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# Ministry Formation – Ministers of Holy Communion

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## **Ministers of Holy Communion come in two forms:**

- **Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion** ordained ministers, i.e., priests and deacons. By their ordination they may distribute communion in all situations.
- **Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC)** are laity who are commissioned as ministers for a specific place, parish, school, prison or nursing home, for a specific period of time.

## **What is the difference?**

An EMHC is commissioned for a period of three years to a specific parish or institution. The commission is not transferable to another parish or institution. (The bishop grants permission for ministers in partnered parishes to serve in either community.) Lay communion ministers are recommended by their pastor to the bishop who grants approval for the pastor to commission the lay minister. Commissions must be renewed after the three-year period. In contrast, ordained ministers may serve freely within the diocese to which they have been ordained.

## **What formation is required to become an EMHC?**

Those being recommended must receive a thorough grounding in the Eucharist. This includes formation in the history, spirituality, and ministry practice surrounding the Eucharist. This should go far beyond a devotional understanding and encompass a liturgical and practical understanding of celebrating and living the Eucharist. (See the resource list attached.)

## **What personal characteristics are important for EMHCs?**

EMHCs should demonstrate these characteristics: prayerful, esteem teamwork, attentive and helpful, reverent, unhurried, faithful to schedules, never assumes someone else will cover. They should exude a warm, welcoming presence, be open and accepting of others, i.e., non-judgmental, and be knowledgeable about ministry and the Eucharist.

## **Once commissioned, what else is required of an EMHC?**

Ministers of Communion, like all ministers are called to ongoing formation. The essential qualities of ministers are that they be both authentic and transparent. Authentic means that the person seen acting as a minister on Sunday morning carries that same reverence and respect for other throughout her, or his, life. That is, we see the same person at Mass that we see in the grocery store. Transparent means that the person has so embodied the faith and ministry that Christ shines through her or him. They themselves do not draw attention but rather become transparent. To develop these qualities, one requires an ongoing program of formation over a period of time. Yearly retreats, workshops, spiritual presentations should be part of the life of an EMHC.

## **What about those who take Eucharist to the elderly, sick or imprisoned?**

The same formation and expectations apply. In addition, formation on the ritual forms for distributing Holy Communion outside Mass is necessary. The appropriate ritual and its norms are to be followed with due consideration for the physical and spiritual condition of the person. See “Resources – For Those Who Visit the Sick.”

Contact the Office for Divine Worship for assistance in setting up formation sessions for parishes, groups of parishes or deaneries. Logistical practice, i.e., where to stand, etc. differ from parish to parish and require local input.

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## Resources

***A History of the Mass***, video # 2614, from the Erie Diocesan Media Center. Conceived and written by Fr. John H. McKenna, CM Department of Theology and Religious Studies, St. John's University, Jamaica, NY, 2001, Liturgy Training Publications. Includes a study guide by Lawrence Mick. "This video traces the evolution of the Mass, showing how it was shaped and reshaped by times and cultures, by theologies and the arts. We see a visual record of our past and hear from witnesses along the way, people who engaged in the conversation about the meaning and celebration of Sunday Mass...That conversation continues with you."

***Guide for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion***, Kenneth A. Riley & Paul Turner, 2007, Liturgy Training Publications, LTP.org. This guide briefly covers the history, theology and practice of Communion ministry while recommending and outlining opportunities for ongoing formation and spiritual development.

***Let Us Pray: A Guide to the Rubrics of Sunday Mass***, Paul Turner, 2006, Pueblo Books, Liturgical Press, LitPress.org. Turner brings together the statements of the major documents (GIRM, Introduction to the Order of Mass, Norms for Reception and Distribution, *Redemptionis Sacramentum*...) that govern the Celebration of the Eucharist and the Distribution and Reception of Eucharist. His comments help to clarify the reasoning behind the statements.

***Broken & Poured Out: A Spirituality for Eucharistic Ministers***, Richard R. Gaillardetz, Ph.D., 2002, Liguori Publications, Liguori.org. Available through Hoffmann's. "This booklet discusses the communal aspects of liturgy, the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the idea of Eucharist as sacrifice and the role of the Eucharistic Minister." Well done. Explains traditional beliefs in relation to Vatican II teachings.

***The Ministry of Communion***, Michael Kwatera, 2016, Liturgical Press, LitPress.org.

### DOCUMENTS:

***Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, (Sacrosanctum Concilium) 1963***

***General Instruction of the Roman Missal***, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, USCCB Publishing, 2003. Updated edition, 2011.

***Introduction to the Order of Mass***, Bishops Committee on the Liturgy, USCCB, USCCB Publishing, 2003

***Instruction on the Eucharist, (Redemptionis Sacramentum)*** Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, USCCB Publishing, 2004

***Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America***, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, USCCB Publishing 2002. Updated 2012. Included in the Roman Missal front pages.

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## **FOR THE INSTRUCTOR:**

***Models of the Eucharist***, Kevin W. Irwin, Paulist Press, 2005

“Kevin Irwin invites readers to approach Eucharist as a present enactment of the paschal mystery and a way of life that challenges us to renew in celebration and in life what it means to be a Eucharistic church.”

***Cult and Controversy***, Nathan Mitchell. The classic work on the history of Eucharist as experienced in and outside of Mass.

***Sacrament of Unity: The Eucharist and the Church***, Walter Cardinal Kasper, Crossroad Publishing Co. 2004 [given by Bishop Murphy to the priests of the diocese of Erie as a Christmas gift] See Chpt. 3, The Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist for a discussion of real presence, signs, symbols, etc.: “The Church’s doctrine responds [to these questions] by maintaining a firmly sacramental understanding.”

***A Vision of Pastoral Ministry***, Richard R. Gaillardetz, Ph.D. Liguori, 2002

“If God is the Superabundance of Love and we are made in the image and likeness of God, then we are called ...to seek the other in a spirit of love and communion just as our God seeks us.”

## **FOR THOSE WHO VISIT THE SICK:**

***A Ritual for Laypersons***, The Order of Benedict, Collegeville, MN, 1993, Liturgical Press.

***Handbook for Ministers of Care***, Genevieve Glen, Marilyn Kofler, Kevin O’Connor, 1997, Liturgy Training Publications.

***The Catholic Handbook for Visiting the Sick and Homebound***, Annual publication, Liturgy Training Publications.

This resource provides everything a lay minister needs to pray with and bring Communion to the sick and homebound.