

# NOTES ON EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

## Office of Worship – Diocese of Austin

### DIOCESAN NORMS

Under the jurisdiction of the bishop. (Re: request, approval, mandate, training, catechesis, deputation, etc.)

1. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may be designated to distribute Holy Communion at Mass or to bring Communion to those confined to hospitals, institutions or their own home.
2. It is especially desirable that Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion take the Eucharist from Mass on Sundays and Holy Days, as an extension of the community Liturgy, and bring it to those confined at home.
3. No one can begin this ministry without instruction, careful practical training by the local priests, the bishop's mandate and a parish deputation ceremony at Mass.
4. Patients and staff of institutions and families of the homebound must receive a careful explanation before initiation. This includes:
  - a. Emphasis on the authorization by the Holy Father and the bishop.
  - b. Distinction between Holy Orders (consecration of the Eucharist) and lay ministry (distribution of the Holy Communion).
  - c. Explanation of the extension of the liturgy from the community to the patients.
  - d. Description of the ritual.
  - e. Arrangements for place, time, assembly of patients, bedside arrangements, etc.
  - f. Assurance of regular pastoral visitation and availability of a priest.
  - g. Introduction of the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to staff and patients by the local priest before initiation of the program.
  - h. An explanation to the families of institutional patients, where possible.
5. Application for a mandate is made in writing by the local priest to the bishop, stating the education the candidates have received, their readiness for this ministry and the name of each candidate.
6. The candidates must be fully initiated in the Church, persons of genuine Eucharistic faith, living exemplary Catholic lives and have sound psychological maturity. The person must have no impediment to sacramental reception. Great care is needed in this selection and should involve the opinions of priest and laity. The candidates may be men or women, laity or religious. Youth may be designated as Communion Ministers at the discretion of the pastor.
7. It must be kept in mind that Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are mandated for Mass only for genuine need due to the lack of ordinary ministers (priests and deacons) and great numbers of communicants.
8. The mandate is given to a specific person and for a specific place. In any case, the mandate terminates if the minister moves, or at the discretion of the bishop and the local priests. It is given only as long as the spiritual good of the faithful is served and where general necessity perdures.
9. Norms for determining need, selecting, training and mandating Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion in the diocese may be obtained by contacting the diocesan Worship Office.

# NOTES ON

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10. Any training of Eucharistic ministers must include catechesis on:
- a. The ecclesial nature of the Eucharist as the common possession of the whole Church
  - b. The Eucharist as the memorial of Christ's sacrifice, his death and resurrection, and as the sacred banquet
  - c. The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharistic elements, whole and entire, in each element of bread and wine (the doctrine of concomitance)
  - d. The kinds of reverence due at all times to the sacrament, whether within the Eucharistic liturgy or outside the celebration
  - e. Directives of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal and the Norms for the Distribution of Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States.
11. Specific directives regarding Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
- a. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion do not communicate themselves when they assist the priest at Mass. After the priest has received communion in the usual way, the ministers receive communion from the priest. As ministers exercising their office, they should receive communion under both kinds. The priest or deacon offers the chalice to the Extraordinary Minister. The minister then receives a chalice or ciborium from the priest or deacon and distributes to the faithful with the words "Body of Christ" or "Blood of Christ". No other words are to be used. (BCL 3/77)
    - a. An Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion fulfills his/her function in a Mass only when there are not a sufficient number of ordinary ministers present. *The Pontifical Commission indicated that when ordinary ministers (bishop, priest, or deacon) are present at the Eucharist, whether they are celebrating or not, and are in sufficient number and are not prevented from doing so by other ministries, the extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist are not allowed to distribute communion either to themselves or to the faithful.* (Apostolic Pro-Nuncio Letter, September 21, 1987)
    - b. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should be appropriately dressed when distributing Communion during the liturgy.
    - c. In bringing Communion to the sick or home-bound, the Body of Christ (Host) is to be placed in a pyx. It is not to be carried in a handkerchief or any other receptacle. If Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion accept the Host for the sick during Communion time, they are to go immediately to the sick at the conclusion of Mass. It is not respectful or proper for a minister to have the Sacred Host with him or her while visiting after Mass with other parishioners.
    - d. If for any reason a sick person is not able to consume the Host immediately, it is to be returned to the tabernacle. It is gross negligence to leave the Host in a room for the sick person to receive at a later time.
    - e. For no reason should any Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion carry the Host around while shopping or engaged in any other activity, nor should it be kept in one's home overnight. Hosts are to be brought to the sick immediately. Hosts that are not consumed by the recipient are to be returned to the tabernacle immediately or if distance or other circumstances prevent, the Host may be consumed by the minister.

- f. The Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion cannot give a liturgical blessing to those who do not receive Holy Communion.

## **DIOCESAN NORMS AND QUALIFICATIONS**

*Effective 2005*

In order to serve the needs of the people of God in the Diocese of Austin and to be responsible stewards of the gifts given to the Diocese, the Diocese of Austin issues the following policy:

### **INTRODUCTION**

The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* of the Second Vatican Council calls for the "...full, conscious and active participation of the faithful in the liturgy" (#14). The introduction of the laity into the ministry of Reader and Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion is one way to support this goal. The lay people have historically been active as ushers and altar servers, but even these liturgical roles are given more attention and welcome participation.

The following qualifications for Liturgical Ministers are offered as a guideline in assisting the pastor and his staff in encouraging and supporting people in these ministries. Specific attention is given to the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

### **QUALIFICATIONS OF EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION**

Those who assist with the distribution of Holy Communion at mass and/or bring Holy Communion to the sick in hospitals, nursing homes or their own homes should meet the following qualifications for this ministry:

- be fully initiated and practicing members of the Catholic Church;
- attend Mass regularly;
- give positive witness to the Christian life;
- have a knowledge of the Order of the Mass;
- show reverence for the sacredness of the Body and Blood of Christ by their manner of dress and decorum while assisting at liturgy;
- be fully aware of the manner of preparation, distribution and disposition of the Body and Blood of Christ;
- participate in a training program for communion ministers;
- be approved for commissioning by the Diocese of Austin;
- be commissioned at a parish liturgy.

## **COMMISSIONING**

Before a person may serve as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, the person needs to have met all of the qualifications mandated by the Diocese. Upon completion of the mandates, the pastor submits a list of the names of those persons who have been prepared as qualified Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion at Mass and to the Sick to the Worship Office Director, Diocese of Austin. A form is provided for your convenience. A letter will then be sent to the Pastor asking him to commission those ministers for a period of two years.

### **COMMISSIONING OF EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION**

The Commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion is found in the Book of Blessings Chapter 63.

