

Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

“The Eucharist has always been the source of Christian love and the center of ecclesial life (Dominicae Cenaе, 7), daily building up the life of all Christians, making of them a holy temple in the Lord, a dwelling-place for God in the Spirit, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ (This Holy Living Sacrifice, 3).”

The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist together point to the rite of Holy Communion, for “Christ gave his body and blood to be eaten and drunk so that all who participate share in the reality of his unique sacrifice and Passover made present in sign and symbols in the Eucharist (This Holy Living Sacrifice, 10).”

“The eyes of faith enable the believer to recognize the ineffable depths of the mystery that is the Holy Eucharist....The Eucharistic species of bread and wine derive from the work of human hand. In the action of the Eucharist this bread and this wine become our spiritual food and drink. It is Christ, the true vine, who gives life to the branches. As bread from heaven, bread of angels, the chalice of salvation, the medicine of immortality, the Eucharist is the promise of eternal life to all who eat and drink it. The Eucharist is the a sacred meal, a sacrifice of love, a sign of unity a bond of charity in which Christ calls us as his friends to the banquet of heaven (Norms for the Distribution & Reception of Holy Communion under both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America #4).

1. The pastor, or his delegate, determines the needs and the persons best qualified to serve the parish community in this role Those who are invited to assist as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should exercise this function in a spirit of faith and service.
2. “All taking part in liturgical celebrations, whether ministers or members of the congregation, should do all that pertains to them, and no more, taking into account the rite and liturgical norms (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 28).” Therefore, those serving as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, especially at the Sunday celebration, should not serve in any other capacity at that particular liturgy.
3. This ministry is open to women and men aged sixteen and above, who have been fully initiated. They should be practicing Catholics, in good standing with the parish community, and possess a love of the Eucharist.
4. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion must be properly trained both in the theology and practice of their role before beginning the ministry. Ongoing education and evaluation at the parish level is also encouraged.
5. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion exercise their function during the Sunday Eucharist, at a Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest, and to the homebound and nursing home communities outside of Mass.
6. “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.” (See # 29 – Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion

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Under Both Kinds in the Diocese of the United States of America). In the Archdiocese of Anchorage, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion generally do not wear albs.

7. Ministers to the homebound and nursing homes receive the same training as those who exercise this function during the liturgy, with additional training specific to homebound ministry. It is encouraged that Ministers to the Homebound be sent forth from the Community's Sunday Celebration.

8. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may distribute either the Body of Christ or the Blood of Christ. As they do so, they proclaim only: "The Body of Christ" or "The Blood of Christ" [not "this is the Body of Christ," or "receive the Body of Christ," or some other phrase].

9. A simple commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion takes place during the celebration of Eucharist. A service for this may be found in the Book of Blessings, chapter 63.

10. The length of service for each Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion is left to the discretion of the pastor/pastoral administrator, as long as the minister remains a member of the parish. It is recommended that the commission be renewed every two years.

11. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may still enter the sanctuary during the Fraction Litany, but stand at a distance from the altar.

12. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion always receive the vessel from the priest which contains the Blessed Sacrament which they will distribute. (*GIRM 2000, 162*) *Note: This does not mean that the only person who may give communion to the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion is the priest or deacon. Especially in parishes where there are a large number of ministers the priest may choose to communicate one or two of the ministers and then hand him or her the vessel so that he or she may help distribute communion to the rest of the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.*

13. Ministers may assist with purifying and washing the communion vessels as needed, as well as consuming the remaining precious blood. (See *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States* #51-55)

14. At Eucharistic liturgies with children, fully initiated adults or youth aged sixteen and above, may fulfill the role of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

15. Certificates of Commissioning for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion with the Archbishop's signature can be made available through the Office of Evangelization upon request.