

**SOME SPECIFIC POINTS OF CATECHESIS
FOR EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION
DIOCESE OF COLORADO SPRINGS**

(Please distribute the following pages to all EMHC)

The Minister Him/Herself

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) perform a very important ministry in the Church. They serve the Church in a particular way. More than simply a functionary, EMHC should express in their lives a sincere striving after the truth and holiness that characterizes the Church of God. Hence, EMHC must be persons of good moral character with a full and manifest commitment to all those teachings and disciplines that the Church presents for our assent of faith. In a very special way EMHC must hold to the truth of the real and substantial presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. At the very least, EMHC must never deny or speak against any teaching of the Catholic Church.

More specifically:

1. EMHC must be at least 16 years of age and have received all the Sacraments of Initiation.
2. EMHC must be faithful and practicing Catholics, with nothing permanently impeding them from receiving Holy Communion themselves (e.g., a canonically irregular marital union).
3. EMHC should manifest a love and reverence for and devotion to the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.
4. EMHC should receive the Sacrament of Penance regularly and should never exercise their ministry if in the state of mortal sin.
5. EMHC are to make themselves regularly available to perform this ministry.
6. EMHC must be mandated by the bishop or his delegate.
7. EMHC must be well-trained and be familiar with the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and the instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* as these relate to their specific ministry.
8. EMHC should make every effort to use proper terminology when speaking of their ministry or of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Words are instructive. Incorrect words instruct incorrectly. For example, the still-common term “Eucharistic Minister” has been reprobated. This is a ministry of **Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion**. Only bishops and priests are Eucharistic Ministers. In addition to bishops and priests, deacons are also Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. The consecrated elements are to be identified as **“the Body of Christ”** and **“the Blood of Christ”** or **“the Precious Blood.”** Sacred vessels such as patens and chalices should not be referred to as *dishes*.

Some Particulars Regarding the Exercise of the Ministry

1. Holy Communion may not be offered or given to a person who is not a baptized member of the Catholic Church (with the exceptions noted in canon 844). If it is known that a non-Catholic is presenting him/herself for Holy Communion, the pastor or parish director should kindly inform the person (outside of Mass) of the teaching and discipline of the Church regarding reception by non-Catholics. It must be determined that a homebound or hospitalized person is a Catholic before giving them Holy Communion.

In this regard, I strongly recommend that at funerals, weddings, and Christmas and Easter Masses – times when many non-Catholics may be at Mass – an announcement be made to the effect that only properly disposed Catholics may receive Holy Communion.

2. Holy Communion should not be given to anyone in a canonically irregular marital union. The pastor or parish director should direct these Catholics (outside of Mass) in a kind manner not to approach the altar for Holy Communion until the irregularity has been rectified.

3. If a seemingly non-Catholic person approaches the altar for Holy Communion, the minister should very discreetly inquire if the person is a Catholic. If not, then invite them to a spiritual communion with the words: “Receive the Lord Jesus in your heart.” Or simply speak the words “The Body of Christ/The Blood of Christ,” and let the person make a sign of reverence.

4. No minister may permit a communicant to intinct (dip) his/her own Host into the chalice as a means of receiving under both species. This constitutes self-communication, and the minister should reasonably impede any attempt at self-intinction.

5. EMHC should not approach the altar to receive Holy Communion until the celebrant has received.

6. All ministers (clergy and lay) should be very vigilant and make sure that the Host is consumed before the recipient walks away. If they walk away without having consumed the Host, you are to follow them, and ask them to either consume the Host or return it.

7. No recipient is to be given more than one Host at Mass, as in the cases of those recipients who want to carry a Host to a disabled person in the pew or to any other person. A minister should bring the Sacrament to any person unable to approach the altar. This should be done after all others have received.

8. No portion of the Precious Blood remaining after the distribution of Holy Communion may be poured into the sacrarium. The remaining Precious Blood must be consumed by the priest, deacon, and/or EMHC immediately following the distribution of Holy Communion. The ministers return to the sanctuary (altar area) before consuming the Precious Blood.

9. Only a priest, deacon or installed acolyte may purify the vessels after Holy Communion. Ordinarily this purification (or first cleansing) of the vessels should be done by the priest and/or deacon immediately following the distribution of Holy Communion. Water is to be poured into the ciboria and chalices. The water is then consumed, and the vessels are wiped dry with a purificator. If this cannot be done in a timely manner, the vessels may be placed on the credence

table and covered with a purificator and purified IMMEDIATELY after Mass. The purificator should never be pushed into the chalice, thereby soaking up whatever drops of the Precious Blood might remain in the chalice.

10. As a general rule, access to the tabernacle should be extremely limited. The pastor or parish director has a serious obligation to safeguard the Blessed Sacrament and to maintain custody of the tabernacle key. For this reason the EMHC who bring the Eucharist to the sick should receive their Host(s) for distribution to the homebound or hospitalized following the distribution of Holy Communion to all the faithful at Mass or at the end of Mass (Sunday or weekday). A pyx should not be presented from the Communion line to the minister distributing Holy Communion at Mass. No one should be given a Host unless that person is known to be an authorized EMHC.

11. When taking Holy Communion to the homebound or those in hospitals, the minister must go immediately from the Church to the place(s) where Holy Communion is to be distributed. There may be no other activities undertaken while the Eucharist is in the possession of the minister. While the Eucharist is in the possession of the minister care should be taken that respect is shown. There should be no unnecessary conversation, no playing of the radio in the car, etc.

12. If, when taking Holy Communion to the sick, it is anticipated that there will be Hosts remaining after the final recipient has received, the minister may ask the final recipient to consume the remaining Hosts. The minister may not consume the remaining Hosts him/herself.

13. The Eucharist may NEVER be kept in the home, automobile or any other place for future use or for adoration. It may be kept only on the person of the minister for the time that the sick are visited.

14. When distributing Holy Communion to the hospitalized or homebound the prescribed ritual is to be used. When bringing Holy Communion to the homebound or hospitalized, the sick person should be asked if he/she is properly disposed to receive Holy Communion. If the person needs to make a confession, the EMHC should inform a priest who will come and hear the person's confession. Then Holy Communion may be given. **A sick person who declines Holy Communion because he/she wants first to go to confession, should never be told that confession is not necessary.**

Since it is impossible to anticipate every situation that might occur in the distribution of Holy Communion either at Mass or to the sick, prudence and good judgment (without undue scrupulosity) should always be exercised by the minister of Holy Communion.