

# The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion



**The Church was born of the paschal mystery. For this very reason the Eucharist, which is in an outstanding way the sacrament of the paschal mystery, stands at the center of the Church's life.**

*(Ecclesia de Eucharistia, no. 3)*

**Norms and Guidelines**  
**Diocese of New Ulm**  
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## Introduction

If you are reading this booklet, you are most likely an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion or you have been asked by your pastoral leader to consider this ministry. This book has been designed to accompany the training and formation that your pastoral leader or designee has offered to you to perform the ministry of extraordinary minister of Holy Communion.

## The Need for Extraordinary Ministers



The sacred liturgy is entrusted to the care of the diocesan Bishop. In places where it is normal to have a large amount of extraordinary ministers, the Bishop should issue norms to be carried out by those who exercise the ministry.<sup>1</sup> Since the 1973 Instruction titled *Immensae*

*Caritas*, the Holy See has given the Bishop the authority to appoint Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) where the need exists.

The EMHC exercise their ministry whenever there is no priest, deacon, or instituted acolyte present or when the ordinary minister is prevented from administering communion because of other pastoral obligations, ill health, or advanced age, or when the number of the faithful is so great that, unless extraordinary ministers assist in the distribution of the Eucharist, the celebration would be unduly prolonged.

The following norms are to be observed by pastors, pastoral administrators, deacons, and lay faithful who are designated as EMHC.

## Character of the EMHC

EMHC are suitable lay persons chosen by the pastor or pastoral leader.<sup>2</sup> The EMHC must be 18 years old and fully initiated members of the Church. The EMHC must be “deeply imbued with the spirit of the liturgy, and they must be trained to perform their functions in a correct and orderly manner.”<sup>3</sup> They are to cooperate with their pastors through the exercise of their ministry according to the grace and charism which the Lord has given them.<sup>4</sup> Persons who are not in good standing in the Church and who publicly oppose church teachings should not be considered for appointment to the ministry of Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. The EMHC should be a public witness to the faith and recognized as such in the parish where they minister.

## Appointment

A letter of intent written by the pastor or pastoral administrator is sent to the Director of the Office of Worship. Upon the approval by the Bishop, the extraordinary minister is appointed to perform this ministry for a period of five years. There are three types of appointments:

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<sup>2</sup> General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), no. 107

<sup>3</sup> Constitution on the Liturgy (CSL), no. 29

<sup>4</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), no. 910 and *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 73

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<sup>1</sup> *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (RS), no. 160

1. EMHC at Mass
2. EMHC outside of Mass
3. EMHC that assists with exposition and reposition for Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

## Commissioning

After appropriate formation and training, the extraordinary minister is commissioned for the ministry. This is sometimes done during the celebration of Mass at the parish Church after the homily. It is desirable that the newly commissioned extraordinary minister fulfill this ministry at that Mass. The commissioning ritual is found in the *Book of Blessings*, chapter 63. See also pages 9 and 10 of this booklet.

EMHC are commissioned to distribute communion in their parish Church or area faith community. The appointment does not give the EMHC permission to distribute communion in other churches or Area Faith Communities. However if need necessitates, the priest can appoint an EMHC to help with communion for a single occasion without the need to secure appointment from the Diocesan Bishop. In this case the *Rite of Commissions from the Roman Missal (Appendix V)* should be used. EMHC that serve only for Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament are not commissioned.

## Renewal

After the EMHC has served a five year term, the pastor or pastoral administrator may wish to renew the appointment. If the EMHC has successfully completed his/her term of service and is willing to continue this ministry, another letter of intent is sent to the Office of Worship. Those serving consecutive terms do not

participate in the commissioning ritual again.

## Training

Many resources are available to assist the EMHC with the proper training for the ministry. Most notable is the book “The Breaking of the Bread” by Joseph Chaplin (Paulist Press, 2004). It provides practical ritual information as well as spiritual formation for the ministry. Your Pastoral Leader will be able to assist you with further training. The bibliography found at the back of this booklet lists further resources.

## The EMHC within Mass

The ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are priests and deacons. It is for this reason that the term “extraordinary” is used to describe the laity who distribute Holy



Communion. When there is a sufficient number of ordained ministers present at a Mass, the EMHC does not fulfill the function even if scheduled to assist at that Mass.

Appropriate dress for the extraordinary minister is important. Clothing should be clean, modest and in good taste so as to reflect the respect due to the Most Holy Eucharist. Items such as jeans, t-shirts, outerwear, or revealing clothes are not appropriate for any liturgical minister.

