

ST. HELEN OF THE CROSS

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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GUIDELINES FOR EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF COMMUNION (EMHC)

Approved by

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Pastor

July 1, 2011

Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

From Redemptionis Sacramentum

[46] The lay Christian faithful called to give assistance at liturgical celebrations should be well instructed and must be those whose Christian life, morals and fidelity to the Church's Magisterium recommend them. It is fitting that such a one should have received a liturgical formation in accordance with his or her age, condition, state of life, and religious culture. No one should be selected whose designation could cause consternation for the faithful.

[95] A lay member of Christ's faithful "who has already received the Most Holy Eucharist may receive it again on the same day only within a Eucharistic Celebration in which he or she is participating."

[102] The chalice should not be ministered to lay members of Christ's faithful where there is such a large number of communicants that it is difficult to gauge the amount of wine for the Eucharist and there is a danger that "more than a reasonable quantity of the Blood of Christ remain to be consumed at the end of the celebration" The same is true wherever access to the chalice would be difficult to arrange, or where such a large amount of wine would be required that its certain provenance and quality could only be known with difficulty, or wherever there is not an adequate number of sacred ministers or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion with proper formation, or where a notable part of the people continues to prefer not to approach the chalice for various reasons, so that the sign of unity would in some sense be negated.

[154] "...The only minister who can confect the Sacrament of the Eucharist *in persona Christi* is a validly ordained Priest". Hence the name "minister of the Eucharist" belongs properly to the Priest alone. Moreover, also by reason of their sacred Ordination, the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are the Bishop, the Priest and the Deacon, to whom it belongs therefore to administer Holy Communion to the lay members of Christ's faithful during the celebration of Mass. In this way their ministerial office in the Church is fully and accurately brought to light, and the sign value of the Sacrament is made complete."

[155.] In addition to the ordinary ministers there is the formally instituted acolyte, who by virtue of his institution is an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion even outside the celebration of Mass. If, moreover, reasons of real necessity prompt it, another lay member of Christ's faithful may also be delegated by the diocesan Bishop, in accordance with the norm of law, for one occasion or for a specified time, and an appropriate formula of blessing may be used for the occasion. This act of appointment, however, does not necessarily take a liturgical form, nor, if it does take a liturgical form, should it resemble sacred Ordination in any way. Finally, in special cases of an unforeseen nature, permission can be given for a single occasion by the Priest who presides at the celebration of the Eucharist.

[156.] This function is to be understood strictly according to the name by which it is known, that is to say, that of extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, and not "special minister of Holy Communion" nor "extraordinary minister of the Eucharist" nor "special minister of the Eucharist", by which names the meaning of this function is unnecessarily and improperly broadened.

[157.] If there is usually present a sufficient number of sacred ministers for the distribution of Holy Communion, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may not be appointed. Indeed, in such circumstances, those who may have already been appointed to this ministry should not exercise it. The practice of those Priests is reprobated who, even though present at the celebration, abstain from distributing Communion and hand this function over to laypersons.

[158.] Indeed, the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion may administer Communion only when the Priest and Deacon are lacking, when the Priest is prevented by weakness or advanced age or some other genuine reason, or when the number of faithful coming to Communion is so great that the very celebration of Mass would be unduly prolonged. This, however, is to be understood in such a way that a brief prolongation, considering the circumstances and culture of the place, is not at all a sufficient reason.

[159.] It is never allowed for the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion to delegate anyone else to administer the Eucharist, as for example a parent or spouse or child of the sick person who is the communicant.

[160.] Let the diocesan Bishop give renewed consideration to the practice in recent years regarding this matter, and if circumstances call for it, let him correct it or define it more precisely. Where such extraordinary ministers are appointed in a widespread manner out of true necessity, the diocesan Bishop should issue special norms by which he determines the manner in which this function is to be carried out in accordance with the law, bearing in mind the tradition of the Church.

PRACTICAL PROVISIONS

I. Selection Criteria

In order for a person to be appointed as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (EMHC), the following conditions must be met:

- Be a Catholic living in harmony with the teachings of the Church and be able to receive the Eucharist.
- Be of at least 16 years of age, possess the maturity to perform the duties of an EMHC at Mass or to the sick and homebound in various locations (i.e. private homes, nursing homes, hospitals).
- Be chosen and appointed by the pastor.
- Be in Compliance with the Parish's Compliance Plan as adopted by the Pastoral Council and Approved by the Diocese of Tucson.
- Complete proper training and received proper commissioning by the pastor.
- If from another parish, they must fulfill the above requirements and serve at the discretion of the pastor.

