

**GUIDELINES FOR
EXTRAORDINARY
MINISTERS
OF
HOLY COMMUNION**



ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON
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GUIDELINES FOR EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY
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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:
 - a. to facilitate the distribution of Holy Communion within Mass when there is a large number of communicants;
 - 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:
 - a. be practicing Catholics, distinguished in their Christian life, faith and morals;
 - b. be at least 18 years old;
 - c. have received the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist;
 - d. demonstrate a deep reverence for and devotion to the holy Eucharist;
 - 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 Archbishop. 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 archdiocesan program of training and formation conducted by the Office of Worship. 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 Office of Worship certifying that the candidates have completed their training and recommending that the Archbishop appoint them as extraordinary ministers. The Office of Worship forwards the request to the Archbishop for his approval. Upon approval, extraordinary ministers are issued a certificate signed by the Archbishop 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 found in the *Book of Blessings*. 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 Archbishop by the pastor, chaplain or religious superior through the Office of Worship. 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 on-going 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. A neat appearance and reverential deportment are essential at all times.
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

17. Extraordinary ministers normally sit in the assembly until the time when they approach the altar to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion.
18. 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.
19. 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.
20. 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.

21. After receiving their sacred vessels, extraordinary ministers reverently and without haste go to their Communion stations.
22. 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.
23. 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.
24. The communicant, including the extraordinary minister, is never allowed to self-communicate, even by means of intinction, that is, dipping the Host into the chalice.
25. 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 laundered.

26. 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.
27. 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 and never poured on the ground or into the sacrarium. 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 or at the place where the purifications will take place.
28. 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, or at a place convenient to the sacrarium immediately after distribution of communion or the conclusion of the Mass.
29. 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.

30. 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. A small amount of water is poured into the chalices and the water consumed by the priest, deacon, or instituted acolyte. The Extraordinary Ministers may not assist in the purification of the vessels.
31. 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.
32. The Precious Blood may not be reserved, except for giving Communion to someone who is sick and unable to receive the Sacred Host.
33. 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 and so the vessels are ready for the next liturgy. Please note: Extraordinary Ministers may assist with the task of cleaning (ie washing and drying) the sacred vessels but not in their purification.

III.

Distribution of Holy Communion to the Sick

34. Extraordinary ministers who take Holy Communion to the sick and infirm should be trained for the special requirements of this ministry.
35. 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*.
36. 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.
37. 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.
38. 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.
39. 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.

40. 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.
41. 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.
42. 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.)

APPENDIX

Additional directives to the *Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion* [revised as of February 22, 2010 based on Liturgical Norms and Policies of the Archdiocese of Washington]

- 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 *fractio panis*, 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 approach them but 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, 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 to hand over the host. The minister then intincts the host as above.
- 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 and never be poured into the ground or the *sacrarium*.
- 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 or with wine and water, which is then drunk by whoever does the purification. The paten is usually wiped clean with the purificator.

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