

Diocese of Saint Augustine

Norms and Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Introduction

These norms and principles have been revised to conform to current liturgical law, theological reflection and pastoral direction regarding the role of the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. This document must be read in conjunction with the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (3rd typical edition) and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' document *Norms for the Celebration and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America*. In addition, the document *Redemptionis Sacramentum* ("On certain matters to be observed or to be avoided regarding the Most Holy Eucharist") issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments in 2004 must also be consulted.

The Ministers of Communion

1. Bishops, priests and deacons are the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion.¹
2. When these ordinary ministers are not available, commissioned extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may assist with the distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful.² When necessary, priests serving in the Diocese of Saint Augustine have been granted the faculty "to appoint, for a given occasion, a fit person to distribute communion in cases of genuine necessity."³

Determining Need for Extraordinary Ministers

3. 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.
4. The distribution of Communion under both kinds will ordinarily necessitate additional ministers, especially for the distribution of the Precious Blood. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (3rd typical edition) significantly expands those opportunities when Holy Communion may be distributed under both kinds. In the Diocese of Saint Augustine the reception of Holy Communion under both kinds is the established norm for every Eucharistic celebration.
5. Outside of Mass, the frequent reception of Holy Communion by the sick, elderly and homebound may be considered in determining a parish's need for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

Selection of Candidates

6. The selection of candidates should reflect the composition of the parish as regards to age, ethnic and racial diversity.

7. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are to be fully initiated Catholics, i.e., received the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, and be at least 16 years of age. They should regularly attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation. As well, they are to be encouraged to frequently participate in the sacraments.
8. Special care is to be taken in the selection of those who may take Holy Communion to the sick, elderly and homebound. These should be persons who can minister with compassion and understanding. Those who will serve in this way are to be made aware of the particular obligation to respect the confidences of persons to whom they minister. Such ministers will also be required to pass a criminal background check as directed by the Diocese of Saint Augustine.
9. The pastor may select a coordinator of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to assist in the ministry and for the purpose of scheduling of ministers. The coordinator may also assist with training and other formation events for those who serve the parish in this ministry.

Formation

10. Formation and training must be provided all candidates for this ministry. The instruction should deepen understanding of the theology and celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist, ministerial roles in its celebration, and liturgical norms to be observed for the reverent distribution of the Holy Communion under both kinds. Parishes are to provide for at least 3 hours of training for all extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion in the theology of the Sacrament of the Eucharist. This can include an overview of the celebration of the Mass. Additional training of at least 2 hours is necessary to provide these same ministers with the practical aspects of their ministry at Mass.
11. For persons who will minister in a pastoral care situation to the sick or the elderly, additional instruction must be provided. In addition to the 3 hours of training in the theology of the Sacrament of the Eucharist mentioned in number 10, candidates for ministry to the sick and elderly must receive, at least, an additional 2 hours of training. This time is to be used to help the minister become familiar with the rite to be observed for taking Communion to the sick or as viaticum to the dying and guidance in procedures of pastoral care of the sick, elderly or homebound.
12. Continuing, ongoing formation is to be provided for all extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. Formation events may take the form of days of recollection, evenings of prayer or liturgical study. Parishes are asked to provide at least two hours of continuing formation to their extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion every two years.

Commissioning

13. Following the period of formation, the pastor is to forward the names of candidates for the ministry of extraordinary minister of Holy Communion to the Office of the Bishop. When commissions of appointment are returned, there is to be a public commissioning according the rites prescribed in the *Book of Blessings* (chapter 63, nos. 1871-1881). The pastor is the

normal minister for this rite.⁴ The commissioning should normally take place at a Sunday celebration of the Eucharist.

Term of Service

14. Extraordinary ministers should be appointed for a specified period of time, usually three years. Please refer to the Diocese's "General Norms for Liturgical Ministers," no. 8 for further information.

Responsibilities and Service

15. Extraordinary ministers are commissioned for specific service to their parish under the direction and leadership of the pastor. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion who wish to serve in other parishes of the Diocese of Saint Augustine or in institutions (e.g., hospitals, nursing facilities, schools, prisons, etc.) that lie outside a parish's competency must receive written permission from their pastor. This letter should be presented to the pastor of the parish or, in the case of a school, the president or principal, where the extraordinary minister wishes to serve.
16. A commissioned extraordinary minister may distribute Holy Communion at Mass only when ordained ministers are unable to do so or the number of communicants would excessively prolong the distribution of Communion.
17. Extraordinary ministers may also take Holy Communion to the sick or homebound or to those unable to take part in the Eucharistic celebration at the direction and discretion of the pastor.

