

Procedures and Responsibilities For Eucharistic Ministers

The Church provides for the commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (commonly referred to as, Eucharistic Ministers), but it also establishes that procedures and responsibilities for such a ministry must be clearly stated. Therefore, the following guidelines will govern the activity of Eucharistic ministers at all the parishes in our cluster.

General Information:

Please try to arrive at church, at least 15 minutes prior to the start of Mass. If you are the Tabernacle Minister, please arrive 30 minutes prior to the start of Mass, so you have ample time to setup for Mass.

As you enter the narthex, or vestibule of the church, please go to the Vesting Sacristy, and enter your presence on the board. There will be a whiteboard in the Vesting Sacristy, where you can write your name next to the particular station that you will be ministering. The schedule of liturgical ministers will contain an order of Eucharistic ministers that may be purely alphabetical and may not designate your position. That is why we need you to designate your position when you arrive for Mass in the Vesting Sacristy.

The abbreviations are as follows: Presider (H1) – Host position 1, TM (H2) – tabernacle minister and Host position 2, H3 – Host position 3, H4 – Host position 4, C1 – Chalice position 1, C2 – Chalice position 2, C3 – Chalice position 3, C4 – Chalice position 4.

Some parishes may not have all these communion stations, please refer to the diagrams for each parish attached to these instructions.

Please use the prayer in the Vesting Sacristy for personal prayer to center yourself before ministering at Mass. Before leaving the sacristy, communicate with other ministers as to what station you will be covering.

As much as possible, the deacons will supply the secretary with their schedules in order to minister the Chalice at Mass because a deacon is the Ordinary Minister of the Chalice. When the deacon is present, one of the Eucharistic Ministers (a chalice) will not be needed; however, if the deacon was not put on the liturgical ministry schedule for that Mass, then the deacon would usually allow the Eucharistic Minister to minister the Chalice instead.

Please come forward for communion at the completion of the Sign of Peace. Line up in the center aisle with the ministers of the cup at the front of the line. There is no need to kneel after the Lamb of God, because you are serving at this Mass. After the Presider receives the blood of Christ, you may walk in a line up to the altar (use the railing up the stairs, if needed). Since the ministers of the cup are in the front of the line, the Presider will distribute the host, then the chalice to the first 2, 3, or 4 ministers in the line depending on the parish and Mass time you are serving in and whether the deacon will be ministering one of the chalices. After the ministers of the cup have received communion from the Presider and have received their chalice, they will stand behind the altar. The host ministers will receive the Body of Christ from the Presider and if desired, they can receive the Blood of Christ from one of the ministers of the cup. When all the Eucharistic ministers have received communion, please move to your communion station.

Please be attentive to whether or not the choir or the cantor and organist have been to Communion.

At Holy Cross, the choir receives communion in line down the side aisle from Host 3 first. The cantor receives communion in line with the Eucharistic Ministers after the ministers of the cup. Host 3 brings communion to the organist after the communion line is done.

At St. Bartholomew, the organist and cantor receive communion in line with the Eucharistic Ministers. The choir receives communion at the end of the communion line from Host 3.

After distributing communion at your communion station, please check the section of pews in front of you for anyone raising their hand. Please bring communion to these persons in their pew.

After ministering, please bow to the altar before returning to your pew.

Ministers designated as TM or Tabernacle Minister have an added responsibility as follows:

TM (Tabernacle Minister) Responsibilities:

The minister designated as TM, should check the tabernacle, prior to the start of Mass, to make certain that the key to the tabernacle is in the door.

At the beginning of the Sign of Peace, the minister designated as TM, should immediately proceed to the tabernacle and carry the ciborium to the altar. Arrive at the altar as the Lamb of God (Angus Dei) begins or as promptly as possible after the Lamb of God has begun.

If there is more than one ciborium in the tabernacle, please bring **both** of them to the altar. Please place the ciborium(s) on the altar to the left of the priest, as he faces the people.

