



DIOCESE OF AUSTIN

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**EUCHARIST**



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### **Policy on the Eucharist**

*Effective 2005*

In order to serve the needs of the people of God in the Diocese of Austin and to be responsible stewards of the gifts given to the diocese, the Diocese of Austin issues the following policy:

- I. The celebration of the sacrament of Eucharist is central to our Catholic Christian life. As the “repeatable” sacrament of our initiation in Christ, we are bound to the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. These words taken from the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* summarize the important place of this sacrament:

*Finally, they come to the table of the Eucharist, to eat the Flesh and drink the Blood of the Son of Man so that they may have eternal life and show forth the unity of God's people. By offering themselves with Christ, they share in His universal sacrifice: the entire community of the redeemed is offered to God by their High Priest. They pray for a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit so that the whole human race may be brought into the unity of God's family (RCIA 2).*

- II. Liturgical Year and the Calendar

The historical events by which Christ Jesus won our salvation through his death are not merely commemorated or recalled during the course of the liturgical year; rather, the celebration of the liturgical year exerts a special sacramental power and influence which strengthen Christian life (Paul VI, *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and The Calendar* (Feb 14, 1969)<sup>1</sup>).

The Church celebrates the memory of Christ's saving work on appointed days in the course of the year. Every week the Church celebrates the memorial of the resurrection on Sunday, which is called the Lord's Day. This memorial is also celebrated together with the passion of Jesus on the great feast of Easter once a year. Throughout the entire year, the mystery of Christ is unfolded and the birthdays (days of death) of the saints are commemorated (GNLYC 1).

<sup>1</sup> Hereafter RCIA

<sup>2</sup> Hereafter GNLYC

A. Holy Days of Obligation

In addition to Sunday, the original Feast Day, the following are feast days of obligation in the United States:

1. Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (January 1)
2. Assumption (August 15)
3. All Saints (November 1)
4. Immaculate Conception (December 8)
5. Christmas (December 25)

B. Anticipated Masses for Sunday and Feast Days

1. Anticipated Masses should be scheduled in the evening (*Eucharistic Mysteries*<sup>3</sup>, 28). In the Diocese of Austin, no anticipated Mass for Sunday or holy day may be scheduled earlier than 4 p.m.
2. The obligation of assisting at Mass is fulfilled by attending a Mass celebrated anywhere in a Catholic rite, either on the Sunday or holy day itself, or on the evening of the preceding day (c. 1248, § 1). Accordingly, participation in any Mass (e.g. Nuptial Mass celebrated after 4 p.m. on a Saturday) fulfills the precept. In such celebrations, the liturgical norms for the particular Sunday or holy day are to be observed. In order to determine when Ritual Masses are permitted to be celebrated, please refer to the norms for the individual Ritual Masses in the Sacramentary.
3. On the occurrence of holy days on Saturday or Monday, the Mass of the holy day is celebrated. Whenever January 1, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God; or August 15, the Solemnity of the Assumption; or November 1, the Solemnity of All Saints, falls on a Saturday or on a Monday, the precept to attend Mass is abrogated (*NCCB*, Nov. 17, 1992). While the holy day obligation is automatically abrogated on these days, the liturgy of the feast is still to be celebrated in every parish and institution at a convenient time in such a way that the dignity of the feast is maintained. The exceptions to this abrogation are December 25, Christmas; and December 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception.
4. Paschal Triduum
  - a. The instructions contained in the ritual books relating to the Paschal Triduum should be carefully observed.

<sup>3</sup> Hereafter EM

- b. The number of celebrations should be limited to those deemed truly necessary for pastoral needs.
- c. The Mass of Christian Burial is not allowed on Holy Thursday, and throughout the Paschal Triduum. However, a non-Eucharistic funeral service is always permitted.

5. Holy Thursday

Parishes are asked to adhere to the time of day indicated for the service: "The Mass of the Lord's Supper is celebrated in the evening, at a convenient hour, with the full participation of the whole community and with all the priests and clergy exercising the ministry." The Ordinary may allow one additional Mass to be celebrated for those unable to attend the solemn celebration of the Lord's Supper in the evening. This Mass must not prejudice the principal evening Mass (Sacramentary, Holy Thursday).

6. Good Friday

The celebration of the Lord's Passion should begin about 3 p.m., unless pastoral reasons suggest a later hour. If the size or nature of a parish so indicates, the celebration may be repeated later. Holy Communion may be given to the faithful only at the celebration of the Lord's Passion, but may be brought at any hour of the day to the sick who cannot take part in the service.

7. Easter Vigil (Holy Saturday)

- a. Only with the Solemn Vigil during the night does the Easter celebration begin.
- b. Before the celebration on Holy Saturday evening, holy Communion may be given only as viaticum.
- c. The entire celebration of the Easter Vigil takes place at night. To ensure darkness, it can begin 30 minutes after the scheduled sunset. It should end before daybreak on Sunday.
- d. Although it is never permitted to celebrate the entire Easter Vigil more than once in a given church or to anticipate the Mass of Easter before the Vigil, for pastoral reasons an additional Mass may be celebrated after the Mass of the Vigil. Such a Mass may follow the Liturgy of the Word of the Mass of the Easter Vigil and other texts of that Mass should include the renewal of baptismal promises (Sacramentary, Easter Vigil).

8. Christmas Midnight Mass

Christmas Midnight Mass should only be celebrated in churches, chapels, and nursing homes.

- a. It is not permitted to celebrate it in a private home.

III. Offices and Ministries in the Mass

All in the Eucharistic assembly have the right and duty to take their own parts according to the norms for their liturgical roles and they are to be trained before undertaking these offices. Individuals should not exercise two ministerial roles at the same Mass (e.g., lector and extraordinary minister of holy Communion).

