

**EXTRAORDINARY  
MINISTERS  
OF  
HOLY COMMUNION**



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## Brief Theology and History of the Eucharist

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, “The Eucharist is a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Father, a blessing by which the Church expresses her gratitude to God for all his benefits, for all that he has accomplished through creation, redemption and sanctification” (CCC 1360).

Catholics actively participate in the Eucharist as the source and summit of their Christian life. This active participation manifests itself by:

- Gathering with a community of believers each Sunday and Holy Day
- Praying together at Mass in word, gesture and song, listening together to God’s Word
- Giving thanks and praise to God together for the gifts of creation, and in a special way, for the gift of Jesus Christ—his life, death and resurrection, and
- Sharing in and becoming the Body of Christ through reception of Holy Eucharist at Mass

Catholics believe that through active participation in the Mass and in a special way, through the reception of Holy Communion at Mass, they are filled with the real presence of Christ, and are therefore sent to be Christ’s presence in the world until he comes again in glory. St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo, put it this way in the 5th century:

*What you see...is bread and a cup. This is what your eyes report to you. But your faith has need to be taught that the bread is the body of Christ, the cup the blood of Christ...If then, you wish to understand the body of Christ, listen to the Apostle as he says to the faithful, “You are the body of Christ and His members”...You reply “Amen” to that which you are, and by replying you consent... Be a member of the body of Christ so that your “Amen” may be true... Be what you see, and receive what you are.*

Centuries later St. Thomas Aquinas gave us an explanation of how this mystery happens. He called it transubstantiation. By that he meant that the “accidents” (the visible reality) of bread and wine remain, but the “substance” is changed into Christ’s Body and Blood. This has also come to be understood as what Catholics mean by the “real presence” of Christ in the Eucharist.

The Church has always celebrated and revered the Eucharist. In its early history the members of the Christian community did what Jesus told them to do—they took and ate and drank knowing in faith that this was indeed a sharing in the Body and Blood of Christ. The Sacred Body was taken in hand and the Sacred Chalice was shared by all.

As time went on and the Church no longer consisted of members who had actually seen and known the Lord, and for many cultural and historical reasons, Eucharistic practices slowly began to change. By the 9th century the language of the Mass was no longer that of the people, as it was in the early Church. The altar table was moved from the midst of the people to the back wall of the church. The presider no longer faced the people as he led them in prayer. The Eucharist became so removed from the people that the Christian community came to see themselves as unworthy of this gift, even though they were baptized and redeemed by the Lord. Few people received Holy Communion, and only then on the tongue. By the 13th century the cup was no longer shared with the people. As a result of these and other practices, the people's main contact with the Eucharist was through the elevation of the Eucharistic species which was actually added to the Mass. For the people this elevation was their opportunity to "receive" for "seeing" became "receiving." Jesus' command to his followers to "take and eat, and take and drink" seemed to no longer apply to all believers.

In modern times, the event which began to change this approach to the Eucharist was the election of Pope Pius X in 1903. Pope Pius X knew the great importance of the command of Jesus that believers "take and eat" that he changed the practice of the Church. No longer did a person have to wait until the age of 14 or 15 to be eligible to share in Holy Communion. Children who reached the age of reason, usually about 7 years old, were now welcomed to the altar table of the Lord. By bringing the children to the altar table, Pope Pius X also brought with them their parents and grandparents. Through this action participation in Holy Communion began to be returned to all believers.

Pope John XXIII convened Vatican Council II in 1962. The Council's first document was *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. This fundamental teaching of the Church opened even further the understanding of the Eucharist and many of the practices regarding it.

On May 29, 1969, in the document *Memoriale Domini* the Church gave permission for the faithful to return to the ancient ritual practice of receiving Holy Communion in the hand and the practice went into effect in the United States on November 20, 1977. Lay people could now receive Holy Communion reverently, either on their tongue or in their hand. About this practice, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem wrote in the 4th century: "Make your left hand a throne for your right, because your right is going to receive the King; make a hollow of your palm and receive the body of Christ, saying after it: 'Amen!' ...

Then, after you have partaken of the body of Christ, come forward to the chalice of His blood....” On January 29, 1973, the instruction *Immensae caritatis* was issued by Pope Paul VI. With this instruction, the diocesan bishop was given permission to designate lay men and women to distribute the Eucharist as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. It stated that “...this faculty may be used whenever there is no priest, deacon or instituted acolyte present, or when the ordinary minister is prevented from administering Communion because of other pastoral obligations, ill health, or advanced age, or when the number of the faithful is so great that, unless Extraordinary Ministers assist in the distribution, the celebration would be unduly prolonged.” It should also be noted that when Communion under Both Kinds is offered, the deacon, if present at Mass, is the ordinary minister of the Precious Blood.

