

*St. Michael  
Catholic Church*

*Extraordinary Ministers  
of Holy Communion (EMHC)  
Guidelines*



At the St. Michael Church, the model of the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (EMHC) is one of service of God and ministering in and to our parish's faithful, which is the Body of Christ—the Church. We follow the example(s) of the Apostles, who fed the multitudes. We do this by reverently distributing the Holy Eucharist to those present at our parish's Eucharistic celebrations.

These guidelines have been prepared to assist you in making your service to Christ and His Church—organized, joyful, and genuinely spirit filled; for both you and our parish family. As your pastor, I hope that your service will encourage, enhance, and support you in your daily walk with God, and that through your participation in sharing the Body and Blood of Christ with our sisters and brothers, that they too will be filled with every blessing of the Spirit of our God. May God be with you always.

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April 20, 2025

Rev. Bob Newbury  
Pastor

## ***Liturgical Documentation***

### ***Institution of the Eucharist***

*“While they were eating, Jesus took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples, said, ‘Take and eat; this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.’”* (Matthew 26:26-28) (NAB)

### ***The Mystery of the Holy Eucharist***

On the night before he died, Christ gathered his Apostles in the upper room, to celebrate the Last Supper and to give us the inestimable gift of His Body and Blood. *“He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries until He should come again and so to entrust to His beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of His death and resurrection ... Thus, in the Eucharistic Liturgy we are joined with Christ on the altar of the Cross and at the table of the upper room in “the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated and in the sacred banquet of communion with the Lord’s body and blood.”* (CSL #47, *Norms of Distribution of Communion #1, USCCB, 2010*)

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## ***Ordinary Minister of Holy Communion***

We welcome you to this parish liturgical ministry as a minister at the altar distributing the Precious Body and Blood of Christ to the parish’s faithful at scheduled liturgies. By virtue of his ordination, the bishop or priest offers the sacrifice in the Person of Christ, the Head of the Church. He receives gifts of bread and wine from the gathered faithful, offers the sacrifice to God, and returns to them the very Body and Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ, as from the hands of Christ himself. Thus, bishops, priests and deacons are considered the *ordinary* ministers of Holy Communion. In every celebration of the Eucharist, there should be a sufficient number of ministers of Holy Communion, so that it can be distributed in an orderly and reverential manner. Bishops, priests, and deacons distribute Holy Communion by virtue of their office as ordinary ministers of the Body and Blood of the Lord. (*GIRM #93, 182. Norms for Distribution of Communion #26-27, USCCB, 2010*)

### ***Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion***

When the size of the assembly requires it, the celebrant may be assisted by other bishops, priests, or deacons. ***If such ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are not present, “the priest may call upon extraordinary ministers to assist him*** (i.e., formally instituted acolytes or members of the gathered faithful; who have been [trained and] commissioned [mandated according to established diocesan policy and procedures] ***according to the prescribed rite.***” Additionally, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (EMHCs) should receive sufficient spiritual, theological, and practical preparation to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence. (*GIRM #108, Norms for Distribution of Communion #28, USCCB, 2010*)

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## ***Requirements for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHCs)***

- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHCs) must: (a) have received all of their Sacraments of Initiation (e.g., Baptism, Confession, First Eucharist, and Confirmation); (b) be a faithful and practicing Catholic (in good standing); (c) be at least 16 years of age; (d) regularly receive the Sacrament of Penance; and (e) have nothing permanently impeding them from receiving Holy Communion themselves (i.e., irregular marriages).
- Ministry participants must attend an EMHC training session (lasting approximately 2 hours) and:
  1. Read, understand, and comply with the Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion outlined in diocesan policies; the General Instruction to the Roman Missal (GIRM); the *Redemptionis Sacramentum*; and this handbook.
  2. Read the “*Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America.*” ([www.usccb.org/liturgy/current/norms.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/liturgy/current/norms.shtml))
  3. Receive instruction on the importance of using the proper terminology associated with this ministry.
  4. Participate in a “hands-on” training session with the parish’s EMHC ministry coordinator(s) or pastor.

5. Attend at one refresher (re-mandation) training session (every 3 years or as needed), a spiritual discernment and preparation period each year, if possible. These are offered either at the parish-level or as a diocesan event.
6. Are normally mandated for three years by the diocese’s bishop. Additionally, they are mandated to serve at the St. Michael Parish only. (If you desire to serve as an EMHC at another parish, it is solely at the discretion and with the permission of the other parish’s pastor.) In other words, the mandate does not mean that you can automatically serve as an EMHC at *any other* parish in the Diocese of Colorado Springs or elsewhere.
7. Upon completion of training, if they wish to serve the homebound or parishioners in the nursing homes, assisted living, etc., please contact the Parish Office. Additional and more specialized instruction is needed for hospital, nursing home, residential, and hospice visits; where Communion is distributed to all Catholics.
8. If available, sign-up for Holy Days of Obligation.
9. As soon as you receive your schedule, check your assignments, and ensure you can fulfill the scheduled requirements. If you will not be available on your assigned date, you are responsible to find a replacement for the scheduled Mass. As a minimum, please contact the scheduled sacristan and brief him/her accordingly, as soon as possible. If possible, please write the person’s name on the schedule who will be substituting for you, if known and possible.

