



Norms for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the Eucharistic celebration is the paschal meal, it is right that the faithful who are properly disposed receive the Lord's body and blood as spiritual food as he commanded. This is the purpose of the Breaking of bread and the other preparatory rites that lead the faithful directly to communion (GIRM 80).

It is desirable that the faithful, just as the priest himself is bound to do, receive the Lord's body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and that they share in the cup. Then even through the signs communion will stand out more clearly as a sharing in the sacrifice actually being offered (GIRM 85).

If a large number are to receive communion, the priest celebrant will frequently need assistance in distributing communion so that the communion rite is not unduly long. This assistance will regularly be needed when communion is given under both kinds, the form of communion in which the Eucharistic banquet is more clearly signified.

Deacons and concelebrating priests will assist in the first place, as ordinary ministers of the Holy Communion. Instituted acolytes, where they are available, can assist as auxiliary ministers. Frequently, however, this assistance will be given by extraordinary ministers of the Holy Communion, either formally commissioned for a given period or deputed by the priest celebrant (GIRM 162, Norms 28)).

These 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 assembly. In accord with a most 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.

- * There is no need for special ministers to be accommodated in the sanctuary for the whole celebration. It may be a more appropriate expression of their ministry and relationship to the assembly if they come forward from their place among the people as the priest receives communion (GIRM 38).
- * 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 (GIRM 38)
- * When distribution is complete, the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should return the vessels to a side table. They may reverently consume any remaining consecrated elements and assist with the purification of the sacred vessels (Office of the Bishop, 2002).



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II. GENERAL REMARKS

- A. Those who fulfill this ministry are to be fully initiated, active members of the community. They should be of sufficient age and temperament to undertake this ministry.

In each parish extraordinary Ministers of the Holy Communion are selected by the pastoral team with prayerful consideration of the needs of the community and the qualifications of the individual. Criteria are necessary for the selection, formation, and evaluation of ministers. For those who will serve in the public ministry of the Church, faith must be supported by visible signs. To this end, the following qualifications might be employed to assist the pastoral team: basic human wholeness; manifestation of the theological virtues (faith, hope and charity); manifestation of the cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance); a positive sense of Church and a willingness to be formed in the ministry of the Church.

Preparation for this ministry includes:

1. Formal instruction through the Office of Liturgy: attendance at a workshop which includes sessions on ministry, Eucharist, Paschal Mystery and general guidelines.
 2. Parish instruction as to local customs and responsibilities: hands-on practice, knowledge, and understanding of parish procedures and responsibilities and an opportunity for sharing with others in the ministry.
- B. After preparation for this ministry is completed and all forms have been received and processed by the Office of Liturgy, the mandate is issued by the Bishop of the Diocese of Orlando for approximately two years, expiring on the First Sunday of Advent.
- C. When the mandates are received by the parish, recognition should take place at a parish liturgy. The Book of Blessings, chapter 63, provides an “Order for the Commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.”
- D. During the two-year period, the extraordinary minister of the Eucharist must have ongoing formation in this ministry. Ongoing support, education, and formation are to be provided at the parish level. The diocese will also offer continuing formational experiences designed specifically for the minister.
- E. Each parish should take proper care that only those with current mandates serve in this ministry. Therefore, it is most important that each parish keep accurate records of each minister of Holy Communion’s mandate, ongoing formation, and requests for renewal of the mandate.



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- F. Mandates may be reissued upon formal written request to the bishop by the pastor. This may be done only in consultation with the individual extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. The request to the bishop must note the dates of ongoing formation of at least one diocesan continuing formation experience for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.
- G. The symbolism of one bread, one body is ideally embodied in one loaf to be used for Eucharist. Because of large congregations and current restrictions on ingredients for the bread, this is difficult. However, the sign of the bread is clearer when there is only one vessel used for bread on the altar and one cup (or one cup and a flagon). Multiple cups and ciboria dissipate the sign value and clutter the altar unnecessarily. The Eucharistic bread is distributed into smaller vessels and the Precious Blood is poured into other cups during the singing of the Lamb of God. If small hosts must be used, there should be at least some larger pieces to be broken at the *fractio* (the breaking of the bread during the Lamb of God).
- H. Sufficient bread should be consecrated for each Eucharistic celebration. The purpose of reservation of the Eucharist is for Communion of the sick and private devotion, not for convenience during Liturgy. With practice, estimates for amounts of bread and wine for different size congregations can be fairly accurate. There should not be a large amount of Eucharistic bread left over.

