

*Anima Christi*

Soul of Christ, sanctify me  
Body of Christ, save me  
Blood of Christ, inebriate me  
Water from the side of Christ, wash me  
Passion of Christ, strengthen me  
Good Jesus, hear me  
Within the wounds, shelter me  
from turning away, keep me  
From the evil one, protect me  
At the hour of my death, call me  
Into your presence lead me  
to praise you with all your saints  
Forever and ever  
Amen.

(St. Ignatius of Loyola)

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## Guidelines and Norms for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion



Suggested Reading:

*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. Encyclical Letter on the Eucharist. St. John Paul II, 2003.

*God is near us. The Eucharist, the Heart of Life*. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. Ignatius Press, 2003.

*Administration of Communion and Viaticum by an Extraordinary Minister*. USCCB Publishing, 2012.

*General Instruction to the Roman Missal*. USCCB Publishing, 2003.

*Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America*. USCCB Publishing, 2002.

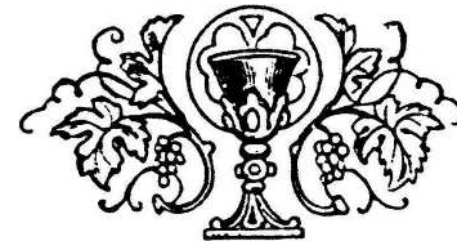
*Pastoral Care of the Sick*. Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1983.

*Celiac Disease, Alcohol Intolerance, and the Church's Pastoral Response*. <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/order-of-mass/liturgy-of-the-eucharist/celiac-disease-and-alcohol-intolerance.cfm> From the Committee on Divine Worship Newsletter, of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, October 2012.

*Presence: The Mystery of the Eucharist*. <https://watch.formed.org/presence>. The Augustine Institute, 2018.

*The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church*. <https://www.usccb.org/resources/mystery-eucharist-life-church> From the Committee on Doctrine of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, November 2021.

- d. Watch for "NO VISITORS" or "ISOLATION" signs:
  - ◇ Consult the nurse in charge about these
- e. Knock before entering or even going around the curtain
- f. Assess the situation and adapt to the person's needs:
  - ◇ Introduce yourself
  - ◇ Sit or stand so you are in a comfortable line of vision for the person in bed
  - ◇ Do not wake people who are sleeping soundly
  - ◇ Be aware of apparatus around the bed
  - ◇ Put the needs of those you visit over your own
- g. Adapt Communion rite to the needs and condition of those you visit
- h. Don't rush the visit, but keep it within the limits of the sick person's stamina
- i. Make an appointment for a return visit if desired



# FAQs

2. After the communion call, any remaining elements of the sacred species are to be immediately returned to the church or consumed by the individual, depending on circumstances and the pyx is to be purified.
3. A host that has fallen should be carefully returned to the parish church and placed in the ablution jar next to the tabernacle until it has dissolved. The water may then be poured down the sacrarium. It may also be consumed.
4. Dress according to your ministry and the purpose of your visit - with dignity and common sense.

## SKILLS NEEDED FOR THE PASTORAL VISIT:

1. You are going to *minister* to a patient or a prisoner—you are a messenger of God’s love, reflect that love.
2. *Listen* to the needs of the person you visit and the family, if present.
3. *Reflect* concern for the person you visit.
4. Be willing to *pray*.
5. Be unhurried and sensitive, without staying too long, noting the energy level of the person you are visiting.

## VISITING HEALTH CARE INSTITUTIONS:

1. Learn what you can about the person before visiting.
2. Visit by yourself or in pairs; not in groups and keep the visit short.
3. Identify yourself to the person in charge:
  - a. Find out visiting hours
  - b. Make appointments if necessary
  - c. Become familiar with the best times to visit:
    - ◇ Not during meals, doctors’ visits or treatment time
    - ◇ Your schedule should be flexible—if you arrive at an inopportune time, come back later

## Who are Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (aka EMHC)?

They are men and women mandated by the Archbishop of Denver to share in the apostolic work of the Church when a true pastoral need exists as determined by the pastor, administrator or chaplain of a parish or institution.

## But I am confused, am I an Eucharistic minister or an EMHC?

“Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion” is the correct terminology. The phrases “Eucharistic” or “communion” minister blur the distinction between the ordained and the non-ordained. EMHCs are members of the laity who have received a mandate from the Archbishop to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion when there is a genuine pastoral need. The responsibilities of EMHCs include the reverent and secure distribution of Holy Communion and the cleansing of the sacred vessels, if requested to do so by an ordinary minister. EMHCs do not distribute communion when a sufficient number of ordinary ministers (bishops, priests, deacons) are present at the Eucharist.