A deep bow is made to the altar by all who enter the sanctuary, leave it, or pass before it.<sup>5</sup> EMHC's should move reverently and unhurried.

While it is assumed that EMHC will wash their hands before a Mass in which they serve, adding hand washing within the liturgy is an addition to the ritual that is not prescribed by the liturgical books. It is not proper to add, move or change anything from the prayers, gestures or rites of the Mass.<sup>6</sup>

It is the role of the priest celebrant, with assistance from concelebrants and deacons, to break the Eucharistic bread at the time of the Fraction Rite.<sup>7</sup> (See footnote regarding the pouring of the Precious Blood.<sup>8</sup>)

It is most appropriate to receive the Lord's Body and Blood from the elements consecrated at the same Mass. This is so Communion is perceived and understood as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated. Sacristans should make every effort to ensure that the amount of unconsecrated hosts and wine are set in accord with the number of people present for the celebration. Using hosts consecrated at a previous Mass should not be a regular occurrence, nor should it become habitual. It is proper to the role of the Priest or deacon, because they are the ordinary ministers of the Eucharist, to

go to the tabernacle for those times when the number of people exceed the amount of hosts just consecrated.<sup>9</sup>

EMHC approach the altar to receive communion after the priest celebrant has received. EMHC "are always to receive from the hands of the priest celebrant the vessel containing either species of the Most Holy Eucharist for distribution to the faithful".<sup>10</sup>

For Mass, a chalice of sufficiently large size or several chalices are prepared. Vessels containing the Body or Blood of the Lord are to be made from precious metal or other solid materials that are precious, provided that such materials are suited to sacred use and do not easily break or deteriorate. This applies to all vessels which hold the hosts, such as the paten, the ciborium, the pyx, the monstrance, and other things of this kind.<sup>11</sup> Vessels are to be blessed before being used for the Mass, as is prescribed in chapter 40 of the *Book of Blessing*.

To assure that Holy Communion is distributed in an orderly and reverent manner, there should be two stations for the Precious Blood for every single station of the Body of Christ,<sup>12</sup> unless space is limited in the church building. Stations should always be set up at the base of the sanctuary and not in other places around the church so that the assembly "comes to the altar" to receive.

The Chalice is usually administered by a deacon, or when no deacon is present, by a priest, or even by an instituted acolyte or another EMHC, or by a member of the

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<sup>5</sup> Ceremonial of Bishops, no. 72. See also GIRM nos. 274-275

<sup>6</sup> CSL, no. 22, GIRM no. 24

<sup>7</sup> GIRM, no. 240, USCCB norms, no.37

<sup>8</sup> USCCB norms that refer to the pouring of the consecrated wine during the Fraction Rite: A letter from the Congregation of Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments (Prot n. 660/04/L) modifies the USCCB norms of 2002. This eliminates both the use of flagons during the consecration and the pouring of the Precious Blood during the Fraction Rite.

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<sup>9</sup> GIRM, no. 85 and 163, HCWEOM, no. 6, RS no.89

<sup>10</sup> GIRM, no. 162

<sup>11</sup> GIRM, no. 327, 329 and RS nos. 117 and 118

<sup>12</sup> USCCB norms, no. 27 and no. 30

faithful who, in case of necessity, has been entrusted with this duty for a single occasion.<sup>13</sup>

The Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Christ and is a most precious gift to us. Therefore, the Sacrament should never be left on a table, stand, pew, or organ console for a communicant to consume (self-communicate). The EMHC should be aware of the diocesan policy on *Reception of Holy Eucharist under Both Species* which gives directives for the reception of the Sacrament.

Whatever may remain of the Blood of Christ is consumed by the priest.<sup>14</sup> However, if circumstances are such that much of the Blood of Christ remains, the deacon or the EMHC may assist, in a reverent manner, with consuming what is left.<sup>15</sup> It is proper to the role of the priest or deacon to place unconsumed hosts in the tabernacle.<sup>16</sup>

The EMHC may cleanse the vessels with soap and water following the purification by the priest, deacon, or instated acolyte.<sup>17</sup>



### EMHC outside of Mass

The Eucharist is the source and the summit of every Catholic's life of faith. It is in partaking of Holy Communion that Catholics receive the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ. Catholics

need not be deprived of the opportunity to receive the Blessed Sacrament due to illness, age, or infirmity. Yet ordinary ministers of Holy Communion cannot always fill the great need among Christ's faithful. Therefore extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion must be properly prepared to fulfill this need in taking the Eucharist to the sick. Unless they have been properly trained, appointed and commissioned for this ministry, family members or friends of the sick or shut-ins are not to be automatically designated as EMHC outside of Mass.

