

The person who has been appointed to be an **Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion*** must be duly instructed and should distinguish himself or herself by Christian life, faith, and morals: striving to be worthy of this great office; cultivating devotion to the Holy Eucharist and acting as an example to the other faithful by piety and reverence for this Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.” *Immensae Caritatis*

*** Formerly: Special Minister of Holy Communion**

INTRODUCTION

The Bishop may appoint qualified persons as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. This may be done for a specific occasion, for a short time or for a specified amount of time. In the Diocese of Trenton the specified amount of time is three years, which is renewable. Extraordinary Ministers may give the Eucharist to other members of the faithful, or to the sick, who are confined to their homes.

This appointment is made at the request of the pastor of a specific parish or the chaplain of a particular institution of the Diocese. Individuals who are so mandated by the Bishop may distribute Holy Communion only at the direction of the parish priest or chaplain.

This ministry differs from that of the instituted “acolyte.” The Extraordinary Minister’s mandate is for a particular area. An acolyte is a Special Minister for the whole diocese. The acolyte may distribute Communion in any parish or institution of the Diocese at the request of a parish priest or the Catholic chaplain.

1. What is the role of the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion?

The role of the Extraordinary Minister is to assist the priest in the distribution of Holy Communion when other priests or deacons (the ordinary ministers) are not available or when numbers of persons receiving Holy Communion necessitate more ministers for an orderly and reverent distribution of Holy Communion. *[Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America (hereinafter Norms) #10].*

In cases of necessity, “the priest may commission suitable members of the faithful for the occasion.” (Norms # 28)

Specific roles include:

- a) Distributing Holy Communion in the parish or institution for which the mandate is given; if the minister moves to another parish the mandate may be transferred;
- b) bringing Holy Communion to the homes of the sick or aged members of the parish, at the request of the pastor. (See Appendix B for Blessing);
- c) bringing Holy Communion to a hospital or nursing home with the permission of the Catholic chaplain;
- d) administering Holy Communion under both species, bread and consecrated wine;
- e) being entrusted with the tabernacle key;

- f) assisting with the purification of the vessels as needed;
- g) Exposing the Blessed Sacrament for adoration by the faithful:
This is done only when the priest, deacon or acolyte is unable to be present.

The Extraordinary Minister:

1. Makes a single genuflection in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, to be reserved or exposed for public adoration;
2. opens the tabernacle door and either places the ciborium on the altar or places the host in the monstrance;
3. at the end of the period of adoration, he/she does not bless with, or incense, the Sacrament but puts the Blessed Sacrament back into the tabernacle;
4. may not bless with the Sacrament, nor incense the Sacrament;
5. the minister wears suitable clothing for this ministry.

Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass. #'s 84 - 89

- h) saying the prayer, but not blessing throats on the feast of St. Blase, Feb. 3rd;
- i) distributing ashes on Ash Wednesday;

2. Are there occasions when Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may not distribute Communion at a Eucharistic Liturgy?

Yes. When there are enough ordinary ministers to distribute Holy Communion.

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., formally instituted acolytes or even some of the faithful who have been commissioned according to the prescribed rite. In case of necessity, the priest may also commission suitable members of the faithful for the occasion.” [*General Instruction of the Roman Missal (hereinafter GIRM) #162*]

3. What is appropriate attire for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion?

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should dress in secular clothing that is modest, clean and appropriate for worship.

If the local parish decides to use special dress for its Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, it must be distinctive and not confused with the dress of a priest or deacon.

4. What type of preparation is required for Extraordinary Ministers?

“Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should receive sufficient spiritual, theological and practical preparation to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence.” (Norms # 28)

All Extraordinary 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 and wine.” (GIRM #280)

The pastor is responsible to see that appropriate preparation is provided for them. In addition to the pastor, qualified and experienced ministers in the parish may conduct instructional sessions. Assistance may be obtained through the diocesan Office of Worship.

5. Where do the Extraordinary Ministers sit for the Liturgy?

Extraordinary Ministers may be seated anywhere in the assembly or in a special designated area among those assembled.

6. Are Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion permitted to exercise other ministries?

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may exercise other ministries, such as the ministry of lector/reader or cantor. They may not, however, exercise these other ministries at the same Mass. This preserves the distinction of roles and the plurality of ministries.

