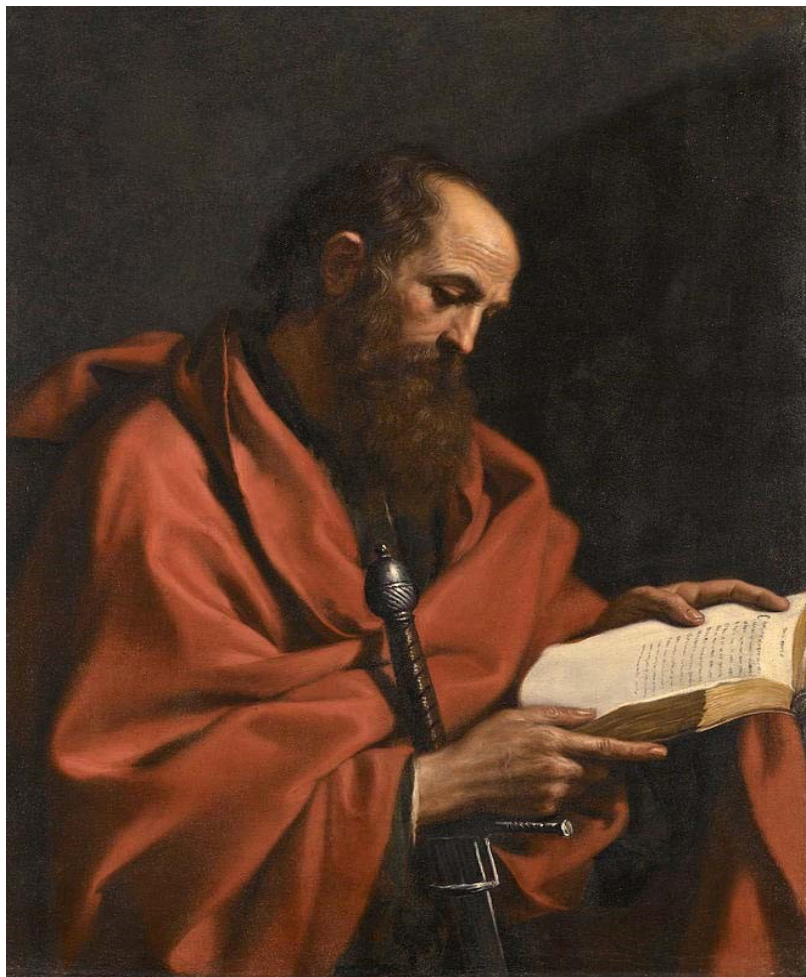


GUIDELINES FOR EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

“There is nothing so great as the Eucharist. If God had something more precious, He would have given it to us.”

—St. John Marie Vianney



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LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

January 24, 2020
Feast of St. Francis de Sales
Patron of the Diocese of Columbus

Dear Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion,

I want to heartfully thank you for your willingness to serve as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. In his important letter on the Holy Eucharist entitled “Ecclesia de Eucharistia” (“On the Eucharist In Its Relationship to the Church”) Pope St. John Paul II wrote: “The Second Vatican Council rightly proclaimed that the Eucharistic sacrifice is ‘the source and summit of the Christian life’. (LG, 11) ‘For the most holy Eucharist contains the Church's entire spiritual wealth: Christ himself, our Passover and living bread. Through his own flesh, now made living and life-giving by the Holy Spirit, he offers life to men’. (PO, 5) Consequently the gaze of the Church is constantly turned to her Lord, present in the Sacrament of the Altar, in which she discovers the full manifestation of his boundless love.” (Ecclesia de Eucharistia, 1)

You have been invited to distribute “the Church’s entire spiritual wealth, Christ himself”. Obviously, such a great calling calls for careful spiritual and practical preparation and profound reverence!

It is my hope that these guidelines will be a great help for you so that together we might demonstrate a profound respect and reverence for Our Lord Jesus Christ, present Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Jonathan F. Wilson
Pastor

INTRODUCTION

For Catholics, the Mass is the heart of our faith, a celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ. The Vatican II document, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* describes the Mass as, “the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time, it is the fount from which all the Church’s power flows¹.” In short, it is the source and the summit of Christian life and prayer.

