

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER OF HOLY COMMUNION

PASTORAL GUIDELINES

I. INTRODUCTION

The revised GIRM makes a distinction between an ordained minister (Priest or Deacon) and other ministers who serve the priest or distribute Communion as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. The ministry of Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion in our diocese has made a positive contribution to the Celebration of Eucharist and the pastoral care of the sick and shut-ins. For the sake of all concerned, the Diocese of Antigonish provides the following guidelines for the parishes of the whole Diocese.

II. SELECTION

A. The persons (male and female) chosen should be mature Roman Catholics, persons of character who have by their actual Christian living shown that they have taken their faith seriously. They are persons who manifest a deep devotion for the Eucharist.

1. Nominations might be made by the entire parish community, or Parish Council.
2. Nominations can be reviewed by the Liturgy Committee, or Parish Team, knowing that the final decision rests with the pastor.
3. Young adults (over 16 and Confirmed) might be considered for this ministry if they meet the above criteria.
4. The individuals should not be serving in another ministry.

B. A personal interview (by the pastor) with each individual is necessary to provide an opportunity to get to deepen one's knowledge of the people and give them a chance to express their belief in the Eucharist and their feelings concerning the role of the ministry.

III. FORMATION

A. Formation for the ministry takes time and is an opportunity for Adult Faith Development.

- B.** A program of three sessions should be required of all entering into any liturgical ministry.
1. These sessions might be given by the pastor, some member of the Parish Team (catechetical director, or pastoral assistant), a member of the Diocesan Liturgical Commission, diocesan liturgical resource person, or some member of the parish who has served in the ministry for a number of years.
 2. Resources for these sessions are available from the Office of Worship (Diocesan Pastoral Center: 539 6188 ext. 237)
- C.** The following topics should be covered:
1. **Baptism**, the call of all Christians to enter into a relationship with God through the Church.
 2. **Ministry**, the call of all Christians to join with Jesus in His mission to bring all humankind into one People under the Father's love.
 3. **Eucharist**, as sacrifice, sacrament, meal and memorial, as well as an appreciation of historical developments.
 4. **Practicing the procedures**, for sharing Eucharist (Hosts and Chalice) with the Assembly and for taking Communion to the sick and shut-ins.

IV. RECOGNIZING

- A.** After the completion of the period of formation, persons are called forth in a community celebration (Sunday Eucharist), to be recognized as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.
- B.** The recommended period of service in the ministry is four years. Renewal of this period of commitment may be made upon mutual agreement of the individual and the parish community.
1. This enables individuals to terminate their ministries with comfort when personal reasons may so indicate.
 2. It opens the door for others to participate in this ministry.
 3. People tend to be more faithful when duties accepted will be

completed within a specified time frame.

4. This gives people an opportunity to offer their services in other ministries (a person should serve in only one ministry at a time).
5. People may be given an opportunity to return to the ministry after a certain amount of time (2 years) away from it (this may be necessary in rural parishes where the number is limited).

C. The bishop, dean, or pastor officiates at the Rite of Recognition

D. The Rite of Recognition can be found in:

Celebrations of INSTALLATION and RECOGNITION

CCCB Publication Services, 2005, pages 96-105

V. CLOTHING

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should be dressed in a way that expresses the respect and dignity proper to the Eucharist and the Eucharistic Assembly. There is no distinctive garb for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. Dress appropriately, cleanly and neatly.

VI. HYGIENE

A. In the Rite of Eucharist, no provision is made for the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion to engage in a washing of hands.

1. When a priest washes his fingers or hands during the Eucharistic Liturgy, he performs a symbolic more than a practical gesture... (*“Wash me, O Lord, from my iniquity...”*)
2. Ministers should enter into the spirit of that ritual as the presider carries it out.
3. Clean your hands and fingernails just as you would if you were preparing food and serving guests at your table. It is recommended that you physically wash your hands in the sacristy before Mass or before you set up for Mass. You would not wash your hands with sanitizer and then handle food before serving at your table, and therefore it should not be used before you serve consecrated hosts to parishioners. **If you have a cold or flu, you should ask someone to replace you for that Mass.**

VII. PROCEDURES AT MASS

At least **10 minutes before** the Liturgy begins, the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should make their presence known to the presider.

