

GUIDE FOR EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

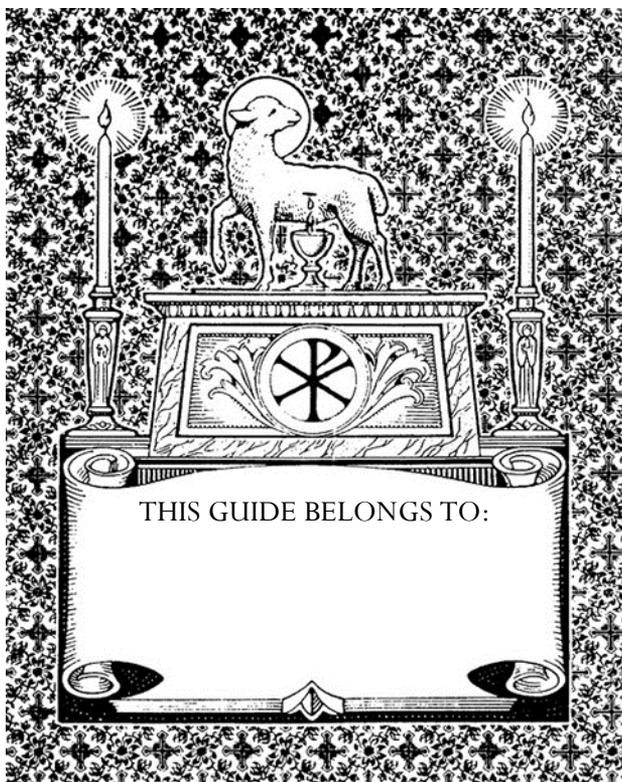


CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOSEPH
JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI

This guide was last revised in May of 2018

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The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch.

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1324)



What is an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion?

An extraordinary minister of Holy Communion is a lay person who has been delegated by the proper authority to distribute Holy Communion. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion assist those who are **ordinary ministers** (Bishops, Priests, and Deacons) when necessity requires it.

What is the proper name for this role?

The correct name for this role is “**extraordinary minister of Holy Communion.**” Terms such as “Eucharistic minister” or “minister of the Eucharist” are applied properly only to Bishops and Priests, since they are able to consecrate the Eucharist and celebrate Mass.¹

Who can fulfill this role?

Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) should be practicing Catholics who have received the sacrament of Confirmation. They should be at least eighteen years of age and should have received proper training. They should not be living in a situation that will be a source of scandal to others (e.g., living in a marriage not recognized by the Catholic Church).

EMHCs must be commissioned by the Bishop. This commissioning lasts for three years after which time a renewal may be requested. In exceptional cases, the Priest celebrating the Mass may delegate someone as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion for that specific instance. EMHCs commissioned in the Diocese of Jefferson City should exercise this role only within the Diocese.

¹*Redemptionis Sacramentum* (2004), 154 and 156.

The reverence owed to the Blessed Sacrament

The Blessed Sacrament deserves the worship and respect that we owe to God himself, since in this sacrament Christ himself is really present in His Body and Blood, His soul and His divinity.² We show reverence for the Blessed Sacrament, above all, by receiving Holy Communion only in the state of grace and never when we are conscious of having committed a grave sin without first receiving absolution in the sacrament of Confession.³

We must always be careful when handling the Blessed Sacrament, never hasty or sloppy, and we must always be mindful that Christ is fully present under the smallest recognizable particle of the Host or drop of the Precious Blood. This presence continues as long as the appearances of bread and wine last.

The Blessed Sacrament, whether under the form of bread or the form of wine, should never be thrown away, buried, burned, poured onto the ground, or poured down the sacrarium. These are grave offenses.⁴ In addition, the Precious Blood should never be poured from one vessel to another.⁵

Distributing Holy Communion During Mass

Before Mass:

Be sure to dress modestly and reverently⁶ and to show up on time to the Mass for which you are scheduled.

