

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

The office of minister of lay Holy Communion was officially instituted by Pope Paul VI in 1973.

The principle behind the move was and is the spiritual good of the faithful. Reception of Holy Communion must not become impossible or difficult because of a shortage of priests or because a priest is not available - hence the need for lay ministers.

Ministers exercise a noble office, confident in the knowledge that by their ministry they are serving their fellow Catholics and promoting their spiritual wellbeing by making it possible for Christ's body and blood to be received by the faithful.

It is forbidden for priests and deacons, who are, of course, the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion, to sit down and leave the distribution to lay ministers. This doesn't apply where the priest is incapacitated.

PROCEDURE

The Holy Communion ministers come to the sanctuary after the priest has received Holy Communion but not during. The hosts used at Holy Communion should be the same ones consecrated at the Mass being said. If you run out of hosts the priest will go to the tabernacle and put some extra hosts in your communion dish. After Holy Communion is distributed the chalices and patens are left on the side of the altar for the priest to purify. If there is any consecrated wine left in the chalices, the priest will drink it, not the Holy Communion ministers. The servers take the sacred vessels back to the credence table after the priest has purified them.

To receive Holy Communion people should be at liberty to leave their seats whenever they wish whether they be at the front or back of the church. The less regimentation there is, the better. If there is a large crowd at Mass, I am considering having three people distribute the Sacred Hosts so that it is not too prolonged.

Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, as well as distributing Holy Communion during Sunday Mass should also be willing to take it to the Sick and housebound.

The ideal situation is where the minister has only one person to go to on Sunday.

Ministers of communion are also allowed to expose the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance for exposition and repose it after the period of prayer is over. They are not allowed to give the blessing.

TAKING COMMUNION TO THE SICK

Here at St Vincent's people are 'send out' towards the end of the Sunday morning Mass (before the concluding rites) accompanied by a prayer

In the communicant's house there should normally be a table covered with a white cloth on which should stand a crucifix with lighted candles. Ministers are not required to provide these. The sick or housebound person will normally be expecting you.

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A period of silence should be observed after the person has received the sacred host. Appropriate set or spontaneous prayers can be said after Communion. They can be read from a book or based on the Gospel of the Sunday. I can provide you with 'prayers after Holy Communion' if you so wish. The reading during the Service should be short and, if possible, Eucharistic in character. The communicant can drink some water after receiving the host if he or she so wishes. Some ill people find it difficult to swallow the sacred host. If some of the host falls out of the sick person's mouth, please wrap it in a paper tissue or napkin and return it to the Church where Fr Paddy will have it burnt. There is a little booklet which you can use. Just ask the priest for it.

Except in an emergency, sacred hosts should not be kept in your house. If you have hosts left after your visits to the sick, they should be brought back to the Church.

If I remember rightly Eucharistic ministers are commissioned for a period of five years after which, if

they wish to continue as a minister, should be re-commissioned.

Communion time with a sick or housebound person will normally involve exchanging pleasantries but not engagement in extended conversation about all and sundry.

Ministers should be discreet about the condition of the sick or housebound person since it is private information. However, you should always let the priest know if, in your judgement, the time has come for the person to receive the Sacrament of the Sick. The family of the sick person should be aware that we are taking communion to their sick or housebound relative. Please let the sick person know that the priest is always willing to come and hear their confession if they so desire it.

The Sacrament of the Sick (Anointing) may be given to any weak or infirm person especially those who are old and infirm. We have community anointing sessions within Mass in church twice a year – normally during Advent and Lent. Please encourage the sick and housebound to come to these.

The minister of communion are conscious that they hold a liturgical ministry confirmed by the Church and that they should endeavour to live lives in conformity with the Gospel. They should cultivate a warm and friendly attitude towards the community to which they belong and get along well with everybody - young and old.

THE MASS

1382. The Mass is at the same time, and inseparably, the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated and the sacred banquet of communion with the Lord's body and blood. But the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice is wholly directed toward the intimate union of the faithful with Christ through Holy Communion. To receive Holy Communion is to receive Christ himself who has offered himself for us.

1332. *Holy Mass (Missa)*, because the liturgy in which the mystery of salvation is accomplished

concludes with the sending forth (*missio*) of the faithful, so that they may fulfil God's will in their daily lives.

1088. "Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the Sacrifice of the Mass not only in the person of his minister, 'the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross,'

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but especially in the Eucharistic species. By his power he is present in the sacraments so that when anybody baptizes, it is really Christ himself who baptizes. He is present in his word since it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church. Lastly, he is present when the Church prays and sings, for he has promised 'where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them.'"

THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST

1323. "At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Saviour instituted the Eucharistic

sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a Paschal banquet 'in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.

The Eucharistic Prayer

By this prayer of thanksgiving and consecration we come to the heart and summit of the celebration:

In the preface, the Church gives thanks to the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit, for all his works: creation, redemption, and sanctification. The whole community thus joins in the unending praise that the Church in Heaven, the Angels and all the Saints, sing to the thrice-holy God.

