



# Procedures for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Holy Trinity Catholic Church, Gainesville, VA

June 2018

# Procedures for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

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# Procedures for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

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These procedures explain how instructions given to Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion by the Diocese of Arlington are implemented within Holy Trinity Parish (where Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are usually simply called “EMCs”). These procedures are not intended to supersede, supplement or in any way interpret the instructions given by the Diocese. Special supplements to these procedures are published as needed, e.g., for Easter Triduum and Christmas. If you have any comments or questions, please contact the ministry coordinator.

These procedures apply primarily to the Mass ministry. The Homebound/Nursing Home ministry is coordinated separately from the Mass ministry and publishes procedures that apply specifically to that ministry. All EMCs are encouraged to participate in the Homebound/Nursing Home ministry on a regular or occasional basis. Separate training is provided. For more information, contact the Homebound/Nursing Home ministry coordinator.

## 1 Mission

Serving with utmost care and reverence, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion assist the priests of Holy Trinity Parish with distribution of Holy Communion, when necessitated by the size of the congregation, to ensure that greater access to the Eucharist is made possible for the faithful. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion assist with the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass, take the Eucharist to the homebound and nursing home patients, and also assist in ecclesiastical functions such as the distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday.

## 2 General Policies

### 2.1 Mandates.

EMC mandates granted by the diocese are not permanent and apply only within the boundaries of the parish. Mandates are good for five years, renewable once, in order to allow more of the faithful to share in the benefits of this ministry. (With approval by the pastor and the diocese, mandates may be renewed for additional terms to fill particular parish needs.) A mandate will be revoked if the EMC moves out of Holy Trinity Parish or becomes inactive. Former EMCs may apply for a new mandate after taking at least one year off.

### 2.2 Training.

EMCs must attend a workshop conducted by the diocese in order to receive a mandate. In addition, training in how the instructions given in the diocesan workshop are applied at Holy Trinity is required before an EMC may serve. This training is ordinarily done at a general meeting of EMCs.

### 2.3 Annual Meeting(s).

All EMCs must attend the annual EMC meeting, usually held in June. If necessary, additional meetings may be scheduled, for example, to prepare for the Christmas and Easter liturgical seasons. At these meetings, current procedures and policies are reviewed, new ones are introduced, and issues and concerns are addressed. EMCs may be removed from the EMC schedule if they do not attend a mandatory meeting. If you cannot attend a meeting for any reason, you should contact the ministry coordinator to arrange a “make-up” session.

### 2.4 Multiple Ministries.

Many EMCs serve the parish through participation in a variety of ministries, committees, and social and support groups. However, it is preferable that different individuals serve in the various roles and ministries of the liturgy, so that those roles and ministries are not monopolized by a few. The rules pertaining to the service in multiple liturgical ministries here at Holy Trinity are:

- Lector. EMCs may not serve as both lector and EMC at the same Mass.
- Sacristan. EMCs may not serve as both sacristan and EMC at the same Mass.
- Usher. EMCs may not serve as both usher and EMC at the same Mass.

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- Cantor. EMCs may not serve as both cantor and EMC at the same Mass.
- Choir. EMCs are discouraged from singing in the choir at the same Mass for which they are assigned as EMC. If an EMC chooses to participate in both at the same Mass, EMC responsibilities take precedence over choir responsibilities.

### 2.5 Attire.

EMCs must comply with the following Holy Trinity Parish attire policy for all liturgical ministries:

#### Attire Policy for all Liturgical Ministries Serving in the Church and at Mass

*The attire for all liturgical ministers (lectors, cantors, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMC) and ushers) should be reverent, modest and neat so as to display dignity for the ministerial role, to provide a role model for the congregation, and to avoid drawing focus from the sacredness of being in the holy presence of Our Lord. The vast majority of the time we get this right, let's try to make it all the time.*

#### Men:

- *Though a jacket/suit and tie is preferred for weekend Masses, a tailored shirt with a sport coat, tie, sweater or vest is also acceptable.*
- *Slightly more casual attire may be worn at daily Masses.*

