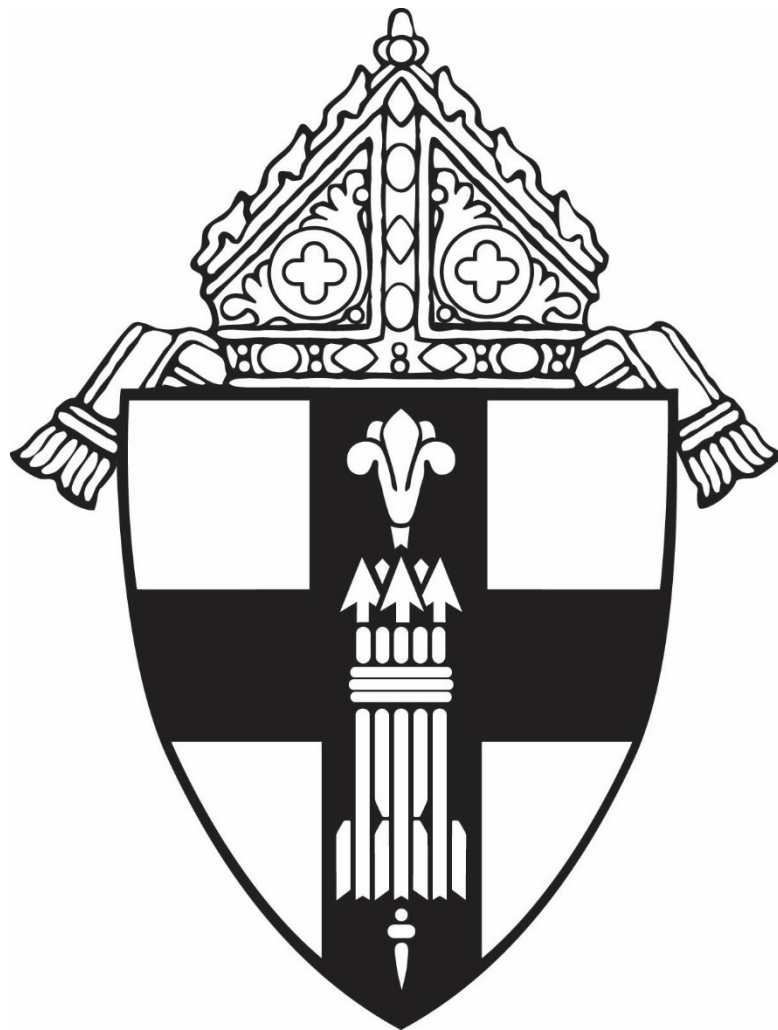


Pastoral Instruction for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion



Diocese of Manchester

Anima Christi

Soul of Christ, sanctify me
Body of Christ, save me
Blood of Christ, inebriate me
Water from Christ's side, wash me
Passion of Christ, strengthen me
O good Jesus, hear me
Within Thy wounds hide me
Suffer me not to be separated from Thee
From the malicious enemy defend me
In the hour of my death call me
And bid me come unto Thee
That I may praise Thee with Thy saints
and with Thy angels forever and ever.
Amen.



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Introduction

The Diocese of Manchester, which encompasses the entire state of New Hampshire, is made up of 90 parishes and 13 mission churches. Eighty-Nine of the parishes have a resident pastor and 8 have a parochial vicar who assists the pastor. Of the 90 parishes approximately 27 have a permanent deacon assigned to them. From these statistics one can see that it is not possible to have more than one or two ordinary ministers of Holy Communion at each Mass celebrated throughout the diocese at any given parish. Due to the disproportionate ratio of priests and deacons to people who attend and receive Holy Communion at Mass, the Bishop of Manchester deems it necessary to delegate some of the laity to assist the priests and deacons in the distribution of Holy Communion. A pastor is therefore required to request delegation for a parishioner in a formal letter to the bishop. This delegation is for a period of 3 years which can be renewed by the pastor in writing.

The Office of Worship, on behalf of the Bishop of Manchester, maintains the database of delegated extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

This is the first official instruction for the preparation and training of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion in the Diocese of Manchester. Prior to this instruction pastors were expected to properly instruct and prepare the laity for this ministry. Once again, individual pastors have taken this responsibility seriously and have trained and instructed the laity to the best of their ability with whatever resources they have found relevant and helpful.

Turning to an exhortation written by Blessed Pope John Paul II entitled *Christifideles Laici*, on the role of the laity in the Church, we read how pastors have the responsibility to

...acknowledge and foster the ministries, the offices and roles of the lay faithful that find their foundation and the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, indeed, for a good many of them, in the Sacrament of Matrimony. When necessity and expediency in the Church require it, the pastors, according to established norms and universal law, can entrust to the lay faithful certain offices and roles that are connected to their pastoral ministry but do not require the character of orders. The code of Canon law states: “when the necessity of the church warrants it and when ministers are lacking, laypersons, even if they are not lectors or acolytes, can also supply for certain of the offices, namely to exercise the ministry of the word, to preside over liturgical prayers, to confer baptism, and to distribute Holy Communion in accord with the prescriptions of the law.”¹

With a sufficient formation and instruction on the role of the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion at Mass, the layperson is expected to exercise the ministry entrusted to them both appropriately and confidently. As a result of good formation and instruction given to the extraordinary minister there will be without a doubt a heightened awareness of the awesome responsibility that comes with distributing the Body and Blood of the Lord.

