

Manual for Trainers of  
**Extraordinary  
Ministers of Holy  
Communion**



**ARCHDIOCESE  
OF LOUISVILLE**

# Table of Contents

---

Prayer for Communion Ministers .....	1
Learning Outcomes .....	2
Foundations of Ministry .....	4
Qualifications .....	7
Eucharistic Theology .....	10
Practical Considerations .....	13
Frequently Asked Questions .....	22
Communion to the Sick & Homebound .....	30
Appendix A: Rite of Commissioning Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion .....	32
Appendix B: Rite of Communion to the Sick .....	33
Appendix C: Rite of Dismissal from Mass of Communion Ministers to the Sick .....	36

## A Prayer for Communion Ministers

***Heavenly Father,***

***You brought us into a new and intimate relationship with you through your son, Jesus, who tells us: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."***

***As Ministers of Holy Communion, help us to treat others as we would treat Jesus. Let us welcome and serve one another with all the radical kindness, respect, and generosity that we would offer to Christ himself.***

***Through the gift of the Holy Eucharist, continue to feed and nourish our souls. In the example of Jesus, may we share the gift of Christ's precious Body and Blood with reverence. May we become worthy servants and friends to one another through our ministry.***

***In your holy name we pray, Amen.***

## Goal 1: Communion ministers understand their role as lay ministers and servant leaders in the Church.

---

**Learning Outcome 1.1:** *The Second Vatican Council catalyzed a transformation of the Church with renewed emphasis of the unity of all the People of God. All lay ministries were born of this transformation.*

- By virtue of their baptism, all Christians are equally called to holiness according to their gifts.
- *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* is the major liturgical document of Vatican II, which called for all the faithful to be full, conscious, and active participants in the liturgy.
- Each person at Mass has a role according to their gifts – the assembly itself is a ministry with an important role.

**Learning Outcome 1.2:** *Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (EMHCs) are called forth from their parish communities to serve in this ministry because of their particular gifts.*

- EMHCs demonstrate a reverence for the Eucharist
- EMHCs possess faith maturity and are good models of Christian life
- EMHCs demonstrate hospitality to all
- EMHCs demonstrate humility and gratitude

## Goal 2: Communion ministers will know the foundational principles of Eucharistic theology and can articulate what is meant by “the Body of Christ.”

---

**Learning Outcome 2.1:** *Catholics believe in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist; for this reason we treat the Eucharistic elements with utmost reverence.*

- EMHCs know the basic elements of the Eucharistic Prayer and Communion Rite of the Mass.
- EMHCs understand the doctrine of concomitance: Christ is fully present – Body, Blood, and divinity – in the each of the Eucharistic elements, and in each piece or drop, no matter how small.
- EMHCs know how to deal with accidents (drops or spills) efficiently and reverently.

**Learning Outcome 2.2:** *The “Body of Christ” refers both to the consecrated elements and to us – the Body of Christ – one Church united.*

- Each person is a tabernacle of the living God. Christ is present in each person just as he is present in the Eucharistic elements.
- Transformation is both specific (bread and wine) and corporate (all of us).

## Goal 3: Communion ministers have the practical skills necessary to perform their ministry in a variety of contexts.

---

**Learning Outcome 3.1:** *EMHCs know how to receive and distribute communion properly.*

- EMHCs know the proper gestures and dialogue for reception of communion.
- EMHCs know how to distribute on the tongue or in the hand.
- EMHCs understand the difference between reception of the sacrament and the consumption of remaining hosts or Precious Blood.
- EMHCs know how to distribute communion to the sick and homebound if needed.

**Learning Outcome 3.2:** *EMHCs understand Church and diocesan regulations regarding distribution of Holy Communion.*

- Communion is distributed from that consecrated at the same Mass (i.e. not from the tabernacle)
- Ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are used first, then EMHCs as needed.
- EMHCs do not perform dual ministries at the same Mass, if at all possible.
- EMHCs know the difference between purification of vessels and washing the vessels; purification is done by ordained ministers only.

**Learning Outcome 3.3:** *EMHCs can respond to a variety of special situations regarding distribution of Holy Communion.*

- EMHCs know how to handle non-communicants in the communion line (blessings for non-communicants are discouraged).
- EMHCs know how to handle a shortage or surplus of sacred Hosts / Precious Blood.
- EMHCs understand that the communion line is not the place for catechesis. They understand it is *not* their responsibility to police the reception of communion. They understand that it *is* their responsibility to report unusual or troubling instances to the pastor.
- EMHCs know what resources are available to them if they have questions or concerns.

# Foundations of Ministry

---

What was our manner of participating in Mass before Vatican II?

What was the role of the people of God?

The Second Vatican Council marked a major shift in the history of the Church, transforming it from an institution where clerics did much of the work of the Church to the Church being a sign of unity of all her people. Two important documents of Vatican II help explain this shift and our emerging role as lay liturgical ministers. These could be considered “charter documents” for all lay liturgical ministries, including communion ministry.

