

» Appendix I «

Frequently Asked Questions

A Handout for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Why are laypersons called "Extraordinary Ministers" of Holy Communion? The word, extraordinary, does not refer to a person's talents or gifts, but rather refers to the fact that the "extraordinary minister" is not the usual minister of Holy Communion. The "ordinary minister" or usual minister of Holy Communion is the priest (and deacon), and the "extraordinary minister" is a layperson.

What if a priest is concelebrating or a deacon is assisting at Mass, who has priority to distribute Holy Communion? Ordained ministers are the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion, even if other laypersons are scheduled to distribute. There may be occasions when an unexpected priest is concelebrating at Mass, and therefore, an assigned extraordinary minister will need to relinquish his/her role at that particular liturgy.

Are Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion allowed to assist the priest at the altar during the breaking of the bread? No. The breaking of the bread is reserved to the priest, assisted by the deacon. The breaking of the bread takes place during the singing of the Lamb of God and should be a clear sign to the faithful of the one bread broken for the world. However, when there is great need and there are a number of Eucharistic vessels, a layperson may assist the priest by handing him the vessels and arranging them on the altar.

Are extraordinary ministers permitted in the sanctuary area? Yes. EMsHC may enter the sanctuary to receive Holy Communion and their vessels. Care should be taken so that such movement does not interrupt the gesture of "the breaking of the bread". Once in the sanctuary, they should stand some distance away from the altar so they do not have the appearance of being concelebrants. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are not to be given Communion until after the priest, concelebrants (if any), and the deacon have received.

Is it appropriate for an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion to receive Communion under the form of bread only? If Holy Communion is being distributed under both kinds, it is most appropriate for the EMHC to receive Holy Communion under both kinds, unless he/she is unable to do so because of health or some other good reason.

Is it permissible to use a person's name when distributing Holy Communion? The words that are to be used when distributing the host are, "The Body of Christ," and the words to be used when distributing the Precious Blood are, "The Blood of Christ." No other words are to be added.

What is intinction and is it permitted? Intinction is a method of distributing Holy Communion under both forms. The minister takes a host and dips it into the Precious Blood and then gives the host to the communicant who receives it on the tongue. It is never permitted for a communicant to self-communicate by taking the host and dipping it into the Precious Blood. A minister must always give Communion under either form. While intinction by a minister is permitted, it is not the preferred form of distribution of Holy Communion in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

What if a person kneels to receive Holy Communion? The General Instruction of the Roman Missal states that the posture for reception of Holy Communion in the United States is standing. However, if a communicant comes forward and kneels, the minister should give Communion to that person.

Is it appropriate for the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion to consume any remaining Precious Blood? Yes. The Precious Blood must be consumed. It is preferable to consume any remaining Precious Blood immediately following Communion. However, if a significant amount remains, the Precious Blood may be placed on the credence table with a purificator placed over it. Then immediately following Mass, ministers over the age of 21 should assist in consuming the remaining Precious Blood.

Can the Precious Blood be reserved in the tabernacle? The Precious Blood may not be reserved in the tabernacle unless it is being reserved for a sick person who is unable to receive the Host. If this is the case, however, the Precious Blood should be placed in a well-sealed container in order to avoid the possibility of spilling. If there is any Precious Blood remaining after the sick person has received, the minister should consume the rest of it. The container should be properly purified.

Can an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion assist the priest by placing the remaining hosts in the tabernacle? Yes. If the tabernacle is some distance from the altar (e.g. in a Blessed Sacrament Chapel), then an EMHC may take the ciborium of hosts and place them in the tabernacle.

What should an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion do when a non-communicant comes forward to "receive a blessing?" There is no rubric or directive that foresees non-communicants coming forward in the Communion procession. However, in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati out of pastoral sensitivity, an EMHC may silently trace the sign of the cross on the forehead of persons who come forward, but are unable to receive Holy Communion. The EMHC, however, does not say any words while tracing the sign of the cross on the forehead.

What if someone comes forward with a pyx and asks for additional hosts? In the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, those who take Holy Communion to the sick and homebound are to be called forward after the Prayer After Communion. The minister receives the pyx with the appropriate number of Hosts at that time and are sent forth by the community. Therefore, hosts should not be placed in a pyx in the Communion procession.

Is it appropriate for an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion to deny Holy Communion? Never. It is not the place of an EMHC to determine the worthiness of a communicant.



