



Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

A. Purpose

1. In order to preserve its dignity and integrity, the Church places certain requirements on the celebration of Liturgy. Our culture places a high premium on individual freedom of expression and frowns upon any hint of legalism or control. The Church, however, is not primarily an institution or mere association of individuals. She is a faith community and, even more fundamentally, a communion in Christ and with Christ. This communion is initiated and maintained by Him through the visible bonds of the Sacraments.
2. As the custodian of the sacred Liturgy, the Church is responsible for ensuring that the Lord's intention is preserved in its celebration and that its universal character is handed down and safeguarded. The Lord has entrusted to the universal Church the mission of protecting the "deposit of faith." As St. John Paul II writes in the introduction of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "Guarding the deposit of faith is the mission which the Lord entrusted to his Church, and which she fulfills in every age."
3. While the Second Vatican Council provides for various ways in which the Liturgy can be adapted to different cultures, circumstances and situations, it always remains the Church's communal worship shared by all members of the Body of Christ throughout the world. The Church's Liturgy is not the property of any individual, particular priest or community. It belongs to the whole Church and to all the ages.
4. The Church, therefore, provides certain guidelines and regulations to express the universal nature of her worship. The essential character of the Liturgy is shared by all Catholics around the world. It is received as part of a dynamic tradition extending back to its very origin in Christ's own actions, while at the same time providing for sufficient adaptability, which enables the Liturgy to be at home in every local situation.

B. Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

5. According to the norm of the law, the ordinary minister of the Holy Eucharist is a bishop or priest. "The only minister who, in the person of Christ, can bring into being the sacrament of the Eucharist is a validly ordained priest" (canon 900 §1). It is most fitting that he distributes Holy Communion to the faithful. The bishop, the priest and the deacon are, by virtue of their sacred ordination, the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion (cf. canon 910).

C. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

6. "In addition to the ordinary ministers there is the formally instituted acolyte, who by virtue of his institution is an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion even outside the celebration of Mass. Moreover, if reasons of real necessity prompt it, another lay member of Christ's faithful may also be delegated by the diocesan bishop, in accordance



with the norm of law, for one occasion or for a specified time” (*Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 155).

7. “This function is to be understood strictly according to the name by which it is known, that is to say, that of Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, and not ‘special minister of Holy Communion’ nor ‘extraordinary minister of the Eucharist’ nor ‘special minister of the Eucharist,’ by which names the meaning of this function is unnecessarily and improperly broadened” (*Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 156).
8. The Holy See emphasizes that mandating Extraordinary Ministers must be based on the genuine needs of the community and the unavailability of ordinary ministers (cf. *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 157). Such circumstances are present when:
 - a. the number of priests and deacons is not sufficient to distribute Holy Communion to the faithful in a reasonable amount of time;
 - b. the priest himself is unable to distribute Holy Communion by himself because of ill health and/or advanced age; or
 - c. the communicants are so great in number that the celebration of Mass would be unduly prolonged.
9. Extraordinary Ministers are limited to exercising their ministry in the parish, hospital or nursing home to which he or she is mandated.

D. Role of the Priest

10. Extraordinary Ministers always serve at the discretion of the priest. He decides if the requirements for the use of Extraordinary Ministers are present and how many will be needed. For larger Archdiocesan gatherings (outside the regional high schools), the priest in charge of the Liturgy consults with the Archbishop regarding the use of Extraordinary Ministers.
11. The pastor or hospital chaplain may appoint mandated Extraordinary Ministers to serve the sick in hospitals, nursing or private homes provided that:
 - a. there is an objective pastoral need, e.g. the sick persons desire more frequent reception of Holy Communion than the priest’s usual visitations can provide;
 - b. the Extraordinary Minister supplements rather than replaces the ministry of the priest; and
 - c. priests are available when needed for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick.



E. Selection of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

12. Parishes in the Archdiocese are encouraged to select individuals who are well qualified to serve as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, and not simply to ask for volunteers when needed.
13. Pastors should also develop their own additional criteria for selecting Extraordinary Ministers, which might consist of participation in Eucharistic Adoration, for example. The purpose is to select individuals of exemplary Catholic life and morals.
14. Accordingly, the preferred order of choosing Extraordinary Ministers is: duly installed acolytes, major seminarians, consecrated men and women, catechists, other lay faithful. (cf. *Immensae Caritatis*, 4).

