

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION
Church of Saint Patrick
Yorktown Heights, New York
May 2006

Opening Prayer

**Lord Jesus Christ,
you gave us the eucharist
as the memorial of your suffering and death.
May our worship of this sacrament of your body and blood
help us to experience the salvation you won for us
and the peace of the kingdom
where you live with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.**

(Opening prayer for the solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ and the traditional prayer at Benediction.)

Background and Origins of this Ministry

“Christ the Lord has left to the Church, his spouse, a testament of his immense love. This wonderful gift of the eucharist, which is the greatest gift of all, demands that such an important mystery should be increasingly better known and its saving power more fully shared...Present day conditions demand that, while the utmost reverence owing to such a sacrament is maintained, greater access to the holy communion should be made possible so that the faithful, by sharing more fully in the fruits of the sacrifice of the Mass, might dedicate themselves more readily and effectively to God and to the good of the Church and of humankind.”

With these words the Church opens her instruction, *Immensae Caritatis*, which allows lay men and women to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion.

The fact that the Church has permitted the use of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion is one more example of her desire to make the Eucharist readily available to her people. It is a further effort on her part to remove any

obstacle which might make it more difficult for those present at Mass or those prevented from being part of the Eucharistic assembly because of illness or old age to receive Christ in Holy Communion.

In March of 1971 the National Conference of Catholic Bishops received permission from Rome to introduce this ministry into the United States. The Archdiocese of New York inaugurated it on March 11, 1973, when Cardinal Cooke mandated the first group of men and women at St. Patrick's Cathedral. These ministers of Holy Communion were designated to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass in their parishes. Subsequently the role of the extraordinary minister in the Archdiocese was expanded to include ministry to shut-ins in hospitals and institutions and finally to the homebound.

Here at St. Patrick's

Gathering Place and Time: Extraordinary Ministers should arrive 15 minutes before the Mass is scheduled to begin. At 10 minutes before the Mass substitutes will be looked for. If you arrive after substitutes have come forward, please allow them to function rather than asking them to return to their seats. The celebrant may lead those who will function at the Mass in a prayer. At 5 minutes before the Mass is scheduled to begin the ministers will gather in the vestibule. The hope is that this will give the celebrant some moments of silent prayer before we begin the celebration.

Processional: Order:

Thurifer carrying a thurible with burning incense
Cross between two candles
Ministers of Holy Communion
Lector (carries the Gospel Book in the absence of a deacon)
Deacon carrying the Gospel Book
Celebrant

The Extraordinary Ministers will line up two by two; if there is an odd number the single person will walk behind the others. When they reach the step of the sanctuary, they bow profoundly to the Altar, turn slightly facing the Tabernacle and genuflect to the Blessed Sacrament. If the minister is unable to genuflect the minister may substitute a profound bow. They then move into the first pew.

In the Stone Church, the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion will gather in the back of the church in the area that was the old baptistery. They will also walk up to the sanctuary step, bow to the Altar, turn and genuflect to the Blessed Sacrament and enter their pew.

Offertory: The priest says “Pray, brethren...” When he is finished, the people rise and then make their response: “May the Lord accept...”

Lord’s Prayer: Our Bishops have asked us to refrain from holding hands during the Lord’s Prayer and also to refrain from raising our hands during the doxology.

When to enter the Sanctuary: When the celebrant receives from the chalice, the ministers should line up in a straight line behind the Altar. The celebrant will give them the host and the deacon or assisting priest will offer them the Precious Blood. Just before receiving Holy Communion, the communicant bows his or her head before the Sacrament as a gesture of reverence. After they have received they should take whatever vessel is handed to them. No one but a priest should take the Blessed Sacrament from the Altar. Even the deacon should not take the chalices or ciboria from the Altar but should receive them from the priest. Only the priest or deacon may return the Blessed Sacrament to the Tabernacle. It is an Archdiocesan rule that Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should not have access to the Tabernacle either during or after the Mass.

The four distributing the Host will stand two in the Main Aisle, and one each on the far aisles. The two cups will stand midway between the main aisle and the far aisle on both sides. All should strive to have an inviting posture and facial expression.

Likewise, in the Stone Church, the ministers will enter the sanctuary after the priest has received from the chalice. They will line up where they have, to the left of the Altar forming a line with the Servers. The priest will give the Host to all in the sanctuary and the deacon will offer the Precious Blood. If there is no deacon than the priest will offer the chalice when he is finished with the Hosts. The positions for distribution of Holy Communion remain where they have been.

Purification of the communion vessels: Those who are distributing the consecrated hosts should assist the other lines when their line is finished. They should then return the ciborium to the Altar where the ciboria will be combined and purified by the deacon or one of the priests. The Extraordinary Ministers clean their fingers in the bowl near the Tabernacle. Those who were distributing the Precious Blood should consume any remaining Blood providing this is a small amount. If there is more then one swallow the minister should bring the chalice to a priest or a deacon. When the chalice is empty, the minister should pour water into the chalice, purify it, consume the water, and they dry the chalice with the purificator. When these changes are instituted, **Sunday, June 18th, The Feast of Corpus Christi**, there should be three cruets containing water. One cruet will be on the table behind the Tabernacle where at least two of the chalices should be purified; and two cruets will be on the credence table: one to be used by the priest or deacon, the other to be used by the remaining Extraordinary Minister(s).

In the Stone Church, the communion vessels will be purified at the credence table.

Recessional: After the Cross and Candles have lined up in the Main Aisle, the Extraordinary Ministers join them. When the priest bows and genuflects, all the ministers do the same. It is the same in the Stone Church.

Weekday EMHC will change the time when they enter the sanctuary and will no longer go to the Tabernacle.

Holy Communion and Viaticum for the Homebound from the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

The pyx, containing the correct amount of unconsecrated hosts, is placed on the credence table before the celebration begins. Please note that they should be placed on the credence table, not the gift table as before. The same thing takes place in the Stone Church.

After Communion the pyx remains on the corporal.

After the final blessing but before the dismissal, the celebrant or deacon says: “Ministers of Holy Communion, please come forward and take the Blessed Sacrament, with our prayers and concern to those who are homebound.” The minister comes and takes the pyx and without bowing (they are carrying Jesus Himself) they should walk down the aisle and get into their cars and bring the Eucharist and possibly a bulletin to the homebound. The same thing takes place in the Stone Church.

They should NOT, stay around the church and be sociable. They should NOT stop anywhere along the way. If this can not be done, then they should get a priest or deacon to fill their pyx only when they are ready to leave (very iffy) or they may come to the rectory and use the chapel there.

The Blessed Sacrament should never be taken home and then brought to the sick later in the day.

Every time Holy Communion is brought to someone, including as Viaticum, it must be recorded in the Sick Book. There will be two books, one in the vesting sacristy and the other in the chapel in the rectory.

The situation in the homes will vary but there should be a cloth-covered place with a lighted candle. The minister may have to bring the cloth (in some rare circumstances) and once a year they should bring the candles blessed on the Feast of the Presentation (February 2).

As soon as you enter, you should place the pyx on the cloth, open the pyx and genuflect or make a profound bow. There should also be a glass of water so that the host will be easier to consume. Please refer to the hand-out that will give you the appropriate prayers and readings.

Once this is done, then it is appropriate to socialize with the homebound.