## *Preparing for Mass*

### General Responsibilities:

1. *Please* be present at the Church **at least** 10-15 minutes PRIOR to the Mass; this allows time to prepare yourself and receive any special instructions.
2. Please initial by your name on the Mass ministers schedule (normally posted in the Gathering Space on cork board) and check-in with that Mass's Sacristan.
3. Find and wear one of the EMHC minister medallions.
4. EMHCs are identified for all weekend and Holy Day of Obligation Masses. However, at any given Mass, there may not be enough EMHCs present. Therefore, *PLEASE* serve, if we are short EMHCs. ***If you are unable to serve as scheduled, please find a replacement in advance of the scheduled Mass.***
5. Our "**Sunday Best**" describes the type of clothing to be worn by EMHCs. The Sanctuary is not an appropriate place for soiled sneakers or jeans, flip-flops, running shoes or any other sports-related footwear or attire.

\*\* Sacristans are tasked to ensure scheduled ministers are present before the Mass start time. Good liturgies do not just happen—they are well planned. If you have not arrived/checked in with the Sacristan 10 minutes before the Mass, they have been instructed to find a replacement for you. If you are delayed, the ***replacement minister*** will fulfill the EMHC role instead.

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- The sacristan will prepare the credence table for the Mass (if used) including: the chalices, patens, water cruet, finger bowl, corporal, purificator, presider's chalice pall, etc., before the liturgy's start time.
- In the long-standing tradition and teachings of the Church (such as the instructions of St. Ambrose, St. Thomas Aquinas, et al) arriving before the Mass start time – especially, for scheduled EMHCs (at least 10-15 minutes) – permits us to be unrushed, and *time to be respectful and to prayerfully reflective before God in anticipation of the scheduled liturgy and the ministry role you will be undertaking.*
- The purpose of the Prayer Before Mass is to recollect oneself and transition from the world outside to the reverential atmosphere to worship God; turn our attention toward Christ; and leave behind all other worldly concerns and distractions.
- It is a good time, throughout the Mass, to ask Christ to forgive all of your venial sins since your last confession, and especially to help us resolve any bad feelings that might have arisen (like road rage in the car on the way to Church or a fight with the spouse or kids, as we walked out the door to come to the Mass).

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### *General Procedures for EMHCs*

- If EMHCs are required by pastoral need, they approach the altar **only after** the priest celebrant fully receives Holy Communion. At the St. Michael Parish, EMHCs are asked to please stand before the sanctuary stairs (on the baptismal font side) (after the Sign of Peace), until the priest has communicated himself of the Body **and** the Blood. *“After the priest has concluded his own self-Communication, he distributes Communion to the [altar servers and] Extraordinary Ministers, assisted by the deacon (if present), and then hands the sacred vessels to the EMHCs for distribution of Holy Communion to the people.” (#38 – Distribution of Holy Communion)*
- *“When receiving Holy Communion, the communicant bows his or her head before receiving the sacrament as a gesture of reverence and receives the Body of the Lord from the minister. The consecrated host may be received either on the tongue or on the hand at the discretion of the communicant. When Holy Communion is received under both kinds, the sign of reverence is also made before receiving the Precious Blood.” (GIRM #160)*

At the end of the Sign of Peace, the priest or deacon will bring the paten or ciborium (with previously consecrated hosts) from the Tabernacle to the altar, if/as needed.
- As EMHCs approach the sanctuary steps, please **do not** continue to exchange signs of peace. After the presider has received both the Body and Blood, ministers may then proceed into the sanctuary and stand beside (baptismal font side) the altar to receive communion. After receiving communion, they will go to respective communion positions.

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\*\* The EMHC assisting with the distribution of the Precious Body shall wait for the Priest to arrive at his communion position before he/she begins to distribute.

\*\* EMHCs distributing the Precious Blood shall stand a distance away from the person distributing the consecrated Hosts to avoid crowding.

\*\* If a deacon is present, remember one EMHC minister is not needed; the deacon (as an ordinary minister) is **required**, by virtue of his ordained ministerial office, to be an Ordinary minister of the Precious Blood (i.e., chalice).

