

Our Lady & Saint Anne, Caversham – 07 December 2013

THE MINISTRY OF EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER OF HOLY COMMUNION

Notes from a presentation given by Fr Michael Fountaine

EMHC = Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion

GIRM = General Instruction of the Roman Missal

Vatican II – The opening up of the ministries of the Assembly

Christ is Present in the Liturgy

The 4 modes of Christ's Presence

- He is present in the gathered assembly, when we pray and sing
- He is present in the presiding priest
- He is present in the Word – the sacred scripture
- **He is present in the Eucharist – the consecrated bread and wine, his body and blood**

The Lord Jesus, on the night before he suffered on the cross, shared one last meal with his disciples. During this meal our Saviour instituted the sacrament of his Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the ages and to entrust to the Church his Spouse a memorial of his death and resurrection.

As the Gospel of Matthew tells us:

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, "Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my Body, which is given for you. Then he took the chalice, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, " Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my Blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins." (Mt 26:26-28; cf. Mk 14:22-24, Lk 22:17-20, 1 Cor 11:23-25)

Christ is present

Recalling these words of Jesus, the Catholic Church professes that, in the celebration of the Eucharist, bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and the instrumentality of the priest. Jesus said: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink" (Jn 6:51-55). The whole Christ is truly present, body, blood, soul, and divinity, under the appearances of bread and wine - the glorified Christ who rose from the dead after dying for our sins. This is what the Church means when she speaks of the "Real Presence" of Christ in the Eucharist. This presence of Christ in the Eucharist is called "real" not to exclude other types of his presence as if

they could not be understood as real (cf. *Catechism*, no. 1374). The risen Christ is present to his Church in many ways, but most especially through the sacrament of his Body and Blood.

Stewards of the Presence...

7 fold action of Christ

- Jesus takes bread
- He gives thanks
- He breaks the bread
- He gives the bread
- He takes the chalice
- He give thanks
- He gives the chalice

Holy Communion

While the heart of the celebration of Mass is the Eucharistic Prayer, the consummation of the liturgy is found in Holy Communion. In the gathering, in the breaking of the bread, in the eating and drinking the faithful are joined together as members of Christ's mystical body, sharing the one life of the Spirit. In the great sacrament of the altar, they are joined to Christ Jesus and to one another

Ordinary Ministers of Communion:

Priest (through the 7 fold action)
Deacon

Auxiliary Ministers:

Instituted Acolytes

The permission for this ministry, given in 1969 by Pope Paul VI, was implemented by the instruction aptly entitled *Immensae Caritatis -- Immense Love*. From the instruction we read:

Christ the Lord has left to the Church, his spouse, a testament of this immense love. This wonderful gift of the Eucharist, which is the greatest gift of all, demands that such an important mystery would be increasingly 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 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.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

(Redemptionis Sacramentum 2004)

- The name “minister of the Eucharist” belongs properly to the Priest alone. By reason of their sacred Ordination, the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are the Bishop, the Priest and the Deacon.[154]
- In addition there is the instituted acolyte, who by virtue of his institution is an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion even outside the celebration of Mass. If, reasons of real necessity prompt it, another lay person may be delegated by the diocesan Bishop, for one occasion or for a specified time.
- Finally, in special cases of an unforeseen nature, permission can be given for a single occasion by the Priest who presides at the celebration of the Eucharist [155]. This function is to be understood according to the name by which it is known: extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, and not “special minister of Holy Communion” “extraordinary minister of the Eucharist” nor “special minister of the Eucharist”. [156]

Frequent Communion

This instruction reflects a growing awareness on the part of the Church for the importance of communion in the life of the faithful believer. Since the early part of the 20th century, when Pope Pius X gave instruction that the faithful might receive communion frequently and at an early age (1905,

1910), large numbers of persons have come forward for communion at liturgy, and those who are sick or confined feel a special need for the comfort of this sacrament. In addition, the action taken by Pius XII to revise the Eucharistic fast regulations, and the permission granted by Paul VI to restore the ancient practice of communion under forms of both bread and wine have made necessary additional ministers. The ministry of the Eucharistic minister thus came about as a direct result of the great reverence and hunger Catholics feel for the Eucharist, and their desire to receive it frequently.

Where there are a sufficient number of priests extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may not be used. [157]

An extraordinary minister of Holy Communion may administer Communion only:

- when the Priest and Deacon are lacking,
- when the Priest is prevented by weakness or advanced age or some other genuine reason,
- or when the number of faithful coming to Communion is so great that the very celebration of Mass would be unduly prolonged. [158]

An extraordinary minister of Holy Communion cannot delegate anyone else to administer the Eucharist. [159]

The diocesan Bishop should review current practice and establish special norms where necessary. [160]

Communion of the Sick

These individuals serve Christ who is present in the assembly by ministering his Body and Blood to their sisters and brothers. They also serve the Body of Christ by taking Communion to those members who, through sickness, old age, or other causes are prevented from taking part in the Mass. In accord with a most ancient tradition, it is most appropriate for communion to be taken directly from the (Sunday) Eucharist to the sick and the housebound.

