

# Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

## I. General Norms

1. The ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are the priest and deacon.
2. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may be appointed in parishes, religious houses, and chaplaincies in situations of genuine pastoral need where ordinary ministers are not available or are insufficient in number:
  - 2 § a. to facilitate the distribution of Holy Communion within Mass when there is a large number of communicants;
  - 2 § b. to allow for a more frequent, even daily, administration of Holy Communion outside of Mass to those impeded from attending Mass because of sickness or physical weakness.
3. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion assist priests and deacons in administering Holy Communion. They may not replace them, except on those occasions when the ordinary minister is impeded from administering Holy Communion because of ill health, advanced age, or other pressing pastoral obligations.
4. It is the responsibility of pastors, chaplains and religious superiors, within their respective jurisdictions, to evaluate the need for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion and to identify worthy candidates for this service. The number of extraordinary ministers in a parish, chaplaincy or religious house should correspond to genuine pastoral need. The number should not be so few as to unduly burden any one minister, yet not so large as to make it appear that this ministry is a regular and normal expression of lay participation in the Eucharist.
5. To serve as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, persons must:
  - 5 § a. be practicing Catholics, distinguished in their Christian life, faith and morals;
  - 5 § b. be at least 18 years old;
  - 5 § c. have received the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist;
  - 5 § d. demonstrate a deep reverence for and devotion to the holy Eucharist;
  - 5 § e. possess the requisite abilities and temperament to carry out their assigned duties.
6. Special care must be exercised in the choice of those candidates who will take Holy Communion to the sick. In addition to meeting the qualifications listed above, they must be persons who will deal with the sick and the aged in a compassionate and understanding manner, always conscious of the serious obligation to respect the confidence of those to whom they minister.
7. Care should be taken that the selection of extraordinary ministers reflects, as far as possible, the diversity of the community to which they will minister. Candidates may be men or women, lay people or those in consecrated life.
8. The pastor, chaplain or religious superior should interview all candidates prior to presenting them for nomination to the Bishop. The interview should provide the candidates with the opportunity to express their belief in the Eucharist and their understanding of their role as extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. Inquiry should be made regarding the candidates' attitude toward prayer and regular use of the Sacrament of Penance.
9. Before being commissioned as extraordinary ministers, candidates are strongly encouraged to complete the diocesan program of training and formation conducted by

the diocesan Liturgical Commission. This program provides theological and spiritual formation, as well as training in practical and liturgical skills.

10. Once candidates have completed their training, the pastor, chaplain, or religious superior should write a letter to the director or associate director of the Liturgy Commission certifying that the candidates have completed their training and recommending that the Bishop appoint them as extraordinary ministers. The Liturgy Commission forwards the request to the Bishop for his approval. Upon approval, extraordinary ministers are issued a certificate signed by the Bishop or his delegate. The certificate is presented to the extraordinary ministers when they are publicly commissioned.
11. Before assuming their duties, extraordinary ministers should be commissioned according to the rite. This should take place, preferably, at the Sunday Liturgy.
12. The term of office for extraordinary ministers is three years, effective from the time of commissioning. The term is renewable, but application must again be made to the Bishop by the pastor, chaplain or religious superior through the Liturgical Commission. Pastors, chaplains and religious superiors are encouraged to promote a broad sharing of this extraordinary ministry among the faithful under their care.
13. Extraordinary ministers are designated for service in their own parish or specified institution, and therefore are not authorized to exercise this ministry in other parishes or institutions.
14. Pastors, chaplains and religious superiors should periodically review the performance of their extraordinary ministers, at least on an annual basis, and be diligent in providing ongoing formation to deepen the ministers' Eucharistic devotion and liturgical spirituality. Annual attendance at a specially prepared occasion of spiritual renewal conducted by the parish or deanery is strongly recommended for all extraordinary ministers. Eucharistic devotion, including Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, should normally be a part of each annual event.
15. When serving, extraordinary ministers should always be dressed in a manner consistent with the dignity of their role. The vestment should be like the one approved by the Conference (CCBI) or something similar according to the Local Ordinary. This vestment is to be worn whenever and wherever the Lay minister or Religious installed as Extraordinary Ministers or Religious Superiors administer Holy Communion. A neat appearance and reverential deportment are essential at all times. They must wash their hands before and after administering Holy Communion.
16. At the time of the selection of candidates, during the formation and training programs, at the ceremony of commissioning as well as at other opportune moments, priests should make every effort to instruct the people under their care about the nature of this extraordinary ministry and the importance of the Eucharist in their lives.

