

EMHC INSTRUCTIONS

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHCs) help the Ordinary Ministers (Bishops, Priests, and Deacons) distribute Holy Communion to the Faithful and Homebound. EMHCs are expected to be committed to Christ and to Catholic belief and practice, be in good standing with the Church, be dedicated to the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, and faithfully fulfill their role as EMHCs.

Blessings of This Ministry

Serving as an EMHC is an extraordinary privilege. The Eucharist is the center of the Christian life, since the Eucharist contains the presence and self-gift of Jesus to us. “It is more blessed to give than to receive,” Jesus teaches us (Acts 20:35). In serving as an EMHC, we become an instrument through which Jesus gives Himself to His faithful. We are thereby greatly blessed through this ministry.

HOLY EXPECTATIONS

Being an EMHC means that you are a co-steward of the Eucharist, along with bishops, priests, and deacons. It is a great and important responsibility. Your role is to help the clergy bring Jesus to people, to protect the dignity of the Eucharist, and to help people receive worthily and properly. To this end, there are 3 requirements for this role:

(1) *Christian Faith & Life:* EMHCs are expected to believe in Christ and in all the teachings of the Catholic Church. They are also expected to live a life of Christian and Catholic discipleship. They should be seeking to live out their faith in every aspect of their lives, conforming their conduct by God's grace to the ideals of the Gospel and Catholic Faith. They are not expected to be perfect, but should be sincerely seeking to align their ways to God's, and to overcome their sins and weaknesses. One should be going to Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. One should be going to Confession regularly, most importantly whenever it is needed, but at least a few times each year. Being a Catholic "in good standing" is also required. Being a Catholic "in good standing" means that there is no willed and enduring obstacle to receiving absolution in sacramental confession and to receiving the Eucharist. For instance, belonging to certain organizations contrary to the Church (e.g., Freemasons, Ku Klux Klan, Planned Parenthood, etc.) is not compatible with the Catholic Faith, or with fulfilling any liturgical role. Further, all romantic relationships should be in conformity with Catholic teaching. Before marriage, one should be chaste, seeking to save sexual intimacy for marriage. One's marriage should also be recognized by the Church. If one's state of life conflicts with the basic norms of Catholic morals, one would need to rectify that situation and align his/her lifestyle with Catholic morals before taking on a liturgical ministry. Our priests are happy to help people do this. Lastly, it goes without saying that, to be an EMHC, one should have a deep appreciation for the gift of the Holy Eucharist.

All of this is important, because being an EMHC is not just about fulfilling a task. It is a manifestation of faith in a particular ministry. Believing and living the Christian Faith is foundational for this ministry, as it is for all liturgical roles.

(2) *Formation & Training:* We ask that all EMHCs have a basic theological formation in the Church's teaching on the Holy Eucharist, as well as practical training in the role. Before your practical training, we ask that you read the two documents found here in this folder: (1) *The Holy Eucharist*, and (2) *Terminology*. This guide will be used in your training, and for a reference guide for the future.

(3) *Faithful Fulfillment of the EMHC Role:* EMHCs are expected to faithfully fulfill their special role. This includes showing up when scheduled, seeking substitutes in good time when one cannot make it, and fulfilling their role conscientiously and with devotion. For convenience we will refer to "level 1" and "level 2" of this ministry. Level 1 refers to being an EMHC in Mass. Level 2 refers to bringing Holy Communion to the sick and homebound. We'd like every EMHC to be able to do both. However, it is allowable that a particular EMHC be only a Level 1 EMHC or Level 2 EMHC.