[Brief Theology and History of the Eucharist is taken from the *Office of Worship and Christian Initiation, Archdiocese of Santa Fe, June 2005.*]

## **Description, Selection Criteria, Formation and Training, Call to Protect**

### **Description**

Extraordinary Ministers for the distribution of Holy Communion are properly formed, instructed and commissioned lay persons. EMHCs may be male or female. They should reflect the cultural diversity of our parish community. These ministers are appointed for our parish community to aid in the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass. EMHC is not to function apart from their parish community. Ordinarily, EMHC do not perform any other liturgical ministry at the Mass at which they serve as an EMHC.

When the situation requires, the presider of the Mass may call upon members of the faithful who are not EMHCs to aid him in the distribution of Holy Communion on that one occasion. Those called must be Catholics in good standing who are themselves able to receive the Eucharist.

### **Selection Criteria**

In order for a person to be appointed as an EMHC, the following conditions must be met:

- Be a Catholic living in harmony with the teachings of the Church and be able to receive the Eucharist
- Be of sufficient age and maturity to perform the duties of an EMHC at Mass or to the sick and homebound in various locations (i.e. private homes, nursing homes, hospitals)
- Be chosen and appointed by the pastor for the parish entrusted to him

## **Formation and Training**

Prior to beginning your ministry, EMHCs are to be formed and trained in the following:

- Theology of the Eucharist and understanding of the Mass
- Theology and spirituality of ministry
- Universal church, diocesan and parish guidelines and procedures for their ministry

EMHCs should participate in ongoing theological and ministerial formation at the parish and/or Diocesan level.

## **Call to Protect**

All ministers and volunteers who have contact with children and young people are required by the diocese to comply with the Diocese of Phoenix Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Minors. A copy of the current manual is available in the office for your review or you can access the information directly at [www.safeenvironmenttraining.org](http://www.safeenvironmenttraining.org). After the Foundation class, “Protecting God’s Children for Adults” is completed, then you **must renew every two years**.

## **Commissioning, Length of Service, Reverence and Attire**

### **Commissioning**

After preparation for this ministry is completed, a formal commissioning of EMHCs takes place, normally at a Sunday Eucharist, by the pastor or his delegate. EMHCs are to exercise their ministry only in their own parish or institution.

### **Length of Service**

Since ministry is a call both from God and the community in which it is exercised, it is appropriate that the choice of ministry and renewal of the term of service be mutually agreed upon by the individual and the parish. EMHCs generally will serve for a period of at least two (2) years, after which time an evaluation should occur. This evaluation may lead to a determination that the minister

- be re-commissioned as an EMHC for another term,
- is being called to another ministry,
- leave ministry all together at this time.

It is helpful that each parish keep accurate records of each EMHC’s training, ongoing formation and their term(s) of service.

## Reverence and Attire

EMHCs show utmost reverence for the Eucharist. This reverence is reflected in their demeanor at Mass (full, active and conscious participation in the liturgy; CSL 14), their attire, and the manner in which they handle the Eucharist.

A neat and reverential appearance is in keeping with the minister's role and belief in the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The minister's attire should be appropriate and should not detract from that role--please no jeans, shorts, short skirts, or sleeveless tops or t-shirts. EMHCs should refrain from using strong cologne, perfume or aftershave because some recipients of Holy Communion have sensitivities to these scents and because these fragrances often remain on one's hands and can be transferred to the Eucharist.

In the Diocese of Phoenix, EMHCs do not wear albs or any other special liturgical garb.

## Schedule of Assignments

Schedules are computer prepared for four months at a time: Feb—May, June—Sept., and Oct.—Jan. A new schedule is ready prior to the end of a current schedule. Individual scheduled times are emailed to you with your user name and password just after the schedule is prepared. A letter is mailed to those without email.

Comprehensive schedules and rosters are available on the web terminal at <http://www.rotundasoftware.com/ministry/ststevens>. Access is gained with your user name and password. Comprehensive schedule hard copies are also available in the Liturgy Office. The content of the printed schedules can change over time.

