

Procedures and Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

UPDATED NOVEMBER 27, 2015

ROLE OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER OF HOLY COMMUNION

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) were first permitted in the United States in 1971. At that time the Congregation of the Sacraments responded to a request of the American bishops to allow laypersons to assist priests in distributing Holy Communion.

In January 1973, Pope Paul VI, in the instruction *Immensae Caritatis*, extended this permission to the universal Church. He wrote: "Present-day conditions demand that greater access to Holy Communion should be made possible so that the faithful, by sharing more fully in the fruits of the sacrifice of the Mass, might dedicate themselves more readily and effectively to God and to the good of the Church. First of all, provision must be made lest reception become impossible or difficult owing to a lack of a sufficient number of ministers."

The institution of this particular ministry responds to the condition in the Church today whereby Catholics are encouraged to share in communion at every Eucharist in which they participate, and under both species, and the large number of persons who are coming forward to partake of the body and blood of Christ.

"It is useful for the diocesan bishop to issue particular norms concerning extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion which, in complete harmony with the universal law of the Church, should regulate the exercise of this function in his diocese" (*Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests*). These include the following:

- EMHCs may distribute Holy Communion at eucharistic celebrations only when there are no ordained ministers present or when those ordained ministers present at a liturgical celebration are truly unable to distribute Holy Communion.
- They may also exercise this function at Eucharistic celebrations where there are particularly large numbers of the faithful and which would be excessively prolonged because of an insufficient number of ordained ministers to distribute Holy Communion.
- EMHCs are also used in order to distribute the Eucharist to the sick or homebound. Any person who regularly takes Holy Communion to the sick is to be trained and commissioned. An individual may be commissioned for only this aspect of the ministry or may perform this service within the Eucharistic assembly. Please see the pastor or deacons for additional information.

REQUIREMENTS FOR ELIGIBILITY

EMHCs must meet the following requirements:

- Be a practicing Catholic, distinguished in their Christian life, faith and morals
- Be at least 18 years of age
- Have received the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist
- Demonstrate a deep reverence for and devotion of the Holy Eucharist
- Be an active, registered member of Epiphany Parish
- If married, the marriage must be a valid Catholic marriage

SPIRITUALITY

EMHCs should strive to live the Catholic Faith in spirit and in truth, namely through:

- Regular Mass attendance
- Daily prayer (especially Eucharistic Adoration and meditation on the Scriptures)
- Regular Confession
- Participation in faith formation and the life of the parish

To distribute the Bread of Life to the faithful, EMHCs should heed the Lord's invitation to ongoing conversion and friendship with Him. We cannot give what we do not have, so we rely on the Lord to fill us with his strength.

PROCEDURES

Dress Code

EMHCs should dress neatly, in a way consonant with the dignity of their role. Good taste and common sense are the best guides in this area. What you wear sends signals to the assembly about how seriously you take your ministry. Dress with dignity and respect. Never wear anything that will detract from Holy Communion. The focus must always be on the Eucharist, not its minister.

- ✗ Please avoid wearing jeans, shorts, tank tops, flip-flop sandals, shoes with loud heels, and distracting jewelry, patterns, and colors.
- ✓ Men are encouraged to wear a tie and/or blazer/suit jacket.

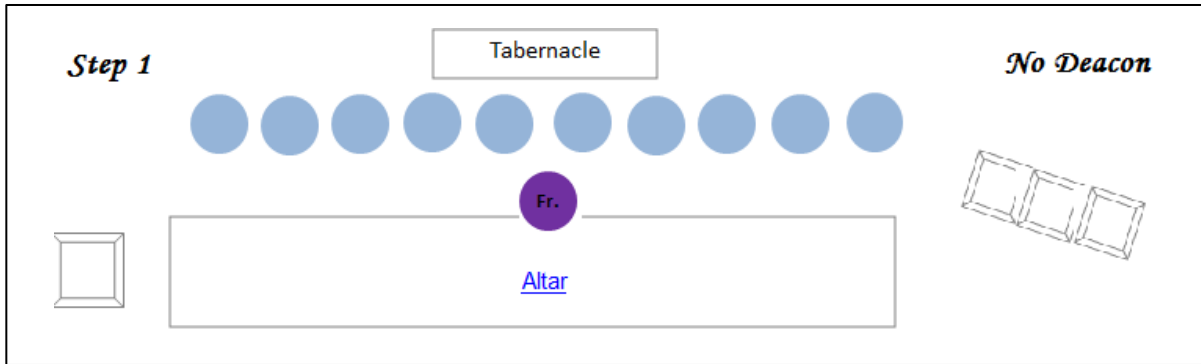
Arrival at Mass

- EMHCs should arrive **10-15 minutes before Mass** and **sign-in at the sacristy**. Please show up if you have been scheduled for a Mass. If you cannot attend on a day that you have been scheduled, it is your responsibility to find a substitute (see *Scheduling* section below for additional information). Please be respectful of the Eucharist and the ministry; do not wait until the day that you have been scheduled to find a substitute.

