



Norms for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

I. INTRODUCTION

The administration of Holy Communion at Mass is an important liturgical ministry in the parishes of our diocese. In addition to bringing the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ to the people of God, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion witness to faith in the real presence of Christ by their actions and by the dignity and reverence with which they treat the Body of Christ.

These guidelines have been provided by the Office of Liturgy to provide some general observations and principles on this important ministry of the Church. For a smooth functioning of this ministry, the needs of the particular faith community must be taken into account. These guidelines define 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.

The ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are bishops, presbyters, and deacons. Whenever they are present at a liturgy, and are vested according to their order, they are to fulfill this ministry.

At the same time, "In every celebration of the Eucharist there should be a sufficient number of ministers for Holy Communion so that it can be distributed in an orderly and reverent manner (Norms 27). The same need often arises when it comes to ensuring that the sick and homebound have access to the Sacrament. In such cases, Church law allows for the naming of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to assist, but not replace, the ordinary ministers (Norms 26-28; RS 151-160).

Therefore, with gratitude for their ministry, the following policies regarding Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHCs) are adopted for use in the Diocese of Orlando in order to highlight the dignity of this office and guide the ministry of those called to help bring the Eucharistic Presence of Christ to their sisters and brothers. These policies replace all previous diocesan policies concerning the ministry of EMHCs.



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II. REQUIREMENTS, FORMATION AND TRAINING

Those who fulfill this ministry are to be fully initiated, active members of a parish. They should be of sufficient age (at least 15 years old), maturity and temperament to undertake this ministry. They must have no impediment to receiving Holy Communion and participating in the sacramental life of the Church. Candidates should be physically able to exercise this ministry.

Preparation for this ministry includes:

1. Formal instruction through the Office of Liturgy by attending a diocesan EMHC workshop. The EMHC workshop includes topics on liturgical ministry, the Mass, theology of the Eucharist, the Paschal Mystery and a review of diocesan guidelines.
2. Parish instruction as to local customs and responsibilities, hands-on practice, knowledge, and understanding of parish procedures and responsibilities and an opportunity for sharing with others in the ministry.

III. PROCESS

- A. When the Pastor has determined that a given candidate meets the basic requirements outlined above, the Pastor or his representative is to submit the Petition for Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion to the Office of Liturgy. The petition and other relevant documents can be obtained from the Liturgy and Music page at the diocesan website. When the petition is received the candidate is scheduled for the requested diocesan training. After training is completed and all forms have been received and processed by the Office of Liturgy, the mandate is issued by the Bishop of the Diocese of Orlando for five years, expiring on December 31st of the fifth year.
- B. It is most appropriate to celebrate the *Order of Commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion* when a new group of EMHCs has been mandated for the parish. The ritual is found in the *Book of Blessings*, chapter 63. The Office of Liturgy has provided a downloadable version of this blessing as well as a certificate of commissioning at our website. It is not necessary to repeat this commissioning for those who are renewing a previously issued mandate.
- C. Each parish should take proper care that only those with current mandates serve in this ministry. Therefore, it is most important that each parish keep accurate records of each minister of Holy Communion's mandate, ongoing formation, and requests for renewal of the mandate.



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- D. During the five-year period, the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion must have ongoing formation in this ministry. Ministers may participate in programs provided at the parish or diocesan level. The content, nature and venue of said formation may be determined by the Pastor; however, consideration should always be given to the nature of this ministry and topics encompassing the Eucharist and the Liturgy.
- E. Mandates may be reissued upon formal written request to the bishop by the pastor. This may be done only in consultation with the individual Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. Acceptance of the request presumes appropriate ongoing formation as determined and attested to by the Pastor.

IV. BEFORE THE LITURGY

- A. Upon arrival for liturgy, the minister of Holy Communion should follow local check-in procedures. Hands should be clean. Care should be taken to avoid use of strong cologne, perfume, or aftershave lotion because of some people's sensitivity to these scents.
- B. Ministers are encouraged to sit with their families and come from the assembly and return to it after they have served. There is no need for special liturgical garb or symbol. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should not be a part of the opening or concluding processions.

V. DURING THE LITURGY

- A. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion approach the sanctuary during the priest's communion (Norms 38).
- B. Local custom determines where ministers of Holy Communion stand and wait.
- C. After the priest has received Communion, he then gives Communion to the deacon. The priest distributes Communion to the Extraordinary Ministers, assisted by the deacon, and then hands the sacred vessels to them for distribution. Neither deacons nor lay ministers may ever receive Holy Communion in the 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).



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- D. The priest and other ministers go to their assigned stations for distribution of communion. All who present themselves must be given communion. If the EMHC is concerned about the person receiving communion, he or she should discuss the matter with the pastor after Mass.
- E. Please note that the purpose of reservation of the Eucharist is for Communion of the sick and private devotion, not for convenience during the Liturgy. Since enough bread and wine for each assembly's Eucharist is to be brought forward at the time of the Preparation of the Gifts, there is no need to go to the tabernacle before communion is distributed

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal states, "It is most desirable that the faithful, just as the priest himself is bound to do, receive the Lord's Body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and that, in the instances when it is permitted, they participate in the chalice (cf. no. 283), so that even by means of the signs Communion will stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated" (85). Further supporting this understanding is the fact that the GIRM makes no mention of bringing the ciborium(a) with hosts consecrated at an earlier Mass to the altar during the Eucharistic Celebration.

