

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION



Guidelines of the Diocese of Fargo

Revised 2015

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LITURGICAL LAW FOR EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

The proper function of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) is defined in the following documents:

Universal Church Law: *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM)

USCCB Norms: *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under both kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America.* (USCCB Norms)

Fargo Diocesan Policy: *Particular Norms for Holy Communion* – January 2007

Pastors who oversee the training of EMHC are to be familiar with the provisions of all of these documents. The first two can be found on the internet at the following link: <http://www.usccb.org/liturgy>. This will assist them in providing EMHC with the “sufficient spiritual, theological, and practical preparation to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence.” (USCCB Norms, 28).

When examining the documents to provide preparation for EMHC, please note that while universal law may not legislate certain practices, the USCCB and Diocese of Fargo may define a policy.

DECREE

In Nomine Domini. Amen.

PARTICULAR NORMS FOR HOLY COMMUNION – DIOCESE OF FARGO

At the direction of Pope Benedict XVI, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) will no longer be permitted to assist with the purification of the sacred vessels used at Mass, either during or after its celebration. The three year indult which had allowed for this was not renewed. The sacred vessels are to be purified by “the priest, deacon, or an instituted acolyte after Communion or after Mass” (*General Instruction to the Roman Missal (GIRM)*, 279).

I am promulgating a revision of the Particular Norms for Holy Communion to include this change and to clarify other questions that have arisen since the October 18, 2005 revision. A new guidelines booklet is also being issued and should be used for the training of your current and future EMHC.

Holy Communion under Both Kinds:

- “Holy Communion has a fuller form as a sign when it is received under both kinds” (*GIRM*, 281). As the Diocesan Bishop, in accord with the *GIRM*, I give permission “to permit Communion under both kinds whenever it may seem appropriate to the priest to whom, as its own shepherd, a community has been entrusted, provided that the faithful have been well instructed and there is no danger of profanation of the Sacrament or of the rite’s becoming difficult because of the large number of participants or some other reason” (*GIRM*, 283).
- When Holy Communion is distributed under both species, there should be two (2) stations for the Precious Blood for every single station of the Body of Christ (*USCCB norms*, 30).
- The celebrant is assisted in the distribution of Holy Communion by other ordinary minister (bishops, priests, and deacons) who are present. When additional ministers are needed, “the priest may call upon extraordinary ministers to assist him” (*GIRM*, 162).
- Pastors and chaplains must request permission from the Bishop for each person that they desire to serve as EMHC in the parish or institution under their care. A diocesan form is available for new requests.

- In cases of necessity, the priest may appoint qualified individuals as EMHC for single occasions. They are to be commissioned according to the rite provided in Appendix V of the *Sacramentary* (1985).
- EMHC may also be designated for ministry to the sick and shut-ins to allow for a more frequent reception of the Eucharist than would otherwise be possible.

Nomination, Appointment, Training, and Commissioning of EMHC:

- EMHC are to be 18 years of age, fully initiated into the Church, practicing Catholics in good standing with the Church, nominated by their pastor or chaplain, appointed by the Bishop of Fargo, properly trained, and liturgically commissioned.
- The Bishop of Fargo appoints EMHC to primarily serve only in their parish/cluster/institution. Within the Diocese of Fargo, however, they may also serve when other extraordinary needs arise and the priest celebrant requests their assistance. This privilege does not apply to EMHC who have been appointed by a bishop in another diocese.
- Appointments to serve as EMHC are valid for up to three years before they must be renewed. Renewals are processed each October. A diocesan form is provided to each pastor or chaplain indicating the EMHC that require renewal. If appointment is not renewed, they may no longer serve as EMHC.
- An individual who has been appointed, properly trained, and commissioned may serve both during Mass and outside of Mass (i.e. to the homebound, hospital, etc.).
- The local pastor or chaplain is responsible for ensuring the proper training of EMHC.
- The proper commissioning ritual is found in the *Book of Blessings*, chapter 63.

EMHC during Mass:

- EMHC who assist during Mass are expected to be familiar with the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (especially GIRM, 160-165, 283-284); *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America* (USCCB Norms); and the diocesan liturgical policies outlined in this decree.