If you have computer access please go to the web terminal and complete your profile at any time but before the next schedule period. You may change your profile any time but it will only be reflected in next schedule period. When you know, your personal schedules (vacations etc.) please change your profile as soon as possible.

If you have no computer access, please complete a ministry information form prior to the preparation of each new schedule, listing Mass preferences and dates that you will not be available to serve. **It is essential that you complete this form and return it to the liturgy office by the deadline listed on the form.** This helps us maintain current information regarding your phone number, your email address and your availability. Every effort will be made to honor your primary request.

**If you are unable to fulfill an assignment, it is your responsibility to obtain a substitute, prior to the Mass.** With computer access you may request a substitute any

time before being reminded by email (normally 2 days prior to your assignment). You are not relieved of that assignment until receiving a return email. If you receive an email requesting a substitute the first one to respond receives the position. You do not have that position until you receive a return email. Please do not show up just because you received an email request. If you have no computer access, please phone your coordinator. They can request a substitute for you. If no substitute is obtained and you fail to show up for your scheduled assignment, you will be considered a “no show”. After three “no shows” you will be removed from future schedules. Please direct any questions to the EMHC coordinator or assistant coordinator.

## **Procedures Before, During, and After Mass**

### **Before Mass**

- EMHCs should arrive at the church at least 15 minutes before the scheduled Mass to both check in, and prepare interiorly for ministry (A replacement is appointed if not present 15 minutes prior to mass).
- Check-in is in the Vestry with the EMHC Captain and initialing the sign-in sheet which indicates your location for distribution of Holy Communion at that mass.
- Take the appropriate EMHC necklace and take your seat within the assembly of believers. You are encouraged to sit close enough to approach the altar in a timely manner after the *Sign of Peace*.
  - If assigned to the **Body** sit on the left side (Mary’s side)
  - If assigned to the **Blood** sit on the right side (Joseph’s side)
- If you are an EMHC who is not assigned for that Mass, please consider letting the Captain know that you are present and available to serve if needed.
  - Note that when Holy Communion is distributed under both kinds, the deacon is to distribute the Blood (GIRM #182)
  - EMHCs should not perform another ministry during the same Mass, unless an emergency situation arises

### **During Mass**

- EMHCs are called, as is the entire assembly, to full, conscious, active participation in the Eucharistic celebration
- Because EMHCs are models for the ritual behavior of the assembly, they should do all the ritual gestures of the assembly with strength and reverence, and make all verbal and sung ritual responses with faith and enthusiasm
- If EMHCs do not regularly model the current church and parish practices during liturgy, they will be counseled, re-trained or perhaps relieved of their ministry

## Procedures for Distribution

- Following the *Sign of Peace*, approach the altar from either Mary's (left) side if ministering the **Body** or Joseph's (right) side if ministering the **Blood**. Please reverence the altar with a bow if crossing the center aisle.
- Remain at the foot of the steps until the celebrant has received both the **Body** and the **Blood**, then ascend the steps and form a semi-circle behind the celebrant and the altar
- The minister assigned the **Blood (C-5)** for the handicapped comes to the altar on the left of the priest to receive communion
- The priest will offer the **Body** and **Blood** to the Deacon and this EMHC (C-5)
- They both then move to the left side of the sanctuary by the ambo to serve the **Blood** to the remaining EMHCs
- The remained EMHC receive in line from the priest the **Body** and then go to the Deacon or the EMHC (C-5) to receive the **Blood** (If you do not wish to receive the **Blood** continue in line with your arms crossed over your heart to indicate this)
- After receiving, return to your original position and come to the presider in line to receive the ciborium or chalice
- Descend the altar on the left (Mary's) side moving to your assigned location standing facing the altar at the foot of the stairs until the Priest descends to begin serving communion
  - Note: if you pass in front of the altar to reach your assigned position, **do not stop or bow**—you are carrying Christ!
- In giving Holy Communion, the minister holds the host slightly above the vessel, looks at the communicant, and in a clear voice says, "The Body of Christ" to which the communicant responds "Amen". These are the **only** words to be used. Nothing is to be added or subtracted, not even a name. Then the Sacred Body is placed in the hand or on the tongue according to the manner indicated by the communicant
- If a communicant begins to walk away carrying the host, the EMHC should say in a subdued voice, "Please consume the host now"
- In giving the Blood, the EMHC holds the Chalice up slightly and says in a clear voice while looking at the communicant, "The Blood of Christ" to which the communicant responds "Amen".
  - These are the **only** words to be used. Nothing is to be added or subtracted, not even a name
  - Generally, the communicant should hold the Chalice firmly in both hands and drink from it
  - However, in the case of a physical disability or weakness, the EMHC should be ready to assist in holding the Chalice