At Holy Cross, the TM also brings the patens from the credence table to the altar and takes their place at the end of the line.

At St. Bartholomew, because the tabernacle is fairly far away from the altar as it is in the place where there used to be an entrance to the Eucharistic Chapel, it is more efficient for Host 3 to bring the patens over to the altar from the credence table.

After the distribution of communion, the TM minister should ensure that all of the remaining consecrated hosts including small particles have been placed in the ciborium, after which the ciborium should be returned to the tabernacle.

If the number of hosts that remain exceed the capacity of the ciborium, the additional hosts should be placed in an additional ciborium, and both should then be returned to the tabernacle.

It is important to remember that the ciborium should never be emptied completely. At least one host is always to be present within the tabernacle.

After the last Mass that day, the key to the tabernacle door should be returned to its place in the Working Sacristy; otherwise the key may be left in the tabernacle for the next Mass that day.

The TM may genuflect to the Tabernacle when retrieving the reserved Body of Christ for the altar and when returning the Body of Christ to the Tabernacle. When holding the Body of Christ in the ciborium, you do not bow to the altar. You can bow to the altar after you have finished putting the ciborium in the Tabernacle.

The TM also acts as the sacristan and sets up the credence tables before Mass. Please see the Sacristan instructions that follow.

Sacristan Instructions (setup for credence tables)

1. Place three patens, water bowl (lavabo) with finger towel and 2 to 4 chalices with 2 to 4 purificators and 1 corporal on the credence tables. The number of chalices is dependent on the parish. St. John & Holy Cross – 4, St. Maximilian Kolbe – 2, St. Bartholomew – 2.
2. Take the tabernacle key from cabinet and check the number of hosts in the tabernacle ciborium. Leave tabernacle key in the tabernacle for Mass.
3. Place priest's paten (larger) with an appropriate number of small hosts with large host on top on the table at the rear of the church for the gift bearers to bring up the gifts. The following would be the usual number of small hosts to put into the large paten depending on the number of hosts in the ciborium (use your judgment): St. John & Holy Cross – 2 sleeves at each Mass, St. Maximilian Kolbe 5:00pm and 10:30 am – 3 sleeves, St. Maximilian Kolbe 8:00 am – 1 sleeve, St. Bartholomew 9:00 am – 2 sleeves, and St. Bartholomew 11:00 am – 1 sleeve. This number will vary from week to week and from Mass to Mass. Do not assume that this number is correct, it is only a guide. When in doubt ask the celebrant.
4. Place about 1-1/2 cups of wine in the large wine cruet on the table at the rear of the church for the gift bearers to bring up the gifts. The amount of wine should be adjusted according to the season – less in the summer, more at Christmas and Easter.
5. Introduce yourself to the Presider before Mass. If there is a visiting or retired priest, please help them with what they might need and go over the usual procedure for distributing communion to the Eucharistic Ministers.

Sacristan Instructions (setup for Baptism at Mass)

If you notice that there is a baptism to be celebrated at Mass, which is usually noted on the whiteboard in the Vesting Sacristy, then follow these instructions:

1. Put Sacred Chrism (vial marked 'SC') on the baptistery.
2. Place baptismal candle on the baptistery. Take candle out of box.
3. Place towel on the baptistery.
4. Place baptism booklet on the baptistery.
5. Light the Paschal candle just before Mass. The Paschal candle is usually located at the Baptismal Font except during the Easter Season when it is placed next to the ambo.

After Communion Responsibilities For all Eucharistic Ministers:

The guidelines of the Catholic Church suggest that only Eucharistic ministers are to purify the vessels that are utilized during the celebration of the Mass. Therefore, Eucharistic ministers of the Cup and Host are asked to do the following at the conclusion of Communion:

After communion, purify the cups at the side table or do so at the end of the Mass. Remove all of the cloths and vessels from the credence tables. If you are going to purify the chalices after Mass, then cover the chalices with purificators.