Before Mass

- **DRESS:** Men and women should dress modestly and tastefully. In going to Mass, we dress not only to “suit” ourselves, but with the common good in mind. Demonstrating the sacredness of the Holy Mass in our dress is helpful to us and to others. Specifically, please wear shoes (vs. flip-flops or sandals), full-length trousers (vs. shorts), a button shirt or blouse, or the equivalent dress according to the societal norms of Washington. A jacket with a tie or sweater is appropriate for the formality of the occasion and weather.
- **BEFORE MASS BEGINS:** EHMC’s should arrive in the sacristy 10 minutes before Mass in order to check in using the MSP App on the iPad mounted in the wall. After checking in, unless they have any questions or concerns, they can return to their seats in the congregation. They are encouraged to sit in an aisle seat near the Sanctuary, so that they can come up when needed without undue delay.
- **SUBSTITUTES:** Through the Ministry Scheduling Program (MSP), EMHCs are urged to make substitute requests early when they cannot make an assigned Mass. They are also encouraged to be generous in responding to substitute requests made by other EMHCs.

During Mass

When should we come up?

After the “Lord, I am not worthy” prayer (after the Lamb of God and Behold, the Lamb of God)

How many EMHCs should come up?

As many as are needed to cover all the stations, minus the priests and deacons, who always get preference.

- *Sunday Masses:* 4 Stations (2 Host, 2 Chalice)
- *Weekday 8:00am Mass:* 2 Stations (1 Host, 1 Chalice)
- *12:10pm Weekday Mass:* 4 Stations (2 Host, 2 Chalice)
- *Large Masses:* 8 Stations (4 Host, 4 Chalice; or 8 Host)

Thus, if there is a priest and deacon at Mass, and only 2 Stations needed, then no EMHCs should come up to help, even if scheduled. If there is one priest and no deacon at a normal Sunday Mass, 3 EMHCs should come up.

NOTE 1: Some priests concelebrate but are not able to distribute the Eucharist because of an infirmity. So, one must not count them as being able to cover a station. With time, EMHCs will be able to know which priests can help distribute the Eucharist, and which cannot.

NOTE 2: When the number of EMHCs scheduled exceed the number needed, EMHCs should ideally talk before the Mass about who will come up and who will stay back.

NOTE 3: When a non-ordained Dominican brother is present at Mass but has not been scheduled to be an EMHC, there is no need to defer to him for the distribution of Holy Communion (unless this has been decided before the Mass in consultation with the brother). We seek to schedule all EMHCs ahead of time, including non-ordained brothers. OMHCs (Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion: Bishops, Priests, and Deacons) always have precedence. With regard to EMHCs (Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion), although installed acolytes (our Dominican brothers) would have precedence over those not officially installed, still, so as to prevent confusion, *scheduled EMHCs* should generally be given *precedence over non-scheduled*, even if they be Dominican brothers.

How should EMHCs line up?

- Single file facing the priest to receive Holy Communion (Host)
- Side by side to receive Holy Communion (Chalice)

Do we need to receive a vessel from the priest for distribution, or can I just take one from the Altar myself?

EMHCs must receive Holy Communion from the priest or deacon. They cannot self-communicate. They also need to receive a vessel for distribution from the priest. They should not take a vessel from the Altar themselves.

Should the EMHCs help in distributing Holy Communion to the Servers?

The priest will communicate the Host to the Servers. A Deacon will communicate the Chalice to them. If there is no Deacon, then the two EMHCs designated to distribute the Chalice can communicate the Chalice to the Servers before going to the congregation.

Where should I stand to distribute Holy Communion to the Congregation?

Here at St. Dominic Church, the Host Stations are in the central aisle. The Chalice Stations are in front of the pillars in front of the side aisles. One should stand in a such a way that persons not receiving from the Chalice can easily walk by.

How should I hold the Paten or Ciborium when I distribute the Hosts?

Hold the Paten or Ciborium securely with one hand. Distribute with the other hand.

How should I hold the Chalice and Purificator?

Hold the Chalice with your stronger hand. Hold the Purificator with the other hand.

How do I communicate the Host?

When a person comes up, hold a Host up, saying “The Body of Christ.” Let the person say, “Amen.” Then communicate the Host, either placing it on the person’s tongue, or in the hand. If someone wants to grab the Host, do not permit him. Tell him gently, “Put out your hand flat. Now, take with the other hand.”

Beware of habit. Distribute the Host and Chalice with special care. Do it with love. Each distribution is special. Do what you do well. Have a spirituality of the Eucharist in the way you distribute the Eucharist. Don’t draw attention to yourself, but let your faith shape the way you communicate the Blessed Sacrament. By distributing the Eucharist with meaning, you become a faithful witness to the great Gift of the Eucharist.

