

**EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER OF COMMUNION
TRAINING BOOKLET**



DIOCESE OF WINONA
55 West Sanborn Street
Winona, MN



Immensae Caritates, 1997

ON CERTAIN QUESTIONS REGARDING
THE COLLABORATION OF THE NON-ORDAINED
FAITHFUL IN THE SACRED MINISTRY OF PRIEST

Article 8, No. 2 of the Roman Instruction, *Immensae Caritates*, 1997, states that the diocesan bishop should provide for the formation of extra-ordinary ministers of communion.

- I. The bishop should issue particular norms concerning extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion
 - A. in harmony with the universal law of the Church,
 - B. regulating the exercise of this function in his diocese.

- II. Such norms should provide for matters such as
 - A. the instruction in Eucharistic doctrine of those chosen to be extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion
 - B. the meaning of the service they provide
 - C. the rubrics to be observed
 - D. the reverence to be shown for the Eucharist
 - E. instruction concerning the discipline on admission to Holy Communion.

This booklet is a resource for parish based training of Extraordinary Ministers of Communion commonly known as Eucharistic Ministers.



GUIDELINES FOR EUCHARISTIC MINISTERS IN THE DIOCESE OF WINONA

June 2004

“The Eucharist has always been the source of Christian love and the center of ecclesial life (*Dominicae Cena*, 7) daily building up the life of all Christians, making of them a holy temple in the Lord, a dwelling-place for God in the Spirit, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ (*This Holy Living Sacrifice*, #3).”

The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist together point to the rite of Holy Communion, for “Christ gave his body and blood to be eaten and drunk so that all who participate share in the reality of his unique sacrifice and Passover made present in sign and symbols in the Eucharist (*This Holy Living Sacrifice*, #10).”

“The eyes of faith enable the believer to recognize the ineffable depths of the mystery that is the Holy Eucharist...The Eucharistic species of bread and wine derive from the work of human hand. In the action of the Eucharist, this bread and this wine become our spiritual food and drink. It is Christ, the true vine, who gives life to the branches. As bread from heaven, bread of angels, the chalice of salvation, the medicine of immortality, the Eucharist is the promise of eternal life to all who eat and drink it. The Eucharist is the a sacred meal, a sacrifice of love, a sign of unity a bond of charity in which Christ calls us as his friends to the banquet of heaven. (*Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Diocese of the United States of America*, #4).”

1. The pastor, or his delegate, determines the needs and the persons best qualified to serve the parish community in this role. Those who are invited to assist as ministers of the Eucharist should exercise this function in a spirit of faith and service.
2. “All taking part in liturgical celebrations, whether ministers or members of the congregation, should do all that pertains to them, and no more, taking into account the rite and liturgical norms (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 28).” Therefore, those serving as Eucharistic ministers, especially at the Sunday celebration, generally should not serve in any other capacity at that particular liturgy.
3. This ministry is open to women and men aged sixteen and above, who have been fully initiated. They should be practicing Catholics, in good standing with the parish community, and possess a love of the Eucharist.
4. Eucharistic ministers must be properly trained both in the theology and practice of their role before beginning the ministry. Ongoing education and evaluation at the parish level is also encouraged.
5. Eucharistic ministers exercise their function during the Sunday Eucharist, at a Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest, and to the homebound and nursing home communities outside of Mass.
6. “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.” (See # 29 – *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Diocese of the United States of America*). In the Diocese of Winona, Eucharistic ministers generally do not wear albs.
7. Ministers to the homebound and nursing homes receive the same training as those who exercise this function during the liturgy, with additional training specific to homebound ministry.



8. Eucharistic ministers may distribute both the bread and the cup. As they do so, they announce “The Body of Christ” [not “this is the Body of Christ,” “receive the Body of Christ,” or some other phrase].
9. A simple commissioning of Eucharistic ministers takes place during the celebration of Eucharist. A service for this, found chapter 63 of the *Book of Blessings*, also appears at the end of this booklet..
10. The length of service for each Eucharistic minister is left to the discretion of the pastor/pastoral administrator, as long as the minister remains a member of the parish.
11. Ministers of the Eucharist approach the altar after the priest has received communion. This does not mean, however, that they are not to enter the sanctuary. Especially in larger churches, they may still enter the sanctuary during the *Lamb of God*, but stand at a distance from the altar.
12. Eucharistic ministers always receive the vessel from the priest that contains the Blessed Sacrament, which they will distribute. (*GIRM 2000, 162*) Note: This does not mean that the only person who may give communion to the Eucharistic ministers is the priest or deacon. Especially in parishes where there are a large number of ministers, the priest may choose to communicate one or two of the ministers and then hand him or her the vessel so that he or she may help distribute communion to the rest of the Eucharistic ministers.
13. Ministers may assist with purifying and washing the communion vessels as needed, as well as consuming the remaining precious blood. (*See Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States #51-55*)
14. At Eucharistic liturgies with children, fully initiated adults or youth aged sixteen and above, may fulfill the role of Eucharistic ministers.

