



Diocese of Prince George

Norms for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

“Where such Extraordinary Ministers are appointed in a widespread manner out of true necessity, the diocesan bishop should issue special norms by which he determines the manner in which this function is to be carried out in accordance with the law, bearing in mind the tradition of the Church” (*RS*, 160).

A bishop, priest or deacon is the ordinary minister of Holy Communion (canon 910); hence, the term “Minister of the Eucharist” belongs properly to the ordained (*RS*, 154). An “Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion” is a lay person who assists with the distribution of Holy Communion, either during Mass or when visiting the sick.

The Extraordinary Minister is delegated by the diocesan Bishop or his representative for an individual occasion or for a specified time (*RS*, 155). The mandate is always based on the needs of the Church and the unavailability of ordinary ministers (cf. *Ecclesiae de Mysterio*, 8, 2; *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 157).

Qualifications

It is the responsibility of the pastor to choose candidates for this service who “must be persons whose good qualities of Christian life, faith and morals recommend them. Let them strive to be worthy of this great office, foster their own devotion to the Eucharist and show an example to the rest of the faithful” (*IC*, 6). They should be at least 21 years of age.

Preparation and Mandate

The pastor should instruct those to be mandated as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion and commission them at Mass on the first Sunday of Advent using the attached form. When there is a need for commissioning on a single occasion, the Roman Missal provides a short form in appendix III, page 1447.

The term of the mandate is three years, with the option of renewal for a second term. The mandate is for service in a particular parish and does not authorize the individual to serve in another parish. A record of those who have been mandated should be kept in the parish.

All Extraordinary Ministers are subject to the diocesan “Safe Parish and Community” policy. Among other things, this policy requires that those who visit the sick at home or in a care facility must complete a Criminal Record Check.

Serving at Mass

The Extraordinary Minister approaches the altar only after the Priest has received Communion, and they are always to receive from the hands of the Priest Celebrant the vessel containing the species of the Most Holy Eucharist for distribution to the faithful. (*cf. GIRM162*)

When distributing Holy Communion, the Extraordinary Minister shows the Host to the communicant and says “the Body of Christ”, waits for the “Amen” and places the Host on the tongue or hand of the communicant. When distributing Holy Communion from the chalice, the Extraordinary Minister says “the Blood of Christ”, waits for “Amen” and hands the chalice to the communicant, then wipes the rim with the purificator before offering the chalice to the next person.

At the end of distribution of Holy Communion, the Extraordinary Minister should return the ciborium or chalice to the altar. “The priest himself immediately and completely consumes at the altar any consecrated wine that happens to remain; as for any consecrated hosts that are left, he either consumes them at the altar or carries them to the place designated for the reservation of the Eucharist” (*GIRM*, 163). The Extraordinary Minister should purify (wash) his or her fingers at the credence table.

Within the Mass, the act of blessing belongs to the ordained minister – bishop, priest or deacon – and not to lay persons (*CCC*, 1669; *CIC*, 1169). If someone who is not receiving Holy Communion approaches an Extraordinary Minister, the latter should offer a simple greeting, such as “may God bless you.” The Extraordinary Minister should not use any gesture, such as laying a hand on the person. The laying on of hands has its own sacramental significance and is inappropriate in this context (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, November 22, 2008).

In case of accidents

A Host which falls to the floor is not given to the communicant, but consumed by the Minister or placed on the paten. If the Precious Blood is spilled, the area where the spill occurred should be washed with water and this water should then be poured into the *sacrarium* in the sacristy or, if there is no *sacrarium*, on the ground (*cf. GIRM*, 280).

Visiting the sick

The pastor should provide the Blessed Sacrament in a proper pyx at Sunday Mass to the Extraordinary Minister, who goes directly from Mass to visit the sick person, so that the congregation and the communicant may be conscious of their unity in the Holy Eucharist. The ritual for “Communion of the Sick” should be followed.

In case of accidents

If a sick person receives the Host and then rejects it, the Host should be placed in water in a small receptacle and placed in the tabernacle until dissolved. Once the Host no longer has the species of bread (and is no longer the Body of Christ), the priest can pour the water into the *sacrarium*.

September 2014

References

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| <i>CCC</i> | Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992) |
| <i>CIC</i> | Code of Canon Law (1983) |
| <i>GIRM</i> | General Instruction of the Roman Missal (2000) |
| <i>IC</i> | <i>Immensae Caritatis</i> (1973) |
| <i>RS</i> | <i>Redemptionis Sacramentum</i> (2004) |

Order of Commissioning Within Mass

After the homily, the candidates stand before the celebrant, who addresses the congregation.

Dear friends in Christ, our brothers and sisters are to be entrusted with administering Holy Communion at Mass and with taking Holy Communion to the sick.

Speaking to the candidates:

In this ministry, you must be examples of Christian living in faith and conduct; you must strive to grow in holiness through the sacrament of unity and love. Remember that, though many, we are one body because we share the one bread and one cup. As ministers of Holy Communion, be especially observant of the Lord's command to love your neighbour. For when He gave His body as food to His disciples, He said to them: "This is My commandment, that you should love one another, as I have loved you."

Examination

Are you resolved to undertake the office of giving the body and blood of the Lord to your brothers and sisters, and so serve to build up the Church?

Response: I am.

Are you resolved to administer the Holy Eucharist with the utmost care and reverence?

Response: I am.

The candidates kneel

Dear friends in Christ, let us pray with confidence to the Father; let us ask Him to bestow His blessings on our brothers and sisters, chosen to be ministers of Holy Communion.

Merciful Father,

Creator and guide of Your family, bless + our brothers and sisters.

May they faithfully give the Bread of Life to Your people.

Strengthened by this sacrament, may they come at last to the banquet of life.

Through Christ Our Lord. Response: Amen