*Lumen Gentium* (1964)

- expands the idea of “the People of God” to include all the faithful, stressing the equality of all Christians because of their common baptism.
- We share in the work of the Church because of our baptism.
- “universal call to holiness”

*LUMEN GENTIUM* (1964)

“These faithful are by baptism made one body with Christ and are constituted among the People of God; they are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ; and they carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world.” (#31)

“The holy people of God shares also in Christ’s prophetic office; it spreads abroad a living witness to Him, especially by means of a life of faith and charity.” (#12)

“The Spirit distributes special grace among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts the Spirit makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks or offices advantageous for the renewal and upbuilding of the Church.” (#11-12)

“And if by the will of Christ, some are made teachers, dispensers of mystery, and shepherds on behalf of others, yet all share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ.” (#32)

## *Sacrosanctum Concilium (1963)*

- Mass is a public celebration for everyone present and indeed the whole universal Church, not just for a select few.
- **Everyone** has a role to play in liturgical celebrations.
- The Church has a responsibility to recognize the roles of the People of God, and the people have a responsibility to embrace those roles according to their gifts.
- Liturgy is not to be viewed as entertainment for “silent spectators.”

---

The word “LITURGY” roughly translates to “the work of the people” – from the Greek *leitōs* (“public”) and *ergos* (“work”)

---

## *SACROSANCTUM CONCILIUM (1963)*

“Liturgical functions are not private functions but are celebrations of the Church which is ‘the sacrament of unity’ ... therefore, liturgical services pertain to the whole Body of the Church.” (#26)

“Rites which are meant to be celebrated in common, with the faithful present and actively participating, should as far as possible be celebrated in that way rather than by an individual and quasi-privately.” (#27)

“The church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, active participation in liturgical celebrations called for by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people’ is their right and their duty by reason of their baptism. In the reform and promotion of the liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else.” (#14)

## Summary:

- The Second Vatican Council sparked the transformation of the Church from an institution of clerics into a sign of the unity of all the People of God. All lay ministries were born of this transformation.
- By virtue of their baptism, all Christians are equally called to holiness according to their gifts. Baptism gives us rights and responsibilities.
- All the faithful are called to be full, conscious, and active participants in the liturgy.
- Each person at Mass has a role according to their gifts, and all are important.

## Discussion Questions:

- What is your experience of the Second Vatican Council (either lived experience or historical understanding)?
- What would you like to know more about?
- What challenge does the Church's "universal call to holiness" place before you?



# Qualifications

---

## What the Church says (emphases added):

*Fidei Custos* (1969)

“A lay Christian who is to be chosen as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion should be outstanding in Christian life, in faith, and in morals, and one whose mature age warrants the choice and who is properly trained to carry out so exalted a function.” (#5)

*Immensae Caritatis* (1974)

“The faithful who are [Extraordinary] 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.” (#6)

*Code of Canon Law* (1983)

“When the need of the Church warrants it and [ordinary] ministers are lacking, **lay persons**, even if they are not lectors or acolytes, can also supply certain of their duties, namely, to exercise the ministry of the word, to preside, offer liturgical prayers, to confer baptism, and to **distribute Holy Communion**, according to the prescripts of the law.” (§230.3)

*Ecclesiae de Mysterio* (1997)

“It is thus useful for the **diocesan bishop to issue particular norms** concerning extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion which, in complete harmony with the universal law of the Church, should regulate the exercise of this function in his diocese. Such norms should provide, amongst other things, for matters such as the **instruction in eucharistic doctrine** of those chosen to be extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, the meaning of the service they provide, the rubrics to be observed, the reverence to be shown for such an august Sacrament and instruction concerning the discipline on admission to Holy Communion.” (Part II, Art. 8)

## What the Church says (continued):

*Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America* [USCCB] (2002)

“Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should receive sufficient **spiritual, theological, and practical preparation** to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence. In all matters they should follow the guidance of the diocesan bishop.” (#28)

Extraordinary ministers need particular spiritual gifts also. The following list is adapted from Victoria Tufano, *Guide for Ministers of Communion* (1999), but other charisms may be added:

- Hospitality
- Humility
- Reverence, especially for the Holy Eucharist
- Gratitude

In the Archdiocese of Louisville:

- Pastors request a “mandate” from the Archbishop for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion who will serve in their parish.
- This mandate expires after 5 years and can be renewed indefinitely.
- Extraordinary ministers can serve outside their own parish with the permission of the priest presiding.

### Summary of Qualifications:

- Fully-initiated (baptized, confirmed, and received First Eucharist)
- “mature age warrants the choice”
- Recommended by the pastor (not self-appointed)
- Mandated by the Archbishop
- Trained in practical, theological, and spiritual matters
- Exhibits the qualities of a Good Christian – publicly and privately
- Capable of the physical requirements of the ministry
- Fosters person devotion to the Eucharist
- Exhibits the necessary spiritual gifts for the ministry

### Discussion Questions:

- Are there any of the qualifications or demands of this ministry that I need to pray about?
- Am I overextended in my commitments to ministry?
- What gifts has God given me that might make me a good candidate for this ministry?
- Why is it insufficient to learn only the practical aspects of this ministry (such as where to stand and what to say)?