Pastoral – Liturgical Considerations

18. Ministers should be dressed in a manner consistent with the dignity of service at the altar and their lay state. One's general appearance, apparel and accessories worn during the liturgy should reflect the dignity of the role of one called to distribute the Body and Blood of Christ. Extraordinary ministers are to be given the "General Norms for Liturgical Ministers" of the Diocese of Saint Augustine and are to be fully acquainted with the dress code as published in those norms. Sunday best attire is an expectation for those who exercise this liturgical function and should conform to the published norms established for the Diocese of Saint Augustine.
19. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are to sit within the assembly. They should never be seated in the sanctuary. "They 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."⁵
20. As a clearer sign of unity and participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated, bread consecrated at the same Mass is to be used for the reception of Holy Communion.⁶ The

reserved Sacrament should remain principally for distribution of communion to the sick and hosts from the tabernacle should only be used when more hosts than were consecrated at Mass are needed.

21. So that the distribution of Holy Communion may not be excessively long it is recommended that there be two ministers of the Precious Blood for each minister of the Body of Christ.
22. Because of the serious intolerance even to small amounts of gluten in wheat, the Precious Blood should always be made available to persons who suffer with celiac-sprue disease. They should be advised of this way of approaching the Lord's Table so as not to be deprived of communion. Care should be taken that the Precious Blood offered is free of gluten from contact with the fermentum.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat for Divine Worship has issued pastoral guidelines for the reception of Holy Communion by the lay faithful who have celiac-sprue disease as well as those unable to receive even a small amount of the consecrated wine. These guidelines are available from the Diocese of Saint Augustine's Office of Liturgy.

23. The Precious Blood may not be reserved, except for communion to the sick when the person is unable to receive Communion under the form of bread.

Manner of Distributing Communion

24. The norms to be observed for the distribution of Holy Communion are those found in the *GIRM*, nos. 159-163, 182-183 (when a deacon is present at Mass), 242-248 (when there is concelebration). The *GIRM* also specifies some "general norms" for the distribution of Holy Communion under Both Kinds in nos. 281-287. The "Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America," nos. 27 through 54 also contains general information on the distribution and reception of Holy Communion.

Appendix 1 of these Norms provides a summary of these and may be reproduced to assist parishes in the training and formation of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

25. The practice of intinction (whereby a consecrated host is dipped into the Precious Blood and then given to the communicant on the tongue) is not the preferred manner for distribution of Holy Communion under both forms. However, when Holy Communion is distributed in this way, the directives given in *GIRM*, no. 287 and the "Norms for Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds in the Diocese of the United States," no. 49 must be followed. Please note that only a priest may distribute Holy Communion by intinction. A deacon or, in his absence, an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion may hold the chalice.

26. The blessing of children or non-communicants should not be encouraged during the distribution of Holy Communion. Should individuals present themselves or children for a blessing during the Communion procession, ministers may trace the sign of the cross on the person's forehead. This gesture is not accompanied by any words.

Following the Distribution of Holy Communion

27. After the distribution of Holy Communion, all ministers return to the altar with the sacred vessels. Consecrated hosts that remain are either consumed or taken to the tabernacle. The priest, deacon and/or other extraordinary ministers may consume whatever remains of the Precious Blood.⁷ The sacred vessels used for the distribution of Holy Communion may then be purified either at the altar or at the credence table by a priest, deacon or instituted acolyte. Alternately, they may be covered with a cloth and purified immediately after Mass.⁸

Communion to the Sick and Homebound

28. Taking Holy Communion to the sick or homebound may be considered a special and distinct service. Parishes may consider commissioning a separate group of persons for this specific ministry.
29. Sunday is the most appropriate day for the Eucharist to be taken to those who cannot be part of the community's celebration. It is most fitting that extraordinary ministers go directly from the Sunday Eucharist carrying Holy Communion to the sick and homebound. Pyxes are to be filled at the altar following distribution of Holy Communion to the assembly. The hosts that are taken to the sick and homebound should generally be from those consecrated at that Mass. [Please note: pyxes are never to be filled within the Communion procession itself, that is, individuals are not to have pyxes filled during the distribution of Holy Communion.] Ministers can be sent forth after the distribution of Holy Communion to the assembly or depart in the recessional. A sample formula for use at Mass in the sending of ministers to the sick is provided in Appendix 2 of these Norms.
30. The rites found in *Pastoral Care and Anointing of the Sick*, Chapter Three, "Communion of the Sick" are to be used by the extraordinary minister. When Communion is taken on Sunday, the readings of the day are appropriate.⁹
31. When Holy Communion may only be received by the sick under the form of the Precious Blood and not consecrated at Mass in the presence of the sick person, it is to be carefully placed in a covered, spill-proof vessel. If not taken to the sick immediately the vessel is placed in the tabernacle. If some of the Precious Blood remains after communion to the sick, the minister consumes it and the vessel is purified.

