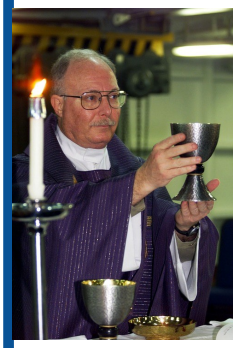
MINISTERS AT MASS

Many misapply the names of the ministers related to the Eucharist and Holy Communion. It is helpful to understand the basis of each role to clarify who is carrying out each role.

THE EVENT

THE EUCHARIST — The liturgical action called the Eucharist is also traditionally known as the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It is one of the seven sacraments of the Church. The Sunday celebration of the Eucharist is at the heart of the Church's life, the ritual, sacramental action of thanksgiving to God which constitutes the principal Christian liturgical celebration of and communion in the paschal mystery of Christ.



HOLY COMMUNION — The reception of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist. More generally, our fellowship and union with Jesus and other baptized Christians in the Church, which has its source and summit in the celebration of the Eucharist. In this sense, Church as communion is the deepest vocation of the Church.



THE MINISTERS

THE MINISTER OF THE EUCHARIST = THE EUCHARISTIC MINISTER = THE PRIEST

The name "minister of the Eucharist" belongs properly to the Priest alone as set forth in the Code of Canon Law. This is further illuminated in the Vatican instruction *Redemptionis sacramentum*: "the only minister who can confect the Sacrament of the Eucharist *in persona Christi* is a validly ordained Priest. Hence the name "minister of the Eucharist" belongs properly to the Priest alone." The validly ordained priest or bishop is the only person vested with the power to effect "transubstantiation".

Transubstantiation is the term the Church uses to describe the change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of Christ's Body and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of Christ's Blood which takes place during the Eucharistic consecration (*CCC*, no. 1376).

Since "the Eucharist is offered through the priests' hands in the name of the whole Church" (*CCC*, no. 1369), it is not possible for a deacon or lay minister to be a Eucharistic Minister.

THE ORDINARY MINISTER OF HOLY COMMUNION = THE BISHOP, THE PRIEST OR THE DEACON

An ordinary (ordained) minister of Holy Communion is the primary minister to distribute Holy Communion. If there are not enough ministers to serve the congregation, then Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may assist in distribution.

THE EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER OF HOLY COMMUNION = THE COMMUNION MINISTER = THE LAY

This minister is not an ordinary (ordained) minister, but further outside (*extra*) the ordinary minister role, thus the name, "extraordinary minister". As such, this minister is not enabled to enact the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, *the sacrament of the Eucharist*. The role of Communion Ministers is to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion.

Sources: The Catechism of the Catholic Church; https://catholicexchange.com/who-can-consecrate-a-host/