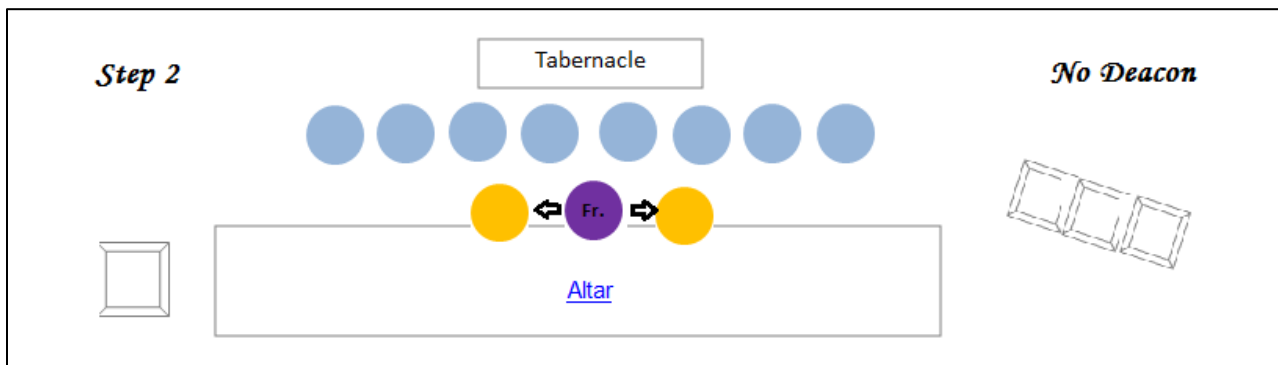
During Mass

- After the priest consumes the host, approach the sanctuary. When you arrive at the sanctuary, face the altar and make a profound bow. Proceed to the area behind the sanctuary using the side stairs. Clean your hands using the hand sanitizer dispensers. Enter the sanctuary through the archways and take your position between the altar and tabernacle. Stand facing the altar.
- In Masses with deacons: The celebrant will distribute the host to the EMHCs. Then the deacons will distribute the Precious Blood to EMHCs. Once all EMHCs have received the ciborium, proceed to your position.
- In Masses without deacons: In the absence of deacons, two EMHCs will distribute the Precious Blood. Holy Communion will be administered in this way (see the following page):

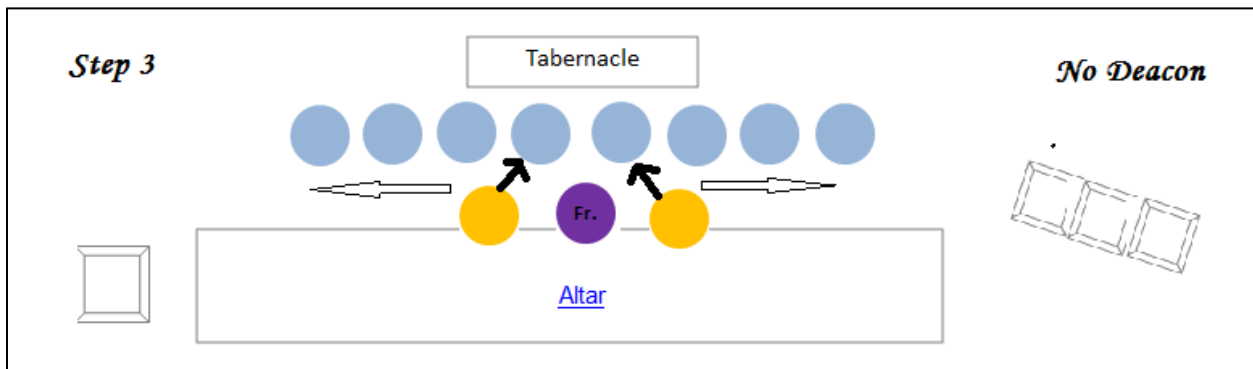
Step 1: Celebrant distributes host to all EMHCs