How should I distribute Holy Communion to Persons with Disabilities?

Persons with disabilities should be seated in the front rows, near the aisle, on either side. Look for them. Distribute the Eucharist to them first, before distributing to the congregation.

What should I do with the Ciborium after I distribute the Body of Christ?

If there are no Hosts left in your Ciborium or Paten after distributing, then place the vessel on the purification table. If there is a lid or an extra Pall, you can put that over the vessel to cover it. Do not put anything else on top of or inside of it, however.

If there are Hosts left, then hand your vessel to the priest after he has finished distributing Holy Communion. He will empty the remaining hosts into the Ciborium before bringing it up to the Tabernacle. He will hand you the empty vessel, which you should then place on the Purification Table.

What should I do with the Chalice after I distribute the Blood of Christ?

If there is still some of the Precious Blood remaining in the Chalice after distribution has finished, please drink the rest, and wipe the lip of the Chalice. Then, place on the Purification Table with the Purificator draped OVER IT, not stuffed in it. If the EMHC distributing the Chalice is unable to drink the remaining Precious Blood, then he / she should ask another EMHC or a Priest or Deacon or Dominican Brother to help consume the rest.

If you run out before distribution is finished (if there are still people in line to receive from the Chalice), politely tell the next person, "I'm sorry. There is no more." Then, walk up to place the Chalice at the Purification Table.

After Mass

- As a special servant of the Eucharist, you are encouraged to pray after Mass in thanksgiving for receiving such a tremendous Gift, for your own benefit, and to be an example to others.
- If there was a collection, or two collections, at Mass, and if there are not 2 lectors to take care of the money, please help with this. Put the money in the plastic bags (located above the safe); 2 people are required. If there are 2 collections, be sure that they are kept separate and put in their correct bags. Do not count the money. Simply organize it according to denomination, putting all the checks together. Then, put in the proper bag. You and the other person should push out the air from the bag, seal it, sign it, and then deposit it in the safe, making sure to turn the handle so that the bag drops successfully into the safe.

Thank you for your service!

Troubleshooting Questions for EMHCs

What if someone comes up wanting to receive Holy Communion kneeling?

The bishops of the United States have legislated a common way for us to receive Holy Communion in this country. In a Communion line, persons should make a head bow in Adoration before receiving, and they should receive standing. If a person kneels, however, the person should not be refused Holy Communion, as long as the person is receiving the Eucharist properly.

What if someone wants a blessing?

Simply say “God bless you” without using any gestures.

What if someone isn’t Catholic?

If someone doesn’t seem to know what to do when coming up, or if you know that the person isn’t Catholic, ask politely, “Are you Catholic?” If the answer is no, then smile, and say, “I’m sorry. I’m not able to give Holy Communion to you. You should speak with the Priest after Mass. God bless you.”

What if someone doesn’t consume the Host right away?

As an EMHC, you are not only a distributor of the Eucharist. You are also a steward and guardian of the Eucharist. It is part of your duty to make sure that the Eucharist is respected and received properly. The faithful should receive and consume the Host immediately after receiving it. If they do not, you need to tell them to do so. Say politely, “Excuse me, Sir / Madam, please consume the Host immediately.” Motioning can help. Sometimes you will need to pursue someone to insist that he consumes the Host. Do not be afraid. The faithful should know better. Those who don’t know need to be instructed about the proper way to receive.

Is “Self-Intinction” permitted?

Intinction means dipping the Host in the Chalice before receiving It. Under certain conditions, a Priest can distribute the Eucharist by means of Intinction. There is a special method and/or Vessel for this. “Self-Intinction” means that someone seeks to dip the Host himself into the Precious Blood before receiving it. This is not allowed. So, if you are distributing the Precious Blood, and someone comes up to you with the Host he has received, wanting to dip it in the Chalice, you must not allow it. Simply put the Purificator over the Chalice, to block it. Say, “I’m sorry, but that is not allowed. You need to consume the Host first, before you drink from the Chalice.” If

the person becomes difficult or argumentative, then tell him that he must see the Priest after the Mass to talk about it.

