



### Instruction:

#### **Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion Assisting at Mass and Communion of the Sick in the Diocese of Cleveland<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Introduction**

1. “That more complete form of participation in the Mass by which the faithful, after the Priest’s communion, receive the Lord’s body from the sacrifice, is strongly endorsed.”<sup>2</sup> “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...”<sup>3</sup> Reception of Holy Communion from hosts consecrated at Mass remains a clearer sign of the entire liturgical assembly’s participation in the one sacrifice of Christ.
2. “Holy Communion has a fuller form as a sign when it takes place under both kinds. For in this form the sign of the Eucharistic banquet is more clearly evident and clearer expression is given to the divine will by which the new and eternal Covenant is ratified in the Blood of the Lord, as also the connection between the Eucharistic banquet and the eschatological banquet in the Kingdom of the Father.”<sup>4</sup> “...in the instances when it is permitted, [the faithful] partake of the chalice, so that even by means of the signs Communion will stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated.”<sup>5</sup>
3. In 1973, Pope Saint Paul VI authorized the use of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion in the promulgation of the document *Immensa Caritatis*.

Since then, other directives on the celebration of the Eucharist and the role of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion have been issued by the Holy See, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the Diocese of Cleveland.

This Instruction seeks to clearly present the requirements for those who exercise this ministry and to put in one place all the norms that pertain to this ministry in the local Church of the Diocese of Cleveland.

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<sup>1</sup> This present Instruction in English is the typical edition of *Instruction: Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion Assisting at Mass and Communion of the Sick in the Diocese of Cleveland*. When questions of interpretation arise with translations of this document this English typical edition is to be considered the authoritative source.

<sup>2</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (hereinafter noted as SC), 55.

<sup>3</sup> General Instruction of the Roman Missal (hereinafter noted as GIRM), 85.

<sup>4</sup> GIRM, 281.

<sup>5</sup> GIRM, 85.

4. Regarding the distribution of Holy Communion, the Church teaches that the Ordinary Minister is a Bishop, Presbyter (Priest), or Deacon.<sup>6</sup>
5. The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion is an instituted Acolyte or another member of the Christian faithful designated by the Bishop to distribute Holy Communion.<sup>7</sup> This function is supplementary to the Eucharistic ministry of the Bishop, Priest, or Deacon. Extraordinary Ministers exercise their ministry only when there are not enough Ordinary Ministers to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion.<sup>8</sup>

### **Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion**

6. The circumstances which suggest the use of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are “when the Ordinary Ministers are impeded from administering Communion because of another pastoral ministry, ill-health, or old age; whenever the number of faithful wishing to receive Communion is so great that the celebration of Mass or the giving of Communion outside Mass would take too long.”<sup>9</sup>
7. Such individuals are formally recognized by the Bishop after they have participated in diocesan formation for this ministry and orientation for their ministry in the community in which they will distribute Holy Communion. They are then commissioned in their parish or institution by the pastor or his equivalent.
8. In rare circumstances when there are not sufficient Ordinary or Extraordinary Ministers present, the Priest celebrant, after he has received the Sacrament in the usual way, may depute an individual to serve as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion for a particular occasion. While arrangements for identifying a person to serve as Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion for a single occasion may occur before Mass begins, “It is fitting that a mandate to do so should be conferred according to the following rite: ‘May the Lord + bless you so that at this Mass you minister the Body and Blood of Christ to your brothers and sisters.’”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Code of Canon Law (hereinafter noted as CIC), 910 §1.

<sup>7</sup> CIC, 910 §2; 230 §3.

<sup>8</sup> Congregation for the Clergy, Pontifical Council for the Laity, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Congregation for Bishops, Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, and Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts, “Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding Collaboration of Nonordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priest,” (15 August 1997), 8.

<sup>9</sup> *Immensae Caritatis* (hereinafter noted as IC) as found in Documents on the Liturgy (hereinafter noted as DOL), 2075; GIRM, 162.

<sup>10</sup> *The Roman Missal: Third Edition*, Appendix III, Rite of Deputing a Minister to Distribute Holy Communion on a Single Occasion.

