

OFFICE OF DIVINE WORSHIP
Archdiocese of Newark
March, 2008

Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

The instruction *Immensae Caritatis* states that the “wonderful gift of the Eucharist...demands that such an important mystery should be increasingly better known and its saving power more fully shared.” The same instruction goes on to state that “provision be made lest reception (of the Eucharist) become impossible or difficult owing to a lack of a sufficient number of ministers,” and further spells out the various circumstances in which a lack of sufficient ministers for the distribution of Holy Communion can occur, namely:

During Mass, because of the size of the congregation or a particular difficulty in which a celebrant finds himself; outside of Mass, when it is difficult because of distance to take the sacred species, especially the Viaticum, to the sick in danger of death, or when the number of the sick, especially in hospitals and similar institutions, requires many ministers.

Therefore, in order that the faithful, who are in the state of grace and who with an upright and pious disposition, wish to share in the Sacred Banquet, may not be deprived of this sacramental help and consolation, it has seemed appropriate to establish extraordinary ministers, who may distribute Holy Communion under the following determined conditions:

1. Local Ordinaries have the faculty to permit a suitable person individually chosen as an extraordinary minister for a specific occasion or for a time or, in the case of necessity, in some permanent way, either to distribute the Eucharist to the other faithful and to take it to the sick. This faculty may be used whenever:
 - a) There is no priest, deacon or acolyte;
 - b) These are prevented from administering Holy Communion because of another pastoral ministry or because of ill health or advanced age;
 - c) The number of faithful requesting Holy Communion is such that the celebration of Mass or the distribution of the Eucharist outside of Mass would be unduly prolonged.
2. Local Ordinaries also have the faculty to permit individual priests exercising their sacred office to appoint a suitable person who in cases of genuine necessity would distribute Holy Communion for a specific occasion. (Cf. #13).
3. The above-mentioned Local Ordinaries can delegate these faculties to auxiliary bishops, Episcopal vicars and Episcopal delegates.
4. The suitable person to whom numbers 1 and 2 refer shall be designated according to the following order: lector, student of major seminary, male and female religious, catechist, male or female lay Catholic. This order, however, can be changed according to the prudent judgment of the Local Ordinary.

5. In oratories of religious communities of either sex, the office of distributing Holy Communion in the circumstances described in number 1 can fittingly be given to a male superior not having major orders or to a woman superior or to the respective vicars.

6. If time permits, it is fitting that the suitable person individually chosen by the Local Ordinary for administering Holy Communion as well as the person appointed by a priest have the faculty spoken of in number 2, should receive the mandate according to the rite annexed to this Instruction; they are to distribute Holy Communion according to the liturgical norms.

Since these faculties are granted only for the spiritual good of the faithful and for cases of genuine necessity, priests are to remember that they are not thereby excused from the task of distributing the Eucharist to the faithful who legitimately request it, and especially from taking and giving it to the sick. The person who has been appointed to be an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion is necessarily to be duly instructed and should be distinguished by his or her Christian life, faith and morals. Ministers of Communion should strive to be worthy of this great office; let them cultivate devotion to the Holy Eucharist and show themselves as an example to the other faithful by their piety and reverence for this most holy Sacrament of the altar. Let no one be chosen whose selection may cause scandal among the faithful.

Consequently, the following are the norms governing the special ministry of communion in the Archdiocese of Newark:

ESTABLISHING THE MINISTRY

This section applies only to parishes or institutions which do not currently have extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion but wish to establish this ministry for the first time.

Pastors, administrator and chaplains of hospitals or other institutions are to consult with their associates, constituents and/or parish councils in determining the usefulness of this ministry in their particular pastoral situation.

If this ministry is desirable, the pastor, administrator or chaplain is to petition the Ordinary for the use of the faculty in establishing this ministry, stating the reasons why this ministry would be useful in the given pastoral situation. This letter should be addressed to the Archbishop and mailed c/o Office of Divine Worship, 171 Clifton Avenue, Newark, NJ 07104.