#### Ladies:

- *Tops must have covered shoulders, accomplished either by the top having sleeves or by the addition of a jacket, sweater or other solid fabric garment (not lace or other see-through fabric). Low cut tops may not be worn.*
- *Dresses and skirts are to be at least knee length.*
- *Slacks are dressy, rather than casual.*
- *Dress shoe selection is made giving careful consideration to heel height (stairs) and noise (marble floors).*

#### All:

- *Jeans and sneakers may not be worn.*
- *Tight and/or revealing clothing may not be worn.*
- *Though attire modifications may be necessary due to inclement weather, modesty must remain a priority.*

#### Moms and dads:

*Thank you for helping your daughters and sons make good choices for Mass attire.*

In addition:

- Wear your EMC cross.
- Avoid the use of perfume, cologne, scented hand lotions, sanitizers, etc. that might transfer to the Blessed Sacrament or trigger allergic reactions in others.
- If you use hand sanitizer before Holy Communion, be sure that it is **unscented** and does not leave a sticky residue on the ciborium.

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### 3 EMC Scheduling

#### 3.1 Schedule

- Schedules are typically prepared every two months. A request for input is made approximately one month before the beginning of the next schedule. Respond as quickly as possible to requests for schedule input, identifying any dates when you are not available to serve and any dates or Mass times when you would especially like to serve.
- Immediately review the draft schedule and notify the coordinator of any errors or conflicts. Consider volunteering for any vacancies, even if they are at a Mass you don't usually attend.
- It is a good idea to enter your assignments into your personal calendar. Be sure to check your calendar regularly so that you don't accidentally miss an assignment.
- The final version of the schedule is distributed by email and posted on the Holy Trinity web site at <http://www.holytrinityparish.net/ministries/>.

#### 3.2 Substitutes

- You are responsible for finding a substitute if you cannot serve at an assigned Mass. PLEASE DON'T WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE!
- Get to know the other EMCs who serve at the same Mass(es) you prefer. This can make it easier to find a substitute with a quick phone call or email.
- Email requests for subs are also effective. Send your request FIRST to the list of EMCs who regularly serve at the Mass in question. If no one responds, you may send a second request to the general list of EMCs.
- If you are assigned to take Holy Communion to the choir or help with ciboria after Holy Communion and you can't serve, please remember to let your substitute know that he or she is now responsible for the choir or ciboria. If your substitute isn't able to perform that task, please ask another assigned EMC to take on the responsibility.
- While your generosity and willingness to serve at two Masses in response to a request for a substitute is *greatly appreciated*, consider giving unassigned EMCs the opportunity to volunteer before you offer.
- Don't assume that you are the designated substitute just because you volunteered. Another volunteer may have responded before you. Ask for confirmation when you send your offer to substitute to the requester.
- As soon as a replacement is found, send a message to all addressees identifying the volunteer to eliminate the need to make or respond to multiple offers (e.g., "Sue Smith has agreed to sub for me at the 10:30 am Mass on June 1.").
- Always be prepared to serve, even if not assigned, in case an assigned EMC is absent.
  - Dress appropriately, as if you had been assigned to serve.
  - Bring your EMC cross.
  - Check the sign-in book upon arrival to get a sense of whether any assigned EMCs are absent. (See 4.1.)
  - Know how many EMCs are needed (the number is in parentheses by the Mass time in the sign-in book).
  - Count the EMCs that go forward after "Lord I'm not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed." If one or more are missing, go forward. Be sure to wait to make sure that all assigned EMCs have had a chance to take their places. (Example: At 10:30, eight EMCs are assigned. If only six are lined up at the sanctuary steps, two more EMCs should immediately go up to join the others.) The priest determines whether all the assigned EMCs are needed. Please do not be offended if the priest decides that you are not needed and asks you to return to your seat!