Because it is the responsibility of the priest to delegate an individual to be an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion for a single occasion using the ritual blessing, “It is never allowed for [the Deacon or] an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion to delegate anyone else to administer the Eucharist, as for example a parent or spouse or child of the sick person who is the communicant.”<sup>11</sup>

9. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may also distribute the Eucharist to members of the faithful who are unable to be present at Mass (e.g., the homebound, sick, elderly, imprisoned, etc.), using the appropriate ritual from either *Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum* (1983) or *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery Outside Mass* (2024).

### **Those Nominated for Service as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion**

10. Those who assist as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion must be fully initiated (that is, they are to have received the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist) as members of the Latin Church, and must be in full communion with the Catholic Church. In accord with the norms of the Eastern Catholic Churches, it is not permissible for an Eastern Catholic to be appointed as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion.
11. It is the responsibility of the pastor, or his equivalent, the head of a religious house, or the one who exercises pastoral leadership within Catholic institutions to select those faithful who live a life in accord with the faith of the Church for service as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. Those nominated to serve as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should be role models for the parish, who are living exemplary lives of faith as evidenced in word, action, participation in social media, etc. They should be participating regularly in the Sunday celebration of Eucharist. They must not be living together in a manner giving the appearance of marriage if they are not married, even if in a “civil marriage.” “No one is to be chosen whose appointment the faithful might find disquieting.”<sup>12</sup>
12. Each person is to be chosen by name.<sup>13</sup> A general call for volunteers to serve in this ministry is forbidden.
13. Care should be taken to ensure that the selected individuals represent the overall makeup of the parish (i.e., diversity of women, men, age, culture, ethnicity, etc.).
14. Those selected must be capable of fulfilling the physical requirements of this ministry (e.g., climbing stairs, holding vessels, prolonged standing, etc.).

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<sup>11</sup> Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (hereinafter noted as RS), 159.

<sup>12</sup> IC (DOL, 2081).

<sup>13</sup> IC (DOL, 2075).

15. Young people who are fully initiated and in their sophomore year of high school or beyond may be formed for this ministry in their parish or at their Catholic high school. They should attend a diocesan formation session no earlier than during their sophomore year. Beyond this, there is no age requirement.

High School personnel are asked to contact the pastor of their student being considered for the ministry of Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, requesting a letter of recommendation, or any objections or reasons why the person cannot serve at the school as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion.

16. Those who have been commissioned are commissioned for a specific place for this ministry (cf. paragraph 23).
17. People who have moved into the Diocese of Cleveland who have served as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion in another diocese must go through the formation and commissioning process required in the Diocese of Cleveland before exercising this ministry (cf. paragraph 22).

## **Formation**

18. "Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should receive sufficient spiritual, theological, and practical preparation to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence."<sup>14</sup>
19. This formation is fulfilled through participation in a diocesan formation session and by orientation in the parish or the specific institution for which the individual will be commissioned. Formation in the parish or institution for this ministry should focus on the practical details related to ministering specifically within that community.
20. Individuals who take Communion to the sick or elderly – who are either confined to their homes or nursing homes or are in a hospital setting – are to have additional formation and training specific to that ministerial function, based on the Roman Ritual *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery Outside Mass (2024)* or *Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum (1983)*.
21. Individuals who take Communion to the incarcerated, nursing homes, and hospitals are to have additional training specific to that ministerial function. See paragraphs 76 and following of this document for further explanation.

## **Commissioning**

22. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are commissioned by the Bishop for service in a particular parish or institution in the Diocese of Cleveland using the following procedure:

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<sup>14</sup> Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion (hereinafter noted as NDRHC), 28.

- a. The Office for Worship will send notice of formation sessions to the parishes and institutions. The pastor, member of the parish staff, campus minister, etc. should identify and invite potential nominees for this ministry. A general call for volunteers to serve in this ministry is forbidden. The pastor will then forward the names of the nominees to this ministry to the Office for Worship.
- b. These individuals participate in a diocesan formation session, which focuses on Eucharistic theology, the structure of the Mass, and a general instruction on practical aspects of being an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion.
- c. Following participation in the diocesan formation, the Office for Worship will send a list of participants' names to the parish or institution, which should be reviewed and approved by the pastor, chaplain, or pastoral leader of the institution. Upon receipt of approval, the Office for Worship will issue an *Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion Certificate of Commission* to the parish or institution.
- d. Training in the particular logistics of the Communion Rite at the individual's parish or institution should occur prior to commissioning and reception of the certificate. This training should include familiarizing the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion with the appropriate ritual celebrations with the homebound, sick, hospitalized, incarcerated, etc. as found in Chapters 1-2 of *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery Outside Mass (2024)*. For a communal gathering (e.g., in a nursing home or a prison), refer to #26-41 of *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery Outside Mass (2024)*. The briefer rite may be used when only one or two communicants are gathered. See *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery Outside Mass (2024)* #42-53.
- e. The pastor, or his equivalent, in the context of Mass, celebrates the Commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion using the ritual as found in the *Book of Blessings*, Chapter 63.

