



GUIDELINES FOR EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

INTRODUCTION

The Office for Worship has prepared the following guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion at Sunday Mass, as well as at other Eucharistic celebrations.

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide some general observations and principles regarding this important ministry of the Church. They define clearly the contents of the liturgical law on this matter, the demands of a good Eucharistic liturgy, and the expectations of the universal and local Church.

MINISTRY OF HOLY COMMUNION

1. The ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are Bishops, Priests and Deacons who assist the Bishop or Priest (GIRM no. 182). At every celebrating of the Eucharist there should be sufficient number of ministers for Holy Communion so that it can be distributed in a reverent and orderly manner. Additionally, the sick and those unable to participate at the Eucharistic celebration have a spiritual need to receive Holy Communion. The Church, in order to make access to so great a sacrament, allows for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion when there is need. This is a ministry of bringing the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ to the People of God in a dignified and reverent manner. It also witnesses to faith in the Real Presence of Christ in the action of sharing in the Eucharistic meal of Christ's sacrifice. The ministry should, therefore, be treated with utmost dignity and reverence.
2. It is for these reasons that the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments gives clear norms for the involvement of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. When there are not enough priests and deacons available for the numbers of faithful present, those who are authorized as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may be assigned to distribute Communion. It should be kept in mind that ordained ministers present for the celebration of the Eucharist are the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion and expected to distribute the Eucharist, unless they are too frail or sick to do so (*Inestimable Donum*, 10, *Redemptionis Sacramentum* 158).

REQUIREMENTS

3. Baptized and Confirmed Catholic men and women of at least 25 years of age are eligible for this ministry. They should be persons who sincerely try to live the Gospel message in their communal and individual lives. If they are married, they should be married in the Church (divorce does not make one ineligible to serve as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion). They should faithfully participate in the Sunday Eucharist and with God's grace in every aspect of their lives. People under the age of 25 must be individually recommended for delegation by their pastors.
4. Candidates for extraordinary ministry of Holy Communion are to be properly trained in the parish, receive delegation from the Bishop or his Episcopal Delegate to serve in a particular parish and be commissioned for services in the parish before they serve.

5. All new extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are to be commissioned, preferably during a Sunday Mass. The Rite of Commissioning is found in the Book of Blessings. (Chapter 63)
6. The names of those that the Pastor requests for delegation as ministers are to be submitted to the Office for Worship. Delegation is for, at most, a two year term. At the Pastor's discretion, delegation may be renewed upon request.
7. The extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are to wear proper attire. The use of a symbol such as a cross or a medal is permissible. Albs are not appropriate vesture in that liturgical ministers are first and foremost members of the worshipping assembly, and should appear as such.
8. At least once a year, each community is encouraged to arrange some program or retreat to renew the faith, prayer and commitment of the present ministers. These meetings/retreats could also include the discussions of issues that have arisen in the course of their ministry.
9. All extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should be encouraged to attend diocesan workshops on liturgy sponsored by the Office for Worship as well as relevant workshops offered by other diocesan offices (e.g. Diocesan Ministries Celebration).

PROCEDURE DURING MASS

10. The extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are part of the faithful that form a holy people. They are to take an active part in Mass by joining in the prayers and the singing, the hearing of the word of God and in the common offering of Sacrifice. Their gestures and postures should be observed in common with all the faithful. Normally, they should be seated with the assembly during Mass. (GIRM 95, 96)

If there is a tabernacle with the Blessed Sacrament in the sanctuary (center of the sanctuary, behind the altar), a genuflection is made by the priests and ministers before and after Mass, but not during the celebration of Mass. Other ministers genuflect whenever they pass in front of the Blessed Sacrament (GIRM 274).

11. At the Sign of Peace, the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion approach the sanctuary. After the priest and deacon have received Communion, the ministers approach the altar and stand at a convenient place to receive Holy Communion under both kinds. (GIRM 162, NORMS 38)
(NB: if the whole assembly is not being offered the chalice, it is not appropriate to offer to the ministers only. It is a Liturgical Norm in the Diocese of Orange to distribute Holy Communion under both kinds.)