ADDENDUM

Important items to note from *This Holy and Living Sacrifice:* *A Formation Resource for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion*

- 1) As the local ordinary, I am giving general delegation for pastors to permit the use of low-gluten hosts for persons with gluten intolerance. Medical certification is not required. (Cf. pp. 5 & 6)
- 2) For Communion to the sick, all parishes should distribute hosts into pyxes at the altar during the Fraction Rite of Mass. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMsHC) should be called forward by the deacon/priest after the Post-Communion prayer to receive their pyx. In other words, hosts should not be placed in a pyx in the Communion procession. Many parishes have already implemented this practice and have found it to be worthwhile. EMsHC visiting the sick may also go to the tabernacle to obtain hosts outside of Mass with the pastor's permission. (Cf. pp. 6 & 7)
- 3) Letters requesting authorization to commission EMsHC are to be sent to the director of the Office for Divine Worship and Sacraments (ODWS), Karen Kane, and she, in turn, will send a letter of authorization. There is a sample letter for requesting authorization on the ODWS webpage for EMsHC. Go to: <http://www.catholiccincinnati.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/EMHC-Sample-letter-for-authorization.docx> In addition, parishes/institutions should send an updated list of EMsHC on an annual basis. (Cf. p. 8)
- 4) EMsHC should be commissioned every year. This annual (re)commissioning should normally take place at the Sunday Masses on the Feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi). Commissioning may take place at other times of the year for new EMsHC. The Order for the Commissioning of EMsHC is found in the *Book of Blessings* and is available as a Word document on the ODWS webpage for EMsHC. Go to: [http://www.catholiccincinnati.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Order Commissioning EMsHC.pdf](http://www.catholiccincinnati.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Order_Commissioning_EMsHC.pdf) (Cf. p. 8)
- 5) The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM, 85), as well as the *Norms for Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States* (NDRHC, 30), state that the faithful should receive hosts consecrated at the Mass at which they are participating. As far as it is possible, I ask priests/deacons to refrain from going to the tabernacle during the Fraction Rite. If additional hosts are needed, then a minister may go to the tabernacle. This will require sacristans or other Mass coordinators to keep track of the number of people gathered so that the appropriate number of hosts are consecrated for Mass. (See also, "My Sacrifice and Yours," Appendix III.6, pp. 27 – 30.)
- 6) The GIRM (283) and NDRHC (24) state that the local ordinary may create norms for the distribution of Holy Communion under both Kinds. In the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, the norm is as follows: "To the best of their ability, each parish should offer both species at

all Sunday celebrations of the Eucharist, and if possible, at other celebrations of the Eucharist when it can be done with reverence and dignity." This is particularly true for sacramental celebrations, especially First Communion, Confirmation, Marriage, and Funeral Masses. Normally, the Precious Blood is to be distributed from ancillary chalices (cups). (Cf. p. 5)

- 7) For those EMsHC who participate in the archdiocesan formation program, they will be commissioned to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion at all parishes and at other institutions in the Archdiocese when called upon by the pastor or principle celebrant of the Mass. Details of the formation process will be outlined by the ODWS and communicated on the ODWS webpage and in Clergy Communications. (Cf., p. 9)

Additional liturgical norms for the distribution and reception of Holy Communion:

- 1) In the dioceses of the United States, the appropriate posture for the lay faithful as they receive Holy Communion is standing. In addition, they are to make a slight bow of the head as a sign of reverence as they receive the Body and Blood of our Lord. If a person wishes to kneel, he/she may choose to do so of his/her own accord and Communion is to be given. However, for the sake of unity in parishes of the Archdiocese and across the country, pastors or individual priests should make the faithful aware of the directive to stand as they receive Holy Communion. In addition, no kneelers should be used for the reception of Holy Communion (Cf. GIRM, 160).
- 2) It is the prerogative of the communicant to choose between reception of Holy Communion on the tongue or in the hand. Pastors or individual priests may not require communicants to receive Holy Communion on the tongue or in the hand – it is the communicant's choice. In addition, Holy Communion may never be withheld from the communicant because of his/her choice for reception of Holy Communion. (Cf. GIRM, 160; NDRHC, 41)
- 3) Children are to be catechized about how to receive Holy Communion, including both options for reception (in the hand/on the tongue). Furthermore, they are to be catechized about the reception of Holy Communion under both kinds and encouraged to participate in the reception of the fullness of this Most Holy Sacrament on a regular basis.