



*Really partaking of the body of the Lord in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread, we are taken up into communion with Him and with one another. (Lumen Gentium #7)*

## ***Introduction***

The **ordinary** minister of Holy Communion is a bishop, priest or deacon (CANON 910, §1). However, other members of the faithful, known as **extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (EMHCs)**, may be commissioned to assist with the distribution of the Sacrament (CANONS 230, §3 AND 910, §2). EMHCs can ensure a timely and reverent distribution of Communion among a large assembly.

## ***Who can Serve as an EMHC?***

*“In this ministry, you must be examples of Christian living in faith and conduct; you must strive to grow in holiness through this sacrament of unity and love. Remember that, though many, we are one body because we share the one bread and one cup.”*

-- The Rite of Commissioning Special Ministers of Holy Communion

Those selected to serve as EMHCs should be fully initiated members of the community who strive to live the Christian life, to give good example, and who are devoted to this great mystery which signifies the unity of the Church and brings it about. The Church is not expecting saints to carry out this ministry; but those who take their faith seriously and desire to grow in that faith.

1. The EMHC must be fully initiated in the Catholic Church (i.e., baptized and confirmed).
2. It is the pastor’s responsibility to ensure that all EMHCs receive appropriate spiritual, theological and practical training to exercise this ministry with knowledge and reverence.

3. The EMHC must be commissioned to serve in the assigned parish(es)/ institution(s). Commissioning is valid for a period of three years at a time. Those interested in serving as an EMHC should contact their pastor. A pastor or bishop may terminate the service of the EMHC at any time, and the EMHC may also resign at any time.
4. It is preferable that EMHCs do not serve simultaneously in other liturgical ministries, such as lectors or choir members at the Mass. It is more decorous and reverent for an individual to concentrate on a single ministry and it better represents and respects the diversity of gifts in the community.

### *How to prepare to serve as EMHC*

#### **Prayer**

Reflect upon the people to whom you will be ministering. Call to mind how you are all members of the Body of Christ. Pray for the individuals who make up your parish community and ask the Lord to grant you deeper communion with Christ and one another through the Mass. Strive to live the Christian life. Reflect upon how you live out gospel values and how you can be an agent of peace in your community. Cultivate your personal prayer life. The deeper your life of personal prayer, the more you bring to the community gathered for worship. Your ministry does not begin and end with the communion rite. Foster an attitude of hospitality and reverence for Christ in all people at all times.

#### **Study**

Prepare for Mass by reading in advance the texts to be proclaimed and reflect upon the connection between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Learn more about the theology of the Mass and the various liturgical roles, especially the role of the baptized assembly. Learn more about the meaning of the Eucharist as the source and summit of the Christian life.

#### **Practical Preparation**

Know when you are scheduled to serve. Arrive in due time to sign in and prepare your heart for service. Be familiar with the protocol for this ministry. Dress modestly so as not to draw attention to yourself. Be sure your hands are clean.

If sufficient regular ministers (Bishops, priests, or deacons) are present, the EMHC must graciously step aside from service.

If you have a contagious illness, find a replacement for yourself.

## ***Protocol – The Communion Procession***

### **Comportment**

- Your reverence for the people you serve and for the Sacrament will show itself in your actions.
- Take care to minister with unhurried and deliberate movements.
- Stand with good posture but be at ease with those to whom you minister. Your presence at the Lord's table should reflect both comfort and care.
- Give full attention to each person who comes forward. Allow the moment to be a sacred moment for each communicant.

### **The Body of Christ**

- To distribute the Body of Christ: hold the host slightly above the vessel look into the eyes of the communicant and clearly say, "The Body of Christ".
- It is important to speak to the person, not to the air, the host, or the vessel.
- Wait for the communicant to respond, "Amen" then place the host on the communicant's hand or tongue. This is a special conversation, a faith statement, not a commonplace dialogue.

### **The Precious Blood**

- To distribute the Blood of Christ: hold the cup up slightly, look into the eyes of the communicant and say "The Blood of Christ".
- Wait for the communicant to respond, "Amen". The communicant then takes the cup and drinks a small amount.
- Only in the case of physical infirmity should the EMHC assist in holding the cup.
- Receive the cup back from the communicant with both hands and wipe the rim inside and out with a purificator where the person drank.

