

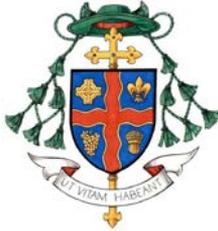


**DIOCESAN NORMS FOR
EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF
HOLY COMMUNION**



DIOCESE OF SAULT STE. MARIE

March 2018



Most Rev. Marcel Damphousse
Bishop of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie

Granted

The Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur

On March 19, 2018

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FOREWORD

This document has been produced:

- a) to assist and empower the lay faithful serving or wishing to serve as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion within the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie;
- b) to inform them of the relevant instructions of the Universal Church and the diocesan norms established by the Bishop regarding this important ministry (see *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (RS), Instruction of the *Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments*, dated April 23, 2004, #160); and
- c) to provide guidance as to the formation and mandating of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion for service within our liturgies and to the sick and homebound.

This document supersedes all previous norms regarding this function. The Pastor or priest-administrator of each parish and Catholic community in the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie is to establish appropriate formation based on the norms articulated in this document.

Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie
Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

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Introduction: The Mystery of the Holy Eucharist

At the Last Supper, on the night when He was betrayed, our Saviour instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of His Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries until He should come again, and so to entrust to His beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of His death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is eaten, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us. (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, #47)

The night before he sacrificed his life by freely accepting death on the Cross, Jesus at the Last Supper gave to the Church the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. He changed the substance of the offering of bread and wine, "in a way surpassing understanding" (Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), #1333) into his Body and Blood.

He gave the Apostles power to do the same: "'Do this in remembrance of me', (Lk 22:19), a power that allows the Church to offer a visible sacrifice by which the sacrifice which Christ accomplished once for all on the cross "would be re-presented, its memory perpetuated until the end of the world, and its salutary power be applied to the forgiveness of the sins we daily commit" (CCC, #1366).

Our Lord Jesus Christ is truly, really and substantially present in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. We receive him bodily in Holy Communion and contemplate his sacred presence in the Tabernacle or through adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

The Eucharist is more than just a fraternal meal or re-enactment of the last supper - it is the source and summit of the Christian life. All other sacraments, ministries and works of the Church are orientated toward it, for in the Blessed Eucharist is contained "the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself" (CCC, #1324).

Our participation in the Eucharist is a *Communio in Sacris*, a 'communion in sacred things' that signifies our unity as the People of God and our fidelity to the teachings and authority of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

I. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion

Through baptism, all the baptized are consecrated into a *universal priesthood of all believers* wherein they offer prayer and spiritual sacrifices that witness the power of God (see Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, #10).

Although the two (2) are interrelated, this universal priesthood is distinct from the ministerial or 'sacramental' priesthood exercised by those that receive the sacrament of Holy Orders, Bishops, Priests and Deacons.

By virtue of their ordination, Priests are the only ministers who can validly confect the Sacrament of the Eucharist *in persona Christi*, that is, acting in the person of Christ. An extension of this teaching is that those who have received Holy Orders, Bishops, Priests and Deacons are the Ordinary ministers for the distribution of Holy Communion (cf. canon 910, § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (CIC)).

However, where the needs of the Church require and in accordance with the provisions of the law, members of the lay faithful may be mandated or commissioned to distribute Holy Communion by a Bishop or a Priest (cf. canon 230, § 3 CIC). These persons serve as

Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

The term 'Extraordinary' in this context refers to the distinction between the special, contingent role served by these ministers and the normative, permanent role served by a Priest and Deacon as the 'Ordinary' minister of the Eucharist.

To avoid confusion, the role should be understood and referred to according to the title designated by the Church: *Extraordinary minister of Holy Communion*, or simply *Extraordinary minister*. Other titles such as "Eucharistic minister" and "special minister of the Eucharist", although perhaps easier to use, unnecessarily and improperly broaden the meaning of this service, and should be avoided (RS, #156).

It is important to acknowledge and appreciate the ministry that Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion fulfill in the life of the Church. They provide support to the ministry of the Ordinary minister at Mass and, in bringing communion to the sick and homebound, they perform a corporal and spiritual work of mercy that brings great comfort to the faithful.