## Why do we even have EMHCs?

A genuine pastoral need may arise when the number of faithful receiving Holy Communion at Mass is so great that the liturgy would be unduly prolonged. Another need may arise when ordinary ministers are unable to administer Holy Communion conveniently because of poor health or advanced age, or when they are not available because they are fulfilling other duties. In addition, grounded in charity and the corporal works of mercy, the need has arisen for mandated and well-formed EMHC to bring the Eucharist to the sick, to the homebound, and especially as viaticum, to the dying.

## How does one become an EMHC?

A written request is made by the pastor or chaplain of an institution, to the Archbishop setting forth a description of the needs of the parochial (or other) situation, the names of candidates, an assurance that all those for whom mandation is being requested are of sufficient Christian maturity with a definite relationship to the parish or institution to be served, and whose character and way of life reflect a serious and well-formed faith and moral commitment.

#### **What are the requirements of EMHC:**

All candidates must be at least age 16. They must be fully initiated into the Church with the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, must always ensure that their lives are in conformity with the teachings of the Church, including the teaching on married life and publicly affirm the magisterium of the Church.

#### **What kind of classes do I need to become an EMHC?**

Individuals are to be given sufficient formation and training for the role to be undertaken. Instruction in the theology of the Eucharist, the proper nature of this ministry as extraordinary, and prayerful Eucharistic spirituality should be part of the training required for all EMHCs.

#### **I already am an EMHC. Do I still need to take a class?**

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should receive, on a regular basis, ongoing theological and spiritual formation for this holy and important undertaking. Minimally, this formation occurs once every four years; yearly formation is highly encouraged.

#### **Can I be an EMHC at a parish I am visiting?**

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are appointed to a particular parish or institution only and may not minister outside or beyond the parameters of their appointment. In cases of emergency, however, and for a specific occasion, all priests may appoint Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to serve on that occasion alone (See *Roman Missal*, Appendix 3).

#### **What if I am a school teacher/prison ministry/hospital ministry at one parish and attend another, can I be mandated at both?**

Yes, you can be mandated to serve at more than one parish or institution. Each parish or institution would ask for mandation in your name to serve both places.

#### **How long can I be an EMHC?**

One receives mandation to serve in this capacity for up to a four-year period. Continuation of service should not be presumed, but rather specifically determined by the pastor prior to renewal.

## **VISITING INSTITUTIONS AND HOMES**

Taking the Eucharist to institutions (hospitals, nursing homes, other health care facilities, prisons) and homes is an extension of the Eucharistic Celebration of the community at Mass.

The function of the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion in the pastoral care of the sick or to prisoners is to bring the Eucharist to a member of the parish community who is confined and cannot participate in the communal celebration and to extend charity in whatever way is possible or needed. Therefore:

1. The EMHC is a representative of the parish bringing to another member the love, concern, and prayers of the community.
2. The EMHC may be ministering only to the person confined, or to that person and other members of the household. Since the visit of the EMHC is not meant to be a substitute for one's participation in the Eucharist, others should be encouraged to participate, but not to use the visit as a substitute for Mass. The EMHC should, however, be sensitive to the presence of others and involve them in the rite.
3. The visit by the EMHC includes the rite of reception of Holy Communion as presented in the proper liturgical books.
4. The visit is an opportunity to ask the individual if there is a need for a visit by a priest for the Sacraments of Reconciliation or Anointing of the Sick.

#### **REVERENCE FOR THE EUCHARISTIC SPECIES BY THE MINISTER:**

1. Go directly from the church to the institution or home.
  - ◇ no shopping or visiting on the way
  - ◇ do not keep the Blessed Sacrament in your home or vehicle

#### How to Minister the Blood of Christ:

As those who desire to receive the Blood of Christ come forward, the chalice is offered to the communicant with the words, "The Blood of Christ." The communicant responds "Amen" and the chalice is handed to them. After they return the chalice, the rim is wiped inside and out with a purificator. The chalice is rotated slightly; the purificator is adjusted to an unused part of the linen, and then the chalice is presented to the next communicant. The chalice is never passed from one communicant to another.

A communicant is never allowed to self-communicate by intincting the host in the chalice and is not permitted to pass the chalice to another communicant. Intinction, can only be ministered by a priest or bishop. An EMHC, may stand next to the priest or bishop and hold the chalice from which intinction is distributed. While distributing the Precious Blood, never pour the Blood from one chalice to another, so as to fill an empty chalice with Precious Blood at a communion station.

#### Following the Distribution of Holy Communion:

EMHCs return the ciborium/chalices to the altar or credence table. Depending on your parish the tabernacle maybe outside the sanctuary, you may be asked to bring your ciborium to it.

Any remaining Precious Blood must be consumed at the end of the distribution of Holy Communion by the ordinary ministers, who may be assisted by the EMHCs.

