

Diocese of San Diego

POLICY ON EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

The faculty is granted to pastors and priests-chaplains to appoint extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion in their parishes or institutions.

The faculty is granted to all priests to designate suitable persons to distribute Communion for a specific occasion when there is genuine necessity to do so.

Appointing Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

The following norms are to be followed in appointing extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion who will function on a regular basis within Mass or Communion services in their own parish or institution.

1. There must be a genuine need for such a ministry. A need exists when ordinary ministers (priests and deacons) are not available or a sufficient number of them are not present to respond to the faithful requesting Communion within a short period of distribution.
2. When such a need exists, the pastor or priest-chaplain may select and appoint men and women, lay or religious, to be extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.
3. Those chosen to be extraordinary ministers are to be mature persons fifteen years of age or older, confirmed, leading an exemplary Christian life and so recognized and respected by the faith community.
4. The pastor or priest-chaplain has the responsibility of providing for instruction of both the candidates for this ministry and those to whom they will minister to ensure acceptance, understanding and appreciation of the ministry.
5. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion who function on a regular basis in their own parish or institution should be appointed either for an indefinite period of time or for a specific period of time, generally three years.
6. It is recommended that they be formally commissioned in a ceremony witnessed by members of the faith community.
7. The pastor or priest-chaplain is responsible for the continued spiritual growth of extraordinary ministers.

The Instruction, *Immensae Caritatis*, says: "Let them 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."

8. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are to limit the exercise of their ministry to their own parish or institution.
9. They should not exercise another liturgical ministry within the same Mass in which they

distribute Communion, nor should they assist the priest during the Eucharistic prayer in the manner of a deacon or communicate in the manner of a celebrant or concelebrant.

10. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may wear an alb or other suitable vesture or other appropriate and dignified clothing.
11. Pastors and chaplains are to keep a record of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion appointed by them.

### The Distribution of Communion within Mass

The following guidelines apply to the distribution of Communion within Mass:

1. As one of the worshipping assembly the extraordinary minister is expected to fully participate in the entire liturgy.
2. Extraordinary ministers may approach the altar as the priest receives communion.

Note: In the Diocese of San Diego, extraordinary ministers who are not already there, may gather in the sanctuary area as the Lamb of God is begun.

3. If enough bread for each Eucharist is brought forward at the Presentation of the Gifts, the need to go to the tabernacle before the distribution of Communion is avoided. However, if hosts from the tabernacle are needed, the minister may bring them to the altar during the Lamb of God.

If one chalice is not sufficient for Holy Communion to be distributed under both kinds, either additional empty chalices are placed on a corporal on the altar and filled with wine along with the main chalice after the presentation of the gifts, or additional chalices are filled with wine before Mass and brought to the altar at the preparation of the altar.

4. Ordinary ministers distribute the consecrated bread into ancillary vessels. If this is to take place at the altar, the vessels are brought forth during the Lamb of God. In the case of large assemblies, this distribution into ancillary vessels may take place at a side table within the sanctuary to which ministers take the consecrated bread. Once the vessels are filled, it is not necessary to take them to the altar for handing to the ministers of Communion.

Note: In the Diocese of San Diego, extraordinary ministers, when necessary, may assist ordinary ministers in this distribution.

5. Only after the priest has received Communion is Communion given to the deacon and extraordinary ministers. They do not wait to receive Communion until after distribution to the assembly.
6. After all the eucharistic ministers have received Communion, the bishop or priest celebrant, who may be assisted by the deacon, hands vessels containing the Body or the Blood of the Lord to the deacons and extraordinary ministers who will assist with the distribution of Holy Communion.

Note: In the Diocese of San Diego, other ministers, when necessary, may assist ordinary ministers in handing the vessels to Communion ministers for the distribution of Holy Communion.

