

EUCCHARISTIC MINISTER HANDBOOK

Welcome to the Ministry of Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist!

“The Eucharist constitutes the very life of the Church, for the Lord said; I am the bread of life. No one who comes to me shall ever be hungry; no one who believes in me shall ever thirst.”

“In every celebration of the Eucharist there should always be a sufficient number of ministers for the distribution of the Eucharist. Priority is always given to ordinary ministers (bishops, priests, deacons) and auxiliary ministers (instituted acolytes). When there are large numbers of the faithful present and there are **insufficient** ordinary and auxiliary members at hand, special or extraordinary ministers properly appointed beforehand should assist in the distribution of Communion.” (HLS, #29).

Your willingness to serve as an **Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist**, reflects not only response to your Baptismal call to serve the people of God, but a commitment to Christ as you share in the preaching, teaching and leading aspects of the church. You offer the Eucharist, recognize the Body of Christ in those to whom you offer Eucharist and ultimately you act as the Body of Christ by fully participating in the life of the parish and the wider community. Your willingness to commit to a monthly schedule, to prepare properly for your service and to arrive on time dressed appropriately for your assigned Mass, further reflects that commitment.

Once trained and commissioned in this ministry, you will be issued an identifying Ministry pin. Wear this pin humbly for it signifies that you have accepted the awesome privilege of assisting in the distribution of Holy Eucharist! **God bless your efforts!**

General Ministry Information:

- Those invited to serve in this ministry are designated only for service in this parish. Eucharistic Ministers should not take it upon themselves to bring Communion to a parent, family member, friend or neighbor, unless permission is given from the pastor or his designee, of the parish in which the person resides.
- The selection of and invitation to serve as an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist is a reflection of the diversity of the parish. An invitation to join the ministry does not mean that one is "better or holier than another", nor is an invitation indicative of a reward of some sort. Archdiocesan guidelines for invitation to service in this ministry clearly indicate that an invitation to serve ...not create an elite in the church community.

- Your respect for the Ministry should be reflected in your appearance and attire; appropriate attire includes being properly groomed and wearing a suit and tie or clean, nicely creased trousers with shirt and tie or nice sweater; pants suit or skirt or slacks with blouse/sweater. Please note: no jeans or shorts at any time! Jewelry or clothing which would be distracting to the Assembly should not be worn.

Additional Responsibilities Information

Before Mass Information

- On the day you are assigned to serve as an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist, it is appropriate and a good practice, to develop the habit of taking time to prepare for your service with quiet prayer and if possible, a reflective reading of Scripture.
- Plan on being in the sacristy at least 15 minutes prior to your scheduled Mass time; **check your name off the posted schedule or insert your name for the person for whom you are substituting** and then go to your seat within the Assembly.
- Your hands should be clean, with neatly trimmed and clean nails. It is good practice to wash your hands with soap and water before the liturgy, this is particularly important if you are a smoker. You may wish to do this when you are checking into the sacristy.
- Your participation in the liturgy should be whole and complete, by paying respectful attention to the proclamation of the Word, joining in the singing and offering the peace greeting, etc.

At Mass Information

- You should sit in the Assembly with family or friends, within the 1st 3rd of the Church, close enough to the altar to move there easily **during** the sign of peace within the liturgy.
- If, at the Mass to which you are assigned, there is the unexpected presence of a deacon or another priest, the last person named on the schedule should refrain from coming forward.
- Ministers come forward to the sides of the altar steps, **during** the "Sign of Peace", sanitize your hands and wait. Time your arrival to **precede** the Celebrant's readiness to begin the Breaking of the Bread as **this is a significant liturgical action**.

