

FOREWORD

I am delighted to present to the Archdiocese these Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC). Cardinal Simon Pimenta introduced this Ministry in the Archdiocese of Bombay in March 1987. This was soon after the Holy See had issued an Instruction giving guidelines for this. A Booklet providing necessary information both for Parish Priests and for the Extraordinary Ministers was published.

With the experience gained after many years of this Ministry, which were found very fruitful, it was felt necessary that new guidelines be prepared answering the needs of our time. Bishop Barthol Barretto, in charge of this Ministry in the Archdiocese, with the assistance of a Core Committee, has compiled this revised Handbook. My thanks to him and to his collaborators.

I am confident that this Handbook will be of great help for all our Priests, our EMHC and for all our faithful. It will help not only for uniformity but also for all to understand that this is not just a service but an Apostolate. It will help our EMHC to make the Eucharist more the centre of their own lives and that of their families, and enable them to communicate a spirit of devotion and an understanding of this Sacrament, to the people they minister to. I am particularly keen that our EMHC have continuous on-going formation on the theology of the Sacraments so that they can appreciate the immensity of this great gift Our Lord Jesus Christ has left us. May the Eucharist transform our Archdiocese more and more into the Kingdom of God and may this Sacrament bring many graces to our Church and to our Country.

With kind regards and best wishes.

+ 

✠ Oswald Cardinal Gracias
Archbishop of Bombay

February 02, 2019

INTRODUCTION

The Eucharist is the source and the summit of the Christian life. It is in partaking of Holy Communion that Catholics receive the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ. It is important that Catholics not be deprived of the opportunity to receive Holy Communion due to illness, age or infirmity. The Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion cannot always fill the great need among Christ's faithful. Therefore, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) must be properly prepared, according to both pastoral theology and canon law, to fulfill this need in taking the Eucharist to the sick and homebound.

While the primary role of the EMHC is to carry the Eucharist to the sick and homebound, they may also be called upon to assist when there are larger numbers attending Mass, and distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful can cause undue delay.

This booklet outlines the role of the EMHC and related information concerning their selection and preparation / training / instruction.

Please refer to the Appendices for the Rite of Commissioning, Guidelines for the Administration of Communion, Guidelines for Formation and Certificate of Authority, etc.

May the guidelines in this booklet help our Parish Priests and those involved in this Sacred Ministry to transform our parishes into a Eucharistic Community.

+ 

✠ Barthol Barretto
Auxiliary Bishop of Bombay
Bishop in-charge of EMHC

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Information available from historians (Hippolytus, Tertullian, Novatian), tells us that the Early Church Christians often received Holy Communion from fellow Christians, who were not priests. At the beginning of the 9th Century, the Roman Liturgy was profoundly reformed and the priest alone became the Ordinary Minister of Communion, and this continued till the 20th Century. The practice of sending lay people to distribute Holy Communion was essentially revived because of the 'necessity' during wartime (concentration camps).

Canon Law (230) newly promulgated in 1983, mentions the possibility of 'lay ministers of Communion' among 'the obligations and rights of all the lay members of the faithful'. The relevant extract is reproduced here:

Canon 230/3: Where the needs of the Church require and ministers are not available, lay people, even though they are not lectors or acolytes, can supply certain of their functions, that is, exercise the Ministry of the Word, preside over liturgical prayers, confer Baptism and distribute Holy Communion, in accordance with the provisions of the law.

(Text referenced and reproduced from 'Lay Ministers of Communion to the Sick', Archdiocese of Bombay, 1987)

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTRY OF THE EUCHARIST

The links between the Community's Eucharistic Celebration, especially on the Lord's Day and the Communion of the Sick are intimate and manifold. Besides remembering the sick in the general intercessions at Mass, those present should be reminded of the significance of Communion in the lives of those who are ill...the obligation to visit and comfort those who cannot take part in the Eucharistic assembly may be clearly demonstrated by taking Communion to them from the Community's Eucharistic Celebration. This symbol of unity between the community and its sick members has the deepest significance of the Lord's Day. (*Lay Ministers of Communion to the Sick, Archdiocese of Bombay, 1987*)

1. Why Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion?

1.1. Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are bishops, priests and deacons. These persons distribute Holy Communion by virtue of their ordination. "It is first of all the office of the priest and the deacon to minister Holy Communion to the faithful who ask to receive it. It is most fitting, therefore, that they give a suitable part of their time to this ministry of their order, depending on the needs of the faithful". (*Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass, #17*).

