

Frequently Asked Questions

EME's (Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist) at St Anthony of Padua Parish

1. Are EME's really necessary?

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion or EME's assist in the reverent and orderly distribution of Holy Communion "when the size of the congregation or the incapacity of the bishop, priest, or deacon requires it" (Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds, 28). Their ministry is of great importance as it allows for Holy Communion to be received under both kinds, for the reception of Holy Communion to be a communal action, and allows for Holy Communion to be brought more readily to the sick and homebound. If such ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are not present, the priest may call upon extraordinary ministers to assist him, i.e., duly instituted acolytes or even other faithful who have been deputed for this purpose. In case of necessity, the priest may also depute suitable faithful for this single occasion (GIRM 162).

2. Who appoints EME's?

EME's are delegated by the archbishop upon the recommendation of their pastor and the completion two trainings at St Anthony of Padua: Spiritual Formation & Hands on training for their respective area. Although priests may depute persons of good Christian reputation to serve as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion or EME's for a single occasion (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 162), it is the diocesan Bishop who is responsible for this ministry. At all times, EME'S are to follow the directions of their pastor and the archbishop.

3. Who regulates the ministry of EME's?

The pastor of the parish has the responsibility of caring for the Eucharist in the parish. The laity and religious, as EME's, share in this ministry at the service of the pastor. The pastor alone makes decisions on:

- who may serve as an EME'S
- when the service of an EME'S is no longer required
- to whom the Blessed Sacrament may be brought
- who may have access to the tabernacle
- particular practices in parish liturgies

Extraordinary Ministers are not to determine for themselves who may receive the Eucharist or to whom the Blessed Sacrament may be brought outside of Mass. The Eucharist may not be brought to the sick or homebound (including family members) without permission from the pastor. If a person seeking to receive Communion is not a member of the parish, the pastor must first seek permission from that individual's pastor before fulfilling the request. This is to ensure full sacramental care is provided to that person.

4. Can persons with disabilities serve as EME'Ss?

Persons with disabilities may serve as EME's with the approval of the pastor. Accommodations should be made when possible, however, certain disabilities may preclude an individual from serving in this particular ministry as safeguarding the Blessed Sacrament is an essential element here. The determination on such matters is to be left to the individual pastor. Questions or advice regarding individual situations should be directed to the Office of Worship.

5. What preparations should one make prior to serving as an EME's?

As a minister in the liturgy, one should dress appropriately for such service to God. The EME'S should also make sure to wash their hands before distributing the Blessed Sacrament. It is recommended to wash hands prior to Mass, whether at home or in the sacristy, with soap and water. Also every EME should have attended or watched the video trainings for Part I Spiritual Formation and Part II Hands On training for their specific area. All ministers of Holy Communion should show the greatest reverence for the Most Holy Eucharist by their demeanor, their attire, and the manner in which they handle the consecrated bread or wine.

6. What do I do if I drop a Host or spill the Precious Blood?

The first thing to remember is that it is necessary not to rush when distributing Holy Communion. Take time with each communicant so that it can be a prayerful encounter. If a Host or part of a Host falls, pick it up immediately and consume it. If it cannot be consumed, it is to be completely dissolved in water before being poured down the sacrarium. If some of the Precious Blood is spilled, immediately use your purificator to pick it up. Retrieve another purificator under the Ambo (yes, that means you may have to leave the communion station for a moment) and then continue ministering the remaining Precious Blood. After Mass, bring some water in a small basin and a purificator and wash the area. The water is then poured into the sacrarium. If a sacrarium is not available, the water is to be poured into the garden. If the Precious Blood falls onto a carpeted area,

purificators are used to pick up as much as possible. A clean purificator is then used to cover the area until the Mass has been completed. The area should then be cleaned thoroughly and the water and diluted precious blood poured into the sacrarium.

7. May EME's bless those who are not receiving Holy Communion?

EME's are to not to bless the person but should offer a very brief prayer of spiritual Communion, such as "May Christ be always in your heart" or "Receive Christ in your heart," or "May Jesus be your guide." They should refrain from making the Sign of the Cross over the person or using the word "bless" in such prayers. If EME's are instructed by their pastors to touch the person on the shoulder or on the head, they are to be careful that the gesture does not resemble laying on of hands and should be aware that their hands may contain particles of the Eucharist.

8. Should I bow to the altar while carrying the Blessed Sacrament or Precious Blood?

While carrying the Blessed Sacrament under one kind (Bread Host or Precious Blood) in a ciborium or chalice, it is not necessary to bow toward the altar or genuflect towards the Tabernacle. We return to postures befitting the King of kings when the Blessed Sacrament is no longer carried in the EME's hands.

9. What is intinction and is it permitted?

Intinction is a method of distributing Holy Communion under both kinds. The priest takes a host and dips it into the Precious Blood and then gives the Host to the communicant who receives it on the tongue. Communicants are not permitted to take the Host and dip it into the Precious Blood. EME'S are not permitted to distribute Holy Communion through intinction. If someone approaches you and attempts to dip the Host into the chalice, hold the chalice with the purificator covering the top and invite them to consume the Host. Then present the chalice to them so they may drink directly from it. Be sure to inform your priest after Mass so catechesis may be clarified.

10. What if a person kneels to receive Holy Communion?

The posture for reception of Holy Communion in the United States is standing. However, if a communicant comes forward and kneels, the minister is to give Communion to that person.

