



## GUIDELINES FOR EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

“While the heart of the celebration of the Eucharist is the Eucharistic Prayer, the consummation of the Mass is found in Holy Communion, whereby the people purchased for the Father by his beloved Son eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ. They are thereby joined together as members of Christ’s mystical Body, sharing the one life of the Spirit. In the great sacrament of the altar, they are joined to Christ Jesus and to one another.” (*Norm for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the USA*) # 5).

“It is most desirable that the faithful, just as the priest himself is bound to do, receive the Lord’s Body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and that, in the instances when it is permitted, they partake of the chalice (see # 283) so that even by means of the signs Communion will stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated” (*GIRM* # 85).

“From the first days of the Church’s celebration of the Eucharist, Holy Communion consisted of the reception of both species in fulfillment of the Lord’s command to “take and eat . . . take and drink.” The distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful under both kinds was thus the norm for more than a millennium of Catholic liturgical practice” (*NDRHCBK* # 17).

“The diocesan bishop may establish norms for Communion under both kinds for his own diocese, which are also to be observed in churches of religious and at celebrations with small groups. The diocesan bishop is also given the faculty to permit Communion under both kinds whenever it may seem appropriate to the priest to whom, as its own shepherd, a community has been entrusted, provided that the faithful have been well instructed and there is no danger of profanation of the Sacrament or of the rite’s becoming difficult because of the large number of participants or some other reason” (*GIRM* #283.2).

“Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should receive sufficient spiritual, theological, and practical preparation to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence. In all matters they should follow the guidance of the diocesan bishop” (*This Holy and Living Sacrifice*, #28).

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

“In the dioceses of the United States of America, acolytes, altar servers, lectors, and other lay ministers may wear the alb or other suitable vesture or other appropriate and dignified clothing” (*GIRM* # 339).

1. Pastors, in consultation with the parish pastoral council, staff members and community, determine the needs and the persons best qualified to serve the parish in this ministry. Those invited into this ministry should realize that it is a leadership role in the community.
2. This ministry is open to women and men, age sixteen and above who have been fully initiated. They must be practicing Catholics, in good standing with the parish community, and possess a love of the Eucharist. Their role is not to be visibly confused with the roles of other ministers, such as deacon, reader, cantor, and so on.
3. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion exercise their ministry during the Mass, at a Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest, and to the homebound and nursing home communities outside Mass. They should dress appropriately for their ministry. Ministers to the



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homebound and nursing home communities receive the same training as extra-ordinary ministers of the Eucharist, with additional training specific to homebound ministry.

4. Extraordinary ministers must be properly trained in both the theology and the practice of their ministry before being commissioned. Ongoing formation is encouraged at least annually.
5. Extraordinary ministers are ministers of both the Body and Blood of Christ. They are not simply distributing items to individuals, but participating in an essential moment in the mystery of faith, a moment of inviting others and self to recognize and reverence the body of Christ in its many dimensions. This is reflected in the Church's regulations that ministers are to announce "The body of Christ" or "The blood of Christ." This is a matter of direct address to the communicant as well as naming the species.
6. A simple commissioning of extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist takes place during the Eucharist. It should be renewed every three years, giving both the parish and the minister the opportunity to reconsider the commitment.
7. Scheduling ministers for this ministry is important, even during difficult seasons and vacation months, lest the impression be given that the ministry is trivial or unimportant.
8. Ministers may assist with washing the communion vessels after their purification by a priest, deacon or instituted acolyte (see *GIRM* # 279 & 284 and *NDRHCBK* #52, 53, 55).
9. When the Holy Eucharist is carried to people who are homebound, in nursing homes, or in the hospitals, it should always be carried in a pyx. The pyx is to be purified, by rinsing with clear water which is consumed or poured into the ground, before replacing it in the sacristy.
10. At children's Liturgies of the Eucharist (school/RE), adults or youth age sixteen and above, should fulfill the leadership role of extraordinary ministers.

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Bishop of Great Falls-Billings