

OFFICE OF WORSHIP GUIDELINES FOR COMMISSIONED EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION AT THE EUCHARISTIC LITURGY

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Eucharist is the most central expression of our Christian faith – its source and summit. It is a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Father. We give thanks and praise to the God for the gifts of creation and the gift of Jesus Christ. Christ is really present in the consecrated bread and wine. The entire reality of the entire Christ is really present to the faithful receiving sacramental Holy Communion. Through the reception of the Eucharist at Mass we share in and become the Body of Christ.

The Eucharist is the memorial of Christ's sacrifice. Through it we participate in Christ's sacrifice for the world. We surrender ourselves to the transforming power of his passion, death and resurrection in our lives.

The Eucharist is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. At the Eucharistic table we are joined with the communion of Christians around the world and the communion of angels and saints who praise God at the heavenly banquet. The bread of heaven, the food of eternal life, gives us the divine life that makes us children of God. It fills us with the life of the Holy Spirit, who forgives our sins, brings us to life, unites us in love and energizes us for service.

The Eucharist is given to us as strength and nourishment so we may carry on the work of Jesus: to proclaim the good news of salvation and to reconcile the world to God in Christ in our ordinary lives. Like the Lord, whose body was broken and whose life was poured out for us, we continue his mission of service through participation in Holy Communion. We are sent forth to be broken and poured out like Christ in order to feed the hungry and satisfy the thirsty.

The Eucharist binds us together as one body. It renews our participation in the life of Christ that we share in the Church. We enter into deeper communion with Christ, with the divine life of the Trinity, and with each other in the whole Body of Christ over time and space.

2. THE ROLE OF COMMISSIONED EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

Commissioned Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion help the distribution of Communion proceed smoothly. The ordinary eucharistic ministers are anyone who is ordained (bishop, priest or deacon) or an instituted acolyte. For all of them, the ministry of Communion is an expected part of their role. But in their absence or when not

enough of them are present, the Bishop of Pueblo commissions extraordinary Ministers of Communion (hereafter referred to as “Ministers”) to assist with the distribution of Communion when the number of people in the assembly, or the disability of the celebrant, or some other pastoral necessity makes it necessary for them to assist the Presider.

Because of their close association with the Eucharist, Ministers are called to represent Christ. They must become what they give, that is, they must become and live as the Body of Christ they give to their brothers and sisters. Such Ministers are obliged to set an example for the parish by their devotion toward the Eucharist. This is shown when exhibiting the following qualities:

- *Humility* – serving the assembly instead of drawing attention to oneself
- *Hospitality* – making everyone feel welcome at God’s table (Communion anticipates the heavenly banquet where all are honored guests). Be attentive, relaxed, smile, give eye contact, distribute at an unhurried pace, and have a reverent and cordial tone of voice.
- *Gratitude* – “Eucharist” comes from the Greek word for “thanks.” The Eucharist is about giving thanks and praise to God by remembering God’s actions throughout history. This keeps us grateful and hopeful because what God has done in the past he will continue to do. In the Eucharist we express personal gratitude for what God has done in our lives. We receive the gift of the Lord’s presence with grateful hearts and share that gift and his blessings generously and joyfully with others.
- *Reverence* – shown in our approach to the altar, how we handle the bread/wine, how we dress, our posture and our gestures.

Just as we would never harm the body of anyone we love we must care for the Body of Christ that is the Church – our fellow parishioners. We acknowledge there are parishioners we find it difficult to deal with, but we affirm they are one with us in the body of Christ. We may disagree with them or oppose their ideas, but we may not speak ill of them or tear the community apart over any issue. We must have reverence for the people who are the body of Christ. Communion Ministers recognize the presence of Christ in the communicants who come before them. They sense our unity in Christ through the ritual that all of us share. The Eucharist united the Church in love in all our diversity so that Christ might be everything in all of us.

3. QUALIFICATIONS

In order for someone to be commissioned as a Minister, the person is:

- a fully-initiated Catholic (has received the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation) who is a member of the parish in the Diocese of Pueblo in which the person is to serve

- a Catholic in good standing, as assessed by the Pastor of the parish in which the person will serve – someone who tries to live the Gospel and who would not cause scandal
- at least 16 years of age
- nominated by the Pastor of the parish where s/he will serve
- has received formation and training at either the parish or deanery level in: the theology of the Eucharist and the Mass, the spirituality of ministry, and the guidelines and procedures for their ministry

The Pastor should ensure that candidates for this ministry reflect both genders and the other demographics within the parish and the local community.

4. COMMISSIONING

The Pastor requests the commissioning of the individual as a Minister. The request is made through the Office of Worship and Spiritual Life. These requests are then routed to the Chancellor, to whom the Bishop has delegated the authority to commission. The Chancellor will then send the Pastor a confirmation letter to commission the individual(s). The commission will be valid for a period of three years.