General Norms

1. The *Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments* states that recourse to the assistance of *Extraordinary ministers* is warranted when:
 - there are no priests or deacons available;
 - an injury or illness prevents the Priest or Deacon from physically distributing communion;
 - the number of communicants is so high that the Communion rite itself would be unduly extended without supplementing Ordinary ministers; and
 - the distribution of Holy Communion under both species is used (see RS, #158).
2. When a sufficient number of Ordinary ministers are present for the distribution of Holy Communion, Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are not required. As a general rule in our diocese, a ratio of greater than fifty (50) communicants to one (1) Ordinary minister would indicate the need to have one or more Extraordinary Ministers.

3. To avoid obscuring the primary role of the Priest and Deacons as ordinary ministers of communion, when Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion serve, their total number should not be excessive.

Selection & Formation

4. It is the prerogative of the Pastor, as delegated by the Bishop, to select, form and mandate Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. No person whose selection would cause concern or confusion amongst the faithful is to be mandated.
5. Persons mandated by the Bishop or their Pastor and who wish to serve as Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion must:
 - a) have received the sacraments of Baptism, First Holy Communion & Confirmation;
 - b) be over fourteen (14) years of age;
 - c) demonstrate a proper understanding of Catholic Eucharistic doctrine;
 - d) have faith in the Real Presence;
 - e) be duly prepared; and
 - f) live an example of "Christian life, morals and fidelity to the Church's Magisterium" that recommends them to the ministry (RS, #46).

6. Prior to serving as Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, all candidates are required to participate in appropriate formation and the practical instruction required to fulfill their function properly (cf. canon 231, § 1 CIC). This formation must include both catechetical and practical components. It is fitting that candidates receive a proper liturgical formation (RS, #46).
7. Once proper formation has been completed, the candidate is to be mandated within the context of a Liturgical celebration. The Extraordinary minister of Holy Communion can be called to serve in the parish, the hospital, senior residences within the territory of the parish or in the domicile of those who are housebound.
8. For reasons of real necessity, a Pastor may mandate a member of the faithful to serve as an Extraordinary minister for a single occasion. The priest blesses him or her with these words: "May the Lord bless you, so that at this Mass you may minister the body and Blood of Christ to your brother and sisters" (Roman Missal, p. 1447). If this person is to continue in the role on a regular basis, they must receive appropriate instruction and be formally mandated.
9. An Extraordinary minister is mandated for a period of three (3) years, renewable. His/her mandate must be in writing.

10. A list of the names and contact details of all persons mandated to serve as Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion must be recorded and maintained by the Parish.

Ministry & Conduct

11. Prayer is central to the life of any Catholic and especially to the ministry fulfilled by Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. They should set aside time to pray and reflect on the mystery of the Eucharist. It is fitting and appropriate for devotions such as Eucharistic adoration to form an integral part of this prayer.
12. The Sacrament of penance is the primary way of obtaining forgiveness and the remission of serious sin committed after baptism (*Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, #31). It has an intimate relationship with the mystery of the Eucharist in the life of the Church. It is appropriate for those engaged as Extraordinary ministers to commit themselves to a regular examination of conscience and to avail themselves of this sacrament, both for personal benefit and as a positive witness to the community.
13. Extraordinary ministers are encouraged to lead and participate in pastoral activity that promotes greater reverence for the Eucharist and assists the faithful in deepening their understanding of the sacrament.

14. Extraordinary ministers must dress and act in a reverent manner that reflects the dignity of the sacrament. It is unacceptable for Extraordinary ministers to wear casual, untidy or immodest clothing of any kind while fulfilling this sacred function or to act in a manner unbecoming to their role.
15. Extraordinary ministers, when serving in the Liturgy, are to maintain a respectful and reverent posture as this communicates the sacred nature of the Sacrament to others and encourages them to respond appropriately.

II. The Communion Rite

16. To avoid disruption during the prayers of the Liturgy, those serving as Extraordinary ministers should approach and stand in the sanctuary area during the 'sign of peace'. They are to avoid standing around the altar in positions reserved for the Celebrant and/or concelebrating Priests.
17. The use of hand sanitizers or washers **in the sanctuary** is prohibited. If a public health crisis necessitates any amendment to this policy, instructions will be issued by the diocese.
18. It is preferable that the ordinary minister both retrieves and reserves the sacred hosts in the Tabernacle; however, in certain circumstances, the Celebrant may direct an Extraordinary minister to

assist with this assignment. Mindful that this is no longer a simple piece of bread but rather the Body of the Risen Christ, the consecrated host is to be accorded great reverence.