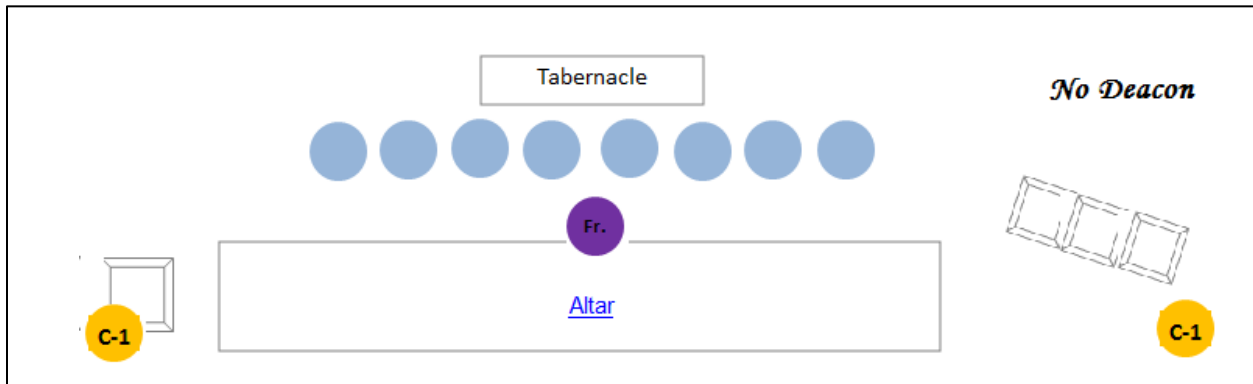
Step 2: After celebrant distributes the host, the two ministers of the Precious Blood step up and stand on either side of the priest, face him, and receive the chalice.



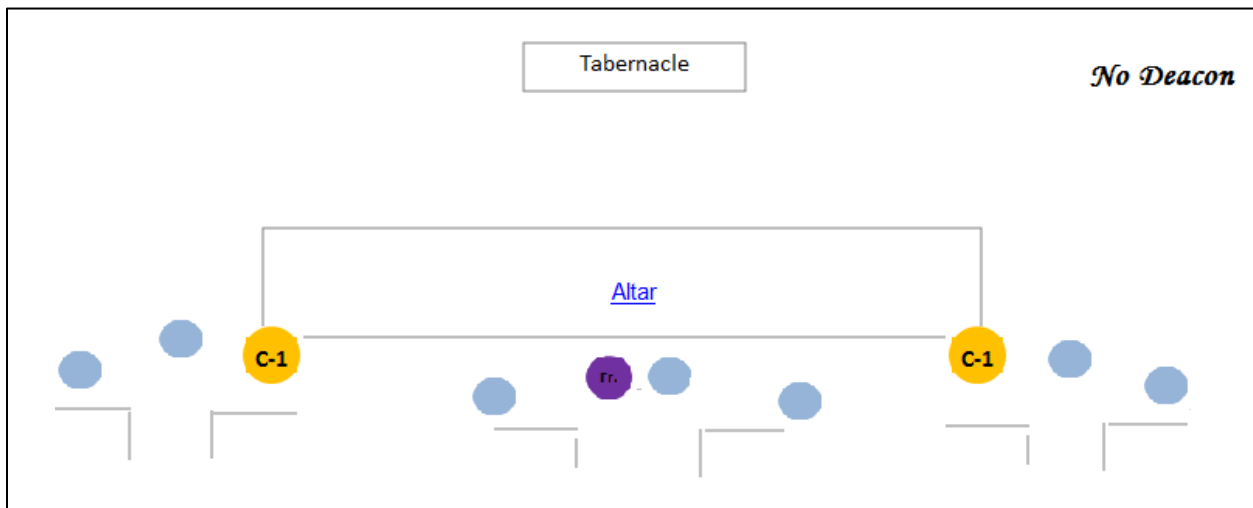
Step 3: After consuming the Precious Blood, the two EMHCs then administer the chalice to the other EMHCs beginning in the center of the line and moving outward from the altar.



Step 4: Once the last EMHC has received from the chalice, the two ministers of the Precious Blood proceed to their positions. Meanwhile, the celebrant distributes the ciboria to the remaining EMHCs.



Step 5: Once all EMHCs have received the ciborium, all ministers proceed to their positions.