II. Commissioning

After preparation for this ministry is completed, a formal commissioning of EMHCs takes place, normally at a Sunday Eucharist, by the pastor or his delegate. EMHCs are to exercise their ministry only in their own parish or institution.

EMHCs generally will serve for a period of at least two (2) years, after which time an evaluation should occur. This evaluation may lead to a determination that the minister

- be re-commissioned as an EMHC for another term,
- is being called to another ministry,
- leave ministry all together at this time.

The parish keeps accurate records of each EMHC's training, ongoing formation and their term(s) of service.

III. Scheduling

The Liturgy Coordinator is responsible for scheduling all Extra Ordinary Ministers. A copy of the schedule will be given to each one. The schedule may also be accessed online at www.sthelenchurch.com.

If a person cannot assist for any reason, he or she is responsible for contacting other Extra Ordinary Ministers to ensure a proper number. If the person is impeded by health reasons, he or she may contact the Liturgy Coordinator to make necessary arrangements.

IV. Proper Attire and Composure

All EMHCs and Lectors show the greatest reverence for the Most Holy Eucharist by their attire, the manner in which they handle the Eucharist and their demeanor.

A. In regards to attire, all members of Christ's faithful are welcomed to dress modestly inside the Church. The faithful are asked to be garbed in reverence, propriety and decency as befitting a liturgical celebration.

- In order to keep a respectful atmosphere in the church those ministers not dressed in a modest fashion might not be admitted to serve.
- The following standards not only call for the covering of intimate areas of the body, but also obscuring their shape, by wearing non form-fitting clothing.
 - Shirts or dresses without sleeves are not permitted. The back, chest and torso must be fully covered.
 - Men are welcomed to wear a button down or polo shirt with slacks, kakis or jeans. They may wear a tie or a jacket depending on the weather or degree of the celebration. They are encouraged to wear a belt and casual or dress shoes. Laymen do not wear hats inside a church.
 - Men may NOT wear shorts, tank tops, sandals or pants that hang below the waist or too loose.
 - Women are invited to wear conservative and modest full dresses, skirts, pants or caprice with shirts that fully cover the shoulder areas. Women's skirts must reach to the knees or below. Women may wear mantillas, veils or hats if they choose
 - Women may NOT wear shorts, spaghetti straps or strapless.
 - If you must ask, don't wear it!

V. Confession and Fast for Spiritual Preparation

EMHC, as all Catholics, must be in a state of grace. "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (1 Cor. 11:27-28). This is an absolute requirement which can never be dispensed. To receive the Eucharist without sanctifying grace in your soul profanes the Eucharist in the most grievous manner.

"A person who is conscious of a grave sin is not to . . . receive the body of the Lord without prior sacramental confession unless a grave reason is present and there is no opportunity of confessing; 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" (CIC 916).

One who is to receive the most Holy Eucharist is to abstain from any food or drink, with the exception only of water and medicine, for at least the period of one hour before Holy Communion" (CIC 919 §1). Elderly people, those who are ill, and their caretakers are excused from the Eucharistic fast (CIC 191 §3).

VI. Before Mass Begins

Upon arriving to the church, ministers are to get the Ministerial Cross from the ushers' closet. Enough Crosses will be available as the number of ministers needed for the celebration.

All EMHCs are reminded to wash their hands in the sacristy or the rest room before Mass begins.

VII. At the Lamb of God (Agnus Dei)

1. If they have not washed their hands before Mass, EMHC may apply hand sanitizer while remaining in their seats, but not while standing, so as to not distract others.
2. As the *Agnus Dei* or *Lamb of God* is begun, the Bishop or priest alone, or with the assistance of the deacon, and if necessary of concelebrating priests, breaks the Eucharistic bread.
 - a. Other empty ciboria or patens are then brought to the altar if this is necessary.
 - b. The deacon or priest places the consecrated bread in several ciboria or patens, if necessary, as required for the distribution of Holy Communion.
 - c. Since retrieving the Sacrament before Communion and reposing after Communion is the task of the Ordinary Minister (bishop, priest or deacon), it would fall to him unless impeded, as in the case of infirmity or some other necessity, or to other Ordinary Ministers (concelebrants and deacons), before it would be legitimate for EMHC to do it.
 - d. If it is not possible to accomplish this distribution in a reasonable time, the celebrant may call upon the assistance of other deacons or concelebrating priests.
 - e. If extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are required by pastoral need, they should *NOT* approach the altar before the priest has received Communion.