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### 3.3 Daily Mass

The priest decides whether an EMC is needed for daily Mass based on the number of people in attendance on any given day. EMCs should watch to see how many ciboria the priest takes from the tabernacle. He will take an extra ciborium (i.e., one more than the number of clergy) if an EMC is needed. In that case, an EMC should go forward. Wait to go up until after, "Lord I am not worthy...."

## 4 Mass

### 4.1 Signing In.

The EMC schedule is posted in the ministry book on the stand in the narthex. Initial the block next to your name under the Mass date and time when you arrive for an assigned Mass. If you are substituting for another EMC, line through their name and write your name underneath or to the side. If you are not assigned but go up at Holy Communion time to fill a vacancy, please return to the book after Mass, line through the name of the missing EMC, and add your own.

### 4.2 Seating.

EMCs are encouraged to sit in the right transept sections of pews (St. Joseph side) when assigned to serve at Mass. Reserved seating will be arranged as needed (e.g., Easter, Christmas).

### 4.3 Reverence.

EMCs have a special obligation to behave reverently in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Examples include:

- Behavior and attire should reflect reverence for the Blessed Sacrament and the dignity of the EMC role.
- Always come up to the altar with your hands folded reverently.
- Bow reverently:
  - Toward the altar just before going up the steps after the "Lord I am not worthy...."
  - Toward the priest just before receiving Holy Communion,
  - Toward the altar after returning the ciborium to the priest after Holy Communion,
  - Toward the tabernacle when the Blessed Sacrament is reposed.
- Cross in front of the altar, never behind it.
- Cover the full ciborium with your palm when walking to prevent spills.
- Keep your thumb and index finger (the fingers with which you touched the Blessed Sacrament) together over the ciborium until you return the ciborium to the priest and then purify them. This is because tiny fragments of the Blessed Sacrament may still be on your fingers (the same reason we rinse our fingers in the ablution bowl after Holy Communion).

### 4.4 Approaching the altar.

- Approach the altar after "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed."
- Keep your hands folded reverently.
- Reverence the altar with a bow if you cross in front of it.
- Stand at the foot of the steps to the right of the sanctuary, near the baptismal font (**Illustration position 1\***).
- The choir EMC should stand closest to the column by the baptismal font (**Illustration position X\***). If you are NOT the choir EMC, leave room for the choir EMC next to the column.

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\* Please refer to the illustration on the last page of this document.

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- If there is only ONE priest, ONE MORE EMC may go forward AFTER all assigned EMCs have gone to steps. The “extra” EMC should take the position closest to the center aisle so as to end up in the position closest to Tabernacle. (Note: You may be asked to sit down if there are not enough ciboria.)
- When the priest drinks from the chalice, bow reverently toward the altar and then go up the steps. The EMC closest to the congregation goes up the steps first, followed in a line by the rest of the EMCs. The leading EMC should walk along the side of the altar rug and stop close to the tabernacle (the distance from the tabernacle depends on how many EMCs there are in attendance). The other EMCs should follow the first EMC and take their places in a line along the edge of the rug (Illustration position 2\*\*). The Choir EMC should stand closest to the altar (Illustration position X\*).
- If you are assigned to serve at a Mass and will be taking the Blessed Sacrament to a sick or homebound parishioner after that Mass, place your pyx on the altar so that the priest knows that you will need to obtain Hosts. (Following Holy Communion, AFTER you have purified your fingers, return to the altar to get the pyx and Hosts.)
- Bow as the priest approaches and receive Holy Communion. The priest will then hand you a ciborium and may direct you to a Communion station. As each EMC is given a ciboria, the other EMCs should move down so they are close to altar. This prevents the priest or deacon from having to walk all over the sanctuary.
- **Daily Mass Exception.** At regular daily Mass, wait until the priest takes the ciboria from the tabernacle to go forward. If the priest takes only enough for himself (and any other clergy present at the altar), do not go up. (For example, if there is only one priest, go up only if he takes *two* ciboria from the tabernacle.)

