



*Welcome  
to the Catholic Parish  
of the Wairarapa*



**'A community living and sharing the Good News of  
Jesus Christ.'**

**GUIDELINES FOR THE  
MINISTERS OF COMMUNION  
IN THE MASS**

## The Ministry

The role of Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion has its roots in the early Church, where the distribution of the Eucharist was primarily conducted by the bishops or priests.

As Christian worship grew and populations increased, particularly during the Middle Ages, the logistical challenges of distributing Communion to large congregations became apparent.

By the 19th century, in response to the need for assistance during the distribution of Communion, bishops began to appoint laypersons to help in this task, especially in health crisis situations or when clergy were unavailable.

The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) emphasised the active participation of the laity in the liturgy, further validating the role of laypersons in the Church.

In 1973, the Vatican issued specific guidelines allowing bishops to designate Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC), formalising this practice. The role of the EMHC is to assist in the distribution of the Eucharist during Mass and to bring Communion to the sick or homebound when necessary.

This ministry reflects the Church's understanding of the communal nature of the Eucharist and the call to serve one another within the Body of Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 12).

EMHC undergo training to ensure they understand the reverence required in handling the Blessed Sacrament, highlighting the sanctity of the Eucharist as the source and summit of Christian life (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1324).

Today, the ministry plays a vital role in many parishes, ensuring that the faithful can receive Communion in a timely and reverent manner.

## **EMHC during Mass**

There are three ministers needed in the Mass if there is only one priest and no deacon. If there is a deacon, only two are needed.

### **Before Mass:**

- The EMHC need to be arrive at least 15 minutes before Mass. [The sacristan will have to look for replacement if an EMHC has shown up by 10 minutes before Mass.]
- The EMHC stay in the foyer, together with the other liturgical ministers, for the prayer and further instruction by the sacristan.
- In the sequence for the procession, the EMHC comes after the lectors and before the priest.

### **During Mass:**

- The EMHC go to the sanctuary when the Lamb of God is sung.
- If there is no deacon, the designated number 1 EMHC, after washing their hands at the credence table, takes the ciborium, with consecrated hosts, from the tabernacle and places it on the altar (on the corporal).
- The other EMHC wash their hands from the basin and/or disinfect their hands at the credence table.
- The ministers stand beside the altar for communion.
- The priest gives the body of Christ to the EMHC. (NB the EMHC wait until the priest has partaken the Body of Christ before they consume the Body of Christ.)
- If there is a deacon the priest offers the chalice to the deacon and then offers the second chalice to EMHC 1. EMHC 1 partakes of the Blood of Christ and then offers the chalice to EMHC 2 who is standing next to them.

- If there is a deacon, the deacon offers the chalice he has partaken from to EMHC 3, otherwise the priest offers the chalice to EMHC 3.
- The priest then gives the ciborium or bowl of hosts to EMHC 1 from which they distribute communion. (EMHC 1 waits for the priest to leave the altar before moving to their position.)
- If there are mobility restricted communicants, the priest and EMHC offer them communion before taking up position in front of the altar.
- The priest and EMHC 1 stand at the head of the centre aisle to distribute the Body of Christ; the priest usually stands to the Tabernacle side of the altar and EMHC 1 usually stands beside him to the Marian altar side of the main altar. (NB this is not a hard and fast rule.)
- EMHC 2 and 3 move as far to the sides of the sanctuary as is reasonably practicable, given the position of music ministers. (The more space between the ministers distributing the Body of Christ and those offering the Blood of Christ the better, to avoid congestion.)
- In dispensing the Body and Blood of Christ, the EMHC raise the consecrated host or chalice slightly and say, "The Body/Blood of Christ." WITH NO OTHER WORDS INCLUDING NAMES.
- With the Body of Christ, the person can receive communion in the hands or on their tongue.
  - If the person is receiving the Body of Christ on the tongue, make sure that you do not touch their lips or tongue.
- When distribution of Communion is finished, place left over hosts in the ciborium.
- When distributing the Precious Blood, make sure that the chalice is received securely by the person receiving communion.