**If** children and communicants come forward for a blessing during communion, the EMHC will **only** proffer a statement (similar to: ***“Receive the Lord Jesus in your heart.”***) with no hand movements or other gestures indicative of any formal of blessing. (Diocesan Norm #3) ***Touching of the hair, signing of foreheads, etc., is strongly discouraged and prohibited.*** (NB: The Communion procession is intended for the baptized Catholics in good standing to receive Holy Communion. A “blessing” is proffered by an ordained clergy member at the end of the Mass (e.g., during the Concluding Rite by the Final Blessing and Dismissal).)

- Please, remember: **one ministry, per person** per liturgical celebration. Some people regularly attempt to fulfill dual roles (i.e., Reader and Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, etc.). However, no one should serve in more than one liturgical position at the same Mass, unless it is *absolutely necessary to do so* because of the unplanned for absence of another minister; there are no other, such as certified or qualified replacement minister available; and Mass’s priest celebrant approves. (cf. GIRM #110)

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There are times when EMHCs do not show up. If you are able, please step forward to perform as an EMHC, if such a situation arises.

- Be flexible. If you are finished with distribution at your station, please step closer to a nearby station to assist in distribution there, if/as needed.
- Ushers will also alert EMHCs of communicants unable to come forward to receive communion. Please give them Holy Communion (only the Precious Body, not the Precious Blood (due to the increased risk of spillage while walking, et al)) where they are seated.
- The music ministers will come forward for communion after the assembly has received communion. The EMHC(s) on the **choir side** are generally responsible for administering communion to the music ministers. (GIRM #86)

### ***Distribution of Holy Communion and Addressing the Communicant***

- EMHCs of the **BODY OF THE LORD**: Raises the Host slightly (to eye level) and says, “**THE BODY OF CHRIST.**” The communicant responds “**AMEN**” and then receives either on the tongue or on the hand.
- If no response is given by the communicant, the EMHC should reply “**AMEN**” in a low voice on behalf of the communicant.
- PLEASE DO NOT say: “*This is the Body of Christ*” or “*Receive the Body of Christ*” or use the person’s name if you know the individual communicant.

- No communicant is to receive more than one Host at a Mass. (Diocesan Norm #7) (Homebound EMHCs receive their needed consecrated hosts from the priest or deacon, after the Mass. (Diocesan Norm #10))
- If a seemingly, uncatechized person approaches for communion, the EMHC should discretely inquire if they are a Catholic and already received their First Communion. If not, a brief statement (e.g., “*Receive the Lord Jesus in your heart*”) (Diocesan norm #3) (with no hand movements indicative of a blessing) will be given to them instead of giving the person Holy Communion. This also applies in instances when a young-looking child approaches, who acts like they have not yet received First Communion.
- EMHCs with the **PRECIOUS BLOOD**: Raises the chalice slightly and says, “**THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.**” The communicant responds “**AMEN**” and receives the chalice to drink of the Blood.
- If no response is given by the communicant, the EMHC should reply “**AMEN**” in a low voice on behalf of the communicant.
- PLEASE DO NOT say: “*This is the Blood of Christ*” or “*Receive the Blood of Christ*” or use the person’s name if you know the individual communicant.
- After each communicant has received the Blood of Christ, the EMHC will carefully wipe both sides of the rim of the chalice with the purificator. This action is a matter of hygiene. For the same reason, the EMHC will then rotate the chalice approximately a ¼ turn before offering it to the next communicant; using a fresh/different portion of the purificator for each wipe of the chalice rim.

### ***After Communion Distribution***

- Following the distribution of communion to the faithful: Ministers of the paten shall bring any and all remaining consecrated hosts to the priest/deacon at the altar. Ministers of the chalice may consume any remaining Precious Blood (however, only in the sanctuary, and near and facing the altar) and ***place their purificator over the top of the chalice (not in it)*** (Diocesan Norm #9). Empty patens and chalices are then placed on the credence table. The presider or deacon will collect remaining consecrated hosts in the ciborium and return them to the Tabernacle.
- Chalices ***cannot*** be placed on the credence table with Precious Blood in them; it must be consumed. If the EMHC is/are unable to consume the remaining Precious Blood, please request a member of the clergy assist. At no time, can Precious Blood be poured down the sacrarium or common sink and drainage system.
- All sacred communion vessels must be purified immediately after the Mass by a priest, deacon, or instituted acolyte at the credence table or the altar.
- Once the communion vessels have been purified, they are then to be cleansed (with warm water and soap, (in the sacristy), dried, and stored in the appropriate cabinet(s). This cleansing of the Communion vessels is to be done by the scheduled EMHCs after the Mass. As a general rule, they should be washed with soap and water after every Mass.

