

EPIPHANY ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Offering every member of our community a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ

Procedures and Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

UPDATED January 2025

ROLE OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER OF HOLY COMMUNION

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) were first permitted in the United States in 1971. At that time, the Congregation of the Sacraments responded to a request of the American bishops to allow laypersons to assist priests in distributing Holy Communion. In January 1973, Pope Paul VI, in the instruction *Immensae Caritatis*, extended this permission to the universal Church. "It is 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" (Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests). These include the following:

- EMHCs may distribute Holy Communion at Eucharistic celebrations only when there are no ordained ministers present or when those ordained ministers present at a liturgical celebration are truly unable to distribute Holy Communion.
- They may also exercise this function at Eucharistic celebrations where there are particularly large numbers of the faithful and which would be excessively prolonged because of an insufficient number of ordained ministers to distribute Holy Communion.
- EMHCs are also used in order to distribute the Eucharist to the sick or homebound. Any person who regularly takes Holy Communion to the sick is to be trained and commissioned. An individual may be commissioned for only this aspect of the ministry or may perform this service within the Eucharistic assembly. Please see the pastor or deacons for additional information.

REQUIREMENTS FOR ELIGIBILITY FOR EMHC

- Be a practicing Catholic, distinguished in their Christian life, faith and morals
- Be at least 18 years of age
- Have received the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist
- Demonstrate a deep reverence for and devotion of the Holy Eucharist
- Be an active, registered member of Epiphany Parish
- If married, the marriage must be a valid Catholic marriage

SPIRITUALITY

EMHCs should strive to live the Catholic Faith in spirit and in truth, namely through regular Mass attendance, daily prayer, regular Confession, and participation in faith formation and the life of the parish. To distribute the Bread of Life to the faithful, EMHCs should heed the Lord's invitation to ongoing conversion and friendship with Him. We cannot give what we do not have, so we rely on the Lord to fill us with his strength.

Liturgical Minister's Prayer Before Mass

MERCIFUL FATHER, it is a privilege to minister at your altar. I believe that during the holy Sacrifice of the Mass the Church offers to You the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ our High Priest and King. I also believe that during the Eucharistic Banquet bread and wine are changed into the living Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ, Your Son and our Savior. O LORD JESUS, how happy I am that You have called me to minister at Your altar. May I never forget that the Mass is the greatest action on earth and the most important thing I can do today. O HOLY SPIRIT, give me the grace to fulfill my sacred duty with faith, reverence, and love, so that what I do may be pleasing to You, assist Your people in praising You, and obtain for us all the fruits of this Holy Mass. Amen.

PROCEDURES

Dress Code

EMHCs should dress neatly, in a way consonant with the dignity of their role. Dress with dignity and respect. Never wear anything that will detract from Holy Communion. The focus must always be on the Eucharist, not its minister.

- Please avoid wearing jeans, shorts, tank tops, flip-flop sandals, shoes with loud heels, and distracting jewelry, patterns, and colors.
- Men are encouraged to wear a tie and/or blazer/suit jacket.

Arrival at Mass

- EMHCs should arrive 15 minutes before Mass and sign-in at the sacristy in the numerical order listed on the sheet. Please show up if you have been scheduled for a Mass. If you cannot attend on a day that you have been scheduled, it is your responsibility to find a substitute (see Scheduling section below for additional information). Please be respectful of the Eucharist and the ministry; do not wait until the day that you have been scheduled to find a substitute.

Please check with the Sacristan on days you are not assigned to see if they need extra help.

During Mass

- After the Sign of the Peace, approach the sanctuary. When you arrive at the sanctuary, face the altar and make a profound bow or genuflect. Proceed to the area behind the sanctuary using the side stairs. Enter the sanctuary through the archways and clean your hands using the hand sanitizer dispensers. Stand on the side where you will distribute from so there is no criss cross in front of the tabernacle.
- The priest or deacon will distribute the Host to the EM's. The celebrant will distribute the ciboria to EM's. The EMHC generally administers communion to the altar servers.
- Once all EMHCs have received the ciborium or chalice, all ministers proceed to their stations with the celebrant leading the way.
 - Gluten free hosts are available in the center aisle only.

These stations may vary dependent upon the number of priests, deacon, and EM's present. The **first** EM to sign in should take the Number 1 spot, the **second** person to sign in should take the Number 2 spot, etc. If there are large crowds and extra EM's, you can add spots. **Any attending Deacons take precedence and may fill your assigned spot.**

NOTE: The EM on the Mary side is to proceed to the Narthex and the back pews to see if there are any parishioners with limited mobility who need Holy Communion. A priest may do this during special masses like Christmas or Easter.