A. Place of Priest at the Eucharist

1. Celebration

- a. The chasuble is always worn by the celebrant even for daily Mass.
  - i. In concelebration, a concelebrant may wear alb and stole.
  - ii. The liturgical colors are as follows: white, violet, red, green. Blue is not a liturgical color for the Roman Rite.
- b. The Eucharistic prayer is the prayer of the Church and not a private prayer.
  - i. The people, then, have a right to the official prayer of the Church in public liturgy and not a private composition, regardless of its beauty and timeliness.
  - ii. Private interpolation where options are not allowed intrudes on the public worship of the Church and is not permitted.
- c. The homily is considered an integral part of the Mass and not a separate rite that is inserted in the liturgy; therefore, the homilist should not make the sign of the cross before and after the homily.
  - i. The *General Instruction* directs the celebrant to make the sign of the cross at the beginning of the introductory rite but not during the penitential rite.
- d. The Host should not be broken during the institution narrative of the Eucharistic prayer.
  - i. The consecration is a narration or proclamation and not a re-enactment.
  - ii. The Host should be broken at the fraction rite.

- e. The “rite of peace” comes within the rite of Communion and thus is a preparation for the reception of Communion. As such, it is a sign of reconciliation whereby one demonstrates a willingness to be reconciled and at peace with all before receiving the Body and Blood of Christ.
  - i. The priest is to give a sign of peace to the deacon or other ministers in the sanctuary but not to the congregation who offer a sign of peace to each other.
  - ii. The priest is not to leave the sanctuary during the sign of peace unless pastoral reasons indicate (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (2002)<sup>4</sup>, 154).

## 2. Concelebration

- a. Concelebration is required at the ordination of Bishops and priests and at the Chrism Mass. It is recommended, unless the good of the faithful should require or suggest otherwise, at:
  - i. The evening Mass of Holy Thursday
  - ii. The Mass for councils, meetings of Bishops, and synods
  - iii. The Mass for the blessing of an abbot
  - iv. The conventual Mass and the principal Mass in churches and oratories
  - v. The Mass of any kind of meeting of priests, whether secular or religious.
- b. Concelebration is also optional at other times.
  - i. It may take place provided the needs of the faithful do not require or suggest individual celebration.
  - ii. It is forbidden to have an individual celebration of the Eucharist in the same church or oratory during a concelebration (c. 902; GIRM 2002, 203).
- c. The concelebrants put on the vestments usual for individual celebrants. For a good reason, however, the concelebrants may omit the chasuble and wear the stole alone over the alb, but the principal celebrant always wears the chasuble (GIRM 2002, 209).

<sup>4</sup>Hereafter GIRM

- d. Catholic priests are prohibited from concelebrating the Eucharist with priests or ministers of churches or ecclesial communities who do not have full Communion with the Catholic Church (c. 908).
- e. At the end of the preparation of the gifts, the concelebrants come near the altar and stand around it in such a way that they do not interfere with the actions of the rite and that the people have a clear view. They should not be in the deacon's way when he has to go to the altar in the performance of his ministry (GIRM 2002, 215).
- f. The parts of the Eucharistic prayer said by all the concelebrants together are to be recited in such a way that the concelebrants say them in a softer voice and the celebrant's voice stands out clearly (GIRM 2002, 218).
- g. Unless otherwise indicated, only the principal celebrant makes the gestures. However,
  - i. At the epiclesis, the concelebrants speak the words with both hands out stretched toward the offerings.
  - ii. At the words of institution each concelebrant extends his right hand toward the bread and toward the chalice and, afterward, bows low.
  - iii. Only one chalice and paten are elevated at the doxology by the celebrant and a deacon or concelebrant.
- h. The celebrant alone makes the extended arm gesture of prayer at the Our Father.
- i. The celebrant alone elevates the Host and cup at Communion time.
- j. After the celebrant receives from the cup, he begins the distribution of Communion to the faithful without waiting for the concelebrants to receive from the cup.

#### B. Place of Deacons at the Eucharist

For guidelines on the manner in which a deacon exercises his liturgical function at the Eucharist, see GIRM 2002, 171-189 and *Liturgy Guidelines for Deacons* (Diocese of Austin, May 2004).

1. The various ministries of the deacon at Mass may be distributed among several deacons, present and wearing their vestments. (See *Congregation of Rites*, instruction 21, 6/68, nn. 4 & 5)
2. Other deacons who are present but not called upon to function in the celebration should not vest or occupy a specific place in the liturgy, unless they are

participating as the order of deacons, e.g., at the liturgy of ordination of another deacon (*Bishops' Committee on Liturgy Newsletter* (USCCB, Oct 1981)<sup>5</sup>).

C. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

They serve under the jurisdiction of the Bishop (request, approval, mandate, training, catechesis, deputation, etc.).

1. Extraordinary ministers of holy Communion may be designated to distribute holy Communion at Mass or to bring Communion to those confined to hospitals, institutions, or their own homes.
2. It is especially desirable that extraordinary ministers of holy Communion take the Eucharist from Mass on Sundays and holy days, as an extension of the community liturgy, and bring it to those confined at home.
3. No one can begin this ministry without instruction, careful practical training by the local priests, the Bishop's mandate, and a parish deputation ceremony at Mass.
4. Patients, staff of institutions, and families of the homebound must receive a careful explanation before distribution. This includes:
  - a. Emphasis on the authorization by the Holy Father and the Bishop
  - b. Distinction between holy orders (consecration of the Eucharist) and lay ministry (distribution of the holy Communion)
  - c. Explanation of the extension of the liturgy from the community to the patients
  - d. Description of the ritual
  - e. Arrangements for place, time, assembly of patients, bedside arrangements, etc.
  - f. Assurance of regular pastoral visitation and availability of a priest
  - g. Introduction of the extraordinary ministers of holy Communion to staff and patients by the local priest before initiation of the program
  - h. An explanation to the families of institutional patients, where possible
5. Application for a mandate is made in writing by the local priest to the Bishop, stating the education the candidates have received, their readiness for this ministry, and the name of each candidate. The application form is available [here](#).
6. The candidates must be fully initiated in the Church, persons of genuine Eucharistic faith, living exemplary Catholic lives, and have sound psychological maturity. The person must have no impediment to sacramental reception. Great

<sup>5</sup> Hereafter BCL

care is needed in this selection and should involve the opinions of priests and laity. The candidates may be men or women, laity or religious. Youth may be designated as Communion ministers at the discretion of the pastor.

