

Handbook for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion



Saint Katharine Drexel Parish

November 2019

Foreword

Dear Colleagues in Ministry:

In accepting the Church's invitation to be a Eucharistic Minister of Holy Communion, you are in a very concrete manner demonstrating your fundamental baptismal vocation to be another Christ.

In the celebration of the Eucharist, we receive a two-fold food: the bread of the Word and the bread of the Eucharist: "...Christ is always present in His Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass... under the Eucharistic species...He is present in His Word..." (Vatican Council, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 7).

Since Vatican II we have become accustomed to the layperson reading the Word of God. As the Council tells us, "Christ is present in His Word." In a real sense we have been receiving Christ in His Word through the lips and speech of our laypeople.

Another step has been taken. In the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, we see laypeople distributing the Eucharistic Bread to souls in the banquet of Christ. This needed assistance given to our priests is another example of our common obligation to bring the Risen Lord to all humankind.

We should not be surprised at these changes in the Church. Rather let us appreciate the layperson and his/her role as it is outlined in Chapter IV of the *Constitution of the Church*. Let us encourage our Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to study and reflect on this entire document of the II Vatican Council.

The Scriptures tell us that we all share in a common priesthood. We must keep clearly in mind, however, that "though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated. Each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ," (Vatican Council II, *The Church*, no. 10). In the ministry of distributing Holy Communion the layperson does not perform a function necessarily restricted to ordained priests. Rather, he/she exercises his/her own proper priesthood of service acquired at Baptism and deepened through Confirmation.

This handbook has been prepared for the use of the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. May it provide the theological background, procedural detail and pastoral application needed for the exercise of their duties. May it also become a source of continual inspiration for them as they share the Living Bread at the banquet table of the Lord.

Introduction

Saint Pope Paul VI, in his Instruction to the Bishops of April 1969, expressed his concern over the shortage of priests in many areas, and the increased pastoral duties of priests. The Pope recognizes that the ministry of souls required some action in these circumstances. We as parishioners are aware of a real need in our own diocese and parishes. We also experience a shortage of available priests, combined with the length of time it takes to distribute Holy Communion in some parishes. Making use of lay people in distributing Holy Communion will improve the Communion Rite at our Masses, make it less lengthy, more orderly, and hopefully fill it with a deeper spirit of devotion.

In considering this or any recent change in the Church, it is well to remember the distinction between what we call matters of doctrine and matters of discipline in our faith. Matters of doctrine include the essential truths revealed by God through Sacred Scripture and authentic Church Tradition. These basic truths are unchangeable, though our understanding of them and how to apply them to our daily lives can deepen and develop. However, matters of discipline concern the various rules and regulations of the Church flowing from and surrounding the truths of our faith and their practical effects in our daily lives. These rules, of course, do admit of change and modification, because the actions of the People of God, like those of God Himself, occur in 'the measure of change.' The Church cannot change God's laws, but she can certainly modify or make exceptions to her own disciplinary laws. That is why the Second Vatican Council calls her the Pilgrim Church, 'at the same time holy and always in need of being purified, comprised of a divine and a human element.'

With regard to allowing religious and other laity to distribute Holy Communion, there is certainly nothing in the doctrine of the Church, which would prevent this practice; rather there is much to support it. For every Christian belongs to 'The Common Priesthood of the Faithful' by virtue of the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. We are thus 'a priestly people,' as St. Peter calls us, called to offer sacrifice and bear witness to Christ. This priestly character of baptism is what gives every Christian the right to administer the sacrament of Matrimony, and of course, to baptize in emergency. The sacrament of Holy Orders, however, confers upon men the 'ministerial or hierarchical priesthood', which differs from the common priesthood of the faithful 'in essence and not only in degree.' Thus, there are certain things priests can do which the laity cannot. In regard to the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, the function of the ministerial priest is to 'bring it about' or to confect the Sacrament. There is no divine law or doctrine, which would forbid a sister or layperson to distribute this Spiritual Food which has already been brought about through the unique power of the ministerial priesthood. So, we have here a question of discipline, not of doctrine.