### **Names and other Greetings**

- Do not use the name of the person or any additional words.
- The act of giving and receiving communion is an act of faith in the presence of Christ.
- Nothing should dilute or diffuse that action. Every person who comes to the Lord's Table is equal and should be treated with the same hospitality and respect.
- Moreover, through baptism and Eucharist we are one in Christ and through Him are bound to one another. Everything else, including our name, is secondary.

### **Blessing**

- If someone comes forward with arms crossed seeking a blessing, trace the sign of the cross on the person's forehead and say: "May you be blessed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit".
- This gesture affirms that all are united by the Holy Spirit and that a deep spiritual communion is possible even when we do not share the Body and Blood of Christ.
- Every effort should be made to prevent making this blessing an event that would detract from or suggest equivalence to the reception of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

### **When Accidents Happen**

- If you or the communicant drops the host, pick it up immediately. If possible, consume it directly. Otherwise, set it aside for consumption at the end of the communion procession. You might keep it in the hand that is also holding the vessel

or inside the vessel but apart from the other hosts. If you will be unable to consume the host, place it in a purificator and entrust it to the priest or sacristan.

- If you or the communicant spills the Precious Blood, immediately cover the spill with the purificator. Obtain a new purificator and position yourself in front of the spill as you continue to distribute communion. The priest or sacristan will know how to properly clean up the spill after Mass.

### **Parish Protocol**

Every parish should hold a training session that includes the information in this guideline but also goes over the procedures specific to the parish, such as where to sign in, how to find a replacement, when to come forward, where to stand, roles for receiving and placement for distribution, procedures after communion and any additional duties after Mass.

### **Holy Communion to the Sick, Homebound, and Imprisoned**

- Contact the Health Care Apostolate Office of the Diocese for more information – Phone (403) 218-5501 or online: <http://calgarydiocese.ca/health-care-apostolate.html>

## **FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION DIRECTIVE OF THE GIRM IN THE DIOCESE OF CALGARY**

### ***When do the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion come to the Altar?***

In the Diocese of Calgary, the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may enter the sanctuary at the Sign of Peace, and stand away from the altar.

After the priest consumes the Eucharistic Species, the extraordinary ministers approach the altar. They may receive Communion from the Priest, the deacon, or one of the other extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion who has been the first of the laity to receive Communion.

However, the Priest must present the Communion vessels to the extraordinary ministers

### ***What is the posture for receiving Communion in the Diocese of Calgary?***

**SEE GIRM #160.** The more common posture is for the people to stand to receive Communion, but we need to be aware that kneeling is permitted.

*A prie-dieu* should not be provided for this latter posture.

It is important to convey to the people that paragraph **GIRM #160** is not an indication that one posture is more holy than the other.

Formation is also needed on:

- a) How to receive on the tongue: tilt the head back and extend the tongue in order that the hand of the minister does not contact the mouth of the communicant.
- b) How to receive in the hand: place one hand beneath the other, then take the lower hand and lift the host to one's mouth.

- c) No sign of the cross or genuflection is required after receiving Communion.

### ***What is the Sign of Reverence at Communion?***

The bow of the head is a sign of reverence for the sacred presence of the Risen Lord in the Communion elements. This is a bow of the head and not a deep bow.

In order that it be a gesture of integrity and not rote motion the whole Communion procession will need to take on a slightly slower pace.

Each communicant will make the bow of the head while standing before the sacred elements, not while the person ahead is receiving Communion. The bow will occur in a timely manner while the previous communicant is moving away. The minister will wait for the communicant to make the bow, then raise his or her face toward the minister in order to respond appropriately. Once the communicant raises the head, the minister holds the host and proclaims *The Body of Christ*. The communicant responds *Amen*. The consecrated host is placed with care upon the hand of the communicant, or on the tongue. The communicant then moves to the station to receive the Blood of Christ in the same manner.

In the Diocese of Calgary the bow is encouraged before both elements: the Body of Christ and the Blood of Christ.

### ***Communion from the Chalice***

In the Diocese of Calgary, the Blood of the Lord may be consumed only by drinking from the chalice.

### ***Who May Place Remaining Consecrated Hosts in the Tabernacle?***

**GIRM #163** states that only the deacon or priest may go to the tabernacle. This applies also to retrieving previously consecrated hosts from the tabernacle. In the Diocese of Calgary, formally installed extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may also go to the tabernacle.

From a practical viewpoint it is fitting therefore to have sufficient hosts consecrated at the liturgy to provide for the entire assembly in so far as this is possible.