### **Place of Ministry**

23. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are commissioned to carry out this ministry within the specific context of their parish and/or institution (e.g., high school, college, university, nursing home, hospital, jail, prison, etc.).

24. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion fulfill their role in sacramental celebrations on Sunday and at other Masses provided there are insufficient numbers of Ordinary Ministers present. When sufficient numbers of Ordinary Ministers are present at the liturgy, they must distribute Communion instead of the Extraordinary Ministers.<sup>15</sup> Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. Among Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, preference is given to instituted Acolytes.
25. In the case of weddings and funerals, first preference should be given to the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion who fulfill this ministry at the parish where the celebration is taking place. Commissioned Extraordinary Ministers from other communities may be used, as long as sufficient instruction on local distribution practices is provided prior to the wedding or funeral.
26. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion who exercise ministry both within a parish and an institution are required to receive, in addition to diocesan and parish training, particular formation for each additional institution with which they are associated (e.g., high school, college, university, nursing home, hospital, jail, prison, etc.).
27. It is the responsibility of the pastor, or his equivalent, the head of a religious order, or the one who exercises pastoral leadership within Catholic institutions to evaluate the needs of the parish or institution on a regular basis, to determine how many Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are needed and how best to share the responsibilities of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion among qualified and willing members.

### **Preparation for the Liturgy**

28. “Those who exercise this ministry should strive to be worthy of this great office, foster their own devotion to the Eucharist, and show an example to the rest of the faithful by their own devotion and reverence toward the most august sacrament of the altar.”<sup>16</sup>
29. All ministers of Holy Communion should show the greatest reverence for the Most Holy Eucharist and the faithful with whom they share the Body and the Blood of Christ “by their demeanor, their attire, and the manner in which they handle the consecrated bread or wine.”<sup>17</sup> Extraordinary Ministers should observe care and respect for the sacred vessels from which the consecrated bread and wine are distributed.

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<sup>15</sup> GIRM, 162, 206.

<sup>16</sup> IC (DOL, 2081).

<sup>17</sup> NDRHC, 29.

## Participation in the Liturgy

30. “The Church earnestly desires that Christ’s faithful, when present at Mass, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators; on the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the service conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full involvement.”<sup>18</sup>
31. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should model this participation by joining in the singing of the hymns, songs, and acclamations; through attentive listening to the proclamation of the Word of God; and by participating in the spoken and sung dialogues of the Mass.
32. They are to strive to have an understanding of the various parts of the Mass and their meaning.<sup>19</sup>
33. It is not necessary for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to participate in the Entrance Procession, nor is it necessary for them to sit in the sanctuary. They should, however, be seated in reasonable proximity to the sanctuary for ease of movement when it is time for them to begin their ministry.<sup>20</sup>

## The Liturgy of the Eucharist

34. If Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are required by pastoral need, they may approach the sanctuary, and even enter and stand off to the side of the sanctuary, during the Lamb of God. They then approach the altar to receive Communion themselves after the Priest receives Communion.<sup>21</sup>
35. After the Priest has concluded his own Communion, he distributes Communion to the Deacon, if present, and then to the Extraordinary Ministers. “Neither Deacons nor lay ministers may ever receive Holy Communion in the manner of a concelebrating Priest,”<sup>22</sup> who self-communicates.
36. The Priest, who may be assisted by the Deacon, then hands the sacred vessels to the Extraordinary Ministers for the distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful.<sup>23</sup>
37. The ministers proceed to their assigned location within the church or institution.

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<sup>18</sup> SC, 48.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Introduction to the Order of Mass: A Pastoral Resource of the Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy, USCCB: Washington, 2003 (hereinafter noted as IOM), 21.

