

Diocese of San Bernardino - Guidelines for Parish Ordinary & Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Office of Worship **Revised 5-7-15**

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THESE GUIDELINES REFLECT THE CHANGES FOR EMHC IN THE NEW NORMS IMPLEMENTED IN THE DIOCESE ON THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT 2012. FIRST REVISION 3-27-13

Documentation

“The Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in the liturgical celebrations called for by the very nature of the liturgy.” Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (CSL) §14

“Christ has given us this memorial of his passion to bring us its saving power until the end of time. In this great sacrament you feed your people and strengthen them in holiness, so that the family of mankind may come to walk in the light of one faith, in one communion of love. We come to this wonderful sacrament to be fed at your table and grow into the likeness of the risen Christ.” Preface: Holy Eucharist II, RM, 2 edition.

“Holy Communion has a fuller form as a sign when it takes place under both kinds. For in this form the sign of the Eucharistic banquet is more clearly evident and clearer expression is given to the divine will by which the new and eternal Covenant is ratified in the Blood of the Lord, as also the connection between the Eucharistic banquet and the eschatological banquet in the Kingdom of the Father.” General Instruction to the Roman Missal (GIRM) §281

“Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should receive sufficient spiritual, theological, and practical preparation to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence...In all matter, such Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should follow the guidance of the diocesan bishop.” Norms for Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the USA (USA Norms) §28

Faculties

The faculty is granted to pastors, parochial administrators, pastoral coordinators and priest-chaplains to appoint extraordinary ministers of Communion in their parishes or institutions, as needed. Pastors, parochial administrators and pastoral coordinators are required to send a list of names of those appointed to serve in parishes as EMHC to the Office of Worship. An official document of appointment, signed by Bishop Barnes, and a card that can be carried by the EMHC will be provided for each person on the list.^{1[1][1]}

The faculty is granted to all priests to designate suitable persons to distribute Communion for a specific occasion when there is genuine necessity to do so. (See GIRM # 284)

^{1[1][1]} This document is not to be confused with the certificate of participation provided those taking the all-day workshop for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion at Office of Worship formation days.

I. The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (EMHC)

“The faithful who are special ministers of communion must be persons whose good qualities of Christian life, faith and morals recommend them. Let them strive to be worthy of this great office, foster their own devotion to the Eucharist, and show an example to the rest of the faithful by their own devotion and reverence toward the most august sacrament of the altar.” Immensae caritatis: Paul VI 1973

1. The persons invited to serve as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are to be mature (usually at least 15 years of age), fully initiated Catholics, who participate fully and regularly in the Sunday celebration of Eucharist.
2. EMHC strive to live Gospel values and to be Christ’s presence in all areas of their lives.
3. Those invited to this ministry agree to be trained before being commissioned to parish service,² are committed to faithful and reliable presence at those liturgies to which they have been assigned, and are willing to continue their formation and education through parish and diocesan workshops and retreats.
4. EMHC normally limit the exercise of their ministry to their own parish or institution.³
5. Normally they do not serve in another ministry at the same Mass.

II. The Parish and the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion

6. a. In addition to the training and formation offered by the Diocese, ministers can expect to receive instruction and continuing spiritual and liturgical formation from their pastors or other parish or institution leadership, including the specific ways in which this ministry is practiced in the individual parish or institution. Clear parish/institution guidelines and expectations are essential. Most important is the formation of ministers in liturgical spirituality and the call to service through prayer and discernment.

b. Parishes will also provide for periodic Catechesis for the assembly regarding the ministry of EMHC, and theological, liturgical and practical considerations regarding the reception of communion under both species.⁴

7. It is the responsibility of the Pastoral Leadership in a given context (parish, hospital, etc.), usually the Pastor/Pastoral Coordinator/Priest Minister/ Priest Chaplain, to encourage ministers every three years, to discern the continuing call to this ministry. Together, they can prayerfully determine whether or not a recommitment to another term of service is appropriate.