1.2. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

It is a grace and a privilege to be called to serve the Church in some capacity. The work of an EMHC marks one as especially devoted to our Lord in the Eucharist. Under certain circumstances, lay men and women may be delegated to distribute Holy Communion by a bishop or Parish Priest. These persons are known as "Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion". The role of the EMHC does not replace that of the Ordinary Minister, but supplements it on a provisional basis (*Redemptionis Sacramentum, #151*). That is, when a sufficient

number of Ordinary Ministers is present for the distribution of Holy Communion, EMHC should not serve.

2. Need for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

The need for EMHC should be notified by the Parish Priest / Priest-in-charge of the parish. In a school or hospital, this decision is made by the Catholic chaplain, in consultation with the Dean of the Deanery. Two areas of need should be considered:

- a. that of facilitating distribution of Holy Communion at Mass on Sundays and weekdays so that the communion rite does not become unduly prolonged.
- b. that of providing Holy Communion on a regular basis, especially from Sunday Mass, for the sick and those confined to their homes or to institutions within the parish.

2.1. At Mass

The Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* states that EMHC may assist during Mass when a "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". In these cases, it is appropriate for EMHC to be appointed, but not if there will be only a brief prolongation of the Mass. (*Redemptionis Sacramentum, #158*).

2.2. To the Sick at Home or in Hospitals

The Pastoral Care of the Sick directs pastors (priests) to provide for the frequent reception of Holy Communion by the sick and aged. These individuals have the right to periodic visits by priests, who, in addition to bringing Holy Communion, can offer the Sacraments of Penance and Anointing of the Sick, and bring added comfort and spiritual assistance.

EMHC may be asked to assist the priests and deacons of a parish in their service to the sick and homebound. This need for EMHC can

arise when distance “makes it difficult to bring communion, especially as Viaticum to the sick in danger of death; or when the sheer number of sick people, especially in hospitals or similar institutions, requires several ministers”. (*Immensae Caritatis*)

3. Becoming an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion

3.1. Selection

Special care should be exercised in the choice of EMHC who will bring Holy Communion to the sick. These individuals should be able to minister to the sick in a compassionate, prayerful and sensitive way. They should possess psychological maturity and the ability to keep confidences, not discussing indiscriminately the condition of patients or their homes. The selection of EMHC should reflect, as far as possible, the diversity of the community to which they will minister. The candidates may be men or women, lay people or those in consecrated life. It must be noted that those in consecrated life (brothers, sisters) are not ordained ministers. Therefore, they need to be commissioned just like the lay persons after the necessary training.

Those who are selected to be EMHC must:

- be at least 21 years of age; the Parish Priest to decide on the cut off year.
- be a Catholic who has received First Holy Communion and Confirmation and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be assumed.
- not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared.
- be reverential, respectful of his or her faith and the Blessed Sacrament, and of sound moral character.
- if married, must be in a valid marriage according to the law of the Catholic Church.
- possess the requisite abilities and temperament to carry out the assigned duties.

3.2. Process for Commissioning of EMHC

The Parish Priest will discern those who may be admitted to this ministry. The Archdiocese requires that a person participate in a program of formation before being mandated as an EMHC. This program is usually conducted by the parish where the Minister will serve. Topics covered should include both spiritual and practical preparation (see *Appendix IV*):

- theology of the Eucharist
- theology of ministry
- pastoral/liturgical considerations with emphasis on familiarity with the pertinent rituals

When a need arises for more EMHC, announcements may be made inviting those who feel called to this ministry to give their names to the Parish Priest. Those accepted will then go through a period of formation. The Parish Priest will then present to the Bishop the names of those to be commissioned and request a mandate to do so. Prior to the commissioning, a list of the names is posted on the Parish Notice Board for the information of parishioners, should anyone wish to voice an objection.

The commissioning of EMHC is done at a Sunday Eucharist by the Bishop (or a priest delegated for the purpose) using the Rite approved by the Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission (see *Appendix I*). The commissioning is valid for a period of one year and EMHC are to be re-commissioned every year.

3.3. Continuing Formation

It is appropriate that opportunities for EMHC to increase their knowledge of Eucharistic Theology, and their devotion to the Eucharist, be provided by the parish or institution on a yearly basis. These opportunities could include afternoon or evenings of recollection with a lecture or reflection on some aspect of Eucharistic Theology or spirituality. Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament with prayer may be provided. It may also be helpful for

EMHC to meet from time to time with a designated priest or deacon from their parish to discuss their service, and to obtain advice with regard to difficult situations which they have encountered.