# Eucharistic Theology

---

**REAL PRESENCE:** A doctrine of the Church that states that Jesus is truly and substantially present in the Holy Eucharist. We receive the Body and Blood of Christ.

In the Eucharistic Prayer of the Mass, the bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ.

“...make holy these gift we have brought to you for consecration, that they may become the Body and Blood of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ...” (Eucharistic Prayer III)

We, too, are both offered and transformed.

“May he make of *us* an eternal offering to you...” (Eucharistic Prayer III)

---

“In the celebration of Mass, the faithful form a holy people, a people of God’s own possession and a royal priesthood, so that they may give thanks to God and offer the unblemished sacrificial victim, not only by means of the hands of the priest, but also together with him so that they may learn to **offer their very selves**.

*General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 95*

---

## SAINTS ON ‘THE BODY OF CHRIST’

St. Cyril of Alexandria, c. 428 AD:


“Christ said, indicating the bread and wine: ‘This is My Body,’ and ‘This is My Blood,’ in order that you might not judge what you see to be a mere figure. The offerings, by the hidden power of God Almighty, are changed into Christ’s Body and Blood, and by receiving these we come to share in the life-giving and sanctifying efficacy of Christ.”  
*(Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, 26-27)*

St. Paul, c. 55 AD:

“As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body ... You are Christ’s body, and individually parts of it.” *(I Corinthians 12:12-13, 27)*

St. Augustine, c. 393 AD:

“The faithful **receive** the Body of Christ to **be** the body of Christ; and they **become** the body of Christ if they study to **live** by the Spirit of Christ: for that which **lives** by the Spirit of Christ **is** the body of Christ.” (Sermon #272)



“THE EUCHARIST IS NOT A PRIVATE PRAYER OR A BEAUTIFUL SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE, IT'S NOT SIMPLY A COMMEMORATION OF WHAT JESUS DID IN THE LAST SUPPER. [RATHER, IT IS A] MEMORIAL, NAMELY, A GESTURE THAT ACTUALIZES AND MAKES PRESENT THE EVENT OF THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS: THE BREAD IS TRULY HIS BODY GIVEN, THE WINE IS TRULY IS BLOOD Poured OUT. ... TO NOURISH OURSELVES WITH HIM AND ABIDE IN HIM THROUGH HOLY COMMUNION, IF WE DO IT WITH FAITH, TRANSFORMS OUR LIFE INTO A GIFT TO GOD AND TO OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.”

Pope Francis, Sunday address, August 2015

**CONCOMITANCE**: A doctrine of the Church that states that Christ is indivisible and thus wholly present – Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity – in the bread and the wine and in every part thereof.

---

“Christ is ‘truly, really, and substantially contained’ in Holy Communion. His presence is not momentary nor simply signified, but wholly and permanently real under each of the consecrated species of bread and wine.”

*Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Communion in the Dioceses of the United States of America [USCCB] (2002), #8, citing the Council of Trent*

---



## Summary:

- Catholics believe in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist; for this reason we treat the Eucharistic elements with utmost reverence.
- The “Body of Christ” refers both to the consecrated elements and to us – the Body of Christ – one Church united.
- The Eucharist is truly a sacrament of unity – unity with Jesus Christ and with one another.
- Transformation (“consecration” = to make holy) during the Eucharistic Prayer is both specific (bread and wine) and corporate (all of us).
- Christ is fully present – Body, Blood, soul, and divinity – in the each of the Eucharistic elements, and in each piece or drop, no matter how small.

## Discussion Questions:

- What is meant by the “Body of Christ”?
- Do you feel challenged to understand the mysteries of our faith (such as the Real Presence)?
- What has your personal experience of receiving the Body and Blood of Christ been like?

## Practical Considerations

---

“Dual ministry” (performing multiple ministries at the same Mass) is to be avoided, so that as many gifts may be called forth from the assembly as possible.

“In liturgical celebrations each one, minister or layperson, who has an office to perform, should do all of, but only, those parts which pertain to that office by the nature of the rite and the principles of liturgy.” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* #28)

### Gestures of Reverence:

- A profound bow toward the altar is the appropriate gesture when entering or leaving the Church *unless* the tabernacle is visible in the main body of the Church. If that is the case, the gesture of reverence is a genuflection towards the tabernacle.
- During Mass, a profound bow toward the altar is the appropriate gesture for ministers who approach the sanctuary if they pass before the altar. (Not necessary if one does not pass before the altar.)
- Gestures are not made if one is carrying a liturgical object (such as a processional cross, chalice or paten, book of Gospels) – in this case, reverence is expressed by the reverent handling of the object.