When we look at the long history of Church discipline in this matter, we see a very wide variety of practices down through the years. It is true that in more recent years an acute reverence for the Blessed Sacrament seemed to demand that the Sacred Host be normally handled or touched only by a priest. But the anointing of hands is not the main issue involved at all, for deacons have always had the privilege of distributing Holy Communion, and their hands are

not anointed with oil at ordination to the Diaconate. The issue is rather with laws of the Church governing the valid and licit administration of Holy Communion, laws which have undergone a great deal of change in twenty-one centuries. It is well for all of us to develop a real historical sense in this matter. We live our lives within one generation, but we are the heirs of very rich and varied traditions. We should not limit our vision to only the past, but rather broaden our picture of the Church to see the beautiful mosaic that she really is. Each individual piece is different, but each adds to the glory of the Church.

The priest, of course, has always been the Ordinary Minister of the Sacred Species of the Eucharist, which he has consecrated at the Liturgy over which he presides. But we are familiar with exceptions to this rule. We know the story of Saint Tarsicius, the legendary young acolyte or deacon who was killed in the streets of third-century Rome while carrying the Eucharist to Christian prisoners. The fact that others besides the priest handled the Host is also evident from the practice of sending an acolyte or subdeacon with a particle of the Bishop's Host to churches in outlying districts of a city. This particle of the Bishop's Host, or *fermentum*, as it was called, was dropped into the chalice to show the Unity of the local sacrifice with that of the Bishop who is the chief celebrant of the community. This practice, with varying forms, lasted until the 11th century, and we still have a remnant of it now when the priest drops a particle of the Host into the chalice after It has been broken.

We might also recall to mind the fact in early times people would take the Eucharist to their homes for the sick. Deacons, as we have mentioned, are readily given the privilege of distributing Communion, as well as to preach and baptize. This is one of the reasons why the Church since the Second Vatican Council permits married men to be ordained deacons, especially in those places where there is a shortage of priests. In this instance a trained deacon could nourish the spiritual lives of the people by conducting Scripture Services and distributing Hosts previously consecrated by a priest.

Many might be surprised to know that even present legislation of the Church permits lay people to administer Communion in cases of necessity. Church law has always taught that any layperson has the privilege of bringing Holy Communion to a dying person in the absence of a priest. The laity also has the right and duty to handle the Eucharist to keep It from being dishonored, defamed, or destroyed.

In the *Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy*, the Bishops stated that the Eucharist is the summit and source of our Christian life. It follows then, that the Eucharist has to be made available to people. This privilege granted by our Holy Father makes the Eucharist more readily and more fittingly available to the faithful of our diocese and local parish. For this let us be grateful to the Holy Spirit for guiding our leaders so wisely in these days.

Overview

The Ministers of Eucharist perform the extraordinary service of sharing the presence of Christ with all who receive the body and blood of Christ. They are ministers of the assembly in the service of the Lord. They also share in the ministry to the sick, taking the Holy Eucharist to those who cannot get to Church for Mass, and sharing with them their continuing unity with the parish and the church.

Philosophy

This ministry was created to facilitate the smooth distribution of Holy Communion and to assist the presiding celebrant of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It also includes delivering Holy Communion to nursing homes, the homebound, and the sick in hospitals. This ministry was also created to nurture and enhance the extraordinary ministers' own sense of faith development, love for prayer, and the joy of servicing others, recognizing in these inner qualities the presence of Christ in and through this ministry. To become closer to God by distributing Communion to other members of the worshipping community, knowing that by serving them they are serving God in a very special, privileged way.

Expectations

1. Qualifications

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should be sincere Catholics, persons known for their goodness, who seriously follow the Catholic way of life. They should be at ease with other people. They must be at least high school years old; fully initiated into the Catholic Church having received the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist; of sufficient Christian maturity with a definite and registered member of Saint Katharine Drexel parish; and with a character and way of life that reflects a serious and well-informed faith and moral commitment. They should be persons who foster their own devotion to the Eucharist by participating fully at Mass and show an example to the rest of the faithful by their reverent and prayerful manner.

2. Recruiting

A. Where and how do we invite those individuals who are interested in serving as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion?

- Once a year, dedicate a Sunday Liturgy inviting members to consider being an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. Incorporate into the Sunday liturgy itself the theme of Eucharistic ministry to the assembly. This could include guest speakers who would share their personal experiences in Eucharistic ministry.
- Personally invite (call) a member of the congregation to consider this ministry.

- Invite an entire family to consider this ministry (parents/children team effort).

B. How does a parish select candidates?

Selection of the ministers can prove to be an extremely delicate matter for the parish leadership staff. Human jealousies and resistance to the very idea of laypersons distributing Communion can make many in the congregation quite critical of the choices. I propose the following process, which hopefully forestalls criticism, engages the full participation of the community in the selection procedure, and gives the approved ministers a feeling of strong support from the congregation.