To encourage a more unified and thorough preparation for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion it was decided that a Diocesan Instruction for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion was needed and would be helpful to pastors and laity alike. In order to prepare a useful instruction for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion in the Diocese of Manchester pastors from the Diocese were consulted and asked to share their own experiences with extraordinary ministers at Mass and how they

¹ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1988), art. 23.

could be assisted in preparing lay men and women to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass. Laity who have been serving as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion at Mass were also consulted and asked what would be helpful to them in exercising this ministry.

Questions:

- What is the proper name given to a layperson who is delegated to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion?
- What is the distinction between the ordinary minister of Holy Communion and the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion?
- Why do we have to use the term extraordinary?
- Why do we have extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion at Mass?
- How does one become an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion?
- What kind of training should a layperson receive before beginning this ministry?
- What if there are no extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion at Mass to assist the priest?
- Does the priest or deacon not distribute Communion if more extraordinary ministers approach the altar?
- When does the extraordinary minister enter the sanctuary?
- Where do the extraordinary ministers stand when in the sanctuary?
- When does the extraordinary minister receive Holy Communion?
- Can the extraordinary minister self-communicate?
- Can the extraordinary minister go to the tabernacle?

- Can the extraordinary minister purify the vessels?
- What should one do if a Consecrated Host falls to the floor or if Precious Blood spills?
- Can a communicant receive Holy Communion by intinction?
- How should an extraordinary minister dress for Mass when they are scheduled to serve?
- How does an extraordinary minister prepare for Mass when scheduled to serve?
- Can an extraordinary minister refuse someone Holy Communion?
- What does an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion do when someone approaches with arms crossed?

Concerns and Suggestions:

- There is a need for a better understanding of the ministry of the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion by both the priests and the laity.
- The extraordinary ministers should know why they are extraordinary and not ordinary Ministers.
- Some extraordinary ministers act like it is their right to distribute Holy Communion.
- Some extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion seem to know very little or have incomplete understanding of the Liturgy and the Eucharist.
- An extraordinary minister in my parish is telling people that they can only receive Holy Communion on the tongue.

- The extraordinary ministers throughout the Diocese should have the same training and instruction on the ministry.
- The extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should know the responsibilities involved with the ministry.
- The extraordinary ministers should know the proper name and purpose of sacred vessels and items associated with the Mass.
- The commissioning of an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion at Mass should be an opportunity to explain to the parishioners the role of the extraordinary minister.

Taking into consideration the information given by priests and current extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion this instruction has been produced to inform and prepare a layperson to exercise the ministry of an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion at Mass. This instruction's aim is not only to instruct the layperson but also to assist pastors in their role as guardian of the Eucharist, ensuring that the Eucharist is given proper reverence and dignity.

Chapter One

Message from the Bishop

Dear Friends in Christ:

The Eucharist is the greatest gift that Jesus Christ has given to the world! Since it is the greatest gift, we in the Diocese of Manchester want to do all we can to show the appropriate care and reverence for the Eucharist. The Church gives the Bishop of every Diocese the responsibility of ensuring the Liturgy is celebrated correctly and well. In the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, the official instructions on how the Mass is to be celebrated, the Bishop's responsibilities are stated in this way:

For the Diocesan Bishop, the prime steward of the mysteries of God in the particular Church entrusted to his care, is the moderator, promoter, and guardian of the whole of liturgical life. In celebrations that take place with the Bishop presiding, and especially in the celebration of the Eucharist by the Bishop himself with the Presbyterate, the Deacons, and the people taking part, the mystery of the Church is manifest. Hence, solemn celebrations of Mass of this sort must be exemplary for the entire diocese.

The Bishop should therefore be determined that the Priests, the Deacons, and the lay Christian faithful grasp ever more deeply the genuine significance of the rites and liturgical texts, and thereby be led to the active and fruitful celebration of the Eucharist. To that end, he should also be vigilant in ensuring that the dignity of these celebrations be enhanced and, in promoting such dignity, the beauty of the sacred place, of the music, and of art should contribute as greatly as possible.²

To give the Eucharist the reverence which it deserves, I want to do everything I can to ensure that in every parish and at every Holy Mass the liturgy is celebrated according to the Roman Rite with honor and dignity.

² Catholic Church, *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2003), arts. 22.

As a means of continuing our work of building up the liturgical life in the Diocese of Manchester, we have developed this instruction for all who have been delegated to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass. The instruction that you are about to read was developed for the layperson who was chosen by the pastor to serve as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion at Mass. What is presented in this instruction is the who, what and how of this extraordinary ministry. It was developed to answer common questions such as: What is an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion? Who can serve as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion? How does an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion fulfill his or her responsibilities properly?

