



## Guidelines for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion

### **Regarding your title**

The title ‘extraordinary minister of Holy Communion’ is a purposeful one. ‘Extra’ comes from the Latin meaning ‘outside’, as in outside the ordinary. The ordinary minister of the Eucharist is a bishop, a priest, or a deacon. In an ideal world, we would have several priests and deacons at each parish. There are some among us who recall a time when this was in fact the case! We are fortunate to have several clerics in our parishes, though insufficient to distribute communion at large gatherings.

The Church is alert to “the danger of obscuring the complementary relationship between the actions of clerics and that of laypersons”, of a “clericalization” of the lay faithful or of clerics inappropriately assuming those things that are proper to the lay faithful.<sup>1</sup> Thus it is fitting and right to recognize these differences by properly addressing each according to their role, using the title as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion for the lay faithful who assist in distributing communion.

### **Appropriate dress**

Your ‘Sunday best’ is expected each time you serve. You should be covered from shoulders to knees, with footwear that is neat, presentable, and dressy.

Men are expected to wear:

- Button-down dress shirt
- Long pants
- Dress shoes

Women are expected to wear:

- Button-down dress shirt or blouse
- Long skirt or pants
- Dress shoes (no heels)

### **Do NOT wear:**

- Shorts
- Jeans
- T-shirts or shirts with any major branding, text, symbols or logos
- Athletic shoes, sandals, or cowboy boots

### **When to come up & where to stand**

The Church directs that “If extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are required by pastoral need, they should not approach the altar before the Priest has received

Communion.”<sup>ii</sup> Practically speaking, this means that extraordinary ministers should come forward as the priest is receiving the Precious Blood.

To facilitate orderly and easy distribution of the sacred vessels, extraordinary ministers should line up next to the altar on the side closest to the ambo. For the sake of consistency, those distributing the Precious Body should be on the inside (closest to the tabernacle) and those distributing the Precious Blood on the outside (closest to the sanctuary steps).

### **Distribution of the Body and Blood of the Lord**

Above all other responsibilities, your first duty is to reverence, care for, and protect the Eucharist as you distribute communion to the faithful. Once you are holding the Precious Body or Precious Blood, **no other functions** should ever be assumed outside this duty or returning the Sacred Species to the sanctuary.

Communion is distributed to those presenting themselves with the words given by the Church: “**The Body of Christ**” or “**The Blood of Christ**”.<sup>iii</sup> When distributing the Precious Blood, the minister carefully wipes both sides of the rim of the chalice with a purificator and turns the chalice slightly after each communicant receives.<sup>iv</sup>

The practice of intinction – of partly immersing the host in the Precious Blood – is **never** to be done by extraordinary ministers and is reserved to the priest.<sup>v</sup>

Communicants who desire reception via intinction must receive from the priest and should have arranged this with him beforehand.

### **After communion**

When communion is finished, the Precious Body and Precious Blood should be returned to the altar, with both patens and chalices placed on the corporal on the left of the altar. Afterwards, those who have distributed the Precious Body may use the ablution cup and purificator at the credence table to purify their fingers.

After communion, if the priest or deacon is returning the Precious Body to the tabernacle, all ministers in the sanctuary pause what they are doing, face the tabernacle, and genuflect as the tabernacle is closed.

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<sup>i</sup> *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 45

<sup>ii</sup> *Norms For The Distribution And Reception Of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds In The Dioceses Of The United States Of America*, 38

<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid*, 41 & 43

<sup>iv</sup> *Ibid*, 45

<sup>v</sup> *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 287