



Holy Redeemer Sacristan Ministry Protocol for Receiving the Precious Blood

Background

Parishioners at Holy Redeemer who have celiac disease or are sensitive to gluten may be unable to receive communion in the form of standard hosts. Holy Redeemer offers two alternative means of receiving the Body and Blood of Christ: to receive a low gluten host, or to receive the Precious Blood.

Option 1: Low Gluten Hosts

A low gluten host is a special host with a low amount of gluten in it. Holy Redeemer orders its low gluten hosts from Liturgica¹, which are listed on its website as having less than 20 PPM of gluten. Note that these hosts are not entirely gluten free², so a parishioner may opt instead to receive the Precious Blood.

Option 2: The Precious Blood

The consecrated wine is referred to as the Precious Blood of Christ. Parishioners who have celiac disease can receive the Precious Blood from a chalice, as an alternative to receiving a low gluten host.

This document describes the protocol for receiving the Precious Blood; please see the corresponding document for the protocol for receiving low gluten hosts.

Notifying the Sacristan Before Mass

If you wish to receive the Precious Blood, please approach the sacristan before Mass. Simply request that the sacristan put out a chalice for you to receive the Precious Blood. It is important that you arrive with enough time for the sacristan to prepare a chalice for you as they finish their other duties:

- 1) For Masses which do not follow adoration (i.e. Sunday Masses, Saturday evening Masses, some weekday Masses), you must speak to the sacristan no later than five minutes before the start of Mass

¹ See <https://www.liturgica.ca/en/product/low-gluten-altar-bread-for-the-people-1-3-8-box-of-100>, accessed November 20, 2024.

² See <https://www.catholic.com/ga/its-got-to-have-gluten-or-it-isnt-a-host>, accessed November 20, 2024.

- 2) For Masses which do follow adoration (many weekday Masses), please either speak to the sacristan during adoration (before the Eucharist is reposed) or after the sacristan has finished tidying up after adoration.

Locating the Sacristan

The sacristan ordinarily wears a sacristan name tag to assist parishioners to find them.

Sacristans try to finish their other duties in such a manner that they can be standing outside the sacristy between fifteen to five minutes before Mass; however due to a sacristan's many duties, the sacristan may instead be in the sacristy, in the sanctuary, or in transit between the two. If you are unable to find a sacristan, ask an usher for help, or wait for the sacristan outside the sacristy.

In particular at Masses following adoration, sacristans often have to rush to minimize delay between adoration and Mass. In this case, the sacristan should be easy to identify as he/she will be cleaning up after adoration, or be in the sacristy preparing items for Mass.

Timing

We ask parishioners to respect that in addition to the sacristan's volunteer duties, the sacristan will usually also be attending Mass, and will want to rejoin his/her family and pray prior to Mass beginning. Accordingly, please be sure to follow the above guidelines regarding when to approach the sacristan. If you are later than this time, the sacristan will be unable to assist you.

Speaking with the Sacristan

Over time, the sacristans will likely recognize you. It is necessary nonetheless for you to approach the sacristan and request a chalice be put out for you - the sacristan will not put out a chalice simply because he/she has seen you, or based on mere eye contact. This is because not everyone receives communion every Mass - there are a variety of reasons an individual may not receive communion. If a chalice is not going to be used, we do not want to put one out - it can be confusing for the presider, and may lead to him consuming more of the alcoholic Precious Blood than he intended.

How to Receive the Precious Blood From the Chalice

To receive from the chalice, you must present yourself just outside the sanctuary before communion begins. Your cue to approach the sanctuary³ is the Invitation to Communion, i.e. when the priest says: “Behold the Lamb of God...” and everyone responds with “Lord, I am not worthy...”.

You should stand to the left of the sanctuary, behind the altar servers and EMHCs⁴. The priest will give communion to the EMHCs, the altar servers, and then give you the Precious Blood. He will say “The Blood of Christ” (rather than “The Body of Christ”), and you will then respond “Amen” prior to drinking the Precious Blood. If you are the last or only recipient of the Precious Blood, if you are comfortable, it is appropriate to finish the contents of the chalice.

The First Time You Receive the Precious Blood

While there is no special protocol for the first time you receive the Precious Blood, it can make the process go more smoothly if you introduce yourself to the priest before Mass and let him know that you will now be receiving the Precious Blood. This is your opportunity to ask him any clarifying questions you may have.

Questions, Problems or Errors

Like all liturgical volunteers, sacristans work hard to ensure that the Mass is beautiful, reverently prepared and logistically set up in a manner that leads all present to worship God. Nonetheless, mistakes do happen, and protocols do change over time in order to improve them. If you have had an experience where you have not been able to participate fully in communion, we apologize, and want to improve our ministry. If you have experienced significant or repeated problems or errors, or if you have questions, please contact the head sacristan using the contact information in the bulletin⁵.

³ The sanctuary is the elevated portion of the church at the front, which contains the ambo (where the Word of God is proclaimed), the altar, and the priests’ chairs.

⁴ The Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHCs) are the lay people who supplement the clergy in distributing communion. Bishops, priests, and deacons are Ordinary Ministry of Holy Communion.

⁵ See the front of the bulletin for contact information - the “Sacristans” entry.