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Document:
THE GENERAL INSTRUCTION OF THE ROMAN MISSAL
THE MINISTRY OF THE
EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER OF COMMUNION

Other Ministries

100. In the absence of an instituted acolyte, lay ministers may be deputed to serve at the altar and assist the priest and the deacon; they may carry the cross, the candles, the thurible, the bread, the wine, and the water, and they may also be deputed to distribute Holy Communion as extraordinary ministers.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

139. When the Prayer of the Faithful is completed, all sit, and the Offertory chant begins (cf. no. 74, GIRM). An acolyte or other lay minister arranges the corporal, the purificator, the chalice, the pall, and the Missal upon the altar.

149. In each of the Eucharistic Prayers, these formulas are to be modified according to the requirements of grammar.

159. The Communion chant begins while the priest is receiving the Sacrament (cf. above, no. 86).

160. The priest then takes the paten or ciborium and goes to the communicants, who, as a rule, approach in a procession. The faithful are not permitted to take the consecrated bread or the sacred chalice by themselves and, still less, to hand them from one to another. The norm for reception of Holy Communion in the dioceses of the United States is standing. Communicants should not be denied Holy Communion because they kneel. Rather, such instances should be addressed pastorally, by providing the faithful with proper catechesis on the reasons for this norm. When receiving Holy Communion, the communicant bows his or her head before the Sacrament as a gesture of reverence and receives the Body of the Lord from the minister. The consecrated host may be received either on the tongue or in the hand, at the discretion of each communicant. When Holy Communion is received under both kinds, the sign of reverence is also made before receiving the Precious Blood.

161. If Communion is given only under the species of bread, the priest raises the host slightly and shows it to each, saying, *Corpus Christi* (The Body of Christ). The communicant replies, *Amen*, and receives the Sacrament either on the tongue or, where this is allowed and if the communicant so chooses, in the hand. As soon as the communicant receives the host, he or she consumes it entirely. If, however, Communion is given under both kinds, the rite prescribed in nos. 284-287, GIRM is followed.

162. The priest may be assisted in the distribution of Communion by other priests who happen to be present. If such priests are not present and there is a very large number of communicants, the priest may call upon extraordinary ministers to assist him, e.g., duly instituted acolytes or even other faithful who have been deputed for this purpose. In case of necessity, the priest may depute suitable faithful for this single occasion. These ministers should not approach the altar before the priest has received Communion, and they are always to receive from the hands of the priest celebrant the vessel containing either species of the Most Holy Eucharist for distribution to the faithful.

163. When the distribution of Communion is finished, the priest himself immediately and completely consumes at the altar any consecrated wine that happens to remain; as for any consecrated hosts that are



left, he either consumes them at the altar or carries them to the place designated for the reservation of the Eucharist.

Upon returning to the altar, the priest collects any fragments that may remain. Then, standing at the altar or at the credence table, he purifies the paten or ciborium over the chalice then purifies the chalice, saying quietly, *Quod ore sumpsimus* (Lord, may I receive), and dries the chalice with a purificator. If the vessels are purified at the altar, a minister carries them to the credence table. Nevertheless, it is also permitted, especially if there are several vessels to be purified, to leave them suitably covered on a corporal, either at the altar or at the credence table, and to purify them immediately after Mass following the dismissal of the people.

182. After the priest's Communion, the deacon receives Communion under both kinds from the priest himself and then assists the priest in distributing Communion to the people. If Communion is given under both kinds, the deacon himself administers the chalice to the communicants; and, when the distribution is completed, he immediately and reverently consumes at the altar all of the Blood of Christ that remains, assisted if necessary by other deacons and priests.

183. When the distribution of Communion is completed, the deacon returns to the altar with the priest and collects the fragments, if any remain, and then carries the chalice and other sacred vessels to the credence table, where he purifies them and arranges them in the usual way while the priest returns to the chair. It is also permissible to leave the vessels that need to be purified, suitably covered, at the credence table on a corporal and to purify them immediately after Mass following the dismissal of the people.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

190. If no deacon is present, after the Prayer of the Faithful is concluded and while the priest remains at the chair, the acolyte places the corporal, the purificator, the chalice, the pall, and the Missal on the altar. Then, if necessary, the acolyte assists the priest in receiving the gifts of the people and, if appropriate, brings the bread and wine to the altar and hands them to the priest. If incense is used, the acolyte presents the thurible to the priest and assists him while he incenses the gifts, the cross, and the altar. Then the acolyte incenses the priest and the people.