<sup>21</sup> GIRM, 162; IOM, 21; NDRHC, 38.

<sup>22</sup> NDRHC, 39; IOM, 21.

<sup>23</sup> GIRM, 162; NDRHC, 38 and 40; IOM, 21.

38. “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.”<sup>24</sup>

### **Ministering the Body of Christ**

39. “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.”<sup>25</sup>

40. The minister “raises the host slightly and shows it to each, saying, *The Body of Christ*. The communicant replies, *Amen*, and receives the Sacrament.”<sup>26</sup> The minister must not deviate from these words (e.g., by adding additional words, like calling the communicant by name). “As soon as the communicant receives the host, he or she consumes the whole of it.”<sup>27</sup>

41. The communicant chooses whether to receive the Body of Christ in the hand or on the tongue.<sup>28</sup> Choosing the form of reception of Holy Communion remains solely the decision of the communicant and not the minister.

42. “The norm established for the Dioceses of the United States of America is that Holy Communion is to be received standing, unless an individual member of the faithful wishes to receive Communion while kneeling.”<sup>29</sup> Communicants must not be denied Holy Communion because they kneel.<sup>30</sup>

43. “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...so that even by means of the signs Communion may stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated.”<sup>31</sup> Only if it is necessary to use hosts consecrated from a previous Mass, a Priest or Deacon should bring the reserved Sacrament to the altar from the tabernacle, reverently but without ceremony.<sup>32</sup>

44. “If a host or any particle should fall, it is to be picked up reverently.”<sup>33</sup> If a host touches a communicant’s tongue and then falls to the ground, it should be reverently picked up and properly dissolved in the ablution cup.

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<sup>24</sup> NDRHC, 39.

<sup>25</sup> GIRM, 160.

<sup>26</sup> GIRM, 161.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> NDRHC 41; see also GIRM, 160-161; RS, 92.

<sup>29</sup> GIRM, 160.

<sup>30</sup> RS, 91.

<sup>31</sup> GIRM, 85.

<sup>32</sup> IOM, 21.

<sup>33</sup> GIRM, 280.

45. After the Communion of the faithful, if a fragment of the host adheres to one's fingers, the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion should wipe his or her fingers over the ciborium or, if necessary, wash them in the ablution cup by the tabernacle, or in the *sacrarium* in the sacristy.<sup>34</sup>

### **Ministering the Blood of Christ**

46. "The extension of the faculty for the distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds does not represent a change in the Church's immemorial beliefs concerning the Holy Eucharist. Rather, ... with the passing of time, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the reform of the Second Vatican Council has resulted in the restoration of a practice by which the faithful are again able to experience 'a fuller sign of the Eucharistic banquet.'"<sup>35</sup>

47. "If Communion is given under both kinds, the Deacon himself administers the chalice to the communicants."<sup>36</sup> When there are an insufficient number of Deacons or Priests present, an instituted Acolyte or an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion may administer the chalice.<sup>37</sup>

48. Communion from the chalice is generally the preferred form of ministering the Precious Blood in the Latin Church.<sup>38</sup>

49. If any of the Precious Blood is spilled, the area where the spill occurred should be wiped with a purificator or other appropriate cloth, combined with water. The purificator or cloth should then be soaked in water, and this water then be poured into the *sacrarium* in the sacristy. The purificator or cloth should be laundered in an appropriately dignified manner. In no circumstance should Precious Blood be poured down the *sacrarium* before being diluted with water. (See paragraph 67.)

50. After receiving the Body of Christ, the communicant moves and stands facing the minister of the chalice.<sup>39</sup>

51. When receiving the Precious Blood, the communicant bows his or her head before the Sacrament as a gesture of reverence.<sup>40</sup>

52. "The minister says, *The Blood of Christ*. The communicant replies, *Amen*."<sup>41</sup> The minister must not deviate from these words (e.g., by adding additional words, like calling the communicant by name).

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<sup>34</sup> GIRM, 278.

<sup>35</sup> NDRHC, 21.

<sup>36</sup> GIRM, 182; NDRHC, 26.

<sup>37</sup> GIRM 284a.

<sup>38</sup> NDRHC, 42.

<sup>39</sup> GIRM, 286.

<sup>40</sup> GIRM, 160.

<sup>41</sup> GIRM, 286; NDRHC, 43.