If you cannot be at a Mass for which you are scheduled to serve, or if you are sick or for some other reason are not able to distribute Holy Communion, please find a substitute. It is very unfortunate when an EMHC who is scheduled does not show up, and creates unnecessary confusion. If you need to switch Mass times for which you are normally scheduled, please contact the parish office.

If you are scheduled for a Mass, it is best to sit towards the front to allow ease of approaching the altar at the appropriate time.

² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1374–1378.

³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1385.

⁴ *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (2004), 107, 132, and 172.

⁵ *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (2004), 106.

⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1387.

Before Communion:

After the Sign of Peace and/or when the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God) begins, approach up the steps to the sides of the sanctuary. This is usually where the carpets are located. Wait until **after** the priest consumes the precious blood to stand in a single semi-circle line behind the altar.

After the Priest has given Holy Communion to the Deacon under both forms the Priest will give each of the EMHCs the Body of Christ. The Deacon will follow, distributing the auxiliary chalices. The Deacon (or priest) will take the patens from the altar and hand them to the EMHC, sometimes with directions on where to go. Since the Deacon (and an acolyte) are ordinary (usual) ministers for distributing the Blessed Sacrament, any “extra” EMHCs should return to their seats. Exceptions include if a priest/deacon is sick and should not distribute.

Please, never take any sacred vessel from the altar. Only a Deacon or Priest should do this. Exceptions might include the small Low-Gluten Ciborium at the instruction of a priest/deacon.

Distributing Communion:

After all have received, proceed to the normal Communion stations. (Masses with the Bishop might constitute exceptions.) Two ministers with patens stand at the tabernacle side aisle (priest usually takes the “left” of these two stations). Two more ministers with patens stand at the marked spots on the organ side aisle. Ministers with the auxiliary chalices should stand some distance away on the left / right side of those distributing the Host to prevent line backup.

One EMHC designated by the Priest or Deacon will go to the back to distribute Holy Communion to the handicap / those unable to come forward. An usher will usually assist with those who wish to receive. EMHC is not to give Holy Communion to those who wish to leave early.

When distributing Holy Communion under the form of bread, the minister raises the Host above the paten and says, “The Body of Christ.” The communicant responds, “Amen,” and receives Holy Communion. **Holy Communion may be received on the tongue or in the hand, standing or kneeling, at the choice of the person receiving Communion.**⁷

⁷ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (2010), 160.

When distributing Holy Communion under the form of wine, the minister says, “The Blood of Christ.” The communicant responds, “Amen,” and takes the chalice. After receiving, the communicant hands the chalice back to the minister, who wipes the chalice with the purificator and turns it slightly.

The formula for distributing Holy Communion should not be changed in any way (e.g., by adding names).⁸

If someone comes forward with their hands crossed over their chest, this indicates that they do not wish to receive Holy Communion, or they are not yet able to receive. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are not able to confer blessings in the context of the celebration of the Mass.⁹ **Do not touch the person or place a hand over them**, as such gestures have specific meanings in the sacred liturgy. *You may say, “Receive the Lord Jesus in your heart” ... “May God be with you” ... “Peace be with you” ... etc. You may also give them a small head nod and remain silent.* For further information, please see Zenit’s article on EWTN entitled, “Blessings for Non-Communicants”¹⁰ and read the entirety of the article and follow-ups.

A small number of parishioners receive special low-gluten Hosts for medical reasons. These Hosts are usually kept in a small ciborium. When distributing low-gluten Hosts, it is important to avoid cross-contamination. These persons are directed to come to the very end of the line in which the Priest is distributing Holy Communion.

Occasionally, a person may walk away without consuming the Host. If this happens and the person does not consume the Host within taking a few steps away, you may have to approach and ask in a kind manner whether the person is Catholic. Sometimes visitors are not aware of the Catholic Church’s norms about receiving Holy Communion. If the person is not a Catholic, politely ask for the Host back and apologize for the misunderstanding. If the person is a Catholic, politely ask whether they would like to consume the Host or return it to you.

⁸ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion at Mass* (2010).

⁹ Letter of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (22 November 2008) Protocol No. 930/08/L.