- A.** Before mass: (In some churches, much of this is done by a sacristan, but you should always check.)
1. Fill the ciborium and communion plate with hosts, enough for that celebration. Use your hands to transfer the hosts from the container to avoid crumbs at the bottom.
 2. Fill the flagon/decanter with wine if you are distributing the consecrated wine to the community. Fill the water container with fresh water.
 3. Make sure you have a purificator for each chalice used, and that a corporal is with the main chalice for consecration. Place a corporal on the credence table for the purification of sacred vessels and an extra purificator in case of an accidental spill.
 4. Check the tabernacle to see how many consecrated hosts are on reserve. **You should try to consecrate just enough hosts for that Eucharistic celebration.**
 5. Make sure everything needed for the mass is on the credence table and/or the table of offerings.
- B.** During mass:
1. When the congregation has begun the sign of peace, you should move without delay to the sanctuary. **You should sit towards the front of the church and when you arrive in the sanctuary, you should stand off to either side of the sanctuary.**
 2. Do not genuflect or bow to the altar or tabernacle, but move directly to the sanctuary. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should not approach the altar before the priest has received communion.
 3. When the sign of peace is concluded, the choir sings the “Lamb of God” and you should be in the sanctuary during this singing. In this way you will be ready to move to the altar to receive communion so as not to delay unduly the communion of the faithful.

4. Once the presider, celebrants and deacon have received, move to the corner of the altar to receive Communion.
5. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion must receive the Sacred Vessels from the Presider; never take them from the altar yourself following the principle, "you cannot give what you have not received."
6. If any consecrated wine or hosts remain after communion, return them to the corporal on the altar. The priest (deacon) will consume the remaining consecrated wine, and return the hosts to the Tabernacle.
7. The sacred vessels are moved from the corporal on the altar to a corporal on the credence table where the priest or deacon will purify them.

C. Sharing the Eucharistic Bread and Wine:

1. Eye contact is very important. The parishioners will bow slightly before receiving Eucharistic Bread and Wine, but wait for them to lift their head, and make eye contact as you offer Communion (they bow the head only once when they receive the host, not the chalice--- one ritual action for communion).
2. If a host is accidentally dropped and the communicant does not pick it up, then the minister must pick it up and consume it immediately or place it in the palm of his/her hand and return it to the corporal for disposition following distribution of Communion.
3. When serving the chalice, use the purificator to wipe the inside and outside of the rim. Open the purificator fully.
4. When the chalice is empty, return to the sanctuary, place the chalice on the corporal on the altar. Never serve an empty cup!
5. If consecrated wine remains after communion, it should be placed on the corporal on the altar for the priest (deacon) to consume.
6. The priest may require help to move the Sacred Vessels to the credence table where he will purify them. If not, return to your place.

D. After Mass:

If the church has no sacristan to transfer the sacred vessels back to the sacristy, the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion should take all the used sacred vessels (chalice, ciborium, communion plate), wash with hot water in the sacristy and place them back where they are stored.

VIII. COMMUNION TO THE SICK

Those who are sick or home bound are united to God's people assembled for the Sunday Eucharist by sharing in communion. For this reason, communion to the sick is taken directly from the altar and from the Eucharistic Bread consecrated at the Mass.

1. The Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion designated to bring communion to the sick first share in communion themselves.
2. After communion of all the faithful, they then approach the altar.
3. At the altar, the priest, assisted by the deacon, places the consecrated bread in pyxes and hands them to the ministers.
4. No prayer is prescribed at this time since it is the action of handing the elements to the minister that is important. Moreover, a sending forth ceremony would break the flow of the communion hymn.
5. At this point a number of possibilities may be used: the ministers may remain near the altar and leave in the closing procession or they may return to their pews. Either of these options is preferable in the Diocese of Antigonish. Alternatively the ministers may leave immediately to bring communion to the sick.
6. After the priest has handed the consecrated elements to the ministers he goes to the chair.
7. To be avoided is the practice of the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion holding up pyxes to receive the Eucharistic Bread at the same time that they themselves receive communion during the communion procession.

RESOURCES

GENERAL INSTRUCTION OF THE ROMAN MISSAL

CELEBRATION OF INSTALLATION AND RECOGNITION,

CCCB Publication Service, 2005

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Approved by: Brian Joseph Dunn
Bishop of Antigonish