Selection Procedure

- 1) Publicize in the parish bulletin that a certain number of persons are needed to function as ministers of Communion. Invite parishioners to contact their pastor and/or parish pastoral council representative with the name or names of parishioners they would recommend for the task.
- 2) After consideration of each proposed candidate, with the recommendation from the Pastoral Council, the pastor approves those candidates recommended to serve as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.
- 3) Pastor personally invite those prospective candidates and seek their acceptance.
- 4) Upon acceptance of the call, the candidates' name or names are publicized in the parish bulletin where parishioners can review the selection process that was followed. This indicates that the candidates came forth from the people and the council rather than as the personal selection of the pastor or pastoral team.

3. Safe Environment Program

- All EMHC to the sick and homebound must comply with the prescribed parish policies and the policies of the Diocese of Venice regarding volunteers' forms, code of conduct, Safe Environment program (VIRTUS), which consists of two components: training and awareness, and background checking with fingerprinting.
- Regular Sunday EMHC do not need the above requirements.

4. Procedures for Eucharistic Ministers

- 1) Arrive 10-15 minutes before Mass is to begin.
- 2) Become familiar with the **diagram** for distribution *[review insert]*:
- 3) As the Presider extends the sign of peace, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion take their place in the main aisle.
- 4) Keep in mind: Eight (08) lay distributors are needed at each Mass, the Presider will be the ninth (09).

-Nine (09) to distribute "The Body of Christ"

-Four (04) to distribute "The Blood of Christ"

If a priest concelebrant or the deacon is present, he will be an eighth (8) distributor of the Body of Christ.

Please come forward as needed if a scheduled minister fails to secure a substitute.

- 5) After the Presider consumes the Sacred species and the angelus bell is rung, the Extraordinary Ministers of the Blood of Christ will lead all ministers into the sanctuary (circle around to the right of the altar) to the appropriate spots.

Cup-side

Ciboria-side

Altar

- 6) The Presider (and/or Deacon) will distribute Holy Communion to all ministers, followed by the Blood of Christ. One Extraordinary Minister of the Body of Christ will assist the presider in distributing the *ciborias* (bowls) to the other Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. When all have received their appropriate sacred vessel, the Extraordinary Ministers of the Blood of Christ will lead others (single-file) out of the sanctuary; go to your appropriate station.
- 7) **Both Extraordinary Ministers of the Body and Blood of Christ will distribute Holy Communion to the handicapped rows first, and then move to assigned station.** When all are in place, distribution of communion to the assembly can begin.
- 8) Offer the host/cup to each person saying, "*Body [Blood] of Christ.*" The communicant's response is "Amen."

Note: Take your time when distributing Communion; this is not a race to see who can finish first.

Note: Eye contact and touch (body language) is important. This is a personal contact between Jesus and each person who is receiving. You are the instrument of transpiring grace!

Note: If a host falls on the floor, immediately pick it up and consume it. If it is picked up and not consumed, it needs to be dissolved in some water and poured down the *sacrarium* (consuming it is much easier and it is respectful). Ask the sacristan to assist you.

If Holy Communion has touched someone's tongue or is dirty and unconsumable, see the sacristan so that it can be properly disposed in the *sacrarium* and not poured down the sink.

Note: If there is any consecrated wine spilled, immediately cover the spot with your purificator. Get another purificator from the credence table and continue until finished. The area will be properly cleaned as soon as Mass is finished.

Note: Intinction is strictly prohibited. This is reserved only to the priest. Please do not allow parishioners to intinct Holy Communion in the Blood of Christ.

9) The first communion ministers to finish the line at their aisle will be directed to go to the back of the church to give communion to those who are unable to come forward to receive. They are usually seated in the back-row pew/wheelchairs. The hospitality team will help direct you to those who want to receive. Ministers are not permitted to go into the Narthex or chapel to distribute Holy Communion. Return to the altar when you have finished ministering to those at the back of the church.

10) After you have completed the distribution of the Body of Christ, return ciborium to the altar (by handing it to the MC); return to your seat.

-After you have completed the distribution of the Blood of Christ, make sure all of the Blood of Christ is consumed when you return the vessel to the sacristy; return to you seat.

-The Presider will purify only the paten and chalice during Mass. All other *ciborias* (bowels/cups) will be purified after Mass by the Presider, deacon or acolyte.

Note: No one should be washing cups and cleaning up the sacristy until after Mass is finished.

