

Cathedral of St. Peter the Apostle

Norms for

Extraordinary Ministers of Communion

PRAYER

"Loving Father, as we gather in your service, help us to fully understand the magnificence of your Son's sacrifice for us and the wonder of your presence in the Holy Eucharist. Guide and instill in us perseverance and a willingness to do your will. Open our hearts to others as we invite them to your table to share your precious gifts. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, who lives with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit one God for ever and ever. Amen"

IMPORTANCE OF THE EUCHARIST

The Second Vatican Council, in its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, reminds us of some very basic truths concerning the Eucharist: "At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharist sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a Paschal banquet 'in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a future glory is given to us' (SC 47)

Three Dimensions to the Eucharist:

1. There is the past - celebrate a historical moment of the Last Supper;
2. There is the present – the Eucharist brings into the present time (re-presents) the one sacrifice on the Cross. We are celebrating in "memorial," not commemoration, of an actual past event here and now;
3. There is the future - we unite ourselves with the heavenly liturgy and anticipate eternal life.

WHAT IS AN EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER OF COMMUNION

The ordinary minister of Holy Communion is a Bishop, Priest or Deacon. However, an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion is a layperson or religious who has been deputed by the bishop for a period of time, or by a priest for a single occasion, to assist in distributing Holy Communion. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are only called on when there is a shortage of ordained clergy to distribute Holy Communion.

REQUIREMENTS TO BE AN EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER OF COMMUNION

Must be at least 18 years of age, be in good standing with the Church and have a full belief in the Eucharist.

TERMINOLOGY

Ciborium – “cup-like vessel (usually large) with a lid. It contains the hosts that will be used for Communion. It is also used to reserve the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle.”

Paten – “saucer-like vessel that usually matches the chalice with which it is used. It holds the bread that becomes the Body of Christ.”

Chalice – “Large cup used at Mass to hold the wine that becomes the Blood of Christ”

Pall – “stiff square white cover that is placed over the paten when it is on the chalice and over the chalice during Mass to protect its contents”.

Purificator – “a triple-folded rectangular white cloth used to cleanse the chalice and to dry the celebrant’s fingers after the last ablution (washing). In setting up the chalice, the purificator is placed over the mouth, beneath the paten”.

Corporal – A square white linen cloth on which the Host and Chalice are placed during Mass (From Latin corporalis = bodily; from corpus = body).

DRESS

Extraordinary ministers should dress in a way that is dignified and shows respect for the Blessed Sacrament and the function they are carrying out. Clothes should be clean and neat, and reflect the importance of the Blessed Sacrament, generally by being more formal. Please do not wear blue jeans.

CHECK IN BEFORE MASS

In the extra room to the left as you enter into the Church, there will be a sign in sheet for those who are Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist. Please check your name present or write whom you are replacing.

APPROACH THE ALTAR

During the Sign of Peace, the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion walk forward and stand next to the bottom step (your back will be to baptismal font). Note: to those in the pew be alert if there seems to not be enough ministers; go up to assist if needed. For the 5:15pm and 8:00am Masses there are to be two people distributing Body of Christ (one of which is the presider) and two people distributing the Blood of Christ. For the 10:30am Mass there are to be two people distributing Body of Christ (one of which is the presider) and four people distributing the Blood of Christ.

RECEIVING COMMUNION & A VESSEL

After the main celebrant receives the Precious Blood, he will stand at the corner of the altar. The Extraordinary Ministers are to walk in single file up, bow toward the Eucharist, receive the Body of Christ and stand in regular place behind the altar. Bow when the celebrant or concelebrant approaches you, they will offer you the Precious Blood, receive the Eucharist and take the purificator to purify the chalice. The person in the middle will receive the Precious Blood from a minister to their left or right. The person in the middle will be given the Body of Christ to be distributed. Remember, you will be given a vessel. Do not take vessel directly off the altar.

DISTRIBUTING HOLY COMMUNION

After all Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion have received and Bishop/Priests have given altar servers the Body of Christ, several of the extraordinary ministers are to distribute the Precious Blood to the altar servers. The rest of ministers are to remain in place. When all have received communion, the two distributing the Body of Christ go to the middle (unless there are disabled people needing you to come to them) and those distributing the Precious Blood go to the sides. Remember that those with the Precious Blood are to stand as far away from the center aisle as possible to facilitate people moving past you.