The Pastor is to send a letter of commissioning for ministry to the special Ministers along with a copy of these Guidelines.

The Minister will be officially commissioned either by the pastor or his delegate in the presence of the people during Mass or outside Mass. The Rite will follow the “Order for the Commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion” in the *Book of Blessings*, on pages 795-806 (paragraph nos. 1871-1896). Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are to exercise their ministry only in their own parish or mission.

Ministers are to receive at least annual training and formation at the parish or deanery level. They need a program or retreat to renew their faith, prayer and commitment to their ministry.

5. ATTIRE, SEATING AND REVERENCE

Ministers wear modest and appropriate clothing for their ministry. They do not use fragrances or scents because some communicants are sensitive to them. They also abstain from hand lotions which may transfer their taste to the Eucharistic elements.

Ministers sit with the Assembly until it is time for them to exercise their ministry (they do not participate in the Entrance or Closing Processions).

Because they are first members of the Assembly, Ministers show reverence for the Eucharist by their full, active and conscious participation in the liturgy.

6. MINISTERS' RECEPTION OF THE EUCHARIST

- Ministers either enter the sanctuary as the Sign of Peace begins to be exchanged or after the priest gives himself communion. If they enter the sanctuary at the Sign of Peace, they stand away from the altar.
- Ministers do not approach the altar until the priest starts to give himself Communion. They may sanitize their hands before approaching the altar, but this is optional.
- Ministers receive communion after the priest(s) and deacon(s) have received communion.
- Ministers may not give themselves the Body and Blood of Christ. However, if no Deacon is present, in order to expedite distribution of Communion to the Assembly, those who have received communion under both forms from the Celebrant may assist the Presider in distributing Communion and/or the sacred vessels to the other Commissioned Communion Ministers.
- Ministers go to their Communion stations after reverently receiving Communion and their vessels. Stations should be close to the altar so people see more clearly they are being fed from a common table. The procession should move toward the altar; stations in the rear of church are inappropriate.
- The ciborium should not be removed from the Tabernacle for the distribution of Communion unless the distributors of the Body of Christ run out of consecrated bread.

7. DISTRIBUTION OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

- It is preferred, though not required, that musicians receive communion last so the communion procession song can begin immediately after the Presider's communion.
- Persons who are unable to receive Communion under both species (bread and wine) may receive Communion under one form or the other.
- Ministers focus on the communicant before them and are not distracted by others.
- Ministers show a welcoming pose and make eye contact with each communicant after s/he makes an act of reverence (a bow of the head is preferred, but genuflection or kneeling down is permissible).
- Ministers hold up either the consecrated bread or the cup to the communicant's view and clearly say "The Body of Christ" or "The Blood of Christ" and wait until the recipient says "Amen" before distributing the consecrated host (either in the palm of

their hand or on their tongue) or handing over the cup. No other conversation is appropriate because this is a sacred moment.

- Ministers of the Body of Christ do not allow the communicant to reach out and take Communion from their fingers or the vessel containing the consecrated bread.
- Cup Ministers receive the cup back from the communicant with both hands, wipe the rim of the cup inside and out with a purificator at the spot where the person drank, and turn the cup about a quarter turn before presenting it to the next person. Use a fresh part of the purificator for each wipe. Cup Ministers may find it be easier to open up the purificator so they can use a new part of the purificator each time to wipe the rim of the cup. However the cup is wiped, for hygiene reasons, do not use the same small section of the purificator over and over when wiping the rim.
- Due to age, illness, physical disability or other weakening condition, cup Ministers may need to assist some persons with drinking from the cup.
- The practice of intinction (dipping a consecrated host into the cup) is not encouraged for sanitary reasons. But for a communicant who wants this option, cup Ministers may take the consecrated host and dip it into the cup and distribute it to the communicant. The practice of self-intinction (where communicants dip the host into the cup themselves) is forbidden.
- The only words to be spoken between the Communion Minister and the communicant are the formula (“The Body of Christ” or “The Blood of Christ”). Anything else is inappropriate. Because the Communion Procession of the Assembly is a time of reverence and witness to the faith, do not have conversations with people in the Communion line.
- Do not greet people by name when distributing Communion – it distracts from the act of faith in the presence of Christ and can offend someone if the minister doesn’t remember or know the communicant’s name. Stick to the formula “The Body of Christ” or “The Blood of Christ.”
- If a Minister is approached by a child or someone with their arms crossed across their chest, do not give them Communion – give them a blessing instead. However, do not give a Trinitarian blessing (“in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”) or “sign” them with a cross because the Presider will be extending this to everyone shortly after communion at the end of Mass.
- If the Minister does not know the person and the individual does not say “Amen” in response to the formula (“The Body of Christ” or “The Blood of Christ”) repeat the formula again. If there is still no response, ask the person if s/he is Catholic. If not, give them a blessing. Non-Catholics are not to receive the Eucharist because they are not in communion with the Roman Catholic Church and do not share our belief in the Real Presence.
- Ministers should carry a tissue on them in case they happen to touch a communicant’s tongue, or come into contact with the recipient’s mouth, so they can wipe their fingers.