7. It must be kept in mind that extraordinary ministers of holy Communion are mandated for Mass only for genuine need due to the lack of ordinary ministers (priests and deacons) and great numbers of communicants.
8. The mandate is given to a specific person and for a specific place and time. In any case, the mandate terminates if the minister moves, or at the discretion of the Bishop and the local priests. It is given only as long as the spiritual good of the faithful is served and where general necessity perdures.
  - a. After expiration of the mandate, re-application is required if the person is to continue in this service.
9. Norms for determining need, selecting, training, and mandating extraordinary ministers of holy Communion in the diocese may be obtained by contacting the diocesan Worship Office.
10. Any training of extraordinary ministers of holy Communion must include catechesis on:
  - 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 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
  - e. Directives of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and the *Norms for the Distribution of Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States*
11. Specific directives regarding extraordinary ministers of holy Communion
  - a. Extraordinary ministers of holy Communion do not communicate themselves when they assist the priest at Mass.
    - i. After the priest has received Communion in the usual way, the ministers receive the Host from the priest.
    - ii. As ministers exercising their office, they should receive Communion under both kinds.
    - iii. The priest or deacon offers the chalice to the extraordinary minister. The minister then receives a chalice or ciborium from the priest or deacon and distributes to the faithful with the words "The Body of Christ" or "The Blood of Christ." No other words are to be used (GIRM 161, 286).

- b. Extraordinary ministers of holy Communion fulfill their function in a Mass only when there is not a sufficient number of ordinary ministers present. “The Pontifical Commission indicated that when ordinary ministers (bishop, priest, or deacon) are present at the Eucharist, whether they are celebrating or not, and are in sufficient number and are not prevented from doing so by other ministries, the extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist are not allowed to distribute Communion either to themselves or to the faithful” (*Apostolic Pro-Nuncio Letter*, 11/21, 1987).
- c. Extraordinary ministers of holy Communion should be appropriately dressed when distributing Communion during the liturgy.
- d. In bringing Communion to the sick or home-bound, the Body of Christ (Host) is to be placed in a pyx. It is not to be carried in a handkerchief or any other receptacle.
  - i. If extraordinary ministers of holy Communion accept the Host for the sick during Communion time, they are to go immediately to the sick at the conclusion of Mass.
  - ii. It is not respectful or proper for a minister to have the Sacred Host with him or her while visiting after Mass with other parishioners.
- e. If for any reason a sick person is not able to consume the Host immediately, it is to be returned to the tabernacle. It is gross negligence to leave the Host in a room for the sick person to receive at a later time.
- f. For no reason should any extraordinary minister of holy Communion carry the Host around while shopping or engaged in any other activity, nor should it be kept in one's home or vehicle overnight.
  - i. Hosts are to be brought to the sick immediately.
  - ii. Hosts that are not consumed by the recipient are to be returned to the tabernacle immediately or, if distance or other circumstances prevent, the Host may be consumed by the minister.
- g. The extraordinary ministers of holy Communion cannot give a liturgical blessing to those who do not receive holy Communion.

D. Altar Servers

- 1. In accord with the ruling of the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (15 March 1994), females are allowed to serve at the altar.

2. An appropriate balance should be maintained between the number of boys and girls who serve at Mass.
3. The tradition of male servers should not diminish with the addition of females.
4. All altar servers should be properly prepared and formed for assisting the priest and deacon at liturgies.
5. Servers should be mature enough to understand their responsibilities and to carry them out well and with appropriate reverence.
6. Young students should have received their First Communion before becoming altar servers and normally receive the Eucharist whenever they participate in the liturgy.
7. Servers should be emotionally mature and physically capable of carrying the processional cross, holding the Roman Missal or carrying candles with little difficulty. Middle school as well as high school students should also be encouraged to serve at the altar.
8. The proper vesture for altar servers is either cassock and surplice or alb.
  - a. Exceptions regarding vesture may be allowed by the pastor for a particular occasion but not on an ongoing basis.

E. The Liturgy of the Word

In the celebration of the liturgy, the Word of God is not voiced in only one way, nor does it always stir the hearts of the hearers with the same power. Always, however, Christ is present in his Word; as he carries out the mystery of salvation, He sanctifies us and offers the Father perfect worship.

Moreover, the Word of God unceasingly calls to mind and extends the plan of salvation, which achieves its fullest expression in the liturgy. The liturgical celebration becomes, therefore, the continuing, complete and effective presentation of God's Word.

That Word constantly proclaimed in the liturgy is always, then, a living, active Word through the power of the Holy Spirit. It expresses the Father's love that never fails in its effectiveness toward us (*Lectionary for Mass*<sup>6</sup>, 4).

1. The importance of the Word of God is particularly evident in our liturgical celebrations through the ministers of the Word, the place from which the Word is proclaimed, and the books from which the Word is proclaimed.

<sup>6</sup>Hereafter LM

a. Ministers of the Word

- i. The proper ministers of the Word of God are lectors for the pre-Gospel readings, the cantor for the Responsorial Psalm and Gospel verse, and the deacon or priest for the proclamation of the Gospel.
- ii. Each of these ministers should be fully prepared for the ministry of the Word and should fulfill that ministry with dignity, reverence, and competence.

b. Place of Proclamation

- i. There must be a place in the church that is somewhat elevated, stable, and of a suitable design and nobility for the proclamation of the Word.
- ii. It should reflect the dignity of God's Word and be a clear reminder to the people that, in the Mass, the table of God's Word and of Christ's Body is placed before them.
- iii. It must be reserved for the readings, the Responsorial Psalm, the Easter proclamation, the homily, and the general intercessions (LM 32).

c. Books for the proclamation of the Word

The books containing the readings of the Word of God remind the hearers of the presence of God speaking to his people.

- i. Since in liturgical celebrations the books, too, serve as signs and symbols of the sacred, care must be taken to ensure that they truly are worthy and beautiful.
- ii. Each parish should have a Lectionary from which the readings are proclaimed. Parishes should obtain a *Book of the Gospels* for use (especially on Sundays and major feasts) in conjunction with a Gospel Procession.
- iii. Only the *Book of the Gospels* is carried in the Entrance Procession of the Mass (GIRM 2002, d 120).

d. Proclamation

- i. At the conclusion of the First and Second Readings at Mass, the proper conclusion of the lector is to be "The Word of the Lord."