191. A duly instituted acolyte, as an extraordinary minister, may, if necessary, assist the priest in giving Communion to the people. If Communion is given under both kinds, when no deacon is present, the acolyte administers the chalice to the communicants or holds the chalice if Communion is given by intinction.

192. Likewise, when the distribution of Communion is completed, a duly instituted acolyte helps the priest or deacon to purify and arrange the sacred vessels. When no deacon is present, a duly instituted acolyte carries the sacred vessels to the credence table and there purifies, wipes, and arranges them in the usual way.

193. After the celebration of Mass, the acolyte and other ministers return in procession to the sacristy, together with the deacon and the priest in the same way and order in which they entered.



Document:
**NORMS FOR THE DISTRIBUTION AND RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION
UNDER BOTH KINDS IN THE DIOCESES OF THE USA**

**THE MINISTRY OF THE
EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER OF COMMUNION**

Holy Communion Under Both Kinds

17. 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.

18. The practice of Holy Communion under both kinds at Mass continued until the late eleventh century, when the custom of distributing the Eucharist to the faithful under the form of bread alone began to grow. By the twelfth century theologians such as Peter Cantor speak of Communion under one kind as a "custom" of the Church. (28) This practice spread until the Council of Constance in 1415 decreed that Holy Communion under the form of bread alone would be distributed to the faithful.

19. In 1963, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council authorized the extension of the faculty for Holy Communion under both kinds in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*:

The dogmatic principles which were laid down by the Council of Trent remaining intact, Communion under both kinds may be granted when the bishops think fit, not only to clerics and religious, but also to the laity, in cases to be determined by the Apostolic See.

20. The Council's decision to restore Holy Communion under both kinds at the bishop's discretion took expression in the first edition of the *Missale Romanum* and enjoys an even more generous application in the third typical edition of the *Missale Romanum*:

Holy Communion has a more complete form as a sign when it is received under both kinds. For in this manner of reception a fuller sign of the Eucharistic banquet shines forth. Moreover, there is a clearer expression of that will by which the new and everlasting covenant is ratified in the blood of the Lord and of the relationship of the Eucharistic banquet to the eschatological banquet in the Father's kingdom.

The General Instruction further states that "at the same time the faithful should be guided toward a desire to take part more intensely in a sacred rite in which the sign of the Eucharistic meal stands out more explicitly."

21. The extension of the faculty for the distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds does not represent a change in the Church's immemorial beliefs concerning the Holy Eucharist. Rather, today the Church finds it salutary to restore a practice, when appropriate, that for various reasons was not opportune when the Council of Trent was convened in 1545. But with the passing of time, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the reform of the Second Vatican Council has resulted in the restoration of a practice by which the faithful are again able to experience "a fuller sign of the Eucharistic banquet."



The Purpose of These Norms

22. In response to a provision of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops herein describes "the methods of distributing Holy Communion to the faithful under both kinds" and approves the following "norms, with the proper recognition of the Apostolic See." The purpose of these norms is to ensure the reverent and careful distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds.

When Communion Under Both Kinds May Be Given

23. The revised *Missale Romanum*, third typical edition, significantly expands those opportunities when Holy Communion may be offered under both kinds. In addition to those instances specified by individual ritual books, the *General Instruction* states that Communion under both kinds may be permitted as follows:

- a. for priests who are not able to celebrate or concelebrate
- b. for the deacon and others who perform some role at Mass
- c. for community members at their conventual Mass or what in some places is known as the "community" Mass, for seminarians, [and] for all who are on retreat or are participating in a spiritual or pastoral gathering

24. The *General Instruction* then indicates that the diocesan Bishop may lay down norms for the distribution of Communion under both kinds for his own diocese, which must be observed. . . . The diocesan Bishop also has the faculty to allow Communion under both kinds, whenever it seems appropriate to the priest to whom charge of a given community has been entrusted as [its] own pastor, provided that the faithful have been well instructed and there is no danger of the profanation of the Sacrament or that the rite would be difficult to carry out on account of the number of participants or for some other reason. In practice, the need to avoid obscuring the role of the priest and the deacon as the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion by an excessive use of extraordinary minister might in some circumstances constitute a reason either for limiting the distribution of Holy Communion under both species or for using intinction instead of distributing the Precious Blood from the chalice. Norms established by the diocesan bishop must be observed wherever the Eucharist is celebrated in the diocese, "even in the churches of religious orders and in celebrations with small groups."

