering Precious Blood
 - Carefully hand the cup to communicant
 - Be sure communicant has a good grip
 - Exchange should be firm, but gentle
 - Communicant should take cup with both hands
 - In case of disability, assistance may be needed
 - Do not try to force them to drink
 - Take back, wipe and turn
 - Wipe inside and outer lip of the cup where lips made contact
 - Don't dip purificator in Precious Blood
 - Turn cup a quarter turn to air dry
- If you are running out of hosts:
 - Go to the priest or deacon to refill ciborium
 - You may break hosts if there are only a few people left
- When finished distributing Precious Body:
 - Can move to assist others distributing
 - Return your ciborium to the altar
- When finished distributing the Precious Blood:
 - If you run out of Precious Blood, return your cup to appropriate location
 - Consume leftover Precious Blood while still in place and facing the altar. (*indult* granted by Bishop of Scranton) and return cup to the appropriate location
 - Precious Blood should NEVER be poured down a sacrarium
- Purification and Washing of Vessels
 - Only the ordinary ministers of Communion (bishop, priest or deacon) can purify the vessels.
 - Should be done at the altar during Mass or at a side table after Mass
 - Extraordinary Ministers of Communion may assist with the washing of the vessels in the sacristy after Mass

- Take care in handling the vessels
- Watch jewelry to prevent scratching
- Carry the vessel reverently because of its sacred use
- Place any used purificators or corporals in separate container designated as “sacred wash”
- Guiding principle: reverence for the Lord’s Body and Blood

Accidents or Problems

- If a consecrated host is dropped:
 - Pick it up reverently and consume right away
 - Hold under the ciborium, return to altar and tell the priest/
 - The dropped host should never be placed back in the ciborium
 - If host cannot be consumed, it may be completely dissolved in water and poured down a sacrarium

- If Precious Blood spills:
 - DO NOT PANIC—stop what you are doing and do not embarrass the communicant
 - Place the purificator over the spill and position yourself over
 - Absorb the Precious Blood and rinse with water in the sacrarium.
 - If no sacrarium, rinse in another vessel and that water poured into the ground in a secluded spot

- Communicant doesn’t consume the host
 - If placing the host in the hand, be conscious that the communicant consumes the host
 - If communicant begins to walk away carrying the host, say in a subdued voice, “Please consume the host now.”

- Do NOT refuse communion to anyone (*RS 91*)
 - There are guidelines for receiving communion, but it is not up to the Extraordinary Minister of Communion to make that decision on the spot
 - If you have concerns about someone, speak to the pastor after Mass

- Intinction (dipping Host into the Precious Blood before receiving)
 - Rare, but an option
 - Only the priest can do it, and must be received on the tongue.

- Celiac Sprue disease (gluten intolerance)
 - Gluten—protein composite found in wheat that gives elasticity to dough
 - Some individuals suffer intolerance to different amounts of gluten
 - Non-gluten hosts not allowed for Mass, but low-gluten hosts are.
 - Anyone who cannot receive a low-gluten host can still receive the Precious Blood

Serving as an Extraordinary Minister of Communion to the Sick, Homebound, Hospitals, Prisons, or Nursing Homes

Preparations

- Call the person a day or two beforehand
 - Ask how they are feeling
 - Ask if they can prepare a table with a cloth, candle and crucifix
 - Ask how many will be receiving (caretakers, family members)
 - If visiting for the first time, ask if there are any special arrangements such as:
 - Letting yourself in
 - If they have difficulty swallowing
 - If they have health problems
 - Have a copy of the ritual book or text of the rite to be used
 - Bring your own cloth, crucifix, candle
 - Bring holy water, participation aid if desired
 - Bring latest copy of the parish bulletin
 - Bring enough hosts in a pyx

Ministry in Private Homes

- Transporting the Blessed Sacrament
 - Remember focus and reverence
 - Pyx should be carried on you, preferably using a burse
 - Avoid placing pyx in pocket, purse or glove compartment with other items
 - Go directly to the homebound person's house
 - Do not run errands, go shopping, stop for coffee etc.
 - Refrain from listening to the radio or unnecessary conversation (cell phones)

- At the Home
 - Initially
 - Offer friendly greeting to homebound person or caregiver
 - Explain what you've come to do
 - Pay attention to how the homebound person is feeling
 - Avoid socializing until after he/she has received
 - Ask them to turn off the TV
 - Communion Rite
 - Open and place pyx on the white cloth and light candle (if not done already)
 - Invite everyone to spend some time in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament
 - Invite those present to participate in the prayers and readings
 - Follow the ritual prescribed (next slide)
 - Host may be broken into smaller pieces
 - May want to keep a small glass of water nearby to assist the sick person in swallowing the host
 - Outline of Rite prescribed in *Pastoral Care of the Sick or Communion of the Sick*
 - Introductory Rites
 - Greeting
 - Sprinkling with Holy Water (*optional*)
 - Penitential Rite
 - Liturgy of the Word
 - Reading from Scripture
 - Response (*silence or brief explanation*)
 - General Intercessions (*optional*)
 - Liturgy of Holy Communion