Once a parish or institution has received permission in writing to begin this ministry, the pastor, administrator or chaplain may then begin calling upon people to serve in this capacity by following the guidelines below under NOMINATION AND TRAINING OF MINISTERS.

NOMINATION AND TRAINING OF MINISTERS

Only the pastor, administrator or chaplain of a parish or institution may nominate individuals for the exercise of the ministry by name, affirming that

1. The quality of the candidate's Christian life makes this person a suitable candidate for this ministry
2. The candidate is of the proper age to serve in this ministry
3. The candidate is a fully initiated member of the Catholic Church (baptism, confirmation, Eucharist).
4. The candidate has been suitably trained for this ministry.

The ministry of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion is open to both religious and laymen and women, eighteen years of age or older.

The only exception to this age applies to Catholic high school seniors. Any Catholic high school senior who is a fully initiated Catholic and displays sufficient maturity may be mandated as a minister of communion, but only for liturgies held in the school. Any senior who is eighteen or older may get an extension of their mandate to serve their local parish upon written request from the pastor or administrator.

It is the responsibility of the parish, under the direction of the pastor or coordinator, to provide the necessary training for the prospective ministers. Doctrinal, liturgical, and pastoral training, under the direction of the coordinator should commence. (See *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America*). Parishes should also take advantage of training workshops for ministers of communion provided by the Office of Divine Worship.

To receive a mandate for a minister of communion, pastors, administrators and chaplains need to write a letter to the Archbishop sent in care of the Office of Divine Worship. The letter needs to include the following:

- First and last name of each candidate
- Indication that the candidate(s) has been found worthy of this ministry
- Indication that the candidate(s) is a fully initiated Catholic and of the appropriate age.
- Indication that the candidate(s) has been properly trained.
- A request to have the candidate(s) mandated as a minister of communion.

A sample letter is included at the end of this document.

Once the request for the mandate is approved, the pastor, administrator or chaplain will receive a packet from the Office of Divine Worship containing the following items:

- A certificate of mandate for each extraordinary minister of Holy Communion
- A copy of the Rite of Commissioning from the *Book of Blessings*, Chapter 63
- A form that is to be filled out by the pastor, administrator or chaplain and returned to the Worship Office *after the commissioning has taken place*
- A bill of \$5.00 per minister for the certificate and processing

Note: 1.The Rite of Commissioning may not take place on Holy Thursday or during any of the liturgies of the Easter Triduum. 2.The faculty for the ad hoc designation of extraordinary Ministers of Holy communion is not extended at this time.

THE MANDATE

The mandate is the permission of the Ordinary authorizing an individual to distribute Holy Communion in a parish or institution. The mandate is given:

- a) To an individual
- b) For use in a particular parish or institution, and
- c) Is not automatically transferable.

The termination of the mandate will be determined:

- a) By the decision of the extraordinary minister not wishing to continue this ministry
- b) By the minister moving to another parish or leaving the institution
- c) By the decision of the clergy of the parish or institution based on adequate reasons

The pastor, administrator or chaplain is to notify the Office of Divine Worship upon the termination of mandate.

Application may be made to the Worship Office for transfer of the mandate to another parish or institution within the Archdiocese. This request must come from the pastor, administrator or chaplain of the institution in which the minister will serve and must be made in writing to the Director of the Office of Divine Worship.

Upon receiving the mandate and commission (i.e. the celebration of the Rite) the extraordinary ministers may distribute the Eucharist to the faithful:

- a) At Mass, and
- b) Apart from the celebration of the Mass.

DISTRIBUTING COMMUNION AT MASS

The procedures for the distribution of Communion during Mass are found in the current edition of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal and in *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America*. Both of these resources are available through the Office of Divine Worship.

The frequency with which extraordinary ministers function is to be determined by the pastor, administrator or chaplain in consultation with the staff and in light of particular pastoral needs.