The EMHC who carries the Eucharist to the sick continues the act of worship, extending it to those who cannot be present. There is no blessing given to the extraordinary ministers who will be going to the sick or homebound, however the celebrant may desire to call to mind at the announcement time that the ministers are visiting the sick in the parish. The EMHC goes directly from the community to carry the sacrament to the sick and homebound. The proper vessel for this ministry is the pyx. The Eucharist should be carried with reverence and is never to be carried in a handkerchief, envelope, or the like. The Blood of Christ is not carried to the sick as the danger of spilling is too great. An exception can be made for persons not able to receive Communion under the form of bread.<sup>18</sup>

Carrying on conversation, running errands and leaving the Eucharist in an automobile, home, or office is disrespectful of the Sacrament.

Every EMHC that is appointed to minister outside of Mass must know the rite described in *Administration of Communion and Viaticum to the Sick by an Extraordinary Minister*. The texts and

<sup>13</sup> GIRM, no. 162

<sup>14</sup> GIRM, no. 163

<sup>15</sup> USCCB Norms, no. 52

<sup>16</sup> GIRM, no. 163

<sup>17</sup> GIRM 279 and a decree from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, (Prot.n. 468/05/L) states that the sacred vessels are to be purified by the priest, deacon, or instituted acolyte.

<sup>18</sup> HCWEOM, no. 14

prayers are designed so that those who are sick are able to pray in union with the whole Church. If no other communicants are scheduled to be visited that day, it is appropriate to spend some time visiting with the communicant after the rite. Some EMHC may also wish to bring the parish bulletin and other parish materials to share with the communicant.

Canon 919 dispenses the elderly and the sick from the requirement of fasting before receiving the Eucharist. The Church also dispenses those who care for the sick and the elderly from the requirements of the fast.

### **Liturgy of the Word with Distribution of Holy Communion**

The EMHC may be asked to lead a communion service during the week. The proper ritual for the Liturgy of the Word with Distribution of Holy Communion is found in *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*, which can be found in *The Rites*, Volume 1, pages 649-653. While the pastoral leader may ask the assistance of the EMHC for such a service, a Liturgy of the Word with Distribution of Holy Communion should never be scheduled for the purpose of providing a role for deacons or lay ministers, but rather so that the faithful are given the opportunity to receive the Lord during the week. Care should be taken that the EMHC only fulfills the ministry of leader and not take on the roles appropriate to the lector.

### **The EMHC and Exposition and Reposition of the Eucharist**

The ordinary minister for exposition of the Eucharist is a priest or deacon. If the priest or deacon is absent or lawfully impeded, an EMHC or another person

appointed by the Bishop may publicly expose and later repose the Holy Eucharist for the adoration of the faithful (*See page 3 under Appointment*). Such ministers may open the tabernacle and also, as required, place the ciborium on the altar or place the host in the monstrance.<sup>19</sup> At the end of the period of adoration, they replace the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. It is not proper for them to give the blessing with the sacrament, nor do they incense it.<sup>20</sup>

Those persons who expose or repose the Blessed Sacrament for Adoration but do not serve as an EMHC need an appointment from the Bishop from the recommendation of the pastoral leader. There is no commissioning for this faculty.



<sup>19</sup> HCWEOM, no. 93

<sup>20</sup> Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist, no. 26, see also Canon #943

“Take this, all of you, and eat it: this is my body which will be given up for you” (cf. *Mark* 26:26; *Luke* 22:19; *1 Corinthians* 11:24). Then he took the cup of wine and said to them: “Take this, all of you and drink from it: this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all, so that sins may be forgiven” (cf. *Matthew* 14:24; *Luke* 22:20; *1 Corinthians* 11:25).



## Useful Resources

*Book of Blessings* : 1989 ICEL

*Evangelii Nuntiandi*: 1975 Pope Paul VI

*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 2003 USCCB

*Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*, 1973

*Instruction on the Eucharist: Redemptionis Sacramentum*. 2004 USCCB

*Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America*: 2002 USCCB

*The Breaking of the Bread: An Updated Handbook for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion* by Joseph M. Champlin, 2005 Paulist Press

*The Liturgy Documents: A Parish Resource: Volumes I and II*,  
1991 Liturgy Training Publications

*The Sacristy Manual* by G. Thomas Ryan, 1993 Liturgy Training Publications

*The Ministry of Communion, Second Edition* by Michael Kwatera, O.S.B.: The Liturgical Press, 2004



## **Order for the Commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (For those ministering at Mass and outside of Mass)**

*This rite is followed when Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are commissioned during Mass. After the Homily, those to be commissioned are called forward. The Celebrant uses these or similar words:*

Dear friends in Christ, our brothers and sisters N. and N. are to be entrusted with administering the Eucharist, with taking communion to the sick, and with giving it as viaticum to the dying.