¹⁰ Zenit, <http://www.ewtn.com/library/Liturgy/zlitur81.htm>

If a Host falls to the floor:

If a Host falls to the floor, it should be reverently picked up, making sure that no particles of the Host remain on the floor. Set the Host to the side and take it to the Priest or Deacon after the distribution of Holy Communion.

If the Precious Blood is spilled:

If the Precious Blood is spilled, remain calm. If the Precious Blood is on the floor, it should be soaked up with a purificator. More purificators may be needed from the sacristy. This should be done immediately. The Priest should also be told right away.

If the Precious Blood has been spilled on someone's clothing, the Priest should be told right away so that he can explain to the person what to do in order to launder the clothing with reverence to the Precious Blood.

After distributing Holy Communion:

Patens return to the altar—on the corporal(s), and do **not** combine in the main ciborium. Return the chalices to the credence table. Consume any remaining Precious Blood **only** at the credence table and cover the chalice with a purificator.

If the ciborium is presently being taken to the tabernacle, stand reverently as it passes. Otherwise, *you may return to your seat once you are finished putting the sacred vessel(s) at the credence table.*

If you distributed the Hosts, please purify your fingers by using the Ablution Cup on the Credence Table and using the small purificator to wipe them dry.

After Mass:

The sacred vessels (chalices, patens, and ciboria) must have been purified by a Priest, Deacon, or instituted acolyte before they can be washed with soap and water. EMHC should not *purify* vessels.

*Please assist the Deacon in putting away sacred vessels, and cleaning the vessels with soap and warm water. Please do not **ONLY** come up for distributing Holy Communion, and then leave Mass. It is important to clean the vessels with warm soapy water, as well as keeping the Sacristy in clean working order so that those who set up for the next Mass may find what they need.

Guidelines for the Reception of Holy Communion *USCCB 1996*

For Catholics

As Catholics, we fully participate in the celebration of the Eucharist when we receive Holy Communion. We are encouraged to receive Communion devoutly and frequently. In order to be properly disposed to receive Communion, participants should not be conscious of grave sin and normally should have fasted for one hour. A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to receive the Body and Blood of the Lord without prior sacramental confession except for a grave reason where there is no opportunity for confession. In this case, the person is to be mindful of the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition, including the intention of confessing as soon as possible (canon 916). A frequent reception of the Sacrament of Penance is encouraged for all.

For our fellow Christians

We welcome our fellow Christians to this celebration of the Eucharist as our brothers and sisters. We pray that our common baptism and the action of the Holy Spirit in this Eucharist will draw us closer to one another and begin to dispel the sad divisions which separate us. We pray that these will lessen and finally disappear, in keeping with Christ's prayer for us "that they may all be one" (Jn 17:21).

Because Catholics believe that the celebration of the Eucharist is a sign of the reality of the oneness of faith, life, and worship, members of those churches with whom we are not yet fully united are ordinarily not admitted to Holy Communion. Eucharistic sharing in exceptional circumstances by other Christians requires permission according to the directives of the diocesan bishop and the provisions of canon law (canon 844 § 4). Members of the Orthodox Churches, the Assyrian Church of the East, and the Polish National Catholic Church are urged to respect the discipline of their own Churches. According to Roman Catholic discipline, the Code of Canon Law does not object to the reception of communion by Christians of these Churches (canon 844 § 3).

For those not receiving Holy Communion

All who are not receiving Holy Communion are encouraged to express in their hearts a prayerful desire for unity with the Lord Jesus and with one another.

For non-Christians

We also welcome to this celebration those who do not share our faith in Jesus Christ. While we cannot admit them to Holy Communion, we ask them to offer their prayers for the peace and the unity of the human family.

Taking Holy Communion to the Homebound

It is of great spiritual benefit for those who are not able to come to Mass to be able to receive Holy Communion. It is often necessary that Priests and Deacons be assisted in the ministry of bringing Holy Communion to the sick or elderly by extraordinary ministers.

