

Liturgy Handbook for

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Brothers and sisters:

*I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you,
that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over,
took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it
and said, “This is my body that is for you.*

Do this in remembrance of me.”

*In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying,
“This cup is the new covenant in my blood.*

*Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”
For as often as you eat this bread, and drink the cup,
you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.*

I Corinthians 11:23-26

INTRODUCTION

“The sacred liturgy is at the center, at the heart, of the life of the Church. It gives life to the Church. It builds up the Mystical Body of Christ. It manifests the nature of the Church. It empowers the Church to carry out her mission.” | Cardinal Francis Arinze

THE MOST IMPORTANT thing that we do as Catholics is celebrating the Holy Mass! It is through the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, that the Lord breathes life into the Church and fashions the Church and each Christian more fully into the image of Jesus Christ. By virtue of baptism in Christ, every Catholic is called to participate in the Mass in a **“full, conscious and active”** way, as demanded by the Second Vatican Council (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, #14). Does that mean that everyone should take on a ministry in the Mass? **No!** Pope John Paul II clarified this when he said: “Active participation certainly means that, in gesture, word, song and service, all the members of the community take part in an act of worship, which is anything but inert or passive. **Yet active participation does not preclude the active passivity of silence, stillness and listening: indeed, it demands it.**” (*Ad Limina* Address to Bishops of the United States, 1998). By attentively listening, singing, saying the responses, and entering into prayerful silence each of us does in fact fulfill the mandate of the Second Vatican Council. But some of the faithful are also **called upon to fulfill various liturgical roles** and so **assist the entire assembly** in entering more fully into the mysteries being celebrated. “The faithful, moreover, should not refuse to serve the People of God gladly whenever they are asked to perform some particular ministry or function in the celebration” (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, #97).

THE ROLE OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER

“For when the hour had come for him to be glorified by you, Father most holy, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end: and while they were at supper, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, take this, all of you, and eat of it: for this is my body which will be given up for you.” | Eucharistic Prayer IV

The Holy Eucharist is the greatest treasure of the Church since it truly is Christ Himself, the source of all blessings and joy. Jesus Christ is the center of our Christian faith, and the Eucharist is Jesus Christ made manifest – Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. There is nothing more sacred, nothing more important than the Holy Eucharist. One of the most sacred moments in the celebration of the Eucharist is the Rite of Communion, when each of the faithful receives Jesus Christ in all of His fullness under the appearance of bread and wine. Those entrusted with distributing the Holy Eucharist to the faithful take on a noble task, and a serious responsibility.

All Catholics, but especially Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, need to know that the Church teaches that Jesus Christ is present in every particle of the Sacred Host and every drop of the Precious Blood. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains: ***“The Eucharistic presence of Christ begins at the moment of the consecration and endures as long as the Eucharistic species subsist. Christ***

is present whole and entire in each of the species and whole and entire in each of their parts, in such a way that the breaking of the bread does not divide Christ” (#1377). Since Christ is truly present in every crumb of consecrated bread and every drop of the consecrated wine, even these tiny particles must be treated with the utmost reverence.

Following the Second Vatican Council, there was a lot of debate about what to call the lay faithful who help distribute Holy Communion. Several years ago the Vatican ended the debate by instructing that they are to be called “**Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.**” Properly speaking the clergy are the ordinary ministers of Communion – by virtue of their ordination, they are entrusted with the task of giving the Holy Eucharist (and really all the sacraments) to the faithful. The lay faithful sometimes can assist with this, but only when necessary (for example: when a priest is physically incapable of distributing Communion, or when it would take too long for the priest to distribute Communion alone because of the size of the assembly, and so on). Bishops, priests and deacons are the primary and ordinary ministers of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, because of the sacramental character that they have received through the Sacrament of Holy Orders (see *Code of Canon Law*, can. 910).

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC for short) assist in the distribution of the Holy Eucharist for Sunday Masses, Holy Days of Obligation and other special days (e.g. Holy Thursday). EMHC also assist at weekday Masses, and sometimes bring the Eucharist to the sick and homebound. These Guidelines are intended to ensure that proper reverence and respect is given to Our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament. Moreover, they will assist us so that our actions and words add to the moment when the person receives the Body and Blood of Christ. Since these actions and words occur during a very special part of the Mass, and at a sacred and personal time for the communicant, it is important that we as a group, and as individuals, conduct our ministry in a respectful and holy manner. We should strive to communicate reverence and dignity in the performance of our duties without being overly formal or stiff.