8. Pastors and priest chaplains are to keep a record of those they appoint as EMHC.

9. Parishes may determine the dress for extraordinary ministers—appropriate and dignified clothing expressive of an attitude of service and reverence.⁵

10. Parishes will provide schedules with ministry assignments and clear expectations about what to do when a minister cannot be present for a scheduled assignment.⁶

11. The faculty is granted to all priests to designate suitable persons to distribute communion in a case of necessity (See GRIM # 284a).

III. The Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion at Mass

² All new EMHC should be commissioned, preferably during a Sunday Mass or a Liturgy of the Word where at least some members of the faith community are present. See *Book of Blessings for Order for the Commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion*.

³ When persons move to another parish, who have already been appropriately trained and commissioned as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion and/or special ministry to the sick, it is hoped that their training and formation will be reason to invite them to serve in this ministry in the new parish, with appropriate formation and training in the new parish’s specific guidelines.

⁴ Catechetical materials are available from the Diocesan Office of Worship.

⁵ Wearing “Sunday best” clothing is most appropriate. Shoes worn should enable safe movement, especially when steps and changes in elevation are present. A distinctive cross or some other appropriate symbol may be worn, to clearly identify the EMHC. The use of white or colored “stoles”, “robes” or “scapular like collars” are strongly discouraged, as they have no liturgical meaning or tradition for this ministry. Generally, albs are not recommended although they may be appropriate in some pastoral situations.

⁶ EMHC are expected to arrange for their own substitutes; to facilitate this, a roster of names and contact information can be made available to all, updated at least once a year.

A. Preparation

12. a. *“It is most desirable that the faithful, just as the priest himself is bound to do, receive the Lord’s Body from the hosts consecrated at the same Mass and that...they partake of the chalice, so that even by means of the signs Communion will stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated.”* GIRM§85

b. In order to accomplish this important directive, pastors will need to patiently discern an effective method for assuring that an excessive number of hosts are not brought up during the preparation of the altar and gifts for consecration. Bread consecrated from the same liturgy is used first. Only when it becomes clear that more is needed will what is in the tabernacle be used. They will also need to assure that there is a sufficient amount of precious blood available for all that wish to drink from the cup.⁷ Metal alloy chalices or precious wood chalices with metal lining need to be filled and placed on the credence table, preferably on a tray, before Mass commences.

13. There should be a sufficient number of ministers for Holy Communion so that it can be distributed in an orderly and reverent manner. **Bishops, priests and deacons⁸ are the Ordinary Ministers of Communion.** EMHC assist them as needed.

14. EMHC arrive early to find out where their station will be during Communion and whether or not anything special will be required of them.⁹

15. The EMHC ordinarily take their places within the assembly before the liturgy begins. EMHC are not part of the Entrance Procession.

16. Since all ministers are first and foremost members of the assembly, the EMHC is expected to fully participate in the entire liturgy.

B. Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion within Mass

17. EMHC may approach the altar as the priest receives communion. In the Diocese of San Bernardino, these ministers may gather in the sanctuary area during the Sign of Peace.¹⁰

18 a. *“Following the invitation to share in the Sign of Peace, only the deacon and/or the priest fraction the hosts into the ciboria. During this time the *Angus Dei* is said or sung”* Bishop Barnes Letter October 2012.

b. Only Ordinary Ministers (Priest or deacon) of Holy Communion may retrieve the Blessed Sacrament from the tabernacle during liturgy. The unconsecrated wine for the presider’s chalice will still be poured during the offertory, from an appropriate container or small vessel.

19. The Communion Song begins when the presiding priest receives Communion. Once the priest has received Communion, Communion is then distributed to the deacon and extraordinary ministers. EMHC in the Diocese should receive Communion standing.

20. Once all the ordinary and extraordinary ministers have received Communion, the Presider, who may be assisted by the deacon(s), hands vessels with the Body or the Blood of the Lord to the deacon(s) and extraordinary ministers who will assist with the distribution of Holy Communion.

21. All ordinary and extraordinary ministers then move to their assigned places for the distribution of Holy Communion.

⁷ *“When Holy Communion is to be distributed under both species, careful planning should be undertaken so that enough bread and wine are made ready for the communication of the faithful at each Mass. As a general rule, Holy Communion is given from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and not from those reserved in the tabernacle.”* USA Norms§30

⁸ Deacons are the Ordinary ministers of the cup.

