

Updated Decree on Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, General Norms in Accord with Canon Law (1 December 2006; Nickless)

1. The ordinary minister of communion is a bishop, a priest, or a deacon (canon 910, sec. 1).
2. Where pastoral need exists, men and women may be chosen to administer communion as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion at Mass and to the Sick and Dying. **Generally**, those who are invited to serve in this ministry shall have completed their **eighteenth (18)** year, be baptized and confirmed Roman Catholics who regularly share in the eucharist. They shall be of exemplary Christian character, committed to the faith, devoted to the eucharist, respected by the community and shall demonstrate interest and involvement in the community's life. They must be in good standing according to the law of the Church, spiritually sound and capable of adhering to all of the community's procedures for extraordinary ministers of communion. Those chosen must be deemed responsible to carry out the mandate entrusted to them.
 - 2.1. Extraordinary ministers of communion include those men formally instituted as acolyte (canon 910, sec. 2) and other men and women of the Christian faithful deputed in accord with canon 230, sec. 3, mandated by the bishop and commissioned to serve in this ministry.

Selection of Extraordinary Communion Ministers

3. The selection of extraordinary communion ministers shall be under the direction of the pastor of a parish or the superior of a religious institution.
 - 3.1. Pastors and superiors charged with the responsibility of selecting extraordinary communion ministers should invite the collaboration of others who exercise pastoral leadership in the community.
 - 3.2. The invitation to serve as an extraordinary communion minister is not to be understood as a reward, but as a call to service. Parishes and communities should avoid practices in selecting extraordinary ministers where individuals simply volunteer themselves for this ministry.
 - 3.3. Once persons have been selected to serve as extraordinary communion ministers the pastor or superior of a religious community shall submit these names to the bishop for approval and a mandate.

Catechesis and Formation for Extraordinary Communion Ministers

4. Extraordinary ministers of communion shall receive adequate catechesis and liturgical training before they are commissioned to exercise this ministry.
 - 4.1. Catechesis and training for extraordinary communion ministers is provided by the local community.
 - 4.2. Catechesis should include a spirituality of this ministry and an understanding of the eucharist, as well as specific instruction on the practice for administering communion.
 - 4.3. Extraordinary ministers who will administer communion to the sick and to the dying shall receive catechesis and pastoral and liturgical training in addition to the formation and training given for administration of communion at Mass. This catechesis shall be completed before extraordinary ministers of communion to the sick and to the dying are allowed to exercise this ministry.
 - 4.3.1. Pastors or superiors of religious communities are to see that those chosen to administer communion to the sick and to the dying are thoroughly familiar with the rites and options of "Communion of the Sick" and "Celebration of Viaticum Outside Mass" (communion of the dying) contained in Pastoral Care of the Sick.
 - 4.3.2. Occasionally, family members of the sick and of the dying may be asked to regularly administer communion to the sick or dying family member for a period of time. Proper training, formation and a mandate are needed before being commissioned to serve in this role.

- 4.4. Assistance with catechesis and liturgical training is available through the Office of Worship.
- 4.5. Each parish or religious institution is responsible for the continuing formation and spiritual enrichment of commissioned extraordinary ministers of communion.

Term of Service for Extraordinary Communion Ministers

- 5. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are mandated by the bishop to serve their parish or community for a period of not more than three (3) years. Terms are renewable for as long as **the pastor chooses and the individual is willing to serve in this ministry**. Extraordinary ministers of communion must be re-mandated and re-commissioned after every term for as long as they continue to serve in this ministry.
 - 5.1. In beginning their service, extraordinary communion ministers should be informed of their term.
 - 5.2. Parishes and religious institutions may select, catechize, provide specific instruction for, receive a mandate for, and commission new communion ministers at any time as the need arises.

Procedure for Commissioning

- 6. After receiving a mandate from the bishop, extraordinary communion ministers shall be commissioned in the local community in which they will serve.
 - 6.1. The commissioning is done by the pastor, parochial vicar or deacon according to the rite found in chapter 63 of the Book of Blessings, preferably during a parish or community liturgy, ordinarily on a Sunday. Parishes should avoid celebrating the commissioning at Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil, Easter Sunday) liturgies; on the Sundays of Lent (Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays) when the Scrutinies are celebrated; and at other liturgies which have special ritual elements.
 - 6.2. Those who are commissioned shall receive a certificate at the time of their commissioning stating the term of their service. Certificates are sent from the Bishop's office with the mandates.
 - 6.3. Pastors and superiors of religious communities shall keep on record the names of all currently mandated and commissioned Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion and the dates of their current term of service.
 - 6.4. Once commissioned for service at a particular parish or religious institution, extraordinary communion ministers may exercise their ministry within the Diocese of Sioux City at another parish or religious institution, provided the pastor or superior of the second parish/institution has given explicit permission.
 - 6.5. If an extraordinary minister of communion moves from one parish to another in the diocese:
 - 6.5.1. The pastor of the parish from which the extraordinary minister of communion moves shall delete the name from that parish's list of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion;
 - 6.5.2. The pastor of the parish into which an extraordinary minister of communion moves shall enter the name to that parish's list of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, upon the presentation of a valid certificate. It is the pastor's decision to allow the person to exercise this ministry for the remainder of his/her term.
- 7. Each parish or religious institution is responsible for the continuing formation and spiritual enrichment of commissioned extraordinary ministers of communion.
- 8. If there is a change in the good standing of an extraordinary minister of communion in relation to the law of the church which is publicly known, that person is no longer to continue as an extraordinary minister of communion.