Though these Guidelines are in some detail, they cannot cover every possibility that may occur. It is helpful to keep two thoughts in mind when things don’t go according to plan:

- 1. Respect for the Eucharist: always move and act in a respectful way.**
- 2. Minister to others: remember that you are serving others and strive to make them comfortable at a very holy time for them.**

The *General Instruction of Roman the Missal* provides excellent guidance in the thought: “***The gestures and posture of the priest, the deacon, and the ministers...ought to contribute to making the entire celebration resplendent with beauty and noble simplicity...***” (#42).

QUALIFICATIONS

For a person to be commissioned as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion at St. Pius X, he or she must meet the following requirements:

1. Be a Baptized and Confirmed member of the Church.
2. Attend Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation.
3. Be a person of upstanding Christian character, striving to live the faith to the best of his or her ability.
4. Practice Catholic morality as taught by the Magisterium and explained in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.
5. If you are married, be in a lawful marriage in the eyes of the Church.
6. Be a registered member of the parish (or have permission from the pastor).

Speak to Fr. Gerard if you have questions about any of these.

SCHEDULING

Scheduling is done through our church management system called Pushpay. View and manage your ministry/serving schedule by downloading our **parish app “St. Pius X Catholic Parish”** or by clicking the **Manage My Serving** link in one of the emails from the coordinator. You can sign yourself up or communicate with the leader if you need help signing up.

PLEASE NOTE: It is essential that EMHC be present at the liturgies for which they are assigned, or make arrangements for a replacement. If you cannot serve at a time you are signed up for, please go into the system (via the app or *Manage My Serving* link in an email) and **Decline** it and **Find A Replacement** in the system. If you have scheduling issues, please contact Dawn Grabs, our Schedule Coordinator, (913) 259-4801, dgrabs@spxmission.org.

Those who consistently fail to fulfill their assigned duties may be removed from the schedule.

PREPARATION

Preparation begins before we leave home as we should dress appropriately for the ministry. We need to remember respect for the Eucharist, and that we minister at a holy and special time to the congregation.

WHEN ARRIVING AT CHURCH

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are expected to arrive at the church **at least 15 minutes before Mass begins**. Once you arrive, please **sign in on the schedule outside the sacristy**, pray the **Before Mass Prayer**, and **take a cross to wear**.

If you are a commissioned EMHC and would like to fill in, please check the printed schedule outside the Sacristy, If they are in need of additional EMHC, and please sign your name in the blank and take a cross to wear.

BEFORE MASS PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I thank You
for allowing me to serve You at this Holy Mass.
Help me to be mindful and attentive of my duties,
never seeking to draw attention to myself,
and only desiring to bring greater glory to You.
Help me to serve You well,
as if this was my first time,
my last time, my only time. Amen.

PROCEDURE FOR COMMUNION

“In the action of the Eucharist this bread and this wine become our spiritual food and drink. It is Christ, the true vine, who gives life to the branches. As bread from heaven, bread of angels, the chalice of salvation, the medicine of immortality, the Eucharist is the promise of eternal life to all who eat and drink it.” | Norms for the Distribution & Reception of Holy Communion under both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America, 4.

EMHC are to come forward after the **Sign of Peace**. EMHC bow towards the altar as they arrive at the bottom of the steps, and come up to apply hand sanitizer and stand beside the Altar Servers. After all the EMHC have received Communion, the priest will give each of the EMHC a ciborium or a chalice. (The chalice bearers should offer the Precious Blood to the other EMHC.) Wait until the priest moves into position before going to your stations.

There are four stations to offer the Sacred Hosts. The priest will always take the center aisle on the Presider's Chair side. There are also four stations to offer the Precious Blood at the Sunday morning 8:30AM and 11AM Masses; but only two stations at Saturday 4:30PM Vigil.

