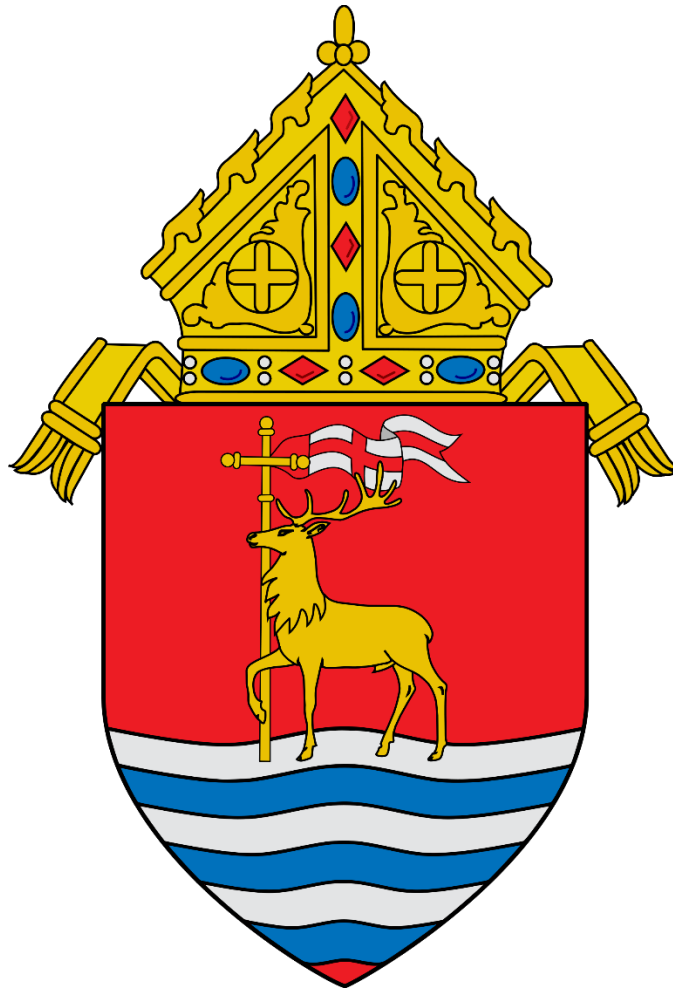


Guidelines for
Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
in the Archdiocese of Hartford



For Use in the Archdiocese of Hartford

August 24, 2016

Introduction

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are those men and women who have received a mandate to share in the apostolic work of the Church when a true pastoral need exists as determined by the pastor, administrator or chaplain of a parish or other faith community.

“Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion” is the correct terminology. The phrases “Eucharistic” or “communion” minister blur the distinction between the ordained and the non-ordained. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are members of the laity who have received a mandate from the Bishop to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion when there is a genuine pastoral need. The responsibilities of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion include the reverent and secure distribution of Holy Communion. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion do not distribute Holy Communion when a sufficient number of ordinary ministers (bishops, priests, deacons) are present at the Eucharist, whether or not they are celebrants or assisting as deacons. It is the responsibility of the priest-celebrant to attend to this consideration (Instruction *Immensae Caritas*, 1973).

A genuine pastoral need may arise when the number of faithful receiving Holy Communion at Mass is so great that the liturgy would be unduly prolonged. Another need may arise when ordinary ministers are unable to administer Holy Communion conveniently because of poor health or advanced age, or when they are not available because they are fulfilling other duties.¹

In addition, grounded in charity and the corporal works of mercy, the need has arisen for mandated and well-formed Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to bring the Eucharist to the sick and to the homebound.

¹ 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. 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).”

Requirements

Mandation of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion is granted by the Archbishop, pastor, administrator, or chaplain of an institution, after sufficient catechesis and training has been completed. Each parish will be responsible for maintaining proper records of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. After preparation the pastor, administrator, or chaplain is to commission the individual within the context of the Sunday Eucharist.

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 as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion must always ensure that their lives are in conformity with the teachings of the Church, including the teaching on married life.

Individuals are to be given sufficient formation and training for the role to be undertaken. Instruction in the theology of the Eucharist, the proper nature of this ministry as extraordinary, and prayerful Eucharistic spirituality should be part of the training required for all Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.²

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should receive, on a regular basis, ongoing theological and spiritual formation for this holy and important undertaking.