3.4. Terms for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

The mandate to serve as an EMHC is, in most cases, given for a term of three years. The mandate may be renewed for additional terms. The mandated term notwithstanding, EMHC must be re-commissioned every year. This practice has certain advantages:

- It encourages turnover among such ministers, ensuring that no individual feels that he or she has a monopoly on this ministry, and gives other qualified parishioners the opportunity to serve.
- It prevents the situation wherein individuals may be called to indefinitely sacrifice their own personal time for this service.
- It ensures, as a matter of course, the option to review the EMHC in a parish or institution, and makes it less difficult to end the service of EMHC.

- The EMHC is commissioned to a particular parish. He or she, even though a commissioned EMHC, cannot distribute Holy Communion in another parish.

The mandate of EMHC in the Archdiocese of Bombay automatically terminates if the person moves from the parish or institution for which he or she was mandated. As well, the mandate can be ended at any time by the Zonal Bishop in consultation with the Parish Priest / Priest-in-charge, or by the Parish Priest / Priest-in-charge, for good reason.

4. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion: Overview of Ministry

4.1. The EMHC at Mass

When EMHC are appointed at Mass, the following procedures should be followed:

- EMHC should not form a part of the entrance procession or recessional. However, they should be seated in a location close to the sanctuary, so as to facilitate their ministry. While they are to be dressed in a dignified manner which befits their service, as a result of a proposal made during the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Eucharistic Congress (2014), a standard vestment (cape) was adopted for all the EMHC in all the parishes of the Archdiocese. The use of this cape becomes a wonderful sign of uniformity and helps bring about greater liturgical decorum in our Eucharistic Celebrations. (Ref. *Circular to Parish Priests, Nov. 29, 2017. Appendix V*)
- If needed, the EMHC should approach the altar after the priest has received Holy Communion.

- The EMHC then proceed to their assigned places to distribute communion to the faithful. The ritual formula "The Body of Christ" should be used, with no alterations or additions. The decision to receive the host on the tongue or in the hand is made by the communicant, and not the minister (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal, #161*). "However, special care should be taken to ensure that the host is consumed by the communicant in the presence of the minister, so that no one goes away carrying the Eucharistic species in his / her hand". (*Redemptionis Sacramentum, #92*).

- Once the distribution of Holy Communion has ended, all ministers should return to the altar or credence table with their vessels, either placing them on the corporal, or handing them to a priest or deacon. Those who have participated in distributing Holy Communion may wish to purify their fingers of any particles that may have clung to them by wiping their fingers over the ciborium. Additionally, a small bowl of water may be provided at the credence table or next to the tabernacle for this purpose (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal, #278*).

- Once they have deposited their vessels, EMHC return to their seats.
- If a person is involved in more than one ministry, he / she should

ordinarily serve in only one of the ministries at any given celebration (e.g. should not serve both as lector and an EMHC at the same Mass).

g. An EMHC may minister both at Mass and to those at home or in a health care facility, provided he or she is properly qualified and prepared for each role.

4.2. Ministering to the Sick and Homebound

a. The EMHC should be provided by the parish or institution with a pyx in which to carry the Eucharist, as well as a copy of the Rite of Communion of the Sick. (see Appendix II)

b. A priest or other custodian of the key to the tabernacle should place the required number of hosts into the pyx for the EMHC. If this takes place during Mass, the EMHC should remain for the final blessing. No special rite of sending forth is necessary.

c. EMHC should not come forward with their pyxes during the Communion procession at Mass, as the one distributing Holy Communion may not be familiar with those who are mandated as EMHC.

d. The EMHC should proceed directly to the home or healthcare facility, without any extraneous stops to run errands, etc. (CIC, 935). The journey from the church to the sick should be considered a time of prayer. If the EMHC travels by car, it is appropriate to refrain from listening to the radio and unnecessary telephone conversations while carrying the Eucharist.

e. Those who are with the sick should be asked to prepare a suitable table, covered with a cloth. Candles are also to be provided, except in cases where an open flame is prohibited. A vessel of holy water may also be prepared. (*Pastoral Care of the Sick*, # 74)

f. After arriving at the location, the EMHC should greet the sick person and any friends or family members in a warm and friendly manner. EMHC should be familiar with the Rite of Communion to the Sick.

g. Whenever it is possible, celebrating the Rite of Communion and the Celebration of the Word should be part of a more comprehensive visit with the sick.

h. At the conclusion of the Rite, the EMHC should assure the sick person, and those also gathered, of the prayers of the community. After taking leave of the sick person, the EMHC should immediately return any hosts, which remain, to the church or institution from which the EMHC was sent. If this is not possible, the remaining hosts should be consumed by the EMHC. The pyx should be purified, either by an Ordinary or EMHC (*Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*, # 62).