Note: When helping with clean up, wash cups, chalice, paten, etc. with soap and water. Be careful the vessels are very fragile.

11) Please remember that **proper attire is always a requirement for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion**. Ladies: No shorts, sneakers, flip-flops, tight clothing or sleeveless tops of any kind, capris are acceptable. Shoulders must be covered. Gentlemen: No shorts, sneakers. Business casual attire is requested, nice pressed slacks, collared shirt, if at all possible tucked in. No jeans or denim at any time.

Note: The members of Liturgy Commission or the Sacristan will ask that you step-down from serving at that Mass if you are not dressed appropriately out of respect to our Lord Jesus or the dignity of the Mass.

Note: Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, even if not scheduled for that Mass, should always come to Mass properly attired and prepared to minister if needed.

12) After holy communion is completed, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to the homebound/nursing homes approach the sanctuary to receive the pyx. After the Presider blesses them, they return to their seats for the final blessing/dismissal. After Mass, those carrying the holy Eucharist to the homebound must leave immediately; do not linger and visit with people.

Note: The Eucharist should be carried and transported in a burse only (to the homebound and nursing homes)

Scheduling

Schedule Coordinator. It is the task of the coordinator to design, update and distribute the schedule promptly and prior to the ending of the liturgical year schedule. The schedule should include names, addresses, phones number and e-mails of each minister, and provide each person with the option of making switches as necessary. Each individual minister is responsible for covering his or her assigned time.

Schedules cover one liturgical year at a time. We try to schedule everyone as often or as seldom as they feel comfortable with. We also try to schedule you for the Mass you would normally attend.

Holy Days and holidays are not pre-scheduled. Sheets are set out in the sacristy a week or so in advance. We ask that you fill-in the time that your personal schedule permits.

Vacations at Saint Katharine Drexel parish are year around. Some Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion go north in the summer and some go south for the winter. We ask that you always check in the schedule to see if you are needed.

5. A Theology of the Eucharist

The Council in the following statement summarizes the vast mystery of the meaning of the Eucharist: *“At the Last Supper, on the night when he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of His body and blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the centuries until He should come again, and so to entrust to His beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of His death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is eaten, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.”* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, no. 47)

In art, we view some paintings, which can be absorbed in a few minutes. The great works of art must grow on the viewer for months before he/she feels he/she understands them. These masterpieces must be viewed from one angle and another. After they are understood, the viewer would fear giving a brief explanation of their meaning and beauty. He/She knows that in whatever he/she says he/she will be neglecting some other important feature of the work.

This is certainly the way one feels who attempts an explanation of the Eucharist, of the Mass, in a few words. Each age finds deeper meaning and beauty. What is presented here is by no means a thorough or exhaustive explanation of the Mass or any part of it. Rather, I will try to turn this wonderful reality before us to begin to understand the emphasis placed on certain aspects of the Eucharist by the Council Fathers, aspects that may have been overlooked a few years ago when most of us received our religious education.

First, note that the Eucharist was instituted *“to perpetuate the Sacrifice of the Cross through the centuries.”* Christ loved the Father from the beginning of His life as man. But He expressed this love most fully when, hanging on the cross of Calvary, He offered Himself completely to the Father in death, retaining absolutely nothing for Himself. The Mass is our opportunity to make ourselves part of that act of love so pleasing to the Father. At the consecration, when our gift becomes Christ, we join Him in this act. We can give our daily lives, our sufferings and joys to the Father with Jesus Christ through faith and love. Our union with the Risen Lord at the moment is as intimate as the union of soul and body.

Secondly, note that the Mass is a memorial of the death and resurrection of Christ. Christ gave us the Mass as our remembrance and re-enactment of His victory over death and sin. While

His death paid the price of our sins, it was His resurrection that brought us to life. This is the deliverance or victory we celebrate every Sunday. Every week we try to enter more fully into this victory, and every Sunday Mass should be a celebration by a liberated and victorious people. Christians are winners, not losers. Every Mass should make us more aware of and grateful for the victory over sin, division, hatred, sickness, and death that is ours if we have the faith to believe in it and accept it.