(GIRM # 110)

7. Are Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion permitted to self-communicate?

No. All communicants, including deacons and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, must always be given Communion under either form, by an ordinary or another Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. Only priests and bishops may self communicate. (Norms # 50)

PROCEDURES FOR APPOINTMENT

1. How does the pastor determine the need for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion?

In determining whether or not Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should be introduced in a parish, the pastor must take into consideration the need for assistance in the orderly and reverent administration of the Eucharist during Mass. The pastor needs also to determine if Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are needed to bring Holy Communion to the sick and others who cannot regularly participate at Mass.

Immensae Caritatis

2. What are the requirements for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion?

The requirements for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion include:

- a) They must be exemplary Catholics;
- b) they may be either male or female;
- c) they must be eighteen (18) years of age or older (exception: junior and seniors in Catholic high school may be trained and mandated to serve only at school Masses);
- d) they must have received all Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist) and if married, they must have had a valid marriage in the Roman Catholic Church.

2. What is the proper procedure for requesting mandation for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion?

The pastor must submit a letter, listing the names of those he has determined to be designated as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion and the reasons for their need, to the Director of the Office of Worship. The letter may be mailed or faxed. Telephone requests by the parish staff will not be accepted. Upon the Bishop's approval, a mandation card, to be signed by the pastor, will be mailed to the parish.

3. What rite is used to Commission an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion?

The Rite of Commissioning Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (*USCC-1978*) must be used. The rite is to be celebrated publicly in the parish where the Eucharistic Minister of Holy Communion will serve. (See Appendix A)

OUTLINE OF MASS

1. What does the Extraordinary Minister do:

Before Mass

- a) Arrive at least 15 minutes before Mass to the assigned area;
- b) see that all stations are covered for Holy Communion;
- c) if other ministers are needed, ask another Extraordinary Minister for assistance;
- d) "Ministers (Ordinary and Extraordinary) should be encouraged to wash their hands before Mass begins or even to use an alcohol based anti-bacterial solution before and after distributing Holy Communion."
Bishop's committee on the Liturgy Newsletter, December 2003, p. 53, #7

If a deacon or sacristan is not on hand, offer to assist the priest presiding, to prepare the credence table and/or gift table, according to the usual procedure.

As Mass Begins:

If the Extraordinary Ministers walk in the opening procession, they make a profound bow to the altar with the priest, deacon and other ministers when reaching the front, then go to their places. (GIRM # 49)

At the Communion Rite:

As the priest receives Holy Communion, the Extraordinary Ministers approach the altar, where, after the deacon, they receive Holy Communion and then receive their sacred vessels for distribution. (Norms # 38)

“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.” (Norms # 39)

They distribute Holy Communion under the form of bread with the words: “The Body of Christ.” The Extraordinary Minister is ready to offer the Body of Christ to the person who chooses to receive in the hand or on the tongue, waiting for the response: “Amen.” The communicant is to bow his or her head before receiving. (Norms # 41)

“When receiving in the hand, the communicant should be guided by the words of St. Cyril of Jerusalem: *When you approach, take care not to do so with your hands stretched out and your fingers open or apart, but rather place your left hand as a throne beneath your right, as befits one who is about to receive the King. Then receive him, taking care that nothing is lost.*” (Norms # 41)

It is the choice of the communicant, not the minister, to receive from the chalice. (GIRM # 284)

The chalice is offered to the communicant with the words: “The Blood of Christ”, while the communicant bows and responds, “Amen.”, then takes the chalice to receive.

“After each communicant has received the Blood of Christ, the minister carefully wipes both sides of the rim of the chalice with a purificator. This action is a matter of both reverence and hygiene; for the same reason, the minister turns the chalice slightly after each communicant has received the Precious Blood.” (Norms # 45)

If Eucharistic Bread or some particle of it falls, it should be picked up reverently by the minister. The consecrated bread may be consumed or placed in a designated vessel with water.

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 is necessary, if needs dictate, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may consume what remains of the Precious Blood from their cup of distribution with the permission of the diocesan bishop. When a sufficient

number of priests or deacons are not available, subject to the approval of the diocesan bishop, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may purify the vessels. 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. (Norms # 55)

For matters related to Intinction, Celiac Sprue Disease and the use of Mustum, please see **Appendix C, D or E.**

After Holy Communion / Mass:

Extraordinary Ministers consume the remaining Precious Blood in their Communion Cup if able, and then place the cup on the Credence table. If unable to finish it, carefully place the cup, covered with the purificator on the table, to be consumed after Mass.

If the Extraordinary Ministers are to process out, do so and, when assigned, help with the purification of the Communion Vessels.