Distribution of Holy Communion Outside of Mass

32. When ordinary ministers are prevented from doing so, commissioned extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, with necessary permission, may distribute Holy Communion outside of Mass. A so-called "Communion Service" is to be used only in the case of serious pastoral

need or emergency. In these instances the “Rite for Holy Communion Outside of Mass” is to be used. Holy Communion outside of Mass is not an option for the celebration of weekday Mass.

In the Diocese of Saint Augustine, outside of the week of the annual Priests’ Retreat, such a service may not replace the normally scheduled weekday Mass without permission of the bishop.¹⁰

Final – September 8, 2009

Appendix 1

Directives for the Distribution of Holy Communion with Extraordinary Ministers of Communion at Mass [This summary may be copied for instruction and formation.]

1. As the *Agnus Dei* or *Lamb of God* is begun, the priest alone, or with the assistance of the deacon, and if necessary of concelebrating priests, breaks the Eucharistic bread. Other empty ciboria or patens are then brought to the altar if this is necessary. The deacon or priest places the consecrated bread in several ciboria or patens, if necessary, as required for the distribution of Holy Communion.¹¹
2. The Lamb of God accompanies the breaking of the bread and may be repeated until the fraction rite is complete. The last phrase is always, “Grant us peace.”¹²
3. As the priest receives Holy Communion, the Communion chant or song begins and, if needed, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion approach the altar.¹³ The singing of the chant or song continues until all the faithful have received Communion.¹⁴
4. Priest concelebrants or deacons receive communion in the prescribed manner before extraordinary ministers.¹⁵ Deacons and lay ministers do not receive in the manner of concelebrating priests. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion do not receive Communion after the distribution of Communion to those in the assembly.¹⁶
5. The chalice may not be left on the altar or another place to be picked up by communicants, nor may the chalice be passed from one communicant to another. There should always be a minister of the chalice.¹⁷
6. The priest distributes Holy Communion to the extraordinary ministers, first distributing the consecrated host to each and then the Precious Blood. Communion is received standing. The ministers bow the head in reverence before receiving. The presiding priest may be assisted by a concelebrant or deacon who distributes the Precious Blood.¹⁸
7. After the extraordinary ministers have received, the priest presents the sacred vessels and purificators to them. The deacon may assist with this. The ministers go to their communion stations for the distribution of Holy Communion.¹⁹ When Communion is distributed under both kinds and deacons are present, they always administer the Precious Blood.²⁰

8. The norm for the reception of Holy Communion is standing. Communicants are not to be denied Communion because they kneel.²¹ When receiving, the communicant bows the head as a gesture of reverence before receiving. The sign of reverence is made before receiving each of the sacred species.²²
9. The minister raises the host slightly and says, “The Body of Christ.” The communicant answers, “Amen.” The consecrated host may be received either on the tongue or in the hand. NO other formula may be used (e.g., “This is the Body of Christ,” “Receive the Body of Christ,” “You are the Body of Christ”) and the use of personal names is not appropriate.²³
10. Communicants receive the Blood of Christ by drinking from the cup after receiving the Body of Christ. The minister says, “The Blood of Christ;” the communicant answers, “Amen.” The minister then hands the chalice to the communicant. When the communicant has drunk from the chalice and hands it back, the minister wipes the rim of the chalice with the purificator and turns the chalice slightly before offering it to the next communicant.²⁴
11. Reception of communion from the chalice is the choice of the communicant. Children are encouraged to receive under both kinds provided they are properly instructed and old enough to receive the chalice.²⁵
12. The blessing of children or non-communicants by ministers should not be encouraged as part of the communion rite. However, should individuals come forward or present children, ministers may trace the sign of the cross on the person’s forehead. This gesture is not accompanied by any words.²⁶
13. After Holy Communion has been distributed the ministers return to the altar with the sacred vessels. Depending on the amount of consecrated hosts that remains, these are either consumed or taken to the tabernacle for reservation.²⁷ What remains of the Precious Blood is consumed by the priest with assistance from the deacon, if necessary. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may also consume what remains of the Precious Blood.²⁸
14. The purification of the sacred vessels by a priest or deacon (or instituted acolyte) may take place immediately after Holy Communion at the altar or at the credence table. If there are a number of vessels to be purified they may be purified after Mass.²⁹
15. There is no specific rubric for the cleansing the extraordinary ministers’ fingers before the distribution of Holy Communion. However, like the priest, any fragments of the host that adhere to fingers of an extraordinary minister may be removed by brushing the fingers together over the ciborium or wiping them on the purificator.³⁰
16. In the event a host is dropped, the minister should pick it up and consume it or place it back in the ciborium to be consumed later. If the Precious Blood is spilled, the minister should prevent communicants from stepping on the area. A purificator may be placed on the spot and it is to be cleansed following Mass. The water used for this cleansing is to be poured into the *sacrarium*.³¹

