

Instruction:

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion Assisting at Mass and Communion of the Sick in the Diocese of Cleveland¹

Introduction

1. That more complete form of participation in the Mass by which the faithful, after the Priest's communion, receive the Lord's body from the sacrifice, is strongly endorsed.²
2. Holy Communion has a fuller form as a sign when it takes place under both kinds. For in this form the sign of the Eucharistic banquet is more clearly evident and clearer expression is given to the divine will by which the new and eternal Covenant is ratified in the Blood of the Lord, as also the connection between the Eucharistic banquet and the eschatological banquet in the Kingdom of the Father.³
3. In 1973, Pope Paul VI authorized the use of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion in the promulgation of the document *Immensae Caritatis*.

Since then, other directives on the celebration of the Eucharist and the role of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion have been issued by the Holy See, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Diocese of Cleveland. This present Instruction is issued in response to recent developments and directions from the Holy See concerning the role of the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion.

In addition to bringing diocesan teaching and policy to a current status with regards to the teaching of the Holy See in these matters, this Instruction seeks to clearly present the requirements for those who exercise this ministry and to put in one place all the laws that pertain to this ministry in the local Church of the Diocese of Cleveland.

4. Regarding the distribution of Holy Communion, the Church teaches that the ordinary minister is a bishop, presbyter or Deacon.⁴
5. The extraordinary minister of Holy Communion is an acolyte or another member of the Christian faithful designated by the bishop to distribute Holy Communion.⁵

¹ This present Instruction in English is the typical edition of *Instruction: Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion Assisting at Mass and Communion of the Sick in the Diocese of Cleveland*. When questions of interpretation arise with translations of this document this English typical edition is to be considered the authoritative source.

² *Sacrosanctum concilium* (hereinafter noted as SC) 55

³ General Instruction of the Roman Missal (hereinafter noted as GIRM) 281

⁴ Code of Canon Law (hereinafter noted as CIC) 910 §1

⁵ CIC 910 §2

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

6. The circumstances which suggest the use of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are when the ordinary ministers are impeded from administering Communion because of another pastoral ministry, ill-health, or old age; whenever the number of faithful wishing to receive Communion is so great that the celebration of Mass or the giving of Communion outside Mass would take too long.⁶
7. Such individuals are formally recognized by the bishop after they have participated in diocesan formation for this ministry; they are then commissioned in their parish or institution by the pastor or his equivalent.
8. In rare circumstances when there are not sufficient ordinary or extraordinary ministers present, a Priest may commission an individual to serve as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion for a particular occasion, using the following words, “*Today you are to distribute the body and blood of Christ to your brothers and sisters. May the Lord bless + you, N.*”⁷

It is never allowed for the Deacon or an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion to delegate anyone else to distribute Holy Communion, as for example a parent or spouse or child of the sick person who is the communicant.⁸

9. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may also distribute the Eucharist to members of the faithful who are unable to be present at Mass (e.g. the homebound, sick, elderly, imprisoned).

Candidates for Service as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

10. Those who assist as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion must be fully initiated in the Roman Catholic Church, that is, they are to have received the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.
11. It is the responsibility of the pastor, or his equivalent, the head of a religious order or the one who exercises pastoral leadership within Catholic institutions to select those faithful who live a life in accord with the faith of the Church for service as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.
12. Each person is to be chosen by name.⁹ A general call for volunteers to serve in this ministry is not to be carried out.
13. Care should be taken to ensure that the selected individuals represent the overall makeup of the parish.

⁶ *Immensae Caritatis* (hereinafter noted as IC) as found in Documents on the Liturgy (hereinafter noted as DOL) 2075

⁷ *Roman Missal: Third Edition*, Appendix III, Rite of Deputing a Minister to Distribute Holy Communion on a Single Occasion.

⁸ Instruction: *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (hereinafter noted as RS) 159

⁹ IC (DOL 2075)

14. Those selected must be capable of fulfilling the physical requirements of this ministry (e.g. climbing stairs, holding vessels).

15. Young people who are entering their senior year of high school may be trained for this ministry in their parish or at the Catholic high school they may be attending during the spring semester of their junior year. Beyond this, there is no age requirement.

High School personnel are asked to contact the pastor of the student being considered for the ministry of extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, requesting a letter of recommendation.

16. Those who have been commissioned are commissioned for a specific place for this ministry (cf. paragraph 22).

17. People who have moved into the Diocese of Cleveland who have served as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion in another diocese must go through the commissioning process required in the Diocese of Cleveland before exercising this ministry (cf. paragraph 21).

