

# Guidelines for Eucharistic Ministers

## Introductory Remarks

*“The Eucharistic celebration is an action of Christ and the Church, which is the ‘sacrament of unity,’ that is, a holy people gathered together and ordered under the Bishop. For this reason, the Eucharistic celebration belongs to the whole Body of the Church. Such a celebration manifests this same Body and affects it. As to the individual members of the Body, the Eucharistic celebration touches them in different ways, according to their rank, office, and degree of participation in the Eucharist. In this way, the Christian people, ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own,’ demonstrates its cohesion and its hierarchical ordering. Therefore, all, whether ordained ministers or Christian faithful, by virtue of their function or their office, should do all and only those parts that belong to them.” [#91 GIRM]*

## Before Mass

Regardless of whether you are scheduled to serve as a Eucharistic Minister, please check to see if assistance is necessary. It’s likely that your help will be welcomed since we often don’t have enough Ministers.

Arrive at least 15 minutes before Mass in order to have sufficient time to vest and prepare for the service.

This is a good time to reflect on the importance of what you are about to do

and to spend some time in prayer before Mass begins.

## Introductory Rites

In the procession to the altar, Eucharistic Ministers follow the servers and the choir. Upon entering the sanctuary, the ministers go to the left (ambo) side near the choir stall and wait until the celebrant venerates the altar. The ministers bow to the altar as the celebrant genuflects or bows, and then take a place in the back row of the choir stall. The outside seat of the stall should be reserved for the lector(s).

## During Mass

Ministers should model full, conscious and active participation for other members of the assembly (listening actively, attentively, joining in the prayers, singing, attending to your posture, bowing during creed, and so on.)

## Communion

Eucharistic Ministers should remain in the choir stall until the celebrant has received communion.

Once the celebrant has received, ministers go to the side of the altar where the priest will distribute communion to them. If for any reason a minister does not wish to receive the precious blood, simply indicate that to the priest or the deacon when the cup is brought.

Once the ministers have received communion, the priest or deacon will bring them a ciborium or a chalice for distribution of the eucharist to the congregation.

Ministers should then proceed to their stations. Typically the priest and one minister will distribute the Body of Christ at the head of the center aisle. One minister should distribute the host at the head of the aisle on the north side of the church and one at the head of the south aisle. These ministers should be alert to occupants in handicapped accessible pews on each side who may need the eucharist brought to them. Should an usher indicate that a member of the congregation seated elsewhere needs to have the eucharist brought to them, be prepared to do so after finishing distribution at your station.

If there is a choir, an additional minister may be required to bring the eucharist to them in the balcony.

Ministers of the Precious Blood station themselves at the head of the north-center and the south-center aisles respectively.

In distributing Holy Communion, ministers should make a point to establish eye contact with each communicant. Extraordinary ministers are ministers of both the Body and the Blood. They are not simply distributing items to individuals, but participating in an essential moment in the mystery of faith, a moment of inviting others and self to recognize and reverence the body of Christ in its many dimensions. This is reflected in the Church’s regulations that ministers are to announce “The body of Christ” [not “This is the body of Christ” or some other phrase].

If a minister of the Body of Christ runs out of hosts, that minister should go to another

station for additional hosts. If necessary, the hosts may be broken so that a sufficient amount is available for the number of people receiving.

If a minister of the cup finds that all the Precious Blood has been consumed, the chalice should be brought to the sacristy and placed on the table to be purified by the deacon or priest. Do not attempt to pour the precious blood from one chalice into another. Do not put the purificator into the cup as there will be some amount of the precious blood remaining.

When your section has finished, please check to see if assistance is needed at another station.

After communion, the Ministers return to the area near the tabernacle. Ministers of the cup should consume the remaining Blood of Christ, or if unable to do so, ask for assistance. Ministers of the host should hand their ciborium to the priest or the deacon who will consolidate the remaining hosts. All the ministers wait until the hosts are consolidated and then genuflect (or bow if unable to genuflect) as the priest or deacon genuflects when closing the tabernacle.

Empty ciboria and chalices should then be taken to the sacristy where they will be purified by the priest or deacon.

### **Purification of Sacred Vessels after Holy Communion**

The General Instruction makes no provision for laypersons to assist in the preparation and purification of sacred vessels at Mass.

Several years ago, the Holy See did grant permission to the dioceses of the United States to engage laypersons (sacristans and Eucharistic Ministers) to assist the priest in the purification of sacred vessels at Mass. When the renewal of this permission was sought in 2006, it was not granted.

Note that there is a distinction between “purifying” sacred vessels and “cleaning” them.

Purification of sacred vessels includes putting some water in the sacred vessels and then consuming the remains of the consecrated bread or wine. This action belongs to the ministry of the bishop, priest and deacon.

The “cleaning” of sacred vessels, including washing the vessels after being purified may be done by a deacon or priest and also by a layperson designated by the pastor to do so.

### **Distinct role**

Liturgical documents emphasize that Communion ministers should not assume the roles of others such as cantor, reader, acolyte at the same liturgy at which they are ministers of the Eucharist. Nonetheless, due to a lack of other ministers the situation may necessitate that a Eucharistic Minister be ready to assist in another capacity at a particular liturgy. However, no individual should sign up for more than one ministry at any individual service.

*Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins. (Mt 26:26-28)*



# St. Lambert Parish Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist