Christ’s faithful are to hold the blessed Eucharist in the highest hon-
our. They should take an active part in the celebration of the most
august Sacrifice; they should receive the sacrament with great devo-
tion and frequency, and should reverence It with the greatest adora-
tion. (canon 898)

The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion

1. The minister of the 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 by virtue of their sacred ordination are the ordinary minis-
ters of Holy Communion (cf. canon 910).

2. “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 celebra-
tion of Mass. If, moreover, 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). The Holy See
has emphasized that mandating Extraordinary Ministers must be based on the needs of the
Church and the unavailability of ordinary ministers (Cf. Ecclesiae de mysterio, 8, 2; Redemptionis
Sacramentum, 157).

Determining the need for Extraordinary Ministers

3. Extraordinary Ministers may serve only if at least one of the following conditions exists (cf.
Redemptionis Sacramentum, 158):

a) the priest and deacon are lacking
b) the priest is prevented by weakness or advanced age or some other genuine reason
c) the number of faithful coming to Communion is so great that the celebration of Mass
would be unduly prolonged.

4. The preferred order of choosing Extraordinary Ministers is: duly installed acolytes, major
seminarians, male and female Religious, catechists, Catholic men or women (cf. Immensae Ca-
ritatis, 4).
5. 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 should consult with the Archbishop regarding the use of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

6. The pastor or hospital chaplain may appoint properly mandated Extraordinary Ministers to serve the sick in hospitals or in nursing or private homes under the following conditions:

   a) that the priest as ordinary minister of Communion is faithful in continuing his sacramental ministry to those sick persons so that the service of the Extraordinary Minister supplements rather than replaces the ministry of the priest;

   b) that there is an objective pastoral need, e.g. the sick person’s desire for more frequent reception of Communion than the priest’s usual visitations provide;

   c) that the priest be available for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick.

**Personal qualifications**

7. “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 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).

In the Archdiocese of Vancouver the minimum age for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion is twenty-one (21) years; however, persons older than this should generally be chosen.

**Appointment**

8. The Archbishop of Vancouver or his delegate must mandate Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. In case of necessity, the priest may commission suitable members of the faithful for a specific occasion.

A person mandated to serve as an Extraordinary Minister in his or her own parish (hospital, etc.) is not authorized to serve in that capacity in another parish (hospital, etc.).

**Term of the mandate**

9. The term of the mandate is for two years, renewable for a second term. If there are exceptional reasons for wanting to appoint someone for a third term (or more) the Archdiocesan Liturgy Commission should be approached.

10. The mandate of an Extraordinary Minister terminates one month after the appointment of a new pastor, even if the appointment falls within the two-year term of the Extraordinary Minister. This termination takes place automatically unless the new pastor explicitly requests otherwise. The automatic termination leaves the new pastor free to choose and have mandated by the Archbishop new Extraordinary Ministers if he so wishes.

**Parish and Diocesan procedures**

11. The process of mandating is as follows: The pastor, hospital chaplain or Archbishop’s Rep-
resentative in a regional high school (and in the case of other Catholic high schools, the chaplain appointed by the Archbishop) submits in writing to the Archdiocesan Liturgy Commission the names of those persons recommended for mandating.

12. The pastor should see to it that Extraordinary Ministers are properly instructed and each given a copy of these Guidelines.

**Rite of Commissioning**

13. The usual date for mandating will be the Solemnity of Christ the King. Those nominated by the pastor or chaplain and approved by the Archbishop are to be mandated during a liturgical celebration in the parish using the proper Rite (see Appendix).

14. When the priest celebrant deputes a layperson as Extraordinary Minister during one particular Mass, he uses the rite found in the Missal. (The Appendix contains this rite in a provisional translation from the 2002 edition of the Roman Missal.)