### ***Who May Purify the vessels?***

**SEE GIRM #163 & 192.**

In the Diocese of Calgary, a priest, deacon, instituted acolyte, or formally installed extraordinary minister of Holy Communion may purify the vessels. The principle here is that if you can do the greater, then you can do the lesser.

## **GUIDELINES FOR MINISTERING TO THOSE WITH CELIAC DISEASE**

Celiac disease is a condition of intolerance to gluten. Consumption of food with gluten by someone with the disease can cause suffering and illness. As Canon Law requires the use of wheat flour for eucharistic bread, some individuals with celiac disease are unable to receive communion under the form of bread. However, there are pastoral options that the parish can provide to help these individuals participate fully in the eucharistic liturgies.

### **Can we use a gluten-free host?**

No. A completely gluten-free host is not valid matter for eucharistic bread in the Roman Catholic Church. Therefore, hosts made from rice or corn, for example, are not valid.

### **Can we use a low-gluten host?**

Approved low-gluten hosts are available. Many individuals with celiac disease are able to tolerate the very low amount of gluten in low-gluten hosts. It may be necessary to purify one's fingers before distributing a low-gluten host to avoid cross-contamination.

### **From where should the parish obtain low-gluten hosts?**

The Diocese of Calgary is supported in prayer by the Sisters of the Precious Blood, who have a low gluten host available. Diocesan policy recommends that all parishes support the ministry of the sisters by obtaining their altar breads from them. You can reach them by phone: 1-866-955-5727 or e-mail: [altarbread@pbsisters.com](mailto:altarbread@pbsisters.com).

### **Can an individual with celiac disease receive the Precious Blood alone?**

Yes. The Body and Blood of Christ are fully present under each species of the sacrament. For those who are severely gluten-intolerant the priest can provide the precious blood in a separate chalice that does not contain a particle of the host. It is recommended that this chalice is offered first to those with celiac disease so that particles of a gluten host are not introduced to the chalice.

### **I have celiac disease. What should I do?**

When you attend a new parish, it is helpful to present yourself to the celebrant before Mass to explain your condition and to ask if the parish provides low-gluten hosts or offers the Precious Blood.

### **What do I do when no alternative is available?**

All efforts should be made on the part of the parish to enable the individual to participate in communion. When no alternative is available, the Church recommends that those with celiac disease make a spiritual communion.

### **I am a pastor. How can my parish help those with celiac to participate more fully?**

Many Catholics do not know that the Church provides low-gluten hosts or that it may be an option to receive the Precious Blood alone. Parishes should periodically mention the availability of these options in the parish bulletin and on the parish website.

### **What does the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops have to say about celiac disease and the reception of communion?**

The CCCB has a short document concerning this matter:

[http://www.cccb.ca/site/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2124&Itemid=1226&lang=eng](http://www.cccb.ca/site/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2124&Itemid=1226&lang=eng)

## Publications

- Turner, Paul and Kenneth Riley. *Guide for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion*.
- Kwatera, Michael. *The Ministry of Communion*.
- Hughes, Kathleen. *Saying Amen: A Mystagogy of Sacrament*.
- Foley, Ed. *From Age to Age: How Eucharist was Celebrated Throughout the Ages*. LTP,
- Gaillardetz, Richard. *Broken and Poured Out: A Spirituality for Eucharistic Ministers*.
- National Pastoral Life Center, "Dos & Don'ts for Eucharistic Ministers". Pamphlets.  
<http://www.nplc.org/>

## Online

- *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) 2011. <http://nlo.cccb.ca/>
- Implementation Directives for the Diocese of Calgary according to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* 2011. <http://calgarydiocese.ca/liturgy/>
- *Redemptionis Sacramentum*– "On certain matters to be observed or to be avoided regarding the Most Holy Eucharist"  
[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccdds\\_doc\\_20040423\\_redemptionis-sacramentum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20040423_redemptionis-sacramentum_en.html)
- Implementation in the Diocese of Calgary of *Redemptionis Sacramentum*  
<http://calgarydiocese.ca/liturgy/>
- *Sacrosanctum Concilium*  
[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19631204\\_sacrosanctum-concilium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html)
- Vatican Website | <http://www.vatican.va> | For all official liturgical documents statements
- Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops | <http://www.cccb.ca>
- CCCB Publications | <http://www.cccbpublications.ca> | For liturgical resources approved for Canada.
- The Sunday Website of St. Louis University| <http://liturgy.slu.edu/> –Weekly liturgical resources corresponding to the Sunday readings.

**OFFICE OF LITURGY**  
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