Please join me in this effort to recognize the beauty of the liturgy and the sacredness of the Eucharist. May the Eucharist, which is the Sacrament of love par excellence, be loved, adored, distributed and received with the greatest dignity of which we are capable. May God continue to guide us in our efforts of building up the liturgy for the glorification of God and the sanctification of all people.

Yours in the All-Holy Trinity
And the Mother of God,

+Most Reverend Peter A. Libasci, D.D.
Bishop of Manchester

Chapter Two

The Office of Worship

The Office of Worship in the Diocese of Manchester, under the care of the Chief Liturgist, Bishop Peter A. Libasci, exists to strengthen the liturgical life of the diocese by example and by being a resource for parishes and Catholic institutions in the preparation of liturgies and sacred celebrations. The Second Vatican Council highlighted the importance of the Liturgy by stating that:

The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the church is directed, at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows. For the aim and object of apostolic works is that all who are made sons of God by faith in baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of his church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat the Lord's Supper.³

Under the direction of the Bishop, it is the responsibility of the director of the Office for Worship to promote and ensure the proper celebration of the Rites of the Roman Catholic Church in the Diocese.

In addition, the director provides assistance to pastors with the formation of his parishioners who have been chosen for various ministries such as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, readers, musicians, and servers. It is desired that the information provided in this pastoral instruction will be useful and helpful for you to participate more fully in the Liturgy, especially on those occasions when you are called upon to fulfill the extraordinary ministry of assisting with the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass.

³ Second Vatican Council, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1965), art. 10.

Chapter Three

Preface

If your pastor has directed you to this Pastoral Instruction for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion he has done so for one of two reasons; you are either currently serving as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion at Mass in your parish or you have recently been approached by your pastor to prepare for this ministry. This pastoral instruction has been developed to assist you in fulfilling this unique task as a layperson.

Parishioners who exercise various ministries at Mass, such as, but not limited to, reading, serving, greeting or leading the congregation in singing as a cantor, exercise roles that are meant to be ordinarily filled by lay men and women. However, the lay person who has been delegated by the Bishop to serve as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion at Mass exercises a role that is considered extraordinary by the Church since it is ordinarily filled by an ordained minister or instituted acolyte.

When the Holy Mass is celebrated according to the rubrics and instructions of the Roman Missal it naturally reveals its beauty. Understandably, each person who is present at Mass, both the ordained and the non-ordained, has a part to play with a beautifully celebrated Mass since these rubrics and instructions apply to each person at Mass. One of the goals of this instruction is to assist men and women in deepening their understanding of the Mass in order to help them to participate more fully. This is accomplished in part when Catholics have a knowledge of who they are at Mass and what

their role is at Mass. When this is achieved a more active participation takes place and each person benefits in a greater way from Christ's action in them. Knowing the mystery that is being celebrated in Mass, each of the liturgical ministers, priests, deacons and the laity, although not in the same manner, contributes to the unity and order of the Mass which reveals its dignity and beauty, and draws those present into the saving work of Jesus Christ.

The participation of each person at Mass is described in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. The instruction includes specific directions for the bishop and priest, the deacon, and the laity. The instruction describes the importance of everyone involved the following way:

They are consequently to avoid any appearance of singularity or division, keeping in mind that they have only one Father in heaven and that hence are all brothers or sisters one to the other. Moreover, they are to form one body, whether in hearing the Word of God, or in taking part in the prayers and in the singing, or above all by the common offering of the Sacrifice and by participating together at the Lord's table. This unity is beautifully apparent from the gestures and bodily postures observed together by the faithful. The faithful, moreover, should not refuse to serve the People of God in gladness whenever they are asked to perform some particular service or function in the celebration.⁴

Therefore, just as a reader at Mass should know more than how to read words on a page, a cantor know more than how to read music, and a server know more than when to bring the Roman Missal or the sacred vessels to the altar, though all of these are necessary and important, the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion should know more than how to place the Sacred Host in a communicant's hand or on a communicant's tongue. Over and above the importance of being able to exercise one's liturgical role properly,

⁴ Catholic Church, *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2003), arts. 95-97.

individuals who exercise a liturgical ministry can do so even better by growing in their knowledge of the Mass itself and how the particular ministry for which they have been chosen is at service to the Mass.

The bishop, priests and deacons, who are specifically entrusted with the special care of the Eucharist, spend many years preparing for ordained ministry through prayer, study and formation. Although it would be unreasonable to expect the majority of the faithful to have the same degree of formation and education, it is reasonable to expect the layperson who has been entrusted with the sacred act of distributing Holy Communion be given a sufficient formation and instruction for this ministry.

This instruction is meant to assist pastors in their responsibility of preparing those who have been delegated to serve as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion at Mass. This instruction is not aimed at preparing extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion who bring Holy Communion to the homebound and/or to institutions such as hospitals and nursing homes. It is important to note that although this instruction is primarily for those who will be assisting with the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass, additional instruction is required for those extraordinary ministers who bring Holy Communion to those who are unable to attend Mass.

