



**Guidelines for
Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
in the Diocese of Laredo**



Adapted from *Guidelines and Norms for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion* from the Archdioceses of Denver and Atlanta for use in the Diocese of Laredo.

Introduction:

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are those men and women mandated by the Bishop of Laredo to share in the apostolic work of the Church when a true pastoral need exists as determined by the pastor, administrator or chaplain of a parish or other faith community.

“Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion” is the correct terminology. The phrases “Eucharistic” or “communion” minister blur the distinction between the ordained and the non-ordained. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are members of the laity who have received a mandate from the Bishop to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion when there is a genuine pastoral need. The responsibilities of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion include the reverent and secure distribution of Holy Communion. An instituted acolyte does not require mandation to serve as an extraordinary minister. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion do not distribute communion when a sufficient number of ordinary ministers (bishops, priests, deacons) are present at the Eucharist, whether or not they are celebrants or assisting as deacons. It is the responsibility of the priest-celebrant to attend to this consideration (Instruction *Immensae Caritas*, 1973).

A genuine pastoral need may arise when the number of faithful receiving Holy Communion at Mass is so great that the liturgy would be unduly prolonged. Another need may arise when ordinary ministers are unable to administer Holy Communion conveniently because of poor health or advanced age, or when they are not available because they are fulfilling other duties.

In addition, grounded in charity and the corporal works of mercy, the need has arisen for mandated and well-formed Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to bring the Eucharist to the sick and to the homebound. Mandation of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion is **granted by the Bishop, to whom written request is** made by the pastor, administrator or chaplain of an institution, setting forth a description of the needs of the parochial (or other) situation, the names of candidates, an assurance that all those for whom mandation is being requested have been fully initiated into the Church with the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, are of sufficient Christian maturity with a definite relationship to the parish or institution to be served, and whose character and way of life reflect a serious and well-formed faith and moral commitment. All candidates must be at least age 18. They must publicly affirm the magisterium of the Church and are in good standing in the Church.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are those persons, selected by their pastors or administrators, who are willing to serve their parish by assuming the responsibility that accompanies this ministry. Those who serve as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion must always ensure that their lives are in conformity with the teachings of the Church, including the teaching on married life.

An exception to the age requirement may be requested, as in the case of a Catholic high school seeking to mandate students. Such petition must be made to the Bishop of Laredo. While an exception for age may be made, full initiation into the faith remains a firm requirement.

Individuals are to be given sufficient formation and training for the role to be undertaken. Instruction in the theology of the Eucharist, the proper nature of this ministry as extraordinary, and prayerful Eucharistic spirituality should be part of the training required for all Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should receive, on a regular basis, ongoing theological and spiritual formation for this holy and important undertaking. Minimally, this formation occurs once every three years at the Diocesan level; yearly formation is highly encouraged.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are appointed to a particular parish or institution only and may not minister outside or beyond the parameters of their appointment. One receives mandation to serve in this capacity for up to a three-year period and continuation of service should not be presumed, but rather specifically determined by the pastor or administrator prior to renewal. In cases of emergency, however, and for a specific occasion, all priests may appoint Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to serve **on that occasion alone** (See *Roman Missal*, Appendix 5).

Process for receiving Mandation as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion:

After careful consideration that each candidate meets the criteria listed above to be commissioned as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, a pastor, administrator or chaplain requests mandation from the Bishop by filling out the electronic form on the liturgy committee page of the Diocesan Website, with these or similar words:

Dear Bishop:

The (parish/institution) of (Name and town) has respectfully discerned the following candidates to serve as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. Through their devotion to the Eucharist and their desire to serve others, they have been found worthy of this ministry:

(NAMES)

The candidates will then be required to attend a half-day Diocesan workshop for training. Afterwards they will receive a certificate of completion and mandation from the Bishop indicating that they are ready to be commissioned at their parishes.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should be commissioned, preferably within Mass, according to the Rite of Commissioning Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, which is found in the *Book of Blessings*.

