

THE PROCESS FOR MANDATING EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION FOR SERVICE WITHIN PARISHES IN THE DIOCESE OF LONDON

The Office of the Bishop has received a number of questions from pastors concerning the practice of mandating Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

In the Diocese of London it has been the practice for the Bishop to mandate Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

It is hoped that the following will assist you in the mandating process. What is contained here does not represent new policy, rather, it articulates and deepens what is already in existence.

Preamble

The liturgical ministry of lay people for distributing Holy Communion is not really a new one in the history of the Church. According to some references in the eighth century, laypersons were often commissioned to bring Holy Communion to those absent from the eucharistic celebration, to the sick or the prisoners.

The Role of the Bishop

The Bishop has the faculty to permit people, chosen by name, to serve as a special minister of Holy Communion in a given instance or for a set period of time.

Selection of Ministers

The persons mandated as Extraordinary (or auxiliary) Ministers of Holy Communion are to be carefully chosen.

The pastor selects individuals for this ministry based on their qualities of Christian life, faith and morals. The pastor may select these individuals on the recommendation of members of the Pastoral Team, Parish Pastoral Council or other members of the faithful.

Individuals who fulfill this ministry must be a fully initiated (baptism, confirmation and eucharist) member of the Roman Catholic Church.

Formation of Ministers

These individuals are to be properly instructed in eucharistic doctrine, in the meaning of their ministry, in the rubrics to be observed and in the reverence to be shown.

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This formation may be provided by the parish alone or by the parish in consultation with the Liturgy Specialist at the Institute for Catholic Formation or the Liturgical Commission.

A sample workshop outline for formation (doctrine and ministry) is provided in Appendix I of this document.

Appendix II contains the rubrics for carrying out this ministry. This appendix will be revised when the 2000 General Instruction of the Roman Missal is implemented in Canada.

Appendix III answers some frequently asked questions about this ministry.

Requesting a Mandate for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Pastors are to submit in writing a request (e-mail or fax is acceptable) to the Bishop's Office for individuals to be mandated for service as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

This request is to indicate:

- the first and last name of those to be mandated for service
- the type of ministry in which an individual will serve as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (i.e., at the parish celebration of Eucharist or as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion to the sick and the homebound)
- the date when the installation (mandate) will take place

Appendix IV has a sample letter of request for mandating Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

Celebration of Installation (Mandating)

The ritual for mandating Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion takes place in the presence of the parish community during Mass or outside Mass. The ritual is found in celebrations of Installation and Recognition (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops Publications © 2005) on pages 96 – 105.

This ritual will no longer be sent to parishes with the letter of mandate because to do this would be an infringement of copyright law.

Length of Mandate

Individuals are mandated for this ministry for a period of five years.

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If individuals continue to serve in this ministry for a second or subsequent term.

It is necessary to re-submit the names of individuals continuing to serve in this ministry after their five-year term is over.

Particulars of Mandate

A person is mandated to serve in this ministry for a particular parish.

Permission must be sought from the Bishop's Office for an individual to transfer this mandate to another parish.

Mandating for Service on a Single Occasion

An individual may be commissioned by the priest to serve as an Extraordinary Ministry of Holy Communion for a single occasion. In this instance the priest could say, "Today you are to distribute the body and blood of Christ to your brothers and sisters. May the Lord bless + you, N."

APPENDIX I

A SAMPLE FORMATIONAL OUTLINE

1. Doctrinal

- Explanation of the role of Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
- Eucharist as Source and summit; Full, Conscious and Active Participation
- The presence of Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist (elements, word, assembly, priest)
- Eucharist as action, thanksgiving (take, bless, break, share)

2. Ministerial

- Spiritual preparation for service
- Technical preparation for service (see Appendix II)

Additional material, workshop outlines and support are available from the Liturgy Specialist.

APPENDIX II

**RUBRICS FOR EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF
HOLY COMMUNION**

1. Approach the altar at the beginning of the Sign of Peace.
2. Stand behind the presiding priest (as per parish practice) giving full attention to the liturgical action.
3. After the priest has received communion, receive communion from the priest under both species (exceptions exist).
4. Receive, hold and carry the vessels with care and with reverence.
5. Wait for the presiding priest to leave the altar before moving to your place of distribution.
6. Share Communion with the faithful by:
 - a) Raising the host to allow eye contact between yourself and the communicant, saying: “The Body of Christ”; allow the communicant to say: “Amen”; give the host to the communicant
 - b) Raising the chalice to allow eye contact between yourself and the communicant, saying: “The Blood of Christ” allow the communicant to say: “Amen”; give the chalice to the communicant. Once the chalice is returned to you wipe the rim (inside and outside) with a purificator and rotate the chalice a quarter turn.
7. After sharing communion with the faithful return the communion vessels to the altar or other location designated by parish practice.

Note: If there is an extra bishop, priest, deacon or instituted acolyte present at the celebration of Eucharist, he will give Holy Communion in place of an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. Check with the presiding priest before Mass begins.

APPENDIX III

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. What if a host is dropped on the floor?

If a host is dropped pick it up and consume it or place it on the side of the ciborium and consume it later.

Q. What if the Precious Blood is spilled?

Use a purificator to absorb the spilled Precious Blood. After the celebration rinse the area with water and absorb with a purificator.

Q. What if there are particles of the host on my fingers at the end of communion?

Using a purificator, cleanse your fingers of the particles.

Q. What if a communicant doesn't respond "Amen"?

When sharing communion, wait until the communicant has said "Amen" before placing the host in their hands. If the person does not say "Amen" you may ask, "Do you wish to receive communion?" If the communicant responds positively, once again say: "The Body of Christ."

Q. What if someone approaches me with arms crossed or asks for a blessing?

It has become common for Ordinary and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to extend a hand in blessing of non-communicants.

With this practice it is important to remember that the rite does not provide for a gesture or formula for blessing those not receiving communion. If the Diocese of London or an individual parish community prescribed such a gesture and formula of blessing this would be adding something to the rite that is beyond our competence.

Note: For a further examination of this question please see, "Should non-communicants come forward for a blessing?" in Q&A: The Mass, Dennis C. Smolarski, S.J., Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, pages 77-79.

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Q. What if I run out of hosts or Precious Blood?

If you run out of hosts see if another minister standing near you can provide you with additional hosts. If this is not possible, hosts may be obtained from the tabernacle.

If you have no more Precious Blood to minister take your chalice and purificator to the credence table and place them there.

If you have further questions please contact the Liturgy Office.

APPENDIX IV

**A SAMPLE LETTER REQUESTING INDIVIDUALS TO
BE MANDATED AS EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF
HOLY COMMUNION**

Dear Bishop Fabbro:

The (parish/institution) of _____ requests the following candidates be mandated to serve as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. Through their devotion to the Eucharist and their desire to serve others, they have been found worthy to serve in this ministry.

These individuals are fully initiated Roman Catholics and they have received formation in the doctrinal and ministerial aspects of this ministry for service in this ministry during the mandate period requested herein.

List names here

It is my hope that you will mandate them as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion for (parish/institution).

Sincerely,

Pastor (or other in the case of an institution)