DIRECTIVES FOR EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION OUTSIDE OF MASS TO PERSONS WHO ARE SICK OR ELDERLY

1. Who may bring Holy Communion to persons outside of Mass?

Besides priests and deacons, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may bring Communion, provided they are installed as Extraordinary Ministers and authorized to do so by the priest of the parish or the Catholic chaplain of the hospital or other institution where the Extraordinary Minister will bring Communion.

2. What procedures do Extraordinary Ministers follow to take Communion from church or chapel?

The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion may be called forward after the Communion Rite at Mass, receive the pyx containing host (s), and be sent from the church or chapel with a blessing or go to the tabernacle after Mass, put the host (s) in the pyx and depart.

The Extraordinary Minister will then proceed directly from the church or chapel to the place where Communion is to be distributed.

3. What Rite is to be used when giving Communion?

The Rite of Communion of the Sick is to be followed.
(See separate section on Rite of Communion of the Sick)

4. Is there a period of fasting before Communion for persons who are sick?

Persons who are sick and those who take care of them are not bound to any Eucharistic fast.

5. What does the Extraordinary Minister do if the person being visited cannot receive the whole host?

A small portion of the host may be given to persons who can receive the host but not the whole host. The extraordinary minister may consume the remaining portion of the host.

6. May a person who is sick and unable to receive Communion under the form of bread, receive Communion under the form of wine?

Only sick people who are unable to receive Communion under the form of bread may receive it under the form of wine alone at the discretion of the priest. If not consecrated at a Mass in the presence of the sick person, the Blood of the Lord is kept in a properly covered vessel and is placed in the tabernacle after Communion. The Precious Blood should be carried to the sick in a vessel that is closed in such a way as to eliminate all danger of spilling. If some of the Precious Blood remains after the sick person has received Communion, it should be consumed by the minister, who should also see to it that the vessel is properly purified. (Norms # 54)

7. Is it necessary to follow the policies and procedures of hospitals or other institutions when bringing Communion?

When bringing Communion to persons in hospitals or other institutions, it is necessary to follow the institution's policies and procedures. These may include: observing isolation procedures and any NPO signs. NPO means Nothing By Mouth. If in doubt about giving Communion because of a person's medical status, ask the person's nurse before giving Communion, whether the person is physically able to receive Holy Communion.

8. What does the Extraordinary Minister do with a host that is not properly consumed?

If the host is not properly consumed by the communicant, the host may be placed in a clean tissue or handkerchief and returned to church or chapel where the host is placed in a designated vessel with water.

9. After Communion is distributed, what does the Extraordinary Minister do with any remaining hosts?

Care should be taken to bring only the amount of hosts needed for distribution. Any remaining hosts are to be returned directly to a tabernacle. If this is not possible, then the remaining hosts are to be consumed by the Extraordinary Minister. Hosts are not to be kept in a house, in a car or on one's person.

10. Can Communion be given during the Triduum?

Communion to persons who are sick may be given at any time on Holy Thursday and Good Friday. On Holy Saturday, Communion may only be given as Viaticum for those in danger of death.

11. Should candles be used during the Communion Rite?

The custom of using lit candles in the home while the Blessed Sacrament is present may be continued. Lit candles may not be used if there is an oxygen tank or oxygen machine present. Lit candles are not to be used while bringing Communion to persons in hospitals or other institutions without the authorization of the institutions.

12. What is the role of the Extraordinary Minister when visiting persons who cannot receive Communion?

The Extraordinary Minister may offer to pray with the person being visited and invite other persons in the house or room to pray. If the person states that he or she wants to receive the Sacrament of Penance before receiving Communion, offer to contact the parish priest or priest chaplain for the person.

THE RITE OF COMMUNION OF THE SICK OUTSIDE MASS

1. When is this Rite of Communion to be used?

When the Extraordinary Minister gives Communion outside of Mass to persons who are sick, he or she uses the Rite of Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass.

2. What does this Rite include?

The Ordinary Rite of Communion of the Sick Outside Mass includes:

- a) Introductory Rites
 - 1. Greeting
 - 2. Penitential Rite
- b) Liturgy of the Word
 - 1. The short form of the Reading of the Word
 - 2. Response
 - 3. General Intercessions
- c) Liturgy of Holy Communion
 - 1. The Lord's Prayer
 - 2. Communion
 - 3. Silent Prayer
 - 4. Prayer after Communion
- d) Concluding Rite
 - Blessing

The Short Rite of Communion of the Sick includes:

- a) Introductory Rite
 - 1. Antiphon
- b) Liturgy of Holy Communion
 - 1. Greeting
 - 2. The Lord's Prayer
 - 3. Communion
- c) Concluding Rite
 - 1. Concluding Prayer

3. When is the shorter Rite used?

The shorter Rite is to be used when Holy Communion is given in different rooms of the same building, such as a hospital or nursing home, where the presence of Community members is not possible or expected. Elements taken from the ordinary rite may be added according to circumstances.