## **II. Procedures for the Distribution of Holy Communion at Mass by Extraordinary Ministers**

1. Extraordinary ministers normally sit in the assembly until the time when they approach the altar to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion.
2. At the Lamb of God, the priest alone, with the assistance of the deacon, breaks the Sacred Hosts. Empty ciboria or patens, if necessary, are then brought to the altar by servers. The priest or deacon places the Hosts in empty ciboria or patens if necessary for distribution. The Precious Blood should be already for distribution since it was

prepared and poured into the chalice(s) at the time of the preparation of the gifts.

Extraordinary ministers do not participate in these actions since they are the proper role of the priest and deacon. If there is a large number of Hosts to be broken, some of the Hosts may be broken prior to the celebration of the Mass so the fractioning rite is not unduly prolonged.

3. Extraordinary ministers approach the altar as the priest receives Communion. After the priest has concluded his own Communion, he distributes Communion to the extraordinary ministers, assisted by the deacon, and then hands the sacred vessels to them for distribution of Holy Communion to the people. Extraordinary ministers should not take the sacred vessels from the altar themselves, but should be handed them by the priest or deacon.
4. Extraordinary ministers should receive Holy Communion from the priest or deacon before being handed the sacred vessels for distributing Holy Communion to the people. The practice of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion waiting to receive Holy Communion until after the distribution of Holy Communion is not in accord with liturgical law.
5. After receiving their sacred vessels, extraordinary ministers reverently and without haste go to their Communion stations.
6. When distributing the Sacred Hosts, the extraordinary minister holds up the consecrated Host as each communicant approaches and, addressing the communicant, says, "The Body of Christ." When the communicant responds "Amen," the minister places the Host on the communicant's tongue or in the communicant's hand.
7. When distributing the Precious Blood, the extraordinary minister holds up the chalice filled with the Precious Blood as each communicant approaches and, addressing the communicant, says "The Blood of Christ." When the communicant responds "Amen," the minister hands the chalice to the communicant. After each communicant has drunk from the chalice, the extraordinary minister wipes both sides of the rim of the chalice with a purificator. The minister then turns the chalice slightly after each communicant has received the Precious Blood. Only purificators made of cloth may be used; paper or disposable purificators may not be used.
8. The communicant, including the extraordinary minister, is never allowed to self-communicate, even by means of intinction = dipping the Host into the chalice.
9. Holy Communion should always be distributed with the utmost dignity and reverence. The minister should avoid all haste in distributing Holy Communion. If a Host is dropped, the minister should reverently pick it up and set it aside. The minister should also reverently pick up any particles that drop from the Host. If any of the Precious Blood should spill, the minister should use the purificator to wipe up the spill. The area where the spill occurred should be washed and the water poured into the sacrarium. After use, purificators should always be rinsed in a sacrarium before being sent for washing.
10. After Communion the Precious Blood that remains is to be consumed and the Sacred Hosts that remain are to be either consumed or returned to the tabernacle by the priest or deacon.
11. Care should be taken that any fragments of the Hosts remaining on the corporal or in the sacred vessels after Communion be reverently consumed. The reverence due to the Precious Blood of the Lord demands that it be fully consumed immediately after Communion is completed. Extraordinary Ministers may assist the priest and deacon in

consuming any Precious Blood that remains after Communion. This should be done with the greatest decorum either at the altar.