12. After all extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion have received Communion, the priest hands the vessels containing the Eucharistic species to the deacons and extraordinary minister of Holy Communion (GIRM 162, NORMS 40).

13. At the end of the communion rite, if any of the Precious Blood remains, it should be consumed: it may never be disposed of on the ground or in the sacrarium. Any remaining consecrated hosts may be consumed or reserved in a tabernacle. The consecrated wine may not be reserved in the tabernacle for later use. (GIRM 163, 183, 192, NORMS 52, 54)

14. After the distribution of Communion, appointed ministers purify the vessels at a side table. It is permissible to leave the vessels suitably covered at a side table on a corporal to be purified immediately after Mass. (GIRM 279 & 284b)

DISTRIBUTION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

15. The Body of Christ is administered with the words, “The Body of Christ”. After the communicant has responded “Amen”, the host is placed in the hand or on the tongue, according to the manner indicated by the communicant.

16. The Body of Christ is always ministered to the communicant. Communicants are not permitted to take their own hosts and communicate themselves.

17. If a host falls to the ground during distribution, the minister should pick it up, place it in the ciborium, and consume it after the distribution is over.

COMMUNION FROM THE CHALICE

18. In the Diocese of Orange, Communion from the chalice on Sundays and Holy days, as well as weekday masses, is permitted. In order to insure that this is done in a reverent and orderly manner, the availability of sufficient ministers is essential. Also, catechesis on the theological, liturgical and symbolic aspects of this practice is to take place on a regular basis. The freedom of each communicant to choose Communion under both kinds (or not) should be understood by the people.

Holy Communion has a fuller form as a sign when it is distributed under both kinds. For in this form the sign of the Eucharistic banquet is more clearly evident and clear expression is given to the divine will by which the new and eternal Covenant is ratified in the Blood of the Lord, as also the relationship between the Eucharistic banquet and the eschatological banquet in the Father’s Kingdom. (GIRM 281)

When Communion under the form of the Precious Blood is offered to the assembly, it shall always be clear that it is the option of the communicant and not of the minister whether the communicant shall receive the consecrated wine. Of course, pastors should encourage the whole assembly to receive Communion under both kinds (GIRM 284).

19. When the members of the assembly drink from the chalice, ordinarily there should be two ministers of the chalice for each minister with the ciborium; but each community needs to determine what ratio is most suitable. Ministers should stand an appropriate distance from each other to facilitate the Communion procession and not unduly impede the assembly’s easy movement.

MINISTRATION OF THE CHALICE

20. The chalice is offered to the communicant with the words, “The Blood of Christ”, to which the communicant responds, “Amen”. Generally, the communicant should hold the chalice firmly in both hands and drink from it. However, in the case of a physical disability or weakness, the minister should be ready to assist in holding the chalice.

21. After each person has received the Blood of Christ, the minister should wipe the rim of the chalice with a purificator and turn the chalice slightly before repeating the procedure for the next communicant.

22. Any danger of spilling the Precious Blood should be carefully avoided. If, by chance, it should spill, the area should be marked, covered immediately and washed after Mass.

23. The chalice is always ministered to the recipient; it may never be given for self-communication. The Chalice may never be left on the altar or another place to be picked up nor passed from one communicant to another. The ministers consume the remainder of the Precious Blood at the side table after the distribution of Communion. Reverence for the Precious Blood dictates that it be fully consumed after Communion and never be poured into the ground or the sacrarium. If needed, ministers may seek the help of others. Designated ministers should purify the vessels, either after communion or if there are a large number of vessels, after Mass. (NORMS 44, 52, 53)

COMMUNION BY INTINCTION

24. Ministration of Communion by intinction, that is, by dipping the consecrated host into the Precious Blood, is reserved to the priest (for instruction see GIRM 287). In the Diocese of Orange it is not practiced since it eliminates the communicants' legitimate option to receive Communion in the hand, and also denies the right of the faithful to receive Communion under the form of bread only. If a communicant with consecrated host in hand approaches a minister distributing the Precious Blood, it is advisable to cover the chalice with the purificator and ask the communicant to talk with a priest after Mass.

