



The Training of Eucharistic Ministers of Holy Communion & Ministers to the Homebound

The use of Eucharistic ('Extraordinary') Ministers provides a very important assistance in our parishes, including here at St. Mary's Cathedral and Old St. Vincent's Church in Cape Girardeau. It is a ministry that is to be carried out with reverence, dignity, and with upmost respect given to the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Our Lord. Therefore, the Church asks that we give sufficient instruction, catechesis, and preparation to the faithful who assist in the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass and to those who bring Communion to the sick and homebound, so that they may fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence.

At St. Mary's Cathedral and Old St. Vincent's Church, we are 'updating' our Eucharistic Minister training and instruction as we implement some minor changes to the process of distributing Holy Communion during our Masses. We ask that those who are to help distribute Holy Communion show the greatest reverence for the Holy Eucharist by their demeanor, their attire, and the manner in which they handle the Body and Blood of Our Lord.

- Coming to the Sanctuary
 - During the *Lamb of God*, the extraordinary ministers proceed to front of the church and stand *near* the sanctuary. **The ministers wait on the floor, before the steps, until the priest concludes his own Communion (i.e., until he receives the Precious Blood). The ministers then bow and proceed into the sanctuary. If four ministers are needed, as on a Sunday, two stand on each side of the altar to receive Communion and then their vessels. A ciborium of consecrated hosts and a chalice of the Precious Blood will be given to each side.** Then the ministers will proceed to distribute Communion.
 - "Extraordinary Ministers should wait near the sanctuary until the ordinary ministers have received Holy Communion before they approach the altar for Holy Communion and then receive their vessels." –Most Reverend James V. Johnston, Jr., *Pastoral Letter on the Sacred Liturgy and Liturgical Norms*, (June 26, 2011), norm #19.
 - "If extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are required by pastoral need, they should not approach the altar before the priest has received Communion. After the priest has concluded his own Communion, he distributes Communion to the extraordinary ministers, assisted by the deacon, and then hands the sacred vessels to them for distribution of Holy Communion to the people." –United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB), *Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion at Mass*, www.usccb.org, (2010).

- The Distribution of Holy Communion
 - As the faithful come up for Communion, the extraordinary minister says “*The Body of Christ*” while distributing the host, or “*The Blood of Christ*” while distributing the cup. The communicant responds “*Amen*.”
 - If a member of the faithful comes forward for a ‘blessing’ (normally indicated by the crossing of their arms), the extraordinary minister simply can say, “*May the Lord bless you and keep you forever. Amen*” or “*God bless you. Amen*” or something similar. **There is no need for the minister to touch the person, or tap their head, or give them a ‘blessing.’**
 - Extraordinary ministers who visit the sick following Mass are to “place the pyx near the altar prior to the beginning of Mass so that the priest or other ordinary minister may place the host(s) in the pyx at the end of the Communion rite or following Mass. They then retrieve them at the end of Mass. **Consecrated hosts may not be placed in the pyx in the Communion procession.**”—Bishop Johnston, norm #20.
 - Extraordinary Ministers to the Sick should put their pyx by the tabernacle with a small piece of paper with the number needed written on it. The ministers go *immediately* to the communicant(s) after Mass.
 - If someone comes in the Communion line with a pyx, please ask them to see Father after Mass.
- Following Communion
 - The ministers bring their vessels back to the altar and reverently place them there. If there is any remainder of the Precious Blood, those ministers (if possible) should consume the Blood near the altar.
 - It is appropriate for the other ministers to wait near the sanctuary until Father reposes the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle following Communion. The ministers should bow and may then return to their places.
- What to do if irregular circumstances arise:
 - **If the Precious Blood is spilt**, the minister should immediately place a purificator on the spot where the Blood has been spilt *and leave it*. Father should be notified so he can purify the spot properly.
 - **If a Host is dropped**, the minister should pick It up and immediately consume it. The communicant should then be given another Host in the same way It was administered the first time.
 - **If someone presents themselves for Communion who does not seem to understand what they are doing**, simply asking them, “Are you Catholic?” or “Can you receive Holy Communion yet?” or another similar phrase would be appropriate.
 - If they say NO, simply say “*God bless you*” or another similar phrase and politely ask them to move on.
 - If they say YES, ask them to receive appropriately by either holding their hands correctly or to stick out their tongue and place the Host on it.



Ministers to the Homebound

- Guidelines

- *Ordinarily*, those who are to visit the sick and homebound retrieve their hosts following the celebration of Mass. As previously stated, the pyx is placed next to the tabernacle and retrieved after Mass.
- The minister to the sick and homebound is to go directly to the hospital, nursing home, or to the person's home after getting Hosts. *You may not* go to the store, home, to the bank, etc., with consecrated Hosts.
- *Unnecessary conversation* should not take place in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and this includes when one takes Communion from the parish to the place of the sick or homebound person(s). Once you retrieve the Hosts from the parish, you should not stop to 'chat' with folks, talk on the phone, etc., on the way.
- The pyx is to be carried on your person (not in a purse or bag).
- Once you have arrived at the homebound or sick person(s) place of residence, the Rite for Holy Communion typically follows this formula: Greeting, Penitential Act, a reading from Sacred Scripture, the 'Our Father,' Holy Communion, a prayer following Communion, and a Conclusion.
- If there are any hosts remaining following your visit(s), they should be returned to the parish church and placed in the tabernacle *immediately*.
- The pyx should be purified by pouring water in the pyx and consuming the water. Allow the pyx to air-dry.
- If a person you are taking Holy Communion to spits out the host, wrap the host in a cloth and bring it to the parish and tell one of the priests. They will take care of It properly.