To serve as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, persons must:

- Be practicing Catholics, distinguished in their Christian life, faith, and morals
- Be at least 19 years old
- Have received the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist
- Demonstrate a deep reverence for and devotion to the Eucharist
- Be an active registered member of a parish in the Archdiocese
- If married, the marriage must be a valid Catholic marriage.

It is the responsibility of the pastor, administrator, or chaplain to obtain a background check and ensure that the individual has completed VIRTUS training prior to commissioning. These records are to be maintained by the parish.

² 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).

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are appointed to a particular parish or institution only and may not minister outside or beyond the parameters of their appointment. One is commissioned to serve in this capacity for up to a three-year period and continuation of service should not be presumed, but rather specifically determined by the pastor or administrator prior to renewal.

In cases of emergency, however, and for a specific occasion, all priests may appoint Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to serve on that occasion alone (See Roman Missal, Appendix 5).

Ministers who make visits to institutions or homes must also receive approval from their pastor or administrator. It is the responsibility of the chaplain to a hospital or institution to obtain approval from the minister's pastor.

Process for Commissioning Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

After careful consideration that each candidate meets the criteria listed above and has received proper training to be an Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, a pastor, administrator or chaplain may commission the new minister.

Training may be done by a pastor, administrator, or chaplain or someone appointed by him who is competent to instruct on the nature of the Eucharist and the proper way to administer Holy Communion (such as a deacon).

Other options for training on the deanery and archdiocesan level will also be offered. However, a pastor may always choose to instruct. Training should include: instruction in the theology of the Eucharist, the proper nature of this ministry as extraordinary, and prayerful Eucharistic spirituality.

Once trained, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should be commissioned, preferably within Mass, according to the Rite of Commissioning Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, which is found in the Book of Blessings. Pastors and chaplains should develop the full complement of ministries that function in the celebration of the Eucharist. Therefore, it is preferable that Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion do not serve as lectors, ushers, or choir members at the same Mass. If an individual's capability to function well as an Extraordinary Minister is inhibited due to illness or age, they should consider assisting the parish in some other way. Ministry is to be exercised on a regular basis. The number of extraordinary ministers in a parish, chaplaincy, or religious house should correspond to the genuine need.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may also be designated for ministry to the sick and shut-ins of the parish to allow more frequent reception of the sacrament than would otherwise be possible. Such individuals are to be instructed in the use of "Administration of Communion and Viaticum to the Sick by an Extraordinary Minister" found in Holy Communion and Worship of the

Eucharist Outside Mass. Additional formation as to the procedures and protocol for visiting those in hospitals should be given, such as the procedures to follow when they bring communion to the hospitalized, i.e., checking in at the nurses' station, sensitivity to the patient's condition/family, etc.

Practical Training Points and Procedures

When serving during the liturgy as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion there are three basic principles to keep in mind.

The Principle of Prayer: All ministry should begin and end with humble and grateful prayer.

The Principle of Attentiveness and Flexibility: Faithfulness in liturgical ministry demands attention to details and readiness to adapt to changing circumstances.

The Principle of Reverence and Uniformity: All actions and words in ministry should be in union with and directed by the celebrant in a generous spirit of loving service to the whole Eucharistic Assembly. Care should be taken against casual actions, attitudes and language that distract from the celebration. Care should also be taken regarding appropriate dress. While each parish will determine its own guidelines for the dress of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, extraordinary ministers should dress in a way that is dignified and shows respect for the Blessed Sacrament and the function they are carrying out. Clothes should be clean and neat, and reflect the importance of the Blessed Sacrament, generally by being more formal. Clothing should not be distracting; the focus of the communicant should be on the Blessed Sacrament, not on the person distributing communion or their dress. Extraordinary ministers are to wear a blessed cross while serving.

Preparation for Ministry

On ministry days, begin the day in prayer. Avoid distractions or anything that would discourage a recollected manner. It is recommended that you arrive at church at least fifteen minutes prior to the liturgy at which you are scheduled to serve, allowing you to be informed of any special circumstances that might be occurring. This also ensures that the priest, deacon, servers, musicians and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion conduct their roles with style and grace because everyone is aware of their specific responsibilities for the celebration.