III. BEFORE THE LITURGY

- A. Upon arrival for liturgy, the minister of Holy Communion should follow local check-in procedures. Hands should be clean. Care should be taken to avoid use of strong cologne, perfume, or aftershave lotion because of some people's sensitivity to these scents.
- B. Having ministers of the Eucharist sit with families is to be encouraged; ministers come from the assembly and return to it after they have served. For the same reason, there is no need for special liturgical garb or symbol. Ministers of Holy Communion should not be a part of the opening or concluding processions.

IV. PROCEDURES FOR DISTRIBUTION

- A. Ministers of the Holy Communion approach the sanctuary during the priest's communion (Norms 38).
- B. Local custom determines where ministers of the Holy Communion stand and wait.
- C. After the priest has received Communion, he then gives Communion to the deacon. The priest then distributes Communion to the extraordinary ministers, assisted by the deacon, and then hands the sacred vessels to them for distribution. Neither deacons nor lay



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ministers may ever receive Holy Communion in the manner of a concelebrating priest. 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 (Norms 39).

- D. The priest and other ministers go to their assigned stations for distribution of communion. All who present themselves must be given communion. If there is a question of propriety or scandal, administer communion and speak to the pastor after mass.
- E. When communion is offered under both species, the cup must also be administered by a minister; it is not to be left on the altar for self-communicating. Communion from the cup is optional. When a deacon is present he ministers the cup (GIRM 182).
- F. In giving communion, the minister holds a host or piece of a larger bread slightly above the vessel, looks at the communicant and says in a clear voice, "The Body of Christ." The communicant responds, "Amen," and the minister then gives communion, respecting the option of the communicant to receive either in the palm of the hand or on the tongue.
- G. In administering the cup, the minister holds the cup up slightly and says in a clear voice while looking at the communicant, "The Blood of Christ." The communicant responds, "Amen." The minister then gives the cup to the communicant who takes it entirely into his/her hands, drinks from it, and returns it to the minister. Then the minister wipes the rim of the cup with the purificator, gives the cup a quarter turn, and offers it to the next communicant.
- H. The invitation, "The Body of Christ" or "The Blood of Christ," must not be narrowed or expanded. The tradition of the Church understands the presence of Christ to include his presence in the assembly, in the Word, in the celebration; the invitation to the communicant is to be all-encompassing.
- I. Communion by intinction (the practice of dipping the host in the chalice) is not customary in the Diocese of Orlando and is not to be encouraged.. Under no circumstances may a communicant him/herself dip the host into the chalice. This would be self-communication which is not allowed. The only way Holy Communion may be distributed by intinction is as follows: "the communicant, while holding the paten under the chin, approaches the priest who holds the vessel with the hosts and at whose side stands a minister holding the chalice. The priest takes the host, intincts the particle into the chalice and, showing it, says: 'The Body and Blood of Christ.' The communicant responds, 'Amen,' and receives the Sacrament on the tongue from the priest. Afterwards, the communicant returns to his or her place."¹



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- J. If the Body of Christ is dropped during the administering of communion, the minister has several options. The minister may bring the dropped Body of Christ to the altar and place it on the corporal to be dealt with after communion, or the minister may hold the host in the same hand as the vessel. The Body of Christ that has been dropped is never to be replaced in the vessel or given to a communicant or consumed by the minister of Holy Communion at that time. When distribution is finished and the minister returns to the altar, then the Body of Christ may be consumed or brought to the sacristy where it may be completely dissolved in water, which is then poured into the special sink (sacarium). When the appearance of bread ceases, the real presence also ceases.
- K. If the Precious Blood is spilled, the minister should cover the spillage with the purificator, first asking the communicants to proceed to another minister of the cup. After mass the area should be washed with a damp clean purificator. Clean (damp) towels should be used if the area is larger.
- L. After distribution of communion, all the ministers of Holy Communion should return their vessels to the credence table or to a place designated. The remaining Precious Blood should be consumed following mass.
- M. Ministers of Holy Communion then return to their places in the assembly for the concluding rites of the mass. The celebrant should be seated, leading the assembly in a period of silent reflection.

V. AFTER DISTRIBUTION

- A. It is often helpful for one or two of the ministers to be assigned to place the remaining consecrated bread in one vessel and return it to the tabernacle. The minister opens the tabernacle and places the vessel in it, genuflects, and closes the tabernacle.
- B. One or two ministers may be assigned to assist the sacristan in purifying and cleaning the vessels after mass.
- C. Every effort should be made to have the ciboria, cups, chalices, plates, flagons, etc., either match or blend well together. Care should be taken to keep these vessels clean and in excellent condition. Ministers of Holy Communion should note that whatever material the vessels are made of, the handling and care should bespeak their sacred use. Purificators must be kept clean and in good condition; corporals should be clean and large enough to have all the vessels placed on them.

¹ Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)* (2000), no. 287. See also, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America*, (2002), #49 and #50.



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