4. Where can this Rite be found?

This rite is found in various publications, including:

- a) *Pastoral Care of the Sick*
- b) *Rites of Anointing and Viaticum*
- c) *A Ritual for Laypersons*
- d) *Rites for Holy Communion and the Pastoral Care of the Sick and Dying*

VIATICUM

1. What is Viaticum?

Viaticum is Holy Communion given to the dying person. It is the spiritual food for the passage through death to eternal life. It is the Sacrament proper to the dying Christian. It is the final Sacrament.

2. When should Viaticum be received?

When possible, Viaticum should take place within Mass so that the dying person, the family, friends and members of the local community may all share in this sacred moment.

When the full Eucharistic celebration cannot take place, the Rite for Viaticum outside Mass is utilized.

3. Who is able to receive Viaticum?

The Christian faithful who are in danger of death, arising from any cause, are to be nourished by Holy Communion in the form of Viaticum. (Canon 921 - §1)

Even if they have received Communion in the same day, those who are in danger of death are strongly urged to receive again. (Canon 921 - §2)

While the danger of death lasts, it is recommended that Holy Communion be given repeatedly but on separate days. (Canon 921 - §3)

Holy Viaticum for the sick is not to be delayed too long. Those who have the care of souls are to be zealous and vigilant to see that the dying are nourished by Viaticum while they are fully conscious.

(Canon 922)

The Most Holy Eucharist may be given to children who are in danger of death, only however, if they are able to distinguish the Body of Christ from ordinary food and to receive Communion reverently. (Canon 913 - §2)

4. Who are the ordinary ministers of Viaticum?

The ordinary ministers of Viaticum are the pastor and his assistants, chaplains, and the superior in clerical religious institutes or societies of apostolic life. (Canon 911 - §1)

In case of necessity or with at least the presumed permission of the pastor, chaplain or superior, who should later be notified, any priest or other minister of Holy Communion must do this. (i.e., give Viaticum) (Canon 911 - §2)

5. What is the Rite of Viaticum Outside Mass?

The Rite of Viaticum Outside Mass includes:

- a) Introductory Rites
 1. Greeting
 2. Sprinkling with Holy Water (if it seems desirable)
 3. Instruction
 4. Penitential Rite
- b) Liturgy of the Word
 1. The short form of the Reading of the Word
 2. Profession of Baptismal Faith
 3. Prayer for the Sick Person
- c) Liturgy of Viaticum
 1. The Lord's Prayer
 2. Invitation to Communion
 3. Communion of Viaticum
- d) Concluding Rites
 1. Blessing
 2. Sign of Peace

6. Where can the Rite be found?

The Rite can be found in various publications, including:

- a) *A Ritual for Laypersons, Chapter 2*
- b) *Pastoral Care of the Sick—Rites of Anointing and Viaticum, Chapter 5*

c) *Pastoral Care of the Dying*

APPENDIX A

The Rite of Commissioning Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

BOOK OF BLESSINGS # 1875-1879

Persons authorized to distribute Holy Communion in special circumstances by the local Ordinary or his delegate according to the following rite. The rite should take place in the presence of the people during Mass.

In the homily the celebrant first explains the reason for this ministry and then presents to the people those chosen to serve as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, using these or similar words:

Dear friends in Christ,

Our brothers and sisters, N. and N. are to be entrusted with administering the Eucharist, with taking Communion to the sick and with giving it as Viaticum to the dying.

The celebrant pauses and then addresses the candidates:

In this ministry, you must be examples of Christian living in faith and conduct; you must strive to grow in holiness through this sacrament of unity and love. Remember that, though many, we are one body because we share the one bread and one cup.

As Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion be, therefore, especially observant of the Lord's command to love your neighbor. For when he said to them: "This is my commandment, that you should love one another as I have loved you."

After the address the candidates stand before the celebrant, who asks them these questions:

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? (I am.)

Are you resolved to administer the Holy Eucharist with the utmost care and reverence? (I am.)

All stand. The candidates kneel and the celebrant invites the faithful to pray:

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 the Eucharist.

Pause for silent prayer. The celebrant then continues:

**Merciful Father,
Creator and guide of your family, bless + our brothers and sisters N. and N.
May they faithfully give the bread of life to your people.
Strengthened by this sacrament, may they come at last to the banquet of heaven.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. (Amen.)**

The general intercessions should include an intention for the newly-commissioned ministers. In the procession at the presentation of gifts, the newly-commissioned ministers carry the vessels with the bread and wine and at Communion may receive the Eucharist under both kinds.