Pastors and chaplains should develop the full complement of ministries that function in the celebration of the Eucharist. Therefore, it is preferable that Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion do not serve as lectors, ushers, or choir members at the same Mass. When an individual's capability to function well as an Extraordinary Minister is inhibited due to illness or age, mandation is not to be requested. They might be invited to serve the parish in some other way.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may also be designated for ministry to the sick and shut-ins of the parish to allow more frequent reception of the sacrament than would otherwise be possible. Such individuals are instructed in the use of “Administration of Communion and Viaticum to the Sick by an Extraordinary Minister” found in *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*. Additional formation as to the procedures and protocol for visiting those in hospitals should be given, such as the procedures to follow when they bring communion to the hospitalized, i.e., checking in at the nurses' station, sensitivity to the patient's condition/family, etc. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may also assist in jail or prison ministry. They are to be particularly attentive and sensitive to the inmates in explaining the guidelines for reception of Holy Communion and to carry out communion services reverently and in such a way as not to confuse the service with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

At ***no time and for no reason*** are Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion allowed to keep the Eucharist in their possession, in his or her home or vehicle, beyond what is necessary for the communion call. The individual should immediately go from the church celebration to the communion call. In addition to the reverence given to the Blessed Sacrament by this gesture, it makes more evident the connection between the Eucharistic sacrifice and the visit to those confined. By tending immediately to the needs of the communion recipient, following attendance at the celebration of the Eucharist, the communion recipient is linked to that sacrifice of the altar that has taken place in the parish church.

Practical Preparations and Procedures

Recognizing that each parish church has its own particular details of design and need, those topics and procedures that are generally universal in the ministry today are listed below. New material from the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 2003 (GIRM)* and *Norms for the Distribution of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America, 2001 (U.S. Norms)* is included here. These two documents also provide additional reference material for this ministry.

The Principle of Prayer:

All ministry should begin and end with humble and grateful prayer.

The Principle of Attentiveness and Flexibility: *Faithfulness in liturgical ministry demands attention to details and readiness to adapt to changing circumstances.*

The Principle of Reverence and Uniformity: *All actions and words in ministry should be in union with and directed by the celebrant in a generous spirit of loving service to the whole Eucharistic Assembly.* Care should be taken against casual actions, attitudes and language that distract from the celebration. Care should also be taken regarding appropriate dress. While each parish will determine its own guidelines for the dress of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, extraordinary ministers should dress in a way that is dignified and shows respect for the Blessed Sacrament and the function they are carrying out. Clothes should be clean and neat, and reflect the importance of the Blessed Sacrament, generally by being more formal. Clothing should not be distracting; the focus of the communicant should be on the Blessed Sacrament, not on the person distributing communion or their dress.

Terminology for the Blessed Sacrament

The way we speak both reflects and shapes the way we believe, and so it is important that our language regarding the Blessed Sacrament reflect our understanding of its nature, and our faith in the real presence of Christ. Although all of Christ is present under each species, it is customary to refer to the host after consecration as either simply “the host,” or “the sacred body.” Likewise, the chalice may be referred to simply as “the chalice” or as “the precious blood.” The terms “bread” and “wine” should be used to refer to the bread and wine brought forward as gifts, but not to the consecrated species, which are no longer bread or wine, but the body and blood of the Lord.

Preparation

On ministry days, begin the day in prayer. Avoid distractions or anything that would discourage a recollected manner. It is recommended that you arrive at church at least fifteen minutes prior to the liturgy at which you are scheduled to serve, allowing you to be informed of any special circumstances that might be occurring. This also ensures that the priest, deacon, servers, musicians and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion conduct their roles with style and grace because everyone is aware of their specific responsibilities for the celebration. Additionally, some parishes might have you assist in sacristan duties as well, for example, in preparing the necessary vessels for the distribution of Holy Communion.

During the Mass, the extraordinary minister sits with the rest of the faithful, and should participate fully in the Mass, listening to the readings, and joining the community in prayer.

At the Breaking of the Bread: The priest, assisted by the deacon if necessary, breaks the consecrated bread and places it in other vessels if necessary. This ritual action is a gesture of our Lord’s at the Last Supper. It is reserved for the priest or deacon only. (GIRM 83, U. S. Norms, 37)

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion approach the altar **ONLY** after the priest receives Communion, and then receive Communion from the priest and deacon. They do not receive Holy Communion at the same time as the priest, and they never wait to receive Communion following the assembly (U.S. Norms, 38-40).

When receiving Communion, just like the rest of the faithful, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are to show a sign of reverence. The U.S. Bishops Conference has determined that the sign of reverence is a simple bow of the head before receiving both the Body and Blood of Christ.

How to Minister the Body of Christ:

Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are each given a vessel by the priest or deacon; they do not take the vessels from the altar. They may participate in distributing Holy Communion to their fellow extraordinary ministers.

They move to their assigned communion station with reverence and dignity. As the communicant approaches, the host is offered to the communicant with the words, “The Body of Christ.”

Nothing else is said (such as the communicant's name). The communicant chooses whether to receive the Body of Christ in the hand or on the tongue.