CHILDREN AND COMMUNION FROM THE CHALICE

25. Children are encouraged to receive Communion under both kinds. Special care should be taken when children receive Communion from the chalice (presuming the parent desired the child to receive the consecrated Wine). They are to be prepared catechetically and liturgically for this option.

GUIDELINES FOR SPECIAL MINISTERS TO THE SICK

26. Ordinarily each commissioned Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion may take Communion to the sick. However, there may be certain specifically commissioned persons who are sent by the community to minister to the sick of the parish on a regular basis.

Priests with pastoral responsibilities should see to it that the sick or aged, even though not seriously ill or in danger of death, are given every opportunity to receive the Eucharist frequently, even daily, especially during the Easter Season. (Pastoral Care of the Sick, 72)

27. Ideally, ministers to the sick are sent by the parish community each Sunday to take the Eucharist to those who are prevented from being present because of age or illness. This is usually done after the Prayer after Communion. The ministers may be blessed and ritually sent to extend the unity of the Eucharist to those who are sick. The formula for the ritual ending may be in these or similar words:

“My brothers and sisters, you are sent to bring the Word of God and the Bread of Life from this assembly to the sick and shut-in members of our parish family. Go to them with our love and our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord”.

Ministers may be sent in this manner at weekday Masses also.

28. The minister to the sick may celebrate the Communion service in one of two ways: a) in context of a liturgy of the Word; or b) in a brief form for use in more restrictive circumstances (Please refer to Chapter 3 of Pastoral Care of the Sick). It is recommended that whenever possible a group of sick or aged persons be brought together to celebrate the liturgy of the Word and the Communion Service in a communal manner. If this is impossible, the minister should try to celebrate the Communion Service as fully as possible, depending on the condition of the patient.

29. When the Eucharist is brought to the sick it should be carried in a pyx or small closed container. Ideally a table is to be prepared with a cloth and a lighted candle for the Eucharist. A vessel of holy waters may also be available.

30. Those who care for the sick or family members may also participate in the Communion Service and receive Communion even if they have already received Communion for that day.

31. Priests with pastoral responsibilities should also see to it that the sick who are confined to home or health care institutions have the Sacrament of Penance available. Ministers to the sick should routinely remind those to whom they minister of such availability.

32. The extraordinary minister of Holy Communion is always to exercise his/her service with the reverence and deportment expected in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. The words, actions and presence of the minister carrying the consecrated Bread or Wine should clearly reflect the words, actions and presence of Christ.

33. If an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion uses a personal vehicle to visit the sick, they need to check with the Parish Business Manager or other designated parish staff person to provide proof of liability insurance with adequate coverage as defined by diocesan directives, along with a valid Driver's license and take an online safe driving presentation.

34. Recognizing our need as a Church to protect the most vulnerable, ministers who visit the sick need to consult their parish regarding diocesan requirements to safeguard against victimization of children and the elderly. This will include background screening and safe environment training.

VIATICUM

35. Viaticum is the celebration of the Eucharist with a dying person. In the case of necessity and with at least the presumed permission of the parish priest, the Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist can bring the Sacrament to the sick in the form of Viaticum, subsequently notifying the parish priest that he/she did so. (The Code of Canon Law #911.)

Abbreviations

GIRM: General Instructions of the Roman Missal. 3rd. Ed. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2010.

NORMS: Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Liturgy Documentary Series 14, 2011

Pastoral care of the Sick, International Commission on English in the Liturgy A Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences, New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1983

The purpose of the Office for Worship is:

- To assist the bishop in his role as principal liturgist of the diocese;
- To serve as a resource to diocesan parishes, schools, offices and institutions regarding liturgical matters which includes music, sacramental celebrations, devotional practices and liturgical formation.
- To serve as a resource to diocesan parishes, schools, offices and institutions in the implementing the Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA). RCIA is the normative process for anyone over the age of reason (usually age 7) to become a Catholic whether through baptism or reception into full communion.
- To plan and coordinate episcopal liturgies at which the bishop presides;
- To assist the bishop in approving any renovations, remodeling or construction of churches or worship spaces.

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