APPENDIX B

A Blessing for Sending Forth Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion from Mass

This blessing and dismissal may be used as the Extraordinary Minister(s) of Holy Communion go forth to bring Communion to the sick. This simple blessing reminds us that our community of faith extends beyond the church walls, with the sick being a vital part of that community.

- a) During the breaking of the bread, the celebrant places the Eucharist in the pyx(es.)
- b) The pyx(es) are left on the altar during the distribution of Communion (and remain there until the Eucharist is reposed in the tabernacle.)
- c) When all stand following the period of thanksgiving after Communion, the minister(s) takes the pyx(es) from the altar and stands facing the celebrant, who addresses the assembly in these or similar words:
“The Extraordinary Minister(s) of Holy Communion will take the Eucharist to those who are confined to their homes.”
- d) Then, using these or similar words, the celebrant addresses the Extraordinary Minister(s) of Holy Communion:
“As you go, take with you not only the Sacrament we have celebrated, but also the Word of God which we have heard, as well as the affection of this parish community, and ask for the prayers of those whom you visit in return. And now, let us pray...”
- e) The Prayer after Communion follows.
- f) The ministers depart in silence after the “Amen” to the Prayer after Communion or process out with the priest and other ministers.

APPENDIX C

INTINCTION

1. What is Intinction?

Intinction is a way of receiving Holy Communion under both kinds.

2. Who is the ordinary minister of Intinction?

The priest is the ordinary minister of Intinction. (Norms # 49)

3. How is Holy Communion administered by Intinction?

“Holy Communion may be distributed by intinction in the following manner: the communicant, while holding the paten under the chin approaches the priest who holds a vessel with the hosts, and at whose side stands a minister holding the chalice. The priest takes a host, intincts the particle into the chalice and, showing it, says, “The Body and Blood of Christ”. The Communicant responds, “Amen” and receives the Sacrament on the tongue from the priest. Afterwards, the Communicant returns to his or her place.” (Norms # 49)

“If Communion is carried out by intinction, the hosts should be neither too thin nor too small, but rather a little thicker than usual, so that after being dipped partly into the Blood of Christ they can still easily be distributed to each communicant.” (GIRM 285 b)

“The communicant, including the extraordinary minister, is never allowed to self-communicate, even by means of intinction. Communion under either form, bread or wine, must always be given by an ordinary or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion.” (Norms # 50)

APPENDIX D

CELIAC SPRUE DISEASE

1. What is Celiac Sprue Disease?

Celiac Sprue Disease is one which makes a person intolerant to gluten and/or wheat products.

2. May a person who has Celiac Disease receive a gluten-free host?

No. Such a host is invalid material. A very low gluten host must be used, if any. Usually persons with this disease must refrain from all contact with the wheat host and no other kind of host is valid. In this case, this individual is invited to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, by receiving from a Communion Cup.

3. Why must a person who has Celiac Disease receive from a Communion Cup and not the Chalice used by the celebrant?

During the Fraction Rite, a small particle of the host is dropped into the chalice, which makes the elements “intolerable” to those with Celiac Disease. The pastoral need requires that another vessel containing the Precious Blood be made available to the communicants with this particular condition.

4. Where can I get further information on this topic?

See the Newsletter from the United States Catholic Conference Bishops Committee on the Liturgy, Vol. XXXIX, November, 2003.

APPENDIX E

MUSTUM

1. What is Mustum?

Mustum proper is grape juice which contains no additives, is not pasteurized and has a very low alcohol content (less than 1.0%) due to the fact that the fermentation process has been arrested shortly after its start.

2. When is Mustum used?

Mustum is used by persons who have intolerance to alcohol and who have received the Bishop's permission for its use.

3. Where can I get further information on this topic?

See the Newsletter from the United States Catholic Conference Bishops committee on the Liturgy, Vol. XXXIX, November, 2003.

APPENDIX F

SUGGESTIONS FOR RECRUITING EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS

Some suggestions would be:

- a) The Pastor makes his own recommendations.
- b) The Pastoral Staff brings forward new names.
- c) The Parish Liturgy Committee lists names of prospective Extraordinary Ministers.
- d) The Parish Council develops a list of prospective Extraordinary Ministers.
- g) The Extraordinary Ministers and other liturgical ministers who are presently serving, offer recommendations to the pastor.

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