12. After the Precious Blood has been consumed and the Hosts either consumed or taken to the tabernacle for reservation, the sacred vessels should be purified. The purifications may take place either at the altar, at a side table in the sanctuary (Credence table), or at a convenient place immediately after distribution of communion or the conclusion of the Mass.
13. The Extraordinary Ministers return the vessels to the altar for purifications (or in the case of the Hosts for reservation in the tabernacle by the priest or deacon). The ministers should then return to their place in the congregation.
14. The purifications take place as follows. A small amount of water is poured into the ciboria and patens and the water consumed by the priest, deacon, or instituted acolyte. The Extraordinary Ministers may not assist in the purification of the vessels.
15. It is important to note that provided the remaining Hosts have been consumed or taken to the tabernacle for reservation and the remaining Precious Blood has been consumed, it is permissible to leave the sacred vessels suitably covered and at a side table on a corporal, to be purified immediately after Mass following the dismissal of the people.
16. The Precious Blood may not be reserved, except for giving Communion to someone who is sick and unable to receive the Sacred Host.
17. After the vessels have been purified by the priest, deacon, or instituted acolyte, the vessels may be moved to a location in the sacristy for them to be washed and dried thoroughly with purificators so that the vessels are ready for the next liturgy. Please note: Extraordinary Ministers may assist with the task of cleaning (i.e. washing and drying) the sacred vessels but not in their purification.

### **III. Distribution of Holy Communion to the Sick**

1. Extraordinary ministers who take Holy Communion to the sick and infirm should be trained for the special requirements of this ministry.
2. In administering Holy Communion to the sick, extraordinary ministers are to follow exactly the rite of Administration of Holy Communion to the Sick by an Extraordinary Minister that is found in Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass.
3. The Eucharist that is taken to the sick is to be carried in a pyx, which should be placed in a burse, if possible, and carried on the minister's person with utmost reverence. Extraordinary ministers while bearing the Eucharist should as a rule keep silence, pray, and be especially mindful of the sacred responsibility that has been entrusted to them.
4. A pyx should always be blessed before being used for the first time. After each use, it should be purified and then washed and dried.
5. Errands such as shopping are not to be done by the extraordinary ministers while bearing the Blessed Sacrament. Nor is the Eucharist ever to be reserved in the minister's house for distribution at a later date. The Eucharist must be borne directly from Church to the house of the sick without interruption.
6. Only sick people who are unable to receive Communion under the form of bread may receive it under the form of wine alone, at the discretion of the priest. If not consecrated at a Mass in the presence of the sick person, the Precious Blood is kept in a properly covered vessel and is placed in the tabernacle after Communion. The Precious Blood should be carried to the sick in a vessel that is closed in such a way as to eliminate all

danger of spilling. If some of the Precious Blood remains after the sick person has received Communion, the extraordinary minister should consume it and in this situation purify the vessel.

7. Visitation of the sick should be so planned that, even when an extraordinary minister takes Holy Communion to the sick more frequently, a priest will visit the sick person at least once a month and be available for the Sacrament of Penance.
8. Priests should be available at all times for the administration of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick to those who are seriously ill. Extraordinary Ministers should advise the priest of the wish of the sick to receive Penance and raise with him the question of the Anointing.
9. A pyx used for the carrying of the Eucharist to the sick should be purified according to the custom for sacred vessels. (Please see Instruction #30)

#### **IV. Appendix: Additional directives to the Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion based on Liturgical Norms**

A. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may not assist at the Preparation of the Gifts (including distributing hosts among ciboria or pouring wine into chalices), in the breaking of Bread, or in the purification of sacred vessels.

B. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion approach the altar as the priest receives Communion. After the priest has concluded his own Communion, he distributes Communion to the extraordinary ministers, assisted by the deacon, and then hands the sacred vessels to them for the distribution of Holy Communion to the people. Extraordinary ministers should not take the sacred vessels from the altar themselves, but should be handed them by the priest or deacon.

C. Extraordinary ministers are deputed for the sole purpose of distributing Holy Communion. They are not to administer blessings or lay hands upon people who do not wish to receive Communion, even if they are requested to do so. There is one blessing at the end of the Mass for the entire congregation, imparted by the priest. Lay people, within the context of the Holy Mass, are unable to confer blessings. These blessings, rather, are the competence of the priest.

D. In the course of carrying out their function, which is solely to distribute Holy Communion in the absence of ordinary ministers, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are not to administer blessings, especially with the Blessed Sacrament.

E. Neither deacons nor lay ministers may ever receive Holy Communion in the manner of a concelebrating priest. The practice of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion waiting to receive Communion until after the distribution of Communion is not in accord with liturgical law.

F. The chalice is usually administered by a deacon or, when no deacon is present, by a priest, or even by a duly instituted acolyte or another extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, or by a member of the faithful who in case of necessity has been entrusted with this duty for a single occasion.

