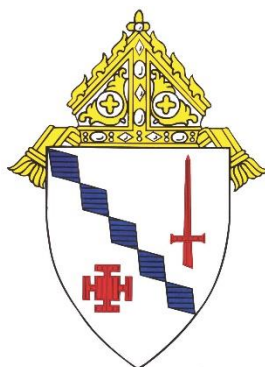


**GUIDELINES FOR
EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS
OF
HOLY COMMUNION**



DIOCESE OF BIRMINGHAM IN ALABAMA

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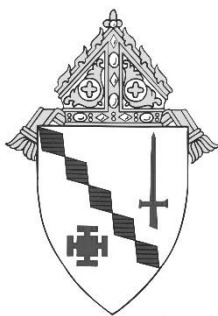
GUIDELINES FOR

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I.

General Norms

1. The Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are the priest and deacon. Only when there is a necessity, may the Extraordinary Ministers assist the Priest Celebrant.
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;

- c) to administer Holy Communion 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. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are those persons selected by their pastors or administrators, who are willing to serve their parish by assuming the responsibility that accompanies this ministry. Those who serve in this ministry must always ensure that their lives are in conformity with the teachings of the Church, including the teaching on married life. They must be at least 18 years of age* and fully initiated in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist; of sufficient Christian maturity with a stable

relationship to the parish/institute; and possess a character and way of life which reflects a serious and well-formed faith and moral commitment.

*An exception to the age requirement may be requested, as in the case of a Catholic high school seeking to mandate students. Such petitions should be made through the Office of Sacred Liturgy.

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 Bishop. The interviews should provide the candidates with the opportunity to express their belief in the

Holy 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 of Sacred Liturgy*. This program provides theological and spiritual formation, as well as training in practical and liturgical skills.

10. The pastor, chaplain, or religious superior should write a letter to the *Office of Sacred Liturgy* certifying that the candidates have completed or intend to complete their training and recommend that the Bishop appoint them as Extraordinary Ministers. The *Office of Sacred Liturgy* forwards the request to the Bishop for his approval. Upon approval, Extraordinary Ministers are issued a letter signed by the Bishop or his delegate.

11. Before assuming their duties, Extraordinary Ministers should be commissioned according to the rite found in the *Book of Blessings*.

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 Bishop by the pastor, chaplain, or religious superior through the *Office of Sacred Liturgy*.
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.

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 Holy 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 breaks the Sacred Hosts. Empty ciboria or patens, if necessary, are then brought to the altar by servers. The priest or deacon then places the Hosts in empty ciboria or patens, if necessary for distribution. The Precious Blood, having been poured into the chalices at the time of the preparation of the gifts, is also now ready for distribution at this point. Extraordinary Ministers do not participate in any of these aforementioned actions since they are the proper role of the priest and deacon only.

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 receive them from 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. 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.

25. 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.

26. 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.

27. 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 only by the priest or deacon.

28. 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.

29. 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. Only the priest may purify vessels at the altar.

30. 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.

31. 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 alone. 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.

32. 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.

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

34. 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: The allowance for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to purify the vessels has not been renewed. They may assist with the task of cleaning (i.e., washing and drying)

the sacred vessels but not in their purification.



III.

Distribution of Holy Communion to the Sick

35. Extraordinary Ministers who take Holy Communion to the sick and infirm should be trained for the special requirements of this ministry.
36. 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 which is found in *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*.

37. 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.

38. 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.

39. 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.

40. 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.

41. 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 regularly

visit the sick person and be available for the Sacrament of Penance.

42. Priests should always be available 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.

43. 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 #31.*)

*Adapted from Archdiocese of Washington, Washington, D.C.
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