Catechesis for Receiving the Body and Blood of the Lord

25. When Communion under both kinds is first introduced by the diocesan bishop and also whenever the opportunity for instruction is present, the faithful should be properly catechized on the following matters in the light of the teaching and directives of the *General Instruction*:

- a. the ecclesial nature of the Eucharist as the common possession of the whole Church;
- b. the Eucharist as the memorial of Christ's sacrifice, his death and resurrection, and as the sacred banquet;
- c. the real presence of Christ in the eucharistic elements, whole and entire--in each element of consecrated bread and wine (the doctrine of concomitance);
- d. the kinds of reverence due at all times to the sacrament, whether within the eucharistic Liturgy or outside the celebration; and
- e. the role that ordinary and, if necessary, extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist are assigned in the Eucharistic assembly



The Minister of Holy Communion

26. By virtue of his sacred ordination, the bishop or priest offers the sacrifice in the person of Christ, the Head of the Church. He receives gifts of bread and wine from the faithful, offers the sacrifice to God, and returns to them the very Body and Blood of Christ, as from the hands of Christ himself. Thus, bishops and priests are considered the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion. In addition, the deacon who assists the bishop or priest in distributing Communion is an ordinary minister of Holy Communion. When the Eucharist is distributed under both forms, "the deacon ministers the chalice."

27. In every celebration of the Eucharist, there should be a sufficient number of ministers for Holy Communion so that it can be distributed in an orderly and reverent manner. Bishops, priests, and deacons distribute Holy Communion by virtue of their office as ordinary ministers of the Body and Blood of the Lord.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

28. When the size of the congregation or the incapacity of the bishop, priest, or deacon requires it, the celebrant may be assisted by other bishops, priests, or deacons. If such ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are not present, "the priest may call upon extraordinary ministers to assist him, i.e., formally instituted acolytes or even some of the faithful who have been commissioned according to the prescribed rite. In case of necessity, the priest may also commission suitable members of the faithful for the occasion." Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should receive sufficient spiritual, theological, and practical preparation to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence. When recourse is had to Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, especially in the distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds, their number should not be increased beyond what is required for the orderly and reverent distribution of the Body and Blood of the Lord. In all matters, such Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should follow the guidance of the diocesan bishop.

Reverence

29. 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. Should there be any mishap--as when, for example, the consecrated wine is spilled from the chalice--then the affected "area . . . should be washed and the water poured into the sacrarium."

Planning

30. When Holy Communion is to be distributed under both species, careful planning should be undertaken so that:

- a. enough bread and wine are made ready for the communication of the faithful at each Mass. As a general rule, Holy Communion is given from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and not from those reserved in the tabernacle. Precious Blood may not be reserved at one Mass for use at another; and
- b. a suitable number of ministers of Holy Communion are provided at each Mass. For Communion from the chalice, it is desirable that there be generally two ministers of the Precious Blood for each minister of the Body of Christ, lest the liturgical celebration be unduly prolonged.

31. Even when Communion will be ministered in the form of bread alone to the congregation, care should be taken that sufficient amounts of the elements are consecrated so that the Precious Blood may be distributed to all concelebrating priests.



Preparations

32. Before Mass begins, wine and hosts should be provided in vessels of appropriate size and number. The presence on the altar of a single chalice and one large paten can signify the one bread and one chalice by which we are gathered "into the one Body of Christ, a living sacrifice of praise." When this is not possible, care should be taken that the number of vessels should not exceed the need.

33. The unity of all in the one bread will be better expressed when the bread to be broken is of sufficient size that at least some of the faithful are able to receive a piece broken from it. When the number of the faithful is great, however, a single large bread may be used for the breaking of the bread with small breads provided for the rest of the faithful.

34. Sacred vessels, which "hold a place of honor," should be of noble materials, appropriate to their use, and in conformity to the requirements of liturgical law, as specified in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, nos. 327-332.

35. Before being used, vessels for the celebration must be blessed by the bishop or priest according to the Rite of Blessing a Chalice and Paten.

At the Preparation of the Gifts

36. The altar is prepared with corporal, purificator, Missal, and chalice (unless the chalice is prepared at a side table) by the deacon and the servers. The gifts of bread and wine are brought forward by the faithful and received by the priest or deacon or at a convenient place. (Cf. GIRM, no. 333). If one chalice is not sufficient for Holy Communion to be distributed under both kinds to the Priest concelebrants or Christ's faithful, several chalices are placed on a corporal on the altar in an appropriate place, filled with wine. It is praiseworthy that the main chalice be larger than the other chalices prepared for distribution.

At the Breaking of the Bread

37. As the Agnus Dei or Lamb of God is begun, the Bishop or priest alone, or with the assistance of the deacon, and if necessary of concelebrating priests, breaks the Eucharistic bread. Other empty ciboria or patens are then brought to the altar if this is necessary. The deacon or priest places the consecrated bread in several ciboria or patens, if necessary, as required for the distribution of Holy Communion. If it is not possible to accomplish this distribution in a reasonable time, the celebrant may call upon the assistance of other deacons or concelebrating priests.