Normally, there is a sink in the working sacristy to provide for the cleaning of vessels. But not all our cluster's churches have a sacrarium, see below. The sink that has a stainless steel cover attached, is called a **sacrarium**. Unlike an ordinary sink, which drains directly into a building's sewer system, a sacrarium drains directly into the ground.

The sacrarium is to be utilized in the cleaning of all Eucharistic vessels, to ensure that no portion of the sacred species is ever deposited into a sewer system. In the event that there is no sacrarium, please use extra care in consuming the consecrated wine and any particles left in the patens after Mass. You can put a little water into the chalice after you've consumed the consecrated wine, swish it around and drink the water before wiping with the purificator. You can put any particles remaining in the patens into the chalice that has a little water in it in order to consume any leftover particles as well.

Please note that consecrated wine is never to be poured into the sacrarium nor should visible particles of hosts ever find their way even into the sacrarium. The consecrated elements must be consumed by a Eucharistic minister of the Cup. And if health concerns preclude the consumption of the consecrated wine by any minister of the Cup, contact another minister of the Cup or either the priest or the deacon, and it will be their responsibility to arrange for a proper disposal.

Water should be poured into the carafe, rinsed out thoroughly and allowed to air dry.

After the last Mass on that day, the two cruets, and the lavabo bowl (finger bowl) are to be rinsed out thoroughly and allowed to air dry on the counter, otherwise they can be left on the credence table. After the last Mass on that day place the patens and chalices back in the cabinet, otherwise the purified patens and chalices can be left on the credence tables.

Cloths that have been utilized during Mass are to be placed in a cleaning bin under the sink area.

Since the sacrarium drains directly into the ground, the water faucet should not be allowed to flow constantly into the sacrarium. Please leave the cover to the sacrarium open to allow for proper ventilation.

Special Circumstances:

If you have completed the distribution of communion at your station, please check to see if a minister at another station is in need of assistance.

If you have exhausted your supply of hosts, secure more hosts from another minister, or direct the people in your line to another station.

In the unlikely event that insufficient hosts are available for communion, please break the remaining hosts in smaller sections to accommodate the unexpected number of communicants.

If a host falls to the floor, and the communicant does not immediately retrieve it, pick up the host and consume it, or set the host aside, on your paten, for later consumption, or proper disposal.

If consecrated wine should spill from the cup, or the cup itself falls during communion, place your purificator over the spot. Then, go to the sacristy, and get another purificator and continue ministering the cup. Advise the priest or the deacon of the spillage, immediately after Mass, so that the area can be properly cleaned.

If you are ministering a cup, wipe the edge of the cup after each communicant and turn the cup. Do not simply dab at the area the communicant drank from.

If you are ministering a cup, and a communicant attempts to dip the host into the cup, attempt to cover the cup with your hand, and whisper that this practice, called self-intinction, is not permitted. However, they are permitted to give you their host and you, as the minister of the cup, can dip the host into the cup and administer both species to the communicant on the tongue. The communicant would not be permitted to receive in the hand in this case.

If while ministering a cup, a back up of people, waiting to receive, is creating a blockage across the front aisle, step back onto the first step of the sanctuary or move your position, until the congestion is relieved.

If you are ministering a cup, and consecrated wine remains after communion, either consume the wine at the altar or side table, or you can cover the cup with a purificator and have another minister consume the wine, immediately after Mass.

When young children, who are not yet old enough to receive, or when an adult comes forward, and their arms are folded to signal the fact that they are not to receive communion, simply make a sign of the cross on their forehead, or touch the top of their head and you can say “May God bless you” or something along those lines.

If you will be unable to serve as a Eucharistic minister, for an extended period of time, please notify the parish secretary of this fact.

As Christmas and Holy Week approaches, there will be special sign up sheets and special instructions for Eucharistic ministers. Please sign up early to insure that we will have an adequate number of ministers.