

Diocese of Fall River



GUIDELINES FOR EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

I Qualifications and Responsibilities

- A. "A lay Christian who is to be chosen as an extraordinary minister of holy communion should be outstanding in Christian life, in faith, and in morals, and one whose mature age warrants the choice and who is properly trained to carry out so exalted a function." (Fidei Custos n. 5)
- B. In the Diocese of Fall River, the candidate should be a fully initiated member in communion with the Holy Catholic Church and have reached his/her sixteenth birthday.
- C. All candidates are to attend the sessions designated for them by the Office of the Bishop. Candidates will attend the training organized by the Office for Divine Worship and/or the Department of Pastoral Care of the Sick.
- D. Candidates must be chosen or approved by their proper Pastor before the application is forwarded to the Bishop's Office. These candidates receive their mandate from the Bishop to exercise this ministry for a period of one year. In a case of genuine necessity, the mandate may be extended upon request of the proper Pastor. The mandate is effective upon the celebration of commissioning by the Pastor or delegate, preferably on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi. (Cfr. Book of Blessings, n.1871 ff.) The rite of commissioning should be repeated each year if the mandate of the extraordinary minister is to be extended.
- E. "Because these faculties have been granted exclusively in favor of the spiritual good of the faithful and for cases of genuine need, let priests remember that such faculties do not release them from the obligation of giving the Eucharist to the faithful who lawfully request it and especially of bringing and administering it to the sick." (Immensae Caritatis VI)

II EXERCISING THE MINISTRY

- A. "We are pleased to recall that the Holy See has authorized under certain circumstances, the distribution of Holy Communion by extraordinary ministers duly deputed to this high task. But we wish to emphasize that this ministry remains an extraordinary ministry to be exercised in accordance with the precise norms of the Holy See. By its nature therefore the role of the extraordinary minister is different from those roles of Eucharistic participation." (Paul VI)
- B. "By reason of their sacred Ordination, the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are the Bishop, the Priest and the Deacon, to whom it belongs therefore to administer Holy Communion to the lay members of Christ's faithful during the celebration of Mass. 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 the Mass. If, moreover, reasons of real necessity prompt it, another lay member of Christ's faithful may also be delegated by the diocesan Bishop..." (Redemptionis Sacramentum nn. 154 - 155)
- C. Therefore, it is clear that the ministry is to be exercised **only** when no priest, deacon or acolyte is available; or the ordinary minister is impeded from administering Holy Communion because of another pastoral ministry, ill-health or old age. The ministry may be exercised:
- within Mass because a sizable congregation is assembled and at which a significant number of communicants may be expected to receive Holy Communion.
 - outside Mass when distance makes it difficult to bring communion, especially as viaticum to the sick in danger of death; or when the sheer number of sick people, especially in hospitals, nursing homes or similar institutions, requires several ministers. (Immensae Caritatis n. 1)
 - within the parish in which the special minister resides or other Diocesan Apostolate for which the special minister has been duly mandated by the Bishop.
 - in attire consistent with the dignity of the situation. Vestments or robes are **not** to be used.
- D. Exercising the ministry during Mass, the extraordinary minister:
- may take part in the entrance procession and assume a position in the sanctuary.
 - may not exercise any other ministry at the celebration in which he/she will be distributing Holy Communion.
 - stands near the altar during the breaking of the bread. After the priest receives Holy Communion in the usual way, the extraordinary ministers receive Holy Communion from the priest, they may receive Holy Communion under both kinds, they may **not** communicate themselves. The priest then gives them the sacred vessels containing the hosts or the precious blood. If pre-consecrated hosts must be obtained from the tabernacle, only the priest or deacon may do so. The extraordinary minister does not have access to the tabernacle.

-with great reverence goes to his/her station and distributes Holy Communion in the usual way. The proper and only permissible form for distributing Holy Communion is to offer the consecrated bread by saying, "The Body of Christ" and to offer the consecrated wine by saying, "The Blood of Christ." No other words or names should be added; and the formula should not be edited in any way. (Cfr. GIRM, 161; 284-287)

-following the distribution of Holy Communion, returns the sacred vessels to the priest or deacon who will return any excess hosts to the tabernacle. The extraordinary minister may assist the priest and deacon to consume what remains of the Precious Blood from the chalice then cleanses his/her fingers and returns to his/her place. The sacred vessels are to be purified by the priest, deacon, or an instituted acolyte. (GIRM n.279)

-may take part in the recessional.

E. Distribution of Holy Communion to the sick:

1. At Mass

After communion, the extraordinary minister to the sick goes to the tabernacle or altar and receives from the priest or deacon the pyx containing the number of hosts needed for the sick they will visit.

After receiving the pyx, the extraordinary minister leaves the church -- or returns to their seat for the conclusion of Mass, depending on local custom-- and proceeds **directly** to the home of the sick.

At the sick person's home, the extraordinary minister follows the rite of distribution of Holy Communion to the sick then may spend some time visiting the homebound person.

2. Outside Mass

The extraordinary minister makes arrangements to meet the priest or deacon at the church to receive from the priest or deacon a sufficient number of hosts in the pyx. The extraordinary minister may **not** have access to the tabernacle. The extraordinary minister then follows the usual procedure described above.

3. In the Hospital

The extraordinary minister makes arrangement to meet the priest/deacon chaplain who will provide the extraordinary minister with sufficient hosts in a pyx or ciborium. Using the appropriate rite, the extraordinary minister distributes Holy Communion to the sick who request it. At the end, the extraordinary minister returns the vessel to the priest/deacon chaplain.

F. Some final guidelines:

-It is the responsibility of the priest or deacon to have care of the tabernacle and Holy Communion it contains. The extraordinary ministers' responsibility begins when the priest or deacon entrusts the Blessed Sacrament to them for distribution.

-The extraordinary minister should confine his/her activity to his/her parish, unless the extraordinary minister is assigned to hospital ministry by the Pastoral Care Office. An extraordinary minister in the parish should not bring Holy Communion to parishioners in a hospital which has an appointed chaplain.

-It might happen that there are hosts left over for some reason or another after all calls are completed. In that case, the special minister is to return the pyx **directly** to the priest or deacon. If the priest or deacon is not available, the special minister may reverently consume any remaining hosts. The pyx should **never** be left in a car or unattended.