

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER OF HOLY COMMUNION GUIDELINES

These guidelines are based on the following church documents and instructions:

2002 *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America (NDRHC)*
UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS (USCCB)

2004 *Redemptionis sacramentum: On Certain Matters to be Observed or to be Avoided Regarding the Most Holy Eucharist (RS)*
CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP
AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENT (CDW)

2011 *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal: Including Adaptations for the Dioceses of the United States of America (GIRM)*
CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP
AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENT (CDW)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. By virtue of his sacred ordination, the bishop or priest offers the sacrifice in the person of Christ, the Head of the Church. He receives gifts of bread and wine from the faithful, offers the sacrifice to God, and returns to them the very Body and Blood of Christ, as from the hands of Christ himself. (Cf. GIRM, no. 93.) Thus bishops and priests are considered the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion. In addition, the deacon who assists the bishop or priest in distributing Communion is an ordinary minister of Holy Communion. When the Eucharist is distributed under both forms, “the deacon ministers the chalice.” (Cf. NDRHC, no. 26; GIRM, no. 182.)
2. In every celebration of the Eucharist there should be a sufficient number of ministers for Holy Communion so that it can be distributed in an orderly and reverent manner. Bishops, priests, and deacons distribute Holy Communion by virtue of their office as ordinary ministers of the Body and Blood of the Lord. (Cf. NDRHC, no. 27; GIRM, no. 162.)
3. When the size of the congregation ... 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.” (See *The Roman Missal*, Appendix III, “Rite of Deputing A Minister To Distribute Holy Communion On A Single Occasion.”) Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should receive sufficient spiritual, theological, and practical preparation to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence. When recourse is had to extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, especially in the distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds, their number should not be increased beyond what is required for the orderly and reverent distribution of the Body and Blood of the Lord. In all matters, such extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should follow the guidance of the diocesan bishop. (Cf. NDRHC, no. 28; GIRM, no. 162.)

II. PURPOSE

As stated above, these guidelines are to “ensure the reverent and careful distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds.” (Cf. NDRHC, no. 22.) They also “have as their purpose the fostering of celebrations that glorify God and deepen the faith, hope and charity of the participants in liturgical worship.” (Cf. NDRHC, no. 56.) As well, they follow the dictates of *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 283, that, “The Diocesan Bishop may establish norms for Communion under both kinds for his diocese, which are also to be observed in churches of religious and at celebrations with small groups.”

III. REQUIREMENTS OF MINISTERS

1. Catholic men and women who are 18 years of age or older and fully initiated - who have received the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation - are eligible for this ministry. They should demonstrate their readiness for the ministry:
 - 1) by regularly participating in the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist,
 - 2) living the Gospel message in their communal and individual lives,
 - 3) being faithful to the teachings of the church in regards to their present state in life, (Single or Married),
 - 4) attending the training/formation sessions provided by the parish, and
 - 5) accepting the responsibility to minister reverently as scheduled or needed.
2. As with all other liturgical ministries, those commissioned as extraordinary ministers should have no expectation of extended or life-long service. They should understand that their ministry is a blessing and privilege and be willing to serve when and where needed.
3. No special clothing or insignia is necessary for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion in the Diocese of Las Cruces; however, modest, dignified clothing is to be worn out of respect for both the Eucharist and the community gathered for worship. As stated in the *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America*, no. 29, “All 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 or wine.”

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARISHES

As all potential extraordinary ministers must be properly trained for the ministry, and, once trained, have both the approval of the bishop to serve and continued formation, the parish has the following responsibilities:

1. **To provide training** that includes:
 - 1) an overview of Catholic beliefs about the Mass and Holy Communion,
 - 2) an outline and practice of the skills and functions of this ministry in the parish, and
 - 3) information about diocesan Basic Ministry Formation,

especially the Extraordinary Minister Specialization, with encouragement to receive further formation through the Specialization process and other diocesan or regional offerings, such as the Diocesan Eucharistic Congress (DEC) or Southwest Liturgical Conference (SWLC) Study Week.