Because of a pastor's many responsibilities in the parish, this training is meant to help him fulfill this particular responsibility of ensuring that extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are properly prepared for their ministry. By providing in this instruction some basic catechesis and formation, the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion in a parish may be more adequately and properly prepared to exercise this

ministry at Mass. In addition, this instruction is to help the layperson understand his or her role in relation to the ordained bishop, priest and deacon. Lastly, a brief catechesis on the Eucharist is included which is meant to deepen the reverence and devotion for the Most Blessed Sacrament by those who have been delegated to assist in its distribution.

Since it is the Body and Blood of the Lord of which we speak it seems appropriate at this point to offer some catechesis on the Eucharist, the great Sacrament of Love. Since the Eucharist is such a great mystery it is impossible to write everything about the Eucharist in a single document. What is written here is meant to complement the love and devotion that a Catholic layperson already has for the Eucharist, a love and devotion that has been fostered throughout many years of life. As an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion deepens his or her understanding of the Eucharist they can gain a greater sense of the Mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ which they have been asked to distribute to their brothers and sisters.

Adoro Te Devote
By St. Thomas Aquinas

Hidden God, devoutly I adore Thee,
Truly present underneath these veils:
All my heart subdues itself before Thee,
Since it all before Thee faints and fails.

Not to sight, or taste, or touch be credit,
Hearing only do we trust secure;
I believe, for God the Son hath said it—
Word of Truth that ever shall endure.

On the Cross was veiled Thy Godhead's splendor,
Here Thy manhood lieth hidden too;
Unto both alike my faith I render,
And, as sued the contrite thief, I sue.

Though I look not on Thy wounds with Thomas,
Thee, my Lord, and Thee, my God, I call:
Make me more and more believe Thy promise,
Hope in Thee, and love Thee over all.

O Memorial of my Saviour dying,
Living Bread that givest life to man;
May my soul, its life from Thee supplying,
Taste Thy sweetness, as on earth it can.

Deign, O Jesus, pelican of heaven,
Me, a sinner, in Thy Blood to lave,
To a single drop of which is given
All the world from all its sin to save.

Contemplating Lord, Thy hidden presence,
Grant me what I thirst for and implore,
In the revelation of Thine essence
To behold Thy glory evermore. Amen.

Chapter Four

The Eucharist

The Eucharist is a Sacrament that is called by many different names; it is sometimes referred to as Holy Communion, the Blessed Sacrament or the Body and Blood of the Lord. Regardless of which of these names we are accustomed to using, one thing is certain, the Church believes that at the consecration at Mass the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. From the very beginning of the life of the Church, the mystery of Christ's presence in bread and wine has raised the most unbelievable question—"how can Jesus Christ, who is God, really be present in a small host?"

Some Catholics, even the most faithful and devout, may find it challenging to articulate the Church's teaching on the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. As Catholics we believe that Christ is truly present in the Eucharist, the ability to speak to someone about what we believe is important. One way of speaking to someone about the Eucharist is to begin where it all began on Holy Thursday. The belief that we have as Catholics in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is something that has its foundation in Sacred Scripture and in Tradition. We read in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke the account of the Last Supper when Jesus took bread and said, "eat it for this is my body", and took the chalice and said, "take and drink, this is my blood." As Catholics, this historical event is very familiar to us; it is an event that we can speak about to others with some ease because it is part of the fabric of our lives. Ever since that first Holy Thursday Catholics have followed Jesus' command and have received His Body and Blood at Mass.

Again, in the Gospel of John we read about Jesus who said, “I am the bread of life. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats of this bread will live forever, and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world (Jn 6: 48, 51).” From the very beginning of the Church until today many men and women of faith have been persecuted and have gone so far as giving up their life because of their belief in the Eucharist.

Pope Benedict XVI expressed how “This most holy mystery” the reality of Christ's Body and Blood, “needs to be firmly believed, devoutly celebrated, and intensely lived in the church.”⁵ The Holy Father in fact, previously had said:

At the last supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his Body and Blood. He did this to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the centuries until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a Sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is received, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.⁶

How important it is for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to believe, celebrate devoutly, and live intensely this most holy mystery which is contained in the consecrated bread and wine. In doing so, not only will their personal life be enriched and transformed but the witness to their community will, in turn, assist others to believe and celebrate this most holy mystery. Christ in the Eucharist is certainly our heart's deepest hunger and others should be able to recognize that that hunger is undoubtedly satisfied when we are able to receive Christ in Holy Communion.

⁵ Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 2007), art. 94.

⁶ *Sacramentum Caritatis*, art. 47.

Certainly believed but reaffirmed at the Second Vatican Council, the Church reiterated that “the source and summit of the Christian life is the Eucharist”!⁷ The Eucharist, the Blessed Sacrament, Holy Communion, is in fact the source and summit of our life because, contained in it, is Christ himself who is the Savior and Redeemer of our life. Every ounce of life and breath comes from the Lord, and all life and breath is meant to bring us closer to Him. Every time a consecrated host is lifted up from a paten and presented to a communicant with the words “The Body of Christ” or the communion chalice presented with the words “The Blood of Christ” it truly is Christ who is being held, it truly is Christ who is being proclaimed and given, it truly is Christ who is being received. What is contained in the Precious Host and in the Precious Blood allows for the most unimaginable, but in reality, the most intimate encounter between God and man. This being so, the extraordinary minister should strive to do everything in his or her power to respect and venerate each and every encounter in which they are involved. As the Body and Blood of Christ is offered, every communicant is invited to accept the invitation that was made by Christ at Baptism, to believe in Him, to follow Him, to have life in Him, to be made holy in this life and to be with Him in heaven for all eternity.