F. Personal Qualifications

15. “The faithful who are Extraordinary Ministers of Communion must be persons whose good qualities of Christian life, faith and morals recommend them. Let them strive to be worthy of this great office, foster their own devotion to the Holy Eucharist and show an example to the rest of the faithful by their own devotion and reverence toward the most august sacrament of the altar. No one is to be chosen whose appointment the faithful might find disquieting” (*Immensae Caritatis*, 6).
16. Those who are called to exercise this ministry should reflect on the privilege of serving their brothers and sisters in the faith. They should acknowledge their service with true humility and gratitude. They must receive the gift of the Eucharist with grateful hearts and share that gift generously and joyfully with others, both in the ministry of giving Holy Communion and in their daily lives.
17. An Extraordinary Minister must be a person who is striving to develop a personal and intimate relationship with Jesus Christ: in the Eucharist and through a life of prayer. This may include spiritual activities such as daily attendance at Mass, visits to the Blessed Sacrament and taking part in other forms of Eucharistic Adoration. Wherever Eucharistic Adoration is a practice in the parish, the Extraordinary Ministers play a crucial role in inculcating the importance of this devotion in the rest of the parish family by their own participation. Simply put, they should seek, like all Christians, to cultivate holiness, especially through frequent confession and personal prayer, especially before the Blessed Sacrament.
18. Those who minister the Bread of life and the Chalice of salvation should develop a sense of compassion, justice and charity in their daily lives.
19. The Extraordinary Ministers should also seek to have a sound knowledge and appreciation for the doctrine of the Church, especially through study of Scripture and the documents of the Magisterium.
20. Willingness to serve others should mark Extraordinary Ministers. They must always respect those who approach them to receive the Eucharist. This entails giving particular



consideration to young communicants, people with disabilities and those who are frail and elderly.

21. In the Archdiocese of Vancouver the minimum age for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion is twenty-one (21) years. However, persons older than the minimum should generally be chosen.
22. In order to serve as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, every person must complete formal training. Through the Liturgy Commission, the Archdiocese offers periodic sessions for this purpose. If it is not possible for a person to attend one of these sessions, then the pastor must offer at least one session to review the Archdiocesan guidelines before mandating that person to be an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion.
23. If an Extraordinary Minister finds it difficult to live a life appropriate to the function, he or she might ask to be excused for a time from the distribution of Holy Communion. If necessary, a pastor might ask such an individual not to continue serving in the ministry.

G. Formation and Training

24. An Extraordinary Minister must know what the Church teaches about the Real Presence of the Lord Jesus in the Eucharist, his self-giving Sacrifice, and the grace which flows from this awesome Sacrament of Christ's love. Therefore, Extraordinary Ministers should never become casual in the way they serve at the Liturgy. They should always maintain a sense of wonder and awe at the Sacrament they are privileged to distribute to others.
25. Recalling the words of Jesus, the Church professes that, in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and the instrumentality of the priest. Jesus says: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world...For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink" (Jn. 6:51-55). The whole Christ is truly present – Body, Blood, soul and divinity – under the appearances of bread and wine. This is what the Church means when she speaks of the "Real Presence" of Christ in the Eucharist. The risen Christ is present to his Church in many ways, but most especially through the sacrament of his Body and Blood.
26. Jesus gives himself to us in the Eucharist as our spiritual nourishment because he loves us and wants to abide with us: "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me and I in them" (Jn. 6:56). By eating his Body and drinking his Blood, we become one with the person of Jesus Christ, true God and true man. Our mortal and corruptible nature is transformed by being joined to the very source of life: "Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me" (Jn. 6:57).



27. The Body and Blood of Christ present under the appearances of bread and wine through the mystery of transubstantiation are treated with the greatest reverence both during and after the celebration of Holy Mass. For example, the tabernacle in which the consecrated Bread is reserved should be distinguished and lead people to prayer. According to the tradition of the Church, one should genuflect in the presence of the tabernacle containing the reserved Sacrament. This liturgical gesture reflects the reverence, respect and adoration that is due to the Holy Eucharist.