- EMHC “should not approach the altar before the priest has received Communion” (*GIRM*, 162) but rather “approach the altar as the priest receives Communion” (*USCCB Norms*, 38). EMHC within the Diocese of Fargo may enter and prepare within the sacristy, if there is a side entrance. However, they are not to enter the sanctuary until the priest has received Communion.
- EMHC “are always to receive from the hands of the priest celebrant [or assisting deacon] the vessel containing either species of the Most Holy Eucharist for distribution to the faithful” (*GIRM*, 162).
- EMHC are not to bring ciboria from the tabernacle or to return ciboria to the tabernacle after the distribution of Communion. This is proper to the priest or deacon.
- EMHC – or any other communicants – may consume what remains of the Precious Blood (*USCCB Norms*, 52).
- The three year indult which had allowed EMHC to assist with the purification of the sacred vessels at the Mass was not renewed. The sacred vessels are to be purified by “the priest, deacon, or an instituted acolyte after Communion or after Mass” (*GIRM*, 279).

EMHC to the sick and homebound:

- EMHC who bring communion to the sick and shut-ins are to be familiar with *Holy Communion and the Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass*, particularly the introduction to Chapter I and the entire contents of Chapter II.
- Their training should include the reverent carrying of the Eucharist and the necessity of going directly to their destination. At no time are they allowed to keep possession of the Eucharist in their home or vehicle. If the empty pyx is not immediately returned to the tabernacle, proper purification of the pyx should also be addressed.

These Norms are to be reproduced and retained in all copies of the Policy Manual of the Diocese of Fargo. They supersede and abrogate any previous diocesan policies regarding EMHC and the distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds. This decree is effective immediately.

All priests and deacons, as ordinary ministers of Holy Communion, are to know the norms stated in the revised *General Instructions of the Roman Missal*, the USCCB documents, and the particular law for the Diocese of Fargo, and to follow them in all liturgical celebrations throughout the Diocese of Fargo.

Let us pray that the implementation of these norms will increase the love and reverence that all the baptized faithful, ordained and lay, have for the Most Holy Eucharist.

Given at the Chancery on January 8, the Baptism of Our Lord, in the Year of Our Lord, 2007.



† Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila
Bishop of Fargo



Very Rev. Brian L. Moen
Chancellor

SUMMARY PRINCIPLES FOR TRAINING EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

The USCCB's document "Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America" is a valuable resource for training extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. While the entire document should be understood and referenced, the following points are summarized for use as a training handout.

General Principles

- The ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are bishops, priests and deacons (*USCCB norms, 26*).
- When conditions require them, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may assist with the distribution of Holy Communion (*GIRM, 162, USCCB norms, 28*).
- Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are to be properly prepared (*USCCB norms, 28*).
- The number of EMHC should not be increased beyond what is required for orderly and reverent distribution (*USCCB norms, 28*).
- In the event of any mishap, hosts or particles are to be picked up reverently. Any spills of Precious Blood should be washed and the water from this washing poured into the sacrarium (*GIRM, 280*).
- Precious Blood is never poured into the ground or the sacrarium (*USCCB norms, 55*).
- When disposing of consecrated hosts, old hosts are "properly consumed." (*Code of Canon Law, 939*) Burying hosts or consecrated Eucharistic bread is forbidden.

The Extraordinary Minister within the Liturgy of the Eucharist

- EMHC approach the altar as the priest receives communion (*USCCB norms, 38*).
- EMHC receive Holy Communion from the priest or deacon, then they receive the vessels for distribution from the priest or deacon (*USCCB norms, 38*).
- The manner for receiving Holy Communion is as described in the *GIRM*. Deacons and EMHC do not receive as a concelebrating priest. Neither do EMHC wait until after to distribution of Holy Communion to receive themselves (*USCCB norms, 39*).
- When distributing Holy Communion, the only proper and permissible formula is to say "The Body of Christ" or "The Blood of Christ" (*GIRM 284-287; USCCB norms, 41,43*).
- When Precious Blood remains, it may be consumed by EMHC (*USCCB norms, 52, Bishop Aquila's Particular Norms for Holy Communion*).

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS CONCERNING
DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION UNDER BOTH KINDS AND
EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

The following questions and answers are a compilation of material from the Bishop's Committee on Liturgy Newsletter (Oct. 2002 and Oct. 2006) and material provided by the liturgy office of the Diocese of Fargo. BCL questions and answers are indicated by the reference (BCL).

May the EMHC bring hosts to/from the tabernacle during Mass?

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)* explains the proper sequence for the distribution of the Body & Blood of Christ in paragraphs 162 and 163 as follows:

162. The priest may be assisted in the distribution of Communion by other priests who happen to be present. If such priests are not present and there is a very large number of communicants, the priest may call upon extraordinary ministers to assist him... These ministers should not approach the altar before the priest has received Communion, and they are always to receive from the hands of the priest celebrant the vessel containing either species of the Most Holy Eucharist for distribution to the faithful.