G. Communion under either form of bread or wine, must always be given by an ordinary or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion.

H. The communicant, including the extraordinary minister, is never allowed to self-communicate, even by means of intinction.

I. The communicant must not be permitted to intinct the host himself in the chalice, nor to receive the intincted host in the hand.

J. When intinction is being used, in the case of a communicant attempting to self-communicate by intincting the host, he or she should be instructed by the minister. The minister intincts the host and places it on the tongue.

K. Whatever may remain of the Blood of Christ is consumed at the altar by the priest or deacon, or by the instituted acolyte who ministered the chalice. He then purifies, wipes, and arranges the sacred vessels in the usual way. Any of the faithful who wish to receive Holy Communion under the species of bread alone should be granted their wish.

L. The reverence due to the Precious Blood of the Lord demands that it be fully consumed after Communion is completed.

M. The Precious Blood may not be reserved, except for giving Communion to someone who is sick and is unable to consume the host.

N. The sacred vessels are purified by the priest, the deacon, or an instituted acolyte after Communion either at the altar or at a credence table, or after Mass at a credence table. The purification of the chalice is done with water alone which is then drunk by whoever does the purification. The paten is usually wiped clean with the purificator.

## **V. Order for the Commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion**

### **INTRODUCTION**

It is, first of all, the office of the priest and deacon to minister Holy Communion to the faithful who ask to receive it. It is most fitting, therefore, that they give a suitable part of their time to this ministry of their order, depending on the needs of the faithful.

It is the office of an acolyte who has been properly instituted to give communion as an extraordinary minister when the priest and deacon are absent impeded by sickness, old age, or pastoral ministry or when the number of the faithful at the holy table is so great that the Mass or other may be unreasonably protracted.

The local ordinary may give other extraordinary ministers the faculty to give communion whenever it seems necessary for the pastoral benefit of the faithful and a priest, deacon, or acolyte is not available.

Persons authorized to distribute Holy Communion in special circumstances should be commissioned by the local ordinary or his delegate according to the following rite. The rite should take place in the presence of the people during Mass or outside Mass.

The pastor is the usual minister of this rite. However, he may delegate another priest to celebrate it, or a deacon when it is celebrated outside Mass.

### **I. ORDER OF COMMISSIONING WITHIN MASS**

After the gospel reading, the celebrant in the homily, based on the sacred text and pertinent to the particular place and the people involved, explains the meaning of the celebration.

## **PRESENTATION OF THE CANDIDATES**

Then he presents to the people those chosen to serve as special ministers, using these or similar words.

After the homily, the presider says:

Let those who will be extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion please come forward.

The deacon or another minister then calls the name of each minister. The candidates come before the presider.

The Presider continues in these or similar words:

Dear friends in Christ, our brothers and sisters N. and N. are to be entrusted with administering the Eucharist, with taking communion to the sick, and with giving it as viaticum to the dying.

The celebrant pauses, and then addresses the candidates:

In this ministry, you must be examples of Christian living in faith and conduct; you must strive to grow in holiness through this sacrament of unity and love. Remember that, though many, we are one body because we share the one bread and one cup.

As ministers of Holy Communion be, therefore, especially observant of the Lord's command to love your neighbour.

For when he gave us his body as food to his disciples, he said to them, "This is my commandment, that you should love one another, as I have loved you."

## **EXAMINATION**

After the address the candidates stand before the celebrant, who asks them these questions:

Are you resolved to undertake the office of giving the body and blood of the Lord to your brothers and sisters, and so serve to build up the Church?

R/- I am.

Are you resolved to administer the Holy Eucharist with the utmost care and reverence?

R/- I am.

## **PRAYER OF BLESSING**

All stand. The candidates kneel and the celebrant invites the faithful to pray:

Dear friends in Christ, let us pray with confidence to the Father; let us ask him to bestow his blessings on our brothers and sisters, chosen to be ministers of the Eucharist.

Pause for silent prayer. The celebrant then continues.