Special Occasions

9. In cases of immediate pastoral need when ordinary or commissioned extraordinary ministers of communion are not available, priests who preside at the eucharist may commission a suitable individual (same criteria apply as in # 2) for a particular occasion.
 - 9.1. Necessary training occurs before the liturgy of the particular occasion.
 - 9.2. The “Rite of Commissioning a Special Minister to Distribute Holy Communion on a Single Occasion” is used. The rite is published in the appendices of sacramentaries published in 1985 or later, or the text is available from the Office of Worship.

Communion to the Sick and to the Dying

10. Parishes and communities are especially urged to make communion available to the sick and to the dying on Sundays and Holy Days when these individuals cannot attend the eucharist of the local community, as well as on other pastorally appropriate occasions.
 - 10.1. The eucharist shall be carried to the sick and to the dying in a pyx. It is never to be carried in a handkerchief, envelope, etc.
 - 10.2. It is not proper for extraordinary ministers of communion to the sick and to the dying to be given the consecrated host for this purpose during the communion procession at Mass. The necessary pyxes should be prepared at the altar either during the Breaking of the Bread or at the conclusion of the communion of the faithful. It is recommended that ministers who will be administering communion to the sick and to the dying come forward and be sent forth after the communion of the faithful is completed, just after the prayer after communion.
 - 10.3. Extraordinary ministers of communion are to take communion directly from the church to the individuals who are to receive. The eucharist must never be taken home overnight to be distributed to the sick and to the dying the next day.
 - 10.4. Present Church norms also allow that, when necessary, communion to the sick and to the dying may be administered under the form of consecrated wine. The Precious Blood must be carried in a worthy and spill-proof container.

Communion to the Sick and to the Dying in Hospitals

11. Since the parish or religious institution is the normative expression of the local ecclesial community, it is preferred that communion of the sick and of the dying in hospitals be administered by extraordinary ministers of communion who are commissioned in and serving a parish or religious institution.
 - 11.1. At a Catholic hospital, the pastoral care department may invite suitable persons (same criteria apply as in # 2), who are not already commissioned in a parish, to this ministry. It is preferable that the steps to become an extraordinary minister of communion (i.e. adequate catechesis and formation, a mandate from the bishop, commissioning) be completed in each person's home parish and that each person serve as a communion minister in his/her home parish.
 - 11.2. When this is not feasible, however, the pastoral care department may provide catechesis and formation, ask for a mandate from the bishop, and a priest or deacon on staff at the hospital may commission these persons as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.
 - 11.2.1. The name of each of these individuals should be recorded in the person's home parish's list of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, even when commissioned by a priest or deacon on staff at the hospital.

12. Those responsible for pastoral care in a hospital or other institution should see that the rite for “Communion in a Hospital or Institution” is used appropriately in these settings. Care should be taken so that communion of the sick is not diminished to the absolute minimum.

Communion in Schools

13. Since the parish or religious institution is the normative expression of the local ecclesial community, faculty, staff **and Confirmed students age 18 and older** who administer communion at school celebrations of the eucharist should be commissioned as extraordinary ministers of communion in their local parish.

13.1. These individuals should be actively exercising this ministry in their home parish.

Other Functions of Extraordinary Communion Ministers

14. Extraordinary communion ministers may also:

14.1. distribute ashes on Ash Wednesday according to the “Order for the Blessing and Distribution of Ashes” found in chapter 32 of the Book of Blessings.

14.2. bless throats on the feast of St. Blase (Feb. 3) according to the “Order for the Blessing of Throats on the Feast of Saint Blasé” found in chapter 51 of the Book of Blessings.

Given this 1st day of December 2006.

Most Reverend R. Walker Nickless

Bishop of Sioux City

Rev. Monsignor Michael D. Sernett, JCD, VG

Chancellor