### 4.5 Going to Communion stations.

- If you have not been directed to a specific Communion station by the priest, fill the stations from the FRONT to the REAR.
- When there are three or fewer EMCs (i.e., daily Mass, 7:30 pm Saturday Mass, 7:00 am Sunday Mass), allow the priest to leave the sanctuary first. At other Masses, leave the sanctuary and go to your Communion station as soon as you receive a ciborium. (This is especially important for the choir EMC).
- Cross behind the priest on the wide sanctuary step if you are going to the station by the Blessed Mother statue. Never cross behind the altar!
- Carry the Blessed Sacrament with dignity and decorum, paying special attention to the sanctuary steps. Cover the top of the ciborium with one hand to ensure that the Hosts do not fall out as you walk.

### 4.6 Communion stations.

Communion stations are numbered in the order they should be filled, from the front of the church to the rear:

1. Front transept on the Blessed Mother side, backed up against the stairs
2. Front transept on the St. Joseph side, backed up against the stairs
3. Cross aisle between the pew sections, facing the rear
4. Rear, about halfway between pews and doors, facing the narthex (for communicants in narthex and Hall)
5. Rear, about halfway between pews and doors, facing the altar
6. Next to the priest (used if there is only one priest)

**Choir.** If there is a choir, the EMC assigned to take the Holy Communion to the choir needs to stand closest to the altar to allow EMC to leave first to either the loft or the rear. This enable choir to receive Holy Communion before singing the Communion hymn. After giving Holy Communion to the choir (either in the loft or at the rear), the choir EMC goes to another station where needed to continue distributing Holy Communion. (This is likely to be at the cross aisle or rear of the church.)

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\* Please refer to the illustration on the last page of this document.



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The weekend Mass Communion stations (assuming that there are two priests), in the order in which they should be filled, are:

Saturday, 5:30 pm (6 EMCs) (*no choir*)

1. Two EMCs at the front transept on the Blessed Mother side, backed up against the stairs
2. Two EMCs at the front transept on the St. Joseph side, backed up against the stairs
3. Two EMCs at the cross aisle between the pew sections, facing the rear

Saturday, 7:30 pm (1 EMC) (*choir – “Choir” EMC to the choir loft, and then to wherever needed.*)

Sunday, 7:00 am (2 EMCs) (*no choir*)

1. One EMC at the front transept on the Blessed Mother side, backed up against the stairs
2. One EMC at the front transept on the St. Joseph side, backed up against the stairs

Sunday, 8:30 am (6 EMCs) (*choir or organist – “Choir” EMC to the choir loft and then to wherever needed. It’s best to go to the cross aisles.*)

1. Two EMCs at the front transept on the Blessed Mother side, backed up against the stairs
2. Two EMCs at the front transept on the St. Joseph side, backed up against the stairs
3. One EMC at the cross aisle between the pew sections, facing the rear.

Sunday, 10:30 am (8 EMCs) (*choir – “Choir” EMC to the choir loft and then to wherever needed.*)

1. Two EMCs at the front transept on the Blessed Mother side, backed up against the stairs
2. Two EMCs at the front transept on the St. Joseph side, backed up against the stairs
3. Two EMCs at the cross aisle between the pew sections, facing the rear
4. One EMC in the rear about halfway between pews and doors, facing the narthex.

Sunday, 5:00 pm (5 EMCs) (*choir – “Choir” EMC goes to the rear of the church about halfway between pews and doors, facing the narthex, where choir will be waiting. The “choir” EMC then gives Communion to those coming in through the doors, or goes to wherever needed, as appropriate.*)

1. Two EMCs at the front transept on the Blessed Mother side, backed up against the stairs
2. Two EMCs at the front transept on the St. Joseph side, backed up against the stairs

This means that, if there is a choir, the first EMC to leave the altar goes to the choir. The next EMC goes to the front transept on the Blessed Mother side, etc. At the 8:30 am and 10:30 am, the next TWO EMCS go to the Blessed Mother side, etc.