38. If extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are required by pastoral need, they should not approach the altar before the priest has received Communion. After the priest has concluded his own Communion, he distributes Communion to the extraordinary ministers, assisted by the deacon, and then hands the sacred vessels to them for distribution of Holy Communion to the people.

39. All receive Holy Communion in the manner described by the *General Instruction to the Roman Missal*, whether priest concelebrants (cf. GIRM, nos. 159, 242, 243, 246), deacons (cf. GIRM, nos. 182, 244, 246), or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (cf. GIRM, no. 284). Neither deacons nor lay ministers may ever receive Holy Communion in the manner of a concelebrating priest. The practice of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion waiting to receive Holy Communion until after the distribution of Holy Communion is not in accord with liturgical law.



40. After all Eucharistic ministers have received Communion, the bishop or priest celebrant reverently hands vessels containing the Body or the Blood of the Lord to the deacons or extraordinary ministers who will assist with the distribution of Holy Communion. The deacon may assist the priest in handing the vessels containing the Body and Blood of the Lord to the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

Distribution of the Body and Blood of the Lord

41. Holy Communion under the form of bread is offered to the communicant with the words "The Body of Christ." The communicant may choose whether to receive the Body of Christ in the hand or on the tongue. When receiving in the hand, the communicant should be guided by the words of St. Cyril of Jerusalem: "When you approach, take care not to do so with your hand stretched out and your fingers open or apart, but rather place your left hand as a throne beneath your right, as befits one who is about to receive the King. Then receive him, taking care that nothing is lost."

42. Among the ways of ministering the Precious Blood as prescribed by the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, Communion from the chalice is generally the preferred form in the Latin Church, provided that it can be carried out properly according to the norms and without any risk of even apparent irreverence toward the Blood of Christ.

43. The chalice is offered to the communicant with the words "The Blood of Christ," to which the communicant responds, "Amen."

44. The chalice may never be left on the altar or another place to be picked up by the communicant for self-communication (except in the case of concelebrating bishops or priests), nor may the chalice be passed from one communicant to another. There shall always be a minister of the chalice.

45. After each communicant has received the Blood of Christ, the minister carefully wipes both sides of the rim of the chalice with a purificator. This action is a matter of both reverence and hygiene. For the same reason, the minister turns the chalice slightly after each communicant has received the Precious Blood.

46. It is the choice of the communicant, not the minister, to receive from the chalice.

47. Children are encouraged to receive Communion under both kinds provided that they are properly instructed and that they are old enough to receive from the chalice.

Purification of Sacred Vessels

51. After Communion the consecrated bread that remains is to be reserved in the tabernacle. Care should be taken with any fragments remaining on the corporal or in the sacred vessels. The deacon returns to the altar with the priest and collects and consumes any remaining fragments.

52. When more of the Precious Blood remains than was necessary for Communion, and if not consumed by the bishop or priest celebrant, "the deacon immediately and reverently consumes at the altar all of the Blood of Christ which remains; he may be assisted, if needs dictate, by other deacons and priests." When there are extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, they may consume what remains of the Precious Blood from their chalice of distribution with permission of the diocesan bishop.

53. The chalice and other vessels may be taken to a side table, where they are cleansed and arranged in the usual way. Other sacred vessels that held the Precious Blood are purified in the same way as chalices. 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 and at a side table on a corporal, to be cleansed immediately after Mass following the dismissal of the people."

54. The Precious Blood may not be reserved, except for giving Communion to someone who is sick. Only sick people who are unable to receive Communion under the form of bread may receive it under the form of wine alone at the discretion of the priest. If not consecrated at a Mass in the presence of the sick person, the Blood of the Lord is kept in a properly covered vessel and is placed in the tabernacle after Communion. The Precious Blood should be carried to the sick in a vessel that is closed in such a way as to eliminate all danger of spilling. If some of the Precious Blood remains after the sick person has received Communion, the minister, who should also see to it that the vessel is properly purified, should consume it.

55. The reverence due to the Precious Blood of the Lord demands that it be fully consumed after Communion is completed and never be poured into the ground or the sacrarium.

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**Purification of Sacred Vessels by
Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion**
Communication, 2006
From the USCCB Committee on Divine Worship

In October, 2006 Bishop William Skylstad, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, received a response from Rome to his request for an extension of an indult permitting extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to assist with the purification of sacred vessels at Mass.

In a letter to the Conference President, Cardinal Francis Arinze, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (Prot. no. 468/05/L), reported that he had brought the matter to the attention of our Holy Father on June 9, 2006 and received a response in the negative.

