

# Instructions for Eucharistic Ministers (EMins)

## THE MECHANICS OF OFFERING COMMUNION

**HOW TO HANDLE HOST:** There is no hurry here. This is a reverent act, not a mechanical action. Hold a host up so that it is between your face and the receiver's face, maintaining eye-contact, and say, "The Body of Christ." The receiver should respond, "Amen." Place the host into the person's hand with a slight pressure – don't drop it from a few inches up. If someone wants to receive on the tongue they will open their mouth. You want to place the host on their tongue without touching their tongue with your thumb or fingers. The moisture of the tongue will cause the host to cling. Just move slowly – after you've done it a few times, you'll see that it is not difficult.

**HOW TO HANDLE THE CUP:** Unfold the purificator (small cloth) and use different areas of it to wipe the cup. Lift the cup slightly so that it is in both of your fields of vision and say, "The Blood of Christ." They should respond, "Amen." Again, there is no hurry in offering the cup – take your time. Don't let go of your grip on the cup until you are sure the other person has a good hold. This is especially important for young children, elderly people or someone who seems upset or distracted. Pay strict attention and be ready to take it back when they are done. Wipe the rim where they drank and turn the cup slightly before offering it to the next person. BTW – the figures on the base of the cup represent the 12 apostles.

## WHAT TO DO AT MASS

Please check-in in the sacristy by 10 minutes before Mass – earlier if possible. Let the Mass coordinator know you are here. If you are running late and don't check-in, chances are you will be replaced. **This causes confusion so please help out by checking in on time.**

Come into the sanctuary during the Sign of Peace. Don't wait for the music to start - ministers should be in their places before the Lamb of God is sung. Stop at the bottom of the steps and make a small bow (head and shoulders) to the altar. A bow is a sign of respect. The altar is a Christ symbol and should be respected. Our tradition at St. Mary is to bow before going up the steps to the sanctuary (altar area) and again after descending the steps.

Take a small amount of hand sanitizer from the bottle on the windowsill. Rub your hands together as inconspicuously as possible.

There should be 5 "EMins". **If you did not check in, do not automatically go up to the altar during mass. Wait and see whether or not 5 people go up. If less than 5 go up, then you should join them.**

The presider will distribute the consecrated bread to all the Eucharistic Ministers, then wine. Usually, the EMin in the middle becomes the bread minister and the other 4 are wine ministers, but be flexible and take what Fr. hands you. When you receive a cup, please take the purificator (small white cloth) before you drink. After you receive the wine, wipe the rim then offer wine to the servers and the bread minister if you are next to them. Once everyone has received the consecrated bread and wine, the EMin closest to the steps should lead the way to your stations. You don't need to wait for the presider to lead! Wine stations are not assigned – choose any empty station.

## BREAD MINISTER

If you are handed the bowl of host, allow the wine distributors to lead the way, then follow them down the steps. Generally, the bread minister stands on Fr's right, but if you end up on his left that's fine.

Be sure you know what to do about “arms crossed” and “pyx” mentioned in the section marked “Some Things That Happen Occasionally”. These are more likely to happen to a Bread minister than a Wine minister.

After everyone has received, Fr Jeff usually takes both bowls with him to the altar. After handing him your bowl, you can just wait at the bottom of the steps for the wine distributors to join you. Then everyone can bow together and return to your seats. Another priest might just goes back to the altar. In that case, follow him and hand him your bowl. He will combine all the hosts into one bowl. Go to the bottom of the steps to wait for the wine ministers. However, if the visiting priest combines all the hosts then hands you the full bowl, take it to the tabernacle on the back altar. Place the bowl inside, close the door, turn the key but leave the key in the lock. Bow to the tabernacle, then join the other Emins at the bottom of the steps and bow to the altar with them.

## WINE MINISTERS

On each side, a wine minister will stand with his/her back to the outside wall and another wine minister will stand half-way to the wall. Wine ministers **MUST** turn so that you are facing directly toward the priest and bread minister. You should not stand facing the congregation! This is important because the people who want to receive from the cup can step out of the flow of traffic and there will be room for others to pass behind them. The direction you face will cause or prevent a big traffic clog!

If your cup is empty and people are still coming to communion, either take your cup to the server’s table or if you are blocked from leaving your spot, cover the cup with the purificator and don’t make eye contact with people.