### ***Purifying and Cleansing***

(GIRM #278-280)

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- The priest, deacon, or instituted acolyte at or after Mass, by using a purificator, ***purify*** the vessels used for Communion by wiping the surface of the patens over a chalice; causing any remaining portions/particles of the Body of Christ to be placed into the chalice. A small amount of water is then poured into each chalice and moved around the inside surfaces to purify it of any remaining Precious Blood or consecrated host particles. The mixture (ablution) is then consumed by them and the chalice's inside surface is wiped dry with the purificator. The vessels are then ready for *cleansing* after the Mass. Purification is to be done on the Altar or Credence Table.
- All EMHCs are asked to assist in *cleansing* Communion vessels after each Mass in coordination with the Sacristan.

### **MINISTRY POINTERS TO REMEMBER:**

- **DO NOT RUSH YOUR DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION.** It is God's greatest, loving gift to us!
- **MAINTAIN AN ATTITUDE OF REVERENCE.**
- **BE ATTENTIVE AND PRESENT TO EACH COMMUNICANT** in your expression and mannerisms.
- If the Precious Blood in your chalice has been fully consumed, cover your chalice with the purificator, return to the sanctuary (baptismal font side), and then stand there until all the other EMHCs are present and communion is finished. EMHCs may not place anything on the altar please. The EMHCs shall hand their communion vessels and purificators to a priest, deacon, or instituted acolyte. All EMHCs will then leave the sanctuary area together, offer a reverential bow, and return to seats.
- Do not place or stuff the purificator into the chalice.

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- If distributing the Body of Christ and you run out of consecrated Hosts, please turn to the priest or a nearby EMHC to obtain additional consecrated Hosts to continue the distribution of Holy Communion. Or the EMHC may begin breaking the Hosts in half or quarters, if/as needed.

**SPECIAL SITUATIONS:**

- **INTINCTION:** The practice of self-intinction is not permitted within the Diocese of Colorado Springs. If a communicant comes to you and attempts to dip a Consecrated Host into the chalice of Blood, politely cover the chalice with the purificator and inform them: *“The bishop requests that you consume of the Body, before you partake of the Blood.”*

If the communicant insists on self-intinction, the EMHC is not to permit it. The EMHC is, however, asked to tell them to speak with the Priest after the Mass about the matter.

- Communicants who present themselves for reception of communion and themselves make a gesture to **take** the consecrated host from the EMHC (as if a potato chip):
  - The EMHC will withdraw the host from the reach of the individual;
  - Ask the individual if they are a Catholic in good standing;
  - And instruct them to properly receive the Precious Body on their tongue or hand;

- If the individual advises they are a Catholic in good standing, however, still does not exhibit a proper manner of receiving communion, the EMHC will then communicate the person on their tongue (in order to safeguard the Eucharist) and advise the individual to please speak with the Priest after the Mass concerning this matter.

- Ushers will also alert EMHCs of communicants unable to come forward to receive communion. Please give them Holy Communion (only the Precious Body, not the Precious Blood (due to the increased risk of spillage while walking, et al)) where they are seated.
- EMHCs must be vigilant to ensure that the consecrated Host is consumed in their presence before the person leaves. If they walk away, the EMHC is to follow them and ask them to either consume the Host or return it. (GIRM #94/Diocesan Norm #6)
- **DROPPING CONSECRATED HOST:** Carefully, pick it up and: (a) Re-communicate it to the person again; or (b) place it in the palm of your hand and later, give it to the priest or deacon at the altar, after the distribution of Holy Communion has been completed.
- **SPILLING OF PRECIOUS BLOOD:** Reposition yourself in front of the area to protect it and place your purificator over the spill area. After the distribution of Communion is completed, inform the priest or deacon of the spillage. The priest or deacon will clean it up, by washing the area with plenty of water and using a purificator to blot/absorb the ablution mixture.



- If a person's clothes are affected, instruct them on how to wash out the garment by hand (over a bowl) in the church's bathroom, if possible, before leaving. The bowl with the ablution mixture (of sacramental blood and water from the garment rinsing) is to then be poured down the sacrarium or directly into the ground outside.
- Some communicants may not receive the Body of Christ (in the form of a normal, unleavened wheat host), because they are gluten intolerant. In such instances:
  - ✓ They may receive a consecrated low-gluten Host from the priest celebrant \*, or
  - ✓ May only receive the Precious Blood of Christ from the chalice (it is their choice).

\* Low-gluten host(s) are to be stored in a metal pyx—apart from the consecrated wheat hosts in the minister's Communion paten—to avoid incidental cross contamination and avoidable, later illness by the communicant.

- Similarly, there may be some communicants who may not receive the Blood of Christ, because of medical intolerance; allergies; illness; non-alcohol consumption restrictions due to medications, etc. Please be conscious that they may instead bow before the chalice instead of receiving the Precious Blood.
- EMHCs walking behind the altar is discouraged. This holy space is reserved to the ordained clergy. EMHCs walking across the sanctuary (i.e., from the ambo side to the baptismal side and/or credence table), should do so in front of the altar.



We are  
the Church.

God inhabits us!

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