H. Appointment

28. The Archbishop of Vancouver delegates parish pastors, chaplains and Archbishop's Representatives in the regional high schools for which they are responsible to mandate Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. In the case of necessity, the priest may commission suitable members of the faithful, but only for a specific occasion.
29. A person mandated to serve as an Extraordinary Minister in his or her parish, particular hospital or school is authorized to serve only in that specific parish, hospital or school. He or she does not serve as Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion in another parish, hospital or school.
30. "It is never allowed for the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion to delegate anyone else to administer the Eucharist, as for example a parent or spouse or child of the sick person who is the communicant" (*Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 159).

I. Term of the Mandate

31. The term of the mandate is for three years, renewable for a second term. If there are exceptional reasons for appointing someone for a third term (or more), the pastor, chaplain or Archbishop's Representative must give his permission.
32. Unless a newly appointed pastor decides otherwise, the term of the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion continues.

J. Procedures for Mandating

33. After ensuring that the proposed members of the community are properly instructed on their future role as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, the pastor, the hospital chaplain or Archbishop's Representative in a regional high school, and in the case of other Catholic high schools, the chaplain appointed by the Archbishop, provides a written mandate to those persons chosen to serve as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.



K. Rite of Commissioning

34. Those mandated by the pastor, chaplain or Archbishop's Representative are to be commissioned during a liturgical celebration using the proper Rite (see Appendix I). The usual date for commissioning is the Solemnity of Christ the King.
35. When the priest celebrant deposes a layperson as an Extraordinary Minister for one particular Mass, he uses the Rite found in the Missal (see Appendix II).

L. Procedures for Serving at Mass

36. Being aware of the specific role that is assigned to them, the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion prepare themselves both inwardly and outwardly to participate in the most solemn prayer of the Church, the celebration of the Eucharist. Assuming their responsibility to assist the priest in serving the community, as prayer leaders they are to manifest dignity and decorum at all times.
 - a. The Extraordinary Minister may walk in the entrance and recessional processions and have a designated place in or near the sanctuary, or they may sit anywhere in the congregation signifying their being particularly called from among the people. If this is so, they may neither enter nor leave in procession along with the priest celebrant and altar servers at the beginning and end of Mass.
 - b. The Extraordinary Ministers participate in the entire Mass when they fulfill this ministry, even though they may have attended a previous Mass.
 - c. The Extraordinary Minister does not assist in breaking the Host.
 - d. The Extraordinary Minister does not take the ciborium or the chalice from the altar either for Holy Communion themselves or for distribution. The vessel is handed to him or her by the priest or deacon.
 - e. The Extraordinary Minister may receive Holy Communion under both species according to established parish custom. He or she is then given the ciborium by the celebrant and proceeds to the designated Communion station. The Ministers wash their hands at the credence table before and after distributing Holy Communion.
 - f. When distributing Holy Communion, the Extraordinary Minister raises the Host and says: "The Body of Christ," waits for "Amen," and then places the Host on the tongue or in the hand of the communicant.
 - g. When Holy Communion is given to the faithful under both species, the Extraordinary Minister may be asked to administer the chalice.
 - h. When presenting the chalice, the Extraordinary Minister says "The Blood of Christ," to which the communicant responds "Amen." After the communicant has received the Blood of the Lord, the Extraordinary Minister wipes the inner and



outer lip of the chalice with the purificator. This is done at the distribution of the Precious Blood to each person.

- i. When Holy Communion is given under both species by intinction, the Extraordinary Minister dips the Host into the Precious Blood and places it on the tongue of the recipient. The communicant is not to dip the Host into the Precious Blood.
- j. If an Extraordinary Minister sees a person walk away after receiving Communion without consuming the Host, the Extraordinary Minister needs to follow that person discreetly and ensure that the Host is either consumed or placed back in the ciborium or placed on the paten.
- k. Care must be taken not to drop the Host on the floor. If a Host falls on the floor, it is reverently consumed by the Extraordinary Minister or placed on the paten and brought to the altar.
- l. After distributing Holy Communion, the Extraordinary Minister returns the ciborium or chalice to the priest at the altar.
- m. The Extraordinary Minister does not bring the ciborium from the tabernacle nor return it there at the end of the distribution of Holy Communion, unless specifically asked to do so by the priest in exceptional circumstances.
- n. The Extraordinary Minister does not purify the sacred vessels, as this is reserved for priests, deacons or instituted acolytes.
- o. The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion does not perform any other distinct role (e.g. lector, cantor, usher, choir member) at the same Mass.
- p. The Liturgy does not call for a special blessing to be given at Communion time, but where the custom has arisen of the priest offering a blessing to those who do not receive Holy Communion, the Extraordinary Minister may simply say: "May God bless you" (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1669; canon 1169).
- q. Each parish may decide on the vesture of the Extraordinary Minister, e.g. whether an alb should be worn. Otherwise the clothing should reflect the dignity of this ministry. It is the pastor's responsibility to ensure proper dress and decorum.

