

Diocese of El Paso
The Office of Worship & Tepeyac Institute
Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Communion

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Official Church Documents

*Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion
Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America*
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Approved by:

Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments,
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Bishop Armando Ochoa, Bishop of El Paso, 27 November 2011

Formation and Commission

Norm, no. 28

Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (EMC) should receive sufficient spiritual, theological, and practical preparation to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence.

In the Diocese of El Paso, Extraordinary Ministers of Communion are required to be trained and prepared at Tepeyac Institute (www.tepeyacinstitute.com) and commissioned by the bishop. The commissioning is for a three-year period. After that period the minister discerns with the pastor if he/she should renew the ministry for another three-year period. The minister must participate in the renewal program at Tepeyac

Gestures of Ministers at Mass

GIRM, no. 49

When they have arrived at the sanctuary, the priest, the deacon, reverence the altar with a profound bow.

Extraordinary Ministers of Communion do not process in with the priest, and or deacon. EMC's take their place in the assembly once preparations for Mass have been completed. EMC's do not wear albs or other insignia.

GIRM, no. 274

If, however, the tabernacle with the Most Blessed Sacrament is situated in the sanctuary, the priest, the deacon and the other ministers (altar servers and lectors) genuflect when they approach the altar and when they depart from it, but not during the celebration of Mass itself.

During Mass the altar is revered with a bow as one passes in front of the altar.

The Extraordinary Minister of Communion

Norm, no. 26

Thus bishops and priests are considered the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion. In addition the deacon who assists the bishop or priest in distributing Communion is an ordinary minister of Holy Communion. When the Eucharist is distributed under both forms, “the deacon ministers the chalice.”

Norm, no.27

In every celebration of the Eucharist there should be a sufficient number of ministers for Holy Communion so that it can be distributed in an orderly and reverent manner.

Generally, EMC's serve only in one ministry. There may be exceptions but these should be rare.

Norm, no. 28

The priest may call upon extraordinary ministers to assist him, i.e., formally instituted acolytes or even some of the faithful who have been commissioned [for this purpose].

Norm, no. 29

All ministers of Holy Communion should show the greatest reverence for the Most Holy Eucharist by their demeanor, their attire, and the manner in which they handle the consecrated bread or wine.

As mentioned before, EMC's are to be properly dressed, and wear neither albs, nor insignia.

Preparation for Mass

Norm, no. 30

When Holy Communion is to be distributed under both species, careful planning should be undertaken so that:

- Enough bread and wine are made ready for the sharing of communion with the faithful at each Mass. As a general rule, Holy Communion is given from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and not from those reserved in the tabernacle. Precious Blood may not be reserved at one Mass for use at another.
- A suitable number of ministers of Holy Communion are provided at each Mass. For Communion from the chalice, it is desirable that there be generally two ministers of the Precious Blood for each minister of the Body of Christ.

GIRM, no. 83

It is most desirable that the faithful, just as the priest himself is bound to do, receive the Lord's Body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and that, in the instances when it is permitted, they share in the chalice (cf. no. 283), so that even by means of the signs Communion will stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated.

Eucharistic ministers should arrive early and ensure that there are sufficient communion cups with purificators, patens, and corporal cloths placed at the credence table. Corporal cloths may be placed on the altar before Mass. Ministers assist in preparing sufficient hosts and wine to be consecrated.

As a rule, ministers should not bring to the altar a ciborium from the tabernacle with hosts consecrated at an earlier Mass. No mention of this practice is made in the GIRM; this practice is not anticipated nor encouraged. If additional hosts are needed from the tabernacle, after the distribution of Holy Communion has begun, a minister could bring a ciborium from the tabernacle with additional hosts to those ministers needing them after the distribution of Communion has begun.

Preparation of the Gifts

Norm, no. 32

Before Mass begins, wine and hosts should be prepared in vessels of appropriate size and number. The presence on the altar of a single chalice and one large paten can signify the one bread and once chalice by which we are gathered “into the one body of Christ, a living sacrifice of praise.” When this is not possible, care should be taken that the number of vessels should not exceed the need.

GIRM, no. 331

For the consecration of hosts, a large paten may fittingly be used, on which is placed the bread for the priest and the deacon and also for the other ministers and for the faithful.

There should not be bread and wine for the assembly and separate bread and wine for the priest celebrant.

A primary symbol is the breaking of a large host and its fragments being distributed to the additional patens that strengthens the sign of the “one bread.”

When additional priests are concelebrating each concelebrant does not have his own host.

Norm, no. 36

The altar is prepared with corporal, purificator, Missal, and chalice (unless the chalice is prepared at a side table) by the deacon and the servers. The gifts of bread and wine are brought forward by the faithful and received by the priest or deacon at a convenient place. If one chalice is not sufficient for Holy Communion to be distributed under both kinds to the priest concelebrants or Christ’s faithful, several chalices are placed on a corporal on the altar in an appropriate place, filled with wine. It is praiseworthy that the main chalice be larger than the other chalices prepared for distribution.