What should I do if a Host is dropped?

If a Host falls, it should be picked up right way. If it is safe to consume, you should consume the Host. Sometimes the person picks up and consumes the Host. This is praiseworthy. If there are no visible particles where the Host dropped, then one need not do anything further. If there are, then, one should protect that area. After Mass, tell the Priest what happened. He will go to purify the area where the Host dropped. You can purify the area yourself. This involves simply dampening an unused Purificator and wiping the area so as to collect any remaining particles. Practically speaking, when one is in the middle of distributing the Host, it is hard to see whether any particles are present. With the type of small round hosts used at St. Dominic's, it is unlikely that there are visible particles that have broken off. So, if one looks down and doesn't see any visible particles, one can assume safely that there are none. One can always check briefly after distribution is finished. One should not be scrupulous, that is, overly worried about particles which one cannot see. However, one should also be diligent about protecting the Sacrament, even in its smaller forms. All used Purificators should go in the laundry basket behind the safe in the Sacristy.

What should I do if some of the Precious Blood is spilled?

One should be careful to prevent all possible spilling or splashing of the Precious Blood. However, every once in a while an accident occurs. Remain calm, and deal prudently with the situation.

Generally, the solution is to dilute the spilled precious Blood with water, using a Purificator, and then to dry the place using a Purificator.

The problem is that this cannot be done very easily in the middle of distributing the Chalice and in the middle of Mass. So, things should be done to mark the spill and protect the area until after Mass.

The Precious Blood can be spilled onto different things. In each case, the solution will be slightly different:

- ***Skin:*** Immediately, wipe the skin dry with the Purificator. Later, dilute and dry, using a Purificator. If this includes the skin of a congregant, the EMHC will need to prudently instruct and guide a member of the congregation as to what should be done.

- **Floor:** Immediately, put your Purificator over the spill, to mark and protect it. Then, either return the Chalice to the Altar, after informing those remaining in line that one must return to the Altar. If there is time to retrieve another Purificator from the Sacristy and continue distribution, then that is ok. If not, then, unfortunately the people remaining in line won't be able to receive from the Chalice in that Mass (at least not from your Chalice). Tell the Priest what happened after Communion or after Mass, so that proper purification can occur. Make sure that you or he actually takes care of it.
- **Clothing:** If the Precious Blood is spilled on your clothing, then, immediately, blot the clothing dry with the Purificator. If the Precious Blood spilled on the clothing of a congregant, it might be best to give the Purificator to that member and instruct them to blot his/her clothing dry with the Purificator and return the Purificator to you. Then, invite the person to come to the Sacristy after Mass to complete the Purification. Later (after Mass), dilute and dry with a Purificator. All used Purificators should go in the laundry basket behind the safe in the Sacristy.

What if there is an insect in the Precious Blood?

Flies and gnats are attracted to wine. Therefore, extra caution should be exercised to prevent bugs from finding their way to the unconsecrated wine or the Precious Blood. Prevention is by cover. The wine cruet should always have a stopper in it when not being used. The Acolytes should ensure this. If there are bugs flying around the sanctuary, then the Priest and Deacon should ensure that the Chalices on the Altar are covered using a Pall or Purificator. If there are bugs flying around when one is distributing the Precious Blood, then cover the Chalice with the Purificator until the bug flies away.

But alas, sometimes a bug gets in! If this happens before distribution, the Priest can seek to safely remove the insect. This is not realistic in the middle of distribution. In most cases, swallowing an insect is harmless. However, because of the psychological factor, it is best to discontinue distributing. If one is courageous, one can seek to swallow the insect oneself, especially if it is a gnat. However, we do not expect you to do that. And this should not be done if there is any chance that one will gag and spit out what one has sought to swallow. Simply return the Chalice to the Priest, who will take care of the Chalice. The Chalice should be covered. After Mass, there can be time to remove the insect and consume the rest of the Precious Blood. Typically, the insect is burned.