

# EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF THE EUCHARIST

## BLESSED JOHN XXIII PARISH



Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist are known by many names: “special ministers of Holy Communion” – “Eucharistic Ministers” – “Communion Ministers.” These persons are appointed by the Archbishop of our Diocese upon the recommendation of the Pastor, usually for a period of two or three years. Once the Archbishop’s mandate has been received, the frequency with which Eucharistic Ministers function is determined by the Pastor, in consultation with his parish staff and in light of particular pastoral needs.

Ministers of Holy Communion are parishioners who, by example, lead a life worthy of their selection and manifest by word and action the reverence which they have for the Holy Eucharist.

Ministers of the Eucharist “share” the consecrated Body and Blood of Christ with their fellow worshippers during liturgical celebrations in the Church, and with those confined to their homes or hospitals. They are not Communion *distributors* (a distributor is part of an automobile engine’s electrical system or a person in marketing!) They are *ministers* of Communion, a title that clearly identifies them as people who serve God’s holy people. In performing this liturgical role, these Ministers not only assist the Pastor, but exercise their own baptismal priesthood.

In the Eucharistic Celebration, bread and wine, the work of human hands, through the power of the Holy Spirit and the action of the presiding priest, become the Body and Blood of Christ. By sharing the Body and Blood of

Christ, we become what we receive. For Ministers of Holy Communion there is another dignity and responsibility: they must become what they give. They must become and live that which they give to their brothers and sisters – the Body of Christ.

Communion Ministers must try to be caring about and at ease with the people they serve, both inside and outside the liturgy. Such care and ease are difficult to manifest during the liturgy if they are not part of a person’s whole life. *All* communicants must be treated equally; *all* who gather at the Lord’s table are brothers and sisters in the Lord. Haste in sharing the Body and Blood of Christ must be avoided – dignity and reverence are the norm. This Ministry is for those who can look another person in the eye with comfort and touch another person with ease. The human action of sharing the Body and Blood of Christ requires ocular, verbal, and tactile contact to express personal communication.

The Eucharistic Minister has a unique and specific function to perform at each liturgy; therefore, he or she should not “double up” by serving as a lector, usher, or song leader at one and the same liturgy.

### ***Practical Points:***

Before coming to Mass or Visiting the Sick, as the case may be, pray that the exercise of your ministry will be done prayerfully, efficiently, and in a manner which will make the recipient of Communion feel closer to God.

Ensure that your attire is neat and appropriate. Please do not come to exercise your ministry in shorts, T-shirts or other “casual dress.” Your ministry to the People of God is a formal ministry and should be reflected in the care you have taken to dress appropriately.

When you arrive at the Church, make sure that you check off your name from the ministry list in the Chapel.

Immediately following the “Sign of Peace” and during the recitation of the “Lamb of God”, the Eucharistic Ministers approach the altar, walking with reverence, and wait behind the presiding Priest. Ministers of the Cup will pick up a white purificator (which will already be placed there by the Sacristan), and place the purificators over their arms. The Priest or Deacon gives the consecrated Host to each Minister and gives the Cup to the Ministers of the Cup, who in turn offer it to the other ministers and the altar servers. Once all ministers have received Communion the Minister of the Body will be given a Ciborium and the Ministers of the Cup will be given chalices filled with the Blood of Christ. Each minister will then proceed to the appointed stations at which time the assembly will come forward to receive Holy Communion.

When presenting the Host, raise the Host as close to eye level with the recipient as you can, look the person in the eye in a friendly manner, and say the words, “The Body of Christ”. Give the person a chance for recognition and to respond, “**Amen!**”

Placing the Host on the tongue or into the hand before a communicant has a chance to say “Amen!” indicates a lack of attentiveness on the part of the Minister. It is at the discretion of the communicant whether to receive in the hand or on the tongue. Please allow the communicant to make that decision. If he/she elects to receive in the hand, place the Host firmly in the hand to let the person know it is there. If on the tongue, simply place the host gently and reverently on the outstretched tongue. Often small children or other adults not able to receive Communion will come in the procession. It is totally appropriate for the Minister to ask a blessing on these people. Simply place your hand on their heads and say “God bless you,” or some other appropriate blessing.

There should be two Ministers of the Cup for each Minister of the Host. A Minister of the Cup stands a fair distance away from the Minister of the Host. This will allow freedom of movement for the communicants and keeps the communion procession moving. Offer the Cup to the communicant while saying the words “The Blood of Christ”. Once again, allow the communicant time to respond with “Amen!” The communicant takes the Cup with both hands, but it may be guided to the lips of small children. After the communicant drinks from and returns the Cup, it is wiped on the rim with the purificator and turned slightly before the procedure is repeated for the next communicant.

Once Communion is over, the Ministers of the Cup remain at the foot of the altar while the

Priest or Deacon transfers all unused Hosts to the Ciborium. This is then given to one of the Eucharistic Ministers to be returned to the Tabernacle in the Chapel. All Ministers process to the Chapel together. The unused Precious Blood is taken to the sacristy and consumed reverently by the Ministers. The vessels are rinsed in the sacrarium (the water from this sink goes directly into the earth, not into the sewer system). The vessels are then wiped and the purificators folded on the rack in the cupboard under the sinks. Ministers then return to their place in the Church.

The gracious lesson and example of the Ministers of the Eucharist will hopefully lead others to generous service as members of the Body of Christ.

If you are interested in becoming a Eucharistic Minister, please speak to the Pastor.