- You should participate in the singing of the Lamb of God chant.
- At St. Patrick Parish, you receive Communion after the celebrant. After the celebrants at the altar have received Communion, they will come to you with the Eucharist so you may receive. After reception, re-sanitize your hands and then receive a ciboria. You then go to your stations at the front of the Church. You should be alert to the needs of the faithful in the first row or two on either side of the Church, as often, physically challenged or elderly parishioners are there, to whom you should bring the Eucharist so they do not have to come forward.
- When bringing Eucharist to the balcony, be aware that you are only to bring Communion to the balcony. **Do not stay in the rear of the Church and distribute Communion after you come from the balcony.**
- When offering Eucharist, state in a clear, audible, but not loud voice, "The Body of Christ." This is a faith statement and should not be modified in any way under the guise of making it more "meaningful" by such statements as "Take Jesus", "The Precious Body of Jesus" etc. These statements DO NOT profess the faith of the Catholic Church regarding the meaning of the action at that moment.
- When offering Eucharist, do not state a person's name, even if you know it. This fragments the common unity of the assembly. When you say some names and not others, it implies some are more important than others.
- Remember - you are a presence of Christ to each person as you minister, so, smile kindly, and refrain from appearing annoyed or stern or appear to be in a hurry.
- Allow each communicant a moment to respond "Amen".
- If you drop the Consecrated Host, do not serve it to the person in front of whom you dropped it. Your calm demeanor at this moment can calm or assure an anxious and embarrassed person. Pick up the Host and consume it yourself, or palm it in your hand under the ciboria until you can place it in the ablution dish next to the Tabernacle for disposal.
- When there are no more communicants at your station, you bring any unconsumed elements to the right side of the Altar as quietly, efficiently and reverently as possible. The celebrant will take all ciboria to the tabernacle.

Distribution of the Precious Blood:

- Because of the numbers attending Masses, St. Patrick Parish only offers the cup on a limited basis.
- Hold the Chalice before each communicant and say "**The Blood of Christ**". The same comments hold true about modifying this statement as those for "**The Body of Christ**." The Communicant responds with an "Amen" and the minister hands the cup to the communicant, who takes the cup, takes a sip and hands the cup back.
- Wipe the rim of the cup carefully with the purificator, (inside and out) and turn the cup a quarter turn for the next person.
- If your cup is emptied take the empty cup to right side of the altar place your cup with the purificator in it on altar and then return to your seat within the Assembly.
- If, after the last communicant, you have Precious Blood remaining in your chalice, look around at the other stations to see if there is a place where you can assist or where some other minister may need the wine from your cup. If not, take the cup to the credence (table), consume the Precious Blood and then follow the same procedure as above. Please note, that if there is a substantial amount of Precious Blood left, no one is expected to consume an extraordinary quantity of Precious Blood. Please be responsible in getting others to assist you. If you have a wheat or alcohol related illness, you will not be expected to consume the Precious elements. In that case, please put your cup on the altar for the priest or deacon to consume and return to your place within the Assembly.
- If you drop or spill the Precious Blood - **DO NOT PANIC!** Stop what you are doing. Your demeanor will reassure those communicants in line or, in particular, the person who may have caused the spill. If the spill is small, your purificator may be all you need to blot the spill. Delay the communion line as little as possible if it is a large spill; go to the sacristy for a large towel or cloth. Soak up the Precious Blood as well as you can and then place a clean towel over the spot, get another chalice (if yours is empty or broken) and begin distributing at a spot removed from the spillage place so that no one needs to step on it. After the Liturgy, get a cold wet cloth and carefully scrub the place where the spill occurred. The cloths used to soak up the original spill should be placed with the purificators to be rinsed out in the appropriate manner.

Information about Intinction and Celiac Disease.

The General Instruction on the Roman Missal offers four (4) methods for administering communion from the cup, weighted in order of preference: drinking, by a spoon, through a tube, or by intinction (dipping the sacred host in the Precious Blood) The spoon and tube are not customary in the United States. Drinking directly from the cup is clearly preferred to any other method of ministering the Precious Blood and the only method we employ at Saint Patrick at this time.

Celiac Disease:

- Celiac disease is a disorder causing an allergic intestinal reaction to the gluten in wheat. Gluten is a protein enzyme which activates when flour is kneaded and functions to bind the wheat together. Gluten is a toxin to persons with the disease and damages the digestive system which inhibits the absorption of vitamins and nutrients and predisposes its victims to a myriad of illnesses. We supply special hosts for those with this condition. They will bring these hosts with them to mass and place them with the gifts for presentation and consecration during the mass celebration.

As a Eucharistic minister, it is important to recognize that there are persons in the assembly who are medically advised against the reception of Holy Communion under the form of bread and it is not your place to judge those who approach only the cup. The principle of extending the cup to these faithful is a matter of justice. Unless they receive the Precious Blood, they cannot participate in Holy Communion. **Canon Law # 925** permits the reception of communion "under the form of wine alone in cases of necessity."

Miscellaneous Information.