A deep bow of the body is made to the altar upon entering the Church. This is done by all the ministers in procession except those carrying articles used in celebration (*Ceremonial of Bishops*, #70)

“If, however, the tabernacle with the Most Blessed Sacrament is situated in the sanctuary, the Priest, the Deacon, and the other ministers genuflect when they approach the altar and when they depart from it, but not during the celebration of Mass itself.” (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, #274)

“Ministers carrying the processional cross or candles bow their heads instead of genuflecting.” (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, #274)

During the liturgy, “A deep bow is made to the altar by all who enter the sanctuary, leave it, or pass before the altar.” (*Ceremonial of Bishops*, #72)

## Movement during the Communion Rite:

- It is recommended that Extraordinary ministers approach after the Invitation to Communion (“O Lord, I am not worthy ...”)

# Communion Rite

- Lord's Prayer – **standing**
- Sign of Peace – **standing**
- Fraction Rite / "Lamb of God" – **standing**
- Invitation to Communion – **kneeling**
- Communion Distribution – **standing**
- [Purification]
- Silence – **sitting or kneeling**
- Prayer after Communion – **standing**

← Extraordinary ministers

“[Extraordinary ministers] should not approach the altar before the priest has received Communion. After the priest has concluded his own Communion, he distributes Communion to the extraordinary ministers, assisted by the deacon, and then hands the sacred vessels to them for distribution of Holy Communion to the people.” (USCCB, *Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion at Mass*)



If practical considerations require another time for Extraordinary ministers to come forward (such as after the sign of peace), please remember:

- Ministers should be in place before the Fraction Rite so as not to distract attention from the priest's breaking of the bread.
- Rituals should not overlap (e.g. extending the sign of peace in the sanctuary during the Fraction Rite)
- Only the celebrating and concelebrating priests receive communion first. It is not appropriate to distribute communion to extraordinary ministers and/or deacons during the "Lamb of God".

Extraordinary ministers never take their own vessel from the altar – it will be handed to you by a priest or deacon

Parish-specific directives:

- How you will be scheduled
- How to arrange a substitute in case of illness or emergency
- How and where to check in when you arrive at Mass
- How to dress
- Procedures for determining whether you will be a chalice or paten minister
- Where, specifically, to stand in the sanctuary to receive your vessel, and where to stand for distribution
- What duties you may have before and after Mass

## Receiving Communion as an Extraordinary Minister

- Only a priest self-communicates (takes communion himself). All other ministers are given Holy Communion by someone else.
- Extraordinary ministers should always model good reception of the Eucharist: use the gesture of reverence (simple bow of the head) and say “amen.”

“When receiving Holy Communion, 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. The consecrated host may be received either on the tongue or in the hand, at the discretion of each communicant. When Holy Communion is received under both kinds, the sign of reverence is also made before receiving the Precious Blood.” (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal* #160)

- If possible, it is a good practice for extraordinary ministers to receive under both forms (Sacred Host and Precious Blood) because of their visibility and the fuller sign value of both forms.
- Distribution under both kinds to the faithful is the norm for the Archdiocese of Louisville.

“Holy Communion has a more complete form as a sign when it is received under both kinds. For in this manner of reception a fuller sign of the Eucharistic banquet shines forth...” (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal* #281)

“For just as Christ offered His whole self, Body and Blood, as a sacrifice for our sins, so too is our reception of His Body and Blood under both kinds an especially fitting participation in the memorial of His eternal life.” (*Norms ... United States* #16)

---

Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, “**Take and eat**; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “**Drink from it**, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant ...”

Matthew 26:26-28

## Distribution:

- The dialogue for distribution is “The Body of Christ.” / “Amen.” or “The Blood of Christ.” / “Amen.” This should not be altered in any way.

“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.” (*Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion at Mass*, USCCB)

- Communion ministers should exhibit hospitality – attempting eye contact during the dialogue, while holding up the host or chalice slightly.
- Pace should be efficient but not hurried.
- Distribution of the host can happen in two ways: on the tongue or in the hand. It is the choice of the communicant. Communion ministers should be prepared for either. Both are equally valid and proper ways of receiving communion. Both have a venerable tradition in the Church. One way should not be communicated as being better, more reverent, or more acceptable than the other.
- Chalice ministers have a purificator and should wipe the rim of the chalice after each communicant, using a clean spot on the purificator every time.

“After each communicant has received the Blood of Christ, the minister carefully wipes both sides of the rim of the chalice with a purificator. This action is a matter of both reverence and hygiene. For the same reason, the minister turns the chalice slightly after each communicant has received the Precious Blood.” (*Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America* [USCCB] #45)

- If you have extra hosts or Precious Blood after your line is complete, it is appropriate to move to help with another line.
- If you run low, look to other ministers to help.
- It is also appropriate for paten ministers to break hosts in half (snap against the bottom of the paten) if there is a shortage. (See: Doctrine of Concomitance)
- Hosts may be moved from one paten to another, but the Precious Blood should not be poured from one chalice to another due to risk of spillage.
- It is appropriate to place the purificator over the chalice if your chalice is empty.
- All ministers remain in place until distribution is complete.
- After distribution, all ministers return with their vessels to the appointed place (credence table or similar area).
- Remaining hosts and Precious Blood may be reverently consumed at this time by any of the communion ministers, or (if there is a lot), this can be done immediately after Mass.
- Consumption of remaining hosts and Precious Blood is not the same as receiving the sacrament. It should be done reverently and quietly (no dialogue or gestures for this).