- The Lord's Prayer
 - Communion
 - Silent Prayer
 - Prayer after Communion
- Concluding Rite
 - Blessing
- Following the Visit(s)
 - Immediately return any remaining hosts to the tabernacle
 - Remember reverence for the sacrament when traveling
 - Purify the pyx using water and purificator

Ministry in Hospitals or Nursing Homes

- Extremely abbreviated rite
- Pastoral sensitivity should guide the adaptation of this rite
- May begin in the church, hospital chapel or the first room
 - Introductory Rite
 - Antiphon
 - Liturgy of Holy Communion
 - Greeting (*optional*)
 - Scripture Reading (*optional if there is time and seems desirable*)
 - The Lord's Prayer (*optional, if there are not many rooms to visit*)
 - Communion
 - Concluding Rite (*said either in the last room visited, in the church or chapel*)
 - Concluding Prayer
- Following the visit, return any remaining hosts to the tabernacle
 - Remember reverence for the Blessed Sacrament when traveling
 - Purify the pyx with water and the purificator

Extraordinary Minister of Exposition

- Ordinary minister of exposition is the bishop, priest or deacon
- An Extraordinary Minister of Communion may expose and later repose the Eucharist for adoration of the faithful, but only with the explicit permission of the pastor or bishop

- May open the tabernacle
- May place the ciborium on the altar or the host in the monstrance and replace the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle
- Extraordinary Ministers may not give the blessing with the sacrament, nor do they incense it
- Extraordinary Ministers are to wear an alb when carrying out this ministry

Other Points

- Ash Wednesday
 - Extraordinary Ministers of Communion may assist with the distribution of ashes
 - Arrive early and check in with the priest or deacon as to where you will be stationed to distribute
 - Check what text you'll be saying when imposing ashes:
 - *“Repent, and believe in the Gospel.”*
 - *“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”*
 - To impose ashes, dip your thumb into the bowl of ashes and mark each person's forehead with the sign of the cross while saying one of the above texts.
 - Be sure to wash your hands thoroughly after administering the ashes.
- Blessing of Throats
 - Extraordinary Ministers of Communion may be assist in the blessing of throats on the memorial of St. Blaise (Feb. 3) or the nearest weekend
 - Normally, crossed candles are held to the throat of the person while the following blessing is given WITHOUT making the Sign of the Cross:
 - *“Through the intercession of St. Blaise, bishop and martyr, may God deliver you from every disease of the throat and from every other illness: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”*

Definition of Terms

ACOLYTE—an instituted ministry usually reserved solely for candidates for the sacrament of Holy Orders.

ALB—the long white liturgical garment worn over street clothing common to all the baptized.

BOOK OF THE GOSPELS—a separate book from the Lectionary that contains the Gospel readings used at Mass.

BURSE—a pouch with a cord to be worn around the neck that holds the pyx of consecrated hosts when traveling to distribute Communion to the homebound or those in hospitals or nursing homes.

CELIAC SPRUE—a disease where a person, to varying degrees, cannot ingest gluten found in wheat flour without becoming ill.

CHALICE—also referred to as the cup, is used to hold the consecrated wine of the Eucharist (the Blood of Christ).

CIBORIUM—a metal container (usually having a cover) used to hold the consecrated hosts. It has a variety of forms from a bowl shape to a goblet-like appearance similar to the chalice. (*plural*—ciboria)

COMMISSION—the public act of installing and blessing a member of the community for a particular ministry of service.

COMMUNICANT—the person who receives Holy Communion under the form of bread and wine from the priest, deacon or extraordinary minister.

CORPORAL—a square, white linen cloth unfolded on the altar on which the paten, ciboria and chalice(s) are placed during Mass. Also used in front of the tabernacle and under the monstrance during Eucharistic Exposition.

CREDENCE TABLE—A small table or shelf in the wall at one side of the altar. On it are usually placed the cruets, basin, and finger towel. The chalice (or cups), corporals, purificators, and extra ciboria for the Mass may also be placed there.

CRUET—One of two small bottles or vessels to contain the water and wine used at Mass.

DEPUTED—assigning a substitute to take the place of another

EUCCHARIST—comes from a Greek word meaning “to give thanks”. Another name for the Mass or the consecrated bread and wine.

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER OF COMMUNION—a non-ordained person who is commissioned to distribute Holy Communion for a single or multiple occasions.