53. “The minister hands over the chalice, which the communicant raises to his or her mouth. The communicant drinks a little from the chalice, hands it back to the minister, and then withdraws.”<sup>42</sup>

54. “After each communicant has received the Blood of Christ, the minister carefully wipes both sides of the rim of the chalice”<sup>43</sup> with a fully opened purificator, using a different portion of the purificator after each communicant. “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.”<sup>44</sup>

55. “Children who have made their First Holy Communion are encouraged to receive Communion under both kinds provided that they are properly instructed and that they are old enough to receive from the chalice.”<sup>45</sup> Anyone who has made their First Holy Communion and who wishes to receive from the chalice is not to be denied because of their age.

56. “It is the choice of the communicant, not the minister, to receive from the chalice.”<sup>46</sup>

57. When there are no more communicants in line to receive from the chalice, if Precious Blood is remaining, the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (as well as Ordinary Ministers) should assist in the distribution at a nearby location in the church. It is not permissible to consolidate Precious Blood from one chalice or cup into another chalice or cup after the Consecration.<sup>47</sup>

58. “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, lest the liturgical celebration be unduly prolonged.”<sup>48</sup>

59. At the conclusion of the distribution of Holy Communion, empty chalices are taken directly to the credence table.

60. When more of the Precious Blood remains than was necessary for Communion, those chalices are taken directly to the altar where the Priest and/or Deacon immediately and reverently consumes all of the Blood of Christ that remains.<sup>49</sup> Instituted Acolytes and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may assist with consuming the Precious Blood after the Priest and/or Deacon returns the chalice to them saying, *The Blood of Christ*, to which the minister responds, *Amen*.

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<sup>42</sup> GIRM, 286.

<sup>43</sup> NDRHC, 45.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> NDRHC, 47.

<sup>46</sup> NDRHC, 46; GIRM, 284.

<sup>47</sup> RS, 106.

<sup>48</sup> NDRHC, 30.

<sup>49</sup> GIRM, 182.

61. “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.”<sup>50</sup>

## Intinction

62. “If Communion from the chalice is carried out by intinction, each communicant, holding a Communion-plate under the mouth, approaches the Priest who holds a vessel with the sacred particles, with a minister standing at his side and holding the chalice. The Priest takes a host, intincts it partly in the chalice and, showing it, says: ‘*The Body and Blood of Christ*.’ The communicant replies, ‘*Amen*,’ receives the Sacrament in the mouth from the Priest, and then withdraws.”<sup>51</sup>

63. Individuals may not self-communicate by intinction.<sup>52</sup>

## Purification of the Sacred Vessels

64. After the distribution of Communion, if there is Precious Blood remaining in the chalices, standing at the altar, the Priest and/or the Deacon immediately and reverently consumes all of the Precious Blood that remains, assisted, if necessary, by other ministers.<sup>53</sup> The Priest and/or the Deacon consolidates the consecrated hosts, if any remain, into ciboria. Either a Priest or a Deacon then reposes the consecrated hosts in the tabernacle.<sup>54</sup>

65. If a Deacon is not present, “when the distribution of Communion is over, the Priest himself immediately and completely consumes at the altar any consecrated wine that happens to remain; as for any consecrated hosts that are left, he either consumes them at the altar or carries them to the place designated for the reservation of the Eucharist.”<sup>55</sup>

66. After the hosts are reposed in the tabernacle, the chalice and other sacred vessels are carried to the credence table where the Deacon, or in his absence, a duly instituted Acolyte or the Priest purifies and arranges them in the usual way.<sup>56</sup> Other than an instituted Acolyte, no Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion may purify the sacred vessels at Mass.

67. “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*.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> NDRHC, 44.

<sup>51</sup> NDRHC, 49; GIRM, 287.

<sup>52</sup> NDRHC, 50.

<sup>53</sup> GIRM, 182; see paragraph 60 above.

<sup>54</sup> Instruction: Deacons Assisting at Mass in the Diocese of Cleveland (hereinafter noted as DAMDC), 49.

<sup>55</sup> GIRM, 163.

<sup>56</sup> DAMDC, 50; GIRM, 192.

<sup>57</sup> NDRHC, 55.

68. After Mass, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may assist with the cleansing of the vessels using hot water and soap.<sup>58</sup> Those assisting with the cleansing of the vessels should follow appropriate procedures for handling the sacred vessels.