What an awesome privilege it is to exercise a ministry in which a Catholic, not only prepares him or herself to receive the Bread of Heaven and the Cup of Salvation from the hands of a priest, but is also prepared to be entrusted, when necessary, with the Body and Blood of Christ for distribution to one’s brothers and sisters in Christ. We refer once again to Blessed Pope John Paul II’s letter on the Eucharist who highlights this reality by saying:

⁷ Second Vatican Council. *Lumen Gentium*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1964), art. 11.

To touch the sacred species and to share them with one's own hands is a privilege of the ordained, which indicates active participation in the ministry of the Eucharist. But it is clear that the church can give such power to men who are neither priests nor deacons, or any sort, whether they are acolytes following their ministry, especially if they are destined for future ordination, or if they are other laypeople who have accepted the faculty for just necessity, but always after a suitable preparation.⁸

Speaking about the Sacred Species, a phrase used to refer to either the Body or the Blood, it is important to speak of the reality of Christ being wholly present in each species. When a communicant receives only one species, he or she is not receiving only a portion of Christ but is receiving the whole Christ. Therefore if a person for some reason does not receive Holy Communion in the species of the Precious Host but does receive the Precious Blood, that person has received Holy Communion. The Church holds this to be true since in the Sacrament of the Eucharist Christ is present whole and entire under the appearance of bread and also under the appearance of wine.

While focusing on the presence of Christ in the Eucharist it may also be helpful to point out some other ways in which the Church believes Christ is present in the Church. We believe that Christ is present when Christians are gathered together. Jesus himself said: “where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in their midst (Matt 18:20).” He is also present in Sacred Scripture, “always, however, Christ is present in his word, as He carries out the mystery of salvation, He sanctifies humanity and offers the Father perfect worship.”⁹ Whether we read or hear the word of God proclaimed, it is Christ himself who speaks to us in those words.

⁸ Pope John Paul II, Letter to all the bishops of the Church on the mystery and cult of the Eucharist, *Dominicae Cenae*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1980), art. 11.

⁹ Congregation for Divine Worship. *Lectionary for Mass* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1985), art. 4.

Christ is also present in the bishop and the priest because of their ordination and he acts through them in a special way. Therefore when the bishop and priest preach or teach and when they celebrate any of the seven Sacraments, it is truly Christ Himself who acts. But there is an important distinction with regards to Christ's presence in the Eucharist and His presence in the other ways mentioned above. When speaking about the Eucharist we refer to it as the "true presence of Christ", not because he is less present in the other ways we mentioned, but because it is Christ's sacramental presence in its fullest sense.¹⁰

Christ's presence in consecrated bread and wine is a reality that even some of the followers of Jesus had difficulty accepting. Although, we rejoice in the good news that with faith the size of a mustard seed, many came to believe that Jesus Christ was truly the Son of God and if truly the Son of God, then certainly capable of transforming bread and wine into His Body and Blood. This mystery of our Catholic Faith was, and always will be, a reality that goes beyond all human understanding. It is indeed a foretaste of heaven as declared in the Second Vatican Council's *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. Regardless of our intellectual capacity to fully grasp the mystery of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, we are, nevertheless, invited to contemplate the mystery each and every time we go to Mass; which is why it is important for us to be familiar with the Holy Mass.

Pope Benedict XVI shared his own thoughts on "the mystery of faith" which is proclaimed by the priest at every Mass. He writes:

¹⁰ *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, art. 7.

With these words, spoken immediately after the words of consecration, the priest proclaims the Mystery being celebrated and expresses his wonder before the substantial change of bread and wine into the body and blood of the Lord Jesus, a reality which surpasses all human understanding. The Eucharist is “mystery of faith” par excellence. The church’s faith is essentially our Eucharistic Faith, and it is especially nourished at the table of the Eucharist. Every great reform has in some way been linked to the rediscovery of belief in the Lord’s Eucharistic presence among his people.¹¹

As Catholics we want to know as much as we can about the mystery of the Eucharist.

We can never feel as though we have come to know it all or have learned it all because the mystery of the Eucharist is nothing less than the Son of God who has come to us. In the Eucharist it is Christ Himself, the One who offered Himself to the Father on the Cross and the One who continues to offer Himself to the Father on our behalf for all eternity.

We want to continually draw deeper into the mystery of the Eucharist who is Jesus Christ. In order to do this it is also important to know that at Mass we are not spectators, at Mass we actually unite ourselves to Christ who offers Himself to the Father. At Mass we unite ourselves to Christ who says “Yes” to the Father’s will which gives glory to God. When we are united to Christ in the Mass, we act with Him, He makes us worshippers, praising and thanking God for His infinite love and goodness.