M. Visiting the Sick or Shut-ins

37. Bringing Holy Communion to sick or elderly persons unable to attend the community celebration of the Eucharist enables them to participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Bringing Holy Communion to them manifests the support and concern of the community for its members who cannot be present at the celebration.
38. When Holy Communion is brought to the home, the Extraordinary Minister must ensure that proper reverence to the Eucharist is manifest and fitting dignity is shown to the Eucharistic Lord before, during and after the sick/elderly has received Holy Communion.



39. To assist the pastor who may be physically unable to visit every sick and elderly shut-ins on a regular basis:
- a. The Extraordinary Minister may be mandated to bring Holy Communion to the sick in hospitals, nursing homes or in private homes.
 - b. The Host placed in a pyx and put in a burse (pouch) should be carried with great reverence, usually around the neck.
 - c. Holy Communion is taken directly from the Church to the sick and is never to be carried while running errands or carrying out other duties.
 - d. The proper ritual for administration of Holy Communion to the sick is to be followed.
 - e. Whenever possible, the pyx should be filled at Sunday or weekday Masses, and the Communion calls made following the Mass, so that the congregation and the sick individuals may be more conscious of their unity in the Holy Eucharist. Other arrangements may be made at the priest's discretion.
 - f. Always consult with the priest before Mass, if you wish to fill the pyx before bringing Holy Communion to the sick.
 - g. In the case when a communicant has received the Host into the mouth and then, for some reason, rejects it, that Host is to be put into a small receptacle of water and placed away in the tabernacle or some other secure place in the church. When it has fully dissolved, the priest pours the water into the sacrarium.

*We thank you for the nourishment you give us through your holy gift.
Pour out our Spirit upon us and in the strength of this
food from heaven keep us single-minded in your service.*



Appendix I: Rite of Commissioning – Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Persons authorised to distribute Holy Communion in special circumstances should be commissioned by the pastor, chaplain or Archbishop's Representative according to the following Rite. The Rite should take place in the presence of the people during Mass or outside Mass.

During Mass

In the homily the celebrant first explains the reasons for this ministry and then presents to the people those chosen, using these or similar words.

Dear friends in Christ,

Our brothers and sisters N. and N. are to be entrusted with administering Holy Communion, 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 Ministers of Holy Communion be, therefore, especially observant of the Lord's command to love your neighbour. For when He gave His Body as food to his disciples, He said to them: "This is my commandment, that you should love one another as I have loved you."

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?

Response: I am.

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

Response: 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 Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion:

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.**

Through Christ our Lord.

Response: Amen.

The general intercessions should include an intention for the newly commissioned Extraordinary 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.

Outside Mass

When the people are assembled an appropriate hymn is sung. The celebrant greets the people. There normally follows a short liturgy of the Word.

The Rite continues as above, nos. 2-5.

Finally, the celebrant blesses the people and dismisses them in the usual way. The Rite concludes with an appropriate hymn.



Appendix II: Rite of Deputing an Extraordinary Minister to Distribute Holy Communion for One Occasion

The Diocesan Bishop has the faculty to permit individual Priests exercising sacred duties to depute a suitable member of the faithful to distribute Holy Communion with them on a single occasion, in cases of real necessity.

When one of the faithful is deputed to distribute Communion on a single occasion in such cases, it is fitting that a mandate to do so should be conferred according to the following rite.

After the Priest celebrant himself has received the Sacrament in the usual way, the extraordinary minister comes to the altar and stands before the Celebrant, who blesses him or her with these words:

**May the Lord bless ✠ you,
so that at this Mass you may minister
the Body and Blood of Christ
to your brothers and sisters.**

And he or she answers:

Response: Amen.