However, if the ministers of the Body of Christ realize that they do not have sufficient hosts for the number of communicants, a minister should be ready to go to the tabernacle and bring the ciborium(a) to the Ministers of Communion who do not have sufficient hosts.

- F. Communion under both species is normative in the Diocese of Orlando. When communion is offered under both species, the chalice must also be administered by a minister; it is not to be left on the altar for self-communicating. Communicants have the option of receiving from the chalice. When a deacon is present he ministers the chalice. (GIRM 182).
- G. In giving communion, the minister holds a host or piece of a larger bread slightly above the vessel, looks at the communicant and says in a clear voice, "The Body of Christ." The communicant responds, "Amen," and the minister then gives communion, respecting the option of the communicant to receive either in the palm of the hand or on the tongue.



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- H. In administering the chalice, the minister holds the cup up slightly and says in a clear voice while looking at the communicant, "The Blood of Christ." The communicant responds, "Amen." The minister then gives the cup to the communicant who takes it entirely into his/her hands, drinks from it, and returns it to the minister. Then the minister wipes the rim of the chalice with the purificator, gives the chalice a quarter turn, and offers it to the next communicant.
- I. The invitation, "The Body of Christ" or "The Blood of Christ," must not be narrowed or expanded. The tradition of the Church understands the presence of Christ to include his presence in the assembly, in the Word, in the celebration; the invitation to the communicant is to be all-encompassing.
- J. Self-intinction is prohibited. Under no circumstances may a communicant him/herself dip the host into the chalice. This would be self-communion which is not allowed. The only way Holy Communion may be distributed by intinction is as follows: "The communicant, while holding the paten under the chin, approaches the priest who holds the vessel with the hosts and at whose side stands a minister holding the chalice. The priest takes the host, intincts the particle into the chalice and, showing it, says: 'The Body and Blood of Christ.' The communicant responds, 'Amen,' and receives the Sacrament on the tongue from the priest. Afterwards, the communicant returns to his or her place." (Norms 49)
- K. If a consecrated host is dropped during the administering of communion the minister may bring the dropped consecrated host to the altar and place it on the corporal to be dealt with after communion, or the minister may hold the host in the same hand as the vessel. The consecrated host that has been dropped is never to be replaced in the vessel or given to a communicant or consumed by the minister of Holy Communion at that time. When distribution is finished and the minister returns to the altar, then the consecrated host may be consumed or brought to the sacristy where it may be completely dissolved in water, which is then poured into the special sink (sacarium). When the appearance of bread (host) ceases, the real presence also ceases.
- L. If the Precious Blood is spilled, the minister should cover the spillage with the purificator, first asking the communicants to proceed to another minister of the chalice. After Mass, the area should be washed with a damp, clean purificator. Clean (damp) towels should be used if the area is larger.



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VI. AFTER COMMUNION

- A. After communion, any remaining consecrated hosts are to be reserved in the tabernacle. They should be collected at the altar by the deacon, or by the priest or an EMHC, and then taken to the tabernacle. In the case where a Mass is celebrated at a location where there is no tabernacle, much care should be taken to ensure that there is not a large amount of consecrated bread remaining. What remains is to be consumed. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may assist in consuming any consecrated bread that remains when there is no tabernacle for reservation.
- B. EMHC's should return their vessels to the credence table or to a designated place. The remaining Precious Blood is consumed immediately. When there are Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, they may consume what remains of the Precious Blood. (Norms 52)
- C. Ministers then return to their places in the assembly for the concluding rites of the Mass. The celebrant should be seated, leading the assembly in a period of silent reflection.
- D. It is the role of the priest, the deacon, or an instituted acolyte to purify the sacred vessels. Insofar as possible this should be done at the credence table (GIRM 279). It is permissible to leave vessels at a side table (credence table) suitably covered and on a corporal, to be purified immediately after Mass. (GIRM 183) All vessels should be sanitized after purification.

VII. ADDITIONAL REMARKS

- A. Blessings - In recent years, the practice has developed that those not receiving communion join in the communion procession to receive a blessing from the minister. For those communities which have elected to follow such a practice, the following should be kept in mind:
 - a. Lay ministers should not bless with a gesture or formula used by clerics. For example, they should not make the sign of the cross over someone while using the Trinitarian formula. A simple "Receive the Lord Jesus in your heart" with or without a light touch of the head or shoulder would be appropriate.
 - b. Likewise, no one (cleric or lay) should give a blessing with the host in their hand, simulating Benediction.



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- B. In the absence of the availability of Priests or Deacons, Pastors may designate EMHCs to bring Holy Communion to the sick and to shut-ins. These individuals shall be called Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to the Sick and Homebound (EMHCSH) and will receive appropriate liturgical instruction at the time of their initial training as an EMHC. Further instruction on Pastoral Care of the Sick is to be carried out at the parish level. Please contact the Secretariat for Laity, Family and Life for additional information and resources. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to the Sick and Homebound must receive Safe Environment Training (as is the case with all EMHCs) but, **IN ADDITION**, must have also successfully passed the diocesan fingerprinting process prior to beginning ministry.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Norms and directives established by the Church for the celebration of any liturgical rite always have as their immediate goal the proper and careful celebration of those rites. However, such directives also have as their purpose the fostering of celebrations that glorify God and deepen the faith, hope and charity of the participants in liturgical worship. (Norms 56)

Reference Documents

Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America (2002), United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Inc., Washington, D.C.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (2011) United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC.

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