Knowing at least this much about the Eucharist and the Liturgy is valuable both personally and for the parish community. As an extraordinary minister, one does become in some ways a more visible “Ambassador of Christ” in the community. In this visible role, some parishioners will turn to the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion for answers to questions regarding the Eucharist and the Liturgy. Understandably, those who have been delegated by the bishop to exercise the ministry of an extraordinary minister of

¹¹ *Sacramentum Caritatis*, no. 6.

Holy Communion may not have a deep theological background or have the ability to articulate everything that can be said about the Eucharist, but they should certainly have the ability to articulate something about the Lord's Eucharistic presence.

As an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, your pastor *recognized* in you, someone who *recognizes* that Jesus Christ is truly present in the Eucharist and in *recognizing* the presence of Christ in the Eucharist you are seen as one who glorifies the Lord by your life. Since our lives are meant to glorify the Lord, and we do this by becoming more like Christ whose complete self-giving gave glory to God the Father, your witness to Christ in the Eucharist is so important in helping others believe in His presence in the Eucharist. The more time we spend deepening our knowledge of the mystery of faith the more we will want to draw closer to Christ in the Eucharist. The closer we draw to Christ in the Eucharist the more we will give glory to Him not only here on earth but also in heaven.

This ministry, as you will see from the commissioning ceremony, is not only about assisting your pastor in his ministry, but it is also about assisting your brothers and sisters in Christ by striving to live the Christian life in this world.

Lauda Sion

By St. Thomas Aquinas

Praise, O Sion, your Redeemer.
Praise your Prince and Shepherd
With canticle and hymn.

Dare to praise Him as you can,
For He is greater than all praise.
Our brightest praises are but dim.

This truth to Christians is proclaimed:
That to flesh, bread is transformed,
And transformed to blood is wine.

Good Shepherd, Bread of Truth,
Lord Jesus, show Your clemency.
May You feed us, may You guard us,
May You Let us see good things
In our homeland eternally.

You Who know and do all things
Feed us, though still captive here.
Make us fellow-citizens,
Co-heirs, and friends of all the saints
In that City bright and clear.
Amen.

Chapter Five

The Purpose and Nature of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

The use of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion at Mass has been permitted in the United States since March of 1971.¹² Prior to the Second Vatican Council the ordained ministers: bishops, priests and deacons, were adequately able without the assistance of the non-ordained to distribute Holy Communion to those who were prepared to receive at Mass. In light of this fact, it is important to understand that for many years very few people who attended Mass received Communion. For many Catholics the emphasis was to receive Holy Communion once a year, particularly at Easter. But the practice of receiving Communion more frequently grew after the teaching of Pope Pius X who emphasized the importance of receiving Communion as often as one goes to Mass. In the document, *Sacra Tridentina*, issued by the Pope in 1905, the faithful were exhorted to not only be properly prepared for the reception of Communion but encouraged to actually receive Holy Communion whenever they went to Mass. This document by Pope Pius X taught the faithful the spiritual benefits of receiving Communion frequently and even daily when possible.

As the number of faithful who presented themselves for Holy Communion at Mass continued to grow, there was a need for more ministers to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion. The Church began to make a provision which allowed members of the laity to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion. This role as well as others were discussed and more clearly defined by the Church during the Second

¹² Thirty-Five Years of the BCL Newsletter 1965-2000. Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: *Washington, D.C.*, 313.

Vatican Council. It can be determined from history that for most of the life of the Church only the ordained priest and deacon were entrusted to the venerable task of touching and distributing Holy Communion.

A provision was made and an extraordinary ministry was defined which allowed for adequately prepared laypersons to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion when necessary and it was to be exercised under very specific conditions. The conditions which would allow the assistance of an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion at Mass were and continue to be on those occasions when 1. no priest or deacon is available, 2. ordinary ministers are impeded by pastoral ministry, ill health, or old age, 3. the number of faithful wishing to receive Communion is so great that it would prolong the Mass. As can be seen from these very specific conditions the true purpose of allowing a layperson to participate in this ministry is primarily to assist the priest and deacon in facilitating the reception of Communion to the faithful when there is a serious need, as described in *On Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful, 1997*.

The distinction between the Ordinary and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

In an attempt to solidify the understanding between the roles of the ordained and non-ordained in the Liturgy a clarification was made in a document called *Inaestimabile Donum*. It is important to keep in mind that in 1980 when this document was written, the laity had only been allowed to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion for a little more than 15 years. In relation to the life of the Church, the ministry of the extraordinary

minister of Holy Communion was still fairly new. The document states:

But these encouraging and positive aspects of liturgical reform cannot suppress concern at the varied and frequent abuses being reported from different parts of the Catholic world: the confusion of rules, especially regarding priestly ministry and the role of the laity. (indiscriminate shared recitation of the Eucharistic Prayer, homilies given by laypeople, laypeople distributing communion while the priests refrain from doing so); and increasing loss of the sense of the sacred... In these cases we are face to face with a real falsification of the Catholic Liturgy.¹³

Considering some of the changes that took place with the Mass after the Second Vatican Council it was wise for the Church to encourage pastors to look at current procedures and how they could be better understood and be improved. With regards to the extraordinary ministry of Holy Communion, there needed to be a better understanding of this ministry and its place in the Mass.