⁹ One proven method for doing this is to have a specific place where EMHC sign in each Sunday on a chart with the various stations indicated. Ministers not assigned may also check this chart five minutes before Mass begins to sign in to serve in those stations where someone has not yet signed in. Ministers who arrive late understand that they will not serve if others have signed in for their station. Special notices and other information can be posted near this sign-in sheet.

¹⁰ Going to the altar at this time enables ministers to move without drawing attention to themselves and assures that they will be in place for the breaking of the bread (Agnus Dei). Ministers remain in the main assembly for the Our Father.

22. Provision will be made to assure that musicians and choir members who wish may receive communion under both species. If possible, they come forward to receive—in procession and in unity with the rest of the assembly.

23. Posture and Gesture

a. Posture: The norm for posture for reception of Holy Communion in the dioceses of the United States is standing. In the Diocese of San Bernardino, kneeling to receive communion is not to be encouraged¹¹ EMHC are to model the norm when they receive Holy Communion.

b. Gesture of Reverence: The communicant bows his or her head while the person in front of them is receiving the Body of Christ and again before receiving the Blood of Christ. Where it is the custom of the people to make the Sign of the Cross, this custom is not abrogated and may be used instead of the bow. Genuflecting is not to be encouraged as it may disrupt the prayerful movement of the communion procession.

24. The Body of Christ

a. As the communicant approaches the ordinary or extraordinary minister to receive the Body of Christ, the minister picks up the host, holds it up in front of the communicant and says clearly the words “*The Body of Christ*”. After the communicant has responded “*Amen*”, the consecrated bread is placed in the hand or on the tongue according to the manner indicated by the communicant.

b. Communicants are not permitted to take their own consecrated bread and communicate themselves.

c. If a consecrated host falls to the ground during the distribution of Holy Communion, the communion minister quickly and discreetly picks it up and places it to the side of other hosts in the ciboria¹² to be consumed later or appropriately taken care of in some other manner, determined by the priest, after distribution is over.¹³

d. If any ministers become aware that there may not be enough consecrated hosts for remaining communicants, they may begin to gently break the hosts remaining in their ciboria for distribution.¹⁴ If a large number of communicants remain, consecrated bread reserved in the tabernacle for such a need can be removed by the Deacon of the Altar, Concelebrating Priest(s), or the Presiding Celebrant from the tabernacle and distributed to the remaining communicants. Only an Ordinary Minister of Holy Communion may retrieve the consecrated bread during Liturgy.

e. Communion Plates/Ciboria used at mass are not to be made of any glass or materials other than precious metal (alloy) or precious wood with a metal liner to prevent rust.

25. The Blood of Christ

a. The distribution of Communion under both kinds is the norm for Sundays in the Diocese of San Bernardino and is strongly recommended in all celebrations of the Eucharist; it is the communicant’s option to receive from the cup.

b. Normally, there are two cup ministers for every minister of the bread. The minister presents the cup to the communicant saying clearly the words “*The Blood of Christ*”. Generally, the communicant holds the cup firmly with both hands and drinks from it. However, in the case of physical disability or weakness, the minister will be ready to assist in holding the cup.

c. After the Blood of Christ has been received, the minister wipes the rim of the cup inside and out with a purificator¹⁵ and turns the cup slightly before presenting to the next communicant.

d. The cup is always ministered to the communicant; it may never be left for self-communication except in the case of concelebrating priests.

¹¹ “Communicants should not be denied Holy Communion because they kneel. Rather, such instances should be addressed pastorally, by providing the faithful with proper catechesis on the reasons for this norm.” GIRMS160

¹² Ciboria are the sacred vessels that hold the consecrated hosts for distribution.

¹³ It will be helpful to have clear parish guidelines about how this is to be handled.

¹⁴ Ideally, especially at Masses with large assemblies, there is a Master of Ceremonies or extraordinary minister who would have the sole responsibility to oversee the reverent and orderly distribution of Holy Communion.

