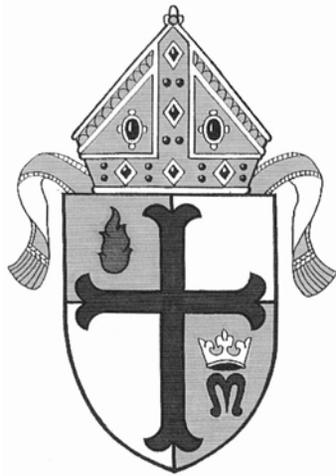
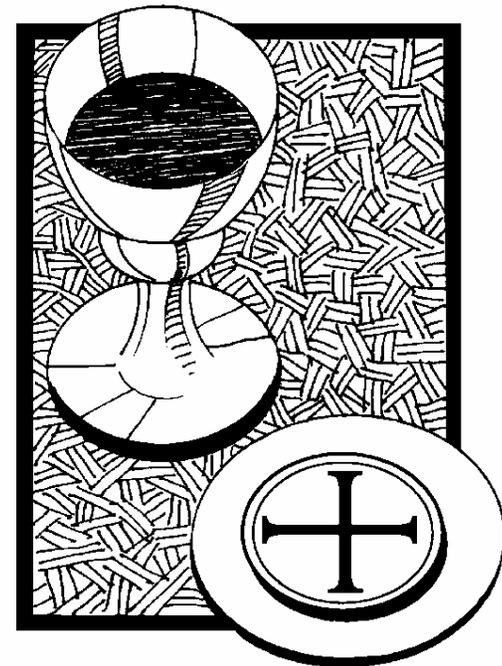


Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion



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Endnotes

- [1] Lumen Gentium as quoted in Catechism of the Catholic Church (Vatican City: St. Paul Books & Media, 1994), #1324, p. 334.
- [2] Second Vatican Council, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* as quoted in Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds In the Dioceses of the United States of America, (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Inc., 2002), #3, p.2.
- [3] *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* [GIRM], #368 as quoted in Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds In the Dioceses of the United States of America, (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Inc., 2002), #3, p. 2.
- [4] *Sacramentary*, Prayer Over the Gifts, Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, as quoted in Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds In the Dioceses of the United States of America, #3, p. 2.
- [5] Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds In the Dioceses of the United States of America, (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Inc., 2002), #29, p. 15.
- [6] Ibid. #20, p. 10.
- [7] Ibid #44, p. 20.
- [8] Ibid #45, p. 20.
- [9] Ibid. #29, p. 16.
- [10] Communion of the Sick, (New Jersey, Catholic Book Publishing Co., 2000), p. 4.

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Prayer for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Lord *Jesus Christ,*
You are the Word of God and Bread of Life.

*Help me to bring your gospel message
and Eucharistic Presence to others.*

*Help me to do so with faith and reverence,
with love and concern.*

*May I carry out this sacred ministry
comfortably, but not casually,
Relaxed, yet with awesome respect.*

*All praise to you,
the God who is, who was, and
who is to come
at the end of the ages. [10]*

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Guidelines for Liturgical Ministers in The Diocese of Metuchen

“The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life.” [1]

The Eucharist constitutes “the church’s entire spiritual wealth, that is, Christ Himself, our Passover and living bread.”[2] It is the “sacrament of sacraments.”[3] Through it “the work of our redemption is accomplished.”[4] He who is the “living bread that came down from heaven” (Jn 6:51) assures us, “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.” (Jn 6:54-55).

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

To serve at the table of the Lord as an Extraordinary Minister is a special privilege to which we have been called. As such, we must take great care in administering the most precious Body and Blood of Christ to the faithful. Whether that be serving at Sunday Mass, daily Mass or bringing communion to the sick or homebound, we must always be conscious of that sacred Presence we hold or carry, and the sacred duty we fulfill. Proper formation of our ministers is important. How we worship conveys the sacredness of what we believe about the mystery that is taking place in the liturgy. This also helps create the appropriate environment for prayer.

These guidelines have been prepared as an aid to assist all ministers perform their roles in a prayerful, reverent and consistent way. These guidelines are not intended to represent an exhaustive list. Questions about any aspect of serving as an Extraordinary Minister should be directed to your Pastor and/or Pastoral Staff for clarification.

H) To Bow or Not To Bow...