- ii. The priest or deacon is to conclude the Gospel with the words "The Gospel of the Lord."
- iii. This is more in keeping with the Latin text and parallels the distribution formula of Communion (USCCB March 25, 1992).

## 2. The Homily at Mass

The Church calls upon the homilist at Mass to develop some point in the readings or of another text from the Ordinary of the Mass of the day, and reminds him to "keep in mind the mystery that is being celebrated and the needs of the particular community."

### a. Who is to Preach

The Code of Canon Law states that the faculty to preach the homily at the Eucharist is to be granted only to priests and deacons (c.764). The diocesan Bishop may not dispense from this norm.

### b. The Responsibility of the Homilist

- i. The preparation of the homily should grow out of a prayerful penetration of Scripture, to a particular people, in the present moment in history.
- ii. The homily should be concise so that it maintains a proper balance with the other elements of the liturgical celebration.
- iii. By his ministry the homilist is required to apply the Word of God proclaimed.
- iv. The homily cannot be replaced by a lecture or other presentation unrelated to the Scriptures or the theme for the feast or season.
- v. Appeals for funds, tape-recorded "talks," or other matters may not replace the homily given by the celebrant or another authorized priest or deacon. However, the homily, properly constructed and delivered, may provide motivation for the support of the missions and for the poor and unfortunate of the world.
- vi. Regular letters from the Bishop should be read at the time of the announcements.
- vii. Announcements should not be made before or after the homily, but either before Mass starts or after the prayer after Communion and before the final blessing.

F. The Liturgy of the Eucharist

1. Communion under both species: The teaching of the Church on the Real Presence of Christ under both the species of bread and the species of wine remains in force. 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 light shines on the sign of the Eucharistic banquet. Moreover, there is a clearer expression of the Lord and of the relationship of the Eucharistic banquet to the eschatological banquet in the Father's kingdom (GIRM 2002, 281).
  - a. Communion under both species is encouraged in all the parishes of the Diocese of Austin in conformity with the norms of the Church and provided that parishioners have been fully catechized about:
    - i. The teaching of the Church on the Real Presence
    - ii. The correct manner of receiving Communion from the cup
    - iii. The fact that when Communion from the cup is offered it is the option of the individual to receive or not to receive under the form of wine
  - b. Communion under both species is permitted at most parochial and special Masses celebrated in the United States. However, Communion from the cup is not permitted in the following cases:
    - i. At Masses celebrated in the open with a great number of communicants (e.g., in a stadium)
    - ii. At other Masses where the number of communicants is so great as to make it difficult for Communion under both species to be given in an orderly and reverent way (e.g., Masses celebrated in a civic square or building that would involve the carrying of the sacred species up and down a number of steps)
    - iii. At Masses where the assembled congregation is of such a diverse nature that is difficult to ascertain whether those present have been sufficiently instructed about receiving Communion under both species
    - iv. When circumstances do not permit the assurance that due reverence can be maintained toward the consecrated wine both during and after the celebration (*Inaestimabile Donum*, 13-14)
  - c. The manner of distribution of Communion from the cup is discussed in detail in *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America* (USCCB, 2002). The material contained in this directory should also form the basis for catechesis of a parish in preparation for the inauguration of Communion from the cup.

- d. Communion can be given under the form of sacred wine alone in cases of necessity (c. 925).

2. Specific Considerations

- a. If Mass is celebrated outside of a church, the Hosts not distributed during the Communion rite are to be consumed by the ministers, or, if the Hosts are numerous, they are to be transferred immediately to a nearby tabernacle.
  - i. It is not proper to allow the Hosts to remain in a hall or auditorium for transfer to a tabernacle at a later time.
- b. When Communion is distributed under both species, care must be taken not to consecrate more wine than it is reasonably expected will be consumed by the communicants.
  - i. The ancillary chalices are to be filled with the unconsecrated wine at the time of the Preparation of the Gifts.
  - ii. No consecrated wine may be poured from a flagon.
  - iii. Any consecrated wine not consumed in the distribution of Communion should be consumed reverently by the ministers either at the altar, at the credence table, or in the sacristy immediately, not after Mass has concluded.
- c. The excess consecrated species must never be poured into the sacrarium or a sink.
- d. The Precious Blood may not be reserved in the tabernacle for later use.
  - i. If Precious Blood is to be administered as viaticum, it should be preserved in a leak-proof container reserved for that purpose and brought to the sick person immediately after Mass.
- e. When there are elements of the Sacred Species to be consumed, this should take place at the credence table or in another designated area to ensure the disposition of the consecrated species in a respectful manner.
  - i. The vessels can be cleansed after Mass.
- f. Care should be taken not to consecrate more Hosts than are reasonably expected to be consumed at the Mass.
  - i. Only a small number of reserved Hosts should be kept for Communion to the sick, viaticum, and Eucharistic devotion.
- g. Small particles that break from the Hosts are to be treated with reverence and consumed when purifying the vessels.

- h. The Hosts are to be carried for distribution in a reverent manner.
- i. The altar cloth, corporal, and purificator should always be clean.
  - i. When they become even slightly soiled, they should be replaced with fresh, clean ones.
    - The same is true of albs and vestments.
- j. While receiving Communion, it is also improper to ask for an extra Host to bring to the sick. In distributing Communion, extra Hosts are not to be given to any communicant.
- k. In the western world a traditional way by which Catholics witness to their belief in the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is the genuflection.
  - i. Whenever one comes into church where the Eucharist is reserved in the tabernacle it is appropriate to genuflect in adoration of Christ's presence.
  - ii. A solemn bow to the altar is appropriate on coming into a church if the sacrament is not reserved there but in a side chapel.
- l. In the United States it is the custom for the congregation to kneel during Mass from the beginning of the Eucharistic prayer until after the Great Amen.
  - i. The congregation then stands for the Our Father and remains standing until after the Lamb of God prayer.
  - ii. The faithful kneel at the words "Behold the Lamb of God" (GIRM 2002, 43; *Guidelines for the Diocese of Austin*, 43).
- m. When there are a large number of people of other faiths at weddings and funerals, it is appropriate to announce at Communion time that they can remain in their place when Catholics come forward to receive Communion.
  - i. When Catholics attend weddings or other services in non-Catholic churches, they are not allowed to partake in the Communion service.
- n. The Sacred Host may be received in the hand or on the tongue (GIRM 2002, 160).
- o. The Precious Blood is received by the faithful from the ancillary chalice (GIRM 2002, 283).
- p. The reception of Communion is preceded by a simple bow of the head (GIRM 2002, 160).