- The schedule is available in email, on the web page, and in the sacristy on the last week-end of the month for the following month;
- Be sure to have the schedule **before** the start of the new month so that if arrangements for a substitute have to be made, there will be ample time to do so. **Remember it is your responsibility to secure a substitute should you have a schedule conflict.**
- When you come forward from the Assembly to fulfill your ministry at Mass, and when returning to your place within the Assembly after fulfilling your service within the Liturgy, do so quietly and efficiently without calling attention to yourself.

- If you are taking the Blessed Sacrament from the tabernacle, you approach the tabernacle, open the door, genuflect (or deeply bow if unable to genuflect) then remove the ciborium.
- If you are taking the Blessed Sacrament to the tabernacle, you open the door of the tabernacle, place the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle, genuflect (or deeply bow if you are unable to genuflect) and close and lock the tabernacle door.
- After you have finished distributing the Eucharist, and have returned any remaining Hosts to the Altar, you may dip the fingers you used to distribute Holy Eucharist into the ablution cup next to the Tabernacle and dry them on the purificator next to the bowl.
- **You do not process out with the celebrant at the end of Mass.**
- A Liturgical Minister may perform only one liturgical ministry at a time, at Mass, thus, e.g. if you are performing the function of Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist at Mass, you may not also perform the function of lector at the same Mass.

Ministry to the Sick / Homebound:

- A parish is to have sufficient ministers trained and prepared for the Ministry of Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist, whose responsibility is not only for the assistance in the distribution of the Eucharist at every regularly scheduled Week-end Mass, daily Mass and Masses offered during the Christmas and Easter Season **but to homebound parishioners and those in hospitals and nursing centers as well.**
- At St. Patrick Parish, there is a specific Ministry of Pastoral Visitation to the Sick and Homebound, in which visitors are specifically trained in pastoral visitation including offering Eucharist when desired and requested by the homebound parishioner or in nursing centers or hospitals.
- **Eucharistic Ministers** may be called upon to bring Eucharist to **temporarily homebound parishioners** who may be, temporarily, unable to participate, in the Parish liturgical celebrations, due to illness or hospital recuperation. The Coordinator of Lay Ministry assigns Eucharistic Ministers to bring Eucharist in these situations, by neighborhood, so you are not inconvenienced. The expectation is that you will bring Eucharist to the temporarily homebound person(s) on your way home after you have attended Sunday Mass.

- The Blessed Sacrament is conveyed in a small closed container called a pyx. When bringing Eucharist to a homebound parishioner, put the pyx, **open** on the apron of the Tabernacle before Mass. (If you need more than one host, put a small piece of paper with the pyx indicating the # of hosts desired). After Communion, the deacon or one of the Eucharistic Ministers will place a host or hosts in the pyx, close it and leave it on the apron for you to pick up at the conclusion of Mass.
- When carrying the Blessed Sacrament, be careful to place it in a safe spot. You may place the pyx in a small cloth bag and wear it around your neck or you may put it in your pocket, or pocketbook. If you do that, you should be careful to place it alone, rather than in a cluttered area. Do not leave it unattended. You should go directly after Mass to the person (s) to whom you will be bringing communion and not let other activities distract you from your ministry, e.g., go shopping or tend to errands.
- You do want to remember that you are carrying the Blessed Sacrament and attending to the business of the Lord so if you meet someone, you do want to smile and greet your neighbor, but you want to be careful about stopping and engaging in a long conversation. Use your good judgment!
- The protocol used by St. Patrick Parish for bringing Eucharist to the homebound is found in the pamphlet, Communion of the Sick, Liturgical Press, 1984. The Coordinator of Home bound ministries will provide you with this pamphlet when you are asked to bring Eucharist to the homebound. Essentially the protocol consists of: a greeting; penitential rite; a short reading from Scripture; intercessory prayers; the Lord's Prayer; reception of Communion; a prayer after Communion and a blessing.

Ash Wednesday:

You may be asked to assist with the distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday. You will use one of the following scripts: "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the gospel", or "Remember, you are dust and to dust you will return." You mark each person's forehead with the sign of the cross with your thumb while saying one of the scripts. Be sure to wash your hands after administering the ashes.

Blessing of Throats

You may be asked to assist with the Blessing of Throats. Follow the same procedure above. Hold the candles in front of the parishioner's throat and say the words: "Through the intercession of Saint Blase, bishop and martyr, may God deliver you from every disease of the throat and from every other illness."