*The celebrant pauses and then addresses the candidates:*

In this ministry, you must be examples of Christian living in faith and conduct; you must strive to grow in holiness through this sacrament of unity and love. Remember that, though many, we are one body because we share the one bread and one cup.

As ministers of Holy Communion be, therefore, especially observant of the Lord's command to love your neighbor. For when he gave his body as food to his disciples, he said to them: *"This is my commandment, that you should love one another as I have loved you."*

*After the address the candidates stand before the celebrant, who asks them these questions:*

Are you resolved to undertake the office of giving the body and blood of the Lord to your brothers and sister, and so serve to build up the Church?

**Candidates: I am.**

Are you resolved to administer the holy Eucharist with the utmost care and reverence?

**Candidates: I am.**

*All stand. The candidates kneel and the celebrant invites the faithful to pray:*

Dear friends in Christ, let us pray with confidence to the Father; let us ask him to bestow his blessings on our brothers and sisters, chosen to be ministers of the Eucharist.

*Pause for silent prayer. The celebrant then continues:*

Merciful Father,  
creator and guide of your family,  
bless † our brothers and sisters N. and N.  
May they faithfully give the bread of life to your people.  
Strengthened by this sacrament,  
may they come at last to the banquet of heaven.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**ALL: Amen**

*The general intercessions follow, either in the form usual at Mass or in the form found in the Book of Blessings, 1879.*

**Order for the Commissioning of  
Extraordinary Ministers  
Within a Celebration of the Word of God  
(For those ministering at Mass and outside of Mass)**

*When Extraordinary ministers are commissioned at a time apart from the Mass, the following ritual is followed. The community has gathered, a suitable song may be sung. After the singing, the minister says:*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

*All make the sign of the cross and reply:*

Amen.

*The minister greets those present in the following or other suitable words, taken mainly from sacred Scripture.*

May the Lord, who nourishes us with the bread of life, be with you.

*And all reply:*

And also with you.

*In the following or similar words, the minister prepares those present for the blessings.*

Our brothers and sisters who have been chosen as extraordinary ministers of holy communion will be commissioned through our prayer and God's blessing. We pray that they may exercise this ministry with faith, devotion and love.

*A reader, another person present, or the minister reads a text of sacred Scripture.*

Brothers and sisters, listen to the words of the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians:

The cup of blessing that we bless is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

*As circumstances suggest, one of the following responsorial psalms may be sung, or some other suitable song: Psalm 23, Psalm 34, Psalm 78, Psalm 145 or Psalm 147*

*In the homily the minister first explains the reason for this ministry.*

*Then he presents to the people those chosen to serve as extraordinary ministers, using these or similar words:*

Dear friends in Christ, our brothers and sisters N. and N. are to be entrusted with administering the eucharist, with taking communion to the sick, and with giving it as viaticum to the dying.

*The celebrant pauses and then addresses the candidates:* In this ministry, you must be examples of Christian living in faith and conduct; you must strive to grow in holiness through this

sacrament of unity and love. Remember that, though many, we are one body because we share the one bread and one cup.

As ministers of holy communion be, therefore, especially observant of the Lord's command to love your neighbor. For when he gave his body as food to his disciples, he said to them: "This is my commandment, that you should love one another as I have loved you."

*After the address the candidates stand before the celebrant, who asks them these questions:*  
Are you resolved to undertake the office of giving the body and blood of the Lord to your brothers and sister, and so serve to build up the Church?

**Candidates: I am.**

Are you resolved to administer the holy eucharist with the utmost care and reverence?

**Candidates: I am.**

*All stand. The candidates kneel and the celebrant invites the faithful to pray:*

Dear friends in Christ, let us pray with confidence to the Father; let us ask him to bestow his blessings on our brothers and sisters, chosen to be ministers of the eucharist.

*Pause for silent prayer. The celebrant then continues:*

Merciful Father,  
creator and guide of your family,  
bless † our brothers and sisters N. and N.  
May they faithfully give the bread of life to your people.  
Strengthened by this sacrament,  
may they come at last to the banquet of heaven.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**ALL: Amen**

*The general intercessions follow as found in the Book of Blessings, 1893. After the intercessions the minister, in the following or similar words, invites all present to sing or say the Lord's Prayer.*

Let us pray to the Father in the words our Savior gave us.