- q. The communicant remains standing for the reception of holy Communion (GIRM 2002, 160).
- r. If the communicant kneels, the minister is not to refuse the person Communion because of this posture (GIRM 2002, 160).

3. The Eucharistic Fast

- a. A fast for one hour from food and liquid, other than water, is required before holy Communion (c. 919, § 1).
- b. Water and medicine can be taken at any time before receiving the Eucharist (c. 919, § 1).
- c. Those who are elderly or who are ill, as well as those who care for them, are excused from fasting (c. 919, § 3).
- d. A priest who celebrates two (2) or three (3) Masses on the same day, may take something before the second or third celebration even if the period of one hour does not intervene (c. 919, § 2).

4. Communion More Than Once a Day

- a. The faithful may receive Communion again in the same day, when they participate in a Eucharistic celebration.
  - i. However, this is only a second time and not as often as one participates in the celebration of the Eucharist.
- b. Those in danger of death may receive viaticum any time, even if they have already received Communion that day (c. 917; 921, § 2).

5. Sharing in Liturgical Worship with Eastern Christians (Orthodox)

Between the Catholic Church and the Eastern churches separated from us there is still a very close communion in matters of faith. Moreover, through the celebration of the Eucharist of the Lord in each of these churches, the Church of God is built up and grows in stature and, although separated from us, these churches possess true sacraments, above all (by apostolic succession) the priesthood and Eucharist. This offers ecclesiological and sacramental grounds for allowing and even encouraging some sharing in liturgical worship (even Eucharistic) with these churches given suitable circumstances and the approval of Church authority (*Decree on Ecumenism and the Catholic Eastern Churches* 5, 15, 44).

- a. Catholics may attend Orthodox liturgical functions, if they have reasonable grounds, e.g. arising out of public office or function, blood relationships, desire to be better informed, an ecumenical gathering, etc. In such cases, they are encouraged to take part in the common responses, hymns, and actions of the church in which they are guests.
  - b. In Catholic liturgical services, an Orthodox clergyman who is representing his church should have the place and liturgical honors as would Catholics of equal rank and dignity. Prominent seating should be arranged ahead of time.
    - i. A Catholic clergyman present in an official capacity at an Orthodox service can, if it is acceptable to his hosts, wear choir dress or the insignia of his ecclesiastical rank.
  - c. A Catholic may read the lessons at an Orthodox liturgical function, if he is invited. An Orthodox may be permitted to do the same at a Catholic liturgical service.
  - d. The *Decree on Ecumenism* (27) permits the sacraments of penance, the Eucharist, and the anointing of the sick to be given to Eastern Christians who are separated in good faith from the Catholic Church, if they ask for them of their own accord and have the right dispositions.
    - i. However, the Guidelines issued by the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas generally forbid the reception of the sacraments by their faithful from other than Orthodox clergy.
    - ii. There are other separated Eastern Christians who are not members of the Standing Conference and, consequently, not bound by its Guidelines. Consultation with the authorities of these churches will determine pastoral practice.
    - iii. For the Nuptial Mass of an Orthodox and a Roman Catholic, the pastor of the Orthodox party should be approached for a practical judgment regarding Communion for the Orthodox spouse (c. 844, § 3).
6. Viaticum
- a. All the baptized who are eligible by law to receive Communion are encouraged to receive viaticum in danger of death.
    - i. Children who have not reached the age of reason may receive viaticum provided they can distinguish the Body of Christ from ordinary food and receive Communion reverently.
    - ii. Ideally, viaticum should be received during Mass and under both species of bread and wine.

- iii. Those who, for medical reason, are unable to take the consecrated bread, may receive viaticum in the form of consecrated wine alone (*Rite of Anointing of the Sick* 27; c. 913, § 2).
- b. Even if they have already received holy Communion that same day, it is highly recommended that those who are in danger of death receive Communion again.
  - i. As long as the danger of death lasts, it is recommended that holy Communion be administered a number of times, but on separate days.
  - ii. Holy viaticum should not be delayed too long.
  - iii. Those involved in pastoral care are to be especially vigilant that the dying receive viaticum while fully conscious.
  - iv. The cause for the danger of death must be proximate, not remote. (For example, a person who is about to undergo open heart surgery is in proximate danger; a person taking an airplane trip is only in remote danger.) (c. 921, 922)

#### IV. Place of Celebration

- A. The Eucharist should be celebrated in a sacred place, unless in a particular case necessity requires otherwise. In such a case, the celebration must occur in a decent place (c. 923, § 1).
  - 1. A particular case includes not only a single occasion but also an individual priest who must celebrate outside a sacred place on a regular basis.
  - 2. Cases of necessity include sickness, old age, distance from a church, pastoral advantage such as Masses for children and other particular groups.
  - 3. A decent place is principally one that would not unduly hinder the participation of the people as a result of undesirable distractions.
- B. The Eucharistic sacrifice should take place on a dedicated or blessed altar.
  - 1. Outside a sacred place a suitable table may be used, always with a cloth and corporal (c. 932, § 2).
- C. In a non-Catholic church, for a just cause and with the express permission of the diocesan Bishop, a priest may celebrate the Eucharist in the place of worship of some church or ecclesial community which does not have full Communion with the Catholic Church, provided there is no scandal (c. 933).

1. This permission is not needed to celebrate the Eucharist in an interdenominational chapel, such as at a hospital, prison, or military installation, since the Canon refers only to the place of worship of some Christian denomination which is not in full Communion with the Catholic Church, such as a Protestant or Orthodox Church.

D. A priest should be allowed to celebrate the Eucharist even if he is unknown to the rector of a church, provided he has a letter of suitability from his Ordinary or his superior, which is dated at least within the year. If he lacks such a letter he can still be allowed to concelebrate if it is prudently thought that he should not be prevented (c. 903).