- Never allow a consecrated host to be taken away without it being consumed (for example, parents are not to give Communion to their children from their hands because they are not commissioned to do so and this is not ordinary food). Stop such a person and tell them to consume the host now. Do not allow anyone but a Communion Minister to break a consecrated host.
- If a Minister starts running out of consecrated hosts, either ask another distributor if you can have some of theirs, break the remaining hosts into pieces, or direct the communion procession to another station. Going to the tabernacle to get a ciborium for some extra hosts is the last resort. If a Cupbearer runs out of the Precious Blood, communicants are directed to another line if one is available, or sends them back to their places. Vessels are returned to the credence table and Ministers return to their seats. Ministers do not rinse or purify their vessels – the Church only authorizes the Presider, Deacon or an Instituted Acolyte to do this.
- If a Minister drops a consecrated host, pick it up and consume it and offer another host to the communicant. If consecrated wine is spilled, it is to be blotted up immediately with a purificator or towel. A clean towel or purificator should then be placed over the stain so no one will step on the spot. Stain removal should wait until after mass.
- Any remaining consecrated hosts or wine should be consumed by the communion Ministers themselves at their stations or brought to the altar. If there are too many consecrated hosts for one person to consume, the Presider or Deacon will help at the altar, or enlist the help of other communions Ministers, or bring them to the ciborium in the tabernacle. Any remaining consecrated wine should be consumed by the cup Ministers themselves at their stations, or brought to the altar where the Presider, Deacon or another communion minister will help, If the quantity is too much for one person. After consumption, Ministers move their vessels to the credence table and return to their seats. Do not purify or rinse the vessels – the Church only authorizes the Presider, Deacon or Instituted Acolyte to do this.

8. PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Ministers are not to distribute Communion if they are feeling ill, have a cold or sore throat or the flu. Get a substitute!
- Ministers should sit where they can easily enter the sanctuary at the Sign of Peace (for example, near the end of a pew).
- There should be enough Communion Ministers and Communion stations to facilitate the Communion Procession.
- In the Diocese of Pueblo communion under both kinds is normative at all Eucharistic celebrations and is offered to all who have received their First Communion. Children are to be prepared catechetically and liturgically for the option of Communion under both kinds.

- Ministers cannot deny communion to anyone unless they know the person is unbaptized. Otherwise give them communion and notify the pastor, who can explain ineligibility to the person. Communion Ministers may presume that a recipient has a right to receive Holy Communion and s/he should not be denied.
- Distribute communion with reverence and dignity, without haste. Make your brief encounter with each communicant an inviting one.

9. LOCAL RULES

These Guidelines provide general observations and principles on this important ministry. For a smooth functioning of this ministry, the needs of the local faith community must be accounted. Examples of some local practices that need to be determined include:

- Scheduling
- Finding substitutes
- Grounds for removal
- Arrival times
- Sign-in sheets
- Use of distinctive signs of ministry (medallions, badges)
- Communion station assignments
- Responsibilities before Mass (for example, preparing hosts and wine)
- Number of Communion Ministers
- Use of hand sanitizer
- Positions around the altar while awaiting Communion
- How Communion is distributed to the Commissioned Communion Ministers
- When Ministers go to their Communion stations
- Location of communion stations
- How Communion is distributed to persons with disabilities (including gluten intolerance) and music Ministers
- Cleansing vessels after Mass

10. RESOURCES USED TO PREPARE THESE GUIDELINES

A Commentary on the General Instruction of the Roman Missal. Edward Foley, Nathan D. Mitchell and Joanne M. Pierce, ed. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2007.

“Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion,” Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, The Worship Center, 2003.

“Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion at Mass -- Guidelines.” Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

“Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion at Mass – Questions and Answers.” Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Office for Prayer, Worship, and Evangelization.

General Instruction of the Roman Missal. Washington: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. 2003.

“Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion,” Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Office of Worship.

“Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC),” Archdiocese of Santa Fe, Office of Worship and Christian Initiation, June, 2005.

“Instruction on the Eucharist,” Washington: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2004.

“Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America.” Washington: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2002.

Kwatera, Michael, O.S.B. *The Ministry of Communion*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2004.

“The Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist: Basic Questions & Answers.” Washington: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2001.

Turner, Paul. *Let Us Pray*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2006.