

## **St. Agnes Church**

### **Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion**

“The Eucharist constitutes the very life of the Church, for the Lord said, ‘I am the bread of life. No one who comes to me shall ever be hungry; no one who believes in me shall ever thirst.’”

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) are called to prayerfully and reverently administer the Body and Blood of Christ as part of the Eucharistic celebration.

“In every celebration of the Eucharist there should always be a sufficient number of ministers for the distribution of the Eucharist. Priority is always given to ordinary ministers (bishops, priests, deacons) and auxiliary ministers (instituted acolytes). When there are large numbers of the faithful present and there are insufficient ordinary and auxiliary members at hand, special or extraordinary ministers properly appointed beforehand should assist in the distribution of Communion.” (HLS, #29)

Your willingness to serve as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, reflects not only your response to your Baptismal call to serve the people of God, but a commitment to Christ as you share in the preaching, teaching, and leading aspects of the church. You offer the Eucharist, recognize the Body of Christ in those to whom you offer Eucharist, and ultimately you act as the Body of Christ by fully participating in the life of the parish and the wider community. Your willingness to commit to a monthly schedule, to prepare properly for your service, and to arrive on time dressed appropriately for your assigned Mass further reflects that commitment.

It is important for all EMHCs to learn the customs and procedures required to be so deeply involved in the Mass. This is a visible and important role in the Mass. It is critical that every effort be made to participate when called upon or to arrange for a substitute if unable to fulfill your duties as scheduled.

**It is your obligation to arrange for a replacement minister if you are unable to serve when scheduled. If a last-minute replacement is needed and you are unable to find one, please contact Jim Barnes at 860-271-9026; jimbarnes912@gmail.com.**

## **Before Mass**

- Schedules are emailed to those for whom we have an address, mailed to others, and are listed on the parish website. They are also available on the table by the entrance to the church.
- How you dress should reflect reverence for your ministry. As with everything our ministers do, your appearance witnesses to the congregation the sacredness of our worship. Women's shoulders should be covered and skirts/dresses should be knee length or longer. Tee shirts, shorts, jeans, and flip flops are not appropriate dress.
- Please remember to wear your "EMHC cross" when you arrive at Mass.
- When you arrive to serve at Mass, please circle or check off your name on the schedule posted on the column on the left as you enter the church. The priest or deacon may then check the schedule before Mass to see if any other EMHCs are needed.
- Please join all the Mass participants (celebrant, servers, and ministers) in the Sacristy for group prayer ten minutes before Mass begins. In addition to the prayer, this will allow time to address particular needs or concerns for the Mass.
- Check the table to the right of the entry to be sure that the wine and hosts are set out for the procession of the gifts. If they are not out, or if something is not right, go to the Sacristy and properly prepare them. In most circumstances, the deacon takes care of this.

## **At Mass and Distribution of Communion**

- The proper time for the EMHCs to leave their seats and proceed to the sanctuary is immediately after the principal celebrant has consumed the Body and Blood of Jesus by and placed the chalice on the altar. (You should sit in the assembly close enough to the altar to move there easily when the celebrant receives Communion.)
- After pausing to genuflect or make a profound bow before the altar, the ministers are then to proceed directly to the left side as you face the sanctuary.
- EMHCs are a witness for the congregation. When the celebrant or deacon offers the host or the Precious Blood to them, they are to bow and, in response to "The Body (Blood) of Christ," say an *audible* "Amen."
- At all Masses, two ministers will each take a chalice to stations directly in front of (touching) the confessional doors. The minister will hold up the chalice and say, "The Blood of Christ" and present the chalice to the communicant. The minister will then take back the chalice, wipe the rim of the cup carefully with the purificator (inside and out), and turn the cup a quarter turn for the next person. This will continue until all communicants have received or the chalice is empty. If, after the last communicant, there is Precious Blood remaining in the chalice, the minister may check to see if assistance is needed at the other station.
- When the distribution of the Precious Blood is complete, the minister is to proceed to the altar and reverently consume any remaining Precious Blood (*not while walking*), wipe the rim, cover the empty chalice with the purificator, and place it on the altar. If an EMHC prefers not to consume the remaining Precious Blood, the chalice with the purificator should be

placed on the altar uncovered for the celebrant or deacon to consume. Ministers may then return immediately to their seats. It is not necessary to reverence the altar again.

- If there is no concelebrating priest or a deacon, an EMHC may be needed to assist with the distribution of the communion hosts alongside the celebrant. (Please note that the Eucharist is to be distributed to the occupants in the partial front pew first.)
- Ministers distributing the Precious Blood should offer the chalice to occupants of the partial front pew after they have received the host. Ministers should allow sufficient space between themselves and whoever is ministering the hosts to avoid a collision as the minister distributing the host turns to take up his/her assigned station.
- When distributing the communion hosts, the minister holds up the host for the parishioner to see and says, "The Body of Christ," then places it on the tongue or in the hand of the communicant. After all have received communion, the ministers return to the sanctuary, hand the deacon or the priest the ciborium at the altar and return to their seats.
- At all times, the ciborium and the chalice should be held reverently with both hands, except (obviously) when the host is being distributed.
- Intinction is not permitted by anyone in the church. If a minister is approached by a communicant wishing to dip the host in Precious Blood, the minister should cover the chalice with his/her hand and quietly indicate to that the practice of intinction is not allowed and ask the communicant to consume the host.
- If a host is dropped, it must be immediately picked up and consumed by the Extraordinary Minister. If an EMHC is uncomfortable consuming a dropped host, he/she may give it immediately to the priest or deacon.
- If the precious blood is spilled, it must be cleaned up quickly and completely. A purificator should be placed over the spill so that no one walks over it. After Mass, the area where the Precious Blood was spilled is rinsed with water and dried completely. If the location of the spill is in a trafficked area, the EMHC should quietly ask the next communicant in line to remain by the spill (covered with the purificator) to assure that no one steps on it or picks it up and immediately seek assistance from the priest or deacon.
- Occasionally there are changes to the clergy schedule which cannot be anticipated when the schedule is prepared in advance. Please follow this rule: the "magic number is 4". We start by counting the clergy functioning at the altar and subtract it from 4. What remains is the number of lay ministers needed. If we are blessed with more clergy, we may not need both EMHCs who have been scheduled. Conversely, even if you are not scheduled for a particular Mass but are in attendance and see a need, please do NOT wait to be asked by the priest but rather join the ministers already in the sanctuary. *(This is a circumstance that would be addressed during the prayer time before Mass.)*
- A minister is not permitted to make to the sign of the cross over/on the forehead of someone who approaches for a blessing, i.e., an infant/child or an adult with arms crossed. The minister may raise his/her hand in blessing and say something like, "May our Lord Jesus always keep you in his love."