## V. Mass Offerings

### A. Additional Masses on the Same Day

1. A priest who presides at more than one Mass on the same day may apply an intention for each Mass for which an offering is given.

a. On Christmas a priest may keep the offerings for three Masses celebrated on the same day (c. 951, § 1).

b. On all other days he may keep only one offering and give the others to purposes prescribed by the Bishop. However, some compensation by virtue of an extrinsic title is admissible (c. 951, § 1).

c. Those who must celebrate Mass *pro populo* on Sundays and holy days may keep the offering from a second Mass that day (c. 951, § 1 and its commentary).

2. A priest concelebrating another Mass on the same day may not accept an offering for it under any title (c. 951, § 2).

a. Except on Christmas, a priest who is concelebrating may not accept an offering for that Mass, unless it is the only Mass he is offering that day.

3. In the Diocese of Austin offerings accepted by diocesan priests after the first Mass are to be sent to the vicar general to be distributed to poor parishes. Religious order priests are to send such offerings to their order.

### B. Collective Mass intentions

See *A Decree of the Congregation for the Clergy* (Page M-28).

### C. Stipends

1. In accord with the approved custom of the Church, each priest, whether celebrant or concelebrant, may accept an offering to offer Mass for a certain intention (c. 945, § 1).

2. Once the offerings (stipends) are accepted, separate Masses are to be offered for the intentions of those who gave individual offerings, even though they be small in amount (c. 948).

3. No one is allowed to accept more Mass offerings to be applied by himself than he is able to satisfy within a year (c. 953).

D. Amount of Offering

1. The Bishops of a province are to define by decree the amount that is to be offered in the whole province for the celebration and application of Mass. A priest may not ask for an amount higher than this.
  - a. However, a priest is free to accept an offering voluntarily given which is higher or lower than the established amount.
    - i. In the absence of such a decree, the custom of the diocese is to be observed.
  - b. The members of every kind of religious institute must observe the amount defined by the above mentioned decree or custom (c. 952).
2. If a sum of money is offered for the application of Masses and there is no indication of the number of Masses to be celebrated, the number is reckoned on the basis of the amount of the offering established in the place where the donor lives, unless the donor's intentions must legitimately be presumed to have been otherwise (c. 950).
3. The ordinary stipend for Masses has been set for all dioceses of our ecclesiastical province at U.S. \$5.
4. Mass intentions can not be refused due to the inability of the petitioner to offer the full stipend.
5. Mass stipends only become the possession of the priest when the Mass intention is satisfied.
  - a. It is forbidden to borrow money from the Mass Stipend Account or to take an advance of money from this account.

E. Record and Supervision

1. Each priest must accurately record the Masses he has agreed to celebrate and those which he has satisfied.
  - a. Those who entrust to others Masses to be celebrated should record without delay in a book both the Masses that were received and those which were given to others.
  - b. The amount of the offerings is also to be noted (c. 955, § 3 - 4).

2. The pastor or rector of a church or other pious place in which Mass offerings are customarily received should have a special book in which he accurately records the number of Masses to be celebrated, the intention, the offering received, and also the fact of their celebration (c. 958, § 1).
3. The duty and right of ensuring that Mass obligations are satisfied belongs to the local Ordinary in churches of the secular clergy and to superiors in churches of religious institutes or societies of apostolic life (c. 957).
  - a. The Ordinary is obliged either personally or through another to inspect every year the Mass offering books (c. 958, § 2).
  - b. In this diocese, this obligation is exercised by the vicars forane (deans).

F. On the Death of a Priest

Each priest is to offer three (3) Masses for the repose of a priest of the diocese after his death.

G. Binational and Trination

A priest may not celebrate Mass licitly more than once a day except in those cases in which the law permits.

1. In the parishes of the Diocese of Austin, the Bishop allows priests to celebrate Mass as often as needed in the local parishes on Sundays and holy days of obligation, and to celebrate Mass twice a day on weekdays when there is a genuine pastoral need due to an insufficient number of priests (c. 905).

H. Missa Pro Populo

After taking possession of the parish, the pastor is obliged to apply a Mass for the people entrusted to him on every Sunday and holy day of obligation observed in the diocese.

1. If he is legitimately impeded from this celebration, he should apply a Mass on these same days through another priest or he, himself, should do it on other days.
2. A pastor who has the care of several parishes need apply only one Mass on Sundays and holy days for all the people entrusted to him.
3. A pastor who has not satisfied these obligations shall as soon as possible apply as many Masses for the people as he has omitted (c. 534).

VI. Bread

- A. Wheat bread is necessary for validity. According to the standing tradition of the Latin Church it must be unleavened. This is necessary for liceity (GIRM 2002, 320).

- B. The nature of the sign demands that the material for the Eucharistic celebration truly have the appearance of food.
1. Accordingly, even though unleavened and baked in the traditional shape, the Eucharistic bread should be made in such a way that the priest is able to break the Host into parts and distribute them to at least some of the faithful (GIRM 2002, 321).
  2. Parishes that are using the very small nickel-sized Hosts are urged to begin using a larger Host for Communion. They more adequately fulfill the above directive.
- C. If there is a need to bake the bread for the Eucharist, the approved formula can be obtained from the Worship Office. The bread must be merely wheat and recently made or frozen so that there is no danger of spoiling (c. 924, § 2).

Permission may be granted by the Bishop to priests and laypersons affected by celiac disease, after presentation of a medical certificate, to consume low-gluten altar bread (BCL 2003, p. 45-50). Low-gluten Hosts are valid matter and may be obtained from:

1. Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, Altar Breads Department, 31970 State Highway P, Clyde, MO 64432-8100, (800) 223-2772, [www.benedictinesisters.org](http://www.benedictinesisters.org)
2. GlutenFreeHosts.com Inc., 100 Buckley Road, Liverpool, NY 13088, [www.GlutenFreeHosts.com](http://www.GlutenFreeHosts.com), [info@glutenfreehosts.com](mailto:info@glutenfreehosts.com)
3. Parish Crossroads, P.O. Box 84, Zionsville, IN 46077-0084, (800) 510-8842, [www.ParishCrossroads.com](http://www.ParishCrossroads.com), [orders@parishcrossroads.com](mailto:orders@parishcrossroads.com)

## VII. Wine

The wine must be natural from the fruit of the grape and not spoiled (c. 924, §3).

