

# Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist

## St. Anne's Church, Shrewsbury

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### Introduction

Thank you for volunteering to serve as an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist at St. Anne's Church. We are honored to have you assisting at Mass by serving the people of God through the distribution of the Blessed Sacrament.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and *Lumen Gentium* state that "the Eucharist is the 'source and summit' of the Christian life... [All] other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself..." (CCC 1324; LG 11)

Jesus commanded His apostles at His Last Supper to "do this in memory of me." It is this command that we follow at every Mass when, through the act of consecration by the priest, the bread and wine are transformed into the Real Presence of Christ, namely His Body and Blood. In the Holy Eucharist, Jesus is literally and wholly present, body and blood, soul and divinity, under the appearances of bread and wine.

Serving the Lord as a Minister of the Eucharist is a great privilege that comes with great responsibility. We give glory and praise to our Lord through this special ministry by maintaining proper reverence and respect of the Blessed Sacrament. It is for all these reasons that the following guidelines have been established.

### Definitions

- **Ciborium** – the vessel that contains the hosts that will be used for Communion
- **Chalice** – the large cup that holds the wine that becomes the Blood of Christ.
- **Credence Table** – the small table located near the baptismal font.
- **Purificator** – the white, linen cloth that is used to wipe the chalice when distributing the Precious Blood to the faithful.

### Qualifications

Serving the Church as an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist is open to all members of the faith community who meet the following qualifications:

- Demonstrates good qualities of Christian life through the practice of the faith in their daily life
- Lives a life according to Catholic Church teachings
- Understands the celebration of the Mass and believes in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist
- Is registered at St. Anne's Church
- Has received the Sacrament of Confirmation, or is fully initiated into the Church through RCIA
- If married, is married in accordance with Church law

## Preparation Before Mass

- Fast for at least 1 hour before the start of Mass.
- Arrive at least 15 minutes before Mass begins.
- Discuss with the other Ministers of the Eucharist where you will sit in the sanctuary and where you will serve Communion.
- Dress in attire that is appropriate for serving: no shorts, flip-flops, revealing clothing, inappropriate T-shirts, Hawaiian shirts, etc. You are giving Jesus to those who receive and should dress accordingly.

## Procession

The procession line at the beginning and end of Mass goes in the following order:

1. Altar Servers
2. Lector
3. Eucharistic Ministers
4. Clergy

Ministers always process in pairs. You should march at the same pace as your ministry partner and arrive or leave together.

When you reach the altar during the opening procession, bow reverently before going to your seat. Similarly, you will bow again before the altar for the closing procession.

## During Mass

Please be aware that many people in the assembly observe those who are sitting in the sanctuary and comment on any behaviors they may consider disrespectful or improper. For this reason, all ministers should demonstrate attentiveness to the

Mass by sitting with good posture, feet flat on the floor, and avoid crossing their legs and arms.

## Reception of Communion

After the sign of peace, cleanse your hands with some hand sanitizer (located either on the credence table or altar rail) and proceed to the side of the altar with the other Ministers of the Eucharist, altar servers, and lector, awaiting reception of Holy Communion. The priest will give himself Communion first (Body and Blood), then the deacon, and finally to all other ministers.

You are invited to receive Holy Communion under both species: Body and Blood. If you choose not to receive from the chalice, simply keep your head bowed as an indication to the priest or deacon that you do not wish to drink from the cup.

As the priest or deacon approaches you with Communion, Body or Blood, make a slight, reverent bow before receiving.

## Distribution of Holy Communion

After the priest and/or deacon have given Holy Communion to each of the ministers at the altar, the priest will hand you a ciborium or chalice. At this point you may walk carefully to your designated station, holding the ciborium or chalice with both hands, and distribute Communion to the faithful.

If you cross in front of the altar while holding the ciborium or chalice, do not bow. You are carrying the Body or Blood of Jesus, so bowing is unnecessary and detracts attention from the Real Presence.