The principal chalice should not be crowded with numerous communion cups. Additional cups, with wine, are to be placed on a corporal off to one side of the altar. When preparing the principal chalice, water is placed only in the principal chalice. Water is not poured in additional communion cups. Ministers of communion do not pour water.

At the Breaking of the Bread

Norm, no. 37

As the *Agnus Dei* or *Lamb of God* is begun, the bishop or priest alone, or with the assistance of the deacon, and if necessary of concelebrating priests, breaks the eucharistic bread. Other empty ciboria or patens are then brought to the altar if this is necessary. The deacon or priest places the consecrated bread in several ciboria or patens if necessary, as required for the distribution of Holy Communion. If it is not possible to accomplish this distribution in a reasonable time, the celebrant may call upon the assistance of other deacons or concelebrating priests.

The Eucharistic bread is placed in additional vessels, brought to the altar and placed on corporal cloths. Corporal cloths are always used for the Eucharistic vessels used for the sharing of Holy Communion. This means that more than one corporal cloth will be used: one upon which the primary paten and chalice are placed for the consecration, one for the vessels that will contain the Eucharistic bread and a third for the communion cups.

The longstanding tradition of the Church states that it is the ministry of the deacon to prepare the communion cups and to assist with the sharing of the Eucharistic wine at the time Communion is shared with the assembly.

Norm, no. 38

If extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are required by pastoral need, they should not approach the altar before the priest has received Communion. After the priest has concluded his own Communion, he distributes Communion to the extraordinary ministers, assisted by the deacon, and then hands the sacred vessels to them for distribution of Holy Communion to the people.

Ordained ministers (bishop, priest, deacon) are the ordinary ministers of communion and extraordinary ministers (laity) are those appointed to assist in the absence of ordained ministers. They may approach the sanctuary during the Agnus Dei.

According to the revised GIRM, the priest and deacon prepare the Eucharistic vessels with the consecrated hosts.

Norm, no.39

All receive Holy Communion in the manner described by the *General Instruction to the Roman Missal*, whether priest concelebrants (cf. GIRM, nos. 159, 242, 243, 246), deacons (cf. GIRM, nos. 182, 244, 246), or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (cf. GIRM, no. 284). Neither deacons nor lay ministers may ever receive Holy Communion in the manner of a concelebrating Priest. The practice of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion waiting to receive Holy Communion until after the distribution of Holy Communion is not in accord with liturgical law.

Norm, no. 40

After all eucharistic ministers have received Communion, the bishop or priest celebrant reverently hands vessels containing the Body and Blood of the Lord to the deacons or extraordinary ministers who will assist with the distribution of Holy Communion. The deacon may assist the priest in handing the vessels containing the Body and Blood of the Lord to the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

Distribution of the Body and Blood of the Lord

Norm, no. 41

Holy Communion under the form of bread is offered to the communicant with the words “The Body of Christ.” The communicant may choose whether to receive the Body of Christ in the hand or on the tongue. When receiving in the hand, the communicant should be guided by

the words of St. Cyril of Jerusalem: “When you approach, take care not to do so with your hand stretched out and your fingers open or part, but rather place your left hand as a throne beneath your right, as befits one who is about to receive the King. Then receive him, taking care that nothing is lost.”

Norm, no. 42

Among the ways of ministering the Precious Blood as prescribed by the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, Communion from the chalice is generally the preferred form in the Latin Church.

Norm, no. 43

The chalice is offered to the communicant with the words “The Blood of Christ,” to which the communicant responds, “Amen.”

No eucharistic minister may direct how a person is to receive Holy Communion. The option to receive the Eucharistic bread in the hand or on the tongue is the decision of the person receiving Holy Communion.

The eucharistic ministers share the Eucharistic bread by raising it and showing it to the person receiving Communion saying, “The Body of Christ.” The communicant responds, “Amen.” No minister of any kind has the authority to change or modify these words.

The minister is not to use the Eucharistic bread (host) to bless those receiving communion imitating benediction.

The purpose of the communion procession is the reception of Holy Communion. In some places it has become the custom of giving a blessing to those who cannot receive communion – this is a custom to be determined by the pastor.

If the minister, or person sharing in communion, should drop the host, it is picked up immediately and consumed by the minister or the person. This should be done as discreetly and as reverently as possible. If for hygiene purposes a dropped host cannot be consumed, place the host in a special container filled with water. When the host has dissolved, dispose of the water in an appropriate manner, such as a sacrarium.

Please ensure the person receiving communion consumes the host. If they do not consume it you may stop distribution of Communion and go to them to politely ensure the host is consumed.

If a person becomes agitated, do not aggravate the situation; suggest that they speak with the priest after Mass.

Always be mindful and considerate of persons with disabilities and of the aged.

The eucharistic ministers present the cup to the person sharing the Eucharistic wine saying, “The Blood of Christ” to which the person responds “Amen.” These words of presentation cannot be changed or modified by the minister.

If the Eucharistic wine were to be spilled the minister immediately takes his/her purificator and cleans the spilled wine. This is done with great care, reverence and discretion. It is helpful if the purificators are absorbent. Be sensitive to the person who spills the Eucharistic wine.