19. The following procedure is proposed when carrying out this task:
 - a) approach the Tabernacle with reverence, and either genuflect or bow directly toward it;
 - b) unlock the Tabernacle and if retrieving the sacred species for distribution, carefully and reverently carry the ciborium and place it directly on the Altar, preferably on a corporal, without obstructing or obscuring the movement of the celebrating/concelebrating Priest;
 - c) if reserving, place the ciborium inside the Tabernacle and then lock it. Immediately return the key to the Ordinary minister or place it in a secure location, i.e. not directly beside the tabernacle or otherwise directly visible.

20. The Pastor is responsible for informing his parishioners and the Extraordinary ministers of the Vatican directives regarding low-gluten hosts (cf. canon 924 CIC; see Letter of the *Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments*, Prot. N. 320/17 dated July 8, 2017; and *RS*, #48). No communicant is to bring his or her own host to be consecrated.

21. **After** the Celebrant has received communion, the Extraordinary minister may then approach the Altar to receive communion from him. They are not to administer the Eucharistic species to themselves but must wait to be given communion by the Celebrant and/or concelebrating Priests or Deacon after they themselves have received it.
22. Following this, they are to collect a sacred vessel from the Celebrant and proceed to the places assigned to them for the distribution of communion. It is preferable that the celebrating Priest and other Ordinary ministers maintain the central position in front of the Altar during the communion rite.
23. The Sacred vessels - ciborium, chalice, paten or pyx - containing the consecrated Eucharistic species must be handled with care at all times, and held upright during distribution.
24. The Extraordinary minister offers the consecrated host by reverently presenting it to the communicant, and saying the words '*The Body of Christ*'; and the Precious Blood with the words '*The Blood of Christ*', to which the communicant responds '*Amen*'.
25. There are two permitted ways to receive the Body of Christ; by mouth, placing the host on the outstretched tongue of the communicant, or in the hand, by placing the host on their outstretched hands, normally one below the other in support.

Extraordinary ministers are to offer the sacrament in the form of reception chosen by the communicant, without exception.

26. The act of intinction, i.e. dipping the consecrated host into the Precious Blood prior to giving it to the communicant on the tongue, is reserved to the Ordinary minister alone. Extraordinary ministers are not authorized to perform an intinction nor allow a communicant to do so under any circumstances. However, they may assist an Ordinary minister in the same way as an instituted Acolyte by holding the chalice for him while he performs an intinction.
27. In order to preclude the possibility of sacrilege, Extraordinary ministers or persons named to fulfill this role, such as a trained Usher, must observe the communicant consuming the Eucharistic species. If the communicant does not consume immediately or if there is a serious doubt that the person has consumed, the trained Usher is to approach the person as soon as possible, and without creating a scandal or a scene, invite him or her to consume the Holy Host. The Usher is to advise the pastor of the situation after mass.
28. While all are welcome at Mass, the right of receiving the Eucharist in the Catholic Church is properly reserved to Catholics that have been initiated into the sacrament, without prejudice to the prescripts of canon 844, §§ 3-4 of the CIC. Extraordinary ministers may not distribute

communion to those who have not been initiated into the sacrament in accordance with the rites of the Catholic Church and those not in communion with the Church.

29. Unless otherwise directed by the Pastor or the Bishop, those that are lawfully permitted to receive the sacrament and who request it are not to be denied.
30. If the person approaching communion appears obviously confused, the Extraordinary minister may enquire if they have received/been initiated into the sacrament according to the rites of the Catholic Church. If they answer in the negative, the Extraordinary minister may then offer a blessing instead of communion. If possible, it is appropriate for the minister or priest to speak with the person following the conclusion of Mass to explain the reasons for this.
31. Should an individual approach an Extraordinary minister and request a blessing, the minister may do so within the following parameters:
 - a. by gently placing one hand on the person's head and saying the words *May God bless you;*
 - b. the Extraordinary minister must not bless the person with the consecrated host or trace the sign of the cross in the air with their hand in the manner of an ordained minister.

