

Diocese of Rockford: Norms and Guidelines

for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion at Mass

Office of Divine Worship - Diocese of Rockford © March 2004

The following Diocesan norms and guidelines are intended to assist parishes in the choice, formation, and support of those persons who are privileged to be appointed by the Bishop as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion at Mass. The Bishop has the faculty to appoint qualified persons, men and women, as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. (CL 910; 230 §3)

The following Diocesan norms and guidelines are based on the **Roman Missal**, 2002, nn.80 - 89; 98 - 99; 155 - 165; 182 - 183; 240 - 249; 278 - 287 and other pertinent rubrics in the Sacramentary. Additionally, the norms and guidelines are derived from the USCCB document, *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America*, which became particular law on April 7, 2002. Included in this document is an indult for the purification of sacred vessels.

I. General Principles

1. In every celebration of the Mass, there should be sufficient ministers of Communion for the giving and receiving of Holy Communion in a reverent and orderly manner so that the faithful are given the *option* of receiving both consecrated species and that the *Rite of Communion* is not unduly prolonged.
2. The ordinary ministers of Holy Communion, bishop, priest, and deacon, assume this responsibility *first*. (GIRM 108) It is only when the number of ordinary ministers is insufficient to meet the needs that Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion assist in this ministry at Mass. (GIRM 162)
3. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should receive sufficient spiritual, theological, and practical preparation to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence. In all matters they should follow the guidance of the diocesan bishop (Norms, 28).
4. All ministers of Holy Communion should show the greatest reverence for the Most Holy Eucharist by their demeanor, their attire, and the manner in which they handle the consecrated bread or wine.

II. Introductory Rites and the Liturgy of the Word

1. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion do not participate in the entrance procession. They should sit among the assembly and come from within it to perform their ministry. (GIRM 120)
2. The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion should dress befitting the occasion. It is appropriate that men wear a suit-type jacket and tie and women wear high-neck and shoulder-covering top and knee-length dress. Jeans, shorts, T-shirt style clothes, sweatshirts, and the like are inappropriate. Proper instruction in this matter should not cause any problems. In the Diocese of Rockford, it is preferred that the Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist at Mass is *not to wear an alb*, or anything similar, which might confuse their role with the role of the priest or deacon.
3. The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion is to fulfill only the liturgical ministry of giving Holy Communion at Mass. He/she is not to fulfill multiple liturgical ministries at the same Mass.

II. Liturgy of the Eucharist

4. The Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are to approach the sanctuary (*presbyterium*) at the beginning of the Lamb of God in order to be ready to assist in the *Communion Rite*. Their assistance in this preparation is secondary to the role of a Deacon, if present.
5. As the Agnus Dei or Lamb of God is begun, the bishop or priest alone, or with the assistance of the deacon, and if necessary of concelebrating priests, breaks the Eucharistic bread.
6. Other empty chalices and ciboria or patens are then brought to the altar if this is necessary [a designated Extraordinary Minister may help in this if there is no deacon or priest available]. Only the deacon or priest places the Eucharistic bread in several ciboria or patens and, if necessary, pours the Precious Blood into enough additional chalices as are required for the distribution of Holy Communion. If it is not possible to accomplish this distribution in a reasonable time, the celebrant may call upon the assistance of only deacons or concelebrating priests. This action is usually carried out at the altar, so that the sharing of all from the one cup is signified. In the case of large assemblies, it may be done at the side table within the sanctuary (*presbyterium*). (Norms, 37).
7. If Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are required by pastoral need, they 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, [or, if a deacon is not present, by a designated Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion] and then [the priest] hands the sacred vessels to each of them for distribution of Holy Communion to the people. (Norms, 38).
8. All receive Holy Communion in the manner described by the *General Instruction to the Roman Missal*, whether priest concelebrants (cf. GIRM, nos. 159, 242, 243, 246), deacons (cf. GIRM, nos. 182, 244, 246), or Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (cf. GIRM, no. 284). Neither deacons nor lay ministers may ever receive Holy Communion in the same 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; GIRM, 160).
9. After all Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion have received the Eucharist, the bishop or priest celebrant reverently hands vessels containing the Body or the Blood of the Lord to the deacons or extraordinary ministers who will assist with the distribution of Holy Communion. The deacon may assist the priest in handing the vessels containing the Body and Blood of the Lord to the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. (Norms, 40).
10. The various stations for the Extraordinary Ministers is determined according to the space of their particular church. Suffice it to say that, if both species are given, there should be two ministers of the Precious Blood for each minister of the Host to help the Communion procession move smoothly, and without undue prolongation.
11. The proper and only permissible form for distributing Holy Communion is to offer the consecrated bread by saying, "The Body of Christ" and to offer the consecrated wine by saying, "The Blood of Christ." No other words or names should be added; and the formula should not be edited in any way. (Cf. GIRM, 161; 284-287).
12. **The communicant determines whether he or she will receive the Host in the hand or on the tongue.** For those who choose to receive the Precious Blood, *the cup is handed to the person* after his or her response. When returned, the cup is wiped with the purificator, and the cup turned slightly for the next communicant.