Thirdly, the Eucharist is *'a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity.'* We know that the Mass is the perfection and fulfillment of the Jewish Passover Meal, a meal in which God's People bound them together each year and promised to keep their part of their covenant with God. Eating together always symbolizes unity and love. In the Mass the bread has become the Body of Christ through which all of us are united in sincere love. In communion we enter into this unity more deeply and also re-commit ourselves to our covenant with God. We boldly re-pledge ourselves to keep the command of Christ: *"Love one another as I have loved you."* (John 15:12)

Finally, the Eucharist is a pledge of future glory. Christians gather together not only remembering that Christ has delivered them from the effects of sins, but also hoping for the day when Christ will call His Kingdom together and establish it at the end of the world at the general resurrection. Those united together with Christ now in charity will then be united together in glory. The earthly banquet will be completed in the heavenly celebration.

The Holy Eucharist continues...

- The Holy Eucharist is the summit of our worship as (Roman) Catholic Christians. *"The summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time, it is the fountain from which all her power flows. For the goal of all apostolic work is that all who are made sons and daughters of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in her sacrifice, and to eat the Lord's supper"* (Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, nos. 7-10).
- If the description of a sacrament is first of all as an action and secondarily as a "thing," then Holy Eucharist is first the act of remembering and thanksgiving and secondarily the Sacred Species.
- The goal of every sacramental action is to transform us into a closer likeness of the Risen Christ. We are to be transubstantiated.
- We are to be a Eucharistic people. Our personal lives should be Eucharistic. Thus, a need for reverence and witness in all that we say and do whether at the altar or away from it.
- The Catholic understanding of "real presence" in the Eucharist:

a) John, Chapter 6

- b) 1 Corinthians 11:17-34
- c) Jerusalem Catechesis
- d) Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1373-1378
- e) "Eucharist: The Real Presence," by Saint Anthony Messenger Press

Terminology

Altar - Eucharistic Table

Ambo - Lectern or Pulpit

Asperges - Holy Water sprinkler

Blessed Sacrament Chapel - Location of the tabernacle, the place of reservation

Chalice - Cup for sacred wine, used by the priest

Corporal - The square cloth covering the altar table where vessels are placed

Ciborium - Cup/Bowl for the sacred body

Credence Table - Table that holds the water, *lavabo* and cups

Cruet - Small receptacle for wine or water

Decanter - Large receptacle for wine

Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion – One who distributes the body and blood of Christ

Flagon - Large pitcher that holds the (consecrated) wine

Hosts -	<u>Unconsecrated</u> -Bread or Hosts	<u>Consecrated</u> -Consecrated Bread or Hosts -The Body of Christ -Holy Eucharist -Holy Communion
	-Wine	-Consecrated Wine -The Blood of Christ -The Precious Blood

-The consecrated elements may also be referred to as the Sacred Species or as the Lord's Body and Blood.

-Altar bread and hosts may be either consecrated or unconsecrated.

Lavabo - Small pitcher and basin using during the washing of hands

Lectionary - Book of Scripture readings for Mass

Lector - One who proclaims the Word of God

Purificator - Towel like cloth used to wipe the edge of the chalice or cup

Roman Missal - Book containing the prescribed prayers, chants, and instructions for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in the Roman Catholic Church.

Sacrarium - Small white basin where the body and blood of our Lord are disposed of (located in the sacristy)

Sacristy - Room where the Minister's vestments, vessels and books are kept

Sanctuary - Entire area on the level of the altar

Transubstantiation - By the consecration the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is brought about. Under the consecrated species of bread and wine Christ himself, living and glorious, is present in a true, real, and substantial manner: his Body and his Blood, with his soul and his divinity (cf. Council of Trent: DS 1640; 1651).

Thurible - Bowl that holds the incense

Thurifer - One who carries the thurible

Viaticum - Eucharist received at the time of death

Conclusion

The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion is a most welcome helper at the Altar of Sacrifice. By accepting the Church's invitation to be a Eucharistic Minister, one becomes another Christ. Jesus told His disciples that the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve. The Fourth Gospel dramatically incarnates these words in the events of the Last Supper. Saint John tells us that *"...during the supper, Jesus...rose from the meal and took off His cloak. He picked up a towel and tied it around Himself. Then He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet and dry them with the towel He had around Him."* In assisting to distribute the Body and Blood of Christ to your brothers and sisters during the celebration of the Eucharist and/or to the sick and shut-in you are in a sense "washing feet," that is, giving service to them after the manner of Jesus.

This handbook in conjunction with a period of study, discussion, and reflection is intended to aid the individual to carry out his or her role as a Eucharistic Minister in a dignified manner and in keeping with sound liturgical practice. Read it over carefully from time to time in order to keep ever fresh in your mind and heart the gravity of this task and of all that it signifies.

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