During the Mass

Typically, the extraordinary minister sits with the rest of the faithful, or in a designated seat, and should participate fully in the Mass, listening to the readings, and joining the community in prayer.

At the Breaking of the Bread: The priest, assisted by the deacon if necessary, breaks the consecrated bread and places it in other vessels if necessary. This ritual action is a gesture of our Lord's at the Last Supper. It is reserved for the priest or deacon only. (GIRM 83, U. S. Norms, 37) Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion approach the altar only after the priest receives Communion, and then receive Communion from the priest and deacon. They do not receive Holy Communion at the same time as the priest, and they never wait to receive Communion following the assembly (U.S. Norms, 38-40). When receiving Communion, just like the rest of the faithful, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are to show a sign of reverence. The U.S. Bishops Conference has determined that the sign of reverence is a simple bow of the head before receiving both the Body and Blood of Christ.

How to Minister the Body of Christ

Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are each given a vessel by the priest or deacon; they do not take the vessels from the altar. They may participate in distributing Holy Communion to their fellow extraordinary ministers. They move to their assigned communion station with reverence and dignity. As the communicant approaches, the host is offered to the communicant with the words, "The Body of Christ." Nothing else is said (such as the communicant's name). The communicant chooses whether to receive the Body of Christ in the hand or on the tongue. The practice of receiving communion in the hand, which is permitted in the United States by a special indult from the Holy See, places additional requirements on the Extraordinary Minister, because it is now necessary that they make sure that the Sacred Host is properly consumed, and that it is treated with reverence by the communicant. Thus it is necessary for the extraordinary minister to observe the person receiving communion until they consume the host. If they begin to walk off without receiving communion (as is sometimes the case with children who have not received proper catechesis or non-Catholic adults), it is important that the extraordinary minister advise an usher or altar server to ask that individual to consume the host, or to retrieve it so that nothing improper happens. It is important to note that the decision to receive communion on the hand is on the part of the communicant, and no one can compel them to receive on the hand or on the tongue.

How to Minister the Blood of Christ

As those who desire to receive the Blood of Christ come forward, the chalice is offered to the communicant with the words, "The Blood of Christ." As they bow in reverence and respond, "Amen," the chalice is handed to them. After they return the chalice, the rim is wiped inside and out with a purificator, the chalice rotated slightly, and then it is presented to the next communicant. The chalice is never passed from one communicant to another.

While distributing the Precious Blood, never pour the Blood from one vessel to another, so as to fill a vessel with Precious Blood at a communion station that might be out of Blood for that station.

Communion by intinction is permitted under two forms. One form requires two ministers, one to hold the vessel containing hosts and the second holding the chalice. The minister with the hosts distributes communion by dipping (intincting) a host in the precious blood, showing to the communicant with the words "The Body and Blood of Christ," and placing the host on the communicant's tongue. Communion by intinction can never be received on the hand. The other form of communion by intinction involves the use of an intinction set.

Denying Holy Communion

There are practically no situations when Holy Communion should be denied by an extraordinary minister. Church norms state that: "Any baptized Catholic who is not prevented by law must be admitted to Holy Communion" (Redemptionis Sacramentum 91). The extraordinary minister should not make a judgment on the worthiness of any individual to receive Holy Communion. In the case of individuals clearly living a life in discrepancy with church teachings, the decision is to be made by the pastor, in consultation with the Bishop, and the pastor will then inform the extraordinary ministers involved. If the extraordinary minister is unsure whether an individual is Catholic or has received their first communion, he should ask them or their parent, and if they reply that they are not, the extraordinary minister should let them return to their pew without receiving communion.

Offering Blessings

There are instances when children who have not received first communion or adults who are not able to receive communion may present themselves to a minister for communion. In some places there is a custom to offer these individuals a blessing. However, it is not within the means of an extraordinary minister to offer a blessing.

Following the Distribution of Holy Communion

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion return the ciborium/a to the altar. If the tabernacle is outside the sanctuary, they may bring any of the remaining Sacrament to it, if there is no deacon to assist the priest in this. A genuflection is made at the opening and closing of the tabernacle door. Any remaining Precious Blood must be consumed at the end of the distribution of Holy Communion by the ordinary ministers, who may be assisted by the extraordinary ministers but only the ordinary minister may purify the sacred vessels.