VIII. Communion Rite

3. The Extraordinary Ministers should NOT come forward until the main celebrant has received both Species, which marks the end of the Eucharistic Sacrifice (a bell rings once) GIRM, 162.
 - a. After the priest has concluded his own Communion, he distributes Communion to the deacon (s) and the altar servers.
 - b. While the priest gives communion to the altar servers, the EMHC approach the altar to receive communion from a priest, deacon or another minister.

4. All receive Holy Communion in the manner described by the *General Instruction to the Roman Missal*, whether priest concelebrants (cf. GIRM, nos. 159, 242, 243, 246), deacons (cf. GIRM, nos. 182, 244, 246), or Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (cf. GIRM, no. 284).
 - a. Neither deacons nor lay ministers may ever receive Holy Communion in the manner of a concelebrating priest [by taking it themselves].

 - b. The practice of EMHC's waiting to receive Holy Communion until after the distribution of Holy Communion is not in accord with liturgical law. (NDRHC, 39; GIRM, 160).

 - c. "The faithful should receive Communion kneeling or standing.... "However, if they receive Communion standing, it is recommended that they give due reverence before the reception of the Sacrament, as set forth in the same norms." (RS, 90)
 - "The norm for reception of Holy Communion in the dioceses of the United States is standing..."
 - "The communicant bows his or her head before the Sacrament as a gesture of reverence and receives the Body of the Lord from the minister" (GIRM, 160)

 - d. Although each of the faithful always has the right to receive Holy Communion on the tongue, at his or her choice, if any communicant should wish to receive the Sacrament in the hand,... the sacred host is to be administered to him or her.
 - However, special care should be taken to ensure that the host is consumed by the communicant in the presence of the minister, so that no one goes away carrying the Eucharistic species in his or her hand.

 - If there is a risk of profanation, then Holy Communion should not be given in the hand to the faithful" (RS, 92)
 - For example, if the person has physical limitations, is holding something (or someone) in their arm, is assisting someone else or if the manner or demeanor raises doubt about their readiness to receive Holy Communion.

- “It is not licit for the faithful “to take . . . by themselves . . . and, still less, to hand . . . from one to another” the sacred host or the sacred chalice.” (RS, 94)
5. After all EMHC have received the Eucharist, the bishop or priest celebrant reverently hands vessels containing the Body or the Blood of the Lord to the deacons or extraordinary ministers who will assist with the distribution of Holy Communion.
 - a. Once they receive the ciborium or communion cup containing the Sacred Species, they walk reverently (without rush or hesitation).
 - They are to avoid “bumping” into people and watching their steps ahead.
 - They are to cover the ciborium (The Body of Christ) with one hand while holding it with the other.
 - The Communion Chalices (The Blood of Christ) are to be covered with the purificator so as to avoid spilling.
 - They should avoid personal conversations or personal social gesture towards anyone else, as if preoccupied only by the mission to bring the Sacred Species to those who hunger for it.
 6. 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. (Cf. GIRM, 161; 284-287).
 7. After the Blood of Christ has been received, the EMHC should wipe the rim of the Chalice, inside and out, with a purificator and turn the Chalice slightly before presenting it to the next communicant.
 - a. The EMHC should be careful not to wipe in a manner where the purificator is dipped into the Precious Blood.
 8. If the Eucharistic bread or some particle of it falls, it should be picked up reverently by the minister and, if not consumed, placed on the patten held by altar boys to be brought back to the priest.
 - a. If the consecrated host cannot be consumed, it may be first completely dissolved in water before being poured down the *sacrarium*. If in doubt, ask the priest.
 9. In the event that the Precious Blood is spilled from the chalice, cover the area with the purificator and pour water over the purificator. Use another purificator to absorb as much water as possible. The area should be washed and the water poured into the *sacrarium*.
 - a. Only wash water, which although it may have come into contact with the Sacred Species has so diluted it that the Presence of Christ no longer remains, may be disposed of in the *sacrarium*.

b. To do otherwise is to risk excommunication:

- RS 107. In accordance with what is laid down by the canons, “one who throws away the consecrated species or takes them away or keeps them for a sacrilegious purpose, incurs a *latae sententiae* excommunication reserved to the Apostolic See; a cleric, moreover, may be punished by another penalty, not excluding dismissal from the clerical state”.
- To be regarded as pertaining to this case is any action that is voluntarily and gravely disrespectful of the sacred species.
- Anyone, therefore, who acts contrary to these norms, for example casting the sacred species into the *sacrarium* or in an unworthy place or on the ground, incurs the penalties laid down.