HOST—the round wafer that becomes the consecrated bread of the Eucharist (the Body of Christ).

INDULT—a special permission or concession granted by the Pope or diocesan bishop that allows the recipient to do something that Church guidelines do not permit.

INTINCTION—the practice of partly dipping the consecrated bread, or *host*, into the consecrated wine before consumption by the communicant. This is only to be done by the priest in exceptional circumstances and never done by the communicant.

LECTIONARY—a series of books containing the Scripture passages for the First Reading, Responsorial Psalm, and Second Reading (but not the Gospels) used at Mass.

LITURGY—official public worship of the Church, of which Eucharist is first and foremost.

LUNA—the round glass case in which a consecrated host is kept so that it can be placed into the monstrance for Eucharistic Exposition.

MONSTRANCE—a vessel used to display the consecrated host for Eucharistic Adoration.

NARTHEX—an entrance area or vestibule leading to the main body of a church.

ORDINARY MINISTER OF COMMUNION—those who have received the sacrament of Holy Orders (bishop, priest or deacon)

PASCHAL SACRIFICE—Christ offering himself on the cross for the salvation of the world. Based on our Jewish heritage, Christ, by sacrificing himself on the cross, becomes our “Passover” (Pasch) Lamb and frees us from the bondage of sin and death.

PATEN—a saucer like dish that holds the round wafer that becomes

the consecrated bread of the Eucharist (the Body of Christ). May appear similar to bowl-like ciboria but not as deep.

PRESIDER—person appointed to lead communal worship in accordance with the laws of the Church. A bishop or priest is the presider of the Mass.

PURIFICATOR—a small piece of white linen, usually marked with a cross in the center, used to wipe the lip of the chalice or cups during the distribution of the Precious Blood.

PURIFICATION—the act of pouring water into the sacred vessels (paten, ciborium, chalice) to cleanse them of tiny particles of the host or remaining Precious Blood. That liquid is then consumed and a purificator used to wipe the vessels dry.

PYX--any metal box or vessel used to carry hosts on visitation to the homebound, hospitals, nursing homes or prisons.

ROMAN MISSAL—the liturgical book that contains all of the prayers used at Mass.

RUBRIC—the rules, guidelines, directions or suggestions given in liturgical books.

SACRARIUM—a special sink in the sacristy with pipes that drain directly into the ground

SACRISTAN—a person who handles the preparations of vessels, linens, books, and other liturgical items before Mass. He or she may oversee the attendance of all liturgical ministers scheduled and may also communicate any special notices or instructions to these ministers before Mass.

SACRISTY—a room attached to a church, usually near the altar, where the clergy and lay ministers vest for Mass and where all the liturgical vessels and other items are kept. The sacrarium is usually located there.

SPECIES—usually referring to consecrated host (Body of Christ) and the consecrated wine (Blood of Christ) given at Holy Communion.

TABERNACLE--A cupboard or boxlike receptacle, usually locked, for the exclusive reservation of the Blessed Sacrament. A lit sanctuary lamp is usually located nearby indicating that the Blessed Sacrament is reserved inside.

THURIBLE—the vessel with a long chain(s) used to burn incense at Mass.

Resources for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Primary Sources:

- *Catechism of the Catholic Church, Second Edition*, USCC, Inc.-- the full, complete exposition of Catholic doctrine
- *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium)*, Second Vatican Council—one of the constitutions of the Second Vatican Council whose principle aim was emphasizing the need for greater participation of the lay faithful in the liturgy.
- *General Instruction of the Roman Missal (Third Typical Edition) 2002*—detailed directives on how the Mass is to be celebrated
- *Instruction on the Eucharist (Redemptionis Sacramentum)*, Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 2004—document addressing certain matters to be observed or avoided regarding the Eucharist
- *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America*, USCCB, 2002--describes the methods of Holy Communion under both kinds, and establishes norms for reverent and careful distribution.
- *Introduction to the Order of Mass, A Pastoral Resource of the Bishop's Committee on the Liturgy*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops--This pastoral introduction provides scriptural and historical context for the acts, objects, materials, symbols, rites, and prayers of the Mass--and in so doing helps all reach fuller and more active participation.
- *Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum*-- contains the complete texts of the official rites for the infirmed of the Church, including Communion of the Sick, and Viaticum with-in and outside Mass
- *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass*-- includes the Rite of Distributing Holy Communion outside Mass, Administration of Communion and Viaticum to the Sick by an Extraordinary Minister, and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

- *Book of Blessings*--this liturgical book includes blessings pertaining to persons, to objects, and to various occasions, as well as blessings and services connected with official parish events
- *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest*--addresses the growing reality of declining number of priests and their availability to celebrate Sunday Mass by providing the appropriate ritual to be used in the celebrating community.
- *Wounded and Loved, Regathering the Scattered*—Bishop Bambera’s pastoral vision for the Church of Scranton that focuses on the faithful’s role as servant leaders