The practice of receiving communion in the hand, which is permitted in the United States by a special indult from the Holy See, places additional requirements on the Extraordinary Minister, because it is now necessary that they make sure that the Sacred Host is properly consumed, and that it is treated with reverence by the communicant. Thus it is necessary for the extraordinary minister to observe the person receiving communion until he consumes the host. If they begin to walk off without receiving communion (as is sometimes the case with children who have not received proper catechesis or non-Catholic adults), it is important that the extraordinary minister advise an usher or altar server to ask that individual to consume the host, or to retrieve it so that nothing improper happens. It is important to note that the decision to receive communion on the hand is on the part of the communicant, and no one can compel them to receive on the hand or on the tongue.

How to Minister the Blood of Christ:

As those who desire to receive the Blood of Christ come forward, the chalice is offered to the communicant with the words, "The Blood of Christ." As they bow in reverence and respond, "Amen," the chalice is handed to them. After they return the chalice, the rim is wiped inside and out with a purificator, the chalice rotated slightly, and then it is presented to the next communicant. The chalice is never passed from one communicant to another. A communicant is never allowed to self-communicate by intincting the host in the chalice and is not permitted to pass the chalice to another communicant. Intinction, can only be ministered by a priest or bishop. An Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, may hold the chalice from which Intinction is distributed. While distributing the Precious Blood, never pour the Blood from one vessel to another, so as to fill a vessel with Precious Blood at a communion station that might be out of Blood for that station.

Those Unable to Receive Communion

In most churches there will be some people who are unable to receive Holy Communion, or who choose not to. Someone might not be able to receive communion because they have not yet made their first communion, are not prepared through fasting, are not in communion with the Catholic Church, or are in a state of serious sin. There can also be many valid personal reasons why a person who able to receive might choose to abstain from Holy Communion. It is important not to judge the motivation for an individual not receiving Holy Communion.

Blessings

Although they are not a part of the approved rite of the Mass, it has become customary in many parts of the United States for individuals who are not receiving Holy Communion to come forward and ask for a blessing. The Congregation of Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments responded to this matter in a letter dated November 22, 2008 (Protocol No. 930/08/L). Although this letter is not legally binding and states that "this matter is under the attentive study of the Congregation", it does reiterate present liturgical norms regarding blessings at Mass. Therefore, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are discouraged from giving blessings to those who cannot receive Holy Communion.

Denying Holy Communion

There are practically no situations when Holy Communion should be denied by an extraordinary minister. Church norms state that: "Any baptized Catholic who is not prevented by law must be admitted to Holy Communion" (Redemptionis Sacramentum 91). The extraordinary minister should not make a judgment on the worthiness of any individual to receive Holy Communion. In the case of individuals clearly living a life in discrepancy with church teachings, the decision is to be made by the pastor, in consultation with the Bishop, and the pastor will then inform the extraordinary ministers involved. If the extraordinary minister is unsure whether an individual is Catholic or has received their first communion, he should ask them or their parent, and if they reply that they are not, the extraordinary minister should let them return to their pew without receiving communion.

Following the Distribution of Holy Communion:

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion return the ciborium/a to the altar. If the tabernacle is outside the sanctuary, they may bring any of the remaining Sacrament to it, if there is no deacon to assist the priest in this. A genuflection is made at the opening and closing of the tabernacle door. Any remaining Precious Blood must be consumed at the end of the distribution of Holy Communion by the ordinary ministers, who may be assisted by the extraordinary ministers but only the ordinary minister may purify the sacred vessels.

Accidents Involving the Blessed Sacrament

While every care should be taken to avoid accidents involving the Blessed Sacrament, the extraordinary minister should be prepared to respond to them should they occur. The most common sort of accidents involve a particle of the host or a portion of the precious blood falling on the ground or another object. If a particle of the host falls on the ground, it should be picked up and consumed. If for some reason it cannot be consumed (for example, if it has already been in an individual's mouth who is unable to consume it), it may be dissolved in water and the water later poured down the sacrarium, however, it is best to contact a priest or deacon should this be necessary. A greater difficulty is presented if some of the precious blood should fall to the ground. The extraordinary minister should insure that no one steps on the spot, perhaps by delegating an individual to guard it. A clean purificator could be used to mark the spot. Then, (perhaps with the deacon's assistance) water should be brought and poured over the spot. It is important to note that when it is diluted with water to the point where it loses the appearance of wine, the Precious Blood ceases to be the Eucharist. The resulting water, however, should still be treated with respect, and, collected in a non-consecrated vessel (a lavabo bowl, for example) through the use of purificators, it should then be poured down the sacrarium. If some of the precious blood should drop on an individual's clothing or possessions, it should be treated in the same way, with due respect for the individual involved.

