

Guidelines for EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION TO THE SICK

PROPER MINISTRY NAME: Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Ministers of Holy Communion to the Sick are Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion who have been specially trained and commissioned to bring Holy Communion to those unable to attend Mass.

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of Jesus' ministry, wherever he went, great crowds came to him to be healed. This ministry is continued by the Church in its ministry to the sick. Besides Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may bring Holy Communion to the sick. "Extraordinary" is used to distinguish between ordained bishops, priests and deacons, and instituted acolytes, who are the "Ordinary" Ministers of Holy Communion.

ELIGIBILITY

Those appointed to be Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to the Sick must be at least 18 years of age and mature enough to consider the importance of this ministry, to minister on their own. When someone aged 16 or 17 serves, they must be accompanied by an adult when ministering to the sick.

All ministers must be fully initiated in the Catholic faith (having received the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion) and a registered member of the parish in which they serve. They must have been practicing Catholics for at least a year. They must be in good standing with the Catholic Church.

ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES

Persons who are Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may be designated to take Holy Communion to those who are sick, homebound, in nursing homes, jail, or prison, always keeping in mind the wider vision of pastoral care. This ministry could be an extension of either Sunday Mass or weekday Masses.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may also be specially trained for administering Viaticum.

FORMATION and TRAINING

The parish community which presents a person to be commissioned as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion has an obligation to enroll that person into a Diocesan program for initial training and to subsequently provide ongoing support and formation.

Initial training must include an understanding of the role of distributing Holy Communion as a ministry within the Church. Acceptance of a call to this ministry should reflect a corresponding commitment to performing the ministry with reverence. Initial training should include an understanding of the Eucharist as the summit and source of our faith. Most important, instruction should be given in the proper care of the Consecrated Host.

Practical information on how Holy Communion is distributed to the sick of the parish and a timely schedule should be provided by the parish. The parish will also provide periodic formation activities that strengthen the person's faith as well as their understanding of their ministry.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion must be willing to enter initial and ongoing formation and be responsible for their scheduled duties. They may need to provide a substitute in their absence.

COMMISSIONING

Upon the completion of formation and discernment for this ministry, the person is appointed as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, by the bishop. They are commissioned for a period of three years at a public ceremony in the midst of the Sunday assembly whom they serve. They may be re-appointed after a suitable period of discernment and opportunity for further formation and re-commissioned at another public ceremony in the midst of the Sunday assembly whom they serve.

SPECIFIC NORMS

1. *Reverence* ... The Consecrated Host must be transported in a pyx and burse. The pyx and burse are to be provided by the parish. Consecrated Hosts must not be kept overnight.¹⁸ Ministers are to take Holy Communion directly and immediately after Mass to those they are serving. If the person[s] to whom Holy Communion is to be distributed is not available or is not able to receive, the Consecrated Host is to be returned to the tabernacle immediately, or is to be consumed by the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion.
2. *Rite* ...The Rite of Holy Communion of the Sick is to be followed. When bringing Holy Communion to persons in a hospital or other institutions, it is necessary to follow the policies of the hospital or institution. Always ask if the patient is able to receive Holy Communion. Others Catholics present, in good standing with the Church, may also receive Holy Communion. Any remaining Consecrated Host is to be consumed by the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion.
3. *Visiting the Sick and Homebound* ...
 - Make an appointment. Call to confirm on the day of the visit. The person may not be feeling well that day.
 - Dress appropriately.
 - If you are sick, postpone the visit.
 - Ministers should prayerfully prepare themselves before their visits.
 - Be attentive to the sick person; he or she may not be up to a long visit. Adapt the rite accordingly.
 - Introduce yourself and share who you represent. Ministers to the homebound and sick are the connection between the person they minister to and their Church community.
 - Follow the rite for distribution of Holy Communion.
 - Update the person on what is going on in the parish and ask him/her for their prayers.
4. *Sending Forth the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to the Sick* ... Before Mass, ministers are to place a pyx on a tray with your name and the number of Consecrated Hosts you need, according to local parish practice and logistics. Before the Prayer After Communion, the ministers are called forward by the priest celebrant to receive their pyx. The Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion then return to their place in the assembly.

ATTIRE and DECORUM

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to the Sick should exhibit a love for the Eucharist as evidenced by their demeanor and attire. An Extraordinary Minister is expected to show reverence for the Eucharist at all times. This should be reflected in his/her dress. It should be appropriate for the occasion, not distracting from his/her role or calling attention to him/herself.

The Extraordinary Minister should show respect to the person to whom he/she is distributing Holy Communion. The Extraordinary Minister is to handle the burse with the pyx containing the Body of Christ, with reverence and care both during transport and distribution of Holy Communion.

RESOURCES

1. *Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum*. International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) Corporation, 1982.
2. *Communion of the Sick*. Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 2012.
3. Jabour, Jeanette M. *Visiting the Elderly: An Essential Parish Ministry*. Twenty-third Publications, 2007.
4. Archdiocese of Chicago. *The Catholic Handbook for Visiting the Sick and Homebound*. Liturgy Training Publications, [Annual Publication].
5. Glen, Genevieve, Marilyn Kofler and Kevin O'Connor. *Handbook for Ministers of Care*. Liturgy Training Publications, 1997.

¹⁸ Canon 934.