- Hold the chalice with both hands - one on the stem and one on the base.
- Pass the chalice to the recipient and ensure they have a firm grip before releasing the stem.
- After you have given the chalice, unfold the purifier and holding it by a corner.
- After the person has partaken the Blood of Christ, receive back the chalice, wipe the rim, both inside and out, where it was used.
- Turn the chalice slightly to an unused part and offer it to the next person.
- As they partake of the Precious Blood, move your hand along the edge of the purifier to a fresh piece of cloth.
- At the end of communion or when all Precious Blood in the chalice has been consumed, return to the credence table.
- Using water from the cruet, rinse the chalice twice and consume the contents.
- Wipe out the chalice with the purifier and leave the purifier in the chalice. If there is Precious Blood remaining it will need to be consumed. If you are uncomfortable with doing this, it can be left for the sacristan or priest to consume. Cover the chalice with the purifier until then.
- Collect all of the communion bowls and all other items from the altar (except the tray of pyxes) and place them all on or beside the corporal on the credence table. NOTE: All sacred vessels and nothing else must be on the corporal.
- Together with the other ministers, bow before the Tabernacle, then return to your seat.

### **End of Mass:**

- After the dismissal and while the recessional hymn is sung, all ministers are to assemble in front of the altar.

- Together with the priest, all other ministers and the altar servers, bow before the altar and turn around for the recessional procession. The order for the procession is:
  - cross bearer
  - other altar server(s)
  - ministers of the Word
  - EMHC
  - deacon
  - priest
- In the foyer, together with the priests and other ministers, bow before the processional cross.

### **After Mass:**

- The EMHC takes all the chalices, ciboria, and bowl for handwash to the sacrarium.
- Wash these vessels with warm soapy water, rinse them, and dry them with a clean towel.
- Return them to their designated cupboards. If there is Mass the next day, put them back on the credence table.
- Place all used linens on the green tray behind the sacristy door.

## **Ministering communion – general**

Your ministry is important. Please carry it out with reverence and respect both for the Blessed Sacrament and for the people to whom you minister. Your interaction with the people to whom you minister should be personal:

- smile and make eye contact with the recipient;
- ensure you select a complete host;

- hold up the host and say clearly, "The Body of Christ." BUT NO OTHER WORDS INCLUDING NAMES.
- place the host securely (but gently and reverently) in the palm of the recipient's hand.

### **Blessings for those not receiving communion**

- Smile and make eye contact with the recipient.
- Without touching the person make the Sign of the Cross and say, "May Jesus be with you today and forever, Amen."

## **EMHC – unusual circumstances**

### **If a host is dropped**

- Pick up the host immediately to ensure it is not trodden on, then either:
  - consume host immediately; or
  - if you are not comfortable with consuming the host, place it on the altar corporal.

### **Intinction**

- The practice of intinction, dipping the host into the chalice, is not encouraged.
- Any communicants wishing intinction need to remain until all others have received communion.
- Only priests and EMHC are able to dip the host and must be careful not to put their fingers into the Precious Blood.
- Ensure there are no drips of the Precious Blood while the host is transferred to the recipient's tongue.

### **Spillage of the Precious Blood**

- The Precious Blood MUST NOT BE WALKED ON.

- If necessary, reposition yourself immediately to prevent anyone stepping on the Precious Blood.
- Another EMHC will take your place.
- Collect the basin and hand towels from the "Spillage Kit" set aside in the sacristy bookcase for this purpose.
- Press hand towels onto spillage to soak up as much as possible.
- Cover spillage with a clean hand towel for protection and place used hand towels in the basin and replace the kit in the sacristy.
- If necessary, wash your hands in the bowl of water on the credence table and dry them with the facecloth.
- Return to your seat until mass ends.
- Don't worry!
- After Mass you will have help.
- After mass, put clean water in the bucket from the spillage kit and use it to prevent a stain.
- Use hand towels to further soak up and dry the spillage and water.
- All used hand towels will need to be rinsed thoroughly and rung out into the bucket. The contents must then be tipped down the sacrarium in the flower room.
- The bucket and basin will need to be rinsed thoroughly and the contents tipped down the sacrarium.
- The bowl of water from the credence table, if used, will also need to be tipped down the sacrarium.
- All used hand towels must be placed in a laundry bag for cleaning.
- The water from their first wash needs to be tipped on the garden.



