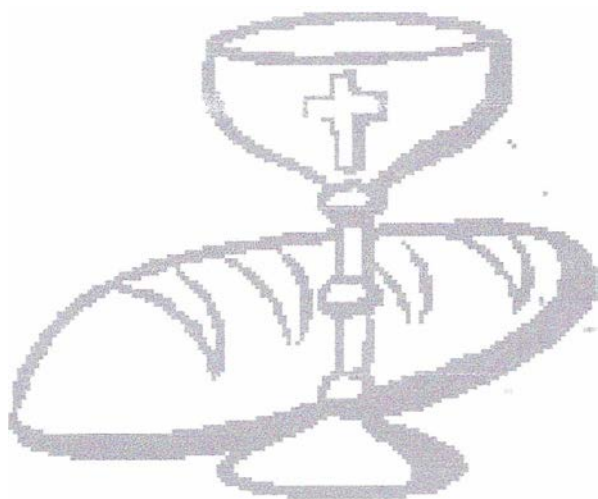


Diocese of Little Rock
Policies and Guidelines
for
Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion



Diocese of Little Rock
Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

General Principles

1. In every celebration of the Eucharist, there should be a sufficient number of ministers of Holy Communion so that it may be distributed in a reverent and orderly manner. Bishops, priests and deacons distribute Holy Communion in virtue of their office as ordinary ministers of the Body and Blood of the Lord. When the size of the congregation or the incapacity of the bishop, priest, or deacon requires it, the celebrant may be assisted by other bishops, priests, or deacons. If such ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are not present, "the priest may call upon extraordinary ministers to assist him, i.e., duly instituted acolytes or even other faithful who have been deputed for this purpose. In case of necessity, the priest may also depute suitable faithful for this single occasion (GIRM 162)."
2. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHCs) may be men or women and should reflect the cultural diversity of their parish community. They should be living in harmony with the teachings of the Church. They should be confirmed, at least sixteen years of age, of sufficient maturity and must be in compliance with the Safe Environment Policy of the diocese.
3. EMHCs should receive sufficient spiritual, theological, and practical preparation to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence.
4. EMHCs must receive a mandate given by the Bishop of the Diocese. Requests for mandates are administered by the Chancery Office of the Diocese. EMHCs should be publicly commissioned within a parish Sunday Mass.
5. A mandate to distribute communion at Mass does not include a mandate to distribute communion to the sick nor is the reverse true. A person may serve in both ministries but must receive a specific mandate for each ministry. In the case of ministry to the sick the EMHC must receive an I.D. card.
6. Within a particular celebration of the Eucharist the number of EMHCs should not be increased beyond what is required for the orderly and reverent distribution of the Body and Blood of the Lord.
7. In all matters EMHCs should follow the guidance of the diocesan bishop.
8. All ministers of Holy Communion should show the greatest reverence for the Holy Eucharist by their demeanor, their attire, and the manner in which they handle the consecrated bread or wine. They should observe the usual practices of good hygiene, keeping their hands clean and avoiding touching one's nose, mouth, and eyes and coughing into one's hand.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

9. As the *Lamb of God* or *Agnus Dei* is begun, the priest alone, or with the assistance of the deacon, breaks the Eucharistic Bread. Other empty patens are brought to the altar as is necessary. The deacon or priest places the consecrated bread in the additional patens. Note: In GIRM 2010 the words "paten" and "chalice" are used to identify the vessels used to contain and distribute the Body and Blood of Christ.

10. EMHCs may come forward and enter the sanctuary during the singing of the "Lamb of God" but they should not approach the altar before the priest has received Communion.

11. After the priest has concluded his own Communion, he distributes Communion to the extraordinary ministers, assisted by the deacon. If the number of EMHCs is large and there is no deacon present, the priest may ask an EMHC to distribute the Blood of Christ to the other ministers after that EMHC has received both the Body and Blood of Christ.

12. The practice of EMHCs waiting to receive Holy Communion until after the distribution of Holy Communion to the members of the assembly is not in accord with liturgical law. (GIRM, 160)

13. After all EMHCs have received the Eucharist, the priest celebrant reverently hands vessels containing the Body or the Blood of the Lord to the extraordinary ministers who will assist with the distribution of Holy Communion. The deacon may assist the priest in handing the vessels containing the Body and Blood of the Lord to the EMHCs.

14. The proper and only permissible form for distributing Holy Communion is to offer the consecrated bread by saying, "The Body of Christ" and to offer the consecrated wine by saying, "The Blood of Christ." No other words or names should be added; and the formula should not be edited in any way.

15. If the Eucharistic bread or some particle of it falls, it should be picked up reverently by the minister. The minister may consume it immediately or hold it until distribution is finished and then consume it. It should not be placed in the paten or given to the communicant or placed in the sacarium. Consecrated bread may be completely dissolved in water which is then poured into the sacarium.

16. If the consecrated wine is spilled from the chalice, the area should be immediately covered with a purificator. The area should be washed after Mass and the water poured into the sacarium.

17. In those instances when there remains more consecrated wine than was necessary EMHCs may consume what remains of the Precious Blood from their chalice of distribution. It is strictly forbidden to pour the Precious Blood into the ground or into the sacarium.

18. In those instances where there remain more consecrated hosts than are necessary to be reserved for the sick, excess hosts should be consumed by the priest who may be assisted by the

deacon and, if necessary, the EMHCs. Burying consecrated Eucharistic bread in the ground is strictly forbidden.

19. "The sacred vessels are purified by the priest, the deacon or an instituted acolyte after Communion or after Mass, in so far as possible at the credence table" (GIRM, 279). Vessels left on the altar or the credence table to be purified after Mass should be suitably covered with a purificator.

Frequently Asked Questions


1. Should EMHCs walk in the entrance and exit processions?

Since an EMHC is part of the worshipping community, it is most appropriate that an EMHC take a place in the assembly before the Mass begins. The location should give convenient access to the altar area to assure that the EMHC can easily come forward at the proper time.

2. May EMHCs give a blessing to those in the communion procession who do not receive communion?

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal makes no mention of priests, deacons or EMHCs offering blessings in the Communion procession. Within the Mass and other liturgical celebrations, the act of blessing using the Trinitarian formula and the sign of the cross with a raised hand is reserved to those ordained to Holy Orders, i.e., a deacon, priest or bishop. If blessings given in the Communion procession by the priest or deacon are the custom in one's parish and a person who is not receiving Communion approaches, an EMHC should offer a simple greeting such as, "May God bless you now and always." If a gesture is appropriate, it should be limited to tracing a small cross on the person's forehead similar to, and as a reminder of, the blessing given by parents and godparents in the liturgy of Baptism. The gesture should in no way resemble the gesture used by the priest when imparting a blessing within the Mass.

Signed on this 7th day of December of the year 2012.


Most Reverend Anthony B. Taylor, DD
Bishop of Little Rock