In liturgical language, a bow is a sign or gesture of reverence and is appropriate at certain points during the liturgy. Likewise, it can be inappropriate at other times. Some helpful hints on when to bow or not:

1. When the Eucharistic Ministers approach the sanctuary at Communion time, it is appropriate to bow when passing in front of the altar.
2. When returning to the sanctuary after distributing Communion, if you are carrying the Consecrated Hosts or the Precious Blood, it is **inappropriate** to bow to the altar or the tabernacle. Nothing is more sacred than what you already hold in your hands.
3. When serving in ministry during the liturgy, your actions can help to model for the congregation the actions and gestures they should also be using during the Mass. For example,

- * Bowing during the creed at the words *“by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary and became Man.”*
- * Raising your hands in the prayer position in praying the *“Our Father”*.
- * Singing during all parts of the Mass that call for the congregation to sing.
- * Bowing your head before receiving Communion in both species. This change is being introduced for ALL with the revisions to the GIRM. *“When receiving Holy Communion, the communicant bows his or her head before the sacrament as a gesture of reverence and receives the Body of the Lord from the minister.” (GIRM #160)*

person on how to receive. If the person approaches to receive, Communion should be offered. Discuss the matter after mass with the priest celebrant or your pastor.

G) Dismissal for Bringing Communion to the Sick

If you are bringing Communion to the sick, it is proper that you be dismissed after Communion as a public witness and reminder to the congregation that the sick are remembered at Mass and are an important part of our community.

1. **Before Mass**, bring your pyx into the sacristy and place the needed number of unconsecrated hosts into the pyx. Make it known to the priest or deacon so that they can place the pyx on the credence table before Mass and know that you will need to be dismissed after Communion.
2. **After Communion**, come forward to receive your pyx from the priest who will give you a blessing and dismiss you. Once dismissed, there is no need to bow or reverence the altar since you are carrying the Sacred Eucharist. Simply leave the church immediately and go to bring Communion to the person(s). Again, as a sign of reverence for the sacred Body you carry, you should not stop and chat or make any other unnecessary stops before visiting the person to whom you are bringing the Eucharist.

A) Scheduling and Serving

Having a sufficient number of ministers available to serve at each Mass in an important dimension to creating the prayerful environment for Mass and attending to the spiritual needs of the community gathered. Each minister is responsible to fulfill assignments or arrange for substitutes if necessary.

- When known in advance, particularly in vacation season, inform the office or the parish Coordinator of Ministers about days that you will be unavailable to serve so that you will not be scheduled on those days.
- If you cannot serve for the time assigned, **it is your responsibility to find a replacement.**
- Do not call the Parish Office or Pastoral Staff on Sunday to say you are unavailable.
- Be willing to serve without a “swap” if asked and you are available. It is a ministry and we should be willing to serve when needed and available. You never know when you might be in need of someone to fill in for you in an emergency!
- Arrive 10-15 minutes before Mass.
- When you arrive, follow the established parish procedure for obtaining your ministry position or station for Communion. Be familiar with where it is located to avoid confusion during Communion time. Be aware that there may be a different configuration of ministers depending on the Mass at which you are serving.

B) Minister Preparation

- The sacristy is a place for the priests and deacons to prayerfully prepare for Mass. To help maintain that spirit of prayerfulness for all ministers before Mass, please limit any social conversation in the sacristy.
- Spend some time before Mass in prayer to help focus on what you are about to do.
- If it is customary for the ministers to gather to pray before Mass, arrive in sufficient time to participate before taking your place.

C) Proper Attire for Saturday/Sunday Liturgy

“All ministers of Holy Communion should show the greatest reverence for the Most Holy Eucharist by their demeanor, their attire, and the manner in which they handle the consecrated bread or wine.”[5]

The focus at the liturgy is the Eucharist. Anything that detracts or calls attention to oneself and away from that central point, including one’s dress, should be avoided.

Appropriate

For Women

Modest:
Dresses, skirt suits
(appropriate length)
Pant suits, dress pants
Sweaters & blouses
Shoes (not sneakers)

For Men

Dress shirt w/tie
Sport coats
Suits w/ties
Collared shirts
Shoes (not sneakers)

4. Someone takes a host but does not consume it: If still in close proximity, kindly ask the person to consume it. Do not follow after the person. During the liturgy is not the time for creating a commotion or discussion.
5. Someone approaches you with a pyx: Give the person Communion themselves but ask them kindly to see the priest or deacon after Mass to get a host. Do not put a host in the pyx.
6. You run out of hosts: Simply return to the sanctuary and place your empty plate on the credence table and remain in place until the Eucharist has been returned to the tabernacle. Do not stand in your minister position with an empty plate.
7. Someone is in my spot: Look around to see what other spot is empty and then move to that position. Clear up any confusion after, not during Mass.
8. Spill some of the Precious Blood: If possible, cover the affected area with your purificator and when finished make it known to the priest, or deacon so that the affected area may be “washed and the water poured into the sacrarium.”[9] Additional purificators should be available on the counter in the sacristy so that you can continue administering the Precious Blood.
9. Handicapped or disabled person in my area: Communicate the handicapped person first and then return to your position. Ask an usher or family member if assistance is needed steadying the person’s head or if the person has other needs.
10. Someone brings host to Precious Blood for intinction: Cover the Precious Blood to indicate that intinction is not appropriate. Kindly ask the person to consume the host and administer the cup to the person as normal.
11. Someone approaches for Communion that you believe should not receive Communion: It is not up to the minister to decide who should or should not receive Communion nor should this be a time to educate the

Special Notes for Ministers of the Precious Blood:

1. “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.” [7]
2. “After each communicant has received the Blood of Christ, the minister carefully wipes both sides of the rim of the chalice with a purificator. 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.” [8]
3. **Daily Mass Exceptions:** Ministers of the Precious Blood may simply consume what remains of the Precious Blood and place the chalice or vessel on the credence table and place the purificator over the cup. Do not use the purificator to wipe the inside of the cup before it has been purified or place it inside the cup.