If there is wine left at the end of communion you may help consume it or not – it is up to you. No one is required to drink any wine. Ladies with a “baby-on-board”, or anyone underage, should **NOT** drink the wine! Use your own judgment as to whether or not and how much wine you should consume. Fr will consume any remaining, but help him out if you can. Again, use your own judgment.

After placing your cup on the credence table, it is a tradition for the Emins to gather at the foot of the stairs, bow together then return to their seats.

## AFTER MASS

On the schedule, two Eucharistic Ministers are designated as Clean-Up ministers. This means that they distribute communion **AND** help wash the vessels afterwards! **It is a simple task to wash the vessels – no different than washing up after a meal at home - but if the assigned Emins don’t do it, it adds to the priest’s or MC’s workload.** Please help out when it is your turn.

**IMPORTANT: Please check-in in the sacristy by 10 minutes before Mass – earlier if possible.**

## SOME THINGS THAT HAPPEN OCCASIONALLY

**ARMS CROSSED ON CHEST:** If someone approaches you with their arms crossed over their chest they want a blessing. Some are children who haven’t had 1<sup>st</sup> Communion yet, some are visitors who know about the blessing, some are members of the RCIA class who not ready to receive communion, and some people are allergic to gluten in the host. Hold your hand near their head or shoulder and say something appropriate such as “ God bless you”, or something like “May God bless you today and all the days of your life.”

**WHEELCHAIR/FRONT ROW COMMUNION:** If a person in a wheelchair is in the aisle, be sure they are offered bread & wine. Sometimes there are people sitting in the front pew that can't walk well and Fr. will take bread to them. Offer them wine too.

**PYX (Small container to transport host):** We have some elderly and ill parishioners who can't come to church and someone from their family takes communion to them. The host is carried home in a small gold container called a pyx. Usually the family member will hold the pyx up for you to put the host in, then they will close the pyx and take a host for themselves, but be flexible about the order of things.

**DROPPED HOST/SPILLED WINE:** This rarely, rarely happens, but you should know what to do. First, reassure the person in front of you. Then, simply bend down on one knee and pick up the dropped host. Be careful not to spill any more hosts in the process. You might have to stop traffic before you can bend down so that no one bumps you causing more spillage! The dropped host must be consumed but if you do not feel comfortable consuming the host, that's OK, but you must keep the host separate – maybe hold it under the plate with the fingers that are supporting the plate – and give it to the priest at the end of communion. Tell him it was dropped!

If you spill some consecrated wine, and if you can manage the cup with only one hand, bend down on one knee and wipe the wine off the floor with your purificator. If the cup is too full for you to manage gracefully, ask the next person in line to hold the cup while you take care of the spill. If necessary, that person can continue to hold the cup while you go to the sacristy to retrieve more purificators. Or ask someone to get the Mass Coordinator who will help you. After the spilled wine has been cleaned up with purificators, those purificators should be rinsed out in a bowl (any bowl from the cabinet) and the rinse water poured into the ground outside – not down the sink into the sewer system!

**INTINCTION:** A few people will approach the wine distributor holding out their host. They want to dip the consecrated host into the consecrated wine before consuming it. This is called intinction. It is an old method of receiving communion in both forms but is no longer practiced. (Actually, the communicant did not dip the host themselves – the priest dipped it and placed it on the communicant's tongue. Can you imagine how long that took!) While it is no longer allowed, it is not your job to stop them from doing it. As a matter of practicality – because we don't want consecrated wine dripped on the floor! – do what you can to make it easy for them and hold your purificator in a way that it will catch any drips if they do fall.

**BOWS:** Ladies, please be aware of your hemline and neckline when you bow! It is perfectly fine to wear a short skirt or V-neck blouse to mass, but in that case just make a "head & shoulders" bow – not a deep bow from the waist. It seems silly to have to mention this but unfortunately there really have been some instances of exposed underwear during bows.

**CHILDREN'S CHOIR:** Sometimes the Children's Choir sings at 9am mass. They gather on the steps after communion, blocking your exit path. Rather than wade through them, bow to the altar while you are still in the sanctuary, go down the steps on the far side of the baptismal table and proceed directly to your seat. Don't form a line in the center aisle with the other ministers and bow together because you will block the congregation's view of the children.

If something comes up that is not covered here, use your own judgment about what to do. Ask Father or the Mass Coordinator afterwards.