

*A Guide for*



*Extraordinary  
Ministers of  
Holy Communion*

**Diocese of Prince Albert  
Liturgy Office**



(2017)



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## *Ministry of the Eucharist*



The Catholic belief about the Eucharist is at the center of our faith. The New Testament tells us that Jesus gathered his disciples on the night before he died and shared a meal with them. He took, blessed, broke, and gave the bread, saying, "This is my body." Sharing the cup, he said, "This is my blood." All ate and drank, and Jesus commanded them, "Do this in memory of me."

For us the Mass is both meal and sacrifice. We sit at table with Jesus and dine with him at his Last Supper. We also join the priest in offering this sacrifice to the praise and glory of God. We call the celebration Eucharist, meaning "thanksgiving," or "Mass," indicating that we are sent forth to announce the Good News of salvation... We greet the coming week confident because of our belief.

To perform this ministry, the extraordinary minister must be the right kind of person: a baptized Catholic in good standing with the Church. The minister will be a person of faith, who believes in God, follows Christ, and trusts in the Holy Spirit.

You have felt God's call to this ministry. You have reflected on your faith, how good God has been to you, and what you have to offer back to the One who made you and blessed you. You have thought about the specific gifts you received from God, and how you might best put them to use for the good of the Church and the world.

\*(Taken from the book 'Guide for Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion: Second Edition' by Laughlin, Riley & Turner)

## *Preparing to Serve at Eucharist*

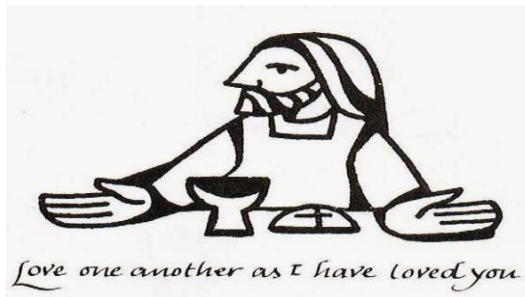
**Hygiene:** Clean your hands and fingernails just as you would if you were preparing food and serving guests at your table. When the Presider washes his hands during the Eucharistic Liturgical Rite, it is a symbolic gesture and not necessary or recommended for Lay Ministers. It is recommended that you physically wash your hands in the sacristy before mass or before you set up for mass. If you have a cold or flu, you should ask someone to replace you for that mass.

\*\*If your parish has asked that hand sanitizer be used immediately before performing your ministry be sure to use it before you arrive at the front of the church so that it does not become a new ritual added into our liturgy.

**Dress:** Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should be dressed in a way that expresses the respect and dignity proper to the Eucharist and the assembly. Dress appropriately, clean and neatly.

### **Before the Celebration:**

1. Report to the Presider or coordinator for your parish and indicate that you are an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion for that celebration.
2. Check with the sacristan to see if you are needed to help set anything up to prepare for the Mass. (Most parishes will have a list of things that need preparing).



## *Movement During the Celebration*

1. When the congregation has begun the sign of peace, you should move without delay, to the sanctuary and stand off to either side of the sanctuary. There is no right or wrong way for this to happen as each parish is designed and set up differently. When finding what works in your parish it is important that extraordinary ministers receive Holy Communion reverently and smoothly, without awkwardness or undue delay to the Communion procession.
2. Do not genuflect or bow to the altar or Tabernacle, but move directly to the sanctuary.
3. Once the Presider has received, move near the altar to receive communion.
4. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion must receive the Sacred Vessels from the Presider; never take them from the altar yourself.
5. The sacred vessels are moved from the corporal on the altar to a corporal on the credence table where they will be purified, immediately or after the Celebration is over.
6. When you are returning to your seat be sure to know what the practice is in your parish as some return individually when they have returned their vessels or they wait in the sanctuary and leave together as a group once everyone has finished.

### **After the Celebration:**

If the church has no sacristan to transfer the sacred vessels back to the sacristy, the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion should take all the used sacred vessels (chalice, ciborium, communion plate), wash with warm water in the sacristy and place them back where they are stored.

## *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread and Wine*

As you begin to distribute Holy Communion, focus on each communicant as if he or she were the only person in line. Make eye contact. Elevate the host slightly, between your thumb and first finger, and say in a distinct, but not loud voice, “The Body of Christ.” The communicant bows and responds, “Amen.” Then place the host in the outstretched hands or on the tongue of the communicant.