The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (EMHC) performs a great service to the Church, by distributing Holy Communion to God’s people on those occasions where there are an insufficient number of priests and deacons to distribute Holy Communion to the people present at the Mass, and to the homebound. It is an honor and a privilege to serve the Church in this capacity and requires careful preparation on the part of the EMHC.

The Diocese of Columbus is blessed with many large, thriving parishes where the great number of communicants at Sunday Mass, coupled with a limited number of priests and deacons, presents a real need for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

Thus, when the permission to use Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion was made universal with the instruction *Immensae Caritatis* of 1973, the practice was established. In that year, Pope St. Paul VI noted that in some places there was a shortage of ordinary ministers of Holy Communion, (priests and deacons) and, therefore, provided for the institution of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion in certain circumstances. Indeed, since that time, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion have been of great service in many parishes of the Diocese. This ministry in the Church is a new one in terms of the history of the Catholic Church; and is accommodated to circumstances of the modern world.



These parish guidelines are meant to assist you in this ministry of service. They are meant to give you the necessary directives to perform your ministry properly, and to assist you with any questions you may have. As an EMHC, you are called to strengthen your love and devotion to our Eucharistic Lord. Ponder upon this mystery you are called to participate in; and “let Jesus, present in the Blessed Sacrament, speak to your hearts. It is he who is the true answer of life that you seek (and share).” Pope St. John Paul II

¹ The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. Vatican Council II. Promulgated Pope St. Paul VI. 4 December 1963. §10.

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION DEFINED

In short, an EMHC is a lay person or religious who has been deputed by the bishop for a period of time, or by a priest or deacon for a single occasion. Their role is to assist in distributing Holy Communion to the faithful on those occasions where a shortage of ordained clergy makes it impossible for them to distribute Holy Communion to all the faithful in a reasonable/timely manner. It is thus a privilege to which the Church invites certain individuals under given circumstances, and not a right.

The distribution of Holy Communion should not be seen as a more complete exercise of the priesthood that belongs to all believers by virtue of their baptism. Rather, it is to be looked at as the exercise of a function that is proper to the ordained priesthood, but which, out of necessity, must be carried out by others. This highlights the extraordinary nature of this service, which, rather than being part of the structure of the Church, is instead tied to particular needs arising from the limited number of clergy.

Pope St. John Paul II points this out in his instruction *Dominicae Cenaе*:

To touch the sacred species and to distribute them with their own hands is a privilege of the ordained, one which indicates an active participation in the ministry of the Eucharist. It is obvious that the Church can grant this faculty to those who are neither priests nor deacons, as is the case with acolytes...²

It is thus useful for the diocesan bishop to issue 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. Such norms should provide, amongst other things, for matters such as the instruction in Eucharistic doctrine, the meaning of the service they provide, the rubrics to be observed, the reverence to be shown for such an august Sacrament, and instruction concerning the discipline on admission to Holy Communion.

The proper term for laypeople delegated to distribute Holy Communion at Mass is “Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion” here often abbreviated to “EMHC.” The preference for this term is noted in *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, which states:

This function is to be understood strictly according to the name by which it is known, that is to say, that of extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, and not ‘special minister of Holy Communion’ nor ‘extraordinary minister of the Eucharist’, nor ‘special minister of the

² The Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist. Pope St. John Paul II. 24 February 1980. §11.

Eucharist,' by which names the meaning of this function is unnecessarily and improperly broadened.³

The term “Eucharistic Minister” which had been commonly used, is likewise inappropriate, and should be avoided. Thus, the use of Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion must be considered a sign of the shortage of priests and deacons and should be an encouragement to pray for an increase in holy vocations to the priesthood and diaconate. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion perform a very valuable service to the Church in supplying for this temporary need, but it is important to recognize that this service corresponds to an extraordinary situation in the life of the Church.

