



Liturgical Ministries: Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist Guidelines

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I. Arrival at Mass

Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist should arrive 15 minutes before Mass to sign in. Please show up if you have been scheduled for a Mass. If you cannot attend on a day that you have been scheduled, it is your responsibility to find a sub. Please be respectful of the Eucharist and the Ministry – do not wait until the Sunday that you have been scheduled to find a sub. All Liturgical Ministers need ample time to prepare to serve in the Eucharistic celebration.

II. Dress Code

Extraordinary Ministers should dress neatly, in a way consonant with the dignity of their role. Good taste and common sense are the best guides in this area; *please avoid wearing shorts or tank tops*. Appropriate dress is a sign of the reverence the minister has for the Eucharist and for the importance of the ministry.

III. Directions for Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist

- a.** During the Sign of Peace, please proceed to the Altar. Bow slowly in front of the Altar to show reverence, then proceed to stand to the *right* of the Altar. You must be in place before the *Lamb of God*. You may greet the other Extraordinary Ministers.
- b.** Once the Presider has received, he will give Communion to you. One minister of the Precious Blood will share the cup with the minister of the Body.
- c.** The minister of the Body will proceed to the front of the center aisle along with the Presider. Ministers of the Blood will proceed to their respective sides in the front, as far away from the center aisle as possible, allowing for a cue (line) behind them.
- d. *Ministers of the Sacred Body:*** As the communicant steps forward and bows as a sign of reverence, the minister takes a Host, raises it slightly, and showing it, says, "The Body of Christ." The individual replies, "Amen," extends hands or tongue, and the Host is given accordingly. *If the communicant does not answer*

"Amen," the minister should say the "Amen." The choice of how one receives the Eucharist, whether in hand or tongue, belongs to the communicant.

- e. **Ministers of the Precious Blood:** As the communicant steps forward and bows as a sign of reverence, the minister holds the cup slightly raised and says, "The Blood of Christ." The communicant answers "Amen," takes the cup and drinks from it. *If the communicant does not answer "Amen", the minister should say the "Amen".* The minister delivers the cup to the communicant's hands and does not attempt to tip it. After the individual has returned the cup, the minister wipes the lip of the cup with the purificator cloth and turns it slightly before presenting it to the next communicant. If your cup should run out before the end of communion, please place your purificator over your chalice and wait until communion is over.
- f. At the end of communion, ministers of the Body will consume any remaining Body, and then return their paten to the Altar. Ministers of the Blood will consume any remaining Precious Blood before returning their chalices to the Altar. Please proceed to the *left* of the altar to place either your paten or chalice on the altar. Cups are then purified at the altar, by the priest and **ONE EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER (decided upon beforehand)**. The remaining ministers may return to their seats.
- g. For the Extraordinary Minister assisting in the purification process. As the Presider purifies each vessel, he will hand each to you to dry. Then, place the patens and chalices in an orderly fashion on the altar. Help fold the purificators. You may now return to your seat.

IV. Practical Questions

a. Who can bless another person?

According to the official Book of Blessings, "*Laymen and laywomen, in virtue of the universal priesthood, a dignity they possess because of their baptism and confirmation, may celebrate certain blessings, as indicated in the respective orders of blessings, by use of the rites and formularies designated for a lay minister. Such lay persons exercise this ministry in virtue of their office (for example, parents on behalf of their children) or by reason of some special liturgical ministry or in the fulfillment of a particular charge in the Church, as is the case in many places with religious or catechist appointed by decision of the local Ordinary*" (18). **The Extraordinary Minister may offer a brief prayer for those in the Assembly who come forward in the communion procession and who are not receiving Holy Communion, such as "May God bless you" or "May God continue the good work in you." This prayer is to be offered audibly and may not be accompanied by the gesture associated with a blessing, e.g., the raising of the hand or the sign of the cross.**

b. What should I do if I drop the Sacred Body or spill the Precious Blood?