- **Distributing the Host:** The Eucharistic Minister (EM) who distributes the Body of Christ to the people should make eye contact with the communicant and **elevate the host briefly** before the communicant. The EM should say **“The Body of Christ”** and the communicant responds **“Amen.”** The EM should observe the communicant consume Jesus. If not, ask the next person in line to wait, and please follow the person who didn’t consume, ask why, and ask for Jesus back. **THERE ARE NO VALID REASONS FOR SOMEONE NOT TO CONSUME ON THE SPOT.** Once you receive Jesus back, you may consume or flush down drain behind altar St. Joseph side. If the person won’t give Jesus back, do not put yourself in harms way.

Note: These words are not to be adapted. Do not omit any words (e.g., do not drop “the”) and do not add any words (e.g., the communicant’s name – “Cheryl, the Body of Christ”).

- Place the host in the communicant's hand or on his/her tongue depending upon the preference of the communicant.

Each ciborium has a smaller pyx for gluten free. Sometimes communicants say “gluten free” or just point to the pyx. We also have homebound EM’s that may have their own pyx to receive extra hosts for their ministry.

- **Distributing the Precious Blood:** For the Precious Blood, the EM should say **“The Blood of Christ”** and the communicant responds **“Amen.”** If there is any Precious Blood left in the chalice, we ask the EM to consume please.

9:00 am - Only Mass with Precious Blood

When a Deacon is present: The Deacon will distribute the chalice on the St. Mary side and the other EMHC on the St. Joseph side. Line up on the appropriate side of the altar. The other EM who distributes the Precious Blood is to take one step forward so Father knows who is taking the chalice.

We don’t always know when there will be extra deacons or concelebrants, so on occasion, your service may not be needed.

- **For those not receiving Holy Communion:** If an adult or child approaches with their hands crossed over their chest, offer a brief prayer such as “Jesus loves you”, Christ’s blessing on you”, “May God bless you”, or another appropriate prayer.

- **Please do not place your hand on any person and just offer the prayer.** Particles of the Eucharist may adhere to their clothing or person.

- Do not make the Sign of the Cross as part of the prayer. This action is reserved to ordained ministers (bishops, priests, deacons).

- The Body and Blood of Christ are always to be distributed by a minister. The host and Precious Blood are never left on the altar for communicants to take themselves, nor are they passed from one communicant to another.

****Once your communion line has finished, check to see if help is needed in other lines.**

After the Distribution of Holy Communion

- Take the ciborium with the remaining hosts to the sanctuary and place it on the altar. The deacon or priest will organize the remaining hosts for reposition in the tabernacle. All ministers of the host should approach the tabernacle and cleanse their fingers in the ablution cups on each side of the tabernacle.
 - If you are distributing the host, do not wipe your hands on your clothing or any other surface before purifying your fingers in the ablution cup. The purpose of the ablution cup is to reverently remove any particles of the Eucharist from your hands.
- All EMHCs should stand on the side of the altar until the deacon or priest returns all ciboria to the tabernacle. Genuflect (if unable, make a profound bow) when the deacon or priest genuflects. When the door to the tabernacle has been closed (listen for the “click”), exit through the archways on either side of the altar. You do not have to bow or genuflect as you return to your seats as you already have at the tabernacle.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

Ash Wednesday

You may be asked to assist with the distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday. If you are assigned to assist in one of the Ash Wednesday liturgies, you should check in at the sacristy and determine from the celebrant where you will be located to distribute the ashes and what script you will use. There are two options:

- “Repent, and believe in the Gospel”
- “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Mark each person’s forehead with ashes in the pattern of a cross with your thumb while saying one of the scripts. Be sure to wash your hands after administering the ashes with water behind the altar.

Communion to the Sick and Homebound

- Contact the church office if you would like to distribute Communion the Homebound for specific training.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Do I have the authority to deny Holy Communion?

A: No. The extraordinary minister should not make a judgment on the worthiness of any individual to receive Holy Communion. In the case of individuals clearly living a life in discrepancy with church teachings, the decision is to be made by the pastor, in consultation with the Bishop, and the pastor will then inform the extraordinary ministers involved. If the extraordinary minister is unsure whether an individual is Catholic or has received their first communion, he should ask them or their parent, and if they reply that they are not, the extraordinary minister should let them return to their pew without receiving communion.

Q: What do I do when an accident involves the Blessed Sacrament?

A: While every care should be taken to avoid accidents involving the Blessed Sacrament, the extraordinary minister should be prepared to respond to them should they occur. The most common sort of accidents involve a particle of the host or a portion of the precious blood falling on the ground or another object.

If a particle of the host falls on the ground, 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), it may be dissolved in water and the water later poured down the sacrarium; however, it is best to contact a priest/deacon/sacristan should this be necessary.