Formation

18. Those selected to serve as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are to receive spiritual, theological and practical preparation for this ministry.¹⁰

19. This formation is fulfilled through participation in the diocesan formation sessions (offered twice a year – in early fall and early spring) and by training in the parish or the specific institution for this ministry with regard to the practical details related to the context of the setting.

20. Individuals who take Communion to the sick – who are either confined to their homes or nursing homes or are in a hospital setting – are to have additional formation and training specific to that ministerial function, based on the Roman Ritual Pastoral Care of the Sick.

Commissioning

21. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are commissioned by the bishop for service in a particular parish or institution in the Diocese of Cleveland for a 5 year term (renewable once) using the following procedure:

- a. The Office for Worship will send notice of formation sessions to the parishes and institutions. The pastor will then forward the names of the candidates to this ministry to the Office for Worship.
- b. These individuals participate in diocesan formation.
- c. Following participation in the diocesan formation, the Office for Worship will send an *Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion Certificate of Commission* to the parish or institution.

¹⁰ Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion (hereinafter noted as NDRHC) 28

- d. Training in the particular logistics of the Communion Rite at the individual's parish or institution follows reception of the certificate.
- e. The pastor, or his equivalent, in the context of Mass, celebrates the Commissioning of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion using the ritual as found in the Book of Blessings, Chapter 63.

Place of Ministry

- 22. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are commissioned to carry out this ministry within the specific context of their parish or institution (e.g. high school, college, university, nursing home, hospital, jail, prison).
- 23. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion fulfill their role in sacramental celebrations on Sunday and at other Masses provided there are insufficient numbers of ordinary ministers present.
- 24. In the case of weddings and funerals, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are to be selected from those who fulfill this ministry at the parish where the celebration is taking place.
- 25. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion who exercise ministry both within a parish and an institution are required to receive, in addition to diocesan training, particular formation for each institution with which they are associated (e.g. high school, college, university, nursing home, hospital, jail, prison).

Preparation for the Liturgy

- 26. Those who exercise this ministry should 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.¹¹
- 27. All ministers of Holy Communion should show the greatest reverence for the Most Holy Eucharist and the faithful with whom they share the Body and the Blood of Christ by their demeanor, their attire, and the manner in which they handle the consecrated bread or wine.¹²

Participation in the Liturgy

- 28. The Church earnestly desires that Christ's faithful, when present at Mass, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators; on the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the service conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full involvement.¹³

¹¹ IC (DOL 2081)

¹² NDRHC 29

¹³ SC 48

29. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should model this participation by joining in the singing of the hymns, songs and acclamations, through attentive listening to the proclamation of the word of God and by participating in the spoken and sung dialogues of the Mass.
30. They are to have an understanding of the various parts of the Mass and their meaning¹⁴ and make themselves its teachers.¹⁵
31. It is not necessary for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to participate in the Entrance Procession, nor is it necessary for them to sit in the sanctuary. They should, however, be seated in reasonable proximity to the sanctuary for ease of movement when it is time for them to begin their ministry.¹⁶

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

32. If extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are required by pastoral need, they approach the altar after the Priest receives Communion.¹⁷
33. After the Priest has concluded his own Communion, he distributes Communion to the Deacon, if present, and then to the extraordinary ministers. Neither Deacons nor lay ministers may ever receive Holy Communion in the manner of a concelebrating Priest.¹⁸
34. The Priest, who may be assisted by the Deacon, then hands the sacred vessels to the extraordinary ministers for the distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful.¹⁹
35. The ministers proceed to their assigned location within the church or institution.
36. 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.²⁰
37. The communicant, including the extraordinary minister, is never allowed to self-communicate, even by means of intinction. Communion under either form, bread or wine, must always be given by an ordinary or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion.²¹

¹⁴ SC 48

¹⁵ SC 14

¹⁶ Introduction to the Order of Mass: A Pastoral Resource of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, USCCB: Washington © 2003 (hereinafter noted as IOM) 21

¹⁷ GIRM 162; IOM 21; NDRHC 38

¹⁸ NDRHC 39; IOM 21

¹⁹ GIRM 162; NDRHC 38 and 40; IOM 21

²⁰ NDRHC 39

²¹ NDRHC 50

Ministering the Body of Christ

38. When receiving Holy Communion, the communicant bows his or her head before the Sacrament as a gesture of reverence.²²
39. The minister raises the host slightly and shows it to each, saying, *The Body of Christ*. The communicant replies, *Amen*, and receives the sacrament.²³
40. The communicant may choose whether to receive the Body of Christ in the hand or on the tongue.²⁴ As soon as the communicant receives the host, he or she consumes the whole of it.²⁵
41. 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.²⁶ Communicants should not be denied Holy Communion because they kneel.²⁷ Rather, such instances should be addressed pastorally, by providing the faithful with proper catechesis on the reason for this norm.
42. If it is necessary to use hosts consecrated from a previous Mass, a Priest or Deacon should bring the reserved sacrament to the altar from the tabernacle, reverently but without ceremony.²⁸
43. If a host or any particle should fall, it is to be picked up reverently.²⁹
44. After the Communion of the faithful, if a fragment of the host adheres to one's fingers, the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion should wipe his or her fingers over the ciboria or, if necessary, wash them.³⁰