11. Is it appropriate for an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion to deny Holy Communion?

Never. At Mass, EME'Ss distribute Holy Communion in good faith to all who present themselves for the Sacrament. It is not possible for the EME'S to know if a person has been just reconciled or received into the Church and it is not the role of the EME'S to make that determination. If a person approaching the Sacrament seems to not know how to receive Holy Communion or does not know what to do with the Host, it may be appropriate to ask if the individual if they received their First Communion, then gently ask the person to consume the host or offer to take the Blessed Sacrament back. Remember that confusion may have many causes and does not necessarily indicate that a person is not Catholic. If an EME has concerns about an individual, they are to speak with their pastor outside of Mass. Be sure to inform your priest of an awkward situation after Mass so catechetical pointers may be shared.

12. What should an EME do if a person does not consume the Host?

Because EME'S are often not in a position where they can stop someone who has not consumed the Blessed Sacrament, parishes are encouraged to have Ministers of Hospitality located in places where they can both assist those who need physical help approaching Holy Communion and ensure the safety of the Blessed Sacrament. Please speak with your pastor for his advice on addressing this situation. In all cases, pastoral sensitivity and discretion are required. If no ministers of hospitality are available, it remains the responsibility of the EME's to safeguard the Eucharist.

13. What should I do if it becomes apparent that there are not enough Hosts?

If you notice that the number of communicants is greater than the total number of consecrated Hosts you may begin breaking the host into smaller pieces and giving each communicant a smaller piece. If Holy Communion is distributed under both kinds, they may also receive under the form of wine alone. It is important to remember that "Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior, is wholly present under the appearance either of bread or of wine in the Eucharist. Furthermore, Christ is wholly present in any fragment of the consecrated Host or in any drop of the Precious Blood" (USCCB Basic Questions and Answers on the Real Presence).

14. How can persons with celiac sprue disease receive Holy Communion?

For many years, Archbishop Charles Thompson has granted pastors the authority to permit the lay faithful to use low gluten hosts in the reception of Holy Communion. Medical certification is not required and the permission stands for as long as the condition persists. Low gluten hosts are available from a number of suppliers. Although some of these contain so little gluten that they are permitted by the USDA to be labeled

“gluten-free”. True gluten free hosts are made with rice or another non-wheat flour. In order to be valid matter for the Eucharist, hosts must be made of wheat and water alone and contain at least a trace amount of gluten. It is also possible to receive Holy Communion under the form of Precious Blood (wine) alone. EME’s are reminded that it is important to ensure that the low gluten host does not come into contact with the regular hosts.

15. May EME’s assist with the consumption of what remains of the Precious Blood after the distribution of Holy Communion?

Yes, they may consume what remains of the Precious Blood from their chalice of distribution.

16. I would like to bring Communion to hospitals and/or nursing homes. What do I need to do?

EME’s in health care facilities must attend Hands-on EME training offered at St Anthony Parish as well as the Spiritual Formation. Some may be required, depending upon the institution, to attend a training session conducted by the Nursing Home, Rehab Center, or Hospital which will cover those areas particular to health care settings.

17. What is a sacrarium?

A sacrarium is a special sink in the sacristy with a drain that goes directly into the ground. It is marked with a silver metal cover that has a cross on it. The sacrarium is used to rinse altar linens and sacred vessels.

18. What should I do if there are hosts remaining from visits to the sick?

If consecrated hosts remain from a visit to the sick, the EME’s may consume them if they have not yet received the Eucharist themselves on that particular day (Code of Canon Law, 917). If the Host is not consumed, it is to be returned promptly to the church. EME’s are not permitted to keep the Blessed Sacrament in their homes or stored in another place.

19. What do I do with my pyx after I bring Holy Communion to the sick and homebound?

The pyx should be kept in a safe and respectful place when not in use. Upon returning home, the Communion Minister should properly purify their pyx by putting a small amount of water in the pyx and consuming the water used for purification. The pyx should then be thoroughly dried.

20. What is the Eucharistic fast required for a sick person?

The Eucharistic fast for a sick person is fifteen minutes, if possible (*Immensae Caritatis*, III). If, this is not possible, no fast is required. The fast of fifteen minutes also applies to Roman Catholic family members and health attendants who are properly disposed and wish to receive Holy Communion with the person to whom the Eucharist is being brought.

21. What is the proper procedure to follow when a sick person is unable to consume the host?

If a sick person is unable to consume an entire small host, a smaller piece may be given to him/her. A glass of water may be provided to assist the sick person in consuming the host. If the host is rejected, it should be wrapped in a purificator, and brought to the church or chapel from which the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion was sent. There, it is to be dissolved in a small bowl of water. Once dissolved, this water should be poured into the sacrarium. If a sacrarium is not available, the water may be poured in the garden.

22. What is the role of a Roamer?

The roamer carries a ciborium (gold vessel) to deliver the Blessed Sacrament to individuals unable to process forward in the communion line and receive the Eucharist near the altar. The roamer will come to the rear of the church and may be waved over by family or ushers to administer the Blessed Sacrament. We do not carry by hand extra hosts to parishioners waiting to receive, instead the roamer will walk to them. We strive as Catholic faithful to find the most dignified and respectful manner to carry the Eucharist and Jesus should never be carried by hand to someone else.