Accidents Involving the Blessed Sacrament

While every care should be taken to avoid accidents involving the Blessed Sacrament, the extraordinary minister should be prepared to respond to them should they occur. The most common sort of accidents involve a particle of the host or a portion of the precious blood falling on the ground or another object. If a particle of the host falls on the ground, it should be picked up and consumed. If for some reason it cannot be consumed (for example, if it has already been in an individual's mouth who is unable to consume it), it may be dissolved in water and the water later poured down the sacrarium, however, it is best to contact a priest or deacon should this be necessary.

A greater difficulty is presented if some of the precious blood should fall to the ground. The extraordinary minister should insure that no one steps on the spot, perhaps by delegating an individual to guard it. A clean purificator could be used to mark the spot. Then, water should be brought and poured over the spot. It is important to note that when it is diluted with water to the point where it loses the appearance of wine, the Precious Blood ceases to be the Eucharist. The resulting water, however, should still be treated with respect, and, collected in a non-consecrated vessel (a lavabo bowl, for example) through the use of purificators, it should then be poured down the sacrarium. If some of the precious blood should drop on an individual's clothing or possessions, it should be treated in the same way, with due respect for the individual involved.

Purifying Sacred Vessels

The purification of the sacred vessels may occur at the altar by the deacon or priest, or at the credence table, or cleansed immediately after Mass. If they are to be cleansed after Mass, the vessels are suitably covered at the credence table on a corporal. (GIRM 183) Purification is ordinarily done by the priest or deacon.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion Visiting Institutions and Homes

Bringing the Eucharist to institutions (hospitals, nursing homes, other health care facilities, prisons) and homes is an extension of the Eucharistic Celebration of the community at Mass. The function of the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion in the pastoral care of the sick or to prisoners is to bring the Eucharist to a member of the parish community who is confined and cannot participate in the communal celebration and to extend charity in whatever way is possible or needed.

At no time and for no reason are Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion allowed to keep the Eucharist in their possession, in his or her home or vehicle, beyond what is necessary for the communion call.

The individual should immediately go from the church celebration to the communion call. In addition to the reverence given to the Blessed Sacrament by this gesture, it makes more evident the connection between the Eucharistic sacrifice and the visit to those confined. By tending immediately to the needs of the communion recipient, following attendance at the celebration of the Eucharist, the communion recipient is linked to that sacrifice of the altar that has taken place in the parish church.

Four important points to remember when visiting an institution or home:

1. The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion is a representative of the parish bringing to another member the love, concern and prayers of the community.
2. The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion may be ministering only to the person confined, or to that person and other members of the household. Since the visit of the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion is not meant to be a substitute for one's participation in the Eucharist, others should be encouraged to participate, but not to use the visit as a substitute for Mass. The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion should, however, be sensitive to the presence of others and involve them in the rite.
3. The visit by the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion includes the Administration of Communion and Viaticum to the Sick by an Extraordinary Minister as presented in Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass.
4. The visit is an opportunity to ask the individual if there is a need for a visit by a priest for the Sacraments of Reconciliation or Anointing of the Sick.

How to reverently visit a home or institution with the Holy Eucharist

1. Go directly from the church to the institution or home. -no shopping or visiting on the way -do not keep the Blessed Sacrament in your home or vehicle
2. After the communion call, any remaining elements of the sacred species are to be immediately returned to the church or consumed by the individual, depending on circumstances and the pyx is to be purified.
3. A host that has fallen should be carefully returned to the parish church and placed in the ablution jar next to the tabernacle until it has dissolved. The water may then be poured down the sacrarium. It may also be consumed.
4. Dress according to your ministry and the purpose of your visit. -with dignity and common sense.

Skills needed for the Pastoral Visit

When going to minister to a patient remember that you are a messenger of God's love, reflect that love. Listen to the needs of the person you visit and the family, if present. Reflect concern for the person you visit. Be willing to pray. Be unhurried and sensitive, without staying too long, noting the energy level of the person you are visiting.