- **Distributing the Host:** The minister who distributes the body of Christ to the people should make eye contact with the communicant and elevate the host briefly before the communicant. The minister says “The body of Christ” and the communicant responds “Amen.”
 - These words are not to be adapted. Do not omit any words (e.g., do not drop “the”) and do not add any words (e.g., the communicant’s name – “Cheryl, the Body of Christ”).
 - Place the host in the communicant’s hand or on his/her tongue depending upon the preference of the communicant.
- **Distributing the Precious Blood:** The minister of the Precious Blood should make eye contact with the communicant and present the chalice. The minister says “The blood of Christ” and the communicant responds “Amen.”
 - These words are not to be adapted. Do not omit any words (e.g., do not drop “the”) and do not add any words (e.g., the communicant’s name – “Bobby, the Blood of Christ”).
 - Except for a good reason (a parent holding a child, a person who does not have full use of hands), the minister does not attempt to guide the chalice. Simply place the chalice

entirely into the hands of the communicant. After the communicant has received, the minister takes the chalice, wipes both sides of the rim with the purificator, turns the chalice slightly, and addresses the next communicant.

- Communicants are not to dip the host into the chalice. This practice – called *intinction* – is reserved for the priest.
- **For those not receiving Holy Communion:** If an adult or child approaches with their hands crossed over their chest, offer a brief prayer such as “Christ’s blessing on you”, “May God bless you”, or another appropriate prayer.
 - You may place your hand on their upper arm or shoulder, but this is not required. Do not place your hand on the head of a child or an adult. This can be offensive to some people and it is a health concern.
 - If you extend your hand in prayer, do not do so while holding a host in your hand. The host should be held only to distribute it to a communicant. It should not make contact with a person other than with his/her hand or tongue. Additionally, avoid making contact with the fingers used to hold the host. Particles of the Eucharist may adhere to their clothing or person.
 - Do not make the Sign of the Cross as part of the prayer. This action is reserved to ordained ministers (bishops, priests, deacons).
- The Body and Blood of Christ are always to be distributed by a minister. The host and Precious Blood are never left on the altar for communicants to take themselves, nor are they passed from one communicant to another.

After the Distribution of Holy Communion

- Take the ciborium with the remaining hosts to the sanctuary and place it on the altar. The deacon or priest will organize the remaining hosts for reposition in the tabernacle. All ministers of the host should approach the tabernacle and cleanse their fingers in the ablution cups on each side of the tabernacle.
 - If you are distributing the host, do not wipe your hands on your clothing or any other surface before purifying your fingers in the ablution cup. The purpose of the ablution cup is to reverently remove any particles of the Eucharist from your hands.
- The minister should reverently consume any remaining Precious Blood. Then place the empty chalice and purificator on the altar. Ministers of the Precious Blood are not required to cleanse their fingers.
- All EMHCs should stand on either side of the altar until the deacon or priest returns all ciboria to the tabernacle. Genuflect (if unable, make a profound bow) when the deacon or priest genuflects. When the door to the tabernacle has been closed (listen for the “click”), exit through the archways on either side of the altar. Make a profound bow before the altar before returning to your seat.

QUICK REMINDERS

- **Approach the sanctuary once the Celebrant has consumed the host** (not before). Bow profoundly to the altar then head up through the side steps on the backside of the sanctuary.
- The minister of the Host whose position is the **main side aisle** (in front of either Joseph or Mary) **distributes the Host to the altar servers** on either side.
- The **chalice is not to be distributed to the altar servers** in the sanctuary. If they wish to receive from the chalice, they can wait in line at the usual Chalice station.
- While the priest or deacon is replacing the ciboria in the tabernacle, ministers should **genuflect with him** but not exit until the tabernacle door is closed. **Listen for the “click”.**

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

Ash Wednesday

You may be asked to assist with the distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday. If you are assigned to assist in one of the Ash Wednesday liturgies, you should check in at the sacristy and determine from the celebrant where you will be located to distribute the ashes and what script you will use.

There are two options:

- “Repent, and believe in the Gospel”
- “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Mark each person’s forehead with ashes in the pattern of a cross with your thumb while saying one of the scripts. Be sure to wash your hands after administering the ashes.