- After the Blood of Christ has been received, the EMHC should wipe the rim of the Chalice, inside and out, with a purificator and turn the Chalice slightly before presenting it to the next communicant. The EMHC should be careful not to wipe in a manner where the purificator is dipped into the Blood.
- Intinction is not customary in the United States and is discouraged in the Diocese of Phoenix; the practice of self-Intinction is not permitted

### **Accidents during Distribution**

- If a host falls to the ground during distribution of Holy Communion, the EMHC should pick it up immediately and consume it then, or after distribution is over. It should never be put back in the vessel to be given to another communicant
- If the Blood is spilled, the area should immediately be covered. It should then be blotted and washed after Mass with water and a purificator. The purificator should be rinsed and wrung out in the *sacrarium*. If there is no *sacrarium*, it should be rinsed in another vessel and the water poured into the ground in a secluded spot
- In either case, do not panic, and do not embarrass the communicant.

### **Procedures after Distribution**

- Once EMHCs are done with distribution, they return the ciborium to the corporal on the altar
- Chalice and purificator are returned to the credence table where any remaining Blood is consumed..
  - If, for some reason, you are not able or willing to consume any remaining **Blood**, then you should place the chalice **on the altar—not on the credence table**
  - Do not put the purificator cloth inside the Chalice. Place it on the tray beside the chalice.
- EMHCs should return to their places in a dignified and reverent manner, not rushing