Ministering the Blood of Christ

45. The extension of the faculty for the distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds does not represent a change in the Church's immemorial beliefs concerning the Holy Eucharist. Rather, today the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the reform of the Second Vatican Council, finds it salutary to restore a practice by which the faithful are again able to experience "a fuller sign of the Eucharistic banquet."³¹

²² GIRM 160

²³ GIRM 161

²⁴ NDRHC 41; see also GIRM 160-161, RS 92

²⁵ GIRM 161

²⁶ GIRM 160

²⁷ RS 91

²⁸ IOM 21

²⁹ GIRM 280

³⁰ GIRM 278

³¹ See NDRHC 21

46. If Communion is given under both kinds, the Deacon administers the chalice to the communicants.³² When there are an insufficient number of Deacons or Priests present, an instituted acolyte or an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion may administer the chalice.³³
47. Communion from the chalice is generally the preferred form of ministering the Precious Blood in the Latin Church.³⁴
48. If any of the Precious Blood is spilled, the area where the spill occurred should be washed with water, and this water should then be poured into the *sacrarium* in the sacristy.³⁵
49. After receiving the Body of Christ, the communicant moves and stands facing the minister of the chalice.³⁶
50. When receiving the Precious Blood, the communicant bows his or her head before the Sacrament as a gesture of reverence.³⁷
51. The minister says, *The Blood of Christ*. The communicant replies, *Amen*.³⁸
52. The minister hands over the chalice, which the communicant raises to his or her mouth. The communicant drinks a little from the chalice, hands it back to the minister, and then withdraws.³⁹
53. After each communicant has received the Blood of Christ, the minister carefully wipes both sides of the rim of the chalice with a fully opened purificator, using a different portion of the purificator after each communicant. 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 the Precious Blood.⁴⁰
54. Children who have made their First Holy Communion are encouraged to receive Communion under both kinds provided that they are properly instructed and that they are old enough to receive from the chalice.⁴¹ Anyone who has made their First Holy Communion and who wishes to receive from the chalice is not to be denied because of their age.

³² GIRM 182

³³ GIRM 284 a

³⁴ NDRHC 42

³⁵ GIRM 280

³⁶ GIRM 286

³⁷ GIRM 160

³⁸ GIRM 286, NDRHC 43

³⁹ GIRM 286

⁴⁰ See NDRHC 45

⁴¹ NDRHC 47

55. It is the choice of the communicant, not the minister, to receive from the chalice.⁴²
56. When there are no more communicants in line to receive from the chalice, if Precious Blood is remaining, the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion (as well as ordinary ministers) should assist in the distribution at a nearby location in the church.
57. It is desirable that there be generally two ministers of the Precious Blood for each minister of the Body of Christ.⁴³
58. At the conclusion of the distribution of Holy Communion, empty chalices are taken directly to the credence table.
59. When more of the Precious Blood remains than was necessary for Communion, those chalices are taken directly to the altar where the Deacon immediately and reverently consumes at the altar all of the Blood of Christ that remains, assisted, if the case requires, by other Deacons and Priests.⁴⁴
60. The chalice may never be left on the altar or another place to be picked up by the communicant for self-communication (except in the case of concelebrating bishops or Priests), nor may the chalice be passed from one communicant to another. There shall always be a minister of the chalice.⁴⁵

Intinction

61. Holy Communion may be distributed by intinction only in the following manner: the communicant, holding a Communion-plate under the mouth, approaches the Priest who holds the vessel with the sacred particles, with a minister standing at his side and holding the chalice. The Priest takes a host, intincts the particle in the chalice and, showing it, says: 'The Body and Blood of Christ.' The communicant replies, 'Amen,' receives the Sacrament in the mouth from the Priest, and then withdraws.⁴⁶
62. Individuals may not self-communicate by intinction.⁴⁷

Purification of the Sacred Vessels

63. After the distribution of Communion, if there is Precious Blood remaining in the chalices, standing at the altar, the Deacon immediately and reverently consumes all of the Precious Blood that remains⁴⁸ and gathers the hosts, if any remain. Either a Priest or a Deacon then reposes the hosts in the tabernacle.⁴⁹

