

“I am the Bread of Life” (John 6:35)

In chapter 6 of the Gospel according to John, Jesus says, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty” (John 6:35). Those who were present could not believe this. They began to mutter to one another that they knew His mother and father, so He couldn’t possibly be from heaven. Jesus addressed their complaint and said:

⁵¹ “I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one **eats** of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.” ⁵² The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to **eat**?” ⁵³ So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you **eat** the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you;

When Jesus said eat in the passage above, it just means to eat. Whereas, in the passage below, immediately after, Jesus uses the much stronger word for eat meaning to gnaw, or munch, or crunch!

⁵⁴ he who **eats** my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. ⁵⁶ He who **eats** my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷ As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who **eats** me will live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live for ever.”

Jesus wasn’t joking when he said that we have to eat His flesh and drink His blood. When many of His disciples turned back and left Him, He turned to His Apostles, and asked, “Do you also wish to go away?” (John 6:67). Believing in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is a central belief of Catholicism.

The Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist

We believe that Eucharist is the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus. In other words, that Jesus, fully divine and fully human (Body, blood and soul), is present in the Eucharist. If everyone truly believed that the Eucharist was Jesus, would that change how we worship? Would it change how we approach our ministry?

St. John Chrysostom posed this question:

“How many of you say: I should like to see His face, His garments, His shoes. You do see Him, you touch Him, you eat Him. He gives Himself to you, not only that you may see Him, but also to be your food and nourishment.”

Become what you receive

“If you are the Body of Christ
and His members,
your mystery is presented at the table of
the Lord,
and you receive your mystery.
To that which you are,
you answer: ‘Amen,’
and by answering, you subscribe to it.

For you hear: ‘The Body of Christ!’
and you answer: ‘Amen.’

Be a member of Christ’s Body,
so that your ‘Amen’ may be the truth.’

By eating the Body and drinking the
Blood of Christ,
we become what we proclaim,
the Body of Christ present to the world.”
(St. Augustine, *Sermons*, 272).



When we come to receive Holy Communion, the Minister says, “The Body of Christ.” We say ‘amen,’ because we believe that the Minister is truly giving Jesus to us. St. Augustine reminds us that not only do we receive the Body of Christ, but we are the Body of Christ.

Jesus takes up residence within a person who receives Holy Communion, but He is not simply a short-term guest. Jesus forms us anew into His image and likeness.

When we receive Holy Communion, our minds are transformed and we think like Jesus; our hearts are transformed and we love like Jesus; and our tongues are transformed and we speak like Jesus. As St. Paul explains, “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). We become what we receive.

Being and Giving the Body of Christ

One of the many ways in which you are Christ for others is by exercising your ministry as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

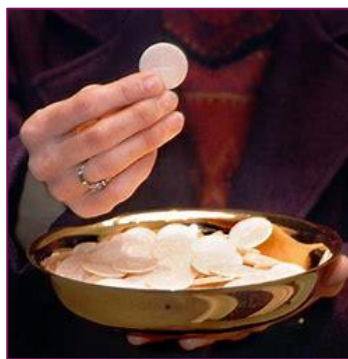
In John’s Gospel, Jesus said to his disciples, “Give them something to eat yourselves” (John 6:13). We can read in a number of ways. The Lord will bless us and our generosity if we share ourselves, our gifts and resources with others, but in a profound way it also refers to your ministry. Jesus is calling you to be the instrument through which He gives Himself to others.



What is an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion?

Bishops, priests and deacons are the **ordinary** ministers of Communion.

Lay people who serve by distributing Holy Communion are called **Extraordinary** Ministers of Holy Communion, but we often use the shorter phrases of Eucharistic Minister or Minister of the Eucharist to describe this ministry.



These various ministers serve Christ present in the assembly by ministering his Body and Blood to their brothers and sisters. They also serve the unity of the worshipping community by taking Communion to those members who are prevented by sickness, old age, or other cause from taking part in the gathering for Mass.

In accord with an ancient tradition, it is appropriate for Communion to be taken directly from the Sunday Eucharist to the sick and to those unable to leave their homes.

Dos and Don'ts

Do...

- Remember that you are a Minister of the Church
- Check your rota during the week and secure a replacement in advance whenever you cannot serve at a Mass for which you are scheduled
- Dress appropriately and respectfully, avoiding clothing or shoes which may be problematic
- Prepare yourself before every Mass with a moment of quiet prayer
- Arrive 15 minutes before Mass starts and sign-in in the customary way
- Participate fully in all the parts of the liturgy. Try not to let your ministry distract you from worshipping. You are at Mass first and foremost to worship God
- Perform your duties and move with reverence and dignity
- Be reverent, but friendly, in your approach to each communicant (e.g., smile)
- Keep your voice loud enough for the communicant to hear, but not so loud as to be distracting
- Try to keep focussed as you repeat "The Body of Christ" or "The Blood of Christ" for this is an expression of faith
- Hold up the host or chalice so that the communicant can see it when responding "Amen"
- Allow the person time to say "Amen" before moving the host or chalice toward him or her
- Present the chalice in such a way that the communicant can easily hold the chalice in their own hands