- A. Wine made from any other fruit or chemical is invalid matter.
- B. Care must be taken so that the wine does not turn to vinegar. If it becomes so sour that it is regarded more as vinegar than wine, it is invalid matter.
- C. The wine must be natural and pure, that is, not mixed with any foreign substance (GIRM 2002, 322). For liceity, it must not be mixed with any foreign substance.

## VIII. Water

A small amount of water is to be mixed with the wine. This is needed for liceity only. It need be observed only for the principal chalice in order to preserve the symbol of the one cup (BCL 1978, p. 96).

## IX. Alcoholic Priests

A. Priests unable to consume wine may receive by intinction when concelebrating or, when celebrating alone, again by intinction, but leaving it to an assistant to consume the consecrated wine (*Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*, Oct. 12, 1983)<sup>7</sup>.

1. Those who celebrate alone must receive permission from the Bishop to receive by intinction (CDF, Oct. 29, 1982).
2. Concelebrating priests may receive under the species of bread alone (CDF, July 1995).

## B. Mustum

1. Permission to use mustum can be granted by the Bishop to priests affected by alcoholism or other conditions that prevent the ingestion of even the smallest quantity of alcohol, after presentation of a medical certificate. By mustum is understood fresh juice from grapes, or preserved by suspending its fermentation, (by means of freezing or other methods that do not alter its nature).
2. In general, those who have received permission to use mustum are prohibited from presiding at concelebrated Masses. There may be some exceptions (for a Bishop or superior general, with the Bishop's permission, a priest at his anniversary, etc.). In these cases, the one who presides is to communicate under both the species of bread and that of mustum, while, for the other concelebrants, a chalice shall be provided in which normal wine is to be consecrated.
3. In the very rare instances of laypersons requesting this permission, recourse must be made to the Holy See through the local Bishop (CDF, July 1995).

## X. Sacred Vessels

Among the requisites for the celebration of Mass, the sacred vessels hold a place of honor, especially the chalice and paten, which are used in presenting, consecrating, and receiving the bread and wine.

- A. Sacred vessels are to be made from precious metals.
  1. If they are made from metal that rusts or from metal less precious than gold then, ordinarily, they should be gilded on the inside (GIRM 328).
- B. Vessels should be made from materials that are solid and that in the particular region are regarded as precious.
- C. Chalices and other vessels that serve as receptacles for the Blood of the Lord are to have a cup of nonabsorbent material.
- D. Vessels of glass, earthenware, clay, or other materials that break easily are not to be used (*Redemptionis Sacramentum*, 117).

<sup>7</sup>Hereafter CDF

- E. The artist may fashion the sacred vessels in a shape that is in keeping with the culture of the region, provided each type of vessel is suited to the intended liturgical use.

## XI. Scheduling of Masses

The Eucharist is important in the life of the parish. Daily Mass should be available to the people.

- A. In parish with only one (1) priest, it is understandable that Mass not be scheduled on the priest's day off.
  - 1. Even on such a day, a Communion service should be conducted either by a deacon or an extraordinary minister of holy Communion who is well trained for this liturgical service.
- B. Sunday Masses should not be needlessly duplicated simply for convenience.
  - 1. Each parish is to review its schedule of weekend Masses to determine if fewer Masses can appropriately serve the parish.
  - 2. Each Mass must provide for full, active, and conscious participation by all in the assembly through the responses and music.
- C. Parishes should not change regularly scheduled Mass times or add or subtract Masses from the regular schedule without first consulting with the Bishop.
  - 1. One-time changes of the Mass schedule for special occasions, such as Holy Week, or holy days, or the parish festival, etc., do not require consultation with the Bishop.

## XII. Communion Outside of Mass

The faithful should be instructed carefully that, even when they receive Communion outside Mass, they are closely united with the sacrifice which perpetuates the sacrifice of the cross. It is, therefore, proper that those prevented from being present at the community's celebrations should be refreshed with the Eucharist (EM 40, 41).

- A. Sacramental Communion received during Mass is the more perfect participation in the Eucharistic celebration. The faithful should be encouraged to receive Communion during the Eucharistic celebration itself.
  - 1. Priests, however, are not to refuse to give Communion to the faithful who ask for it even outside Mass (EM 33a).
- B. Pastors should see that an opportunity to receive the Eucharist is given frequently to the sick and aged, even though not gravely sick or in imminent danger of death. It is lawful to minister Communion under the appearance of wine to those who cannot receive the consecrated bread (EM 40, 41).

### XIII. Paschal Precept

All the faithful, after they have been initiated into the Eucharist, are obliged to receive holy Communion at least once a year.

- A. This precept must be fulfilled in paschal time from the First Sunday of Lent to Trinity Sunday (*Council of Baltimore, 257*), but for just cause it may be fulfilled at another time during the year (c. 920).

### XIV. Preparation of Masses with the Bishop

In order to assure a consistency in quality and appropriateness in diocesan worship, the following guidelines are established.

- A. The rites of ordination, the Chrism Mass, and the rite of election are to be prepared and coordinated through the Worship Office.
- B. All major diocesan liturgies are to be prepared by their respective agencies in cooperation with the Worship Office.
  - 1. The Liturgy Planning Form is sent to the office of the Bishop two (2) weeks before the scheduled event.
- C. Those preparing parochial celebrations (i.e. parish anniversaries, dedications) involving the Bishop are to consult with the Worship Office when the date is set by the Bishop for the celebration.
- D. Funerals of priests and deacons are to be prepared with the assistance of the Worship Office.

### XV. Care of Holy Oils

Holy Oils should be replaced after the Mass of Chrism each year.

- A. The new oils should be used in the celebration of the sacraments and the old oils should be properly disposed of, preferably by burning.
- B. It is not proper to keep old oils stored in the sacristy or the rectory (*Bishops' Committee on Liturgy Newsletter, March 23, 1988*).

### XVI. Copyright laws

It is illegal and immoral to reproduce copyrighted materials (present and future technologies) and music by any means without written permission of the copyright owner.

- A. Regardless of the use of the materials, it does not alter the legal or moral situation of copying without permission.

- B. This applies to all persons in all situations (*Music in Catholic Worship* n. 78; BCL April 69, Sept. 94).
- C. Consult the *Diocesan Copyright Statement*, 1998.