Merciful Father,  
Creator and guide of your family,  
Bless + our brothers and sisters N. and N.  
May they faithfully give the bread of life to your people.  
Strengthened by this sacrament,  
May they come at last to the banquet of heaven.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**R/- Amen**

*Or*

Gracious Lord,  
You nourish us with the body and blood  
Of your Son,  
That we might have eternal life.  
Bless + our brothers and sisters who have been chosen  
To give the bread of heaven and the cup of salvation  
To your faithful people.  
May the saving mysteries they distribute  
Lead them to the joys of eternal life.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**R/- Amen**

### **Presentation of a Ciborium or a Chalice**

The Presider presents a ciborium (with hosts) or pyx to the ministers with these words:

Receive this ——  
Which contains our gifts of bread (and wine).  
These will become the Body and Blood of Christ  
Which you will administer to your brothers and sisters

Each candidate responds:

**Amen**

After the presentation, these are placed on the Altar by the ministers for the celebration of the Eucharist.

The intercessions follow, either in the form usual at Mass or in the form provided here. The celebrant concludes the intercessions with the prayer of blessing. From the following



intentions those best for the occasion may be used or adapted, or other intentions that apply to the particular circumstances may be composed.

The celebrant says:

The Lord feeds and nourishes us with his life giving body and blood. Let us pray that these ministers of communion be ever faithful to their responsibility of distributing Holy Communion in our community.

**R/- Lord hear our prayer**

*Or*

**R/- Hear us O Lord**

Assisting minister:

For our ministers of communion that they witness by their deep faith in the Eucharist to the saving mystery of Christ let us pray to the Lord. **R/-**

Assisting minister:

For the Church, that the Eucharist we celebrate always be a bond of unity and a sacrament of love for all who partake, let us pray to the Lord. **R/-**

Assisting minister:

For the sick who will receive Holy Communion from these ministers, that Christ heal and strengthen them, let us pray to the Lord. **R/-**

Assisting minister:

For all who are present here, that the bread of life and cup of salvation we receive at the altar always be our nourishment, let us pray to the Lord. **R/-**

The celebrant then says:

Lord our God,  
Teach us to cherish in our hearts  
The paschal mystery of your son,  
By which you redeemed the world.  
Watch over the gifts of grace your love has given us  
And bring them to fulfilment in the glory of heaven.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
**R/- Amen**

## **LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST**

In the procession at the presentation of gifts, the newly commissioned ministers carry the vessels with the bread and wine, and at communion may receive the Eucharist under both

kinds.

## **B. Outside Mass**

When the people are assembled, an appropriate song is sung. The celebrant greets the people. There normally follows a short liturgy of the Word. The readings and chants are taken either in whole or in part, from the liturgy of the day or from those given below.

The rite continues as above, numbers.

Finally, the celebrant blesses the people and dismisses them in the usual way.

The rite concludes with an appropriate song.

## **Suggested Readings for Liturgy of Word**

### **Old Testament**

- Genesis 14:18-20
- Exodus 24:3-8
- Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14b-16a
- 1 Kings 19:4-8
- Proverbs 9:1-6

### **New Testament**

- Acts 2:42-7
- Acts 10:34a, 37-43
- 1 Corinthians 10:16-17
- 1 Corinthians 11:23-6
- Hebrews 9:11-15

## **Responsorial Psalms**

- Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5-6
  - R/. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.
- Psalm 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7
  - R/. Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.
- Psalm 78:3 4bc, 23-4, 25, 54
  - R/. The Lord gave them bread from heaven.
- Psalm 145: 10-11, 15-6, 17-8
  - R/. The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.
- Psalm 147: 12-3, 14-5, 19-20
  - R/. Whoever eats this bread will live for ever. (John 6:59b)

## **Alleluia Verses before the Gospel**

- John 6:57
- John 6:58

- John 6:35
- John 6:51-52

## **Gospel**

- Mark 14:12-16, 22-26
- Luke 9:11b-17
- Luke 24:13-35
- John 6:1-15
- John 6:41-52
- John 6:51-59
- John 21:1-14

## **VI. Documents to Review**

- General Instruction of the Roman Missal; Paragraphs 160, 161, 162
- Redemptionis Sacramentum; Paragraphs 146-160
- Rite of Distribution of Holy Communion outside of Mass in the Absence of a Priest
- Immensae Caritatis
- Rite of Commissioning Special Ministers of the Eucharist