

***St. Michael
Catholic Church***

***Guidelines for Extraordinary
Ministers of Holy Communion
(EMHCs) to the Homebound,
Hospitalized or Health Care Facilities***



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

These guidelines have been prepared to assist you in making your service to Christ and his Church organized, joyful, and hopefully more spirit filled, for you as well as those you visit. We hope that your service will encourage, enhance and support you in your daily walk with God, and that through your participation in sharing the Holy Eucharist 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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Overview / Introduction

Since as early as 150 AD, following the Lord's Day Eucharistic celebration, ministers took Holy Communion from the Sunday gathered assembly's Eucharistic celebration, to those who were unable to attend. These included people who were in prison for living in accord with the Gospel, and those otherwise unable to attend (e.g., the sick and the elderly, etc.).

Diocese of Colorado Springs Norms

The distribution of the Holy Eucharist (i.e., the Body of Christ) as Holy Communion to a person or persons outside of the parish church (i.e., those who are homebound, hospitalized or in a health care facility, etc.) must be reverently and securely transported in a small, metal closeable container called a "*pyx*".

EMHCs may not come forward during the Communion procession to be given more than one Host [for their own consumption] during the Liturgy of the Mass (cf. Diocesan Norm #7). Likewise, a pyx should not be presented to the minister distributing Holy Communion during the Mass Communion process either (cf. Diocesan Norm #10).

EMHCs taking Holy Communion to those outside of the parish church are asked to discretely come up to the sanctuary/altar area after the distribution of Communion is completed to receive the appropriate number of consecrated Communion hosts. [At the St. Michael Parish: After the Mass has concluded, please come forward to receive the appropriate number of consecrated hosts for your pyx from a Priest or Deacon].

Travelling to and from the Church:

When taking Holy Communion to the homebound or those in hospitals, the tasked EMHC must go immediately and directly from the parish church to the place(s) where Holy Communion is to be distributed. No other activities are to be undertaken while the Eucharist is in the possession of the EMHC.

While the Eucharist is in the possession of the EMHC, proper reverence and respect must be shown to the Real Presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

"It is not lawful for anyone to keep the blessed Eucharist in personal custody or to carry it around, unless there is an urgent pastoral need and the prescriptions of the diocesan Bishop are observed" (CIC 935 (the Church's Code of Canon Law)).

The Eucharist may never be kept in the home, automobile or any other place for intended future use or for adoration. It may be kept only on the person of the EMHC for the time that the homebound or sick are to be visited.

Rites Used When Distributing Communion:

When distributing Holy Communion to the hospitalized or homebound only the Church's prescribed ritual must be used. All mandated EMHCs are to use the prescribed ritual book, *Pastoral Care of the Sick*, or the condensed ritual book called *Communion of the Sick* that contains only the ceremonies that can be used by an EMHC when distributing Holy Communion to the sick and homebound. (The EMHC is encouraged to bring along a Missalette in order to read the daily prescribed scriptural Mass readings during their visit.)

There are two options for how this rite may be celebrated: *Communion in Ordinary Circumstances* (in a residential home) or *Communion in a Hospital or Institution*, as applicable.

EMHCs are to transport Holy Communion to the Homebound, Hospitalized, etc., in a pastor approved pyx and carried with an approved burse (not in a pants pocket, purse or handbag). If it determined 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 [as that constitutes self-communication]. [If this is not possible, the EMHC must return all undistributed consecrated hosts to the parish church and contact a priest or deacon to have them placed in the tabernacle's ciborium. At no time is an EMHC permitted to enter the tabernacle, for any reason (Diocesan Norm #10).]

St. Michael Parish Church Peculiar Norms

In order to comply with the Church's established liturgical norms (including the General Instruction to the Roman Missal (GIRM)):

1. Currently mandated St. Michael Parish Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHCs), who have been specially trained for this unique and praiseworthy ministry, must:

a. Utilize only church-issued or approved pyx(es) to transport consecrated Communion hosts to the sick, homebound, hospitalized, and those in other health care facilities.

b. Utilize only Church-issued or approved liturgical books, which provide the prescribed norms and liturgy regarding the celebration of the Liturgy of the Word and the Rite of Communion during each visit. If you need one of these booklets, please contact the pastor or the parish office.

c. Visit, offer, and distribute Holy Communion to all Catholics (able to validly receive Holy Communion) in the home, hospital or other health care facilities. Selective distribution of Holy Communion to friends or family members is highly *discouraged* and is generally not permitted—especially when/if there is question whether they are Catholic.

d. When possible, bring and leave a copy of a current parish bulletin with the person/family visited to keep them informed of the parish's activities during their absence from the community's scheduled liturgies.