Communion to the Sick and Homebound

- It is most appropriate for EMHCs to the sick to be sent directly from the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. Recognizing that this is not always possible, the minister is to follow the guidelines established in the parish.
- Communion should be taken to the sick in an appropriate sacred vessel. A worthy, yet inexpensive, pyx can be purchased at a religious goods store.
- When it is necessary for the minister to the sick to approach the tabernacle to obtain the hosts(s), it should be done shortly before the visit to the sick or homebound and in a spirit of prayer and reverence. Genuflection is the appropriate gesture of reverence before the reserved sacrament.
- The ritual found in "Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass" is followed by the EMHC.
- See the pastor or deacons for additional details on the ministry.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Do I have the authority to deny Holy Communion?

A: No. The extraordinary minister should not make a judgment on the worthiness of any individual to receive Holy Communion. In the case of individuals clearly living a life in discrepancy with church teachings, the decision is to be made by the pastor, in consultation with the Bishop, and the pastor will then inform the extraordinary ministers involved. If the extraordinary minister is unsure whether an individual is Catholic or has received their first communion, he should ask them or their parent, and if they reply that they are not, the extraordinary minister should let them return to their pew without receiving communion.

Q: What do I do when an accident involves the Blessed Sacrament?

A: While every care should be taken to avoid accidents involving the Blessed Sacrament, the extraordinary minister should be prepared to respond to them should they occur. The most common sort of accidents involve a particle of the host or a portion of the precious blood falling on the ground or another object.

If a particle of the host falls on the ground, it should be picked up and consumed. If for some reason it cannot be consumed (for example, if it has already been in an individual’s mouth who is unable to consume it), it may be dissolved in water and the water later poured down the sacrarium; however, it is best to contact a priest/deacon/sacristan should this be necessary.

If some of the precious blood should fall to the ground, the extraordinary minister should insure that no one steps on the spot, perhaps by delegating an individual to guard it. A clean purificator could be used to mark the spot. Then – with the deacon or sacristan’s assistance – water should be retrieved and poured over the spot. It is important to note that when it is diluted with water to the point where it loses the appearance of wine, the Precious Blood ceases to be the Eucharist. The resulting water, however, should still be treated with respect, and collected in a non-consecrated vessel (a lavabo bowl, for example) with the use of purificators. The water should then be poured down the sacrarium in the sacristy. If some of the Precious Blood should drop on an individual’s clothing or possessions, it should be treated in the same way, with due respect for the individual involved.

Note: A cruet of water and extra purificators are available in the cabinet behind the altar, around the corner of the archway on the Mary side of the sanctuary.

Q: What if I am a lector and scheduled for Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion?

A: In general, a minister should not exercise multiple ministries in the same celebration (i.e., as lector and EMHC, or as cantor and EMHC). However, exceptions are given if we are not able to find someone else to fill in.

Q: What is someone asked me to give Holy Communion to someone Sick?

A: Please see the priest or deacon for appropriate direction.

Q: What do I do if I run out of consecrated hosts?

A: Tell the person next in line to wait a moment, then go to the priest or deacon for additional hosts. If you are running low on consecrated hosts, you might split host(s) in half. This should be avoided and done only in extenuating circumstances.

Q: What if I do not want to receive Holy Communion from the chalice when I am a minister of the host?

A: Cross your arms in an “X” in front of your chest. This will signal your preference to the priest or deacon.

SCHEDULING

Reminders

- Volunteers receive an e-mail reminder **five days** in advance of their scheduled Mass.
- Volunteers receive an e-mail that lists “available positions this week” on **Wednesday**. You will receive this e-mail if there are openings at your preferred Mass time(s) and if you have not listed the date(s) as unavailable. Volunteers also can check the full schedule to sign up for any openings.
- If you are not scheduled, you are encouraged to check-in at the sacristy prior to Mass to fill any remaining assignments.
- **Note:** Sunday and Holy Day assignments are scheduled through Ministry Pro. You can volunteer for other Masses (e.g., Wednesday evenings and Friday evenings in Lent) at the sign-up sheet in the sacristy. See the sacristan before or after Mass to sign-up.

Requests for Substitutes

- Requests for substitutes and sign-ups to fill open positions are **due at 12:00noon on Friday**. Requests for substitutes will no longer be accepted through Ministry Pro within two days of your scheduled time.

- If your ***request for a substitute is not answered***: You are responsible for filling your assigned role. Keep track of when you request a substitute and make sure someone accepts your request. If no one accepts your request or if it is a last-minute need, make an attempt to contact other volunteers using the information in the “Roster” tab on Ministry Pro.
- If the request is left unfilled, the sacristans will be notified and it will become their task to fill your assignment. This adds added pressure to the already busy moments prior to Mass. Please assist the priest and sacristans by making every effort to fill your assignment.

