

# DIOCESE OF PORTLAND

## NORMS FOR EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

Approved 8/24/2023

### 1. Introduction

“[Christ] comes to believers in order to share his life with them and to be united with them. That is the purpose of our receiving the Eucharist in Holy Communion. We are able to be intimately united with Christ. Normally, the food we take is transformed into our flesh and blood. But this spiritual food and drink that we take is meant to transform us into the One who is being received. We are meant to grow more and more like Christ by receiving the Eucharist in Holy Communion. Our reception of Holy Communion should help us grow in charity for others, too, since the Eucharist is the sign of the great love Jesus had for us, so much so that he gave up his life for us. This is also a reality that is often underappreciated at our celebration of Mass.”<sup>1</sup>

Extraordinary ministers of holy communion are those persons who ensure that the people of God may be able to partake of holy communion when ordinary ministers are present in insufficient numbers. They distribute the eucharist both in the context of the eucharistic sacrifice and other liturgies apart from Mass. With authorization from the proper pastoral authorities, they may expose the blessed sacrament for eucharistic adoration. They may also be entrusted with bringing the blessed sacrament to the sick, including giving communion to the dying (*viaticum*).

The extraordinary minister of holy communion must remember that “[w]e are not the only ones in need of the love that Christ has shown us. We are called to help the rest of the world experience it.”<sup>2</sup> The extraordinary minister of holy communion is designated by decree of the bishop not for themselves, but for a designated community of persons. This designation is temporary, for as long as the need exists and as long as the exercise of their function is useful for the community.

Both the extraordinary minister of holy communion and the communicant encounter God in person, and “[w]e can never encounter God in person and not be changed by that encounter. Do not fear what God may ask of you. Growing closer to him never asks more of us than we can accomplish with his help.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Deeley, R. P., pastoral letter *Do This in Memory of Me*, 2021

<sup>2</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church*, 2022, no. 56.

<sup>3</sup> Deeley, R. P., pastoral letter *Do This in Memory of Me*, 2021.

## **2. Ministers of holy communion – ordinary and extraordinary**

- 2.1. The ministers of holy communion, those who distribute the consecrated bread and consecrated wine to the faithful, are divided into two categories. The first are called ordinary ministers of holy communion. “The ordinary minister of holy communion is a bishop, priest [presbyter], or deacon.”<sup>4</sup>
- 2.2. Men and women who are instituted by the diocesan bishop as acolytes are the first among extraordinary ministers of holy communion.<sup>5</sup> Instituted acolytes do not require any further designation from the diocesan bishop and can function on a stable basis in any location.
- 2.3. Other laypersons who distribute holy communion are called extraordinary ministers of holy communion as well.<sup>6</sup> In order to serve as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, lay persons must be designated by the diocesan bishop for the service of a specific community of persons for a limited time. In an individual case because of an urgent need during the course of Mass, the priest celebrant may designate one or more lay persons for this role during that same eucharistic celebration.<sup>7</sup>
- 2.4. Only ordinary ministers of holy communion (priests and deacons) and instituted acolytes may purify vessels used to distribute Holy Communion under either species.<sup>8</sup>
- 2.5. Sacramentals – In the Diocese of Portland extraordinary ministers of holy communion are authorized to distribute previously blessed ashes on Ash Wednesday and to impart the blessing of throats in honor of St. Blaise as permitted by the *Book of Blessings*.

## **3. Requirements for a member of the Christian faithful to be designated as an extraordinary minister of holy communion**

- 3.1. Pastoral need – Extraordinary ministers are designated when an insufficient number of ordinary ministers are present at Mass such that the distribution of holy communion cannot be carried out in an orderly and reverent manner within a reasonable amount of time. They are also designated when an insufficient number of ordinary ministers of holy communion cannot fulfill the pastoral need for holy communion to be brought to the sick and to the dying at home, in nursing homes, in elderly residences, in hospitals, and in

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<sup>4</sup> Canon 910. §1.

<sup>5</sup> See FRANCIS, apostolic letter *motu proprio Spiritus Domini*, 1 January 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Canon 910. §2. The extraordinary minister of holy communion is an acolyte or another member of the Christian faithful designated according to the norm of can. 230, §3.

<sup>7</sup> “Rite of Deputing a Minister to Distribute Holy Communion on a Single Occasion,” in *The Roman Missal: English translation according to the third typical edition*, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishop, decree *Norms for the Distribution of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the US*, 2002, no. 53.

other similar institutions.<sup>9</sup> Finally, extraordinary ministers are designated when ordinary ministers may not be able to be present at the times when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed or reposed for the sake of the adoration of the faithful.