2. If during the EMHC's visit, the person to be visited relates that they are in need of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and/or Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, the EMHC must contact and relay this information to the parish office or the pastor, as soon as possible.

NB: Church's norms discourage simply visiting the homebound or hospitalized to regularly confer the Sacrament of Reconciliation and/or Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick at *fixed intervals* (i.e., monthly), if/when there has been no change(s) in the person's health condition(s). Doing so, incorrectly implies that these sacraments of healing (like a milk carton, for example) have affixed with expiration dates or are somehow time limited in their efficaciousness.

3. If the EMHC is scheduled to visit a person or facility and later find they are unable to fulfill this vital and important ministry, he or she is required to find another qualified EMHC as a replacement. If you are unsuccessful in locating a replacement, please notify the parish's Homebound EMHC Coordinator/Scheduler or the pastor, as soon as possible. If the person to be visited has been moved from the home to a hospital or other health care facility, please notify the parish's office.

Instructions Regarding Pyx Purification (After the Completion of Communion Visit(s))

Once the EMHC's Communion pyx is empty, it may need to be purified.

Within the St. Michael Parish Church, if there is no priest, deacon or acolyte readily available to assist the EMHC in purifying the pyx when they return to the church, please use good judgment and, if necessary, purify the pyx promptly yourself.

[Note: EMHCs scheduled to take Holy Communion to the homebound, those in hospitals or in health care facilities are permitted to purify the pyx following distribution of Holy Communion themselves, if/as needed. The Holy See's revocation of the indult to the U.S. several years ago (regarding the purification of Communion vessels), applied only to the discontinuance of EMHCs purifying the sacred communion vessels during or after the Liturgy of the Mass.]

NB: If there are any remaining particles of consecrated host(s) within the pyx it ***must be purified***.

The pyx purification procedure or process will consist of:

- (a) Simply (slowly and reverently) pouring a little, warm, clean water into the empty pyx;
- (b) Promptly and reverently consuming the mixture of water and particles; and
- (c) Afterwards, wiping the pyx dry with a purificator before it is put away in storage for future use.

As a reminder, if you have borrowed a pyx from the parish church and no longer exercise this ministry, please return the Communion pyx to the church, so it may be used by others. The use of private or "personal" pyxes is discouraged.

In closing, as an important matter of reference: A communion pyx always needs to be blessing by a bishop, priest or deacon before being placed into service or use for the first time. Likewise, when a pyx becomes unserviceable, it must be burned or buried—since it remains a "blessed article" requiring reverence and appropriate disposition.

How to handle difficult or awkward situations

If the communicant spits back up the consecrated Host, it must still be treated with all due reverence. It needs to be collected, and put in a container of water until it dissolves (usually after a couple days). This is one prescribed function for the ablution cup (which is located on the credence table in the St. Michael Parish Church).

Once the Host has dissolved, a member of the clergy will ensure that the ablution cup's water is poured down the sacrarium or onto the ground in an un-trafficked area outside.

If a Host falls to the floor, a similar procedure as at Mass should be followed to collect fragments. In this instance, the Host is to be collected and then promptly placed in the water of the ablution cup, as noted above.

Conclusion

Any unforeseen incidents or questions arising from the Homebound/Hospitalized/Health Care Facility EMHC ministry are to be brought directly to the Pastor for discussion and/or timely resolution.

Source References

- http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20040423_redemptionis-sacramentum_en.html
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- <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/frequently-asked-questions/thirty-questions-on-instruction-redemptionis-sacramentum.cfm>
- General Instruction to the Roman Missal (GIRM), 2011.
- Diocese of Colorado Springs' Mandation Video for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC), 2013, 2016, and 2019.

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