



EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

Archdiocese of St. Louis

While the heart of the celebration of the Eucharist is the Eucharistic Prayer, the consummation of the Mass is found in Holy Communion, whereby the people purchased for the Father by his beloved Son eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ. They are thereby joined together as members of Christ's mystical Body, sharing the one life of the Spirit. In the great sacrament of the altar, they are joined to Christ Jesus and to one another.

While Priests and Deacons are the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion at Mass, there may be a pastoral need for additional ministers which are called extraordinary ministers. In answering the call to become an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (EMHC), a person directly participates in sharing the mystery of God's love with one's neighbor, either with other members of the parish community at Mass, or with those who suffer from illness, infirmity, or loneliness and need Christ's loving presence brought to them.

On January 29, 1973, Pope Paul VI issued the Instruction *Immense Caritatis* (of Immense Love) on "Facilitating Sacramental Communion in Particular Circumstances." In this Instruction, he lists the qualities which, ideally, should be present in the minister of communion. "The person who has been appointed... must be duly instructed and should distinguish himself by Christian life, faith, and morals, striving to be worthy of this great office, cultivating devotion to the Holy Eucharist and acting as an example to the other faithful by piety and reverence for this most holy sacrament of the altar. Let no one be chosen whose selection may cause scandal among the faithful."

The Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (On Certain Matters to be Observed or to Be Avoided Regarding the Most Holy Eucharist) makes the following statement in paragraph 46: "The lay Christian faithful called to give assistance at liturgical celebrations should be well instructed and must be those whose Christian life, morals and fidelity to the Church's Magisterium recommend them. It is fitting that such a one should have received a liturgical formation in accordance with his or her age, condition, state of life, and religious culture. No one should be selected whose designation could cause consternation for the faithful."

Submission of Commissioned EMHC

1. Extraordinary Ministers are commissioned and selected to serve in this ministry if approved by the pastor and/or religious superior or provincial.
2. Once commissioned a list of the names of Extraordinary Ministers at the parish or religious house should be mailed to the Archdiocese of St. Louis to be recorded and kept on file. Please fill out the form that follows on page 3, sign, and send two copies to the following address:

Office of the Archbishop
20 Archbishop May Drive
St. Louis, Missouri 63119

A copy, with an official seal, will be returned to be kept on file in the parish or religious house records.

Guidelines for EMHC

Guidelines to be an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion in the Archdiocese of St. Louis are as follows:

- Must be at least 18 years of age (as of October 1997).
 - Possess a love of the Eucharist and exhibit a moral manner consistent with the discipline, norms, and teachings of the Church.
 - The ministry is open to both women and men.
 - Communion ministers may exercise their ministry during Mass, and to the homebound outside Mass. (Homebound ministers would need to be certified under Protecting God's Children. Please contact Sandra Price with the Office of Child and Youth Protection at 314-792-7271.) When pastoral need warrants it, they may also distribute communion at a Liturgy of the Word.
 - Once commissioned as an extraordinary minister, it is only for the parish or religious institution for which the person was commissioned. If the minister moves to a new parish he/she would need permission from the new local pastor or religious superior to serve as an extraordinary minister in that parish or religious institution
 - Extraordinary ministers may distribute the Body of Christ or the Precious Blood. NOTE: Because some will only receive under the form of bread and only from a priest, it is important that at least one priest distribute the consecrated host.
 - The length of service for each extraordinary minister is left to the discretion of the pastor or religious superior, as long as the minister remains a member of the parish or community. It is often suggested that a "term of service" be established so others may be offered the opportunity and present ministers may resume previous activities.
 - Extraordinary ministers approach the altar only after the priest has received communion—Body and Blood, and as the "Communion Song" begins.
 - After the priest has concluded his own Communion, he distributes Communion to the extraordinary ministers, assisted by the deacon.
3. All ministers need to be properly trained in both the practice and the theology of their ministry before beginning. Communion is to be distributed according to the correct liturgical norms and with due reverence shown to the Blessed Sacrament. *The Guide for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion* by Liturgy Training Publications is an excellent resource to train and form extraordinary ministers and a copy could be given to all ministers.
4. The commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should take place during the parish celebration of the Eucharist. *The Rite of Commissioning* is included below and can also be found in the *Book of Blessings*.

NOTE: Some ministers might be appointed for each Mass to care for the sacred vessels after Mass, however only a priest, deacon, or instituted acolyte is permitted to purify the vessels. All consecrated Precious Blood is to be consumed and is never emptied into the sacrarium or a common drain.

The form on the following page should be completed and the original and one copy should be sent to the Office of the Archbishop.

Rite for Commissioning Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (A similar Rite may be found in the *Book of Blessings*, Chapter 63)

1. The commissioning takes place during Mass, with the people present. After the homily, which should stress the pastoral reasons for this service to the Christian community, the priest presents the ministers-elect to the people in these or similar words:

Our brothers and sisters have been entrusted with the important duty of distributing Holy Communion to their fellow Christians.

You, my brothers and sisters, have been chosen for an important office and must strive more earnestly than ever to live the Christian life, to give good example, to take your faith more seriously, and to be devoted to this great mystery which beautifully signifies the unity of the Church and wonderfully brings it about: we who share this one bread become one body in Christ Jesus.

Since you are to give the Eucharist to your brothers and sisters in Christ, you must try to practice that fraternal charity which was commanded by Our Lord. He gave His body as food to His disciples and told them: "This, then, is what I command you: 'Love one another.'"

2. After the instruction, the ministers-elect stand before the priest, who asks:

Are you resolved to undertake this office of giving the Body and Blood of Christ to your brothers and sisters for the service and growth of the Church?

Ministers-elect: **I am.**

Are you resolved to reverence and care for the Eucharist which you will administer?

Ministers-elect: **I am.**

3. All stand. The ministers-elect kneel, and the priest invites all present to pray:

My brothers and sisters, let us pray to God our Father that our brothers and sisters chosen to administer the Body and Blood of Christ may be filled with His blessing. (All pray silently, then the priest continues.)

Father of mercy, source of all grace and blessing, bless these our brothers and sisters. May they faithfully distribute the Sacrament to their brothers and sisters, be strengthened and comforted by it, and one day be found worthy to share in the everlasting banquet of heaven. Through Christ our Lord. **R. Amen**

4. An invocation for the newly designated ministers is added to the intercessions.
5. In the procession at the offertory, the newly designated ministers bring the bread and wine to the altar, and may receive under both kinds at Communion.