QUALIFICATIONS & PREPARATIONS

It is important that individuals selected to serve as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are carefully chosen. The instruction, *Immensae Caritatis*, describes them in the following manner:

The faithful who are special ministers of Communion must be persons whose good qualities of Christian life, faith, and morals recommend them. Let them strive to be worthy of this great office, foster their own devotion to the Eucharist, and show an example to the rest of the faithful by their own devotion and reverence toward the most august sacrament of the altar. No one is to be chosen whose appointment the faithful might find disquieting.⁴

The Diocese of Columbus has given some concrete expressions of these norms, namely that an extraordinary minister, if married, be married within the Church, have received the sacrament of Confirmation, and have received the certification of their pastor/bishop that they are properly qualified and trained.

To personally prepare oneself to the distribute Holy Communion, one must examine their conscience. An individual should recuse themselves if their examination provides anything that would prevent them from receiving Holy Communion grave sin, failure to attend Sunday Mass, or a choice not to maintain communion with the teachings and life of the Church, etc. Positively put, however, an EMHC should seek, like all Christians, to cultivate holiness, especially through frequent confession and personal prayer. They should seek to have a good knowledge and appreciation for the thought and beliefs of the Church, especially through study of scripture and Church teaching. It is important that the EMHC continues to renew themselves when training sessions

³ Sacrament of Redemption. CDWDS. 25 March 2004. Chapter VII, Section 1, §156.

⁴ On Facilitating Reception of Communion in Certain Circumstances. Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments. 29 January 1973. §1. N.B. This document was written prior to the directive of not using the term, “special ministers.”

are made available. These sessions are great to refresh your service to the Church. Training sessions are also helpful to review any procedural changes that may be occurring at St. Paul the Apostle Parish.

COMMISSIONING

After adequate training, names are submitted to the Chancery. After review, the pastor is made known that the names have been approved; and that they are commissioned for a period of two (2) years. After the two years, the EMHC must attend another training session and have their names resubmitted to the Chancery.

PARISH PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES

DRESS

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should dress in a way that is dignified and shows respect for the Blessed Sacrament and the function that is to be done. Clothes should be clean and neat. They should reflect the importance of the Blessed Sacrament, generally by being more formal. Any clothing that exposes the legs, upper arms, or other inappropriate parts of the anatomy should not be worn, nor should any clothing bearing prominent logos or slogans. Clothing should not be distracting. The focus of the communicant should be on the Blessed Sacrament, not on the person or his/her dress. Even if you are not scheduled to be an EMHC, you should still dress appropriately as you may be called into service. Also, please avoid wearing excess perfume or cologne.

PRIOR TO MASS

Please arrive to your scheduled Mass at least 15 minutes prior. Upon arrival, please go to the “sign-in desk” located in the front vestibule of the Church. Here you will let the “Greeter” know that you are present. Once you have checked in, please take a cross and place it around your neck. The number of crosses will help the “Greeter” know how many ministers are present and how many need to be replaced. Please note, that if you are not scheduled to be an EMHC at a particular Mass, you may still be asked to serve. If this happens, please make sure that you receive a cross to wear. If you do not show up, or another EMHC cannot be located, that Communion station will be eliminated for that Mass.

DURING MASS

After the *Sign of Peace* come forward and line up against the wall, on floor level, on either side of the sanctuary. You will remain here for the *Lamb of God*. After the priest and deacon communicates (receives Holy Communion), both sides of the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion will come up the stairs, and file in single file through the center of the sanctuary. After receiving the Body of Christ, the EMHC will circle back in line to proceed to the altar where the deacon will minister the chalice. The first group of EMHCs will receive from the chalice

and take it from the deacon. Presuming that all the EMHCs are present, the first six will go to the South transept (left side of the Church). The second group of five or six (depending on if the deacon reserves a chalice for himself) will proceed to the North transept. After all the chalices have been distributed, the deacon will distribute the Precious Blood to the remaining EMHCs from the main chalice. Once the priest has finished distributing the Body of Christ to the EMHCs and altar servers, he will return to the altar and begin to hand out the remaining ciboria. All will be directed to go to the North transept apart from the final two, who will be directed to go to the South transept. *Please refer to Appendix II.*