## Ministering the Body of Christ

- Lift a Host a few inches above the ciborium, look the person in the eyes, and say with faith, "The Body of Christ". Do not say the person's name as you offer Communion to him/her. Similarly, do not say, "This is the Body of Christ" or any other variation. The proper greeting is simply, "The Body of Christ."
- The recipient will indicate the manner in which he/she wishes to receive the Host by lifting their hands or opening their mouth. Gently place the host on his/her hand or tongue.
- If you notice you are running low on the Consecrated Hosts, it is acceptable to break the Consecrated Hosts in half to ensure there is enough to distribute to communicants in your aisle. As you do so, break the Host over the ciborium with

one hand while holding the ciborium with the other, to avoid the risk of having a fragment of the Host fall to the floor.

- If you run completely out of Consecrated Hosts, go to one of the other ministers serving the Body and **with great caution** transfer some of the Consecrated Hosts to your ciborium. A second alternative would be to direct recipients to another Minister of the Eucharist who is still serving.
- If a Consecrated Host is inadvertently dropped to the floor, pick it up and consume it immediately and discreetly. If you do not wish to consume the Host, cup it in your hand that is holding the ciborium and give it to the priest or deacon when you return the ciborium to him at the tabernacle.
- If you are serving at one of the wings, proceed to the front of the altar after completing distribution and offer assistance to the priest, deacon, or other Minister of the Eucharist if they are still serving – especially if there is a long line of communicants waiting to receive Communion. Stand against the first pew about 10 feet away from the other Minister of the Eucharist to ensure proper “traffic flow” of those who are receiving from the other minister.
- Gluten Free: Occasionally, a member of the assembly will ask to receive a gluten free Host. This Host is wrapped in a plastic sleeve in order to avoid contamination with the other Hosts. When you offer the gluten free Host to the person, simply remove it from the sleeve and handle it as you would any other Consecrated Host.
- On occasion, a very young child who has not made their First Holy Eucharist may approach you with his/her parent, but cannot receive Communion. Similarly, an older child or adult may approach you and fold their arms across their chest to indicate they will not receive Communion. They do so seeking a blessing.

Since only a priest or deacon can offer a blessing, you may respond by simply saying, “The Blessing of Christ upon you” or something similar. Do not touch the person’s head or make a sign of the cross.

### Ministering the Blood of Christ

On certain occasions, such as Holy Thursday or at weekday Masses, you may be asked to distribute the Precious Blood. (Note: Once the priest has consecrated the wine, we no longer refer to it as wine. It is called the Blood of Christ or the Precious Blood, understanding that the wine has been transformed into the Real Presence of Christ and is no longer wine.)

- Lift the chalice slightly, look the person in the eyes, and say with faith, “The Blood of Christ”. Do not say the person’s name as you offer the cup to him/her.

Similarly, do not say, "This is the Blood of Christ" or any other variation. The proper greeting is simply, "The Blood of Christ."

- As you hand the chalice to the person, do so with both hands and make sure he/she grasps it securely before you release it to him/her.
- After the communicant receives the Precious Blood, use both hands to retrieve it and wipe the rim, both inner and outer sides, with the purificator. Turn the chalice slightly and present it to the next recipient.
- If you run out of Precious Blood before all members of the community have received, simply look at the next person in line apologetically and indicate that there is none left in the chalice. Return the chalice to the credence table and cover it with the folded purificator.
- Distribution to minors: All baptized members of the Catholic faith who are properly disposed have a right under Church law to receive Holy Communion under both species once they have made their First Holy Eucharist. This includes children and youth under the age of 21. Most parents avoid having their child receive the Precious Blood. If a minor approaches you to receive the Precious Blood, however, you may offer it to him/her.
- If the Precious Blood is spilled onto the floor, the Minister of the Eucharist must protect the area immediately by placing the opened purificator on the floor over the spill. Consume the remaining Precious Blood in the chalice and return the chalice to the credence table. Inform the priest or deacon of the spill so it can be properly cleaned from the floor after Mass. If you are directed to clean the spill, you may do so by soaking the area with water and drying it with the purificator.