**All: Our Father....**

*The minister concludes the rite by saying:*

Lord our God,  
teach us to cherish in our hearts  
the paschal mystery of your Son,  
by which you redeemed the world.  
Watch over the gifts of grace your love has given us  
and bring them to fulfillment in the glory of heaven.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**All: Amen**

*Then he blesses all present.*

And may almighty God bless you all, the Father, and the Son, † and the Holy Spirit.

**All: Amen**

*It is preferable to end the celebration with a suitable song.*

## Glossary of Terms

<b>Altar cloth:</b>	A white linen to cover the top of the altar. The shape, size and decoration of the altar cloth should be like that of the design of the altar.
<b>Chalice:</b>	From the Latin word <i>calix</i> , meaning cup. A receptacle for the sacred blood.
<b>Ciborium:</b>	A dish for storing the precious body. Usually comes with a cover.
<b>Corporal:</b>	An additional altar cloth spread under the Eucharistic vessels by the priest or deacon at the preparation of the gifts.
<b>Flagon:</b>	A container used to present the wine to the priest before consecration.
<b>Monstrance:</b>	A large ornamented vessel for displaying the Eucharist during Eucharistic exposition.
<b>Paten:</b>	A dish that is used to hold hosts.
<b>Purificator:</b>	A white linen cloth used to wipe the lip of the chalice after each communicant partakes of the precious blood and to dry vessels after they have been cleansed.
<b>Pyx:</b>	A small container for storing the precious body. Usually used for communion to the sick. Larger size pyx that are used for exposition are termed lunette, pyx, custodial case or monstrance holder.
<b>Sacrarium:</b>	A sink with a drain pipe having no joints or elbows that leads directly into the earth. This allows the reverent disposal of baptismal water, water used in ritual purifications, holy oils from a previous year, ashes from the burning of disposed liturgical items and the rinsing of the sacred vessels.
<b>Sacristy:</b>	A room in which the articles used for worship are stored.
<b>Sanctuary:</b>	The area in which the altar is.

### Abbreviations

<b>CCC</b>	Catechism of the Catholic Church
<b>CSL</b>	Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy
<b>EMHC</b>	Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion
<b>GIRM</b>	General Instruction of the Roman Missal
<b>HCWEOM</b>	Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass
<b>RS</b>	<i>Redemptionis Sacramentum</i> : Instruction on the Eucharist
<b>USCCB</b>	United States Council of Catholic Bishops

## **The Ministry of Sacristan**

The sacristan provides a very important ministry in the daily life of a parish. In addition to the instructions given to the sacristan from the pastoral leader, the following are a few instructions for those that exercise this ministry.

### **Linens:**

Linens that are worn and are no longer used in the liturgy should be burned and the ashes buried in the ground. Linens for the sacred table, especially those which will receive the sacred species, should always be kept clean. To wash linens, the water that was used in the first washing is poured into the sacrarium or into the ground in a suitable place. After this a second washing can be done like usual.<sup>21</sup>

If the precious blood has been spilled on clothing, altar cloths, corporals or purificators, the article should first be soaked in water, the water then put into the sacrarium. A prewash spray can then be used with the final washing.

### **Lipstick:**

After the purificator has been soaked and the water poured into the sacrarium, a prewash spray can be used prior to the final washing in very hot water.

### **Oils:**

Holy Oils that are no longer in use should be burned and the ashes buried.

### **Candlewax:**

Some wax can be removed easily after it hardens. For tougher wax stains and drips, use paper towels, absorbent brown wrapping paper or a plain brown paper bag under and on top of the fabric. With a hot iron the wax can be ironed off. Once this process has removed the wax, the

item should be washed in hot water with bleach added.

### **Holy Water:**

Holy Water fonts should be cleaned on a regular basis. The unused holy water can be stored in small holy water containers or poured out into the ground. The container and the towels used for cleaning the fonts should be air dried.

### **Vessels:**

Vessels that can no longer be stored in a secure place and are no longer used in the liturgy should be buried.



Lord our God,  
teach us to cherish  
in our hearts  
the paschal mystery  
of your Son,  
by which you  
redeemed the world.  
Watch over the gifts of  
grace your love  
has given us  
and bring them to  
fulfillment in the  
glory of heaven.

We ask this through  
Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Order for the Commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers*

<sup>21</sup> RS, no 120