⁴² NDRHC 46; GIRM 284

⁴³ NDRHC 30

⁴⁴ GIRM 182

⁴⁵ NDRHC 44

⁴⁶ NDRHC 49; GIRM 287

⁴⁷ NDRHC 50

⁴⁸ GIRM 182, see paragraph 59 above

⁴⁹ Instruction: Deacons Assisting at Mass in the Diocese of Cleveland (hereinafter noted as DAMDC) 49

64. If a Deacon is not present, 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.⁵⁰
65. After the hosts are reposed in the tabernacle, the chalice and other sacred vessels are carried to the credence table where the Deacon, or in his absence the Priest, purifies and arranges them in the usual way.⁵¹
66. When more of the Precious Blood remains than was necessary for Communion, and if not consumed by the Bishop or Priest celebrant, the Deacon, standing at the altar, “immediately and reverently consumes all of the Blood of Christ that remains, assisted, if the case requires, by other Deacons and Priests.”⁵²
67. 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*.⁵³
68. After Mass, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may assist with the cleansing of the vessels using hot water and soap.⁵⁴

Reservation of the Eucharist

69. The primary and original reason for reservation of the Eucharist outside Mass is the administration of viaticum. The secondary reasons are the giving of communion and the adoration of our Lord Jesus Christ who is present in the sacrament.⁵⁵
70. The Precious Blood may not be reserved, except for giving Communion to someone who is sick.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ GIRM 163

⁵¹ DAMDC, 50

⁵² NDRHC 52

⁵³ NDRHC 55

⁵⁴ Letter from Bishop Lennon to the Priests of the Diocese of Cleveland, 3 January 2007 (22/2007)

⁵⁵ Roman Ritual, “Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass” 5

⁵⁶ NDRHC 54

Communion to the Sick

71. In accord with an ancient tradition, it is appropriate for Holy Communion to be taken directly from the Sunday Mass to the sick and to those unable to leave their homes.⁵⁷

Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may:

- a. bring their pyx to the sacristy before Mass, and indicate the number of hosts needed for communion to the sick. Following the Prayer After Communion or the announcements, the extraordinary ministers come forward and receive the pyx from the Priest who then gives the final blessing. The extraordinary ministers process out with the Priest.
 - b. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may come to the church after the Mass is completed and receive from the Priest or Deacon a pyx with hosts from the tabernacle for communion to the sick.
72. No one is permitted to keep the Eucharist on one's person or to carry it around, unless pastoral necessity urges it and the prescripts of the diocesan bishop are observed.⁵⁸

Therefore, the Blessed Sacrament is not to be kept in the home or vehicle of the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion overnight (e.g. after Saturday night Mass until Sunday morning, after Sunday morning Mass until Sunday afternoon) until it can be taken to the sick members of the parish.

73. If not consecrated at a Mass in the presence of the sick person, the Blood of the Lord is kept in a properly covered vessel and is placed in the tabernacle after Communion. The Precious Blood should be carried to the sick in a vessel that is closed in such a way as to eliminate all danger of spilling. If some of the Precious Blood remains after the sick person has received Communion, it should be consumed by the minister, who should also see to it that the vessel is properly purified.⁵⁹

Distribution of Communion in Nursing Homes and Hospitals

74. When communion is distributed in a hospital or other health-care institution, the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion uses the appropriate ritual from Pastoral Care of the Sick.

⁵⁷ IOM 16

⁵⁸ CIC 935

⁵⁹ NDRHC 54

“Communion Services”

75. Individuals commissioned within the Diocese of Cleveland to serve as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are not authorized to lead the service “Holy Communion Outside Of Mass”⁶⁰ (“communion services”).

“Special Cases”

76. Laypersons and Deacons who are not able to receive Holy Communion under the species of bread due to Celiac-Sprue disease may receive the Precious Blood, regardless of whether the Precious Blood is offered to the rest of the congregation at Mass.⁶¹

77. Pastors may give permission for an individual Deacon or layperson to receive Holy Communion from a low-gluten host. Pastors should consult the Diocesan Policy for use of low gluten hosts and mustum (Celiac-Sprue disease) of 15 March 2006 for the appropriate procedure.

In order to fully implement the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, I, in accord with Canon 34, hereby promulgate the Instruction “Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion Assisting at Mass and Communion of the Sick in the Diocese of Cleveland” on 1 June 2009, with an implementation date of 31 July 2009.

Sister Therese Guerin Sullivan, SP

1 June 2009

Most Reverend Richard Lennon

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⁶⁰ From Roman Ritual entitled “Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass, Chapter One”

⁶¹ Diocesan Policy for use of low gluten hosts and mustum (Celiac-Sprue disease) C-116a/2006