If some of the precious blood should fall to the ground, the extraordinary minister should ensure that no one steps on the spot, perhaps by delegating an individual to guard it. A clean purificator could be used to mark the spot. Then – with the deacon or sacristan’s assistance – water should be retrieved and poured over the spot. It is important to note that when it is diluted with water to the point where it loses the appearance of wine, the Precious Blood ceases to be the Eucharist. The resulting water, however, should still be treated with respect, and collected in a non-consecrated vessel (a lavabo bowl, for example) with the use of purificators. The water should then be poured down the sacrarium in the sacristy. If some of the Precious Blood should drop on an individual’s clothing or possessions, it should be treated in the same way, with due respect for the individual involved.

Note: Extra purificators are available in the cabinet behind the altar on the St. Mary side of the sanctuary.

Q: What if I am a lector and scheduled for Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion?

A: In general, a minister should not exercise multiple ministries in the same celebration (i.e., as lector and EMHC, or as cantor and EMHC). However, exceptions are given if we are not able to find someone else to fill in.

Q: What if someone asks me to give Holy Communion to someone who is homebound?

A: Please see the priest for appropriate direction.

Q: What do I do if I run out of consecrated hosts?

A: Tell the person next in line to wait a moment, then go to the priest or deacon for additional hosts. If you are running low on consecrated hosts, you might split host(s) in half. This should be avoided and done only in extenuating circumstances.

Q: What if I do not want to receive Holy Communion from the chalice when I am a minister of the host?

A: Cross your arms in an “X” in front of your chest. This will signal your preference to the priest or deacon.

SCHEDULING

Reminders

- Volunteers receive an e-mail reminder one week before their scheduled Mass.
- Volunteers receive an e-mail that lists “available positions this week” on Monday. You will receive this e-mail if there are openings at your preferred Mass time(s) and if you have not listed the date(s) as unavailable. Volunteers also can check the full schedule to sign up for any openings.
- If you are not scheduled, you are encouraged to check-in at the sacristy prior to Mass to fill any remaining assignments.
- Note: Emails come from office87@clients.rotundasoftware.com Please add this to your contacts to make sure you receive these emails!

Requests for Substitutes

- Requests for substitutes and sign-ups to fill open positions are **due at 12:00 noon on Friday**, as that is when the sign in sheet is printed. Any sub requests filled after noon will not show up on the sign in list.
- If your request for a substitute is not answered: You are responsible for filling your assigned role. Keep track of when you request a substitute and make sure someone accepts your request. If no one accepts your request or if it is a last-minute need, please make an attempt to contact other volunteers using the information in the “Roster” tab on Ministry Pro.

- If the request is left unfilled, the sacristans will be notified and it will become their task to fill your assignment. This adds added pressure to the already busy moments prior to Mass. Please assist the priest and sacristans by making every effort to fill your assignment.

Preferences and Contact Information

- Keep your contact information up-to-date in Ministry Pro using the “Profile” tab. At minimum, please provide your e-mail address.
- Use the “Profile” tab to indicate your preferred Mass time(s) and any dates you are unavailable. Do not list the dates in the “Notes” section or e-mail dates to the Ministry Scheduler.
- Note: Consider non-Sunday Holy Days of Obligation or special liturgies (such as Holy Week) and indicate your availability.
- Indicating your availability is an important step toward reducing the number of unfilled assignments. We understand that you cannot always know your schedule beforehand. The substitute request function is a great way to manage these situations, but your cooperation in ensuring the proper fulfillment of the liturgical ministries is critical and much appreciated.

Help with Ministry Pro

There is a Ministry Pro tutorial video available through the “Help” tab. If after watching the video, you still have questions, contact Sharon Sweeney at sharon.sweeney@epiphanyparish.com .

GLOSSARY

Ablution Cup - A small glass cup with a lid placed next to the tabernacle to purify the fingers of the priest or deacon who removes the Blessed Sacrament outside of Mass.

Altar - Place of Sacrifice; central location for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Ambo - Place where the readings from sacred scripture are proclaimed during Mass. May also be used for the homily.

Blessed Sacrament - The consecrated hosts and precious blood, in which Catholics believe that Jesus Christ is truly present.

Ciborium, ciboria (plural) - Sacred vessel with a lid for consecrated or unconsecrated hosts

Chalice - Sacred vessel in which wine, after Consecration, becomes the Precious Blood.

Credence Table - Table near the altar on which are located the various sacred vessels, the lavabo bowl and towel, the water and wine cruets, etc., used during the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Cruets - Glass vessels that hold water and wine for the Mass

Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion – An instituted acolyte or a lay person who meets criteria of Canon 230.

Host - A small wafer of unleavened bread, which is consecrated in the Mass so as to become the Body of Christ.

Luna - Round glass case within which is kept a large consecrated host so that it may be inserted into the center of the monstrance

Monstrance - Sacred Vessel which holds the luna with the consecrated host for adoration and benediction.

Ordinary Minister Of Holy Communion - A bishop, priest or deacon who by virtue of their office ordinarily distributes Holy Communion.