Eucharistic Exposition

- Exposition & Reposition (*in the absence of Priest or Deacon*)
- Not Benediction

Who is called to the ministry?

Servants...

- Genuine ministry is about humble service. The model for all ministry is Christ the Lord who came to serve, not to be served. His command to “love one another” (cf. John 13:43) was prominent throughout his life and ministry. The EMHC must put aside personal agendas and needs, prejudices and judgements in order to serve the community and give faithful testimony to Christ’s presence in the Eucharist.
- A Liturgical Minister is a person of prayer.

- How can you lead the prayer life of the parish if you are not a person of prayer yourself?
- Come to your ministry through prayer!

Selection of Candidates

- Those selected to be Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are to be **fully initiated** members of the community, both male and female, of sufficient age and maturity, and of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Since they may also be called to take Communion to the sick and housebound, those persons selected for this ministry should possess the maturity to minister in these sometimes difficult situations.
- Criteria are necessary for the selection, formation, and evaluation of ministers. For those who will serve in the public ministry of the Church, faith must be supported by visible signs. To this end, the following qualifications might be employed to assist in discerning who might serve in this ministry: basic human wholeness, manifestation of the theological virtues (faith, hope and charity), manifestation of the cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance), a positive sense of Church, a willingness to be formed in the ministry of the Church, and an abiding reverence for the presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist and in the assembly of the faithful.

- Ministers who bring Holy Communion to the sick and the housebound are to comply with the prescribed policies regarding the Diocesan child and vulnerable adult protection procedures. This is for the safety and protection of both the sick person and the minister.

Training & Ongoing Formation

Each parish should have a continuous training program for those who serve in this ministry, as with all ministries. That training should include: education, formation and support. In addition, opportunities for reflection on the Eucharist, its place in the minister's life. This should take place at least once a year or perhaps seasonally (i.e., Advent and/ or Lent)

Length of Service

Since ministry is a call both from God and the community in which it is exercised, it is appropriate that choices of ministry and renewal of the term of service be mutually agreed upon by individual and the parish. Parishes should commission EMHC for a specific period, perhaps two or three years. This will allow both the EMHC and the parish community to benefit from this ministry. It also allows the ministers the opportunity to evaluate their involvement and/or to change to another ministry at the end of their term.

Re-certification and re-commissioning of EMHC beyond that period is dependent upon parish policy.

As with all liturgical ministries, it is best for the individual and the parish if a person serves in only one ministry at any given liturgy. To encourage the involvement of a variety of persons in this ministry, parishes may wish to limit a person's service to one liturgical ministry at any given time.

Liturgical Ministry

Self-Helps...an industry!

- Guide for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
The Liturgical Ministry Series
- The Joy of being a Eucharistic Minister
Mitch Finley
- Forming Extraordinary Ministers for Holy Communion
Caroline M Thomas
- Ministers of Holy Communion – a practical and liturgical guide
Donald A Withey

Liturgical Ministers Dress

Ask yourself this question and be honest. How should you dress in the house of the King of Kings?

If you went to Buckingham Palace, what would you wear?

Why should you dress with any less respect for the only King that matters?

Also, what you wear sends signals to the assembly about how seriously you take your ministry. Dress how you minister - with dignity and respect. Never wear anything that will detract

from Holy Communion. The focus must always be on the presence of Christ, not the presence of the minister.

EMHC should ensure that their hands are clean!
Use Gel when necessary!

In order to put yourself in the perfect frame of mind, you **should arrive at the church early** and try to leave the outside world behind you. Your cares, your problems, aspirations, anxieties, plans, hobbies, hopes, and what's for lunch - all must stay outside. Find a quiet spot and sit or kneel and pray to the Lord whatever is in your heart. You might ask that He make you a worthy minister of his gifts.

It is appropriate that ministers should take their place seated in the assembly. They do not need to be part of the opening or closing processions. It is a powerful sign of unity to see them come from the assembly and return to it after having served.

Please be faithful to the rota. What sign is given when a minister doesn't turn up and someone has to be recruited at the last moment? If you cannot be present then please secure a substitute, giving them as much notice as possible to enable them to prepare. If you have a bad cold etc always swap with someone else!

Sit near to the front of the church when you are ministering, do not rush to the altar. Wait for the priest to receive Communion. Don't bench hop during this time!