¹⁵ A purificator is a linen napkin used to wipe the cup that holds the Blood of Christ.

e. Intinction¹⁶ is not customary in the United States of America and is discouraged.¹⁷ The practice of self-intinction is not permitted.

f. If the consecrated wine is spilled, the area should be covered immediately with a purificator.¹⁸ After Mass the consecrated wine is wiped up with the purificator and the area washed with a damp cloth. The purificator and cloth are then rinsed in water poured down the sacrarium¹⁹.

26. After Communion

a. The Bishop of the Diocese of San Bernardino has granted permission for the EMHC to consume what remains of the Precious Blood from their cup of distribution. This is not done at the place of distribution or while walking back to the sanctuary; instead, what remains in the cup is consumed immediately at the side table where the cups are placed once they are empty. The consecrated wine is never poured into the ground or a sacrarium. What remains of the Blood of Christ may be consumed at the altar by the Priests, or the Deacons who ministered the chalice. The same then purifies, and wipes, and arranges the sacred vessels in the usual way (GIRM #284b).

b. Provided the remaining consecrated bread has been consumed or reserved²⁰ and the remaining Precious Blood consumed, the chalice, cups, ciboria and other vessels that held the Precious Blood, and used purificators, are usually taken to a side table from where they are transferred at the end of the Communion Rite to the sacristy where they are purified²¹ by the priest or deacon and washed (see footnote 21) by the EMHC immediately after Mass following the dismissal of the people. Cleansing the vessels at the altar is inappropriate.

c. The purificators used are then taken care of by the Sacristan or Extraordinary Minister by soaking them in water. The water is then poured into the sacrarium, or in the absence of one, in another container reserved for this use only which is prayerfully emptied into a designated area in the garden soil at an appropriate time. After soaking the purificators, they may be washed by hand or in a washing machine, provided they are washed by themselves.

27. Children and Communion from the Cup

In the Diocese of San Bernardino, Communion under both kinds is normative at all Eucharistic celebrations and is offered to all who have received their first Communion.²²

28. In parishes where it is the custom of some parishioners to come forward, not to receive communion, but to receive a blessing, those coming forward are asked to cross their arms over their chest. During the Communion Rite, only priests and deacons impart blessings to those who join in the Eucharistic procession but do not receive Holy Communion. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion can extend their hand with the palm, up not in a gesture of blessing but of welcoming, and without touching the person simply say “God loves you” or “Dios te ama.” In the diocese of San Bernardino you are not to encourage or discourage people from coming up to receive this greeting. We allow and respect those who do present themselves. Bishop Barnes Letter October 2012.

V. The Distribution of Holy Communion to the Sick and Homebound

“When the Church cares for the sick, it serves Christ himself in the suffering members of his Mystical Body.” Decree on Pastoral Care of the Sick (PCS) 1972

“Because the sick are prevented from celebrating the Eucharist with the rest of the community, the most important visits are those during which they receive Holy Communion. In receiving the body and blood of Christ, the sick are

¹⁶ Intinction is “dipping” the consecrated host into the consecrated wine.

¹⁷ “Among the ways of ministering the Precious Blood as prescribed by the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, Communion from the chalice is generally the preferred form in the Latin Church...” USA Norms\$42

¹⁸ Extra purificators should always be available at the credence table.

¹⁹ A sacrarium is a basin, usually covered, and usually found in or near the sacristy of the Church, with a drain pipe having no joints or elbows, that leads directly into the earth. This sink allows for the reverent disposal of many liturgical elements and for the rinsing of the cups used for the consecrated bread and wine at Mass.

²⁰ The number of consecrated hosts to be reserved in the tabernacle is reflective of how much is needed for Communion to the Sick, Viaticum and for use at a Mass where an unexpected large number of communicants might necessitate going to the tabernacle for additional hosts.

²¹ Purification is accomplished by rinsing the vessels with water and pouring water into the sacrarium or container to be emptied into the garden soil. Cleansing is accomplished by washing the vessels with soap and water.