When presenting the chalice, extend and elevate the chalice slightly as the communicant approaches, with the words, “The Blood of Christ.” The communicant bows and says “Amen” and takes the chalice from your hands to receive Communion, then hands the chalice back to you. You do not need to hold on to the chalice the entire time. Carefully wipe the rim of the chalice, both inside and outside, where the communicant’s lips touched it. Turn the chalice slightly – about a quarter-turn – so that the next communicant’s lips will touch a different section of the rim... Unfold the purificator. After you have handed the chalice to the communicant following his or her “Amen,” you will have a moment to find a fresh place on the purificator to wipe the rim of the chalice.

In general, the ciborium or the chalice should be held comfortably at chest height, neither too high or too low. Adjust the height to accommodate the height or physical dexterity of the communicant. For example, some children and elderly persons may be unsteady when receiving. Be attentive to the needs of each communicant as you distribute Holy Communion.

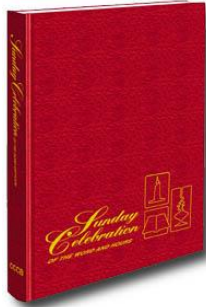
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## *Communion Outside the Eucharistic Celebration*

### **On Sunday:**

If you are asked to give communion for a lay led Celebration on Sunday please find the instruction in the 'Sunday Celebration of the Word and Hours' published by the Canadian Council of Catholic Bishops (CCCB).



### **Communion to the Sick and Shut-Ins:**

As an Extraordinary Minister you may be mandated to bring Holy Communion to the sick in hospitals, nursing homes or in private homes.

The Extraordinary Minister must have a proper pyx in which to carry the Blessed Sacrament to the sick. Instruction and prayers can be found in the following booklet, also published by the Canadian Council of Catholic Bishops (CCCB).



Whenever possible at Sunday or weekday Masses, the pyx should be filled at Mass and the Communion calls made following the Mass so that the congregation and the sick individuals may be more conscious of their unity in the Holy Eucharist. Other arrangements may be made.

## *Be Ready for the Unexpected*

There are specific directives in disposing of a consecrated host that has been dropped or soiled.

If a host or part of it happens to fall during Holy Communion simply pick it up and hold on to it until after you have finished distributing to the rest of the communicants. Then (depending on the situation) it may be consumed or placed on the side to be dissolved after the celebration. Your priest or sacristan will be able to help.

In the case when a communicant has received the Host into the mouth and then, for some reason, rejects it, the Host is to be put into a small receptacle of water, and put into the tabernacle or other secure place. When the host has dissolved it can then be poured into the sacrarium or some other appropriate place in nature (again, your priest or sacristan can let you know where that appropriate place is for your parish).

In the case of spilled Precious Blood, you should wipe it with the purificator, get a new purificator and continue giving Holy Communion, do not rush through this or bring as little attention to it as possible. If the spill is on a carpet again cover it with the purificator, get a new one to continue giving the Precious Blood. After the celebration the spot should be wiped down with a damp cloth, which is then rinsed as other altar linens are. Please ask the sacristan for help.

\*\*When it comes to not knowing who should or shouldn't receive it is simple, your task is simply to give Holy Communion, ***you never withhold it.*** If you have questions or concerns about someone who has come forward you speak to the priest after Mass.





## Quick Guide: Things to Remember:



1. Look each communicant in the eye, recognizing in them the Body of Christ even as you give them his Body and Blood in Holy Communion
2. Remember that it is not permitted to change the formulas for the giving of Holy Communion: “The Body of Christ.” “The Blood of Christ.” This would include adding personal names, such as, “Paul, the Body of Christ,” or “The Body of Christ, Mary.” While this may seem like a warm and friendly way to encounter someone you know, it can actually create divisions.
3. Be yourself. Let your joy shine through in the way you distribute Holy Communion. Smile!
4. Carry and hold the vessels with care and reverence, showing by your actions that this is no ordinary food and drink.
5. Use the entire purificator. Open it and wipe the rim of the chalice with a clean spot on the purificator each time.
6. Elevate the host and chalice slightly, based on the height of the person who receives. Hold it higher for a tall person, lower for a child or shorter adult.
7. Stay calm and focused. If you are running out of hosts, keep your focus on the next person in line until you actually run out; then quietly go to the tabernacle, the sacristan, or the master of ceremonies, according to the practice in your community. If someone seems confused about how to receive Holy Communion or takes what you consider to be too much Precious Blood, be sure not to let your face or body language express your disapproval.
8. Remember that the Communion procession is a sacred moment. It is not the place for arguments or struggles; nor is it the place for catechesis on who can receive Holy Communion or how to do it. If an issue arises, discuss it with the priest or your ministry coordinator after Mass.