## After Distribution of Communion

Once the members of the congregation have been served Holy Communion, return to the sanctuary. You may either hand the ciborium to the priest or deacon, or be asked to follow the priest or deacon to the tabernacle, where the Consecrated Hosts will be combined into one or two ciboria and placed in the tabernacle.

If you are bringing two ciboria (yours and your partner's) to the tabernacle, carry one in each hand. Do not stack them (even if one or both are empty), and do not empty one into the other.

If you had ministered the chalice, go to the side of the credence table, consume any remaining Precious Blood, place the chalice on the credence table, and **cover** it with the folded purificator. Do not wipe the interior of the cup with the purificator or place the purificator in the cup. If you do not wish to consume the left over Precious

Blood, please hand the cup to a deacon, another Minister of the Eucharist, or priest to have them consume it.

## Visitation to the Sick and Homebound

Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist may volunteer to take Holy Communion to the sick and homebound, sharing in the Church's total ministry to the sick after the manner of Jesus. In bringing Communion to the sick and homebound, the Minister of the Eucharist manifests faith and charity on behalf of the whole community toward those who cannot be present at Sunday Mass.

This ministry is a sign of support and concern shown by the community for its members. Patients who are in the hospital find it a comfort and source of healing to have Holy Communion brought to them as often as possible. Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist may make Communion visits any day of the week in accordance with the schedule and the protocol of each hospital or long-term residential facility.

The Minister of the Eucharist becomes a vital link between the parish community and the member who is sick or homebound. It is beneficial for visits to the sick and homebound to occur after Sunday Mass so that the link between the parish liturgical celebration and the parishioner is maintained. Taking a parish bulletin also helps maintain that link.

Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist do not replace the ministry of the priest or deacon to the people, but rather extend and expand it so that all will have more regular contact with Christ in Holy Communion. Those who minister to the sick and homebound should be empathic and compassionate. They should be sensitive to the sick and homebound person's needs including the spiritual, emotional, and material.

Ministers of the Eucharist should always take care to maintain the confidentiality and dignity of the individual. They should also maintain contact with the pastor, deacon, or pastoral assistant, and inform them if the person is in need of sacramental anointing, the sacrament of reconciliation, or a pastoral visit. In addition, if a Minister of the Eucharist observes a particular physical or social need of a homebound person, they should bring this need to the attention of the pastor, deacon, or pastoral assistant so that the parish may respond appropriately.

Please provide the pastoral assistant or Deacon Peter Ryan the name of the person to whom you are bringing Holy Communion. They maintain a list of communicants to ensure even and regular distribution to the sick and homebound of the parish.

According to the document *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass*, "The Eucharist for Communion outside of church is to be carried in a pyx or

other covered vessel; the vesture of the minister and the manner of carrying the Eucharist should be appropriate and in accord with local circumstances”.

Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist should dress in appropriate lay attire when bringing Communion to the sick or homebound. Consecrated hosts are provided during Mass by placing a pyx on the altar before Mass and retrieving it after Mass concludes, or by a particular request to a priest or deacon.

Ministers of the Eucharist who are taking Holy Communion to the sick, homebound or to those in hospitals are to present the Host in a prayerful manner. They are not to make judgments regarding the suitability of the person to receive the Holy Communion; such concerns are to be referred to the pastor or parish priest.

A handout with a simple Liturgy of the Word is available in the sacristy for Ministers of the Eucharist to use when bringing Holy Communion to the sick and homebound. Please see a priest or deacon to obtain a copy of this handout.

Ministers of the Eucharist serving in hospitals or institutions should always be sure that they are giving Holy Communion to the correct person. If there are other Catholic family members or Catholic staff present and sufficient Hosts are available in the pyx, the Minister of the Eucharist may ask them if they would like to receive Holy Communion as well.

Socialization should take place before serving Holy Communion, engaging in a few minutes of friendly conversation with the communicant. After Holy Communion has been given, Ministers of the Eucharist should leave gracefully and allow the communicant time to pray and reflect on the Holy Eucharist.

If there are any Consecrated Hosts remaining after distributing to the sick and homebound, please consume any extra Consecrated Hosts privately.