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

- Check around to see if someone is unable to walk in the communion line. You can either bring that person communion or ask the priest to
- Check to see if another Minister needs help with their line
- Remain calm if any mishaps occurs: someone accidentally drops the host or accidentally spills the chalice. Follow the procedures in place in your Parish. Continue calmly, which will reassure the congregation
- Use a pyx and go straight to the home if you are bringing Holy Communion to the sick and homebound
- Take care to maintain the confidentiality and dignity of the individual when bringing Holy Communion to the sick and homebound
- Return unconsumed consecrated hosts to the tabernacle immediately after visiting the sick and homebound. Don't leave the host in your car or home
- Purify your pyx with water after use when bringing Holy Communion to the sick and homebound
- Maintain contact with the priest if the person is in need of sacramental anointing, the sacrament of reconciliation, or a pastoral visit
- Thank God for the gift of being able to serve Him in this ministry
- Develop a devotion to the Eucharistic presence of Christ

Don't...

- Spend time alone in the sacristy with a child (altar server)
- Draw attention to yourself by dramatic or hurried movement. Be natural in your walking to and from the altar using a somewhat slower-than-normal walking pace
- Show by your facial or bodily expression any sign of disappointment or rejection if people pass you by. Some still prefer an ordained Minister
- Use any extra words of piety or familiarity (e.g., calling people by name). The encounter is between Jesus Christ and the communicant, not between the communicant and the minister. Say only the words in the Communion Rite: "The Body of Christ" and "The Blood of Christ"
- Rush, even if there is an unusually large congregation (e.g., at Christmas or Easter). This is a sacred time
- Refuse anyone Holy Communion (unless they are obviously too young to have received Holy Communion). We are not responsible for judging who is worthy of sharing in communion with us
- Don't bless anyone with the host or your hand. This is the role of the ordained Minister. You can simply say, "God bless you"
- Panic if you run out of hosts or the Precious Blood. If most of the congregation has already received, ask those remaining in your line to go to another Minister. If many people are still to receive, ask those in your line to wait for a moment, and go to the priest to receive further hosts from him

Blessed Carlo Acutis: The Apostle of the Eucharist

One of the beautiful ways that we can deepen our faith in the Eucharist is by attending Mass and Eucharistic adoration. There is a very recently beatified saint to whom we can turn for inspiration: Blessed Carlo Acutis, the Apostle of the Eucharist.

Carlo Acutis was born in London in 1991 to Italian parents, but he and his family moved to Milan, Italy. He grew up a normal boy, loving music, soccer, computer games, action movies, and animals, but Carlo's greatest love was the Eucharist. "To always be united with Jesus, this is my life plan", he wrote when he was only seven years old.



Since Carlo received First Communion at just seven years old, he never missed his daily appointment with the Holy Mass and some Eucharistic adoration either before or after Mass and the daily Rosary. Carlo wrote that when "you stand in front of the sun you tan... but when you stand in front of Jesus the Eucharist you become saints." The Eucharist was "his highway to Heaven."

Carlo's witness of faith led to a deep conversion in his mom, because, according to the priest promoting his cause for sainthood, he "managed to drag his relatives, his parents to Mass every day. It was not the other way around; it was not his parents bringing the little boy to Mass, but it was he who managed to get himself to Mass and to convince others to receive Communion daily."



Carlo was convinced that if people understood better what the Eucharist really is, they would come much closer to God. So he began to document Eucharistic miracles on the internet, which can still be seen online: <http://www.miracolieucaristici.org/>

Carlo was diagnosed with leukaemia as a teenager. He offered his sufferings for Pope Benedict XVI and for the Church, saying: "I offer all the suffering I will have to suffer for the Lord, for the pope, and the Church."

He died on October 12th, 2006, at the age of 15, and was buried in Assisi, at his request, because of his love for St. Francis of Assisi. His cause for canonisation began in 2013. He was declared "Venerable" in 2018 and was declared "Blessed" on October 10th, 2020.

Prayer to Blessed Carlo Acutis

O God our Father,
we thank you for giving us Carlo,
a model of life for young people, and a message of love for all.
You made him fall in love with your son Jesus,
making the Eucharist his "highway to heaven."
You gave him Mary as a beloved mother,
and you made him, through the Rosary, a cantor of her tenderness.
Receive his prayer for us.
Look above all upon the poor, whom he loved and assisted.
Grant me too, through his intercession, the grace that I need (*mention your intention*).
And make our joy full, raising Carlo among the saints of your Church,
so that his smile shines again for us to the glory of your name. Amen.

Prayer before Mass

Blessed are you, God of all creation!
With reverence and humility
I approach the Eucharist and this ministry.
I thank you for calling me to serve your holy people.
May I see you in them. May they see you in me.
Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer before bringing Holy Communion to the Sick and Homebound

Jesus, I thank you for the gift of being in your Sacred Presence.
It is my honour to bring You to those who are unable to attend Mass.
Bless my hands that they may serve You well.
Bless my heart, that I may love as You love.
May my attitude, my reverence, and my concern for both the spiritual and material needs of those whom I shall visit, be that of Your divine heart. Amen.