The extraordinary minister should see the task as more than the mere moments of distribution. The minister should be present for the entire celebration of Mass, and participate fully, especially by receiving Holy Communion under both species.

The liturgical role of the extraordinary minister should be kept visibly distinct from other liturgical ministries. The extraordinary minister, e.g., should not assist the priest at the altar in the manner of the deacon. When serving at Mass the extraordinary minister should not function in any other liturgical role at that same Mass. The extraordinary minister can have an assigned place (e.g. in the sanctuary near the place of the lector or in front of the congregation) or may sit in the assembly. Ministers of Communion may process with the priest and other ministers at the beginning and end of Mass.

The extraordinary minister should not wear the liturgical garb of an ordained deacon or priest (i.e. stole) yet should be dressed in a way consonant with the dignity of this role (e.g. jacket and tie for a man).

After receiving communion from the priest or deacon, the extraordinary minister distributes Communion in the usual manner.

A) Holding the host slightly raised, the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion shows the host to the communicant and says, “The Body of Christ”; the communicant responds by saying, “Amen” and receives the host;

B) Holding the chalice, the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion shows it to the communicant and says, “The Blood of Christ”; the communicant responds by saying, “Amen” and drinks from the chalice.

If a fragment of the host adheres to the ministers’ fingers, they are to cleanse their fingers over the plate and, if necessary, wash them. After communion, the remaining Blood of Christ is consumed, but the vessels are purified and cleaned *after Mass at a side table or in the sacristy*. The chalice is cleaned with wine and water or with water only, which is then drunk by the priest, deacon or acolyte. If a host or particle falls, it should be picked up reverently. If any of the Precious Blood spills, it is to be washed and the water poured into the sacrarium.

DISTRIBUTING COMMUNION APART FROM MASS

Communion apart from Mass is only by way of exception for those who cannot receive within the celebration of Mass, and applies especially to the ministry to the sick in hospitals and in their homes. The pastor, administrator or chaplain will determine the frequency with which the extraordinary minister distributes communion apart from Mass.

To establish the link between the communion of the sick and the Eucharistic celebration of the community, the extraordinary minister will ordinarily take the Eucharist from the altar during the Mass, after the communion of the faithful. The priest will hand the extraordinary minister the host in a small pyx or container. Immediately upon receiving the pyx, the extraordinary minister will leave for the home of the sick person. When this procedure is not possible, the extraordinary minister will take the host directly from the tabernacle after Mass has ended. Ministers of Holy Communion should not take extra hosts for the sick when they themselves are receiving communion.

The person or persons receiving should be informed in advance that an extraordinary minister will distribute communion. A time should then be selected that will allow adequate reflection and attention by the communicant. When possible, relatives and friends should be encouraged to be present and they may also receive communion.

The rite to be used is found in The Roman Ritual, *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*, Chapter II, 1. A shorter rite, Chapter II, 2, may be used when communion is given in different rooms in the same building, such as a hospital. Elements taken from the ordinary rite may be added according to the circumstances. The shorter rite may begin in the first room, where the antiphon found in the ritual is said. The invitation to receive is said in each room, and the concluding prayer in the last room.

After the distribution of communion, if hosts remain, the minister may either consume them or return them immediately to the tabernacle.

SAMPLE LETTER of REQUEST for MANDATES

Letter should be sent to the Archbishop “care of” the Office of Divine Worship

(date)

The Most Reverend N.
C/O Office of Divine Worship
Archdiocese of Newark
171 Clifton Ave.
Newark, NJ 07104

Dear Archbishop N.,

The (parish/institution) of _____ has respectfully discerned the following candidates to serve as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. Through their devotion to the Eucharist and their desire to serve others, they have been found worthy of this ministry:

(NAMES)

The above named people are fully initiated Roman Catholics, 18 years of age or older (or are Seniors preparing to serve at liturgies in a Catholic High School). They have been trained in the spiritual and practical dimensions of this ministry. It is my fervent wish that you will mandate them as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion for (parish/institution).

Sincerely,