Keep in mind the **infinite treasure** that you carry with you in the Most Holy Eucharist. Your movements, gestures and words should convey the deepest sense of reverence. Avoid holding the host in your hand when walking or gesturing. Only hold the host when giving it to a communicant.

When giving the Precious Body: Hold the Host at eye-level with the communicant and say: **“The Body of Christ.”** Most people receive in the hand; however a few people receive on the tongue. This is not a problem as the host will easily adhere to the tongue. (You will learn a very simple and effective way to give Communion on the tongue in the training session)

When giving the Precious Blood: Hold the chalice at eye-level with the communicant and say: **“The Blood of Christ.”** Gently hand the communicant the chalice, being sure not to let go until you are sure they have a firm grip on it. After they return the chalice to you, **wipe the rim** where the communicant's mouth touched the chalice and **turn the chalice** approximately one quarter of a turn before offering the

Precious Blood to the next communicant. (You will learn a very simple and effective way to wipe the rim in the training session)

After you have distributed Holy Communion at your station you may assist another EMHC if there are more than eight people in line. Unless the line is extraordinarily long, EMHC need not assist the priest; some people simply prefer to receive Communion directly from the priest.

When you have finished distributing Communion, return to the sanctuary and place the ciborium or chalice on the **credence table (not the altar)** where the priest will purify the vessels. Then, purify your fingers that touched the Sacred Host by wiping them using the designated **purificator** next to the **ablution cup**. If necessary, you may dip those fingers first in the **ablution cup**, before wiping. When leaving the sanctuary, at the bottom of the steps, please make sure to bow in reverence towards the altar.

WHAT IF...

...there are additional clergy at Mass who could help with Communion?

If you ever attend a Mass in which you were assigned to be an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion and there are additional clergy (bishops, priests or deacons) present, be sure to allow them to distribute Holy Communion. **For every additional clergyman present at Mass, one less EMHC should come forward to assist with Communion**, unless stated otherwise. (Currently, Deacon Steve Bauer does not distribute Holy Communion to the assembly.)

...you're not sure if the person should receive Communion?

We should offer the Eucharist to each person who approaches and wishes to receive, and not refuse anyone unless they seem completely unfamiliar with receiving. In such case, discreetly ask if they are a Catholic. If they reply "No," explain that **"In the Catholic Church, only Catholics receive the Eucharist, but we are glad you are here. May Jesus bless you."** Sometimes you may wonder about offering the Eucharist to a small child. Usually, an adult is with a child and will move them along if they are too young to receive Communion. Regardless of the child's size, we should offer the Eucharist if they approach, wish to receive and seem familiar with receiving.

...a person wants a blessing?

If someone comes up and has his or her hands crossed at the chest, you may say **"Receive the Lord Jesus in your heart"** or **"Jesus bless you."**

...you run out of hosts?

If you run out of hosts and still have people in your line, you may get additional hosts from the priest or another EMHC, being careful to transfer the hosts between the vessels in a respectful manner. When you realize there are not enough hosts, it is acceptable to break the hosts (usually into halves) and give each communicant a piece.

...a Host falls on the floor?

Since Christ is truly present in every crumb of consecrated bread and every drop of the consecrated wine, even these tiny particles must be treated with the utmost reverence. If a host or part of the host drops to the floor, **immediately pick it up** and put it in the hand you are using to hold the ciborium. **DO NOT put it back into the ciborium or offer it to another communicant.** After you finish distributing, you should consume the host yourself or offer it to the priest when returning your ciborium at the altar.

...some of the Precious Blood spills on the floor?

Remain calm, and act in a reverent and clear-headed way.

If the spill is small, guard the spill with your body by standing in a way that prevents people from stepping on it. Continue to distribute the Precious Blood being aware of the spill on the floor and continuing to guard it. Once Communion is finished, lay your **purificator** over the spot of the spill and return to the altar as normal, informing the priest. As the other EMHC return to their seats, you should locate a towel from the credence table or Sacristy. At the end of Mass, as the priest and servers are processing out of the church, go to the place of the spill. Using the wet towel from the Sacristy, wipe down the place of the spill and dry the place so that no one will slip on the wet surface. Carefully bring the wet towel into the sacristy and place it in the **small tub for soiled linens** located in the **Working Sacristy**.