1353 In the epiclesis, (calling down the Holy Spirit) the Church asks the Father to send his Holy Spirit (or the power of his blessing¹⁷⁸) on the bread and wine, so that by His power they may become the body and blood of Jesus Christ and so that those who take part

in the Eucharist may be one body and one spirit.

In the institution narrative, the power of the words and the action of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit, makes sacramentally present under the species of bread and wine Christ's body and blood, his sacrifice offered on the cross once for all.

1354 In the 'anamnesis' (calling to mind) that follows, the Church calls to mind the Passion, resurrection, and glorious return of Christ Jesus; she presents to the Father the offering of his Son which reconciles us with him.

In the intercessions, the Church indicates that the Eucharist is celebrated in communion with the whole Church in heaven and on earth, the living and the dead, and in communion with the pastors of the Church, the Pope, the diocesan bishop, his *presbyterium* and his deacons, and all the bishops of the whole world together with their Churches.

1355 In the communion, preceded by the Lord's Prayer and the breaking of the bread, the faithful receive "the bread of heaven" and "the cup of

salvation," the body and blood of Christ who offered himself "for the life of the world":¹⁷⁹

Because this bread and wine have been made Eucharist ("eucharisted," according to an ancient expression), "we call this food Eucharist, and no one may take part in it unless he believes that what we teach is true, has received baptism for the forgiveness of sins and new birth, and lives in keeping with what Christ taught."¹⁸⁰

7 The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion

'Redemptionis Sacramentum'

[154]. As has already been recalled, "the only minister who can confect the Sacrament of the Eucharist *in persona Christi* is a validly ordained Priest".^[254] Hence the name "minister of the Eucharist" belongs properly to the Priest alone. Moreover, also by reason of their sacred Ordination, the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are the

Bishop, the Priest and the Deacon,[\[255\]](#) to whom it belongs therefore to administer Holy Communion to the lay members of Christ's faithful during the celebration of Mass. In this way their ministerial office in the Church is fully and accurately brought to light, and the sign value of the Sacrament is made complete.

[155.] 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. 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,[\[256\]](#) for one occasion or for a specified time, and an appropriate formula of blessing may be used for the occasion. This act of appointment, however, does not necessarily take a liturgical form, nor, if it does take a liturgical form, should it resemble sacred Ordination in any way. Finally, in special cases of an unforeseen nature, permission can be given for a single occasion by the Priest who presides at the celebration of the Eucharist.[\[257\]](#)

[156.] 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 "Eucharistic Minister" nor "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.

[157.] If there is usually present a sufficient number of sacred ministers for the distribution of Holy Communion, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may not be appointed. Indeed, in such circumstances, those who may have already been appointed to this ministry should not exercise it. The practice of those Priests is reprobated who, even though present at the celebration, abstain from distributing Communion and hand this function over to laypersons.[\[258\]](#)

[158.] Indeed, the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion may administer Communion only when the Priest and Deacon are lacking, when the Priest is prevented by weakness or advanced age or some other genuine reason, or when the number of faithful

coming to Communion is so great that the very celebration of Mass would be unduly prolonged.^[259] This, however, is to be understood in such a way that a brief prolongation, considering the circumstances and culture of the place, is not at all a sufficient reason.

[159.] 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.

133.] A Priest or Deacon, or an extraordinary minister who takes the Most Holy Eucharist when an ordained minister is absent or impeded in order to administer it as Communion for a sick person, should go insofar as possible directly from the place where the Sacrament is reserved to the sick person's home, leaving aside any profane business so that any danger of profanation may be avoided and the greatest reverence for the Body of Christ may be ensured. Furthermore the Rite for the administration of

Communion to the sick, as prescribed in the Roman Ritual, is always to be used.^[226]

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.^[205] The Bishops' Conferences have the faculty to decide whether it is appropriate, once their decisions have been given the *recognitio* by the Apostolic See, for sacred vessels to be made of other solid materials as well. It is strictly required, however, that such materials be truly noble in the common estimation within a given region,^[206] 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 the 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.^[207]

Certain Forms of Worship of the Most Holy Eucharist outside Mass

[134.] “The worship of the Eucharist outside the Sacrifice of the Mass is a tribute of inestimable value in the life of the Church. Such worship is closely linked to the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice.”^[227] Therefore both public and private devotion to the Most Holy Eucharist even outside Mass should be vigorously promoted, for by means of it the faithful give adoration to Christ, truly and really present,^[228] the “High Priest of the good things to come”^[229] and Redeemer of the whole world. “It is the responsibility of sacred Pastors, even by the witness of their life, to support the practice of Eucharistic worship and especially exposition of the Most Holy Sacrament, as well as prayer of adoration before Christ present under the Eucharistic species.”^[230]

[136.] The Ordinary should diligently foster Eucharistic adoration, whether brief or prolonged or

almost continuous, with the participation of the people. For in recent years in so many places “adoration of the Most Holy Sacrament is also an important daily practice and becomes an inexhaustible source of holiness”, although there are also places “where there is evident almost a total lack of regard for worship in the form of Eucharistic adoration.”^[234]