

WHY ARE OUR PARISHES' EMHCs ASKED TO NOT ENTER INTO THE SANCTUARY AREA, UNTIL AFTER THE PRIEST HAS RECEIVED BOTH SPECIES OF HOLY COMMUNION?



The Holy Eucharist DID YOU KNOW?



Within the Diocese of Colorado Springs' last EMHCs Mandation "*Guidelines and Particulars to Exercise*" (issued by Bishop Sheridan, dated June 23, 2019), it states:

"5. [The] *EMHC* should not approach the altar to receive Holy Communion until the [priest] celebrant has received [*i.e.*, consumed both Eucharistic species].” Why you ask?

Biblical Background:

As has been recorded in the New Testament, during His last Passover Meal (the *Last Supper*), Our Lord Jesus said to his disciples, “*Do this in memory of me*” (cf: Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:18-20, 1Corinthians 11:23-25). In the original Greek texts, this statement reads: “*Touto poieite eis tan eman anamnesin.*” There are two aspects of this phrase that deserve our very careful interpretation.

a. First, a key aspect of this phrase *touto poieite* can be translated as *do this* or as *offer this*. In the Old Testament, God commanded the Israelites, “*you shall regularly offer (poieseis) on the altar two yearling lambs as the sacrifice established for each day*” (cf: Exodus 29:38). This use of the word *poiein* is translated as *offer this* or *sacrifice this* over **70 times** in the Old Testament. This same word, that is used for *sacrifice* under the Old Covenant, is used for the *sacrifice* [in a different form however, in accord with the non-bloody sacrifice offered by the Old Testament High Priest Melchizedek (cf: Genesis 14:18-20; Leviticus 2; 6:14-23)] within the Holy Mass of the New Covenant also.

b. Second, a key aspect of this phrase is Our Lord’s use of the word *anamnesin*. When we look at the original, ancient Koine Greek of the Biblical texts, every time this word (*ἀνάμνησις*) appears, it is within the context of a sacrificial offering (cf: Luke 22:19; 1Corinthians 11:24,25; Hebrews 10:3,10). It also can be translated as a *memorial offering* or a *memorial sacrifice*. While these nuances may be somewhat lost in the English translation, then-Jewish ears would have immediately and clearly understood the sacrificial meaning of Jesus’s words.

(SR: www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/is-the-mass-a-sacrifice / <https://thecatholicnewsarchive.org>)

In addition, a New Testament passage that speaks to the sacrificial nature of the Mass is within 1Corinthians 10:14–21; where St. Paul articulates that participation in the Lord’s Supper means refusing to participate in the sinful and worthless worship of and sacrifices to, demons or idols. St. Paul contrasts two groups: First, those who participate at the table of demons. Second, those who partake of the table of the Lord (cf: Malachi 1:7 – is synonymous with an altar of sacrifice).

Overall, the New Covenant holy sacrifice of the Mass consists of several integral and continuously flowing parts by the Priest celebrant: (a) to receive and present his and the gathered assembly's sacrificial offerings to God; (b) to request God bless and accept these offerings; (c) to pray that God receive and consecrate these offerings (through the transubstantiation by the Holy Spirit); and lastly, (d) to receive (by the priest and assembled people, in return back from God) and consume the now consecrated sacrificial offerings (i.e., Holy Communion) of both Eucharistic species.

For the priest's celebration of the Order of the Holy Mass to be valid, he **must** receive **both** the Body and Blood of Christ **at** the altar, before further distributing it to the deacon, altar servers, EMHCs and the remainder of the assembled People of God. In fact, the Second Vatican Council's document, ***Sacrosanctum Concilium*** (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy) (1963), #97 states: "A priest must communicate [himself] at the altar, at the moment laid down by the [Roman] Missal, each time he celebrates Mass ... and the concelebrants [accompanying priests] must communicate [themselves] before they proceed with the distribution of Holy Communion [also]. The Priest [celebrant] or a concelebrant is never to wait until the people's Communion is concluded before receiving Communion himself."

Why must the celebrant priest receive Communion first? In the reality of the sacrificial offering to God, the priest, following the covenantal mandates for grain and animal sin, guilt or purification offerings (i.e., sacrifices on the altar) to God on behalf of himself and the faith community gathered with him, Leviticus 6:9 and 19, states: "The priest who offers the purification offering shall eat of it; ... it shall be eaten in a sacred place [the sanctuary] ..." Therefore, [in *Persona Christi Capitis* and presiding for the people] the priest's consumption of both of the consecrated species, brings to culmination and completion the sacrificial "offering" to and before God.

If or when EMHCs enter into the sanctuary before the priest's consumption of both species, they enter into the holy place of the sanctuary area during the offering to and acceptance of, the consecrated Eucharistic elements from God, instead of after it has been received (physically and spiritually) by the priest celebrant on/at the altar and for further distribution to everyone else.

In recent years, the Holy See has taken steps to clarify it even further for the ordained clergy. In an official "*Responsa ad Dubia Proposta*" (Response to a Doubt [Question]), the Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments, answered the following question:

"[Is it] *licit* [legal or permissible] for the celebrating priest to take Communion only after the Holy Eucharist has been administered to the faithful or distribute Holy Eucharist and communicate at the same time as the faithful?" Response: Negative to both. [He must receive both species first, lest the Mass be illicit *.]" (* forbidden by ecclesiastical law, rules or custom)

Additionally, the USCCB's published *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America* (2001), #38 states: "If extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are required by pastoral need, they should not approach the altar before the priest has received Communion."

The priest receives first, not because of any human protocol, but by virtue of the dignity and nature of his ordained ministry. He acts in the person of Christ [*in Persona Christi Capitis*], for the purpose of the integrity of the Sacrament and for leading the people gathered together: "Thus, when priests join in the act of Christ, the priests offer themselves entirely to God, and when they are nourished with the Body [and Blood] of Christ, they profoundly share in the love of him, who gives himself as food to the faithful (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, No. 13, Pope Paul VI, 1965)."