If the spill is large, immediately lay your **purificator** over the spot, take the chalice to the **credence table**. Grab a towel/cloth from the credence table and a clean purificator to the place of the spill. Use the towels to soak up the Precious Blood. When it's all been removed from the floor, lay the clean **purificator** over the spot, return to the Working Sacristy and carefully place the used wet towel in the **small tub for soiled linens** located in the **Working Sacristy**. Return to your seat at Mass. At the end of Mass, as the priest and servers are processing out of the church, go to the place of the spill. Using the wet towel, wipe down the place of the spill and dry the place so that no one will slip on the wet surface. Carefully bring the used linens from the floor into the sacristy and place them in the small tub for soiled linens located in the Working Sacristy.

(If you are a commissioned EMHC in the assembly and notice the large spill, please come and assist).

...you are distributing from the chalice and someone wants to dip the Host in it?

Dipping the Host into the Precious Blood is referred to as "intinction" by the Church. Communicants are never permitted to do this. Only bishops and priests are allowed to do this. Only bishops and priests may give Communion to the faithful by intinction.

BRINGING HOLY COMMUNION TO THE SICK AND HOMEBOUND

Some EMHC perform the noble service of bringing the Holy Eucharist to people who are not able to come to Mass. They bring the greatest treasure of the Church, the Eucharistic Christ, and help those souls maintain a connection to the life of the parish.

Due to some confusion, the practice has developed in which those who are taking Holy Communion to the sick present a pyx for receiving a Host when they themselves go to Communion. The proper procedure is for the EMHC to receive the pyx containing the Eucharistic Host apart from their own reception of Communion.

After the final prayer of Mass (the Prayer After Communion), the Priest will invite those who will bring communion to the sick and homebound to come forward to the sanctuary steps. He will provide the sacred hosts needed.

Those bearing the Holy Eucharist must be aware of the infinite treasure they carry. **They are to show the utmost reverence for Christ truly present in the Sacred Host.** They should never carry the Eucharist with them on any unnecessary errands (such as a stop at the grocery store).

When giving Holy Communion to the faithful outside of Mass, it is important to maintain the sacredness of the Eucharist and the action of receiving Holy Communion. To assist with this, it is strongly recommended that EMHC use the **Rite for Distributing Holy Communion Outside of Mass** provided with this handbook.

CONCLUSION

It is an honor and a privilege to be able to give the Holy Eucharist to Christ's faithful, as well as a great responsibility to be entrusted with the Church's greatest treasure: Christ Himself. Those who engage in this ministry have a duty to strive to grow in their own love and devotion to the Holy Eucharist so that they can be more faithful witnesses of the love of Christ truly present in our midst. **It is highly recommended that EMHC commit to at least one Holy Hour of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament each week to grow in their devotion to the Eucharist.**

EMHC offer a wonderful service to the parish, and their service is greatly appreciated. Those who approach this service of the Lord with humility and faith will doubtless reap many blessings from Christ, and further their own growth as Christian disciples.

GLOSSARY

Ablution Cup: a small, covered dish of water used to wash the fingers of a priest, deacon, or extraordinary minister of the Eucharist after distributing Communion.

Altar Cloth: large white cloth that covers the top of the altar.

Ambo: place where the readings are proclaimed.

Chalice: special cup used by the priest at Mass for the consecrated wine.

Ciborium: container used to store the consecrated hosts.

Corporal: white cloth placed on the altar for Mass.

Credence Table: table where vessels used during Mass are placed.

Easter Candle (also called **Paschal Candle**): very large candle used during the Easter season, and during the celebrations of Baptisms and Funerals.

Pall: stiff square card used to cover the chalice.

Purificator: white cloth used to wipe the rim of the chalice.

Roman Missal (or just called Missal): book containing all the prayers for Mass.

(Working) Sacristy: room where objects and vestments for Mass are stored,

Vestry (also called **Vesting Sacristy**): room where the priests, deacons, and servers vest for Mass.

Sanctuary: area at the top of the steps where the altar is located.

Tabernacle: place the reserved Eucharist is kept.