The Ordination Rite for a priest is a good place to begin when making the distinction between the ordinary and the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. The text that is used in the Ordination Ritual expresses what the Church believes about who is the priest and what he is ordained to do. In his homily, the Bishop speaks to the people and to the man being ordained about the priestly office. The Bishop may use these or similar words: “It is true that God has made his entire holy people a royal priesthood in Christ. Nevertheless, our great Priest himself, Jesus Christ, chose certain disciples to carry out publicly in his name, and on behalf of mankind, a priestly office in the Church.” The ordinary work that an ordained priest is set apart to perform is to preach and teach the Good News, to be a shepherd to those in his care, and especially to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

¹³ Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, *Inaestimabile Donum*. (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1980), 3.

The day of his ordination, after his hands are anointed by the bishop, the priest kneels before the bishop who holds in his hands a paten and a chalice that have been prepared for the consecration of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. The priest then places his hands on the paten and chalice along with the bishop. With their hands on the sacred vessels, the Bishop says to the priest: “Receive the oblation of the holy people, to be offered to God. Understand what you do, imitate what you celebrate, and confirm your life to the mystery of the Lord’s Cross.” At this very moving moment in the ordination rite the priest is being told of the great responsibility he is undertaking now that he has been configured to Christ. It is a moment that the priest must remember every day of his priesthood. At each Mass he celebrates, the priest, who acts in the person of Christ, receives the gifts of bread and wine on behalf of the people and offers them with his hands in an unbloody way on the altar.

The sacred power which is given to each priest at ordination distinguishes the priest from layperson. In a special way the ordained minister has been given the primary responsibility of being the one who touches and distributes the Blessed Sacrament. It is in light of the fact that the Church has ordinary ministers of Holy Communion, i.e., priests, bishops and deacons, that the layperson who has been chosen and delegated to assist in the distribution of holy Communion would be called an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. Being extraordinary signifies that touching and distributing Holy Communion is not something that would ordinarily and normally be done by someone who is not ordained.

In a letter to priests on the Eucharist, Blessed Pope John Paul II reiterated the need for the priest to remember his unique dignity as a priest which in turn respects the unique dignity of the layperson. The Holy Father wrote:

...one must not forget the primary office of priests, who had been consecrated by their ordination to represent Christ the priest: for this reason their hands, like their words and their will, have become the direct instruments of Christ. Through this fact, that is, as ministers of the Holy Eucharist, they have a primary responsibility for the sacred species, because it is a total responsibility: they offer the bread and wine, they consecrate it, and they then distribute the sacred species to the participants in the assembly who wish to receive them. Deacons can only bring to the altar the offerings of the faithful and, once they have been consecrated by the priest, distribute them, how eloquent therefore, even if not of ancient custom, is the right of the anointing of the hands in our lives in ordination, as though precisely for these hands a special grace and power of the Holy Spirit is necessary! To touch the sacred species and to distribute them with their own hands is a privileged of the ordained, one which indicates an active participation in the ministry of the Eucharist.¹⁴

It is therefore important to understand the distinction between the terms ordinary and extraordinary when associating them with ministers of Holy Communion. Ordinary in this case does not refer to something that is average or second rate but refers to something that is customary. As for the term extraordinary, it is meant to refer to something that is beyond what is ordinary or usual.

The Code of Canon Law states that the bishop, priest, and deacon are considered the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion. After the consecration at Mass it is the ordinary role of the bishop or priest to distribute the Eucharist to the faithful who have participated in the Mass. When the bishop and priest distribute Holy Communion to the faithful it is truly Christ himself giving his Body and Blood. Along with the bishop and priest, the deacon, who is ordained by the Bishop, is to assist the bishop and priest “in the

¹⁴ *Dominicæ Cenæ*. art. 11.

celebration of the divine mysteries, above all the Eucharist, in the distribution of Holy Communion.”¹⁵

Therefore, when ordained ministers are present at Mass and are not impeded in any way because of age, infirmity, or other reason, it is their right and duty to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion. At those Masses when there is a legitimate need because of the number of faithful who desire to receive Communion or ordain ministers are lacking or are impeded in some way of exercising their ordinary duty, extraordinary ministers may assist in the distribution of Holy Communion.

¹⁵ Catholic Church. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 2nd ed. (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2011), art. 1570.