Purifying Sacred Vessels:

The purification of the sacred vessels may occur at the altar by the deacon or priest, or at the credence table, or cleansed immediately after Mass. If they are to be cleansed after Mass, the vessels are suitably covered at the credence table on a corporal. (GIRM 183) Purification is ordinarily done by the priest or deacon; Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion may conduct a more complete hygienic washing after the vessels are purified.

Communion vessels are not purified with any other items. These are sacred vessels – **NOT** ordinary “dishes.”

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion Visiting Institutions and Homes

Taking the Eucharist to institutions (hospitals, nursing homes, other health care facilities, prisons) and homes is an extension of the Eucharistic Celebration of the community at Mass. The function of the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion in the pastoral care of the sick or to prisoners is to bring the Eucharist to a member of the parish community who is confined and cannot participate in the communal celebration and to extend charity in whatever way is possible or needed. Therefore,

1. The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion is a representative of the parish bringing to another member the love, concern and prayers of the community.
2. The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion may be ministering only to the person confined, or to that person and other members of the household. Since the visit of the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion is not meant to be a substitute for one's participation in the Eucharist, others should be encouraged to participate, but not to use the visit as a substitute for Mass. The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion should, however, be sensitive to the presence of others and involve them in the rite.
3. The visit by the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion includes the *Administration of Communion and Viaticum to the Sick by an Extraordinary Minister* as presented in *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*.
4. The visit is an opportunity to ask the individual if there is a need for a visit by a priest for the Sacraments of Reconciliation or Anointing of the Sick.

Reverence for the Eucharistic Species by the Minister

1. Go directly from the church to the institution or home.
 - no shopping or visiting on the way
 - do not keep the Blessed Sacrament in your home or vehicle
2. After the communion call, any remaining elements of the sacred species are to be immediately returned to the church or consumed by the individual, depending on circumstances and the pyx is to be purified.
3. A host that has fallen should be carefully returned to the parish church and placed in the ablution jar next to the tabernacle until it has dissolved. The water may then be poured down the sacrarium. It may also be consumed.
4. Dress according to your ministry and the purpose of your visit.
 - with dignity and common sense.

Skills needed for the Pastoral Visit

1. You are going *to minister* to a patient or a prisoner -you are a messenger of God's love, reflect that love.
2. *Listen* to the needs of the person you visit and the family, if present.

3. *Reflect* concern for the person you visit.
4. Be willing to *pray*.
5. Be unhurried and sensitive, without staying too long, noting the energy level of the person you are visiting.

Visiting Health Care Institutions

1. Learn what you can about the person before visiting.
2. Visit by yourself, or in pairs; not in groups and keep the visit short.
3. Identify yourself to the person in charge.
 - a. find out visiting hours
 - b. make appointments if necessary
 - c. become familiar with the best times to visit
 - not during meals, doctors' visits or treatment time
 - your schedule should be flexible—if you arrive at an inopportune time, come back later.
- d. Watch for "NO VISITORS" or "ISOLATION" signs.
 - consult the nurse in charge about these
- e. Knock before entering or even going around the curtain.
- f. Assess the situation and adapt to the person's needs.
 - Introduce yourself
 - Sit or stand so you are in a comfortable line of vision for the person in bed.
 - Do not wake people who are sleeping soundly.
 - Be aware of apparatus around the bed.
 - Put the needs of those you visit over your own.
- g. Adapt Communion rite to the needs and condition of those you visit.
- h. Don't rush the visit, but keep it within the limits of the sick person's stamina.
- i. Make an appointment for a return visit if desired.

Glossary

Ablution Cup	A small glass cup with a lid placed next to the <i>tabernacle</i> to purify the fingers of the priest or deacon who removes the <i>Blessed Sacrament</i> outside of Mass.
Altar	Place of Sacrifice; central location for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
Ambo	Place where the readings from sacred scripture are proclaimed during Mass. May also be used for the homily.
Blessed Sacrament	The consecrated <i>hosts</i> and <i>precious blood</i> , in which Catholics believe that Jesus Christ is truly present.
Burse	I. Square cloth envelope of the liturgical color of the day, in which the <i>corporal</i> may be placed when not in use. II. A small pouch for carrying a <i>pyx</i> , with a cord which goes around the neck.
Ciborium, ciboria (plural).	Sacred vessel with a lid for consecrated or unconsecrated <i>hosts</i> .