Visiting Health Care Institutions

- Learn what you can about the person before visiting.
- Visit by yourself, or in pairs; not in groups and keep the visit short.
- Identify yourself to the person in charge.
 - find out visiting hours
 - make appointments if necessary
 - become familiar with the best times to visit not during meals, doctors' visits or treatment time your schedule should be flexible— if you arrive at an inopportune time, come back later.
 - Watch for "NO VISITORS" or "ISOLATION" signs. consult the nurse in charge about these e. Knock before entering or even going around the curtain.
 - Assess the situation and adapt to the person's needs. Introduce yourself Sit or stand so you are in a comfortable line of vision for the person in bed. Do not wake people who are sleeping soundly. Be aware of apparatus around the bed. Put the needs of those you visit over your own. g. Adapt Communion rite to the needs and condition of those you visit.
- Don't rush the visit, but keep it within the limits of the sick person's stamina.
 - Make an appointment for a return visit if desired.

A Helpful Glossary of Sanctuary Terms:

Ablution Cup A small glass cup with a lid placed next to the tabernacle to purify the fingers of the priest or deacon who removes the Blessed Sacrament outside of Mass.

Altar Place of Sacrifice; central location for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Ambo Place where the readings from sacred scripture are proclaimed during Mass. May also be used for the homily.

Blessed Sacrament The consecrated hosts and precious blood, in which Catholics believe that Jesus Christ is truly present.

Burse A small pouch for carrying a pyx, with a cord which goes around the neck.

Ciborium, ciboria (plural) Sacred vessel with a lid for consecrated or unconsecrated hosts.

Chalice Sacred vessel in which wine, after Consecration, becomes the Precious Blood.

Corporal Linen square which is unfolded on the altar during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The chalice and paten are placed on the corporal. It is folded in a way that captures any fragments of the host that might have fallen.

Credence Table Table near the altar on which are located the various sacred vessels, the lavabo bowl and towel, the water and wine cruets, etc., used during the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Cruets Glass vessels that hold water and wine for the Mass.

Evangelary A book which holds the gospel readings for Mass. Often called the Book of the Gospels.

Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion Either an instituted acolyte or a lay person who meets criteria of Canon 230.

Host A small wafer of unleavened bread, which is consecrated in the Mass so as to become the Body of Christ.

Instituted Acolyte A man who has been permanently commissioned to assist at the altar, and who, by virtue of his office, is an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. Usually, a seminarian or deacon candidate.

Lavabo Bowl and Pitcher A bowl and pitcher used to wash the priest's hand during Mass.

Lectionary Book which rests on the ambo, containing the Scripture readings for Mass.

Luna Round glass case within which is kept a large consecrated host so that it may be inserted into the center of the monstrance.

Monstrance Sacred Vessel which holds the luna with the consecrated host for adoration and benediction.

Ordinary Minister of Holy Communion A bishop, priest or deacon who by virtue of their office ordinarily distributes Holy Communion.

Pall Square of stiff material covered by linen which is used to cover the chalice and paten.

Paten Small metal plate on which hosts are consecrated during the Mass.

Precious Blood A term for the real presence of Jesus Christ under the appearance of wine.

Purificator Small linen cloth folded three ways, which is used to purify a chalice when communion is received. Before being placed in the laundry, it is soaked, with the water being poured down the sacrarium.

Pyx Small metal container used to carry sacred hosts when communion is taken to the sick or homebound; it is carried in the burse with cord around neck.

Ritual Books Any official book approved by the Church, containing the rites used in the liturgy and the administration of the sacraments.

Roman Missal Ritual book containing the prayers recited at Mass by the priest.

Sacrarium A sink-like receptacle in the sacristy, which drains directly into the ground, rather than into a sewage system. It is used for disposing of water which may have come into contact with sacred things.

Sacred Vessels Any vessel which is used to hold the Blessed Sacrament. Sacred vessels must be made out of certain materials, and are to be blessed according to the rites of the Church.

Sacristy Room where sacred vessels are kept and where the priest and deacon vest when there is not a separate vestry.

Sanctuary Area of the church building set aside for the celebration of the sacred rites. The altar and ambo are placed within the sanctuary.

Sanctuary Lamp A fixture containing a candle or an oil lamp, usually suspended by a chain or affixed to the wall. It is located near the tabernacle. When lit, it indicates the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle.

Tabernacle Locked and secured place of reservation of the Blessed Sacrament