**Serving At Mass**

15. a) The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion at Mass participates in the entire Mass (even though he may have attended a previous Mass).

b) The Extraordinary Minister walks in the entrance and recessional processions and has a designated place in or near the sanctuary.

c) Each parish should decide on the vesture of the Extraordinary Minister, e.g. if an alb should be worn (*Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, July 2000); otherwise the clothing should reflect the sacred dignity of this function. It is the pastor’s responsibility to ensure proper dress and decorum.

d) The Extraordinary Minister should not perform any other distinct liturgical function or role (e.g. lector, leader of song, usher) within the same Mass.

e) The Extraordinary Minister does not assist in breaking the Host.

f) The celebrant does not distribute Holy Communion to the Extraordinary Minister until he has received both species himself. The Extraordinary Minister may receive under both species according to established parish custom and then is given the ciborium by the celebrant and proceeds to the Communion station. He or she washes the hands at the credence table before distributing Communion and afterwards. This ablution water is to be poured into the sacrament.

g) The celebrant (or another priest or deacon) brings the ciborium from the tabernacle and returns it there.

h) When distributing Communion, the Extraordinary Minister raises the Sacred Host and says: “The Body of Christ,” waits for “Amen,” and places the Host on the tongue or in the hand of the communicant. The individual communicant always has the option of receiving in the hand or on the tongue.

The Extraordinary Minister should take care not to drop particles of the Host onto the ground or onto the hands of the communicant.
If a Host falls, it is not given to the communicant, but is reverently consumed by the Extraordinary Minister or placed on the paten or corporal.

i) When Communion is given to the faithful under both species, the Extraordinary Minister may be asked to administer the chalice.

When presenting the chalice the Extraordinary Minister says “The Blood of Christ”, to which the communicant responds “Amen”. The Extraordinary Minister wipes the chalice with the purificator.

When Holy Communion is given under both species, the communicant is not to dip the Host into the chalice (Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani, 2002, 287).

j) The liturgy does not call for a 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).

k) After distributing Holy Communion, the Extraordinary Minister returns the ciborium or chalice to the priest at the altar. Only the priest, deacon and instituted acolyte are permitted to cleanse the sacred vessels.

**Visiting the sick or shut-ins**

16. The Extraordinary Minister may be mandated to bring Holy Communion to the sick in hospitals, nursing homes or in private homes.

a) The priest must supply the Extraordinary Minister with a proper pyx in which to carry the Blessed Sacrament to the sick.

b) Whenever possible at Sunday or weekday Masses, the pyxes should be filled at Mass 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.

c) The priest should supply the ritual for administration of Communion to the sick.

d) The Hosts in pyx and burse (pouch) should be carried with great reverence, usually around the neck.

e) Communion is taken directly to the sick and not carried until later in the day.

f) In the case when a communicant has received the Host into the mouth and then, for some reason, rejects it, the Host is to be put into a small receptacle of water, and put into the tabernacle or other secure place. When it has dissolved (i.e. no longer has the species of bread and is no longer the Body of Christ) the priest will pour the water into the sacrarium.

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ARCHDIOCESAN LITURGICAL COMMISSION

September 2005
Appendix I
Rite of Commissioning Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

1. Persons authorised to distribute Holy Communion in special circumstances should be commissioned 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 or outside Mass.

A. DURING MASS

2. In the homily the celebrant first explains the reason 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.”

3. 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?

R. I am.

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

R. I am.

4. 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 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.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

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

6. 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.

B. OUTSIDE MASS

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

8. The rite continues as above, nos. 2-5.

9. Finally, the celebrant blesses the people and dismisses them in the usual way. The rite concludes with an appropriate song.
Appendix II
Rite of deputing a Minister to distribute Holy Communion for one occasion

1. The diocesan bishop has the faculty to permit a priest exercising his sacred office to be able to depute a suitable member of the faithful to distribute Holy Communion together with him for one occasion in cases of true necessity.

2. It is appropriate that the person who is deputed in these cases to distribute Holy Communion for one occasion receive the mandate according to the following rite.

3. After the celebrant has himself received the Sacrament, the Extraordinary Minister approaches the altar and stands before the celebrant, who blesses him or her in these words:

May the Lord bless you to administer now to your brothers and sisters the Body of Christ.

And he or she answers:

Amen.

4. If the Extraordinary Minister is to receive the Most Holy Eucharist, the priest gives Holy Communion and then offers the pyx or vessel with Hosts or the chalice and they proceed to distribute Communion to the faithful.

Missale Romanum, editio typica tertia (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002), p. 1253
(unofficial translation)