## The Tabernacle:

- It is not appropriate to routinely distribute communion at Mass from the hosts reserved in the tabernacle, although this is possible in an emergency.
- Therefore, no ciborium should be brought from the tabernacle during Mass and routinely placed on the altar.
- It is important for someone, such as a sacristan, to get a good count of participants and adjust the bread and wine if necessary before the presentation of the gifts.
- The primary purpose of reservation in the tabernacle is Viaticum (communion for the sick and dying).
- After distribution at Mass, remaining hosts can be consumed or reserved in the tabernacle as needed for the ministries of the Church.
- The Precious Blood is not reserved except in rare circumstances. Any remaining should be consumed by a minister.

## THE TABERNACLE AT MASS

“As a general rule, Holy Communion is given from the hosts consecrated at the same Mass and not from those reserved in the tabernacle.”

*(Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America #30)*

“It is most desirable that the faithful, just as the priest himself is bound to do, receive the Lord’s Body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and that, in the cases where this is foreseen, they partake of the chalice, so that even by means of the signs Communion may stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated.”

*(General Instruction of the Roman Missal #85)*

“The primary and original reason for reservation of the Eucharist outside Mass is the administration of viaticum. The secondary ends are the giving of communion and the adoration of our Lord Jesus Christ present in the sacrament. The reservation of the sacrament for the sick led to the praiseworthy practice of adoring this heavenly food that is reserved in churches.”

*(Eucharisticum Mysterium #5)*

PURIFICATION: the collecting of all the remaining fragments of hosts and Precious Blood after communion distribution, which are then poured into the chalice. Water is added, a silent prayer is said, and it is reverently consumed by the minister.

- Only a priest, deacon or instituted acolyte may purify the vessels. This is **not** one of the duties for extraordinary ministers.
- Purification can happen either immediately after distribution or immediately after Mass.

"The sacred vessels are to be purified by the Priest, the Deacon or an instituted acolyte. The chalice and other vessels may be taken to a side table ... it is also permitted to leave vessels needing to be purified on a corporal, suitably covered, on the credence table, and to purify them immediately after Mass." (*Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America* [USCCB] #53)

- Only after purification may the communion vessels be washed with soap and water.
- Extraordinary ministers should be aware of the location of the sacrarium, a sink that drains directly into the ground and used for the washing of sacred vessels and disposing of water in which sacred linens (such as purificators) are soaked. Precious Blood is never poured into the sacrarium.

- Sacred vessels should be carried and treated with reverence, not casually as common objects. They should be kept in good condition, washed and stored carefully. Chalices and patens must be made of a Precious material, worthy of the Eucharistic celebration.

Sacred vessels should be made from precious metal. If they are made from metal that rusts or from a metal less precious than gold, they should generally be gilded on the inside.

In the Dioceses of the United States of America, sacred vessels may also be made from other solid materials which in the common estimation in each region are considered precious or noble, for example, ebony or other harder woods, provided that such materials are suitable for sacred use. In this case, preference is always to be given to materials that do not easily break or deteriorate. This applies to all vessels that are intended to hold the hosts, such as the paten, the ciborium, the pyx, the monstrance, and others of this kind.

*General Instruction of the Roman Missal (USA) #328-329*

#### Summary of some key concepts:

- Make a bow to the altar if you pass it without holding a sacred vessel.
- Take your time and make eye contact with each communicant.
- Do not alter the dialogue in any way: “The Body of Christ.”
- If you have extra, move to help with another line.
- Avoid distribution from the tabernacle.
- All ministers remain in place until all persons have received.
- Any consumption of what’s left takes place after distribution or immediately after Mass at the credence table or some other place.
- Purification of vessels is always done by a priest, deacon, or instituted acolyte.

## FAQs

---

Q. What should I do if I drop a host or spill some of the Precious Blood?

A. Remain calm and reassure the communicant if necessary. You or the communicant may pick up a dropped host and consume it. You can also pick it up and place it aside on the corporal on the altar before continuing with distribution. It can be consumed by someone else after distribution, or especially if sanitary concerns are an issue, it can be dissolved in hot water and poured into the sacrarium.

For small spills of the Precious Blood, use a purificator to blot it up immediately. Be careful to hold the chalice upright while you do this. Get a fresh purificator from the credence table. There should always be extra clean ones in case of accidents. You may need to ask the communicant to step back out of the way. For large spills, several purificators or even a towel may be needed. If it cannot be cleaned up quickly, secure the area and continue distribution, moving your line around the spill if necessary. Reverent clean-up can continue after Mass. Any water used to clean linens soaked with the Precious Blood should be poured into the sacrarium. Stains of Precious Blood on clothing can be handled similarly – after soaking, pour the water used into the sacrarium or the ground (if you are at home) before laundering.