10. Similarly, "consecrated hosts are to be reserved in a ciborium or vessel in sufficient quantity for the needs of the faithful; they are to be frequently renewed and the old hosts properly consumed" (*CIC, c.939*).
- a. *Burying hosts or consecrated Eucharistic bread is strictly forbidden.*
 - b. GIRM 163. When the distribution of Communion is finished, the priest himself immediately and completely consumes at the altar any consecrated wine that happens to remain; as for any consecrated hosts that are left, he either consumes them at the altar or carries them to the place designated for the reservation of the Eucharist.
11. Since the Precious Blood may not be reserved (except in a small amount needed for an actual case of Communion for a sick person who cannot receive the Host), it must be consumed. The priest may engage others in consumption, whether concelebrants, deacons or EMCs.
- a. “... Furthermore all will remember that once the distribution of Holy Communion during the celebration of Mass has been completed, the prescriptions of the Roman Missal are to be observed, and in particular, whatever may remain of the Blood of Christ must be entirely and immediately consumed by the Priest or by another minister, according to the norms, while the consecrated hosts that are left are to be consumed by the Priest at the altar or carried to the place for the reservation of the Eucharist” (RS 107).
 - b. Once EMHCs are done with distribution, they return their vessels to the altar where any remaining hosts may be either consumed; any remaining Precious Blood should be consumed at the altar by the priest, deacon or EMHCs (NDRHC #52).
12. When returning to the altar, EMHC will walk directly towards the altar and place the ciborium or the chalice on top of the Corporal on the Altar.

- a. He or she must rinse their fingers in the Ablution Cup located in the credence table (small glass cup with a golden lid).
- b. Without further delay and avoiding attracting attention to themselves, the Extra Ordinary Ministers walk to their seats and pray in thanksgiving, unless the priest instructs them otherwise.

IX. Purification and Cleansing of Sacred Vessels

- A. “The sacred vessels are purified by the priest, the deacon, or an instituted acolyte after Communion or after Mass, insofar as possible at the credence table. The purification of the chalice is done with water alone or with wine and water, which is then drunk by whoever does the purification. The paten is usually wiped clean with the purificator” (GIRM 279)
- B. Only Ordinary Ministers (Priests, Deacons and/or Instituted Acolytes) are permitted to purify Sacred Vessels.
 - a. The extraordinary ministry was created exclusively for those instances where there are not enough ordinary ministers to distribute Holy Communion, due to the consummate importance of assuring that the faithful have the opportunity to receive Holy Communion at Mass, even when it is distributed under both species. (cf. RS, no. 102).
 - b. For a time, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion were in the United States allowed to purify the Communion vessels. However, In accord with the Holy Father’s recent decision, as reported in Cardinal Arinze’s letter of October 12, 2006 (Prot. no. 468/05/L), that indult has since expired and not renewed.
 - c. Therefore an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion *MAY NOT* assist in the purification of sacred vessels, not even after Mass.
- C. When there are insufficient Priests, Deacons, or instituted acolytes to purify the additional chalices during Mass, the purification may take place immediately after the Mass has concluded.
- D. If such purification by ordinary ministers proves pastorally problematic, consideration should be given to distribution of Holy Communion by intinction or to the distribution of Holy Communion under the form of consecrated bread alone.
- E. After Mass has ended, up to two EMHC may assist the Sacristan in washing and drying the Sacred Vessels.

REFERENCES

Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)

Code of Canon Law (CIC), 1983

General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) Third Typical Edition, 2002

Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds (NDRHC)
for the Dioceses of the United States of America. NCCB, 2002

Redemptionis Sacramentum [RS], From the offices of the Congregation for Divine Worship
and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Rome, 25 March 2004.