In his letter to all Bishop members of the USCCB, Bishop Skylstad noted, “as a result, it will be necessary to inform all pastors that Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may no longer assist with the purification of sacred vessels at Mass.” Included from the Bishop’s Committee on the Liturgy is a resource entitled “Seven Questions on Distribution of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds” to assist Bishops, pastors, diocesan and parish liturgists in the implementation of the Holy Father’s decision.

In public comments on the decision of the Holy Father, Bishop Donald Trautman, Chairman of the Committee on the Liturgy, recalled the conciliar mandate for more frequent reception of Holy Communion under both kinds as a fuller sign of the Eucharistic Banquet.

While urging that the Holy Father’s decision be followed, he expressed his hope that each diocesan Bishop will continue to make full use of the authority granted him by the Missale Romanum, *editio typical tertia*, to foster the distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds.

Finally, he recalled the responsibility of each pastor to provide for the training of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion in Eucharistic theology, spirituality and liturgical practice and to instruct the faithful on the ecclesial nature of the Eucharist, the Eucharist as sacrifice and sacred banquet, the real presence of Christ in the Eucharistic elements, the kinds of reverence due at all times to the sacrament, and the roles proper to ordinary and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

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Document
**SEVEN QUESTIONS ON THE
DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION UNDER BOTH KINDS**
USCCB Committee on Divine Worship

1. Why did the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council recommend the distribution of Holy Communion under Both Kinds?¹

“The Council's decision [in 1963] to restore Holy Communion under both kinds at the bishop's discretion took expression in the first edition of the Missale Romanum and enjoys an even more generous application in the third typical edition of the Missale Romanum: ‘Holy Communion has a more complete form as a sign when it is received under both kinds. For in this manner of reception a fuller sign of the Eucharistic banquet shines forth. Moreover there is a clearer expression of that will by which the new and everlasting covenant is ratified in the blood of the Lord and of the relationship of the Eucharistic banquet to the eschatological banquet in the Father's kingdom.’”²

“ 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.”³

“The practice of Holy Communion under both kinds at Mass continued until the late eleventh century, when the custom of distributing the Eucharist to the faithful under the form of bread alone began to grow. By the twelfth century theologians such as Peter Cantor speak of Communion under one kind as a "custom" of the Church. This practice spread until the Council of Constance in 1415 decreed that Holy Communion under the form of bread alone would be distributed to the faithful.”⁴

2. What preparation of the faithful is required before the distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds?

“For the faithful who take part in the rite or are present at it, pastors should take care to call to mind as appropriately as possible Catholic teaching according to the Council of Trent on the manner of Communion. Above all they should instruct the Christian faithful that, according to Catholic faith, Christ, whole and entire, as well as the true Sacrament are received under one kind only; that, therefore, as far as the effects are concerned, those who receive in this manner are not deprived of any grace necessary for salvation.”⁵

3. What resources can assist in this preparation?

*Norms for the Distribution of Holy Communion under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America*⁶ were approved by the Bishops of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and confirmed by the Holy See in 2002.⁷ Part I of these Norms (Holy Communion: The Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus)⁸ provides a summary of the Church's teaching on Holy Communion which can aid in the preparation of ministers and faithful in preparing to receive.

4. When Holy Communion is distributed under both kinds, what happens to what remains of the Precious Blood?

“When more of the Precious Blood remains than was necessary for Communion, and if not consumed by the bishop or priest celebrant, the deacon immediately and reverently consumes at the altar all of the Blood of Christ which remains; he may be assisted, if needs dictate, by other deacons and priests. When



there are extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, they may consume what remains of the Precious Blood from their chalice of distribution with permission of the diocesan bishop.”⁹

5. Who then purifies the sacred vessels?

As ordinary ministers of Holy Communion, the Priest and the Deacon purify the sacred vessels. The instituted acolyte, by reason of his office, “helps the priest or deacon to purify and arrange the sacred vessels.”¹⁰ In the Dioceses of the United States of America, the ministry of instituted acolyte, which is open only to men, is primarily made up of those preparing to receive Holy Orders.¹¹

6. May an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion assist in the purification of sacred vessels?

In accord with the Holy Father’s recent decision, as reported in Cardinal Arinze’s letter of October 12, 2006 (Prot. no. 468/05/L), an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion may not assist in the purification of sacred vessels. This extraordinary ministry was created exclusively for those instances where there are not enough ordinary ministers to distribute Holy Communion, due to the consummate importance of assuring that the faithful have the opportunity to receive Holy Communion at Mass, even when it is distributed under both species. (cf. RS, no. 102)

7. What about those instances where there are many chalices and only one Priest to purify them?

When there are insufficient Priests, Deacons, or instituted acolytes to purify the additional chalices during Mass, the purification may take place immediately after the Mass has concluded. If such purification by ordinary ministers proves pastorally problematic, consideration should be given to distribution of Holy Communion by intinction or to the distribution of Holy Communion under the form of consecrated bread alone.¹² Priests should also keep in mind potential health risks associated with intinction, especially in the flu season.