\*(Taken from the book ‘Guide for Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion: Second Edition’ by Laughlin, Riley & Turner)

# Glossary

**Blessed Sacrament:** The name commonly used to refer to the Eucharistic elements of bread and wine after they have been consecrated and have become the Body and Blood of Christ. The term may also be used to refer to the consecrated bread alone.

**Chalice:** The cup, usually with a stem, used to hold the wine to be consecrated at Mass. Sometimes also called a “communion cup.”

**Ciborium (plural Ciboria):** The sacred vessel, usually with a cover, that holds the hosts for the distribution of Holy Communion and to store the consecrated hosts in the tabernacle. These vessels are usually either a bowl or chalice-like shape. They are usually made from metal and should be unbreakable.

**Consecrated:** Refers to the bread and wine that have become the Body and Blood of Christ during Mass. When the priest prays the word of Jesus in the consecration, the bread and wine cease to be bread and wine (although the appearance of bread and wine remain); they become the Body and Blood of Christ.

**Consecration:** Refers to the narrative of the Institution of the Eucharist in the Eucharistic Prayer, where the priest pronounces the words of Christ at the Last Supper and the bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ.

**Corporal:** The square white, linen cloth placed on top of the altar cloth upon which any chalices and ciboria are placed during the celebration of Mass. Any vessels (chalice, ciborium, monstrance) holding the Blessed Sacrament are to be placed on a corporal.

**Credence Table:** A table in the sanctuary on which the wine and water cruets, water basin/pitcher, and towel are placed for the celebration of Mass.

**Monstrance:** A sacred vessel that exposes a consecrated host to the faithful for adoration within church or during a procession, above all on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi).

**Pall:** A small, square, cloth-covered board, which may be used to cover the chalice to keep insects out. Its use is now optional. The term also refers to the white cloth used to cover the coffin of the deceased during the Funeral Liturgy. It is a reminder of the baptismal garment.

**Paten:** The name for the plate used to hold the Eucharistic bread. Although the term is especially associated with the small plate used to hold the host for the priest, it can also be applied to a larger plate containing a sufficient number of hosts for the communion of the entire assembly. A ciborium, which is more like a cup or bowl in shape, can also be used to distribute hosts, and especially to store them in the tabernacle.

**Purification:** The pouring of water (or water and wine) into the sacred vessels to cleanse them of loose particles of the host and remove any remaining Precious Blood. After the liquid is consumed, a purificator is used to dry the sacred vessels. The purification of sacred vessels is limited to the ordained and to instituted acolytes.

**Purificator:** A small, absorbent, preferably white, easily laundered cloth used for cleaning the chalice(s) during Mass by wiping the lip of the chalice and, either after Holy Communion or after Mass, to dry all the sacred vessels during the purification process.

**Pyx:** A small round vessel, often shaped like a pocket watch, in which the consecrated host is carried to the sick, homebound, and dying.

**Sacrarium:** A sink emptying directly into the ground, not the sewer, which is used for the rinsing of sacred vessels after their purification, for the first washings of corporals and purificators, or the water containing the completely dissolved consecrated hosts that cannot be consumed properly.

\*(Taken from the book ‘Guide for Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion: Second Edition’ by Laughlin, Riley & Turner)

Thank you for your service at the Eucharist.



## **Pange Lingua**

Hail our Saviour's glorious Body,  
Which his Virgin Mother bore;  
Hail the Blood which, shed for sinners,  
Did a broken world restore;  
Hail the sacrament most holy,  
Flesh and Blood of Christ adore!

Come adore this wondrous presence;  
Bow to Christ, the source of grace!  
Here is kept the ancient promise  
Of God's earthly dwelling-place!  
Sight is blind before God's glory,  
Faith alone may see his face!

(Composed in the thirteenth century by St. Thomas Aquinas)