7. When receiving Holy Communion the communicant bows his or her head before the sacrament as a gesture of reverence. The Body of Christ is administered with the words, *The Body of Christ*. After the communicant has responded *Amen*, the consecrated bread is placed in the hand or on the tongue according to the manner indicated by the communicant. The Body of Christ is always ministered to communicants who are not permitted to take their own consecrated bread and communicate themselves.
8. If a piece of consecrated bread falls to the ground during distribution of Communion, the extraordinary minister should pick it up immediately and consume it then or after distribution is over.
9. Distribution of Communion under both kinds is recommended in all celebrations of the Eucharist, but it is the communicant's option to receive from the cup. Careful judgment should be made before Mass that enough wine, but not too much, is made ready for consecration and distribution.
10. The cup is offered to the communicant with the words, *The Blood of Christ*, to which the communicant responds, *Amen*. Generally, the communicant should hold the cup firmly in both hands and drink from it. However, in the case of physical disability or weakness, the extraordinary minister should be ready to assist in holding the cup.
11. After the Blood of Christ has been received, the minister should wipe the rim of the cup inside and out with a purificator and turn the cup slightly before presenting it to the next communicant.
12. The cup is always ministered to the communicant; it may never be left for self-communication except in the case of concelebrating priests. Intinction is not customary in the United States and is discouraged. The practice of self-intinction is not permitted.
13. If the consecrated wine is spilled, the area should be covered immediately and washed after Mass with the water then poured into the sacrarium.
14. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may consume what remains of the Precious Blood from their cup of distribution. This should not be done at the place of distribution, nor as the ministers walk back to the sanctuary, but at a side table in the sanctuary once the ministers arrive there, and immediately, not after Mass. The consecrated wine is never to be poured into the ground or a sacrarium.
15. The chalice and other vessels may be taken to a side table where they are purified by the priest, deacon or instituted acolyte. Provided the remaining consecrated bread has been consumed or reserved and the remaining Precious Blood has been consumed, it is permissible to leave the vessels suitably covered at a side table on a corporal, to be purified and cleansed after Mass. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may assist in cleansing the vessels as needed.
16. Participation in the rite of Communion is for those who receive Communion. Consequently, non-participants should not be encouraged to be part of the Communion procession to receive a blessing instead of Communion. Actually, Communion is not something we "receive" but enter into through interpersonal and mutual self-donation.

## The Distribution of Communion to the Sick and Homebound

The following additional norms are to be followed in appointing extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion who will take Communion to the sick and homebound.

1. This is to be considered a special and distinct ministry over and above that of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion who will function within Mass or Communion services.
2. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion who will take Communion to the sick and homebound should be taught to see their role as sharing in the Church's total ministry to the sick and the poor after the manner of Jesus.
3. These extraordinary ministers should be given proper instruction with regard to reverence in carrying the Holy Eucharist and to performing the ritual prescribed for distribution of Communion to the sick. They should perform their ministry without visiting with others or engaging in other activities.
4. The sick and homebound persons should be assured of the meaning and value of this ministry. It would be well to personally introduce extraordinary ministers to sick and homebound persons before their ministry to them.
5. It must be stressed that the ministry of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion is not to replace the ministry of the priest to his people, but is rather to extend and expand it so that all will have more regular contact with Christ in the Eucharist.
6. The pastor or priest-chaplain should see that worthy Eucharistic containers are available for use by extraordinary ministers to the sick and homebound. The Host is not to be carried in a handkerchief, envelope or similar unworthy container.
7. It is recommended that Hosts for the sick and homebound be consecrated in the Mass from which they will be taken and in which the extraordinary ministers have participated. In this case, there are a number of options:
  - Immediately before receiving Communion themselves, extraordinary ministers may receive their Hosts for distribution.
  - After distribution of Communion to the assembly, and before the Prayer after Communion, extraordinary ministers may come forward to receive their Hosts for distribution.
  - During the Communion rite, the Hosts for distribution to the sick and homebound may be put into Eucharistic containers which are then placed in the tabernacle until after Mass when the ministers may pick them up.

In whatever approach, ministers should go directly to their ministry without greeting others or socializing after Mass.

8. Hosts which cannot be distributed immediately and consumed at once by the sick and homebound should be consumed by the minister or returned to the tabernacle. They should not be left to be received at a later time, carried around while doing other business, or kept in the car or home of the minister.