ENDNOTES

- 1 cf. Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under both Kinds, no. 25.
- 2 Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds for the Dioceses of the United States of America (Norms), no. 20, citing general Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), no. 281.
- 3 Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC), no. 55, Cf. Norms, no. 17.
- 4 Norms, no. 18.
- 5 General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), no. 281, cf. Redemptionis Sacramentum (RS), no. 100.
- 6 [http://www.usccb.org/liturgy/current/norms.shtml#N_30_#N_30_Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist](http://www.usccb.org/liturgy/current/norms.shtml#N_30_#N_30_Christ%20in%20the%20Sacrament%20of%20the%20Eucharist)⁷ may be helpful in such formation. Both texts are available online in English and Spanish or from USCCB Publications. 7, <http://www.usccbpublishing.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=596>
- 8 www.usccbpublishing.com
- 9 Norms, no. 52.
- 10 GIRM, no. 192.
- 11 cf. GIRM, nos. 98, and 187-193.
- 12 cf. RS, no. 102.

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Excerpts from the Instruction:
IMMENSÆ CARITATES
1997

*On Certain Questions Regarding
The Collaboration Of The Non-Ordained
Faithful In The Sacred Ministry Of Priest*

Excerpts relating to collaboration with Extraordinary Ministers of Communion

PRACTICAL PROVISIONS

Article 1

Need for an Appropriate Terminology

§ 3. The non-ordained faithful may be generically designated "extraordinary ministers" when deputed by competent authority to discharge, solely by way of supply, those offices mentioned in Canon 230, § 3(56) and in Canons 943 and 1112. Naturally, the concrete term may be applied to those to whom functions are canonically entrusted e.g. catechists, acolytes, lectors etc. Temporary deputation for liturgical purposes — mentioned in Canon 230, § 2 — does not confer any special or permanent title on the non-ordained faithful. (57)

Article 8

The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion

The non-ordained faithful already collaborate with the sacred ministers in diverse pastoral situations since "This wonderful gift of the Eucharist, which is the greatest gift of all, demands that such an important mystery should be increasingly better known and its saving power more fully shared".(95) Such liturgical service is a response to the objective needs of the faithful especially those of the sick and to those liturgical assemblies in which there are particularly large numbers of the faithful who wish to receive Holy Communion.

§ 1. The canonical discipline concerning *extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion* must be correctly applied so as to avoid generating confusion. The same discipline establishes that the ordinary minister of Holy Communion is the Bishop, the Priest and the the Deacon.(96) Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are those instituted as acolytes and the faithful so deputed in accordance with Canon 230, § 3.(97) A non-ordained member of the faithful, in cases of true necessity, may be deputed by the diocesan bishop, using the appropriate form of blessing for these situations, to act as an extraordinary minister to distribute Holy Communion outside of liturgical celebrations *ad actum vel ad tempus* or for a more stable period. In exceptional cases or in unforeseen circumstances, the priest presiding at the liturgy may authorize such *ad actum*. (98)

§ 2. Extraordinary ministers may distribute Holy Communion at Eucharistic celebrations only when there are no ordained ministers present or when those ordained ministers present at a liturgical celebration are truly unable to distribute Holy Communion.(99) They may also exercise this function at Eucharistic celebrations where there are particularly large numbers of the faithful and which would be excessively prolonged because of an insufficient number of ordained ministers to distribute Holy Communion. (100) This function is *supplementary and extraordinary* (101) and must be exercised in accordance with the norm of law. It is thus useful for the diocesan bishop to issue particular norms concerning extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion which, in complete harmony with the universal law of the Church, should regulate the exercise of this function in his diocese. Such norms should provide, amongst other things, for matters such as the instruction in Eucharistic doctrine of those chosen to be extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, the meaning of the service they provide, the rubrics to be observed, the reverence to be shown for such an august Sacrament and instruction concerning the discipline on admission to Holy Communion. To avoid creating confusion, certain practices are to be avoided and eliminated where such have emerged in particular Churches:

- extraordinary ministers receiving Holy Communion apart from the other faithful as though concelebrants
- association with the renewal of promises made by priests at the Chrism Mass on Holy Thursday, as well as other categories of faithful who renew religious vows or receive a mandate as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion;
- the habitual use of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion at Mass thus arbitrarily extending the concept of "a great number of the faithful."



