

## EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION GUIDELINES

1. It is expected for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to be appropriately attired for the solemn act of distributing the Most Holy Body & Blood of Our Lord. It is a profound privilege, not a right, to assist at Mass, and so we should treat it with respect and dignity. What is stated here is the ideal to be met. Individual situations may warrant exceptions from this ideal. When assisting at Mass, men are asked to be dressed in a suit & tie; Women are expected to wear either a suit or a dress that extends to their knees. Shorts, jeans, sandals, sneakers, or anything that leaves the shoulders uncovered is not appropriate. The best reference, in general, should be “Would I wear this to an important job interview or a meeting with my boss?” In general, the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion should be properly attired, even when they are not scheduled to assist. This would allow for them to be available if a need arises.

If you are bringing the Most Blessed Sacrament to someone in a private home, a care facility, or prison, the certain general standards should be observed. Regarding attire, one should be at minimum in “business casual” dress. For men, this would include a polo shirt or button-up shirt with trousers. For women, the same as given for men or their counterpart in dresses/skirts and blouses.

2. It will be expected that the scheduled Extraordinary Minister will arrive at least 10 minutes before Mass begins. Additionally, they are to initial beside their name on the schedule, so that the priest and usher can make sure that the person is there, or find a replacement.
3. It will be expected that the scheduled Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion sits in a predesignated place at Mass. At St. Joseph’s, this will be in the pew on the “St. Joseph” side (right side) of the church, closest to the aisle. At Our Lady of Guadalupe, this will be the pew behind the celebrant’s chair, the seat closest to the tabernacle.
4. **After the Sign of Peace:** At St. Joseph’s, the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion approaches the sanctuary, bows to the altar, and proceeds to the area behind the statue of the Blessed Mother. When the priest says “Behold the Lamb of God...” they should be kneeling on the kneeler that is available in that area.

At Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Extraordinary Minister should remain in their pew until the priest has received the Precious Blood.

5. Once the priest has received the Precious Blood, approach the altar. The priest will distribute communion to you under both species. If there is a server at Mass, the server will receive first and then assist with the Communion Paten.
6. After receiving, the priest or deacon will hand the vessel to the Extraordinary Minister.
7. If someone wishes to receive by “intinction”, they can only receive from a priest or deacon. Furthermore, it is only the priest or deacon that can “intinct” the Body into the Blood of Christ. If someone attempts to do this on their own, the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion should cover the side chalice with the purificator immediately and inform the communicant that they should consume the Blessed Sacrament before receiving from the side chalice.
8. When the distribution of Holy Communion is completed, the Extraordinary Minister returns the vessel to either the priest or deacon. The priest or deacon will consume any remaining Precious Blood.

At St. Joseph, the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion will then return to their seat, bowing when they cross in front of the altar.

At Our Lady of Guadalupe, they will remain standing at the base of the sanctuary until the priest or deacon reposes the Blessed Sacrament. When the priest or deacon genuflects while reposing the Blessed Sacrament, the Extraordinary minister should also genuflect, unless they are physically unable to do so. In such cases, they should still bow deeply from the waist towards the tabernacle. After doing so, they should immediately return to their seat.

In the event of a spill of the Precious Blood: Immediately stop distributing, place the purificator over the spill, and return the chalice to the altar. Inform the priest or deacon about the spill. Then, go to the sacristy and return with several purificators, so that the spill might be cleaned up and the area soaked with water.

## Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion at Mass

### General Principles

In every celebration of the Eucharist, there should be a sufficient number of ministers of Holy Communion so that it may be distributed in a reverent and orderly manner. Bishops, priests and deacons distribute Holy Communion in virtue of their office as ordinary ministers of the Body and Blood of the Lord. <sup>(1)</sup> When the size of the congregation or the incapacity of the bishop, priest, or deacon requires it, the celebrant may be assisted by other bishops, priests, or deacons. If such ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are not present, "the priest may call upon extraordinary ministers to assist him, i.e., duly instituted acolytes or even other faithful who have been deputed for this purpose. In case of necessity, the priest may also depute suitable faithful for this single occasion (GIRM 162)."

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should receive sufficient spiritual, theological, and practical preparation to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence. In all matters they should follow the guidance of the diocesan bishop (*Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds for the Dioceses of the United States of America*, NDRHC, no. 28). When recourse is had to Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, especially in the distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds, their number should not be increased beyond what is required for the orderly and reverent distribution of the Body and Blood of the Lord. In all matters such Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should follow the guidance of the diocesan bishop (IBID).

All ministers of Holy Communion should show the greatest reverence for the Most Holy Eucharist by *their demeanor, their attire, and the manner in which they handle the consecrated bread or wine*. Should there be any mishap--as when, for example, the consecrated wine is spilled from the chalice--then the affected "area . . . should be washed and the water poured into the *sacrarium* [ GIRM, 280]." (NDRHC, 29).

### Liturgy of the Eucharist

- If extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are required by pastoral **need**, they should not approach the altar before the priest has received 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.
- 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. (NDRHC, 39; GIRM, 160).
- After all Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion have received the Eucharist, the bishop or priest celebrant reverently hands vessels containing the Body or the Blood of the Lord to the deacons or extraordinary ministers who will assist with the distribution of Holy Communion. The deacon may assist the priest in handing the vessels containing the Body and Blood of the Lord to the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. (NDRHC, 40).

- The proper and only permissible form for distributing Holy Communion is to offer the consecrated bread by saying, "The Body of Christ" and to offer the consecrated wine by saying, "The Blood of Christ." ***No other words or names should be added; and the formula should not be edited in any way.*** (Cf. GIRM, 161; 284-287).
- If the Eucharistic bread or some particle of it falls, it should be picked up reverently by the minister. The consecrated bread may be consumed or completely dissolved in water before being poured down the *sacrarium*.
- Should there be any mishap, for example, if the consecrated wine is spilled from the chalice, the area should be washed and the water poured into the *sacrarium*.
- In those instances when there remains more consecrated wine than was necessary, if needs dictate, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion hands the sacred vessel to the celebrant, a concelebrating, assisting priest(s) or deacon(s), or an instituted acolyte. The sacred vessels are to be purified by the priest, the deacon or an instituted acolyte. The amount of wine to be consecrated should be carefully measured before the celebration so that none remains afterward. It is strictly forbidden to pour the Precious Blood into the ground or into the *sacrarium*. (NDRHC, 51-55). The willful desecration of the Most Blessed Sacrament is a grave offense and bears with it the penalty of excommunication.
- Similarly, "consecrated hosts are to be reserved in a ciborium or vessel in sufficient quantity for the needs of the faithful; they are to be frequently renewed and the old hosts properly consumed" (*Code of Canon Law, no. 939*). *Burying hosts or consecrated Eucharistic bread is strictly forbidden.*

## Notes

1. *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds for the Dioceses of the United States of America [NDRHC] (August, 2002), no. 26 and cf. GIRM no. 162 and NRHC, no. 28*