Books & DVDs:

- Laughlin, Corinna, Riley, Kenneth A. and Paul Turner, *Guide of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion*. Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago 2013—provides a basic theological and historical overview of this ministry, resources for formation and the deepening of ministerial spirituality, questions for discussion and reflection, and much more.
- Kwatera, Michael, *The Ministry of Communion*. Liturgical Press, Collegeville 2004--offers practical advice and vital theology for Eucharistic ministers. Updated with the latest liturgical laws and norms, and with an expanded section on leading Communion services.
- Gaillardetz, Richard, *Broken and Poured Out: A Spirituality for Eucharistic Ministers*. Ligouri Publications, Ligouri 2002-- discusses the communal aspects of liturgy, the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the idea of Eucharist as sacrifice, and the role of the Extraordinary Minister of Communion
- Foley, Edward, *From Age to Age*. Liturgical Press, Collegeville 2008—A historical survey that traces the development of Christian Eucharist from its Jewish roots to our own time. In addition to exploring the architecture, music, books, and vessels that contributed to each period's liturgical expressions, this edition introduces readers to the theology of each age as well as the historical and cultural contexts that shaped the Eucharist.
- Baker, J. Robert and Barbara Budde, compilers. *A Eucharistic Sourcebook*. Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago 1999-- gathers poetry, prose, hymns and prayers reflecting on what Eucharist means, what it means to do Eucharist and what it means to be Eucharist.
- Barron, Robert, *Eucharist* (DVD and Study Guide) and *Eucha-*

rist: Catholic Spirituality for Adults (Book). Word on Fire Catholic Ministries, Skokie 2008--This fresh look at the Eucharist brings to light its reality as sacred meal, the sacrifice necessary for communion with God and the real presence of Christ.

Pamphlets or Articles:

- *“The Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist: Basic Questions and Answers.”* Published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Secretariat for Doctrine and Pastoral Practices, June 15, 2001.
- *“Guidelines for the Reception of Communion.”* Published by the USCCB and available on their website (www.usccb.org)
- *Administration of Communion of the Sick.* New bilingual (English/Spanish) edition for use in the context of a liturgy of the word or a hospital. Published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Resources for Spiritual Development:

Extraordinary Ministers of Communion are encouraged to develop a habit of personal prayer and spiritual reading. Some suggestions are periodicals about liturgy or prayer, books about the Eucharist or the lives of the saints. Below are some other suggestions for personal prayer:

- [The Liturgy of the Hours](#): the official prayer of the Church marking the different parts of the day, usually prayed by all clergy and religious communities throughout the world. Available in a 4 volume set or an abridged version called *Christian Prayer* or an even more abridged version called *Shorter Christian Prayer*.
 - USCCB article providing a brief overview of the Liturgy of the Hours can be found at <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgy-of-the-hours/>
 - For an explanation on the Liturgy of the Hours and Mundelein Psalter, visit <http://www.adoremus.org/0307LiturgyofHours.html>
- [Annual/Monthly Resources for Reflections on the Sunday Readings](#): consider reading and reflecting on the Scripture passages for the upcoming Sunday Mass. You can use your bible or find the prescribed scripture readings for any Sunday or weekday at www.usccb.org. These are resources that will help you “break open” the Scripture readings more:

- *At Home with the Word*—published by Liturgy Training Publications (www.ltp.org)
- *Exploring the Sunday Readings*—by Alice Camille, published by Twenty-Third Publications (www.exploringthesundayreadings.com)
- *Living Liturgy*—published Liturgical Press (www.litpress.org)
- Prayers before the Blessed Sacrament: some parishes in our diocese have Eucharistic Adoration chapels or have periodic Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament where you can spend time in quiet prayer before Jesus in the Eucharist. You can also pray before the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle before or after Mass. Here are some prayer resources for Eucharistic devotions:
 - A collection of Holy Hours for various intentions that contain prayers before the Blessed Sacrament can be found at www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/eucharistic-devotion/index.cfm
 - *Prayers for an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion* and *Prayers before the Blessed Sacrament*—published by Liturgy Training Publications (www.ltp.org)

Service:

As Extraordinary Ministers of Communion, we are called not only to offer the Body of Christ to others, but also to serve the Body of Christ outside of Mass. There are numerous service opportunities in your parish and in your community. Consider volunteering to feed the homeless in a soup kitchen or help with the collection and organization of a food bank. Preparing a meal at home for someone in need or alone, welcoming new neighbors with food, or having regular dinners with family are other ways we can feed and build up the Body of Christ.