## **A Decree of the Congregation for the Clergy** (February 22, 1992)

### ARTICLE I

According to c. 948, "separate Masses are to be applied for the intentions for which an individual offering, even if small, has been made and accepted." Therefore, the priest who accepts the offering for a Mass for a particular intention is bound "ex iustitia" to satisfy personally the obligation assumed (cf. c. 949) or to commit its fulfillment to another priest, according to the conditions established by law (cf. c. 954-955).

Priests who transgress this norm assume the relative moral responsibility if they indistinctly collect offerings for the celebration of Masses for particular intentions and, combining them in a single offering and, without the knowledge of those who have made the offering, satisfy them with a single Mass celebrated according to an intention which they call "collective."

### ARTICLE II

In cases in which the people making the offering have been previously explicitly informed and have freely consented to combining their offerings in a single offering, their intentions can be satisfied with a single Mass celebrated according to a "collective" intention.

In this case it is necessary that the place and time for the celebration of this Mass, which is not to be more than twice a week, be made public.

The Bishops in whose dioceses these cases occur are to keep in mind that this practice is an exception to the canonical law in effect; wherever the practice spreads excessively, also on the basis of erroneous ideas of the meaning of offerings for Masses, it must be considered an abuse which could progressively lead to the faithful discontinuation of the practice of giving offerings for the celebration of Masses for individual intentions, thus causing the loss of a most ancient practice which is salutary for individual souls and the whole Church.

### ARTICLE III

In cases described in Article II, paragraph 1, it is licit for the celebrant to keep the amount of the offering established by the diocese (cf. c. 950). This amount is \$5.00. (See article VII-D-3) Any amount exceeding this offering shall be consigned to the Ordinary as specified in Canon 951, § 1, who will provide for its destination according to the ends established by law (cf. c. 946)

### ARTICLE IV

Especially in shrines or places of pilgrimage, which usually receive many offerings for the celebration of Masses the rector, bound in conscience, must attentively see to it that the norms of the universal law on the subject (cf. principally c. 954; 956) and those of this decree are accurately applied.

#### ARTICLE V

Priests who receive a great number of offerings for particular intentions for Masses, e.g., on the feast of the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls) or on other special occasions, being unable to satisfy them personally within the year's time (cf. c. 953) rather than refusing them and thus frustrating the devout intention of those making the offering and keeping them from realizing their good purpose, should forward them to other priests (cf. c. 955) or to their own ordinary (cf. c. 956). If in these or similar circumstances that which is described in Article II, paragraph 1 of this decree takes place, the priests must be attentive to the dispositions of Article III.

#### ARTICLE VI

To diocesan Bishops in particular falls the duty of promptly and clearly making known these norms, which are valid for secular and religious clergy, and seeing to their observance.

#### ARTICLE VII

It is also necessary that the faithful should be instructed in this matter through a specific catechesis, whose main points are as follows: the deep theological meaning of the offering given to the priest for the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the goal of which is especially to prevent the danger of scandal through the appearance of buying and selling the sacred; the ascetical importance of almsgiving in Christian life, which Jesus himself taught, of which the offering for the celebration of Masses is an outstanding form; the sharing of goods, through which by their offering for Mass intentions the faithful contribute to the support of the sacred ministers and the fulfillment of the Church's apostolic activity.



## DIOCESE OF AUSTIN

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### **Policy on the Preparation and Commissioning of Lectors and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion**

*Effective 2005*

In order to serve the needs of the people of God in the Diocese of Austin and to be responsible stewards of the gifts given to the diocese, the Diocese of Austin issues the following policy:

#### I. Introduction

The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council* calls for the “full, conscious and active participation of the faithful in the liturgy” (14).

- A. The introduction of the laity into the ministries of lector and extraordinary minister of holy Communion is one way to support this goal.
  - 1. The lay people have historically been active as ushers and altar servers, but even these liturgical roles are given more attention and welcome participation.
- B. The following qualifications for liturgical ministers are offered as a guideline in assisting the pastor and his staff in encouraging and supporting people in these ministries. Specific attention is given to the extraordinary ministers of holy Communion.

#### II. Qualifications of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Those who assist with the distribution of holy Communion at Mass or bring holy Communion to the sick in hospitals, nursing homes, or their own homes, should meet the following qualifications for this ministry:

- A. Be fully initiated and practicing members of the Catholic Church
- B. Attend Mass regularly
- C. Give positive witness to the Christian life
- D. Have a knowledge of the Order of the Mass

- E. Show reverence for the sacredness of the Body and Blood of Christ by their manner of dress and decorum while assisting at liturgy
- F. Be fully aware of the manner of preparation, distribution, and disposition of the Body and Blood of Christ
- G. Participate in a training program for Communion ministers<sup>8</sup>
- H. Be approved for commissioning by the Diocese of Austin<sup>9</sup>
- I. Be commissioned at a parish liturgy

### III. Qualifications for Lectors

- A. Be fully initiated and practicing members of the Catholic Church
- B. Men, women, youth and children may be prepared for this ministry
- C. Attend Mass regularly
- D. Give positive witness to the Christian life
- E. Have a knowledge of the order of the Mass
- F. Be able to proclaim the Scriptures at Mass
- G. Be willing to prepare the readings through prayer, study, and practice
- H. Be able to accept with conviction the words and prayers being offered
- I. Participate in a lector training program provided by the parish<sup>10</sup>

### IV. Blessing of Lectors

The Order for the Blessing of Readers is found in the *Book of Blessings*, Chapter 61 (1827). This blessing is for parish lectors who have the responsibility of proclaiming the Scriptures at Mass and other liturgical services.

<sup>8</sup> If no program is available, contact the diocesan Worship Office for assistance.

<sup>9</sup> The pastor submits a list of the names of those persons who have been prepared as qualified extraordinary ministers of holy Communion at Mass and to the sick to the worship office director, Diocese of Austin. A letter will then be sent to the pastor asking him to commission those ministers for a period of two years. The commissioning of extraordinary ministers of holy Communion is found in the *Book of Blessings*, Chapter 63. A [form](#) is provided for your convenience (Page K-31).

<sup>10</sup> If no program is available, contact the diocesan Worship Office for assistance.