Appendix 2

Sample Form for Sending Extraordinary Ministers of Communion to the Sick

After the distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful and sacred vessels have been cleared from the altar, extraordinary ministers who are to take Communion to the sick and homebound approach the altar. The priest or deacon – either at the fraction rite or at the gathering of fragments after Communion – prepares the pyxes which the ministers will use to bring Holy Communion to the sick and homebound.

The priest may say one of the following formulas:

My dear friends, you are now entrusted with taking the Body of the Lord from this Eucharistic assembly to our brothers and sisters who are unable to be here with us. Give them our greetings and our love, read today's Holy Scriptures and pray with them. And in the name of this holy people, minister to them this most precious sacrament.

OR

We send you now from this Eucharistic celebration so that our brothers and sisters who are unable to be with us may receive Holy Communion. Share with them, as well, the Holy Scriptures proclaimed today so that they may be nourished by the Word of God, as well. Assure them of our prayers and ask them to pray for us so that together we may be built up as the Body of Christ. Go now to share the glorious presence of Christ with them in Word and Sacrament.

The priest presents the pyxes to the ministers. The priest then says the Prayer after Communion from the presidential chair. Following the blessing and dismissal, the ministers leave with the procession.

¹ *Code of Canon Law*, canon 910, § 1.

² See *Immensae Caritatis* ("On Facilitating Reception of Communion in Certain Circumstances"), Sacred Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments, 1973, no. I.

³ *Immensae Caritatis*, no. II.

⁴ See *Book of Blessings*, Order for the Commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, no. 1873.

⁵ *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, no. 38. (Hereafter cited as *NDRCH*.)

⁶ See *GIRM*, no. 85.

⁷ In accord with prescription indicated in *NDRCH*, no. 52, the Bishop of the Diocese of St. Augustine has given permission for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to assist in consuming whatever remains of the Precious Blood after distribution of Communion.

⁸ See *GIRM*, nos., 163, 183, 192 and 279. Please note that the former permission for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to purify the sacred vessels has been abrogated. See

the October 13, 2006 letter of Bishop William Skylstad to the bishops of the United States in which he informs them of the decision of Pope Benedict XVI to not extend the indult in which permission was given for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to purify the sacred vessels.

⁹ The Liturgical Press publishes *A Ritual for Laypersons* which gathers into one book all rites that an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion may lead in the absence of a priest or deacon. Parishes may wish to make this resource available to those extraordinary ministers who bring Holy Communion to the sick and homebound.

¹⁰ See directive of Bishop Victor Galeone, September 2005.

¹¹ *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States*, no. 37. (Hereafter cited as *NDRCH*.)

¹² *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (3rd typical edition), no. 83. (Hereafter cited as *GIRM*.)

¹³ *NDRCH*, no. 38.

¹⁴ *GIRM*, no. 86.

¹⁵ See *GIRM*, nos. 182 and 244-246.

¹⁶ *NDRCH*, no. 39.

¹⁷ *NDRCH*, no. 44.

¹⁸ *NDRCH*, nos. 41-44.

¹⁹ *NDRCH*, no. 40.

²⁰ *GIRM*, no. 182.

²¹ Reply of the Prefect for the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, July 1, 2002. (Protocol No. 1322/02/L.

²² *GIRM*, no. 160.

²³ *NDRCH*, no. 41.

²⁴ *GIRM*, no. 286; *NDRCH*, nos. 43 and 45.

²⁵ *GIRM*, no. 284; *NDRCH*, no. 46 and 47.

²⁶ Diocese of Saint Augustine, "Norms for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion," no. 27.

²⁷ *NDRCH*, no. 51.

²⁸ *NDRCH*, no. 52.

²⁹ *GIRM*, nos. 163 and 279. See also the October 13, 2006 letter of Bishop William Skylstad to the bishops of the United States in which he informs them of the decision of Pope Benedict XVI to not extend the indult in which permission was given for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to purify the sacred vessels.

³⁰ *GIRM*, no. 278.

³¹ *GIRM*, no. 280; *NDRCH*, no. 29.