***At any Mass where there is only ONE priest or deacon, the LAST EMC leaving the altar should take position 6, next to the priest, instead of going to the station farthest from the altar.***

When you finish giving Holy Communion at a station, look around to see whether lines remain elsewhere in the church. If so, you may go to assist ministers at another station (see 4.9) to an unoccupied station (e.g., at the rear of the church) where lines remain.

***NOTE: Be flexible and use common sense regarding Communion stations. If there are more than two clergy, they may go to ANY station. If “your” station is already filled, either with clergy or another EMC, go to the next station(s) in order, moving toward the rear, until you find a vacancy.***

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### 4.7 Giving Holy Communion.

While you may give Holy Communion to many people at a particular Mass, recognize and honor the fact that, for each individual recipient, there is only ONE Holy Communion.

- Take your time:
  - To give each person the chance to come forward, stop completely and focus on the Blessed Sacrament;
  - To reduce the possibility that you or the person receiving drops the Blessed Sacrament;
  - To give you the opportunity to notice whether the person receiving actually consumes the Blessed Sacrament.
- If necessary, quietly ask the server to move to whichever side makes it easiest for you to give Communion.
- If necessary, quietly remind the server to hold the paten right under the hands or chin of the person receiving to catch any dropped Hosts.
- Hold the ciborium back and away when approached by someone carrying a young child so the child can't grab it.
- Hold the Host up so that the recipient can see and adore our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. In a quiet but clear voice say "**The Body of Christ.**" These are the *only* words that should be said. Nothing should be added or subtracted, not even a name (e.g., do not say "*This is the Body of Christ*" or "*Jane, the Body of Christ*").
- Often there are elderly or disabled individuals in the church to whom you must take the Blessed Sacrament because they cannot come down the aisle. The ushers should direct you to them, but take a moment to look around for individuals who may need your attention before returning to the sanctuary.
- Occasionally, someone may walk away without consuming the Blessed Sacrament. See Section 5.5, under "Frequently Asked Questions," for information on this situation.

### 4.8 Giving Holy Communion to the Choir.

At Masses when there is a choir (usually 8:30 am, 10:30 am, and 5:00 pm on Sunday), an EMC is designated to give Holy Communion to the choir. That EMC's name is printed on the schedule in red with an asterisk (**\*red**). If you are assigned to take Holy Communion to the choir, you should:

- Stand closest to the column, near the baptismal font, after "Lord I am not worthy..." so that you end up closest to the altar (see Section 4.4);
- If necessary, let the celebrant know that you are assigned to take Holy Communion to the choir;
- At the 8:30 am and 10:30 am Sunday Masses go immediately to the choir loft after leaving the sanctuary, going up the stairs to the left of the loft as you face it. (This timing is very important, because the choir/musicians cannot stop singing/playing the Communion hymns to receive once they start.) The choir will line up in the loft stairwell to receive Holy Communion before singing. If the choir is not waiting for you, step into the loft so that the choir sees that you have arrived, and then return to the stairwell. **NOTE:** During the summer months when the 8:30 am choir is on hiatus, go into the loft to the organist to give him Holy Communion.
- The choir for the 5:00 pm Mass will come down from the loft to receive, lining up at the back of the church facing the altar; go immediately to that station.
- After giving Holy Communion to the choir, go to wherever needed. This will most likely be the station in the rear facing the doors, to give Holy Communion to those directed in from the narthex. If there are already 2 EMCs at that station, you may face the altar and give Holy Communion to those in the rear pews or go to another station where assistance is needed.