13. The preferred method of giving Communion under both kinds is to give the Eucharistic bread first and the Eucharistic wine. If Communion is given by intinction, the communicant may never dip the Eucharistic bread into the chalice. Communion under either the form of bread or wine must always be given by a minister with the usual words. In all that pertains to Communion under both kinds, the *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America* are to be followed (see nos. 27-54, Norms).
14. The faithful are not permitted to take up the Eucharistic bread or the sacred chalice themselves, and still less, hand them on to one another. **The norm for reception of Holy Communion in the dioceses of the United States is standing. Communicants should not be denied Holy Communion because they kneel. Rather, the Pastor should address such instances pastorally by providing the faithful with proper catechesis on the reasons for this norm.**
15. When receiving Holy Communion in the hand, the communicant bows his or her head before the sacrament as a gesture of reverence and receives the Body of the Lord from the minister. The consecrated host may be received either on the tongue or in the hand at the discretion of each communicant. When Holy Communion is received under both kinds, the sign of reverence [bow of the head] is also made before receiving the Precious Blood.
16. The blessing of children or infants should not be encouraged while distributing Communion. Children and infants are blessed with the full assembly at the end of Mass.
17. If the Eucharistic bread or some particle of it falls, it should be picked up reverently by the minister. The consecrated bread may be consumed or completely dissolved in water before being poured down the sacrarium.
18. Should there be any mishap--as when, for example, the consecrated wine is spilled from the chalice--then the affected "area . . . should be washed and the water poured into the sacrarium [GIRM, 280]."
19. In those instances when there remains more consecrated wine than was necessary, if needs dictate, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may consume what remains of the Precious Blood from their cup of distribution with due reverence at the altar. Sufficient instruction is to be given by the Pastor. When a sufficient number of priests or deacons is not available, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may purify the vessels. The amount of wine to be consecrated should be carefully measured before the celebration so that none remains afterward. It is strictly forbidden to pour the Precious Blood into the ground or into the sacrarium. (Norms, 51-55).
20. Similarly, "consecrated hosts are to be reserved in a ciborium or vessel in sufficient quantity for the needs of the faithful; they are to be frequently renewed and the old hosts properly consumed" (Code of Canon Law, no. 939). Burying hosts or consecrated Eucharistic bread is strictly forbidden.

IV. Concluding Rite

21. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion do not participate in the procession at the conclusion of the Mass. After they have exercised their ministry within Mass, they should return to their places in the assembly.

V. Requirements for the Preparation and Continuing Formation of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

The Pastor is to decide who should be chosen to be an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion for the parish, bearing in mind the following:

1. Men and women, sixteen years and older, representative of the parish community, may be chosen..
2. Each person selected should be a practicing Catholic, in good standing, whose conduct of life does not contradict the teachings of the Catholic Church as described by the Magisterium, who is fully initiated through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.
3. Those persons selected for this ministry are to be given an appropriate formation in the theology of the Eucharist based on the teaching in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Article 3, The Sacrament of the Eucharist, numbers 1322-1419; *The Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist* (USCCB - 2001); and *Norms for the Distribution and Reception Of Holy Communion*, (USCCB, April 7, 2002)
4. The instruction necessary for competency in this liturgical ministry should include:
 - a. An adult understanding of the Eucharist in its historical, theological, liturgical, pastoral and spiritual dimensions;
 - b. A knowledge about, and an understanding of, this particular liturgical ministry and its relationship to other liturgical roles within the celebration;
 - c. Sufficient skills in the liturgical style of movement and reverence;
 - d. There should be opportunities for formation in the spiritual growth of the Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist; for sharing concerns; for reviewing and improving the ministry where necessary.

VI. Procedure for Appointments as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion at Mass

1. **The Pastor of a parish is to submit to the Bishop, in writing, the names of those persons who qualify and have been chosen to be appointed as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.**
2. The appointment is made to a specific parish, and is exercised in that parish only. If the minister moves to a different parish, the appointment ceases.
3. The appointment as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion is a privilege, not a right. Therefore, the appointment is made for **a specific period of three years and may be terminated before the completion of the term.**
4. The Pastor has the option of re-submitting the names of the same persons for a second term of three years. At the end of this second term, an entirely new group of ministers is to be chosen. This change has the merit of avoiding the presumption that this ministry belongs by right to any individual, family or group. A specific period of time for the appointment has the additional value that the minister is able to leave the ministry, if necessary, and/or for the Pastor if necessary, to request that a particular minister leave the ministry.
5. A letter of approval for the appointments will be issued from the Chancellor/Vice-Chancellor, of the Diocese along with certificates of appointment and **copies of these guidelines for each person so appointed.**
6. The Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are to be commissioned to this ministry in the presence of the parish community at a Sunday Mass. The rite of commissioning to be used is found in the *Book of Blessings*, which is part of the Roman Ritual: *Order of Commissioning Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion within Mass*, nn.1871 to 1881. (pages 795-99 in the Catholic Book Company, 1989 version),