First, don't panic. It's not the end of the world; everything will be fine. Simply bend down on one knee and pick up the dropped host, and consume it immediately. Be careful not to spill anymore hosts while you are retrieving the dropped one. You might have to stop traffic before you can bend down. Do so courteously, remembering that Jesus is also present in the members of the assembly whom you are stopping. If you spill some consecrated wine, and if you can manage the cup with only one hand, bend down on one knee and wipe the wine off the floor with your purificator. If the cup is too full for you to manage gracefully, ask the next person in line to hold the cup while you take care of the

spill.

c. What do I do if someone who is not Catholic comes to me for Communion?

In most cases, you should give them Communion. As Communion ministers, we are not responsible for judging who is worthy of sharing in Communion with us. We cannot know the heart or conscience of the person standing in front of us.

Our primary obligation is to act as Jesus would and to be as hospitable and welcoming as possible. Do not cause a fuss during the Mass by refusing Communion to anyone. If a child does not have his or her hands crossed over their chest, it is best to ask...."Have you made your First Holy Communion?" If they are obviously too young, just offer a blessing.

d. Is it ok for Communion Ministers to skip the cup?

No one is required to share Communion from the cup. However, since the faithful are to be encouraged to do so, part of the ministry of the Communion minister is to offer that encouragement by example. If a minister is unable to that, it might be best to participate in a different ministry.

V. Tips for Extraordinary Ministers

Here are some tips to keep in mind to recognize the importance of your ministry. Many of them might seem like no-brainers, but it never hurts to step back and remind ourselves of some of the basics. After all, in this ministry, you are holding and sharing the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

1. Know you are a minister of the church.
2. Prepare yourself before every Mass with a moment of quiet prayer.
3. Secure a substitute in advance whenever you cannot assist at the Mass for which you are scheduled.
4. Observe other Extraordinary Ministers whenever you gather with the congregation for liturgy. If you notice that one of the scheduled ministers is late or absent, offer to help out.
5. Communicate reverence and dignity at all times in the performance of your duties, even while clearing the altar, without being artificially stiff.
6. Dress appropriately.
7. Participate fully in all parts of the liturgy at which you are serving by singing, praying and listening attentively to the homily. Try not to let your role distract you from worshipping or make you nervous.
8. Develop a devotion to the Eucharistic presence of Christ, knowing the Christ of the Eucharist, not just knowing about the Eucharist.
9. Educate yourself about the practice of celebrating Eucharist – its description in the Bible; its several aspects; thanksgiving, meal, sacrifice, memorial, sign of unity; its history in the church – by reading and attending workshops.

- 10.** Be friendly in your approach to each communicant.
- 11.** Try to keep focused, in spite of the repetition, on each statement of "Body of Christ" or "Blood of Christ" as an expression of faith.
- 12.** Respect each communicant's wish regarding the Host, receiving it in the hand or on the tongue.
- 13.** Hold up the Host or chalice so that the communicant can see it when responding "Amen" to "Body of Christ" or "Blood of Christ."
- 14.** Allow the person time to say "Amen" before moving the Host or chalice toward him or her.
- 15.** If a worshipper approaches you carrying a small child, consider making the sign of the cross on the child's forehead as a gesture of inclusion.
- 16.** Remain calm if any mishap occurs -- someone accidentally spills the Precious Blood, drops the Host, or coughs up the Body of Christ. First make sure the person is not in any danger of choking. Then pick up what remains with a purificator. Continue unflappably, which will reassure the congregation. Accidents happen!
- 17.** Keep your voice level and loud enough for the communicant to hear, but not so loud as to distract those receiving from other ministers.
- 18.** Ministers of the Cup: Stand far enough away from the Minister of the Host to avoid congestion.
- 19.** Present the cup in such a way that communicants can easily take the cup into their own hands.
- 20.** Be natural in your walking to and from the altar, if somewhat slower than your normal walking pace.