

# GUIDELINES FOR EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

## Christ Our Redeemer Catholic Church

Bishops, Priests, and Deacons distribute Holy Communion by 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, EMHC may assist him, i.e., formally instituted acolytes or even some of the faithful who have been commissioned according to the prescribed rite. In case of necessity, the Priest may also commission suitable members of the faithful for the occasion.

### Becoming An Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (EMHC)

It is important that those individuals selected to serve as EMHCs be chosen carefully. The instruction *Immensae Caritatis* describes the qualifications: "The faithful who are special ministers of communion must be persons whose good qualities of Christian life, faith, and morals recommend them. Let them strive to be worthy of this great office, foster their own devotion to the Eucharist, and show an example to the rest of the faithful by their own devotion and reverence toward the most august sacrament of the altar. No one is to be chosen whose appointment the faithful might find disquieting." In the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, the following norms also apply:

- ◆ EM of Holy Communion, if married, must be in a valid marriage according to Church Law,
- ◆ Must have received the sacrament of Confirmation,
- ◆ Must be at least 16 years of age (at least 18 years of age if visiting the sick and homebound).

### Mandate from the Bishop

After the individuals have been selected and trained, the pastor then submits a list to the office of the Director of Liturgy of the diocese who will submit them to the Bishop. When the mandate from the Bishop is received, they must first be commissioned before they are allowed to function as an EMHC. In the diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee an EMHC is mandated for a period of five years. This is done by the Bishop, upon request by the pastor of the parish.

### Considerations Prior To And During Mass

- ◆ An EMHC who is unable to serve is required to find a substitute.
- ◆ EMHCs should dress in a way that is dignified and shows respect for the Blessed Sacrament, the assembled community and the function they are carrying out.
- ◆ Clothes should be clean and neat, modest in appearance and coverage of the body and reflect the importance of the celebration of the Eucharist. Generally this is done by dressing in a more formal fashion.
- ◆ As a minister, an important principle that must always be followed is that nothing should be worn which would draw attention to yourself or be distracting to the community.
- ◆ The EMHC should see to it that their hands are clean.
- ◆ They should also refrain from using cologne, perfume or aftershave on their day of service since some people have sensitivities to these scents and these fragrances often remain on one's hands and can be transferred to the Eucharist.
- ◆ In the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee an EMHC does not wear any special liturgical garb or symbols nor participate in the entrance procession of the Mass.
- ◆ At least 15 minutes before Mass the EMHC will sign in using the form in the Brides' Room. The liturgical ministers will gather in prayer shortly before Mass begins.
- ◆ During the Mass, the EMHC sits with the rest of the faithful, and should participate fully in the Mass, listening to the readings, and joining the community in prayer.
- ◆ The EMHC will approach the altar at the appropriate time indicated in training.
- ◆ After receiving Holy Communion, the EMHC will need to receive a ciborium or a chalice and proceed to the location where they will distribute Holy Communion. They are always to receive the ciborium or the chalice from the Priest or the Deacon.

- ◆ When ministering the Body of Christ, the minister takes the host and shows it to the communicant, saying “The Body of Christ.” In the same way, when ministering the Blood of Christ, the minister takes the chalice, saying “The Blood of Christ.”
- ◆ The EMHC should, in ordinary circumstances, not hold on to the chalice while an individual receives communion. After distributing communion, the EMHC should take the chalice, wipe the lip of it with the purificator, and rotate it slightly.
- ◆ Although the Church also permits Holy Communion under both species by intinction, that is not a custom in the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee. Redemptionis Sacramentum emphasizes that: “The communicant must not be permitted to intinct the host himself in the chalice, nor to receive the intincted host in the hand.” If someone indicates they want to use intinction, the minister should cover the chalice with the purificator and politely tell the person that intinction is not allowed.
- ◆ If a person is seeking a blessing, it is appropriate to respond with a prayer that is clearly distinct from the blessing given by a Priest. It is recommended to say, “May God bless you.” It is important that you not use the host or chalice in giving a blessing.
- ◆ After distributing communion, the EMHC should return to the altar and hand the ciborium or chalice to the Priest or Deacon, or place it on the altar. If the EMHC is distributing the Blood of Christ, the EMHC is permitted to consume whatever remains of the Blood of Christ before returning to the altar. If the vessel is empty, the Priest celebrant may determine that the vessel be placed on the credence table, rather than the altar, for purification immediately or following Mass.
- ◆ If the EMHC has been distributing the Body of Christ, he should take the opportunity to purify his fingers of any particles that may have clung to them. For this purpose, a small bowl of water is provided.