4.3. Dress Code of the EMHC

There is a standard vestment (cape) for all the EMHC in all the parishes of our Archdiocese (Circular dated November 29, 2017 by Bp Barthol Barretto - Ref Appendix V). Capes for EMHC are available with the Pious Disciples of the Divine Master (Prathanalaya, Bandra).

REFERENCES

- Lay Ministers of Communion to the Sick - Handbook issued by the Archdiocese of Bombay, 1987
- CCBI Guidelines for EMHC
- Catholic Exchange.com "When Lay Ministers Take Holy Communion to the Sick", Pete Vere

APPENDIX I

RITE OF COMMISSIONING OF EMHC

Persons authorized to distribute Holy Communion in special circumstances should be commissioned by the local Ordinary, or his delegate, according to the following rite. The rite should take place in the presence of the people preferably during Mass (or, in special circumstances, outside the Mass).

A. During Mass

1. In the homily, the celebrant first explains the reason for this ministry and then presents to the people those chosen to serve as special ministers, using these or similar words:
2. Dear friends in Christ, our brother/s (and) sister/s, N and N are to be entrusted with administering the Eucharist, with taking Communion to the sick and with giving it as Viaticum to the dying.

The celebrant pauses and then addresses the candidate(s):

Cel: In this ministry, you must be examples of Christian living in faith and conduct; you must strive to grow in holiness through this Sacrament of unity and love. Remember that, though many, we are one body because we share the one bread and one cup.

As ministers of Holy Communion be, therefore, especially observant of the Lord's command to love your neighbour. For when He gave His body as food to His disciples, He said to them, "This is my commandment, that you should love one another as I have loved you".

3. After the address, the candidates stand before the celebrant who asks them these questions:

Cel: Are you resolved to undertake the office of giving the body and blood of the Lord to your brothers and sisters and so serve to build up the Church?

Can: I am.

Cel: Are you resolved to administer the Holy Eucharist with the utmost care and reverence?

Can: I am.

4. The candidates kneel and the celebrant invites all the faithful to stand and pray: Dear friends in Christ, let us pray with confidence to the Father; let us ask Him to bestow His blessings on our brother/s (and) sister/s chosen to be minister(s) of the Eucharist.

Pause for silent prayer.

The celebrant then continues:

Cel: Merciful Father, Creator and Guide of your family, bless + our brother/s (and) sister/s N and N. May they faithfully give the bread of life to your people. Strengthened by this Sacrament, may they come at last to the banquet of heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

5. The general intercessions should include an intention for the newly commissioned ministers.

6. In the procession at the presentation of gifts, the newly commissioned ministers may carry the vessels with the bread and wine and at Communion may receive the Eucharist under both species.

B. When Commissioned Outside Mass

When the people are assembled, an appropriate hymn is sung. The celebrant greets the people. There normally follows a short Liturgy of the Word. The readings and chants are taken either in whole or in part, from the Liturgy of the day.

The rite continues as above (*numbers 1 to 4*)

Finally, the celebrant blesses the people and dismisses them in the usual way.

The rite concludes with an appropriate hymn.

APPENDIX II

ADMINISTRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION TO THE SICK AND HOMEBOUND BY EMHC (in ordinary circumstances)

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Upon entering the house, the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (EMHC) places the Blessed Sacrament on the table prepared for it and makes a profound bow. All join in adoration.

EMHC : In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All : Amen.

EMHC : Let us praise God who fills our hearts and homes with peace.
Blessed be God forever.

All : Blessed by God forever.

PENITENTIAL RITE

In these or similar words, the EMHC invites all present to join the penitential rite.

EMHC : My brothers and sisters let us turn with confidence to the Lord and ask his forgiveness for all our sins.

(A brief period of silence)

EMHC : Lord Jesus, you healed the sick: Lord, have mercy ...

All : Lord, have mercy

EMHC : Lord Jesus, you forgave sinners: Christ have mercy ...

All : Christ, have mercy

EMHC : Lord Jesus, you have given us yourself to heal us and strengthen us: Lord have mercy ...

All : Lord, have mercy

Or... All say the "I confess..."

The EMHC concludes the penitential rite with the following:

EMHC : May almighty God have mercy on us forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life.