163. When the distribution of Communion is finished, the priest himself immediately and completely consumes at the altar any consecrated wine that happens to remain; as for any consecrated hosts that are left, he either consumes them at the altar or carries them to the place designated for the reservation of the Eucharist.”

These paragraphs make it clear that the EMHC should not be bringing the hosts from the tabernacle, as their reception of the vessel from the priest is specified. The priest (or the deacon) is also responsible for returning the hosts to the tabernacle. As all of the tabernacles within the Diocese of Fargo are located within the sanctuary area, there is no circumstance under which it is necessary for an EMHC to undertake this task.

The use of an EMHC or sacristan to check the status of consecrated hosts before Mass in order to prepare for Mass is a separate issue. This is a practical matter, not a question of clear liturgical symbolism and distinction between the role of the priest as a Minister of the Eucharist and the role of an EMHC. An EMHC must first receive the Eucharist from the hands of a Minister of the Eucharist before distributing Holy Communion to others.

How about consuming the remaining Precious Blood? The paragraph just cited seems to indicate that the priest alone would consume this.

The USCCB document *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America (USCCB Norms)* notes in paragraph 52 that EMHC “may consume what remains of the Precious Blood from their chalice of distribution with permission of the diocesan bishop.” Bishop Aquila has given this permission.

EMHC “should not approach the altar before the priest has received Communion” (GIRM, 162) but rather to “approach the altar as the priest receives Communion” (USCCB Norms, 38). How is this to be interpreted and implemented? Can EMHC enter into the sanctuary before the priest receives Communion, or is that “approaching the altar”?

For all practical purposes, entering into the sanctuary is “approaching the altar.” The training for EMHC within the Diocese of Fargo may allow them to enter and prepare within the sacristy, if there is a side entrance. However, no EMHC should enter the sanctuary until the priest has received Communion. They may approach the altar as the priest is receiving the Precious Blood.

What happened to the term “Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist”?

The USCCB norms use the term extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. This has been the term used in all official documents in order to distinguish the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion: bishops, priest, and deacons, from the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion who are commissioned to distribute Holy Communion for a set period of time.

Are extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion really necessary at Mass? (BCL)

While extraordinary ministers may never distribute Holy Communion in the place of priests and deacons, their ministry is often needed to facilitate the distribution of Holy Communion “when the size of the congregation or the incapacity of the bishop, priest, or deacon requires it.” (*USCCB Norms,28*) All should be grateful for the exemplary ministry provided by so many extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion throughout the dioceses of the United States of America.

Who appoints extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion and who regulates their ministry? (BCL)

While individual priests may depute persons of good Christian reputation to serve as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion on an ad hoc basis (*GIRM, 162*), it is the diocesan Bishop who is responsible for this ministry. The Bishop may issue norms pertaining to the selection, preparation and fulfillment of this liturgical role (*USCCB Norms, 28*).

Are there separate permissions for EMHC for service within Mass and service outside of Mass (i.e. to the homebound)?

No. The appointment from the Bishop to serve as an EMHC includes the ability to serve either within Mass, when need arises, or outside of Mass. The nomination and renewal forms will be updated to reflect this change in practice.

Does the stipulation that EMHC be approved by the Bishop and liturgically commissioned preclude use of some other person in the case of necessity?

No. In such a case of necessity one must use the rite of commissioning for a single occasion found in Appendix V of the Roman Missal (*GIRM, 162*).

What about EMHC who were commissioned from parishes that have now been consolidated? Do they need to have their appointments renewed?

Yes. Since the original appointment was made for service in a parish which no longer exists, the current pastor (who may be the same original pastor) should re-submit the names for appointment as EMHC.

What about EMHC washing their hands before distribution of Holy Communion?

This was specified in Bishop Sullivan's pastoral letter, *I Am Your Servant*, whose contents regarding EMHC have been abrogated by Bishop Aquila's subsequent decrees. While it is assumed that EMHC will wash their hands before a Mass in which they serve, adding hand washing within the liturgy is an addition to the ritual. By way of analogy, there is no provision for a deacon serving Mass to wash his hands. All liturgical additions are practices to be shunned (*GIRM, 24*).

May EMHC participate in the fraction rite?

