

Guidelines and Reminders for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Before each Mass you are ministering at:

- Arrive at least ten minutes early. Extraordinary Ministers who are not present by the start of Mass will be substituted.

Dress and decorum should be appropriate for the occasion:

- The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion should show reverence for the Most Holy Body and Blood of Jesus, especially by full and active participation in the celebration of Mass. He/she should use respectful and precise language when discussing the Holy Eucharist (always avoiding terms such as “bread” or “wine” when referring to the sacred Host or Precious Blood).
- Since the Extraordinary Minister’s mission is to bring others closer to the Eucharistic Lord, casual clothing, immodest dress and distracting jewellery should never be worn. Dignified dress is preferable.

Ritual Action

- Once the Priest receives the Precious Blood from the chalice, the Extraordinary Ministers proceed immediately to the sanctuary. As they come together at the front of the altar, they bow together, and walk on to the Sanctuary. The Extraordinary Minister who will be receiving the Ciborium from the Tabernacle should be the first on the Sanctuary, and closest to the credence table.
- The Ministers stand side by side, to the side of the altar, facing the Priest.

Distribution of Holy Communion

- **For the Body of Christ:** the Extraordinary Minister will hold the Sacred Host before the Communicant and say in a clear voice, “The Body of Christ”. It is inappropriate to change this declaration in any way by adding words, including the names of members of the congregation. After the Communicant replies “Amen”, the Sacred Host is placed on the tongue, or in the palm of the hand.
- If the Communicant begins to walk away carrying the Sacred Host, the Minister should tell him or her in a subdued voice to consume the Host immediately.
- **For the Blood of Christ:** the Extraordinary Minister will raise the chalice, and say in a clear voice, “The Blood of Christ”, to which the Communicant replies “Amen”. While the Communicant is drinking from the chalice, the Extraordinary Minister should move the Purificator along so that he or she uses a different part of it to wipe from the part you used for the previous person. After each Communicant receives from the chalice, the Extraordinary Minister will wipe clean the rim of the chalice, using the Purificator. Then, before presenting the chalice to the next person, he or she will turn it slightly, so as to present a new part of the rim to the next Communicant.
- The practice of self-intinction (when the Communicant dips the Sacred Host into the Precious Blood) is *strictly forbidden*. Should a Communicant attempt this, the Minister should cover the chalice with the Purificator, and quietly and gently invite the Communicant to consume the Sacred Host first.

When Someone Presents Themselves for a Blessing

- An Extraordinary Minister may say a prayer of blessing to someone who requests one. A suitable gesture of blessing should be used – a hand held over (but **not** touching) the head, accompanied by an appropriate form of words, such as “May Almighty God bless you and give you peace”, or similar. Extraordinary Ministers should *not* make the sign of the cross over, or in front of, Communicants receiving a blessing, especially not when holding a Sacred Host.

Purification of the Sacred Vessels

- At the end of the distribution of Holy Communion, the Extraordinary Ministers should consume what remains of the Precious Blood, before returning the chalices to the credence table. It is absolutely forbidden to pour any amount of the Precious Blood down the sink or the *sacrarium* (the special outlet in the sacristy which leads directly into the ground).
- The patens with any remaining consecrated Hosts should be returned to the altar, and the Priest will include them in the Ciborium, which is then placed in the Tabernacle. The sacred vessels are purified at the credence table.
- There is a specific Prayer for the Purification of Sacred Vessels, which should be committed to memory, or read from the appropriate card, located on the credence table:

“What has passed our lips as food, O Lord,
may we possess in purity of heart,
that what has been given to us in time
may be our healing for eternity.”

Should a Consecrated Host Drop to the Floor

- If the person who has dropped the Consecrated Host does not pick it up and consume it, you should discreetly and reverently pick up the fallen Host (being careful not to drop additional Hosts as you bend down).
- When Holy Communion is completed, you may either consume the Consecrated Host or give to the Priest to dispose of properly (he will either consume it or place it in the Tabernacle where it will be kept in a glass of water after Mass, to facilitate its disintegration).

Should a Spill of the Most Precious Blood Occur

- Ask the members of the congregation near the spill to step back, and to receive the Precious Blood from the other chalice.
- Place your Purificator over the spill.
- Step away from the area and continue in your ministry.
- The Priest will look after the spill, if not immediately, at least after Mass is over. Leave the Purificator over the spill area until the area has been properly cleaned. After Mass, the area should be dabbed dry with another Purificator, and then rinsed thoroughly with water, using fresh cloths. Both the Purificators and the cloths should be rinsed thoroughly, and then laid out to dry, before being laundered as usual. *The water should be poured directly into the earth, and never down the sink.*
- If the chalice is too full for you to hold it safely while you place the Purificator over the spill, as the next person in the Communion line to hold the chalice for a moment.