32. If the consecrated host is dropped, it should immediately and reverently be picked up by the Extraordinary minister and if not seriously spoiled, properly consumed.
33. If the consecrated host is spoiled or accidentally leaves the mouth of the communicant only partially consumed, it is to be wrapped inside a suitable receptacle and taken to be fully dissolved in water and then poured into the *sacrarium* of the church. If a *sacrarium* is unavailable, after dissolving the spoiled host, the water may be poured 'directly into the earth' at a suitable exterior location.
34. If the Precious Blood is spilled, a purificator should be used to soak up as much of the spill as possible. Water alone must be poured onto what remains to clean it, and then this also soaked up with church linens. Afterwards, a second washing in a regular manner may be carried out. All liturgical linens used in this process must be cleaned and purified using the normal procedure.
35. Following the completion of the communion rite, Extraordinary ministers are to place the sacred vessels on the altar or credence table, as directed by the celebrant, for purification and return to their seats.
36. An Ordinary minister is to purify the sacred vessels. If necessary, the Ordinary minister may direct the Extraordinary minister to assist him in consuming the Precious Blood before the purification.

37. Extraordinary ministers may assist in cleaning the Altar linens and sacred vessels following Mass or distribution of communion to the sick. Note that this action is distinct from the ritual act of purification carried out by the ordinary minister at Mass (see *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 279).

III. Communion to the sick or homebound

If one member suffers in the Body of Christ, which is the Church, all the members suffer with that member. (1 Corinthians 12:26)

The ministry of bringing communion to the sick and homebound is a great work of faith and a fraternal undertaking of the Christian community towards one of its members who is unable to go to church. It is Christ, through a member of His Church, who comes to a suffering member of His Body to comfort him/her with His Presence. By this gesture, the sick and homebound remain united to the Christian community, he/she is supported by the Word of God, by the Body of Christ and by the fraternal gesture from the one who brings communion.

The responsibility to visit the sick and homebound and to bring to them communion, at their residences or in hospitals, belongs to the Ordinary minister. If it is not possible for the priest or deacon to render this service on a regular basis, the pastor of the parish, at his discretion may designate a suitable person who, on behalf of the Christian community, will carry the Body of Christ to those who are unable to participate in Sunday mass.

General Norms for Communion to the Sick

38. All those that regularly participate in a ministry of taking communion to the sick or homebound must be formally mandated and trained as Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.
39. Prior to mass and in accordance with the instructions of the pastor, the Extraordinary Minister will bring a pyx or sacred vessel to be placed on the Altar. Once the hosts have been consecrated and reserved, the Ordinary minister, is to return the sacred vessel to the Extraordinary minister. This normally occurs following the distribution of communion during Mass.
40. Extraordinary ministers are to observe the following guidelines:
 - a) permission must be granted by the Pastor for the distribution of Holy Communion; if visiting a hospital or care facility, the Catholic chaplain of that facility must also be informed, and hospital protocols followed;
 - b) the consecrated host must be transported inside an appropriate sacred vessel, such as a Pyx or Ciborium;
 - c) the host must remain in the custody of the Extraordinary minister at all times without exception;

- d) consecrated hosts are not to be stored in the residence of the Extraordinary minister's domicile or in any other area with the exception of a tabernacle approved by the Bishop;
 - e) the act of distributing communion must be carried out as soon as is practically possible, and in a prayerful and reverent manner according to the proper liturgical rite;
 - f) an Extraordinary minister of Holy Communion **must** be accompanied when visiting a residence of a non-family member;
 - g) any unconsumed hosts must be either consumed or returned to the Parish; and
 - h) any loss of a consecrated host must be reported immediately to the Pastor.
41. In the case that a person is unable to physically receive communion, they are invited to make a spiritual communion through prayer.
42. Extraordinary ministers should observe the proper Liturgical rite when taking Communion to the sick. Depending upon the particular circumstances, there are several liturgical rites that may be used outside of the Mass. The minister should consult with the pastor if they are uncertain which rite to use, and prepare carefully, making sure that they are familiar with it beforehand (For more information, please refer to the resource section).

43. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may be called to visit the sick in a number of different surroundings, including private homes, hospital rooms, or chapels. Ministers should be mindful of the following during such visits:
- a. Eucharistic fast: it is preferable that communion is offered at least one hour before or after the communicant consumes food or drink. However, if the person being visited is not able to conveniently observe the fast, a briefer period of approximately 15 minutes may be observed.
 - b. Environment: acknowledge the surroundings in which the rite of receiving communion is to take place. As much as possible, try and remove distractions and prepare the space appropriately, making it conducive to prayer in accordance with the dignity of the sacrament of Holy Communion (white table cloth, crucifix, candle, silence).
44. Since this ministry of care is for the benefit of those that are ill or homebound, others present during a visit to the sick would not **normally** receive communion from the Extraordinary minister. The minister may instead encourage them to remain present and participate in the prayers of the communion rite. Your pastor can provide guidance regarding such situations.

45. Extraordinary ministers are not permitted to distribute communion to a Catholic who has made the decision to end his or her own life via euthanasia (Physician assisted suicide) and who is unwilling to reconsider this decision (see canon 843 CIC). If a request to receive communion is made, the Extraordinary minister is to refer the person to the priest chaplain of the facility or to his/her pastor.

IV. Desecration of the Eucharist

46. Desecration of the Eucharist is a gravely serious offence. It is the act of deliberately treating the consecrated species in a disrespectful manner. This offence incurs the following penalty under the Code of Canon Law (1983), which states:

Canon 1367 - A person who throws away the consecrated species or takes or retains them for a sacrilegious purpose incurs a *latae sententiae* excommunication reserved to the Apostolic See; moreover, a cleric can be punished with another penalty, not excluding dismissal from the clerical state.

47. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion must ensure the proper handling and security of the Eucharistic species both during the Communion rite and afterwards to prevent any deliberate attempts to procure the Eucharist for sacrilegious purposes. Any attempt or suspected case of Eucharistic desecration must be reported to the Pastor or Bishop as soon as possible.

Conclusion

Benedict XVI in his post-synodal Apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis* (#50, 2007), reasserts the teaching of the Church regarding the sacredness of the Sacrament of the Eucharist. He states:

I ask everyone, especially ordained ministers and those who, after adequate preparation and in cases of genuine need, are authorized to exercise the ministry of distributing the Eucharist, to make every effort to ensure that this simple act preserves its importance as a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus in the sacrament. For the rules governing correct practice in this regard, I would refer to those documents recently issued on the subject (Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 2004, 80-96). All Christian communities are to observe the current norms faithfully, seeing in them an expression of the faith and love with which we all must regard this sublime sacrament.

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Recommended resources

Below is a list of books, ministry resources and Church documents recommended by the Diocesan pastoral office for use in forming Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

- *Guide for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (LTP Publications – www.ltp.org)*

This book is the preferred resource for training new extraordinary ministers or for updating experienced ones. It is suitable for individuals or group use. It conveys the teaching of the Church and gives sound advice for dealing with the practical everyday challenges serving in this role. This second edition provides updated pastoral commentary in light of the third edition of The Roman Missal.

- *The Catholic handbook for visiting the Sick & Homebound (LTP Publications - www.ltp.org)*

This book is the preferred resource for those visiting the sick and homebound to distribute Holy Communion. It contains lots of practical information and examples of suitable liturgical rites for use by Extraordinary ministers.

- *The Lamb's Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth (Dr. Scott Hahn – www.scotthahn.com)*

Bestselling author Scott Hahn sheds new light on the Mass, offering readers a deeper appreciation of the most familiar of Catholic rituals. Beautifully written, in clear direct language, this book will help readers see the Mass with new eyes, pray the liturgy with a renewed heart, and enter into the Mass more fully, enthusiastically, intelligently, and powerfully than ever before.

- *Encyclical letter: Ecclesia de Eucharistia (Pope. St John Paul II - www.vatican.va)*

Ecclesia de Eucharistia is a papal document which explains and clarifies the relationship between the Church and the Eucharist, from which she "draws her life". An important document to reflect on for the faith enrichment of those preparing to become Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

- *Instruction: Redemptionis Sacramentum - On certain matters to be observed or to be avoided regarding the Most Holy Eucharist (Congregation for Divine Worship & the Discipline of the Sacraments – www.vatican.va)*

This formal instruction issued by the Roman Curia provides the framework for these diocesan norms and outlines the proper interpretation of Church teaching and law relating to the Sacrament of the Eucharist and the use of Extraordinary ministers.

Contact information

Any enquiries regarding the implementation of this document, pastoral ministry in general or ordering the recommended resources can be directed to the Diocesan pastoral office:

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GOD BLESS!