The *GIRM* is clear that EMHC approach the altar after the priest's communion, so this is clearly excluded (*GIRM*, 162). EMHC receive the vessels from the priest or deacon for distribution after they have received Holy Communion.

Because we have no deacon or concelebrating priests present, we must use eight extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. How can they receive Holy Communion in a reasonable amount of time? (BCL)

The extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion approach the altar as the priest receives Communion (*USCCB Norms*, 38). When a large number of ministers are needed, the priest may go to the first two ministers and give them the consecrated bread. He may then give them the Precious Blood, after which they may assist him in communicating the rest of the extraordinary ministers. After all the extraordinary ministers have received Communion, the priest celebrant returns to the altar. The ministers without vessels may then approach the priest and he hands each their proper vessel. (*USCCB Norms*,40) When a deacon is present, he may assist the priest in the actions assigned to him at this time.

How is the consecrated bread distributed to the faithful? (BCL)

“Holy Communion under the form of bread is offered to the communicant with the words *The Body of Christ*. The communicant may choose whether to receive the Body of Christ in the hand or on the tongue. When receiving in the hand, the communicant should be guided by the words of St. Cyril of Jerusalem: “When you approach, take care not to do so with your hand stretched out and your fingers open or apart, but rather place your left hand as a throne beneath your right, as befits one who is about to receive the King. Then receive him, taking care that nothing is lost.” (*USCCB Norms*,41)

How is the Precious Blood distributed to the faithful? (BCL)

“The chalice is offered to the communicant with the words *The Blood of Christ*, to which the communicant responds, *Amen*.” (*USCCB Norms*,43) 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. (*USCCB Norms*,45)

What does a minister do if the Blessed Sacrament is dropped or spilled during the distribution of Holy Communion?

“If a host or any particle should fall, it is to be picked up reverently. If any of the Precious Blood is spilled, the area where the spill occurred should be washed with water, and this water should then be poured into the sacrarium in the sacristy.” (*GIRM*, 280)

When Holy Communion is distributed under both kinds, what happens to what remains of the Precious Blood?

“When more of the Precious Blood remains than was necessary for Communion, and if not consumed by the bishop or priest celebrant, the deacon immediately and reverently consumes at the altar all of the Blood of Christ which remains; he may be assisted, if needs dictate, by other deacons and priests. When there are extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, they may consume what remains of the Precious Blood from their chalice of distribution with permission of the diocesan bishop.” (*USCCB, Norms*, no. 52)

Who then purifies the sacred vessels?

As ordinary ministers of Holy Communion, the Priest and the Deacon purify the sacred vessels. The instituted acolyte, by reason of his office, “helps the priest or deacon to purify and arrange the sacred vessels.” (*GIRM*, no. 192)

May an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion assist in the purification of sacred vessels? (BCL)

No. “In accord with the Holy Father’s recent decision, as reported in Cardinal Arinze’s letter of October 12, 2006 (*Prot. no. 468/05/L*), an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion may not assist in the purification of sacred vessels. This extraordinary ministry was created exclusively for those instances where there are not enough ordinary ministers to distribute Holy Communion, due to the consummate importance of assuring that the faithful have the opportunity to receive Holy Communion at Mass, even when it is distributed under both species.” (*cf. Redemptionis Sacramentum*, no. 102)

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

Absences: If you are sick or, for some reason cannot serve as an EMHC, be sure to call someone else as a replacement, or at the very least let the Presider know that you will be absent.

Dress: Dress must be modest and respectful to service in the Liturgy. Tennis shoes, jeans, shorts, short dresses or skirts, high slits or low necklines are not appropriate. Strong perfumes and colognes should be avoided.

Prayer: Your spiritual preparation and attention at the Liturgy is essential to allow the Holy Spirit to guide you in this service. It is important to foster personal Eucharistic devotion as well.

Bowing: It is important to bow reverently and properly before entering the sanctuary. This is a great example of reverence to others, especially children. It speaks loudly of respect and reverence for the Blessed Sacrament as well.

Hands: Keep your hands folded while coming and going to the altar. This is a great sign of reverence and liturgical discipline.

Movement: To move carefully, not too fast and too slow, is a great gift to the liturgy. When the last three items are done properly, you are doing your job and are hardly noticed. Therefore, the attention will be properly focused on preparing for and receiving the Body and Blood of Christ.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Priests may obtain a list of currently appointed EMHC for renewal purposes or request an appointment form by contacting:

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
Office of Liturgy
5201 Bishops Blvd. Suite A
Fargo, ND 58104-7605