If you are distributing the Body of Christ, hold the Eucharist at eye level and say "The Body of Christ." You are then to distribute communion in their hand or on their tongue. If you are distributing the Precious Blood, raise the cup and say "The Blood of Christ," take the cup, purify it and twist one turn (remember to rotate the purificator). No other words are to be said, as the above words are an ancient formula of the church.

The practice of self-intinction (communicant dipping the consecrated host into the precious blood) is not encouraged by the Bishops of the United States. If someone approaches and would like to intinct, please place purificator over chalice and politely ask them to consume the Body of Christ and then offer them the Precious Blood. Only the priest is allowed to intinct the Body of Christ into the Blood of Christ. This manner of receiving requires the presence of a paten so that no drop of the precious blood falls to the floor.

You are not to judge those coming up whether they should receive the Eucharist or not. However, if the person looks too young or does not seem to know what they are doing, it is appropriate to inquire if they receive communion or if they are Catholic.

After all ministers (ordinary and extraordinary) finish distributing Holy Communion, then all return to the sanctuary together. If you are on the St. Joseph side of the Church, you are to walk behind the main altar and go to the credence table. Those distributing Precious Blood go to the credence table, consume any that is left and place cup on table. If you are not able to consume all of the Precious Blood, please ask one of the other ministers to assist you in a reverent manner. Do not try to consume more than you are able as this can lead to some tense moments on the altar steps and would bring scandal on the sacrament. Those distributing the Body of Christ return to the altar, place ciborium on the altar for combining and then go to credence table.

CLEANING VESSELS

One of the ordinary ministers will pour water in chalices and hand to one of the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to dry. When all is complete everyone goes back to their seats. Please dry the inside of the chalice completely making sure no elements remain. Be careful when drying that rings do not scratch the inside of the chalice.

Also, please remain silent and reverent during this sacred process. This is not a time for socializing. Remember that what you hold is holy and not of this world. Reflect on that and do not be casual in your handling of the vessels. Once you are presented with a vessel it is no longer bread or wine, so please do not refer to it as that.

After Mass, two of the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should go to the back and clean the vessels in the sink. Please use soap, dry with special cloth (not towel) and place back in the closet. Place any purificators used under sink.

QUESTIONS

1. What if you run out of the Eucharist? Ideally enough hosts are consecrated for all those present at the Mass. But at times this is not the case. For those with the Body of Christ, you should simply lean toward the other minister beside you to receive more of the Body of Christ. Remember to be reverent and deliberate in the exchange of hosts. If you both run out then go straight to the Tabernacle, remove the Ciborium leaving the lid on the altar shelf and return to station to continue distribution of communion. If you run out of the Precious Blood, simply place the purificator and your hand over the top of the cup.

2. What if someone comes up to communion with their arms crossed? The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion cannot give the blessing of the Church. But, you can say raise your hand toward their head and say, "May God Bless You." Do not make the sign of the cross over them as a priest does.

3. What if the Eucharist is dropped? If the Body of Christ is dropped, the extraordinary minister of communion is to immediately pick up and consume. If the Precious Blood is dropped, the extraordinary minister places purificator over the spot and works with the sacristan to clean up after the Mass.

4. What if someone takes the Eucharist and does not consume it? If you notice that the person does not consume the Eucharist ask them to receive it.

5. If asked to go to the tabernacle to retrieve the Eucharist what am I suppose to do? Should walk up to tabernacle, open it, genuflect and take the Eucharist out. On returning, put ciborium in the tabernacle, genuflect and close the tabernacle door. Bring the key back to the credence table.

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I thank you for calling me to serve you and your people in this community as an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist. You know that I could never be worthy of such an exalted honor. Help me to be less unworthy by remaining free from sin. Let me nourish your people with the witness of my life as I serve them with the Body of Christ. Grant your strength and holiness to all your Extraordinary Ministers and make them worthy to bring Christ to others. I ask this through Christ our Lord.