



DIOCESE OF CORPUS CHRISTI

GUIDELINES FOR EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

General Norms

The Office for Divine 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.

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 16 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 commissioning 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 Office for Sacred Liturgy. 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 of the Office for Sacred Liturgy certifying that the candidates have completed their training and recommending that the Bishop commission them as extraordinary ministers. The Office for Sacred Liturgy 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. 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. Pastors, chaplains and religious superiors, at their discretion, may mandate a term of office for extraordinary ministers.

12. 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 deanery is encouraged for all extraordinary ministers. Eucharistic devotion, including Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, should normally be a part of each annual event.

13. 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.

14. 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.

Procedures for the Distribution of Holy Communion within Mass by Extraordinary Ministers

15. Extraordinary ministers normally sit in the assembly until the time when they approach the altar to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion. When the Extraordinary ministers are in procession, they should sit at their designated area.

16. At the *Lamb of God*, the priest alone, with the assistance of the deacon, breaks the Sacred Hosts. If there is a large number of Hosts to be broken, some the Hosts may be broken prior to the celebration of the Mass so as not unduly to prolong the fractioning rite.

17. Extraordinary ministers approach the altar as the priest receives Communion. After the priest has concluded his own Communion, and given Communion to the deacon, 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 **are not allowed** to take the sacred vessels from the altar themselves, but should be handed them by the priest or deacon.

18. 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 following practice is not permitted:** The practice of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion waiting to receive Holy Communion until after the distribution of Holy Communion. This practice is not in accord with liturgical law.

19. After receiving their sacred vessels, extraordinary ministers reverently and without haste go to their Communion stations.

20. 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.

21. 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.

22. 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.

23. 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.



24. 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.

25. 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 into the ground or the sacrarium. Extraordinary ministers may assist the priest and deacon in consuming the Sacred Hosts and Precious Blood that remain after Communion. This should be done with the greatest decorum either at the altar or at the place where the purifications will take place.

26. After the Precious Blood has been consumed and the Hosts either consumed or taken to the tabernacle for reservation by the priest or deacon, the sacred vessels should be cleansed. The purifications may take place either at the altar, at a side table in the sanctuary, or at a place convenient to the sacrarium.

27. **FOR PRIEST OR DEACON:** The purifications take place as follows. A small amount of water is poured into the ciboria and patens and the water either consumed or poured into a sacrarium. A small amount of water is poured into the chalices and the water either consumed or poured into a sacrarium. Then all the vessels should be washed and dried thoroughly with purificators. **Extraordinary ministers are not permitted to purify.**

28. 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 cleansed immediately after Mass following the dismissal of the people.

29. The Precious Blood may not be reserved, except for giving Communion to someone who is sick and unable to receive the Sacred Host.

30. After Communion, the ministers return to their place.



Distribution of Holy Communion to the Sick

31. Extraordinary ministers who bring Holy Communion to the sick and infirm should be trained for the special requirements of this ministry.

32. 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* or what is approved by the Office for Sacred Liturgy.

33. The Eucharist that is brought 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.

34. A pyx should always be blessed before being used for the first time. After each use, it should be purified.

35. When extraordinary ministers receive the Eucharist for the sick at Mass, this should occur after the distribution of Communion and before the Prayer after Communion. 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. Any hosts which remain after Communion is given to the sick should be consumed by the minister.

36. 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 purify the vessel.



37. 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 regularly, and be available for the Sacrament of Penance.

38. 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.