Q. Can I give a blessing to someone in the communion line?

A. Lay persons are not permitted to give blessings in the context of Mass. Usually someone who is not able to receive communion will indicate this in the communion line by crossing their arms over their chest. The Church gives no clear directives for how to handle this situation. We recommend a best practice of (1) some form of hospitable acknowledgement and (2) some words of affirmation, such as “the peace of Christ” or “God loves you.” Gestures that indicate a blessing, such as extending the hand or making the sign of the cross, may cause confusion and should be avoided in this context.

Q. What if I know someone isn't Catholic, but they are coming to receive anyway?

A. We recommend a best practice of distributing communion to anyone who comes forward indicating that they want to receive. After all, we may not know a person's situation or sacramental status even if we think we do. Extraordinary ministers should never be put in the situation where they are expected to deny communion to anyone. If you have concerns, it is your responsibility to communicate those to the priest after Mass, and it is the responsibility of the priest to provide instruction or correction if pastorally necessary.

One possible exception is the case of small children who sometimes imitate others in the communion line. In these cases, it is appropriate to look to a parent and ask if the child has received first communion yet.

The same principle applies for someone who is receiving incorrectly, such as a person taking the host but not consuming it. It is important to not make a scene in the moment, but it is imperative to address this situation after Mass. Usually, the non-Catholic person simply doesn't know or understand. Pastoral conversations are appropriate, but the communion line is probably not the best place for catechesis. Both hospitality and reverence should guide our decisions here. Any tensions can be quickly diffused with, "let's talk after Mass."

Q. What if someone receives communion another way, such as kneeling or by intinction?

A. The United States bishops have indicated that standing is the posture for communion and that there are two equally valid ways to receive communion - on the tongue or in the hand. Occasionally you may see other variations that are outside these normal ways of receiving. Intinction is one example, where the communicant takes the host to the chalice with the intent of dipping it in the Precious Blood before consuming. This is a practice in some other faith traditions, but it is not appropriate in our context because it is essentially self-communicating – taking the Precious Blood yourself. Communion for the faithful is always given and received, not taken. Again, alert the priest after Mass if you see this. In the moment, a good strategy for dealing with intinction is for the chalice minister to take the host, intinct it in the Precious Blood, and place the chalice under the person’s chin while saying “The Body and Blood of Christ.” Then distribute on the tongue. This is not a perfect solution, but a possible best practice.

Another common variation is for the communicant to take a kneeling posture. In these cases, distribute on the tongue and continue on.

“The norm for reception of Holy Communion in the dioceses of the United States is standing. Communicants should not be denied Holy Communion because she or he kneels. Rather, such instances should be addressed pastorally by providing the faithful with proper catechesis on the reasons for this norm” (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal* #160).

Communicants should understand that kneeling is not a more pious or reverent way to approach the Eucharist.

Q. Should communion ministers use hand sanitizer when they approach the sanctuary?

A. You may, but you should not feel like this is required. Clean hands before Mass should suffice. If used during Mass, please be discreet and do not ritualize the use of hand sanitizer. It should not be highly visible or distracting to the assembly.

When concerns about hygiene are raised during flu season, for example, the Office of Worship often gives the following reminders, which apply year round:

- Communion ministers should practice good hygiene by washing hands before mass, for example. Do not serve when you are sick; get a substitute.
- Communicants can always receive under the form of the host and bypass the chalice if they are uncomfortable with receiving from the chalice for any reason.
- The sign of peace can be a simple nod of the head or a verbal greeting instead of a handshake.
- Illness is a valid reason to miss Mass if you need to stay home.

## Q. What about persons with gluten intolerance?

- A. For bread to be valid matter for the Eucharist, it must be made solely of wheat and contain at least a tiny amount of gluten. Completely gluten-free bread is invalid for use at Mass. Low-gluten hosts are commercially available, and it is recommended that parishes have a small number of these available. It is important to communicate that there is a very small amount of gluten in any valid host – we cannot refer to these as “gluten-free.” This could be critical information for persons with extreme gluten sensitivity. Because of the doctrine of concomitance, reception of the Precious Blood only is still full and complete reception of the sacrament and communion with the Body of Christ.

Each parish will have its own procedure for distributing low-gluten hosts, but ordinarily a person wishing to receive a low-gluten host needs to let a minister know well before Mass begins. The low-gluten host(s) may be consecrated in a pyx along with the regular hosts on the altar during the Eucharistic Prayer. It is important that they not be mixed with the regular hosts because of cross-contamination concerns. Then the pyx needs to be in the hands of the communion minister for the section in which the recipient is sitting. Communion ministers should know the parish procedure and be able to direct questions about low-gluten hosts.