- 3.2. Age - To be eligible for designation as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion a man or woman must be at least 16 years old.
- 3.3. Fully initiated – The man or woman must be fully initiated, having received the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and the holy eucharist.
- 3.4. Practicing Catholic – The persons designated must be practicing Catholics, distinguished in their Christian life, faith, and morals. At a minimum, this means living according to the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, and the Precepts of the Church (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 2041-2043). In addition, if married, he or she must be in a union recognized as valid by the Catholic Church.
- 3.5. Eucharistic devotion – The persons designated must demonstrate a deep reverence for and devotion to the eucharist.
- 3.6. Suitability – The person designated must possess the requisite abilities, both physical and cognitive, as well as the necessary temperament to carry out their assigned duties.
- 3.7. Dress – Extraordinary ministers of holy communion should always be dressed in a manner consistent with the dignity of their role during the liturgical celebration. A neat appearance and reverential deportment are essential. In the Diocese of Portland, it is not envisioned that extraordinary ministers of holy communion wear the alb.
- 3.8. Verification—The pastor, administrator, or head of chaplaincy, relying on the external evidence of a person’s behavior and speech, and on the testimony of others if necessary, judges whether an individual meets the requirements of this section.

#### **4. Designation of extraordinary ministers of holy communion**

- 4.1. Request of the pastor – The pastor or parochial administrator nominates members of the faithful for designation as extraordinary ministers of holy communion by the diocesan bishop. In institutions where Catholic chaplaincies exist, the head of the chaplaincy can likewise nominate members of the faithful for designation as extraordinary ministers of holy communion for that institution.
- 4.2. Must fulfill all requirements of safe environment/safeguarding – As acolytes and other extraordinary ministers of holy communion may have contact with vulnerable persons, in the Diocese of Portland, these ministers must fulfill all the requirements of the diocesan safe environment policies regarding their office.
- 4.3. Liturgical Rite of Blessing – The text found in the *Book of Blessings* may be used after a member of the faithful has been designated as an extraordinary minister of holy communion. This blessing is not required in order for extraordinary ministers to begin their service once they have received designation by the bishop.
- 4.4. Length of service of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion – In the Diocese of Portland, extraordinary ministers of holy communion over the age of 18 are designated

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<sup>9</sup> See canon 230, §3.

by the diocesan bishop for a term of 5 years. Terms are renewable once by the bishop at the request of the pastor, parish administrator, or head of an institutional chaplaincy. After the conclusion of a second five-year term, at least one year must elapse before the same candidate can be considered again for designation. This policy begins to apply to all those extraordinary ministers who are designated following the adoption of these norms. It is not applied retroactively. Candidates between the ages of 16 and 18 are designated for one-year terms.

- 4.5. In the Diocese of Portland, in the residence of both women and men religious with a duly erected oratory, all non-ordained superiors are extraordinary ministers of holy communion by virtue of their office and may function in this role in their own house without additional authorization.
- 4.6. Parishes and chaplaincies in institutions are obligated to provide initial and ongoing formation to extraordinary ministers of holy communion on a regular basis each year.

## **5. Scope of the Use of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion**

- 5.1. Extraordinary ministers of holy communion may only exercise their function in the territory of the parish(es) or within the confines of the specific institution where they have been designated by the diocesan bishop.
- 5.2. During the celebration of the Mass – Extraordinary ministers of holy communion may distribute the holy eucharist at Mass when the celebration would be unduly prolonged without their presence. For example, during a eucharistic celebration in which 75-100 of the faithful are present, the priest celebrant may be assisted by a single extraordinary minister of holy communion when no other ordinary ministers of holy communion are present. Extraordinary ministers of holy communion may also be needed if communion is distributed under both species.<sup>10</sup> The number of communion stations at any given Mass should not be multiplied unnecessarily beyond the actual need.
- 5.3. Communion to the Sick and Dying – Extraordinary ministers of holy communion are obligated to keep the pastor, parish administrator, head of chaplaincy or the delegate in charge of extraordinary ministers informed of the names of the persons to whom they bring holy communion and the frequency of visits.
- 5.4. Weekday Communion Services – Communion services on weekdays are not authorized in the Diocese of Portland - Please consult the Department of Canonical Services for guidance.
- 5.5. Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest – Except in the case of an emergency, permission of the diocesan bishop is required for regularly scheduled Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest. The leaders for such services require a specific authorization for this role in addition to designation as extraordinary ministers of holy communion. Please consult the proper diocesan norms on Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest.

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<sup>10</sup> Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, Instruction On certain matters to be observed or to be avoided regarding the Most Holy Eucharist, *Redemptionis sacramentum*, 25 March 2004, No. 102.

5.6. Eucharistic Exposition – An extraordinary minister of holy communion may expose and repose the blessed sacrament for adoration with the permission of the pastor or parochial administrator. Extraordinary ministers of holy communion never give the blessing with the eucharist.


**6. Resignation and Termination of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion**

6.1. Resignation – An extraordinary minister of holy communion may resign by submitting a letter of resignation to the pastor, parochial administrator, or head of Catholic chaplaincy.

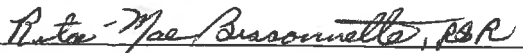
6.2. Removal – The pastor, parochial administrator, or head of an institutional chaplaincy may petition the diocesan bishop to terminate the designation of an extraordinary minister of holy communion for a just cause, for example, the absence of one or more of the requirements in section 3 above.

These norms take effect on Friday, September 8, 2023, Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Approved on this twenty-fourth day of August in the year of the Lord, twenty twenty-three.

  
Most Reverend Robert P. Dealey, JCD  
Bishop of Portland

Seal

  
Sr. Rita-Mae Bissonnette, RSR, JCL  
Chancellor