



DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON

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WHEELING, WEST VIRGINIA 26003

March 9, 2023

Dear fellow servants of the Lord,

It has been three years since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and my decision, for the health of the Catholic people, to suspend the public celebration of Mass in this Diocese. When we resumed public Masses in late May 2020, it was with various safety protocols in place, one of which was not to offer the Sacred Cup to the faithful. That meant that, in most circumstances, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion were not needed at Mass.

With a notable improvement in the COVID scenario and after consultation with my staff and hearing from many of the faithful, I have decided to restore the distribution of the Sacred Cup at Mass, beginning Holy Thursday, April 6, 2023, the memorial of the Lord's institution of the Eucharist. This also allows time to plan for an orderly implementation of the revival of the ministry of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

In accordance with canon law and continuing the tradition of this Diocese, I as your Bishop have the authority to mandate Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion for a period of three years at their respective locations. Because three years have now passed since this special ministry was in general use, I am taking this opportunity to renew the process of all EMHCs' training and certification.

Therefore, I ask all pastors and administrators, between now and April 6, to organize and conduct training sessions for all Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. This is also an opportunity to recruit new persons for this valuable ministry. Following the training sessions, pastors and administrators must submit an approved list of those who attended the training, including a sentence or two indicating why this person has been nominated for the ministry. The list should be sent to Mrs. Karen Muenze, secretary of the Office of Worship and Sacraments, at kmuenze@dwc.org. She will update the current diocesan database for EMHCs and issue each of them a new certificate with an expiration date three years hence.

As you conduct the training sessions (one should be enough but schedule more, if needed), please include the following points:

1. The Catholic Theology of the Eucharist

The Sacrament is truly Christ's Body and Blood, his Real Presence, the Lord in Person in a mysterious yet genuine way. It is the only Sacrament in which the sign becomes what it signifies: Jesus Christ himself. The Eucharist is both a sign of our unity in faith and love and a means of building it up. The Lord comes to us to strengthen us for our mission to proclaim his Gospel and to work for justice, peace and charity in our world.

2. Proper Vocabulary

While Christ comes under the continuing appearances of bread and wine, both clergy and laity who serve as EMHCs should remember that, at the moment in which they and the faithful receive Holy Communion, it is the Lord they receive, not bread and wine. That is why the minister of the Sacrament says to the recipient, “The Body of Christ” and “The Blood of Christ.” A too casual use of the words “bread” and “wine” tends to diminish the reality of the Eucharist. Speaking of the Body of Christ and the Blood of Christ reminds us of the reality of what we receive and what we distribute.

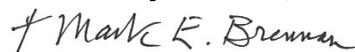
3. Practical Matters:

- a.) Prior to Mass, be aware of how much wine you will need – probably less when the distribution of the Precious Blood is first being restored – so that there is not too much of the Precious Blood left to consume after Mass.
- b.) All ministers of Holy Communion should sanitize their hands before beginning to offer the Sacrament to the faithful.
- c.) In administering the Sacred Cup, the minister should wipe the lip of the Chalice with the purificator and give the Chalice a quarter-turn after each communicant receives the Precious Blood. All parts of the purificator ought to be used. It is not appropriate that the faithful self-communicate by intinction, for the Sacrament is meant to be *received* from the Lord, with his servant (priest, deacon, EMHC) acting as his agent.
- d.) The priest or deacon should purify the sacred vessels at the altar but it is prudent that someone wash them in the sacristy with hot water and a mild detergent after Mass.

For clarifications or questions about the training sessions or the administration of the Eucharist, please contact Dr. Bernadette Kime, the Director of the Office of Worship and Sacraments, at bkime@dwc.org; 304-233-0880 ext. 288.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. May you celebrate the Eucharist with reverence and joy for the good of your people. Have a blessed Lent.

Fraternally in Christ,



+Mark E. Brennan

Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston