

# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

## Theological Concerns

### **What does “Let us proclaim the mystery of faith,” said at every Mass mean?**

‘This statement invites us to express our belief in a central truth of the Catholic religion: Jesus came into the world, suffered, died, rose, and will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead at the end of time. We combine all those Christian events and term them the paschal or Passover mystery.’

### **How does all that relate to the Eucharist?**

‘The Eucharist makes present in a mysterious manner the Last Supper, the sacrifice of Jesus’ life poured out on Calvary, and the risen Lord’s continued presence in our midst until this world ends. Thus, the mystery of faith mentioned in that invitation refers not only to Christ’s actions in the past and future, but also to his presence here and now in the Mass.’

### **Are there other mysteries of our faith?**

‘Many, for example, the Trinity, the blend of divine and human natures in Jesus, the Church, and the seven sacraments. But the Church teaches that the eucharistic mystery is the true center of the whole Christian life; the other sacraments, even every activity of the Church, lead to the Eucharist and flow from it... The Eucharist contains not merely God’s grace, but Christ himself.’

### **How can we better appreciate the Eucharistic mystery?**

‘We can never fully penetrate any of these divine mysteries, but by examining each one from different angles we are able to reach a deeper, richer understanding of them. To study separately the Eucharist from three points of view, as sacrifice, sacrament, and real presence, will help us grow in our comprehension of this, the greatest of mysteries in our Church.’ It will also influence the way in which you will actually carry out your tasks as an extraordinary minister.

### **What is the meaning of the term concomitance?**

‘This theological word expresses Catholic belief that the entire risen Jesus is present under the sign of either bread or wine and in each particle or portion of the consecrated element.’

## Pastoral Issues

### **Are there any spiritual or moral demands by the church?**

The Church insists that candidates should be noted for their Christian life and morals. Those commissioned must strive to be examples of Christian living in faith and conduct.

The church understands human weakness. Even our religious are susceptible. We all have our off days or difficult issues we must work through. It is our faith and prayers that help become better people and strive for holiness. We are not privileged or rank above others in our duty. We are called to be servants and to serve in a humble manner.

Father Tustin has these words to say. “The Church’s custom shows that it is necessary for each person to examine himself at depth, and that anyone who is conscious of grave sin should not celebrate or receive the Body of the Lord without prior sacramental confession, except for grave reason when the possibility of confession is lacking; in this case he will remember that he is bound by the obligation of making an act of perfect contrition, which includes the intention to confess as soon as possible.”

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### **What about blatantly bad, observable behavior on the part of a Eucharistic minister?**

That would be an unfortunate situation. That individual should take a leave or resign until this weakness is corrected. It would be helpful to seek the counsel of a priest. If you witness this type of behavior, it is your responsibility to bring it to the attention of your priest. We are not required to be saints.

### **What if I am divorced or remarry?**

The difficulty is with a marriage outside the church and without the church's blessing. Our priest can be of help here. If you are divorced or a single parent, that does not prevent you from being an extraordinary minister if you are a practical Catholic.

## Commitment

### **How long is our commitment?**

The diocese states three years. But, depending on circumstances at a parish one can serve longer. The number of masses, parishioners in attendance, special and holiday masses will determine how many stations will be necessary. With our deacons or other priests concelebrating, we adjust the number.

An extraordinary minister will serve a month at a time for weekend masses. In an effort to reduce frequency of serving, we try to have you on a three to four month cycle. This helps in planning and sharing of responsibility.

Should circumstances change or for personal reasons, you should never feel uncomfortable as to asking to change your status to be a substitute or step down. If you need to step down, do not hesitate to later approach a minister coordinator about serving in the future. We are always in need of extraordinary ministers to take communion to the sick and home bound. Deacon Gene and Melanie Lewis would be glad to speak to you more about this.

### **Am I commissioned only for my parish or for any church?**

The normal appointment is for service in one's own parish, not for the entire diocese or the universal church. There could be an unusual situation where a priest, after reaching out for additional extraordinary ministers, might request assistance from a qualified visitor. He would commission you on the spot for that liturgy at that church.

## Serving Communion

### **Do we wash our hands before communion as the priest does during the Liturgy of the Eucharist?**

We don't wash our hands as the priest ceremonially does. If you have washed your hands prior to coming to mass, that is fine. You can also wash your hands in the restroom or the porcelain sink in the Sacristy. There is also hand sanitizer available.