MANNER OF DISTRIBUTION

While the norm for the distribution of Communion in the Roman Rite remains under one Species, and on the tongue, specific permissions have allowed Communion under both Species as well as Communion in the hand. It is important to consider each of these methods of receiving Communion, because they each place particular burdens on the EMHC. First, we will consider Communion on the tongue. The communicant will generally make a sign of reverence (a bow is the norm in the United States), and then approach the EMHC. While standing is the norm in the United States, Communion is not to be denied to those who prefer to approach by kneeling. The EMHC takes the Host saying, "The Body of Christ." Other words are not appropriate. It is best if the EMHC take the Host between the thumb and the forefinger in such a way that they may place the Host on the tongue by pressing down with the forefinger from above. This makes it easier to avoid contact with the tongue of the communicant.

The practice of receiving Communion in the hand, permitted in the United States by a special indult from the Holy See, places additional requirements on the EMHC, because it is now necessary that they make sure the Host is properly consumed, and that it is treated with reverence by the communicant. It is necessary for the EMHC to observe the person receiving Communion until the Host is consumed. If the communicant begins to walk off without receiving Communion (as is sometimes the case with children who have not received proper catechesis or non-Catholic adults), it is important that the EMHC follow that individual and either ask them to consume the Host, or to retrieve it so that nothing profane happens. It is important to note that the decision to receive Communion in the hand or on the tongue is that of the communicant, and no one can compel them to receive one way or the other.

BOTH SPECIES

The permission to distribute Communion under both Species in certain cases was granted by Pope St. Paul VI in 1970. The responsibility for determining when it is appropriate to permit Communion under both Species rests with the diocesan bishop. In the Diocese of Columbus, Communion under both Species is permitted at all Masses. This means that the celebrant may decide whether to offer Communion under one or both Species. The only words used in distributing the Precious Blood are "The Blood of Christ." In distributing the Precious Blood, it is important to avoid any danger of spillage. Care should be taken to make

sure that the communicant has taken the chalice firmly before releasing it, but the EMHC should, in ordinary circumstances, not hold on to the chalice while an individual receives. After distributing Communion, the EMHC should take the chalice, wipe the lip of it with the purificator, and slightly rotate it. Some individuals, for medical reasons, are unable to receive even a small particle of the Sacred Host. For this reason, it is permitted for individuals to receive Holy Communion only under the Species, the Precious Blood.

BLESSINGS

Although they are not a part of the approved rite of the Mass, it has become customary in many parts of the United States for individuals who are not receiving Holy Communion to come forward and ask for a blessing. Often this is indicated by hands crossed across the chest. Please note that lay persons are not permitted to give a blessing to either a child or an individual requesting one. *Please refer to Appendix I.*

DENYING HOLY COMMUNION

There are practically no situations when Holy Communion should be denied by an EMHC. Church norms state that, “any baptized Catholic who is not prevented by law must be admitted to Holy Communion.” The EMHC 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, and he will then inform the EMHC involved.

AFTER DISTRIBUTION

After distributing Holy Communion, return your ciborium to the altar or return your chalice to the credence table to be purified by the deacon. Do not place the ciboria on the two square white cloths (corporals). On the credence table, there is an ablution cup. Please dip the fingers you used to distribute Holy Communion in the water and then dry them off. This will be sure to remove any particles of the Hosts still on your fingers. Remove your cross, place it in the basket on the credence table, and return to your seat.

ACCIDENTS

While every care should be taken to avoid accidents involving the Blessed Sacrament, the EMHC should be prepared to respond to them should they occur. The most common sort of accidents involves the Host or the Precious Blood falling onto the ground. If the Host falls onto the ground undisturbed, it should be picked up and consumed. If for some reason it cannot be consumed (i.e., it has already been in the communicant’s mouth), it may be dissolved in water and poured down the sacrarium. However, it is best to contact a priest or deacon should this be necessary.

A greater difficulty is presented if some of the Precious Blood should fall onto the ground. The EMHC should ensure that no one steps on the spot, perhaps by delegating an individual to guard it. A clean purificator should be used to cover and mark the spot. Then, with the priest or deacon’s assistance, water should

be brought 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. Nevertheless, the resulting water should still be treated with respect, and collected in a non-consecrated vessel (i.e., lavabo bowl) using purificators. It should then be poured down the sacrarium. 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.