All : Amen

LITURGY OF THE WORD

A reading assigned for the day in the Lectionary is then proclaimed, or one of the following may be used:

Jesus says: "I myself am the Living Bread come down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread he shall live forever; the bread I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world". (John 6:51)

Or

Jesus says: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who lives in me and I in him will produce abundantly, for apart from me you can do nothing". (John 15:5)

RESPONSE AND REFLECTION

A period of silence may be observed after the reading of the Word of God. A psalm or hymn may be sung. The EMHC or one of those present may then give a brief reflection.

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

The general intercessions may be said. The EMHC introduces and concludes the prayer.

LITURGY OF HOLY COMMUNION

Having met the Lord in His Word, the sick person is ready now to meet Him in the Sacrament.

The Lord's Prayer

The minister introduces the Lord's Prayer in these or similar words:

EMHC : Now let us pray as Christ the Lord has taught us:

All : Our Father ...

Communion:

The EMHC shows the Eucharistic Bread to those present saying:

EMHC : Behold the Lamb of God. Behold Him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb.

All : Lord, I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

The EMHC goes to the sick person and says:

EMHC : The Body of Christ

The sick person answers: Amen and receives Holy Communion.

Then a period of silence may be observed.

The minister says a concluding prayer. One of the following may be used:

EMHC : God our Father, our sister/brother _____ has received the Body of Christ your Son. May it be for her/him a lasting remedy for body and soul. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Or

All powerful God, we thank you for the nourishment you give us through your holy gift. Pour out your Spirit upon us and in the strength of this food from heaven keep us single-minded in your service. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen.

CONCLUDING RITE

The EMHC invokes God's blessing and makes the sign of the cross on himself or herself saying:

EMHC : May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Or

: May Christ the Living Bread, bring us to the banquet of eternal life. Amen.

Conclude the rite with a suitable hymn.

APPENDIX III

EMHC - CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORITY

- This certifies that Mr./Miss./Mrs./Ms _____ has been inducted as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (EMHC) from (dd/mm/yyyy) for a period of one year, for the parish of _____ (name of parish), only. The duties and responsibilities of the EMHC are:
- Taking Holy Communion to the sick and homebound assigned to him/her as per their need (even daily).
 - Assisting with distribution of Holy Communion at Masses on Sundays, weekdays, special Masses and feasts.
 - Assisting with the imposition of ashes in Church on Ash Wednesday.
 - Assisting with the blessing of throats in Church on the Feast of St Blaise.

Sign and Seal of the Parish Priest / Parish

APPENDIX IV

SUGGESTIONS FOR FORMATION AND PREPARATION

The instruction should provide a deeper understanding of the Mass and also practical preparation for the duties of the EMHC.

The following are some of the points that could be covered:

The Eucharist and the Bible:

- Sacrifice and Meal
- Signs and Symbols in the Liturgy
- Passover (Moses) and Passover of Christ
- Passover Meal and Last Supper
- Institution of the Eucharist (Mt 26:26-29; Mk14:22-25; Lk 22:14-20)
- St Paul to the Corinthians: 1 Cor 10 & 11
- John 6

Theology of the Eucharist

- Sacraments
- Documents: *Mysterium Fidei*, *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, *Immensae Caritatis*, Pastoral Care for the Sick.

The Mass

- Structure and rites in the celebration of the Eucharist

Practical Session

- Distribution of the Sacred Host
- Handling of the Chalice and purificator
- How to break and divide hosts if necessary
- Communion for the sick and the homebound
- Psychology of the sick – how to interact and respond, protocol and bedside manner.

(Adapted from 'Lay Ministers of Communion to the Sick', Archdiocese of Bombay, 1987)

APPENDIX V

(Extract from Circular of Bp Barthol Barretto dated November 29, 2017)

It is fitting that, in addition to decorum of personal apparel, vestments appropriate to the office are used by the EMHC at the Eucharistic celebration. Not only does this serve as an indication of the presence of the minister to the congregation, but is also a reminder of the dignity of an office set apart. While selecting a suitable garment, it is to be noted that vestments used at the Eucharist are exclusive to the office i.e. vestments used by the priest/deacon (similar to chasuble, stole, dalmatic, etc.) may not be imitated in the vestments for the EMHC.

During the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Eucharistic Congress, it was proposed to have a standard vestment for all the EMHC in all the parishes of our Archdiocese. These vestments are now readily available with the Pious Disciples of the Divine Master (Prarthanalaya, Bandra) and it is requested that all parishes take advantage of this facility.