F) What if....

1. Children under age approach: simply touch their head and say “God bless you” or make the sign of the cross on their forehead.
2. Someone, other than a child, approaches with arms crossed over their heart: you may give them the same blessing as in (1) above.
3. Drop a host: Pick it up and consume it or hold it in your other hand until you have finished distributing Communion. Once back in the sanctuary, wait until all the other ministers have cleansed their fingers and then place the host in the water in the dish to dissolve. Inform the priest/deacon after Mass so that appropriate disposal can be done.

Inappropriate

For Women

Jeans (no matter the cost or label)
Tube or strapless tops, spaghetti straps
Bare midriff
Short skirts, shorts
Thong shoes, flip/flops or beach footwear
Tights, spandex leg coverings
Tight or low cut slacks, form fitting clothes or blouses

For Men

Jeans (no matter the cost or label)
T-shirts (with or without writing)
Shorts (dress or otherwise)
Thong shoes, flip-flops or beach footwear
Sneakers

Notes:

- Although you may not be scheduled for a particular Mass, because of scheduling difficulties you may be called upon to serve to fill in for someone else. With this in mind it would be helpful, where possible, if you come dressed for this eventuality.
- **DAILY MASS EXCEPTIONS:** Less formal attire is acceptable for serving at daily or Saturday morning Mass. Good judgment is the best rule of thumb here.

D) Preparation of the Gifts

The last set of changes to the GIRM required a refinement in the practice and sequence of the preparation of the gifts. Now, all wine to be consecrated must be poured into a sufficient number of sacred vessels, in addition to the chalice, and placed on the altar at the preparation of the gifts. The additional vessels are to be smaller in size than the main chalice and are placed on a separate corporal on the altar.

- At the Offertory, the Deacon or minister will get the tray of cups and place it on the altar. The Deacon will then pour the wine from the flagon into the appropriate number of vessels. (This will vary depending on the Mass.)
- The wine to be poured into the main chalice is brought up as part of the Offertory procession and the chalice is prepared in the normal manner by the deacon or priest.

E) Serving at Mass

“Holy Communion has a more complete form as a sign when it is received under both kinds. For in this manner of reception a fuller sign of the Eucharistic banquet shines forth.” (6)

- Come forward during the Sign of Peace to be in place **before** the *Lamb of God* begins. The *Lamb of God* is a prayer prayed by all the congregation. Unnecessary movement should be avoided to maintain the spirit of prayerfulness for all.
- Eucharistic Ministers are strongly encouraged to fully enter into this covenant by receiving **both** the Sacred Body and Blood at Communion unless a medical condition or reason would otherwise preclude such participation.
- If you do not wish to receive the Precious Blood, please indicate that to the deacon or Eucharistic Minister by simply placing your hand up with palm forward. Other signs or signals may be confusing to the minister offering the cup and misunderstood.

- When administering the Precious Body or Blood of Christ to a communicant, the minister says either: “The Body of Christ” or “The Blood of Christ” respectively. The communicant responds “Amen.” No other words should be added or used.
- Addressing communicants by name: This should be avoided. All communicants should be made to feel equally welcome at the Lord’s table whether we know them or not. While it may seem like a sign of hospitality to address those you know by name, it inadvertently creates an atmosphere of exclusivity if we cannot address *everyone* by name. Keep it simple and welcoming for all. Smiling is allowed.
- Returning to the sanctuary after administering Communion:
 - * **Ministers of the Hosts:** Return to the *sanctuary* and wait for the priest or deacon to take the plate from you. Then go to wash your fingers at the credence table. Wait until the remaining Blessed Sacrament is returned to the tabernacle. Genuflect when the priest/deacon does and return to your seat. **Please note:** With the recent *GIRM* changes requiring that sufficient hosts be consecrated for each Mass, there may be times when there are no hosts remaining to be returned to the tabernacle. In this case, simply leave the sanctuary and bow to the altar as you return to your seat. Please be attentive to the situation to know what to do.
 - * **Ministers of the Precious Blood:** Return to the *sacristy* or credence table and immediately consume whatever is remaining in your cup of the Precious Blood. Leave your vessel and purificator there. Do not use the purificator to wipe the inside of the cup before it has been purified or place it inside the cup.
- **Vessel Purification:** Recent changes to the *GIRM* require that the sacred vessels be purified by a priest, deacon or instituted acolyte only.