## VALID MATTER FOR THE EUCHARIST

“The bread used in the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharistic Sacrifice must be unleavened, purely of wheat, and recently made so that there is no danger of decomposition. ... It is a grave abuse to introduce other substances, such as fruit or sugar or honey, into the bread for confecting the Eucharist.” (*Redemptionis Sacramentum* #48)

“The wine that is used in the most sacred celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice must be natural, from the fruit of the grape, pure and incorrupt, not mixed with other substances.” (*Redemptionis Sacramentum* #50)

“Hosts that are completely gluten-free are invalid matter for the celebration of the Eucharist. Low-gluten hosts (partially gluten-free) are valid matter, provided they contain a sufficient amount of gluten to obtain the confection of bread without the addition of foreign materials...” (Circular Letter, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, July 2003)

Q. Can I lead a Communion service?

A. At times when a priest or deacon is not available, an extraordinary minister can be delegated to lead a communion service. A Communion service refers to a rite of distributing Holy Communion outside Mass, usually within a celebration of the liturgy of the Word. It is not the ideal and not to be considered a substitute for Mass. In many parts of our diocese, there is good access to daily Mass at various times. Communion services happen more frequently in remote areas where priests cover a larger geographical area. If there is a lack of reasonable access to Mass, the communion service would at least provide access to Holy Communion, which is the fruit of the Eucharistic celebration. A deacon will lead a communion service if no priest is available. If no deacon is available, then the next choice would be an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion to be a lay leader of prayer. The Rite used is found in a ritual book called *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*. Your parish or the Office of Worship can provide you with a simple outline of a communion service if you find that you need it.

“It is, first of all, the office of the priest and the deacon to minister holy communion to the faithful who ask to receive it. It is most fitting, therefore, that they give a suitable part of their time to this ministry of their order, depending on the needs of the faithful.

... The local Ordinary may give other special ministers the faculty to give communion whenever it seems necessary for the pastoral benefit of the faithful and a priest, deacon, or acolyte is not available.”

*(Immensae Caritatis, 1973, 1. I and II)*

Q. Can I be an extraordinary minister at another parish besides my own?

A. The mandate for extraordinary ministers comes from the bishop and it is specifically for your parish. However, you can serve at another parish or even in another diocese with the permission of the priest at that Mass. This happens frequently at weddings and funerals, for example. Usually this requires a simple conversation with the pastor. If necessary, the Office of Worship can provide a statement to the priest that affirms your status as a mandated extraordinary minister. Obviously, you would follow the procedures at the parish at which you are serving, which might be slightly different from what you are used to at your home parish. Incidentally, in the case of an emergency, a priest always has the authority to delegate any person to distribute communion for a one-time situation.

The Office of Worship can be reached at [worship@archlou.org](mailto:worship@archlou.org) or (502) 636-0296, Ext. 1260 for additional questions or consultation.

## Communion to the Sick and Homebound

---

- There is a considerable and growing need for this ministry.
- Communion to the sick extends not only access to Holy Communion but also the love of the whole Christian community.
- A priest or deacon is the first choice for this ministry because administration of the sacraments is part of the ordained office. In addition, the sick person may also need a priest if he or she wishes to receive sacraments of anointing or reconciliation.
- Extraordinary ministers can serve as ministers to the sick when a priest or deacon is not available.

“It is, first of all, the office of the priest and the deacon to minister holy communion to the faithful who ask to receive it. It is most fitting, therefore, that they give a suitable part of their time to this ministry of their order, depending on the needs of the faithful.

... The local Ordinary may give other special ministers the faculty to give communion whenever it seems necessary for the pastoral benefit of the faithful and a priest, deacon, or acolyte is not available.”

*(Immensae Caritatis, 1973, 1. I and II)*

- This role is not self-appointed and is always done with the permission of the pastor.
- Follow the parish procedure for notification about an illness, accessing the tabernacle, and making communion visits. The parish and the pastor need to know about the needs of the sick so that they can respond.
- Proper transportation of the Eucharist:
  - Use a pyx, carried reverently.



- As much as possible, travel directly to the person receiving the host, without stopping for other errands.
- Consume any remaining hosts or parts of hosts after the visit, or return them immediately to the church.
- Never store the sacred host in your car, purse, or home.
- Bringing communion to the sick is often part of an extended pastoral visit.
  - Plan enough time to make pastoral visit.
  - Remember that you represent and extend the parish community – bring news, a parish bulletin, a worship aid, etc. If you come from Mass, share the readings of the Mass or some insights from the homily.
- If you bring communion to hospitals, nursing homes, jails, etc., know and follow the facility rules at those places.
- You may choose to receive Holy Communion along with the sick person, but not more than once per day if you make multiple visits.
- A sample order of worship for Communion to the Sick is found in Appendix B; this can be adapted based on pastoral need.
- Taking communion directly from Mass to the sick, if possible, is a great best practice because it extends the celebration to the sick in a literal way. If the dismissal of the ministers to the sick and homebound takes place at the end of the Communion Rite (optional, see Appendix C), it also makes the ministry more visible the whole worshipping community.

# Appendix A: Rite of Commissioning Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

---

See Book of Blessings #1875-1879

*This blessing takes place during Mass. After the homily, the celebrant calls forward the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, using these or similar words:*

Dear friends in Christ,  
our brothers and sisters, N. and N. are to be entrusted with administering the Eucharist [and with taking Communion to the sick].