Norm, no. 44

The chalice may never be left on the altar or another place to be picked up by the communicant for self-communication (except in the case of concelebrating bishops or priests), nor may the chalice be passed from one communicant to another. There shall always be a minister of the chalice.

Eucharistic ministers may not give themselves communion.

Non-eucharistic ministers (members of the assembly) sharing the Eucharistic wine do not pass the cup from one to another. A Eucharistic minister (or clergy) must always be present for the distribution of the Blood of Christ in Mass.

Norm, no. 45

After each communicant has received the Blood of Christ, the minister carefully wipes both sides of the rim of the chalice with a purificator. This action is a matter of both reverence and hygiene. For the same reason, the minister turns the chalice slightly after each communicant has received the Precious Blood.

Norm, no. 46

It is the choice of the communicant, not the minister, to receive from the chalice.

No person can be refused the cup if he/she wishes to receive the Eucharistic wine, nor can a person be forced against one's will to share the Eucharistic wine.

GIRM, no. 160

When receiving Holy Communion, the communicant bows his or her head before the sacrament as a gesture of reverence and receives the Body of the Lord from the minister. The consecrated host may be received either on the tongue or in the hand, at the discretion of each communicant. When Holy Communion is received under both kinds, the sign of reverence is also made before receiving the Precious Blood.

Regarding other forms of distribution of the Precious Blood (Norms 49-50), intinction is not permitted in the Diocese of El Paso.

Purification of Sacred Vessels

Norm, no. 51

After Communion the consecrated bread that remains is to be reserved in the tabernacle. Care should be taken with any fragments remaining on the corporal or in the sacred vessels. The deacon returns to the altar with the priest and collects and consumes any remaining fragments.

Throughout the GIRM the preference for the purification of vessels is at the credence table. The altar is only approached primarily for consuming the precious Blood not consumed during the distribution of communion.

Patens and cups should not be taken back to the altar after the sharing of Communion.

Place these vessels at the credence table. All vessels are to be placed upon a corporal cloth. If purification takes place after Mass the vessels are to be covered with a purificator. A ciborium could be at the credence table to receive consecrated hosts not consumed at Communion and then reverently returned to the tabernacle or the paten is taken directly to the tabernacle and hosts placed in the ciborium.

Norm, no. 52

When more of the Precious Blood remains than was necessary for Communion, and if not consumed by the bishop or priest celebrant, “the deacon immediately and reverently consumes at the altar all of the Blood of Christ which remains; he may be assisted, if needs dictate, by other deacons and priests.” Where there are extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, they may consume what remains of the Precious Blood from their chalice of distribution with permission of the diocesan bishop.

Whether at the altar, or at the credence table, the remaining Eucharistic wine is to be consumed immediately and reverently.

After Communion the consecrated hosts are quietly taken and reserved in the tabernacle. This is done with no ceremony, e.g. procession, candles, ciborium held high, etc. If there are a few hosts, they can be consumed by the ECM in a reverent manner.

The Precious Blood must be consumed. The Eucharistic wine not consumed at Communion is to be consumed before the end of Mass or immediately after Mass.

A minister may ask the assistance of a non-Eucharistic minister to consume the additional consecrated wine if he/she is unable to consume alcohol.

Norm, no. 53

The sacred vessels are to be purified by the priest, the deacon or an instituted acolyte. The chalice and other vessels may be taken to a side table, where they are cleansed and arranged in the usual way. Other sacred vessels that held the Precious Blood are purified in the same way as chalices. Provided the remaining consecrated bread has been consumed or reserved and the remaining Precious Blood has been consumed, “it is also permitted to leave vessels needing to be purified on a corporal, suitably covered, on the credence table, and to purify them immediately after Mass, following the dismissal of the people.”

In 2007, permission was no longer granted to extraordinary ministers of communion to assist with the purification of the vessels.

Once Holy Communion has been distributed, the extraordinary ministers of communion place the vessels used for the distribution of Holy Communion on the credence table. Any consecrated fragments from the ciboria are placed in the principal chalice by using the purificator (with water). A small amount of water is poured into the various communion cups and this is poured into the principal chalice. The priest, deacon, or instituted acolyte, consumes the water. This completes the purification of vessels. The cleaning of the vessels, especially the communion cups, with water and soap and preparing them for Mass remains an important part of the extraordinary minister of communion ministry.

The preference is that the purification takes place at the credence table, or in the sacristy, and not at the altar.

Norm, no. 55

The reverence due to the Precious Blood of the Lord demands that it be fully consumed after Communion is completed and never be poured into the ground or the sacrarium.

Communion to the Sick

- Ministers of Communion who take Holy Communion to the homebound/sick are to leave immediately after Mass and are to go directly to the person(s) receiving Holy Communion.
- Ministers of Communion are to take only those hosts needed.
- The hosts are carried only in a Blessed pyx.
- If a minister is not able to give communion to the person they visit the host is to be consumed immediately.
- Consecrated hosts cannot be kept in one's home, car, purse, etc.
- It is suggested that you wear your insignia when visiting health care facilities to inform others that you are a commissioned minister.

[Revised: January 2012]