### **What if someone or I drop a consecrated host or portion of?**

Depending on the situation, "do the best you can." The Lord has expected that there will be accidents. React in a calm manner. Pick up the consecrated host reverently and place it back in the vessel. It is okay to redistribute it. If it fell from a communicant's mouth, pick it up and place it to the side in your vessel. When you return to the altar, set the portion to the side on the corporal. Let the priest or deacon know. In the Sacristy, it will be dissolved in water before being poured down the sacrarium.

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### **What if precious blood is spilled?**

In the event of a spill, place your purificator on it to absorb it. If a big spill, return to the Sacristy for additional purificators and a small pitcher of water. Wash the area and wipe up the water. Pour the water in the sacrarium and place the purificators in the sacrarium.

### **Does the minister make eye contact when distributing the Eucharist?**

Due to the reverence and presentation of the Eucharist, our focus is on the act, not the individual. You have observed the person approach you and determined from their movements and positioning of their hands or extending their tongue how they are prepared to receive. Your eye then is on the consecrated host as you raise it up and speak 'the Body of Christ'. To make eye contact would be a distraction for the communicant.

The communicant will say "amen". Some will move their lips, otherwise you say 'amen' and deliver the consecrated host; at the same time moving the breadbasket toward them if the host is dropped. The effectiveness of this rite is marked with sufficient pause and a careful pace.

### **Do I hold the cup for a child receiving?**

No, but keep your hands close should they fumble the cup.

### **Can a communicant take a host, then dip it into the cup?**

No! Only a priest or deacon can.

### **Can we address a communicant by their name during communion?**

No. We do not speak someone's name when we offer the body of Christ or blessed wine. The proper and only permissible form of distributing the Holy Communion is to offer the consecrated bread and say, "The Body of Christ" and to offer the consecrated wine by saying, "The Blood of Christ." No other words or names should be added, nor the wording be edited in any way.

### **What if a communicant does not consume the precious body and walks away with it?**

When this happens, you are to follow and stop the person. Ask them to consume it or take it back and you consume it. If a parishioner has stopped the person, make sure protocol has taken place. We have had instances of children carrying it back; even the host being given to a baby by their mother to chew on! You need be observant, even as a cup minister. During the holidays this happens more often.

### **Should I correct a communicant?**

No. If something is repeated at subsequent masses by the individual, it is your responsibility to bring it to the attention of the priest. He will decide what steps need to be taken. If you are uncomfortable, speak to the deacon or a minister coordinator.

In the case of a communicant that does not present themselves properly, bless them. They might not be Catholic, a visitor, or a communicant not paying attention. If it is a child and a parent is behind them, the parent might shake their head one way or another. When in doubt, bless them.

### **What if I run out of consecrated hosts or blessed wine?**

If you are running low on consecrated hosts and have just a couple of people left, break one or two in half. Otherwise go to the priest or deacon, depending on the side you are on. If the other side bread minister had returned their breadbasket to the altar, you may retrieve that one.

If your cup is empty, place your corporal over the cup and return it to the preparation table.

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If you have consecrated host left over, return them to altar. DO NOT move toward the center stations and start serving.

### Other Questions

#### **Do we genuflect or bow?**

We genuflect before entering our pew when we arrive for mass and upon leaving our pew after mass. Other occasions, such as approaching or leaving the sanctuary, a reverential bow is appropriate. If one is unable to genuflect, a bow is an appropriate substitute. If you are returning a host vessel to the altar, after setting it down, a reverential bow is necessary. The same is true when the priest or deacon has placed the Blessed Sacrament back in the tabernacle. When passing in front of the tabernacle when the Blessed Sacrament is present, it is necessary to genuflect. As a note, when you enter up the steps to the sanctuary during Mass, the Blessed Sacrament is on the altar at that time.

#### **What is the difference from a sacrarium and a sequarium**

The sacrarium is the stainless steel sink in the Sacristy. It drains directly on to the earth under the church. It is not connected to the sewer line. When performing the second rinsing of the vessels, the holy water is poured in this sink.

I might be corrected on this, but the term sequarium refers to the stainless steel containers on the counter in the Sacristy that the used purificators and corporals are put in after the second rinsing of the vessels. We have a parishioner that collects these and cleans according to specific instructions.

Sources: *An Important Office of Immense Love* –A Handbook for Eucharistic Ministers, Joseph Champlin 1980  
*The Breaking of the Bread* – An Updated Handbook for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Joseph Champlin 2005; includes excerpts from *The Roman Missal* 1973; the Order of Mass from *The Sacramentary* 1997; *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* 2002  
USCCB: Committee on Divine Worship – *Ministries and Roles Within the Liturgical Assembly at Mass; Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion at Mass*; Office of Media Relations – *New Norms set for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Bread and Wine*; *USCCB President Welcomes New Instruction on the Eucharist*