### **Reservation of the Eucharist**

69. “The principal and original purpose of reserving the Eucharist outside Mass is the administration of Viaticum; the secondary purposes are the distribution of Communion [to the sick and homebound] and the adoration of our Lord Jesus Christ, present in the Sacrament.”<sup>59</sup>

70. “The Precious Blood may not be reserved, except for giving Communion to someone who is sick.”<sup>60</sup> In practice, the Precious Blood is not normally reserved in tabernacles, except in the rare case when it is known that a sick person may only receive Holy Communion in this manner.

### **Communion to the Sick**

71. In accord with ancient tradition, it is appropriate for Holy Communion to be taken directly from the Sunday Mass to the sick and to those unable to leave their homes.<sup>61</sup> “The Eucharist for administering Communion outside the church should be carried in a pyx or other closed vessel, with such coverings and in such a manner as is appropriate to the place.”<sup>62</sup>

The following procedures may be used:

- a. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may bring their pyx to the sacristy before Mass, and indicate the number of hosts needed for Communion to the sick. Following the Prayer After Communion or the announcements, the Extraordinary Ministers come forward and receive the pyx from the Priest, who then gives the final blessing. The Extraordinary Ministers process out with the Priest and the other liturgical ministers.
- b. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may come to the church after the Mass is completed and receive from the Priest or Deacon a pyx with hosts from the tabernacle for Communion to the sick.
- c. It is most fitting for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to receive consecrated hosts for the sick only from the parish or institution for which they are commissioned to minister.

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<sup>58</sup> Letter from Bishop Lennon to the Priests of the Diocese of Cleveland, 3 January 2007 (22/2007).

<sup>59</sup> Roman Ritual, “Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery Outside Mass” (hereinafter noted as HCWEMOM), 5.

<sup>60</sup> NDRHC, 54.

<sup>61</sup> IOM, 16.

<sup>62</sup> HCWEMOM, 20.

72. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are not permitted to receive extra consecrated hosts intended for the sick from a Communion minister during the Communion procession, in a pyx or otherwise.

73. Using a burse to carry the pyx containing Eucharist is a most laudable and highly recommended way to show the reverence due the Blessed Sacrament while in transport. One should avoid carrying the filled pyx in a pocket of one's shirt, jacket, pants, or in a wallet or any other similarly less dignified means of transportation. "No one is permitted to keep the Eucharist on one's person or to carry it around, unless pastoral necessity urges it and the prescripts of the diocesan Bishop are observed."<sup>63</sup>

Therefore, the Blessed Sacrament is not to be kept in the home or vehicle of the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion overnight (e.g., after Saturday night Mass until Sunday morning, after Sunday morning Mass until Sunday afternoon, etc.) until it can be taken to the homebound members of the parish. At the conclusion of bringing Communion to the sick, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are never to bring extra consecrated hosts home. If, when nearing the end of their ministry for that day, the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion realizes he/she has more consecrated hosts than needed, it is permissible to distribute more than one host to a communicant, or to offer Communion to Catholic members of the care team, whether medical personnel or family members. "The elderly and those suffering from any kind of infirmity, as well as those who take care of such persons, may receive the Most Holy Eucharist even if they have consumed something within the hour before."<sup>64</sup> Alternatively, remaining Eucharist may be immediately brought back to the church for reposition in the tabernacle.

To avoid the situation of having extra Eucharist remaining at the end of bringing Communion to the sick, it is recommended that the minister only carry the precise number of consecrated hosts needed. When uncertain of the precise number needed, it is advisable to estimate low, as a consecrated host may be carefully fractioned over the pyx to distribute to an additional person.

74. Pyxes must be properly purified after use. The best practice for purifying a pyx is to bring the pyx to a Priest, Deacon, or instituted Acolyte to be purified. In the Diocese of Cleveland, outside of Mass and when a Priest, Deacon, or instituted Acolyte are not available, an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion purifies a pyx after a visit to the sick in this manner: The minister carefully pours a small amount of water into the pyx to dissolve and collect any remaining fragments of the consecrated hosts. The minister then either consumes that water or pours that water directly onto the ground. The pyx may then be air dried or wiped with a tissue or paper towel. Any tissue or paper towel used to wipe the pyx should be burned.

