



Recognizing that most people do not have the time to dedicate to more in-depth reading of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and some of the other ancillary liturgical documents, the USCCB produced the following “General Principles.” The principles outlined in the text are followed by their citation in the GIRM or other document, for those who wish to have more information. It is hoped that this piece can serve as a handy tool for the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion and those responsible for their formation on the local level.

‘Since the celebration of the Eucharist is the Paschal Banquet, it is desirable that in accordance with the Lord’s command his Body and Blood should be received as spiritual food by those of the faithful who are properly disposed. – *General Instruction of the Roman Missal [GIRM]*, 80.

Thus, in the Eucharistic Liturgy we are joined with Christ on the altar of the cross and at the table of the upper room in “the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated and [in] the sacred banquet of communion with the Lord’s body and blood.” – *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America*, 1

In every celebration of the Eucharist, there should be a sufficient number of ministers of Holy Communion so that it may be distributed in a reverent and orderly manner. Bishops, Priests and Deacons distribute Holy Communion in virtue of their office as ordinary ministers of the Body and Blood of the Lord.²

When the size of the congregation or the

¹ Based upon *Roman Missal* Formational Materials provided by the Secretariat for Divine Worship of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2010. Adapted for use in the Diocese of Evansville by the Office of Worship, 2012.

² *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds for the Dioceses of the United States of America [Norms]* (August, 2002), 26 and cf. GIRM, 162 and *Norms*, 28

incapacity of the Bishop, Priest, or Deacon requires it, the celebrant may be assisted by other Bishops, Priests, or Deacons. If such ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are not present, “the Priest may call upon extraordinary ministers to assist him, that is, duly instituted acolytes or even other faithful who have been duly deputed for this purpose. In case of necessity, the Priest may depute suitable faithful for this single occasion” (GIRM, 162).

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should receive sufficient spiritual, theological, and practical preparation to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence. When recourse is had to Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, especially in the distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds, their number should not be increased beyond what is required for the orderly and reverent distribution of the Body and Blood of the Lord. In all matters such Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should follow the guidance of the diocesan bishop (*Norms*, 28).

All ministers of Holy Communion, both lay and ordained, should show the greatest reverence for the Holy Eucharist by their demeanor, their attire, and the manner in which they handle the Precious Body or Blood.

In the Diocese of Evansville, any fully-initiated Catholic in good standing may be an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. These ministers are commissioned for five years, and these names should be submitted to the chancery to be recorded. Extraordinary ministers are to be commissioned using the rite found in the *Book of Blessings*, chapter 63.

Liturgy of the Eucharist:

- ✘ As the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God) is begun, the Priest breaks the Precious Body. He may have the assistance of the Deacon, and if necessary of concelebrating Priests. Other empty ciboria or patens are brought to the altar if this is necessary. The Deacon or Priest places the Precious Body 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.
- ✘ If Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are required by pastoral need, they should not approach the altar before the Priest has received Communion. Depending on the layout of the sanctuary, they may line up at the steps to the sanctuary or another convenient place. After the Priest has concluded his own Communion (and given Communion to the Deacon), 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.
- ✘ All receive Holy Communion in the manner described by the *General Instruction to the Roman Missal*, whether Priest concelebrants (cf. GIRM, 159, 242, 243, 246), Deacons (cf. GIRM, 182, 244, 246), or Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (cf. GIRM, 284). Neither Deacons nor lay ministers may ever receive Holy Communion in the manner of a concelebrating Priest. The practice of any ministers of Holy Communion waiting to receive until after the distribution of Holy Communion is not in accord with liturgical law. (*Norms*, 39; GIRM, 160).
- ✘ After all Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion have received the Eucharist, the Priest reverently hands vessels containing the Body or the 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. (*Norms*, 40).
- ✘ The proper and only permissible form for distributing Holy Communion is to offer the Precious Body by saying, “The Body of Christ” and to offer the Precious Blood by saying, “The Blood of Christ.” No other words or names should be added; and the formula should not be edited in any way. (Cf. GIRM, 161; 284-287).
- ✘ If the Precious Body or some particle of it falls, it should be picked up reverently by the minister. The Precious Body may be consumed or completely dissolved in water before being poured down the *sacrarium*.
- ✘ Should there be any mishap, for example, if the Precious Blood is spilled from the chalice, the area should be washed and the water poured into the *sacrarium*.
- ✘ In those instances when there remains more Precious Blood than was necessary, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may consume what remains of the Precious Blood. It is strictly forbidden to pour the Precious Blood into the ground or into the *sacrarium*. (*Norms*, 51-55).
- ✘ All ministers return with their vessels to the sanctuary after the distribution of Communion. Remaining consecrated hosts should be consolidated at the altar by the Deacon and/or Priest and reserved in the tabernacle. Chalices and other empty vessels should be brought to the credence table (*Norms*, 53).
- ✘ Purification of the vessels is reserved to Priests, Deacons, and instituted acolytes (GIRM, 279).