2. **To submit the names of potential ministers to the bishop** of the diocese for his approval **prior to their being commissioned** as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. NOTE: Extraordinary ministers are commissioned for two years at a time. The rite is preferably celebrated in the presence of the people of the parish during a weekend Mass, but can also be celebrated outside of Mass in a Liturgy of the Word. (See the “Order for Commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion” in the *Book of Blessings*, Chapter 63.)
3. **To provide** ministers, once they are commissioned, with the support needed to minister successfully in the parish, including **some sort of schedule, the contact information necessary to obtain a substitute** should the minister be unable to serve as scheduled, and a mentor with whom to initially serve and ask questions.
4. **To arrange for a renewal of ministry, every two years** at a minimum, that includes prayer, liturgy and ministry formation, and time for discussions and questions about parish practice, including any inconsistencies or issues that have arisen. NOTE: The two-year commissioning is renewable, given that an extraordinary minister attends the renewal of ministry session and continues to meet the above-mentioned requirements.
5. **To continually** (or at the very least annually) **recruit other members of the parish to serve as extraordinary ministers**. NOTE: Some ministers think that after a few years they are entitled to serve, and that they have the right to choose the terms of their service. It has also been found that the long-time ministry of some parishioners prevents other parishioners from stepping forward to serve. Given these factors, it is recommended that parishes consider implementing “term limits” on ministerial service in any capacity.

The parish also has the following material and physical responsibilities:

1. **To provide vessels of good quality and good condition from which Holy Communion will be served and in which the Blessed Sacrament will be transported, stored and adored.** *The General Instruction* states: Among the requisites for the celebration of Mass, the sacred vessels are held in special honor, and among these the chalice and paten, in which the bread and wine are offered and consecrated and from which they are consumed. (Cf. GIRM, no. 327.) Sacred vessels should be made from precious metal. If they are made from a metal less precious than gold, they should generally be gilded on the inside. (Cf. GIRM, no. 328.) In the Dioceses of the United States of America, sacred vessels may also be made from other solid materials which in the common estimation in each region are considered precious or noble ... preference is always to be given to materials that do not easily break or deteriorate. This applies to all vessels that are intended to hold the hosts, such as the paten, the ciborium, the pyx, the monstrance, and others of this kind. (Cf. GIRM, no. 329.) *Redemptionis sacramentum* further clarifies: Sacred vessels for

containing the Body and Blood of the Lord must be made in strict conformity with the norms of tradition and of the liturgical books. ... It is strictly required, however, that such materials be truly noble in common estimation within a given region, so that honour will be given to the Lord by their use, and all risk of diminishing the doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ in Eucharistic species in the eyes of the faithful will be avoided. Reprobated, therefore, is any practice of using for the celebration of Mass common vessels, or others lacking in quality, or devoid of all artistic merit or which are mere containers, as also other vessels made from glass, earthenware, clay, or other materials that break easily. This norm is to be applied even as regards metals and other materials that easily rust or deteriorate. (Cf. RS, no. 117.)

2. **To provide appropriate places for the above vessels to be stored between Masses, placed during Mass, and washed after Mass.** This should include secure, protected cupboards, a large and sturdy enough credence table, and a sink with hot running water and a near-by supply of dish soap and towels.
3. **To provide clean, good quality linens and towels to use for the service of Holy Communion, the protection of the Eucharistic species, and for the washing of the above vessels.** These should include corporals and purificators that are not stained or frayed, and a supply of clean, fresh dishtowels.

V. PROCEDURES AS DIRECTED BY THE DOCUMENTS AND INSTRUCTIONS

1. As the *Agnus Dei* or *Lamb of God* is begun, the bishop or priest alone, or with the assistance of the deacon, and if necessary of concelebrating priests, breaks the Eucharistic bread. Other empty ... ciboria or patens are then brought to the altar if this is necessary. (Cf. NDRHC, no. 37.)
2. If extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are required by pastoral need, they approach the altar as the priest receives Communion. (Cf. NDRHC, no. 38; GIRM no. 162.) As directed by each parish, and dependent on the distance from the seating to the altar, ministers may come forward during or after the Kiss of Peace, but they are not to gather around or behind the altar but stay to the side, in the sanctuary or on the floor, so that where they stand does not obscure the action at the altar. (Liturgical Practices Pastoral Letter, Bishop Cantú, January 2014) At this time, they should not extend each other the sign of peace but instead be attentive to the action of the Fraction Rite at the altar.
3. Neither deacons nor lay ministers may ever receive Holy Communion in the manner of a concelebrating priest. After the priest has concluded his own Communion, he distributes Communion to the extraordinary ministers, assisted by the deacon, and then hands the sacred vessels to them for distribution of Holy Communion to the people. 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. (Cf. NDRHC, nos. 38 & 39). All extraordinary ministers are to follow the directives of the parish with regards to placement for receiving and distributing Communion.