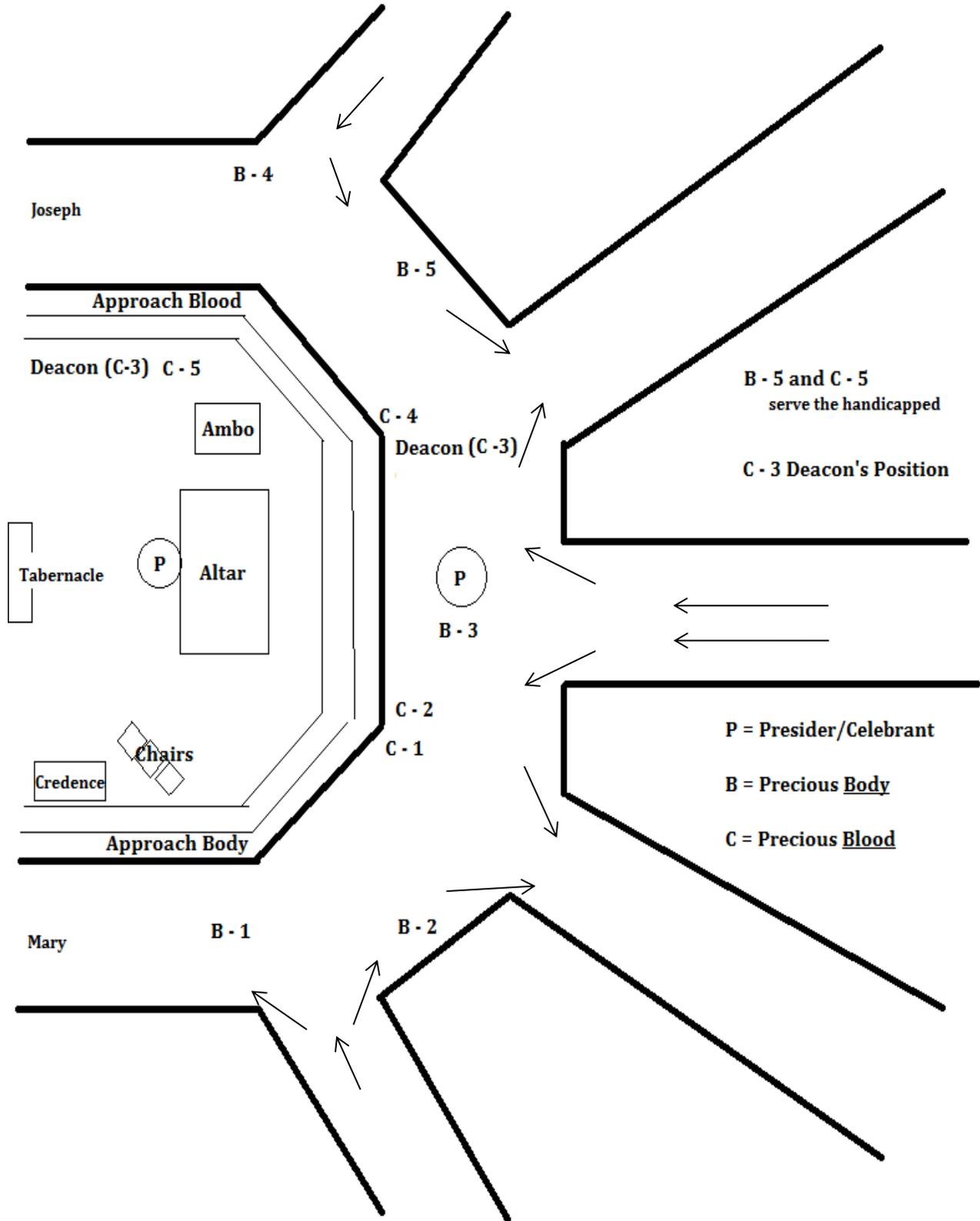
### **Miscellaneous**

- The Deacon will always serve in the position to the left of the celebrant, which is position C-3.
- The two ministers serving the Blood must stand very close, back to back, (almost touching).
- EMHCs do not wash their hands in the ablution bowl in the sanctuary either before or after distribution of Holy Communion. All EMHCs are reminded to wash their

hands in the rest room before Mass begins and avail themselves of hand sanitizer before serving (at both Mary and Joseph shrines)

- While performing their ministry, EMHCs do not bow or genuflect to the altar or tabernacle
- If a person requests additional hosts, advise them that they must see the Priest or Deacon after Mass is over being polite at all times, but do not give a second host to anyone.
- If there are too many ministers of communion around the altar, remain in place with the other ministers until they move to the communion stations, then return to your seat.
- If another minister has taken your assigned position, check to see which position is not filled and quietly move to that position—charity above all things.
- If a young child or even an adult approaches with arms folded across his/her chest, (indicating they do not intend to receive) it is important to recognize them, make eye contact and say “**Receive Christ in your heart**”. This beautiful expression conveys to those not consuming the **Body and Blood** that they are still receiving a **Spiritual Communion**—not a “blessing”, which comes from the priest or deacon at a different time.
- It is **not** appropriate for a communicant to receive the **Blood** and then hand it to another communicant. Each must receive it separately from the Extraordinary Minister.
- It is also never allowed to pour the **Blood** from one chalice into another.

# Church Diagram of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion Serving Positions



## Duties of the Captain (B-5)

If you are assigned to the role of Captain, please plan to arrive at the church 25 to 30 minutes before the beginning of Mass. You will **need to remain** in the rear of the church, preferably near the *Vestry* for greater visibility to arriving EMHC's. Stay until all assigned have checked in, confirmed their assignment and donned an EMHC cross. If unassigned ministers arrive and make their presence known to you, take note of where they sit so you can call on them in the event that an assigned minister fails to show. When the 15 minute time limit arrives and you still are missing someone, then find a substitute for the absent minister. Indicate on the sign in sheet, that the assigned minister was a "no show" and write in the substitute's name.

If there is no deacon for the Mass then you will need to draft additional help to fill that location. You can do this by utilizing EMHCs who were not already assigned for that particular Mass.

The Captain is the person who takes the **Body (B-5)** to the handicapped/disabled in the rear of the church during Communion, with the EMHC designated to serve the **Blood (C-5)**. The head usher will direct you to these communicants. Also serve any caregiver with the handicapped who desire to receive at that time. When you have finished serving all of the handicapped, then return to the front of the church and become the second minister of the **Body** on Joseph's side. The minister of the **Blood** to the handicapped can fill in one of the positions vacated by the others assigned if they have exhausted their supply of **Blood** or return the chalice to the credence table and return to their seat. There is an outline of the Captain's responsibilities on the sign in table for you to use as a reference guide.

## Final Thoughts

While we have attempted to cover everything needed to make your EMHC experience a rewarding one, I am sure there are some things that we have missed. Whatever presents itself to you, remember that you are a minister, a servant of the people of God. Remember also, that your actions are prompted by your deep love for your Creator and Savior, and rooted in respect for the Eucharist that unites us to the *Body of Christ*. We invite your questions and your comments. Thank you for your service to the community of St. Stevens.