### Accidents Involving the Blessed Sacrament

If a particle of the host falls on the floor, it should be picked up and consumed. If for some reason it cannot be consumed (for example, if it has already been in an individual's mouth who is unable to consume it, pick up the host and give it to the Priest or Deacon.

In the case of spilled Precious Blood, the EMHC should insure that no one steps on the spot, by putting his or her clean purificator over the spill. Then, (with the assistance of the Deacon or an EMHC) water should be brought and poured over the spot. The resulting spill should later be blotted with a purificator to remove as much as possible. If some of the Blood of Christ should drop on an individual's clothing or possessions, it should be brought to the attention of the Priest or Deacon who will treat it in the same way, with due respect for the individual involved.

### Ministers Needed

When the Eucharist is distributed under both forms, the Deacon ministers the chalice. When the Eucharist is distributed under the single form of the host, the Deacon assists the Priest in distributing the host if needed. The number of concelebrating Priests and the number of Deacons serving may vary for different occasions, therefore the number of positions to be covered by an EMHC will vary. If one Priest and one Deacon are present, as is our norm, the following will apply.

#### Communion Under One Species

5:30 pm Vigil Mass	No EMHC
7:30 am Mass	No EMHC
10:30 am Mass	2 EMHC

#### Communion Under Both Species

5:30 pm Vigil Mass	4 EMHC
7:30 am Mass	4 EMHC
10:30 am Mass	10 EMHC

### EMHCs that Bring Holy Communion to the Sick

All EMHCs to the sick and homebound must undergo background screening, which includes fingerprinting, and they must complete the Safe Environment Program that is provided by the Diocese before they will be allowed to function in this ministry. A separate training session will be held for those who will be bringing communion to the homebound with individuals who have already completed the regular training session, so that the specific issues involved in this service may be presented with greater depth. It is important that EMHCs to the homebound become acquainted with the approved rites for communion in such circumstances, and that they have a copy of that ritual that they may use when distributing Holy Communion.

Prior to Mass the EMHC will collect cards from the sacristy. The cards have the names/addresses of those who cannot join us at Mass.

Before arriving at each home, the EMHC will call the number provided to make certain the visit is anticipated.

The EMHC will receive the Blessed Sacrament from the Priest or Deacon, at the end of the distribution of Holy Communion during Mass. A metal Pyx will be given to each EMHC in which the host(s) have been placed, and a burse (a small pouch) in which to place the Pyx. The cord may be placed around the neck and then the burse (with the Pyx inside) may be placed in a shirt pocket, or left hanging around the neck, or otherwise carried on the minister's person with the upmost reverence.

Once the EMHC has received the Blessed Sacrament, it is important to go directly to the place where he or she is to distribute Holy Communion. They are not to make unrelated stops or engage in social conversations while in possession of the Blessed Sacrament. It is never allowed to take the Blessed Sacrament home for later distribution. These are considered grave matters by the Church. Some things to remember when bringing Holy Communion to the Sick and the Homebound:

1. Use the ritual "Communion of the Sick" and bring a missalette or Bible to read the scripture readings.
2. Introduce yourself to those who are present and briefly explain what you have come to do. Pay attention to how the sick/homebound person is feeling.
3. Invite those who are present to participate in the prayers.
4. Based on the person's strength/attentiveness, share with them the day's homily.
5. Create links to the parish, e.g., bring a parish bulletin, or share news from the parish.
6. Thank the person for the opportunity to pray with them and for their hospitality.
7. Immediately after your visits are complete, you should consume any remaining hosts.
8. Return to the sacristy and purify the Pyx. Note on the index cards if the host was received and return the card to the drawer in the sacristy, along with the Pyx and burse.

If you feel you are called to this ministry, or have any questions, please contact Deacon Miguel Nolla. If you are already an EMHC and would like to visit the sick a few times to help you discern a call to this ministry, please contact Deacon Miguel Nolla.

**EMHC Coordinator**  
**Deacon Miguel Nolla**  
**850-897-6885**  
**MLnolla@centurylink.net**