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<sup>63</sup> CIC, 935.

<sup>64</sup> HCWEMOM, 24.

75. Christ is sacramentally present in the Eucharist under each of the species. When a sick person is medically unable to receive Eucharist in the form of bread, they may be given Holy Communion in the form of wine alone.<sup>65</sup> “If not consecrated at a Mass in the presence of the sick person, the Blood of the Lord is kept in a properly covered vessel and is placed in the tabernacle after Communion. The Precious Blood should be carried to the sick in a vessel that is closed in such a way as to eliminate all danger of spilling. If some of the Precious Blood remains after the sick person has received Communion, it should be consumed by the minister, who should also see to it that the vessel is properly purified.”<sup>66</sup>

### **Distribution of Communion in Prisons, Nursing Homes, and Hospitals**

76. When Communion is distributed in a hospital or other health-care institution or prison, the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion uses the appropriate ritual from *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery Outside Mass (2024)*. Individuals who take Communion to the sick, elderly, hospitalized, homebound, or incarcerated are to have additional formation and training specific to that ministerial function, based on the Roman Ritual *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery Outside Mass (2024)*. See paragraph 22 (d), above.

77. The following liturgical and canonical norms should be observed:

- a. Members of the Latin Catholic Church and of the Eastern Catholic Churches can always receive Eucharist if they are properly disposed.
- b. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may lawfully administer the Eucharist to members of Eastern Churches, and other Churches, not in full communion with the Catholic church but recognized as having a similar Eucharistic theology (e.g., Polish National Church, Old Catholic Church, etc.) if they spontaneously ask to receive Holy Communion and are properly disposed.<sup>67</sup> “Spontaneously” means that the minister has not invited individuals to receive Holy Communion, rather, they ask of their own volition.

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<sup>65</sup> CIC, 925

<sup>66</sup> NDRHC, 54.

<sup>67</sup> See CIC, 844 §3.

c. “If the danger of death is present or other grave necessity, in the judgement of the diocesan Bishop or the Conference of Bishops, Catholic ministers may licitly administer these sacraments [including the Eucharist] to other Christians who do not have full communion with the Catholic Church, who cannot approach a minister of their own community and on their own ask for it, provided they manifest Catholic faith in these sacraments and are properly disposed.”<sup>68</sup> The person would need to be in danger of death or there could be “some other grave and pressing need.” It is the responsibility of the Bishop, not the individual minister, to determine if there is such “a grave and pressing need” an individual situation meets the criteria set forth for a Christian who does not have full communion with the Catholic Church to receive Eucharist.

78. This training should include familiarizing the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion with the appropriate ritual celebrations with the homebound, sick, hospitalized, incarcerated, etc. as found in Chapters 1-2 of *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery Outside Mass (2024)*. For a communal gathering (e.g., in a nursing home or a prison), refer to #26-41 of *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery Outside Mass (2024)*. The briefer rite may be used when only one or two communicants are gathered. See *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery Outside Mass (2024)* #42-53.

## Communion Services

79. Individuals commissioned within the Diocese of Cleveland to serve as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are not authorized to lead Communion services when a Priest is unavailable for a parish celebration of Mass.

## Special Cases

80. Laypersons and Deacons who are not able to receive Holy Communion under the species of bread due to Celiac-Sprue disease or another medical condition may receive the Precious Blood, regardless of whether the Precious Blood is offered to the rest of the congregation at Mass.<sup>69</sup>

81. Pastors may give permission for an individual Deacon or layperson to receive Holy Communion from a low-gluten host. Pastors should consult the appropriate procedure as established by diocesan policy.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> CIC, 844 §4.

<sup>69</sup> Diocesan Policy for use of low gluten hosts and mustum (Celiac-Sprue disease), 15 March 2006, C-116a/2006.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

In order to fully implement the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, I, in accord with Canon 34, hereby promulgate the *Instruction: Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion Assisting at Mass and Communion of the Sick in the Diocese of Cleveland* on 17 December 2025, and coming into effect on 1 February 2026. Upon the coming into effect of this Instruction, the 2009 version of this Instruction is abrogated.

*+ Edward C. Malesic*

Most Reverend Edward C. Malesic, JCL  
Bishop of Cleveland

*V. Gardiner*

Vincent Gardiner, JCL  
Chancellor

17 December 2025

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