COVID-19 PROTOCOLS

As we are continuing to struggle with the effects of SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19), the manner of distributing Holy Communion has changed in the past year or so. As of receiving this handbook to the announcement of the pastor lifting the adapted protocols, the process for distributing Holy Communion will be as follows.

After the *Sign of Peace* come forward and line up against the wall, on floor level, on either side of the sanctuary. If you do not have a mask on, please put it on. You will remain here for the *Lamb of God*. After the priest and deacon communicates (receives Holy Communion), both sides of the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion will come up the stairs, and file in single file through the center of the sanctuary. After receiving the Body of Christ, the EMHC will circle back in line, stopping at the credence table to get hand sanitizer. The EMHC will get back in the single-file line to receive their ciborium from the priest or deacon. The Precious Blood will not be distributed until further notice.

After distributing Holy Communion, return your ciborium to the altar, use the ablution cup, sanitize your hands again, remove your cross, and return to your seat.

Please be vigilant with checking to see if there are any updates from the parish office regarding distribution. The parish office will be sure to communicate any changes with you. If you should have questions, please do not hesitate to call.

GLOSSARY

Ablution Cup:

A small glass cup with a lid placed next to the tabernacle to purify the fingers of the priest or deacon.

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.

Burse:

1. Square cloth envelope of the liturgical color of the day, in which the corporal may be placed when not in use.
2. A small pouch for carrying a pyx, with a cord which goes around the neck.

Ciborium(a):

Sacred vessel(s) with a lid for holding consecrated or unconsecrated hosts

Chalice:

Sacred vessel in which wine, after Consecration, becomes the Precious Blood.

Corporal:

Linen square which is unfolded on the altar during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The chalice and paten are placed on the corporal. It is folded in a way that captures any fragments of the Host that might have fallen. Before being placed in the laundry, it is soaked with the water being poured down the sacrarium.

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.

Lavabo:

A bowl and pitcher used to wash the priest's hand during Mass.

Lectionary:

Book which rests on the ambo, containing the Scripture readings for Mass.

Ordinary Minister of Holy Communion:

A bishop, priest or deacon who by virtue of their office ordinarily distributes Holy Communion.

Pall:

Square of stiff material covered by linen which is used to cover the chalice and paten.

Paten:

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. It is not treated as a towel/napkin.

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.