Chalice	Sacred vessel in which wine, after Consecration, becomes the <i>Precious Blood</i> .
Chalice Veil	A cloth in the liturgical color of the day which may be placed over the chalice and paten. The burse may then be placed on top.
Communion Paten	A metal plate, sometimes with a handle, which is held by an altar server to catch any fragments of the <i>host</i> that might fall during Holy Communion.
Corporal	Linen square which is unfolded on the altar during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The <i>chalice</i> and <i>paten</i> are placed on the corporal. It is folded in a way that captures any fragments of the host that might have fallen. Before being placed in the laundry, it is soaked, with the water being poured down the <i>sacrarium</i> .
Credence Table	Table near the <i>altar</i> on which are located the various <i>sacred vessels</i> , the <i>lavabo bowl</i> and towel, the water and wine <i>cruets</i> , etc., used during the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
Cruets	Glass vessels that hold water and wine for the Mass.
Evangelary	A book which holds the gospel readings for Mass. Often called the Book of the Gospels.
Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion	Either an <i>instituted acolyte</i> or a lay person who meets criteria of Canon 230.
Host	A small wafer of unleavened bread, which is consecrated in the Mass so as to become the Body of Christ.
Instituted Acolyte	A man who has been permanently commissioned to assist at the altar, and who, by virtue of his office, is an <i>extraordinary minister of holy communion</i> . Usually, a seminarian or deacon candidate.
Lavabo Bowl and Pitcher	A bowl and pitcher used to wash the priest's hand during Mass.
Lectionary	Book which rests on the <i>ambo</i> , containing the Scripture readings for Mass.
Luna	Round glass case within which is kept a large consecrated <i>host</i> so that it may be inserted into the center of the <i>monstrance</i> .
Monstrance	Sacred Vessel which holds the <i>luna</i> with the consecrated <i>host</i> for adoration and benediction.
Ordinary Minister Of Holy Communion	A bishop, priest or deacon who by virtue of their office ordinarily distributes Holy Communion.
Pall	Square of stiff material covered by linen which is used to cover the <i>chalice</i> and <i>paten</i> .

Paten	Small metal plate on which <i>hosts</i> are consecrated during the Mass.
Precious Blood	A term for the real presence of Jesus Christ under the appearance of wine.
Purificator	Small linen cloth folded three ways, which is used to purify a <i>chalice</i> when communion is received. Before being placed in the laundry, it is soaked, with the water being poured down the <i>sacrarium</i> .
Pyx	Small metal container used to carry sacred <i>hosts</i> when communion is taken to the sick or homebound; it is carried in the <i>burse</i> with cord around neck.
Ritual Books	Any official book approved by the Church, containing the rites used in the liturgy and the administration of the sacraments.
Roman Missal	<i>Ritual book</i> containing the prayers recited at Mass by the priest.
Sacrarium	A sink-like receptacle in the sacristy, which drains directly into the ground, rather than into a sewage system. It is used for disposing of water which may have come into contact with sacred things.
Sacred Vessels	Any vessel which is used to hold the <i>Blessed Sacrament</i> . Sacred vessels must be made out of certain materials, and are to be blessed according to the rites of the Church.
Sacristy	Room where <i>sacred vessels</i> are kept and where the priest and deacon vest when there is not a separate vestry.
Sanctuary	Area of the church building set aside for the celebration of the sacred rites. The <i>altar</i> and <i>ambo</i> are placed within the sanctuary.
Sanctuary Lamp	A fixture containing a candle or an oil lamp, usually suspended by a chain or affixed to the wall. It is located near the <i>tabernacle</i> . When lit, it indicates the presence of the <i>Blessed Sacrament</i> in the Tabernacle.
Tabernacle	Locked and secured place of reservation of the <i>Blessed Sacrament</i> .

Topics for the Diocesan Workshop for the Training of
Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Morning Sessions

9:00 am—9:15 am	Prayer, Welcome, Introduction
9:15 am—10:00 am	Basic Theology of the Eucharist
10:00—10:15 am	Break
10:15 am—11:00 am	Introduction to the Eucharistic Liturgy Origins of the Mass, meaning of celebration
11:00 am—11:15 am	Break
11:15 am—12:00 pm	The EMHC at Mass: guidelines for serving

Afternoon Sessions

1:00 pm—1:15 pm	Prayer, Welcome, Introduction
1:15 am—2:00 pm	Basic Theology of the Eucharist
2:00—2:15 pm	Break
2:15 pm—3:00 pm	Introduction to the Eucharistic Liturgy Origins of the Mass, meaning of celebration
3:00 pm—3:15 pm	Break
3:15 pm—4:00 pm	The EMHC at Mass: guidelines for serving