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### 4.9 **After Communion.**

- Usually, you should return to the sanctuary as soon as you finish at your original station and wait near the altar (**Illustration position 3\*\*\***) until the celebrant finishes giving Holy Communion. If a long line remains at some station, you may move to that station to assist. **There should never be more than four EMCs at any station: one/two original EMCs plus one/two "helpers" (one on each side, about five feet apart, standing next to the original ministers, standing backed up against the stairs on the Blessed Mother side, St Joseph side and next to the priests, or backed up against the front pews if at the cross aisles. Do not stand at pew front).** In the case of significant crowding, you may go to an unoccupied station (likely in the rear of the church, facing either the narthex or altar).
- In general, use the center aisle to return to the altar when you finish giving Holy Communion. If lines remain in the center aisle, return to the altar via the side aisle on the St. Joseph side. At crowded Masses, ushers may lead you back to the altar, to reduce the possibility of colliding with someone in the aisle. If they feel it is prudent, they may have you pause near the cry rooms until Communion lines have finished. If you see that assistance is needed at another station, let the usher know where you need to go. **REMEMBER: No more than FOUR ministers at any station!**
- Keep your thumb and index finger (the fingers with which you touched the Blessed Sacrament) together over the ciborium, until you have returned the ciborium to the priest and then purified your fingers. This is because tiny fragments of the Blessed Sacrament may still be on your fingers until you have rinsed your fingers in the ablution bowl.
- When the celebrant comes back to the altar, place the ciborium in his hands. (Do not place the ciborium on the altar.) There is no need to hang back and wait for the servers to return their patens, but do try to line up in an orderly fashion rather than crowding around the altar. After giving the ciborium to the priest, bow toward the altar and go to the credence table behind the altar on the baptistry side to purify your fingers.
- Rinse your fingers in the ablution bowl on the credence table. You may also use the hand sanitizer, if available, after rinsing your fingers.
- Line up at the bottom of the sanctuary steps in front of the baptismal font (**Illustration position 4\*\*\***).
- Wait until the celebrant locks the ciboria in the tabernacle. Genuflect or bow when the celebrant does. Once the tabernacle has been locked, you may return to your pew.
- If you need to obtain the Blessed Sacrament for visits to the homebound or nursing home, approach the altar as the priest returns to the sanctuary after Holy Communion. After being given the Blessed Sacrament, go to the foot of the altar steps and wait with the other EMCs for the priest to repose the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. (After the Blessed Sacrament is reposed, proceed to the back of the church, wait there for Mass to end, and then go immediately to the sick or homebound person, without stopping or conversing with others.)
- In some cases, an assisting priest or deacon may collect the ciboria and chalice(s) and take them to the sacristy behind the altar for purification. An EMC is designated on the schedule in blue with the "@" symbol (**@blue**) to help carry the vessels to the sacristy, if requested by the priest or deacon. If you are assigned to help carry vessels, wait at the top of the steps near the credence table after rinsing your fingers to see if the priest or deacon collects the vessels and wishes assistance. If so, return to the altar and help carry the vessels to the sacristy. Only members of the clergy may actually purify vessels used for Holy Communion. EMCs are only permitted to dry vessels after they have been purified. (The priest or deacon doing the purification may not want any help at all.) If you are asked to help, please do not attempt to do any more than carry the vessels to the sacristy, and if requested, dry them after purification. After leaving the sacristy, reverence the tabernacle as you pass, and return to your pew.

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\*\*\* Please refer to the illustration on the last page of this document.

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### 5 Frequently Asked Questions.

#### 5.1 Why don't we have Holy Communion under both species?

Although the Blessed Sacrament is sometimes given in the form of the Precious Blood by the priest, Holy Communion is distributed by EMCs at Holy Trinity only in the form of the Sacred Body for a variety of reasons, such as the limited number of EMCs, the logistics involved in washing vessels, and health reasons. We know, of course, that "since Christ is sacramentally present under each of the species, Communion under the species of bread alone makes it possible to receive all the fruit of Eucharistic grace."<sup>1</sup>

#### 5.2 What if I drop a Host?

Dropping a Host (or even spilling a ciborium) occasionally happens to everyone. When it happens, please observe the following:

##### DO:

- Immediately and calmly pick up the Host and offer it to the communicant.
- **If the communicant refuses the Host, EMCs return to the altar and place the Host on the priest's paten.** Then return to the Communion station and continue distributing Holy Communion. (When Communion is over, tell the priest what happened so that he knows that the Host on the paten was dropped.)
- **Have the server place his purificator (cloth) on the spot and guard it until you return or until the spot is purified.** Upon your return, or if another EMC takes that spot, make sure to prevent anyone from stepping on the spot where the Host fell. When you have finished giving Holy Communion, ask the server, another EMC or an usher to get someone (usually a priest, deacon or server knight) to bring holy water to purify the spot. **Remain in place, protecting the area where the Host(s) fell, until he comes.**
- If multiple Hosts are dropped, immediately and calmly pick up the Hosts and place them on the server's paten, checking carefully to be sure you have found them all. Cover the paten with the server's purificator so they don't fall again. Ask the usher(s) to help protect the area until it has been purified. Take the paten with the dropped Hosts to the altar and place them on the priest's paten. Then return to your station to continue distributing Holy Communion. When you return to the altar, tell the priest what happened. The dropped Hosts will probably be placed in water to dissolve and then be poured down the sacrarium.

##### DON'T:

- Don't panic!
- Don't hesitate to ask the server, other EMCs, or ushers for help.
- Don't worry if the Communion line is held up. Another EMC should come to assist after finishing at his/her original station.
- Don't place a dropped Host in the ablution bowl. Instead, place it on the priest's paten and tell him what happened.
- **Don't place a dropped Host on the server's paten.**
- **Don't consume a dropped Host.**

#### 5.3 What if someone approaches with arms crossed, appears not to be Catholic, or seems too young?

- Assume that someone who approaches with crossed arms simply wants to adore our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. You may just smile and look to the next person in line. Since nothing may be added to the liturgy, it is not appropriate to say "May God bless you," "May Jesus be in your heart," or any other words besides "The Body of Christ." Also remember that only priests and deacons may bestow blessings; do not

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<sup>1</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no., 1390

# Procedures for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

## Holy Trinity Catholic Church, Gainesville, VA

extend a hand over the person, make a cross on their heads, or do anything that suggests that you are bestowing a blessing on them.

- With regard to someone who appears not to be Catholic, please remember that, generally speaking, EMCs do not have the authority to decide who may receive the Eucharist. Only God knows with absolute certainty a person's heart or state of grace, and so EMCs should habitually defer to the good faith of those who approach the sacrament. If you have a grave concern about someone who comes forward to receive, you may kindly and quietly ask them if they are Catholic. If they respond that they are not, kindly and quietly tell them that you cannot give them Holy Communion. If they protest, kindly and quietly ask them to move to a line where there is a priest or speak to the priest after Mass.
- You may also ask young children if they have received their First Holy Communion. If they say "no" or are confused, just smile and look to the person behind them to receive.

*NOTE: Eastern Rite Catholics give First Communion to very young children and often receive with crossed arms. We can give the Blessed Sacrament to someone who identifies himself or his child as such.*

### **5.4 What if someone has gum in their mouth, extremely dirty hands, etc.?**

Quietly ask them to remove their gum, open their mouth to receive on the tongue, or whatever is appropriate. Ask them to go to priest's line if they protest.

### **5.5 What if someone walks away without consuming the Host?**

If someone begins to walk away carrying the Host, placing it in a pocket, etc., without consuming it, stop the person and quietly ask if he or she is Catholic.

- If the person is Catholic, quietly ask him or her to immediately consume the Host and watch to see that they do so before resuming distribution of Holy Communion.
- **If the person is NOT Catholic, ask him/ her to return the Host to you and invite him/her to speak to the priest after Mass about the Catholic faith. Take the Host to altar and place it on the priest's paten. Then return to resume distribution of Holy Communion.**

If necessary, go after a person walking away without consuming the Host, but do not place your hands on the individual in attempt to restrain him or retrieve the Host; instead, immediately ask for assistance from a priest or usher.