APPENDIX I

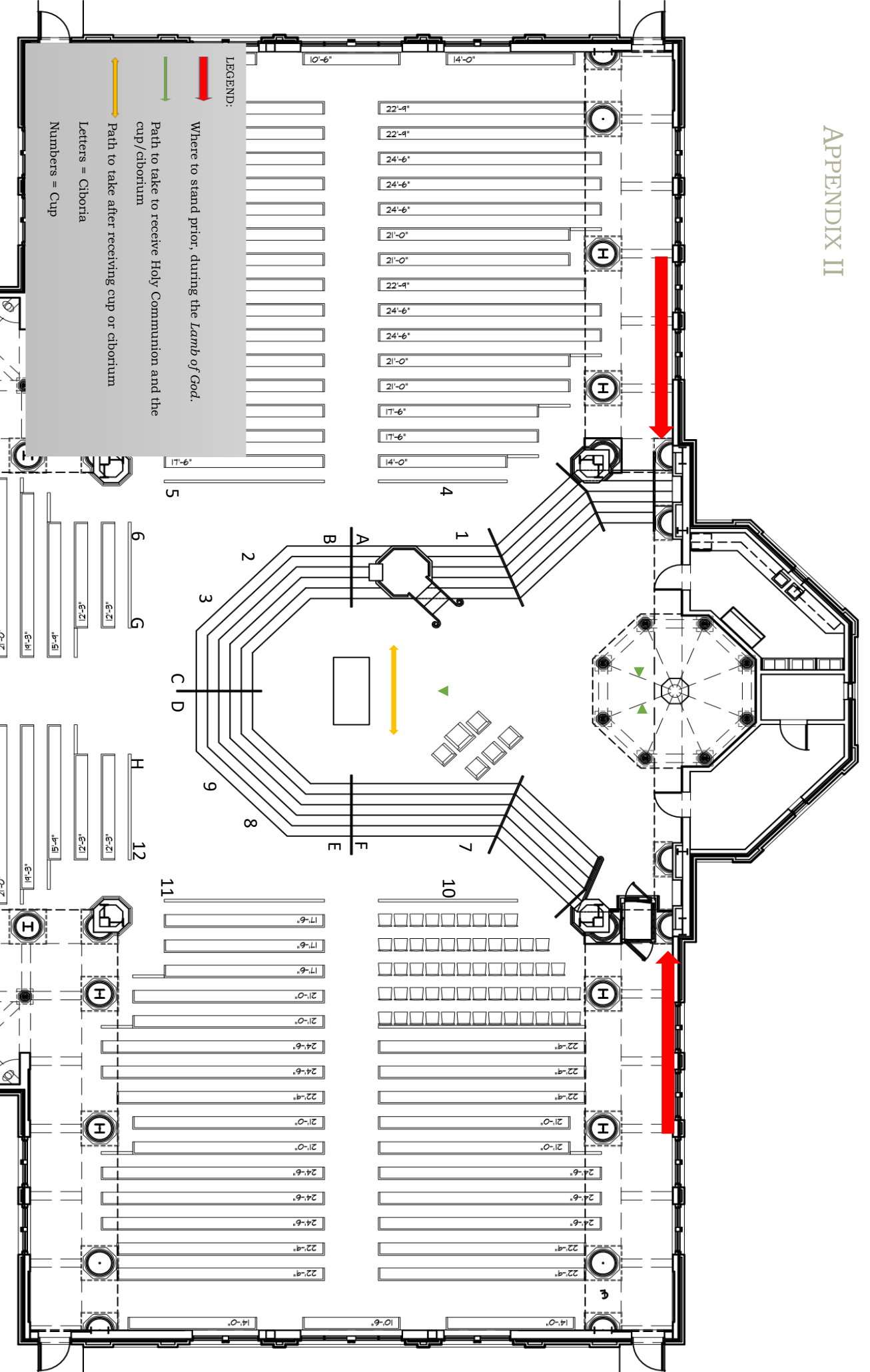
BLESSINGS AT THE TIME OF HOLY COMMUNION⁵

In the Diocese of Columbus, the practice of giving blessings in lieu of Holy Communion has become quite commonplace. While motivated by significant pastoral concerns, it is important to note that it is not an approved liturgical rite. Several concerns have been voiced about the practice that suggests it may receive a negative judgment from the Holy See. These concerns include the following:

1. The liturgical blessing of the Holy Mass is properly given to each and to all at the conclusion of the Mass, just a few moments subsequent to the distribution of Holy Communion.
2. Lay People, within the context of Holy Mass, are unable to confer blessings. These blessings, rather, are the competence of the priest (cf. *Ecclesia de Mysterio*, Notitae 34 (15 August 1997) article 2 & 6; can. 1169, §2; and *Roman Ritual De Benedictionibus* (1985) §18)
3. Furthermore, the laying on of a hand or hands-which has its own sacramental significance, inappropriate here-by those distributing Holy Communion, in substitution for its reception, is to be explicitly discouraged.
4. The Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 84, “forbids any pastor, for whatever reason or pretext, even of a pastoral nature, to perform ceremonies of any kind for divorced people who remarry.” To be feared is that any form of blessing in substitution for communion would give the impression that the divorced and remarried have been returned, in some sense, to the status of Catholics in good standing.
5. In a similar way, for others who are not to be admitted to Holy Communion in accord with the norm of law, the Church’s discipline has already made clear that they should not approach Holy Communion nor receive a blessing. This would include non-Catholics and those envisaged in can. 915 (i.e., those under penalty of excommunication or interdict, and others who obstinately persist in manifest grave sin).

⁵– Congregatio de Culto Divino et Discipluna Sacramentorum. Fr. Anthony Ward, SM. Prot. N. 930/08/L. Vatican City, 22 November 2008.

APPENDIX II



St. Paul Apostle Catholic Church
Westerville, Ohio
Diocese of Columbus
2021