Those who wish to take Holy Communion to the homebound should be properly commissioned extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion and should do this **only with the knowledge and permission of the Pastor.**

When taking Holy Communion to the homebound, only a clean, properly blessed pyx should be used to hold the Blessed Sacrament. The approved ceremony for distributing Holy Communion found in the proper ritual book should be followed.¹⁰

The Blessed Sacrament should be taken directly from the church to the place or places where it will be distributed.¹¹ Any Hosts or particles of Hosts that remain after distributing Communion should be returned to the tabernacle immediately. **No other errands or business should be carried out while distributing Holy Communion.** The Blessed Sacrament should never be kept in private homes or left unattended (e.g., in a car or on a nightstand). It should be carried in a reverent manner (e.g., in a burse hung around the neck or in a front shirt pocket) on one's person (e.g., not in a glove compartment).

A pyx that has been used to carry the Host should be tapped over the ciborium in the tabernacle so that no particles remain in it. It should then be rinsed with water and the water poured down the sacrarium in the sacristy. After this, it can be cleaned and dried as usual.

Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should not delegate their role to others, e.g., relatives or friends, unless these are also properly commissioned extraordinary ministers.¹²

¹⁰ *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (2004), 133.

¹¹ *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (2004), 133.

¹² *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (2004), 159.

Prayer of Saint Thomas Aquinas BEFORE Receiving Holy Communion

Almighty eternal God, behold, I come to the Sacrament of Your Only Begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, as one sick to the physician of life, as one unclean to the fountain of mercy, as one blind to the light of eternal brightness, as one poor and needy to the Lord of heaven and earth.

I ask, therefore, for the abundance of Your immense generosity, that You may graciously cure my sickness, wash away my defilement, give light to my blindness, enrich my poverty, clothe my nakedness, so that I may receive the bread of Angels, the King of kings and Lord of lords, with such reverence and humility, such contrition and devotion, such purity and faith, such purpose and intention as are conducive to the salvation of my soul.

Grant, I pray, that I may receive not only the Sacrament of the Lord's Body and Blood, but also the reality and power of that Sacrament.

O most gentle God, grant that I may so receive the Body and Blood of Your Only Begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ, which he took from the Virgin Mary, that I may be made worthy to be incorporated into his Mystical Body and to be counted among its members.

O most loving Father, Grant that I may at last gaze for ever upon the unveiled face of Your beloved Son, whom I, a wayfarer, propose to receive now veiled under these species: Who lives and reigns with You for ever and ever. Amen.



Prayer of Saint Thomas Aquinas AFTER Receiving Holy Communion

I give You thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, who have been pleased to nourish me, a sinner and Your unworthy servant, with the precious Body and Blood of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: this through no merits of mine, but due solely to the graciousness of your mercy.

And I pray that this Holy Communion may not be for me an offense to be punished, but a saving plea for forgiveness. May it be for me the armor of faith, and the shield of good will. May it cancel my faults, destroy concupiscence and carnal passion, increase charity and patience, humility and obedience and all the virtues, may it be a firm defense against the snares of all my enemies, both visible and invisible, the complete calming of my impulses, both of the flesh and of the spirit, a firm adherence to You, the one true God, and the joyful completion of my life's course.

And I beseech You to lead me, a sinner, to that banquet beyond all telling, where with Your Son and the Holy Spirit You are the true light of Your Saints, fullness of satisfied desire, eternal gladness, consummate delight and perfect happiness. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Story of Saint Tarsicius

Saint Tarsicius was a martyr, probably very young, of the early Roman Church. He lived during a time of heavy persecution. Once, when he was carrying the Blessed Sacrament with him, pagans attacked him and demanded that he give them what he was carrying. Tarsicius chose to suffer death rather than to give up the Body of Christ to desecration.

Saint Tarsicius serves as a patron and model for those who serve Mass and those who distribute Holy Communion.

Glossary of Terms

ABLUTION CUP — A small bowl of water that is used to purify the fingers after touching the Host.

ALTAR — A dignified and stationary place from where the sacrifice of our Lord is offered to the Father and made present to us. It represents Christ. It is the focal point for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The altar is the table from where we receive Christ in his body and blood.

BENEDICTION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT — A Eucharistic devotion in the Catholic Church of the Latin Rite. A blessing given by a priest or deacon with the Blessed Sacrament exposed in a monstrance.

CHALICE — Latin for “cup” -one to be shared- and is consecrated. It is made of gold or silver (precious metal), and holds the wine for the Holy Sacrifice.

CIBORIUM — A covered vessel used to hold consecrated hosts.

CORPORAL — The Corporal is a square piece of cloth. It is spread out on the altar, and the purpose is to ensure that any small particles or crumbs from the Sacred Host can be cleaned easily.



HOLY MASS — The proper name when referring to “Mass”, also called the “Sacred Liturgy” or the “Divine Liturgy” (though Divine Liturgy often refers to the Byzantine Rite).

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST — The most solemn part of the Mass, from the Offertory to Post-Communion included. The Church has arranged this part of the Mass so its several parts correspond to the words and actions of Christ at the Last Supper, and specifically in three stages: in the Presentation of the Gifts (offertory), the bread and wine are brought forward; in the Eucharistic prayer God is thanked for the whole work of redemption and the gifts become the Body and Blood of Christ; in the Breaking of the one Bread the unity of the faithful is signified, and in Communion they receive the same Christ who gave himself on Holy Thursday to his Apostles.



LITURGY OF THE WORD -- The part of the Mass during which the faithful are instructed in God's revealed word. It consists of readings from Sacred Scripture and the psalm (between them). The homily, profession of faith, and prayer of the faithful develop and conclude the Liturgy of the Word.

MONSTRANCE -- An ornately decorated device that holds a consecrated host for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. It usually consists of a pillar topped with a circular design with the host in the center.

PATEN -- Latin for "plate" and is a plate of gold or silver upon which the larger Host rests for consecration. It is also the "plate" which is used for distribution of Holy Communion.



PURIFICATOR -- A small, rectangular piece of white linen or cotton, marked with a cross in the center used in the celebration of Mass. It is folded in three layers and used to purify the chalice and paten after Holy Communion.

PYX -- A smaller vessel, made of precious metal, in which the Sacred Host is either preserved or carried. A pyx should have a hinged lid and often a small carrying pouch called a "bursa." It is often used to carry the blessed sacrament to the sick.



SACRISTY -- A room in the Church where the vessels and furnishings for Mass are prepared. At Immaculate Conception we have four sacristies. The back sacristies are where the priests and servers vest. Those on the side are staging areas for immediate preparations for Mass.



SACRARIUM -- A special sink that drains directly to the ground and not to any wastewater system. The water used to rinse the altar linens is poured down the sacrarium.

SANCTUARY -- The part of a church containing the altar. It is the center of liturgical ceremony, clearly distinct from the main body of the church.

SANCTUARY LAMP -- (Vigil Light) A wax candle, usually in a red glass container, kept burning day and night wherever the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in Catholic churches or chapels.

TABERNACLE -- An ornate place where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, and is kept locked with the **tabernacle key**.

THURIBLE—Metal vessel in the shape of a vase or cup, with a cover suspended by a chain. It is used for burning incense. The incense boat is a small metal container, and has a cover with a spoon. Usually shaped like a boat, it is a symbol of the Church, the ark of Peter.



Select Church Documents

From the recent Popes on the Holy Eucharist:

Paul VI, *Mysterium fidei* (3 September 1965).

John Paul II, *Dominicae cenae* (24 February 1980).

John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17 April 2003).

John Paul II, *Mane nobiscum Domine* (7 October 2004).

Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis* (22 February 2007).

From the Holy See, on extraordinary ministers:

Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments, *Immensae caritatis* (29 January 1973).

Inter-dicasterial Instruction, *Ecclesiae de mysterio* (15 August 1997), Practical Provisions Article 8.

Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (25 March 2004), 88, 133, and 146–160.

From the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

Committee on Divine Worship, *Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion at Mass* (2010).



Cathedral of St. Joseph Guide for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion



Given this 2nd Day of May 2018
Memorial of St. Athanasius
Cathedral of St. Joseph