ORDER FOR THE COMMISSIONING OF EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

From: *The Roman Ritual*
Book of Blessings, Chapter 63

INTRODUCTION

It is, first, the office of the priest and deacon to minister Holy Communion to the faithful who ask to receive it. It is most fitting, therefore, that they give a suitable part of their time to this ministry of their order, depending on the needs of the faithful. (See Congregation of Rites, instruction *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, #31, AAS 64, 1967).

It is the office of an acolyte who has been properly instituted to give communion as an extraordinary minister when the priest and deacon are absent or impeded by sickness, old age, or pastoral ministry or when the number of the faithful at the holy table is so great that the Mass or other service may be unreasonably protracted. (Roman Ritual, *Holy communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass*, #17; see Paul VI, apostolic letter *Ministeria quaedam*, August 15, 1972, # VI: AAS 64 (1972) 532.)

The local Ordinary may give other extraordinary ministers the faculty to give communion whenever it seems necessary for the pastoral benefit of the faithful and a priest, deacon, or (instituted) acolyte is not available.

Persons authorized to distribute Holy Communion in special circumstances should be commissioned by the local Ordinary or his delegate according to the following rite. (See instruction *Immensae Caritatis* I, # 1, 6). The rite should take place in the presence of the people during Mass or outside Mass.

The pastor is the usual minister of this rite. However, he may delegate another priest to celebrate it or a deacon when it is celebrated outside Mass.

ORDER OF COMMISSIONING WITHIN MASS

After the gospel reading, the celebrant in the homily, based on the sacred text and pertinent to the particular place and the people involved.

INTRODUCTORY RITE

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Homily

After the gospel reading, the celebrant in the homily, based on the sacred text and pertinent to the particular place and the people involved, explains the meaning of the celebration. He presents to the people those chosen to serve as special ministers, using these, or similar words:

I invite those to serve as communion ministers to come forward.

(Addressing the assembly) **Dear Friends in Christ, our brothers and sisters N. and N. are to be entrusted with administering the Eucharist, with taking communion to the sick, and with giving the Eucharist as viaticum to the dying.**

The presider pauses, and then addresses the candidates:



INSTRUCTION

In this ministry, be examples of Christian living in faith and conduct. Strive to grow in holiness through this sacrament of unity and love. Remember that, though many, we are one body because we share the one bread and one cup.

As ministers of Holy Communion, be especially observant of the Lord's command to love your neighbor. When he gave his body as food to his disciples, he said to them: "This is my commandment, that you should love one another as I have loved you."

After the instruction, the candidates stand before the presider who asks them these questions:

COMMISSIONING

Are you resolved to undertake the office of giving the body and blood of the Lord to your brothers and sisters, and so serve to build up the Church?

Candidates: I am.

Are you resolved to administer the holy Eucharist with the utmost care and reverence?

Candidates: I am.

The assembly stands. The communion ministers kneel.

(Addressing the assembly) **Dear friends in Christ, let us pray with confidence to our God. Let us ask for God's blessing on our brothers and sisters chosen to be ministers of the Eucharist.**

BLESSING

(Chanting) **Merciful Father,
creator and guide of your family,
bless + our brothers and sisters, N. and N.**

**May they faithfully give
the bread of life and the cup of salvation
to your people.**

**Strengthened by this sacrament,
may they come at last to the banquet of heaven.**

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*The assembly may express their approval with a **sung acclamation or applause**. The **Prayers of the Faithful** should include an intention for the newly commissioned ministers.*

*In the procession at the **presentation of gifts**, the newly commissioned ministers carry the vessels with the bread and wine. (Water is not offered with the gifts of bread and wine.)*

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST



GUIDELINES FOR RECEIVING COMMUNION

For Catholics

Catholics fully participate in the celebration of the Eucharist when they receive Holy Communion in fulfillment of Christ's command to eat his body and drink his blood. To prepare for communion, Catholics fast for one hour, practice charity and love with their neighbors in daily life, and review their behavior to see that they are free from grave sin before reception of communion. Those conscious of grave sin are encouraged to seek the sacrament of Reconciliation before receiving communion.

For other Christians

We welcome Christians to celebrate with us. It is a consequence of the sad divisions in Christianity that we cannot extend a general invitation to receive communion. Reception of Holy Communion by Christians not fully united with us would imply oneness which does not yet exist and for which we must all pray.

For those not receiving Communion

We encourage others to simply remain seated during communion. We invite you to sing with the assembly during communion.

For those receiving Communion

Please remain kneeling as the communion procession song begins and rise to join the procession to communion at the usual time. It is our custom to approach the communion distributor, do a simple bow of the head, answer the acclamation with, "Amen," and receive communion respectfully and gracefully.

From: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C.