4. After all Eucharistic ministers have received Communion, the bishop or priest reverently hands vessels containing the Body or the Blood of the Lord to the deacons or extraordinary ministers who will assist with the distribution of Holy Communion. The deacon may assist the priest in handing the vessels. (Cf. NDRHC, no. 40). The ministers should all move to their stations for distributing Holy Communion as decided and directed by each parish.
5. Holy Communion under the form of bread is offered to the communicant with the words "The Body of Christ." (The communicant should bow his or her head and respond, "Amen," but Communion should not be withheld until they do so.) The communicant may choose whether to receive ... in the hand or on the tongue. (Cf. NDRHC, no. 41.) Note: This is not the time to acknowledge any communicant by name.
6. ... Communion from the chalice is generally the preferred form in the Latin Church ... The chalice is offered to the communicant with the words "The Blood of Christ." ... (Cf. NDRHC, nos. 42 & 43.) (The communicant should bow his or her head and respond, "Amen," but Communion should not be withheld until they do so.) NOTE: This is not the time to acknowledge any communicant by name.
7. The communicant is to take the chalice in their hands to receive. In some cases, the minister may (*or should*) assist the communicant in drinking from the cup. After each communicant has received ..., 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 ... before presenting it to the next person. (Cf. NDRHC, no. 45). It is the choice of the communicant, not the minister to receive from the chalice. (Cf. NDRHC, no. 46).
8. When more of the Precious Blood remains than was necessary for Communion, ... When there are extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, they may consume what remains of the Precious Blood from their chalice of distribution with permission of the diocesan bishop. (Cf. NDRHC, no. 52.) <Note: This permission is granted in the Diocese of Las Cruces; extraordinary ministers should do so at the credence table and leave their chalices there for purification.> The reverence due to the Precious Blood of the Lord demands that it be fully consumed after Communion is completed and never be poured into the ground or the sacrarium. (Cf. NDRHC, no. 55.) There is an exception to this "for sick people who are unable to receive Communion under the form of bread ... at the discretion of the priest." See *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America*, no. 54.
9. Note: The norm established for the Dioceses of the United States of America is that Holy Communion is to be received standing, unless an individual member of the faithful wishes to receive Communion while kneeling. (Cf. RS, no. 91.) When receiving Holy Communion, the communicant bows his or her head before the sacrament as a gesture of reverence and receives ... from the minister. (Cf. GIRM, no. 160.) The communicant, including the extraordinary minister, is never allowed to self-communicate, ... Communion under either form, bread or wine, must always be given by an ordinary or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. (Cf. NDRHC, no. 50; GIRM, no. 160.)

10. When the distribution of Communion is over, the Priest himself immediately and completely consumes at the altar any consecrated wine that happens to remain; as for any consecrated hosts that are left, he either consumes them at the altar or carries them to the place designated for the reservation of the Eucharist. Upon returning to the altar, the Priest collects the fragments, ... and he stands at the altar or at the credence table and purifies the paten or ciborium over the chalice, and after this purifies the chalice, ... If the vessels are purified at the altar, they are carried to the credence table by a minister. Nevertheless, it is also permitted to leave vessels needing to be purified, especially if there are several, on a corporal, suitably covered, either on the altar or on the credence table, and to purify them immediately after Mass, after the Dismissal of the people. (Cf. GIRM, no. 163.)
11. When the distribution of Communion is over, the Deacon returns to the altar with the Priest, collects the fragments, ... and then carries the chalice and other sacred vessels to the credence table, where he purifies them and arranges them as usual, while the Priest returns to the chair. Nevertheless, it is also permitted to leave vessels needing to be purified, especially if there are several, on a corporal, suitably covered, either on the altar or on the credence table, and to purify them immediately after Mass, after the Dismissal of the people. (Cf. GIRM, no. 183; NDRHC, nos. 51 & 53.)
12. Likewise, after the distribution of Communion is complete, a duly instituted acolyte helps the Priest or Deacon to purify and arrange the sacred vessels. In the absence of a Deacon, a duly instituted acolyte carries the sacred vessels to the credence table and there purifies them, wipes them, and arranges them as usual. (Cf. GIRM, no. 192.)
13. After Mass, as determined by each parish, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may do a more thorough washing of the vessels with soap and water as needed. It is important that all ministers be made aware that many of the vessels are plated with precious metal and any washing and drying should be done gently so as not to cause unnecessary wear to the finish of the vessels. (For the same reason, wine should not be poured and kept in the vessels for too long a period of time before Mass begins.)

VI. CONCLUSION

The ordered preparation and celebration of the Mass, and of Holy Communion in particular, should always profoundly affect the faith of communicants in all its aspects and dimensions. In the case of the distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds, Christian faith in the real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist can only be renewed and deepened in the life of the faithful by this esteemed practice. (Cf. NDRHC, no. 56.) Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion that have received sufficient spiritual, theological and practical preparation should fulfill their role with a knowledge and reverence that both contributes to the ordered celebration of Mass, and of Holy Communion, and renews deepens faith in the real presence of Christ.