Move with dignity. The EMHC is the first to form what is one of the great processions of the Mass (not a queue for Communion)

Concern is often raised about the continuing practice of communicating the assembly at Mass from the sacrament reserved in the tabernacle.

The *Constitution on the Liturgy*, art. 55, states: "The more complete form of participation in the Mass by which the faithful, after the priest's communion, receive the Lord's body from the same sacrifice, is strongly endorsed" This is supported in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 85, which states that "it is most desirable that the faithful, just as the priest himself is bound to do, receive the Lord's body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and that, in the instances when it is permitted, they partake of the chalice.(cf. no. 283), so that even by means of the signs Communion will stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated."

WHY?

Sacrosanctum Concilium says that we are to learn to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice, not just through the hands of the priest,

but with him (48). The dynamic of presenting our gifts [bread, wine and ourselves] that God returns to us transformed by the power of the Spirit so that by our sharing in these gifts we may in turn also be transformed by the same Spirit into the body of Christ ecclesial and be sent to transform the world.

We offer the Eucharist

We receive Communion

Implications for “Eucharistic Services”

The Eucharistic Prayer

From ancient times humanity has turned to God in thanksgiving, praise and petition. The Berakah, the ancient prayer of blessing, forms the root system of the Eucharistic Prayer today. We are apart of a great tradition that turns to God and remembers the goodness, mercy and love that God shows for humanity.

In the spirit of Christ, we celebrate the great blessings prayers over bread and wine. Remembering the covenant, we repeat the Eucharistic action of taking, blessing, breaking and sharing. Indeed we know the Lord chooses to live with us.

What is it?

Remembering

Remember God’s wonderful works.

Praise and thank God!

Calling the Spirit / Epiklesis

Ask the Spirit to transform our gifts and make us holy.

Blessing

Remember the night before Jesus died.

Remember what He gave us.

Anamnesis/Making present

Offering

Offer the sacrifice and be united in sharing the Body and Blood of Christ.

Petitioning/Asking

Take joy and courage from the Communion of Saints.

Praising

Give all glory and honour to the Lord. Amen, Amen!

Procedures for Distribution

According to the liturgical norms, the priest alone, or with the assistance of the deacon or other concelebrants, breaks the Eucharistic bread as the *Lamb of God* is sung or recited.

EMHC approach the altar **as the priest receives Communion**.

Local custom determines where the EMHC stand and wait.

After the priest has concluded his own Communion, he distributes Communion to the assisting deacon, if present.

Deacons and EMHC **do not** receive Holy Communion in the manner of a concelebrating priest. Then Communion, under both kinds, is distributed to the EMHC by the priest and assisted by the deacon who ordinarily distributes the blood of

the Lord. (NB: If the whole assembly is not being offered the blood of the Lord, it is not appropriate to offer it to the EMHC only).

The practice of EMHC waiting to receive until after the distribution of Holy Communion is not in accord with liturgical law.

As the priest or deacon approaches the minister with the Body or Blood of the Lord, the minister bows his/her head as a sign of reverence and responds with a clear “Amen” to the invitation, “The Body of Christ” or “The Blood of Christ.” Next, a chalice of the Body or Blood of the Lord, is handed by the priest or deacon to each minister, and he/she goes to the respective station for the distribution of Communion to the assembly.

As a general rule, all who present themselves to the EMHC for Communion should be given Holy Communion. If there is a question of scandal or propriety, the EMHC should offer Communion and speak to the Priest after Mass.

In the absence of an Ordinary Minister of Holy Communion, when Communion is offered under both kinds, the cup is always administered by the EMHC. The cup is not to be left on the altar for “self-communication” by the assembly (GIRM 2002, no 160). The reception of the cup by communicants is their personal choice.

Giving the Body of Christ

In giving Communion, the EMHC raises the host slightly and says in a clear voice: “The body of Christ.” The communicant responds: “Amen.” The minister then gives Communion, respecting the option of the communicant to receive either in the palm of the hand or on the tongue (*GIRM* 2002, nos. 161, 284-287).

If a person is unable to receive Communion under the form of bread, he/she may choose to receive Communion under the form of wine – the Blood of Christ.

Giving the Blood of Christ

In administering the chalice, the minister raises the cup slightly and says in a clear voice while looking at the communicant, “The Blood of Christ.” The communicant responds: “Amen” The EMHC then gives the chalice to the communicant who takes it entirely into his/her hands (when physically able), drinks from it and returns it to the minister. Then the minister wipes the rim of the cup with the purificator, turns the cup slightly and offers it to the next communicant (*GIRM* 2002, nos. 161, 284-287). It should be remembered that all movements in the liturgy must be carried out with dignity and reverence. Liturgical movements are never hurried.