Paten - Small metal plate on which hosts are consecrated during the Mass.

Precious Blood - A term for the real presence of Jesus Christ under the appearance of wine

Purificator - Small linen cloth folded three ways, which is used to purify a chalice when communion is received. Before being placed in the laundry, it is soaked, with the water being poured down the sacrarium.

Pyx - Small metal container used to carry sacred hosts when communion is taken to the sick or homebound; it is carried in the burse with cord around neck

Sacrarium - A sink-like receptacle in the sacristy, which drains directly into the ground, rather than into a sewage system. It is used for disposing of water which may have come into contact with sacred things

Sacred Vessels - Any vessel which is used to hold the Blessed Sacrament. Sacred vessels must be made out of certain materials, and are to be blessed according to the rites of the Church

Sacristy - Room where sacred vessels are kept and where the priest and deacon vest when there is not a separate vestry.

Sanctuary - Sanctuary Area of the church building set aside for the celebration of the sacred rites. The altar and ambo are placed within the sanctuary.

Sanctuary Lamp - A fixture containing a candle or an oil lamp, usually suspended by a chain or affixed to the wall. It is located near the tabernacle. When lit, it indicates the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle.

Tabernacle - Locked and secured place of reservation of the Blessed Sacrament

Statutes of the Diocese of Peoria

- 6.12.1 Pastors recommend candidates to the Bishop or vicar general requesting the mandate to commission them as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. The mandate to serve as an extraordinary minister of the Eucharist is valid for three years and is generally restricted to the parish for which the mandate was requested unless otherwise specified.
- 6.12.2 Pastors must testify that those nominated to be extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist are mature Catholics of excellent character and obvious spiritual devotion and who live their faith in harmony with the Gospel and the laws of the Church. These candidates are to receive proper training and spiritual formation for this ministry. The office of divine worship will provide resources and recommendations to aid pastors in the training and on-going formation of extraordinary ministers.
- 6.12.3 Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are to be commissioned using the rite from the Book of Blessings. In an exceptional circumstance, any priest may commission an individual to distribute Communion at a particular Mass using the formula given in the Roman Missal.
- 6.12.4 Those who take Communion to the sick must observe the proper ritual. They should proceed from the church directly to the sick person and must return any unused hosts without delay. Hosts should not be kept unnecessarily in one's personal possession and under no circumstances may they ever be kept overnight. The vessels for carrying the Eucharist must be properly purified (c. 935).
- 6.12.5 The priest celebrant always receives the Body of Christ first. Ordinary ministers of the Eucharist (bishops, priests and deacons) are always to distribute Communion before other extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist. Extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist only enter the sanctuary to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion after the celebrant has received Communion. When it is convenient, and in particular at more solemn liturgies, it is preferred that a deacon minister the cup to the faithful.
- 6.12.6 During the celebration of Mass, only an ordained minister may approach the tabernacle to remove the reserved Hosts for distribution to the faithful.
- 6.12.7 Outside liturgical celebrations and with the permission of the pastor, an extraordinary minister may approach the tabernacle and take reserved Hosts for distribution to the sick or homebound. A sacristan may reverently approach the tabernacle to check the number of reserved hosts before Mass.
- 6.12.8 The custom which leads young children and others not permitted to receive Holy Communion to seek a blessing as others receive Communion may be continued. Extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist are not to impart a blessing by using the same words and gestures as a priest or deacon. Rather, they are encouraged to use a simple formula such as, "May the Lord bless and keep you."
- 6.12.9 Only in extraordinary circumstances may an extraordinary minister be granted permission by the pastor to publicly expose and then later repose the Blessed Sacrament for the adoration of the faithful. They must follow the proper ritual and are not allowed to give Benediction with the Sacrament. This permission is given for houses of religious within the Diocese of Peoria, at the direction of the house superior, when the regular exposition of the Blessed Sacrament is part of their rule and when no cleric is available (c. 943).

**Affidavit for Serving as an
Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion
In the Catholic Diocese of Peoria**

I, _____, having been nominated by my pastor to serve as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion exclusively for Epiphany Parish, hereby certify that I have been trained according to diocesan and universal norms for this service and am committed to a life in harmony with the Gospels and the precepts of the Church. I am familiar with diocesan laws and practices as outlined in chapter 6 of the Statutes of the Diocese of Peoria. Once commissioned, I pledge to observe these and all other regulations of the Universal Church and the Bishop of Peoria with regard to my ministry

Especially in an age of secular ambiguity, I recognize the importance of ensuring that public representatives of the Church speak with one voice. I am therefore ready to meet the same standards that are necessary for a Catholic to teach or preach in the Diocese of Peoria. Those standards include but are not limited to the contents of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Code of Canon Law.

Signature

Name – Please Print

Address

City & Zip Code

Parish/City

Pastor's Signature

Date