#### Purifying Sacred Vessels:

The purification of the sacred vessels may occur at the altar by the priest, who may be assisted by the deacon, or at the credence table by a deacon or instituted acolyte. The sacred vessels may also be purified immediately after Mass. If they are to be purified after Mass, the vessels are to be suitably covered at the credence table on a corporal. (GIRM 183) Purification is ordinarily done by the priest, deacon, or instituted acolyte. An EMHC or sacristan may conduct a more complete hygienic washing after the vessels are purified. These are sacred vessels - **NOT** ordinary "dishes."

#### Is there a blessing or commissioning ceremony for EMHCs?

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should be commissioned, preferably within Mass, according to the Rite of Commissioning Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, which is found in the *Book of Blessings*.

#### If I sing in the choir or help usher/lector can I also be an EMHC at the same Mass?

Pastors and chaplains should develop the full complement of ministries that function in the celebration of the Eucharist. Therefore, it is preferable that EMHCs do not serve as lectors, ushers, altar servers or choir members at the same Mass.

#### It is getting harder for me to help EMHC because of my physical condition, what should I do?

When an individual's capability to function well as an EMHC is inhibited due to illness or age, mandation is not to be requested. They might be invited to serve the parish in some other way.

#### I want to bring Holy Communion to the sick and homebound, how do I do that?

EMHCs may also be designated for ministry to the sick and homebound of the parish to allow more frequent reception of the sacrament than would otherwise be possible. Such individuals are instructed in the use of "Rite of Giving Communion to the Sick" found in *Pastoral Care of the Sick*. Additional formation as to the procedures and protocol for visiting those in hospitals should be given by the coordinator of the homebound ministry.

#### What about bringing communion to those in jail/prison?

EMHCs may also assist in jail or prison ministry. They are to be particularly attentive and sensitive to the inmates in explaining the guidelines for reception of Holy Communion and to carry out communion services reverently and in such a way as not to confuse the service with the celebration of the Mass.

#### I just received the pyx at Mass to take Holy Communion to the homebound. May I stop and chat with others after Mass?

EMHCs should immediately go from the parish Mass to the communion call. It is a beautiful connection between the Eucharist that just has

taken place in the parish and the reception of Holy Communion by the homebound parishioner.

**How am I suppose to distribute Holy Communion to those with gluten intolerance?**

Each parish has its own way of handling this situation. A common norm is for the EMHC to either wash their hands with a sanitizer or wipe their fingers with a purificator before distributing the low-gluten host to the communicant so that there is no cross-contamination.

## Aspects of Ministry

Recognizing that each parish church has its own particular details of design and need, here are universal considerations for EMHCs and their ministry.

**The Principle of Prayer:**

All ministry should begin and end with humble and grateful prayer.

**The Principle of Attentiveness and Flexibility:**

Faithfulness in liturgical ministry demands attention to details and readiness to adapt to changing circumstances.

**The Principle of Reverence and Uniformity:**

All actions and words in ministry should be in union with and directed by the celebrant in a generous spirit of loving service to the whole Eucharistic Assembly.

## Preparation

1. On ministry days, begin the day in prayer and quiet. Avoid distractions such as TV, radio, or anything that would discourage a recollected manner.
2. Care should be taken against casual actions, attitudes, and language that distract from the celebration. Care should also be taken regarding appropriate dress.

3. It is recommended that you arrive early to your parish liturgy at which you are scheduled to serve, allowing you to be informed of any special circumstances that might occur. This also ensures that the priest, deacon, servers, musicians, and EMHCs conduct their roles with style and grace because all are aware of their specific responsibilities for the celebration. Additionally, some parishes might have you assist in sacristan duties as well.

## Communion Rite

**The Fraction of the Bread:**

The priest, assisted by the deacon if necessary, breaks the consecrated bread and places it in other vessels if necessary. This ritual action is a gesture of our Lord's at the Last Supper. It is reserved for the priest or deacon only. (GIRM 83, U. S. Norms, 37)

EMHCs approach the altar as the priest receives Communion, and then they receive Communion from the priest and/or deacon. They do not receive Holy Communion at the same time as the priest, and they never wait to receive Communion following the assembly (U.S. Norms, 38-40).

When receiving Communion, just like the rest of the faithful, EMHCs are to show a sign of reverence. The U.S. Bishops Conference has determined that the sign of reverence is a simple bow of the head before receiving both the Body and Blood of Christ.

**How to Minister the Body of Christ:**

EMHCs are each given a ciboria by the priest or deacon; they do not take the ciborium from the altar. They may participate in distributing Holy Communion to their fellow extraordinary ministers. They move to their assigned communion station with reverence and dignity. As the communicant approaches the host is offered to the communicant with the words, "The Body of Christ." And the communicant responds "Amen." Nothing else is said (such as the communicant's name). The communicant chooses whether to receive the Body of Christ in the hand or on the tongue.