- a. Reverently hold the holy Eucharist (show care for the sacred elements);
- b. Allow the communicant to stand before you and make a bow of the head in reverence to the Lord;
The choice of how one receives the Eucharist, whether in the hand or on the tongue, belongs to the communicant.
- c. Show care for these words (addressed to each person, not mumbled, not shouted).
- d. Show care for the gesture (not grandiose or indifferent).
Look at the communicant.
- e. Show care for the communicant (young, old, various abilities).
- f. Be skilful and gracious in giving the Eucharist.

The practice of receiving Communion by self-intinction, whereby the communicant takes a host and dips it into the precious blood is not permitted by the liturgical documents.

No dunking!

The Communion Plate

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* mentions the Communion-plate in the section concerning articles to be prepared for Mass: “The following are also to be prepared the Communion-plate for the Communion of the faithful” (118). Additionally, *Remptionis Sacramentum* encourages its use: “The Communion-plate for the Communion of the faithful

should be retained, so as to avoid the danger of the sacred host or some fragment of it falling” (93).

If an accident occurs...don't panic!

With the Eucharistic Bread:

If a host falls to the ground during distribution, the minister or MC should pick it up. It should be consumed when distribution is over or allowed to dissolve completely in water and then poured into the sacrarium.

With the Precious Blood:

The communicant is asked to proceed to another minister of the chalice. Then the minister/MC should cover the spillage with a purificator or larger towel so that the spillage is absorbed. The area should be washed after Mass and the water poured into the sacrarium.

Purification of Sacred Vessels.

After distribution of Communion, any remaining hosts are to be reserved in the tabernacle (or consumed). Also, if there is any remaining Precious Blood, the priest, deacon (or EMHC) consume what remains.

The chalice and other vessels used for the distribution may be taken to a side table where they are cleansed or covered and cleansed after Mass by the priest or deacon.

The Liturgy after the Liturgy

“Receiving the Bread of Life, the disciples of Christ ready themselves to undertake with the strength of the Risen Lord and his Spirit the tasks which await them in their ordinary life. For the faithful who have understood the meaning of what they have done, the Eucharistic celebration does not stop at the church door. Like the first witnesses of the resurrection, Christians who gather each Sunday to experience and proclaim the presence of the Risen Lord are called to evangelise and bear witness in their daily lives.”

(Dies Domini.45)

Evangelii Gaudium (Joy of the Gospel!)

“an evangelizing community is filled with joy; it knows how to rejoice always. It celebrates every small victory, every step forward in the work of evangelization. Evangelization with joy becomes beauty in the liturgy, as part of our daily concern to spread goodness. The Church evangelizes and is herself evangelized through the beauty of the liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelization and the source of her renewed self-giving.”

Pope Francis

Reflection on the Ministry

Yours is a share
in the work of the Lord's Spirit
who makes of us
one bread, one body,
the cup of blessing which we bless.

Yours is the work
of ministering Christ's body and blood
to the body of Christ, the church.

Yours is service
at the Lord's reconciling table.
You name for each of us
the gifts we have offered
and the gifts we receive:
"The Body of Christ, the Blood of Christ."

You minister holy food to holy people
in the holiest of all communions.
Yours is the ministry of the One
who was broken
and poured out for our sake:
the ministry of Christ
who is our Passover and our lasting peace.

Come to your work

from your personal prayer,
praying that the Lord
will heal your brokenness
as you break and pour out
yourselves for others.

Remember the purity of the gifts you minister
and how great is your need
for the Lord's mercy.

Learn to love the Eucharist you minister:
let it heal the hurt
your heart is slow to acknowledge;
let it make you one with all that is living;
let it help you revere
all those whom you serve.

Ministers of the Eucharist are many;
truly Eucharistic ministers
are what you must become.

Let your service at the Lord's table
make of your life
a table of mercy and welcome
for all you know and meet.
In and outside the worship space,
revere those you serve
as you would reverence

the sacrament you minister.

When you minister to friends and family,
remember that the greatest bond you share
is in the Lord.

When you minister to visitors and strangers,
revere them
as you would your closest friend.

When you minister to those with whom you are at odds,
revere them
as the Lord does you in your sin.

Some will esteem you as "holy"
because of the work you do:
remember
that your holiness
is the Lord's work within you.
When you are asked to serve
at inconvenient times,
let the needs of God's people
be your first consideration.

When you begin to think
that your ministry makes you
an important person in the community,
remember that what the Lord did at table
became a sign of the cross.

When your brothers and sisters
praise and thank you for your work,
take delight in the communion
you share with them in Christ
and rejoice in the work
the Lord has accomplished through you.
Be faithful in the work you do,
for through it the Lord saves his people.

*“Yours is a Share: Call of Liturgical Ministry”
by Austin Fleming*