EMCs can usually rely on the altar servers and ushers to help monitor the consumption of the Blessed Sacrament. While failing to consume the Blessed Sacrament is especially likely at Christmas and Easter Masses, it may occur at ANY Mass, and it doesn't always involve a child or teenager. In some cases, the person involved is not an observant Catholic and is ignorant of the meaning and manner of receiving Holy Communion. In other cases, the person simply wants to ensure that a family member who is not present or who has difficulty leaving the pew is able to receive. (In the latter case, you can ask the person to point out the individual who is unable to come forward, and then you can give Holy Communion to that person when you finish with the line.) We pray that there is no malicious intent! In any case, it is essential to see that the Host is immediately consumed or returned to the EMC.

### **5.6 What if I run out of Hosts?**

Try to monitor the lines and your supply of Hosts. If you only need a few more Hosts, ask an EMC near you to share his supply. If you run out of Hosts and cannot easily obtain more from a nearby EMC, simply return to the sanctuary and wait by the altar until Communion is over and you can hand your ciborium to the priest. **Do not break Hosts.**

### **5.7 What if someone asks for a small piece of the Host?**

**EMC may not break Hosts. If someone is unable to consume the entire Hosts, tell them that you cannot break the Host and ask them to go the priest or deacon's line. If they are unable to do so, go to the priest or deacon yourself, or ask another EMC or usher to assist in getting a priest or deacon to go to that person.**

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### 5.8 What is the purpose of the abluion bowl?

The abluion bowl is intended to capture any fragments of the Blessed Sacrament (even ones not visible to the eye) that may adhere to your fingers while distributing Holy Communion. For this reason, it is very important that we rinse our fingers every time we give Holy Communion.

- If the abluion bowl is empty, the first EMC should take it to the sacristy behind the altar, fill it with water from the tap, and return it to the credence table. EMCs should then purify their fingers as usual.
- If the abluion bowl is missing, the first EMC should go to the sacristy behind the altar and get it, fill it with water from the tap, and place it on the credence table. The abluion bowl (a small gold-colored, footed bowl) is kept in the tall pantry-like cabinet to the far left of the sink, on a shelf at about eye-level). EMCs should then purify their fingers as usual.
- It would also be acceptable – but not preferable – to go to the sacristy and rinse your fingers in the sacrarium sink, since it drains directly into the ground.

The abluion bowl is not intended as a means to sanitize your hands. Hand sanitizer is usually available in a pump bottle next to the abluion bowl to deal with germs. It is to be used AFTER the abluion bowl, NOT INSTEAD of it. Its use is optional.

### 5.9 What health precautions should EMCs take?

EMCs that are ill, recovering from an illness or think they may be coming down with something should not serve. EMCs who have sores or bandages on their fingers, hands, arms or faces should not serve. Please find a substitute if you can, but if you don't have time or aren't successful, it's still better not to serve than to risk spreading infection (or cause parishioners concern that you might be spreading infection).

EMCs should wash their hands well with soap and water before and after Mass and use hand sanitizer after Communion. You may wish to avoid shaking hands during the Exchange of Peace, if you will be distributing Holy Communion. (You can bow, wave or show some other sign of greeting instead.)

If you feel that you must use hand sanitizer BEFORE giving Holy Communion, be sure that the sanitizer is odorless and rubbed in well, to keep the ciborium from becoming sticky.

### 5.10 May I take Holy Communion to the sick or homebound?

This very special aspect of the EMC ministry is coordinated separately and has its own set of formal procedures. While all EMCs are encouraged to participate in the Homebound/Nursing Home ministry on a regular or occasional basis:

- EMCs should NEVER take it upon themselves to take Holy Communion to anyone without first contacting the Homebound/Nursing Home coordinator. The coordinator will take care of the required coordination with the parish office and help determine how best to minister to the person in question.
- EMCs should NEVER give the Blessed Sacrament to another person – even another EMC – to take away with them. EMCs who are assigned to take the Blessed Sacrament to the sick MUST approach the altar after Holy Communion and obtain the Blessed Sacrament from the priest.