*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 Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion be, therefore, especially observant of the Lord's command to love your neighbor. For when 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 sisters and so serve to build up the Church? **I am.**

Are you resolved to administer the Holy Eucharist with the utmost care and reverence? **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 extraordinary ministers of the Holy Communion.

*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. Amen.

*The general intercessions should include an intention for the newly-commissioned ministers. In the procession at the presentation of gifts, the newly-commissioned ministers carry the vessels with the bread and wine and at Communion may receive the Eucharist under both kinds.*

# Appendix B: Rite of Communion to the Sick

---

Administration of Communion to the Sick by an Extraordinary Minister from *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*, Chapter II

## Introductory Rites

The minister greets the sick person and the others present.

**Minister:** Peace to this house and to all who live in it

[If possible] the minister then places the Blessed Sacrament on the table, and all join in silent adoration.

## Penitential Rite

The minister invites the sick person and all present to recall their sins and to repent of them in these words.

**Minister:** My brothers and sisters,  
to prepare ourselves for this celebration,  
let us call to mind our sins.

*After a brief period of silence, the penitential rite continues, using one of the following:*

**A**        *All say:*

I confess to almighty God,  
and to you, my brothers and sisters,  
that I have sinned through my own fault  
*They strike their breast.*  
in my thoughts and in my words,  
in what I have done  
and in what I have failed to do;  
and I ask blessed Mary, ever virgin,  
and all the angels and saints,  
and you, my brothers and sisters,  
to pray for me to the Lord our God.

**B**        **Minister:** You brought us to salvation by your paschal mystery: Lord, have mercy.  
**All:** Lord, have mercy.  
**Minister:** You renew us by the wonders of your passion: Christ, have mercy.  
**All:** Christ, have mercy.  
**Minister:** You give us your body to make us one with your Easter sacrifice: Lord,  
have mercy.  
**All:** Lord, have mercy.

*The minister concludes the penitential rite with the following:*

**Minister:** May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins,  
and bring us to everlasting life.

**All:** Amen.

## Liturgy of the Word

*The Word of God is proclaimed by one of those present or by the minister. Reading from Mass of the Day or options given in Pastoral Care of the Sick, Part III.*

### Response

*Silence or a brief explanation of the reading*

### General Intercessions

*The general intercessions may be said. If possible use the intercessions mentioned at the parish mass that day. With a brief introduction the minister invites all those present to pray. It is desirable that the intentions be announced by someone other than the minister. After the intentions the minister says the concluding prayer.*

## Liturgy of Holy Communion

### The Lord's Prayer

*The minister introduces the Lord's Prayer in these or similar words:*

**Minister:** Now let us pray together to the Father in the words given us by our Lord Jesus Christ:

*All say:* Our Father...

### Communion

*The minister shows the Eucharistic bread to those present, saying:*

Behold the Lamb of God,  
behold him who takes away the sins of the world.  
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

*All who are to receive communion say:*

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof,  
but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

*The minister shows the blessed sacrament to the recipient and says:*

**The Body of Christ.**

*The recipient responds: Amen.*

### **Silent Prayer**

*A period of silence may be observed.*

### **Prayer after Communion**

*The minister says a concluding prayer.*

Let us pray,  
God our Father, almighty and eternal,  
we confidently call upon you,  
that the body [and Blood] of Christ  
which our brother(sister) has received  
may bring him(her)  
lasting health in mind and body.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## **Concluding Rite**

### **Blessing**

*The minister who is a lay person invokes God's blessing and makes the sign of the cross on himself/herself while saying:*

**Minister: (+) May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil,  
and bring us to everlasting life.**

**All: Amen.**

or:

**Minister: (+) May the almighty and merciful God bless and protect us, the Father,  
and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.**

**All: Amen.**

## Appendix C: Rite of Dismissal from Mass for Extraordinary Ministers Bringing Communion to the Sick

---

*Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum* suggests dismissing the ministers to the sick directly from Mass whenever possible, so that the link between the community's Eucharistic celebration and the sick is made clear. No text for such a dismissal is given. The following is a suggestion.

*Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion who take Communion to the sick may be called forth from the assembly after Communion has been distributed to the assembled community.*

*The Priest takes the pyxes, prepared with the required number of hosts consecrated at the Mass, and hands them to the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.*

*The Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion remain there as the Priest addresses the assembly and the ministers, with prayers of blessing and direction, using one of these or similar words:*

**“As you go to the sick and the homebound, take with you not only the sacrament we have celebrated, but also the Word of God which we have heard, as well as the affection of this parish community. Ask for the prayers of those whom you visit in return. Go, now, with God’s peace and blessing.”**

or

**“Brothers and sisters, you are sent from this assembly to bring the Word of God and the Bread of Life to the sick and homebound members of our parish family. Go to them with our love, our care and our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and gentle healer.”**

*The Prayer after Communion follows.*

*It is recommended that the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion who take Communion to the sick then depart immediately for their visits to the sick.*