Preferences and Contact Information

- Keep your contact information up-to-date in Ministry Pro using the “Profile” tab. At minimum, please provide your e-mail address.
- Use the “Profile” tab to indicate your preferred Mass time(s) and any dates you are unavailable. ***Do not*** list the dates in the “Notes” section or e-mail dates to the Ministry Scheduler.
- ***Note***: Consider non-Sunday Holy Days of Obligation or special liturgies (such as Holy Week) and indicate your availability.
- Indicating your availability is an important step toward reducing the number of unfilled assignments. We understand the six-month schedule is a long time and anticipate that you cannot know your whole schedule for that time. The substitute request function is a great way to manage these situations, but your cooperation in ensuring the proper fulfillment of the liturgical ministries is critical and much appreciated.

Help with Ministry Pro

There is a Ministry Pro tutorial video available through the “Help” tab. If after watching the video, you still have questions, contact Ministry Scheduler Michelle Koettters at ministryscheduler@epiphanyparish.com.

Liturgical Minister’s Prayer Before Mass

MERCIFUL FATHER, it is a privilege to minister at your altar. I believe that during the holy Sacrifice of the Mass the Church offers to You the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ our High Priest and King. I also believe that during the Eucharistic Banquet bread and wine are changed into the living Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ, Your Son and our Savior. **O LORD JESUS**, how happy I am that You have called me to minister at Your altar. May I never forget that the Mass is the greatest action on earth and the most important thing I can do today. **O HOLY SPIRIT**, give me the grace to fulfill my sacred duty with faith, reverence, and love, so that what I do may be pleasing to You, assist Your people in praising You, and obtain for us all the fruits of this Holy Mass. Amen.

GLOSSARY

Ablution Cup	A small glass cup with a lid placed next to the tabernacle to purify the fingers of the priest or deacon who removes the Blessed Sacrament outside of Mass.
Altar	Place of Sacrifice; central location for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
Ambo	Place where the readings from sacred scripture are proclaimed during Mass. May also be used for the homily.
Blessed Sacrament	The consecrated hosts and precious blood, in which Catholics believe that Jesus Christ is truly present.
Ciborium, ciboria (plural)	Sacred vessel with a lid for consecrated or unconsecrated hosts
Chalice	Sacred vessel in which wine, after Consecration, becomes the Precious Blood.
Credence Table	Table near the altar on which are located the various sacred vessels, the lavabo bowl and towel, the water and wine cruets, etc., used during the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
Cruets	Glass vessels that hold water and wine for the Mass
Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion	Either an instituted acolyte or a lay person who meets criteria of Canon 230.
Host	A small wafer of unleavened bread, which is consecrated in the Mass so as to become the Body of Christ.
Luna	Round glass case within which is kept a large consecrated host so that it may be inserted into the center of the monstrance
Monstrance	Sacred Vessel which holds the luna with the consecrated host for adoration and benediction.
Ordinary Minister Of Holy Communion	A bishop, priest or deacon who by virtue of their office ordinarily distributes Holy Communion.
Patén	Small metal plate on which hosts are consecrated during the Mass.
Precious Blood	A term for the real presence of Jesus Christ under the appearance of wine
Purificator	Small linen cloth folded three ways, which is used to purify a chalice when communion is received. Before being placed in the laundry, it is soaked, with the water being poured down the sacrarium.
Pyx	Small metal container used to carry sacred hosts when communion is taken to the sick or homebound; it is carried in the burse with cord around neck
Sacrarium	A sink-like receptacle in the sacristy, which drains directly into the ground, rather than into a sewage system. It is used for disposing of water which may have come into contact with sacred things
Sacred Vessels	Any vessel which is used to hold the Blessed Sacrament. Sacred vessels must be made out of certain materials, and are to be blessed according to the rites of the Church
Sacristy	Room where sacred vessels are kept and where the priest and deacon vest when there is not a separate vestry.
Sanctuary	Sanctuary Area of the church building set aside for the celebration of the sacred rites. The altar and ambo are placed within the sanctuary.
Sanctuary Lamp	A fixture containing a candle or an oil lamp, usually suspended by a chain or affixed to the wall. It is located near the tabernacle. When lit, it indicates the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle.
Tabernacle	Locked and secured place of reservation of the Blessed Sacrament.