²² “Children are encouraged to receive Communion under both kinds provided that they are properly instructed and that they are old enough to receive from the chalice.” USA Norms: 47

united sacramentally to the Lord and are reunited with the Eucharistic community from which the illness has separated them.” PCS: §51

The Ministry

29. Ordinarily, commissioned EMHC may take Communion to the sick. There may also be certain persons who serve in ministry to the sick on a regular basis. All who serve in this ministry are expected to receive specialized training and formation in the theology and liturgy of *Pastoral Care of the Sick* as well as in the practical aspects of this ministry. Diocesan training is required with appropriate training materials approved by the bishop.²³

The Parish/Institution

30. These ministers will be offered periodic formation to remind them to see their role as sharing in the Church’s total ministry to the sick as Jesus did.

31. Pastors, parochial administrators, pastoral coordinators or priest-chaplains will also periodically catechize the assembly in its role of ministry to the sick and how their partnership with those who visit the sick is most fully realized.

32. Pastors, parochial administrators, pastoral coordinators or priest-chaplains will assure that those who will take Communion to the sick and homebound will be given proper instruction with regard to reverence in carrying the consecrated host and to performing the ritual prescribed for distribution of Communion to the Sick.²⁴ Additional guidelines and rubrics for the individual parish or institution are essential. Visitors to the sick must be aware and in compliance with parish and institution guidelines. The Office has a particular class and new guidelines specifically for Ministers to the Sick.

33. Normally, the parish or institution provides each minister with appropriate containers. A pyx or small ciboria with lid are used for carrying the consecrated host. When in unique and extraordinary circumstances the precious blood is to be distributed,²⁵ a suitable container for transporting it is necessary, such as a special and beautiful small bottle with a dropper. The Host should not be carried in a handkerchief, envelope or other unsuitable container.

34. It is recommended that hosts for the sick and homebound be consecrated in the Mass from which they will be taken and in which the EMHC have fully participated.

35. Ideally, ministers are sent forth by the parish or other community from the Sunday or daily celebration of Eucharist.²⁶ ***EMHC interested in this ministry may receive more information asking for the “Visitors to the Sick Guidelines” provided by the Office of Worship***

²³ Classes for ministers to the sick and homebound are offered annually by the Diocesan Office for Worship. This formation and training includes an overview of *Pastoral Care of the Sick*, a review of the rites to be used during a home visit when communion is distributed, required basic skills and techniques (i.e. communication, leading prayer, etc.), challenges, and special concerns.

²⁴ *“The links between the community’s Eucharistic celebration, especially on the Lord’s Day, and the communion of the sick are intimate and manifold. Besides remembering the sick in the general intercessions at Mass, those present should be reminded occasionally of the significance of communion in the lives of those who are ill: union with Christ in his struggle with evil, his prayer for the world, and his love for the Father, and union with the community from which they are separated.” PCS:73*

²⁵ Because of safety and other concerns, the precious blood is offered in very unique circumstances only, for example, when someone is so seriously ill that they cannot swallow the host (or even a part of a host), or for people who are gluten intolerant. Ministers will need to be carefully attentive to the unique needs of particular communicants through effective communication with caretakers, medical personnel and others who may have primary responsibility for the communicants particular health concerns.

²⁶ *“The obligation to visit and comfort those who cannot take part in the Eucharistic assembly may be clearly demonstrated by taking communion to them from the community’s Eucharistic celebration.” PCS:73* This is normally done just before the Prayer After Communion. This norm requires a predetermined procedure which assures that the EMHC to the Sick and homebound has brought a PYX to the church, with their name and number of hosts indicated on the outside bottom of the PYX. The EMHC will also need to communicate with a person (designated by the Pastor) who will see to it that the Pyx is filled with the requested number of hosts. This procedure will also indicate where the the Pyx is placed prior to Mass and who will place it there to be sure that it is filled with the designated numbers of consecrated hosts. Once all present have received Holy Communion, the ministers come forward, and are ritually blessed and sent forth from the community to serve the sick and homebound. One suggested formula (or similar words) for ritual sending is: *“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.”* Please note that the practices of presenting the Pyx to be filled at the time the minister receives “PERSONAL” communion, or bringing the Pyx to the sacristy and refilling it with unconsecrated hosts are strongly discouraged.