# Eucharistic adoration

## Setting up before

- Make sure that the altar cover has been removed.
- Put on top of the altar the corporal.
- Take the candelabras from the cupboard and place them on the centre-right and centre-left of the altar. Make sure that you have the clear plastic sheets underneath the candelabras. This is to catch any wax dripping from the candles. They are found in the cupboard where the monstrance is found.
- Take the monstrance from the designated cupboard and place them on the altar sideways and open the glass doors where the lunette will be inserted in.
- Light the candles. If there are short candles, replace them. The candles are available in the cupboard on the left side next to the tabernacle.
- Take the tabernacle key from the sacristy cupboard and open the tabernacle lock.
- Genuflect before the tabernacle before opening its door.
- Reverently take the lunette with the Blessed Sacrament pyx to the altar, remove the Blessed Sacrament from the pyx, and insert the Blessed Sacrament inside the monstrance.
- Close the glass door of the monstrance, lock it, and turn the monstrance facing the congregation.
- Genuflect again right after you have done.
- Put the pyx on the side table of the presider's chair.
- You can come to the front of the altar and genuflect again before going to your seat.

## After

- Go to the front of the altar and genuflect.

- Proceed to the back of the altar and genuflect again.
- Collect the pyx for the Blessed Sacrament from the side table of the presider's chair.
- Turn the monstrance sideways, open the glass door and take off the Blessed Sacrament.
- Put inside the pyx the Blessed Sacrament and reverently process to the tabernacle.
- Put inside the tabernacle the Blessed Sacrament, lock the tabernacle door and retrieve the key.
- Put the key on the credence table.
- Blow the candles out.
- Return the monstrance to its designated cupboard.
- Return the candelabras to their designated cupboard.
- Return the clear plastic sheets to their designated cupboard.
- Fold the corporal and return it to its designated cupboard.
- Return the tabernacle key to its designated cupboard.
- Cover the altar with the altar cloth.

## **Taking communion to the sick/housebound**

- The consecrated hosts for taking communion to the sick and housebound can be received by the ministers during the Sunday or weekday Mass from the priest.  
NOTE: If possible, please use this option because it involves the whole congregation and receives the priest's blessing.
- In circumstances when you have to give communion on a day when there is no Mass, place the consecrated host(s) into the pyx yourself directly from the ciborium in the tabernacle. (Please use this option only if the first is not possible.)

NOTE: A tabernacle key is available inside the door of the chalice cupboard in the sacristy. You will need to know where the key to the sacristy to get hold of the tabernacle key. You need to return the keys to their places after you have finished.

- It is highly recommended that consecrated hosts be given to the sick on the same day on which they are taken from the church.

NOTE: It is also highly recommended that they not be kept in the minister's home or any other place.

- Any unconsumed hosts must be consumed by the EMHC as long as the EMHC has not already received communion that day.
- If unable to be consumed, the consecrated hosts must be returned promptly to the church and either replaced in the ciborium or, if to be given to the communicant within 48 hours, may remain in their pyx within the tabernacle.
- If a sacred host is dropped on the floor, it should be picked up and consumed immediately.
- If a sacred host has been served to a person who is unable to swallow it, it must be wrapped in the purificator and returned to the church.
- The priest or the EMHC must then:
  - Dissolve the host in water (it may be necessary to first break it into small pieces) until it no longer has the appearance of food.
  - Pour the liquid down the sacrarium.

NOTE: If unable to return the host to church, dissolve it in the same way and, while saying a prayer, pour the liquid on a piece of ground that does not get walked on.

- Upon returning home after ministering communion the pyx should be purified by pouring a small amount of water into it and then the water consumed. Dry the pyx thoroughly and keep it in a safe and respectful place.