If the Extraordinary Minister is to receive the Most Holy Eucharist, the Priest gives Communion to the minister. The Priest gives him or her the ciborium or vessel with the hosts or the chalice and together they go to administer Communion to the faithful.



Appendix III: Rite of Communion of the Sick

Introductory Rites

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Response: Amen.

The minister greets the sick person and all who are present.

The Lord be with you.

Response: And with your spirit.

(If it seems desirable, the minister may sprinkle the sick person and those present with holy water.)

Penitential Act

The minister invites the sick person and all present to prepare themselves for this celebration by calling to mind their sins and seeking the Lord's forgiveness. After a brief period of silence, the penitential rite continues:

I confess to almighty God
and to you, my brothers and sisters,
that I have greatly sinned,
in my thoughts and in my words,
in what I have done and in what I have failed to do,

And, striking their breast, they say:
through my fault, through my fault,
through my most grievous fault;

Then they continue:
therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin,
all the Angels and Saints,
and you, my brothers and sisters,
to pray for me to the Lord our God.

**May almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life.**

Response: Amen.

OR:

You were sent to heal the contrite of heart: Lord have mercy.

Response: Lord, have mercy.

You came to call sinners: Christ have mercy.

Response: Christ, have mercy.



You are seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us: Lord have mercy.

Response: Lord, have mercy.

**May almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life.**

Response: Amen.

The Liturgy of the Word

The Word of God is proclaimed by one of those present or by the minister. A brief period of silence may follow the reading. The minister may offer a brief reflection on the Word of God. Then, the minister invites all present to pray for the needs of all, and in particular, for the sick person and those who care for him or her. After each petition, all respond:

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

The Communion Rite

(Liturgy of Holy Communion)

With hands joined the minister says:

**At the Savior's command
and formed by divine teaching,
we dare to say:**

Our Father...

The minister takes the host, and holding it slightly raised says aloud:

**Behold the Lamb of God,
behold him who takes away the sins of the world.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.**

And together with the people the minister says:

**Lord, I am not worthy
that you should enter under my roof,
but only say the word
and my soul shall be healed.**

The minister gives Communion in the usual way to the sick, and then to others present who wish to receive Communion. A period of silent prayer may be observed.



Prayer After Communion

The minister says a concluding prayer.

**God, only support of our human weakness,
show the power of your protection
over your servants who are sick,
that, sustained by your merciful help,
they may be restored to your holy Church in good health.
Through Christ our Lord.**

Response: Amen.

The Concluding Rites

A priest or deacon blesses the sick person and the others present using one of the following blessings. If, however, any of the Blessed Sacrament remains, he may bless the sick person by making a sign of the cross with the Blessed Sacrament in silence.

A. May God the father bless you.

Response: Amen.

May the Son of God heal you.

Response: Amen.

May the Holy Spirit shed light upon you.

Response: Amen.

May he enlighten your heart and lead you to life on high.

Response: Amen.

And may almighty God bless all of you, who are gathered here, the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit.

Response: Amen.

B. May the Lord Jesus Christ be with you to defend you.

Response: Amen.

May he go before you to lead you and behind you to guard you.

Response: Amen.

May he look upon you, keep you safe and bless you.

Response: Amen.

And may almighty God bless all of you, who are gathered here, the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit.

Response: Amen.

A minister who is not a priest or deacon invokes God's blessing and makes the sign of the cross on himself/herself, while saying:



**A. May the Lord bless us,
protect us from all evil,
and bring us to everlasting life.**

Response: Amen.

**B. May the almighty and merciful God bless
and protect us,
the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.**

Response: Amen.



Appendix IV: Sample Mandate for Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion

Date: _____

Dear _____,

By the authority delegated in the Archbishop's decree of [DATE], I depute you as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion for a period ending two years from today's date.

Please read carefully the attached Archdiocesan Guidelines, and follow them with care.

You have already assured me that you are in full communion with the Church and living your faith fully in accord with this important ministry you will exercise in the parish. Please be sure to discuss with me any change in your circumstances in this regard.

Together with your fellow parishioners, I thank you for your willingness to undertake this service with humility and devotion.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Pastor