Chapter Six

Delegation of the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion

As with all ministries in the Church, particular guidelines are given by the Church in order to regulate who can serve in a particular ministry and how one can exercise that ministry. A member of the lay faithful is delegated to the ministry of an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion in one of two ways. The first and most infrequent way in which a layperson may rightly assist in the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass is by deputation by a priest at Mass for one occasion. This deputation occurs only in exceptional cases or in unforeseen circumstances when the priest, who is the celebrant of the Mass, recognizes a pastoral need in which he requires the assistance of an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. The priest has the authority to delegate a layperson to assist him in the distribution of Holy Communion by following the approved *Rite of Deputing a Minister to Distribute Holy Communion on a Single Occasion*, which is found in the Appendix of the Roman Missal 3rd Edition. This rite can be used when, for example, the number of people at Mass is so great and there is either an insufficient number of ordinary ministers and previously delegated extraordinary ministers available at Mass to assist him or none at all. Ideally, prior to the beginning of Mass, the priest, using his best judgment, asks someone he knows is the best suited to assist him in the distribution of Holy Communion. He explains to the individual the need for assistance in distributing Holy Communion at Mass and instructs the person to approach the altar for a blessing after he himself has received the Body and Blood of Christ. Once the priest has received Communion he then blesses the man or woman with words from the Roman

Missal: “May the Lord bless you, so that at this Mass you may minister the Body and Blood of Christ to your brothers and sisters.” The individual simply replies with the word, “Amen”, then receives Communion by the priest and is handed the vessel with the consecrated Hosts or the chalice with the Precious Blood.

The second and most common way that a lay man or woman becomes an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion is by delegation from the local bishop for a period of three years. After three years the delegation expires but is renewable when requested by the local pastor. Delegation from the bishop is received after a pastor has determined that there is a need for assistance in the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass in his parish. Once that determination has been made by the pastor, he has the responsibility of choosing a member of his parish who is rightly suited for this extraordinary ministry. The pastor must first consider those members of his parish who are fully initiated and practicing Catholics. Over and above being a fully initiated and practicing Catholic, other important qualities include and are not limited to living the Catholic Faith authentically and openly, a desire to grow in holiness, and a recognizable devotion and reverence for the Blessed Sacrament. Ultimately the pastor must try to avoid choosing any man or woman who may disrespect the Eucharist or bring scandal to his parishioners.

When a pastor has identified an individual whom he believes has the necessary qualities and ability to serve as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion he approaches that person and speaks to him or her about the ministry and its responsibilities. During this conversation the pastor would also try to learn more about the individual by asking various questions about his or her Faith and their love for the

Church and the Eucharist. Once the pastor has come to the determination that a person is qualified and is able to fulfill the role of serving as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion in his parish he writes a letter to the Bishop explaining the need he has for assistance in the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass and therefore seeks delegation for the individual which he testifies is worthy of the ministry. With trust in his pastor's needs and his judgment of the individual, the Bishop sends the pastor a letter giving the individual permission to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass once they have received proper training and the pastor has commissioned the individual using the *Order for Commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion* found in the approved *Book of Blessings for use in the Diocese of United States of America*.

Chapter Seven

Reflection on the Commissioning

You are now invited to take a few moments to reflect on the text of the commissioning that your pastor will celebrate with you and your parish at a designated parish Mass. In the commissioning ceremony you will recognize the Church's vigilance in ensuring the proper care of the celebration of Mass and the Eucharist. As with all rites in the Church the words will reveal to you the responsibilities of the ministry and in the presence of your pastor and the parish community you will publicly declare your intention to accept the responsibilities and to exercise this ministry out of love for Christ and His Church.

Order for Commissioning of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion within Mass

After the Gospel and homily, in which your pastor will explain to the faithful the meaning of the ceremony, you will be called forward and will be presented to the people with these or similar words:

Dear friends in Christ, our brothers and sisters who have been chosen as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion will be commissioned through our prayer and God's blessing. We pray that they may exercise this ministry with faith, devotion, and love.

After being presented, your pastor will address these words to you:

In this ministry, you must be an example of Christian living in faith and conduct; you must strive to grow in holiness through the sacrament of unity and love. Remember that, though many, we are one body because we share the one bread and one cup.

As a minister of Holy Communion be, therefore, especially observant of the Lord's command to love your neighbor. For when he gave his body as food to his disciples, he said to them: "this is my commandment, that you should love one another as I have loved you."

After he has addressed you with these words he will then ask you the following two questions as an examination. Your response to the questions will be "I am".

Are you resolved to undertake the office of giving the body and blood of the Lord to your brothers and sisters, and so serve to build up the church?

Are you resolved to administer the Holy Eucharist with the utmost care and reverence?

For the blessing your pastor will invite you to kneel and the congregation to stand. He will invite the community to bow their heads and pray for you as he raises his hands and bestows one of the following blessings:

Dear friends in Christ, let us pray with confidence to the Father; let us ask Him to bestow his blessings on our brothers and sisters, chosen to be ministers of the Eucharist.

Merciful father, creator and guide of your family, bless our brothers and sisters.

May they faithfully give the bread of life to your people.

Strengthened by the Sacrament, may they come at last to the banquet of heaven.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

Or

Gracious Lord, you nourish us with the body and blood of your Son, that we might have eternal life.

Bless our brothers and sisters who have been chosen to give the bread of heaven and the cup of salvation to your faithful people.

May the saving mysteries they distribute lead them to the joys of eternal life.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The words of this commissioning articulate how serious the Church is about the proper care for the Eucharist, and in light of that care, the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion must share the same seriousness for the Eucharist. Once again we turn again to the words of Blessed Pope John Paul II, who explains why the Church has such care for the Eucharist:

By giving the Eucharist the prominence it deserves, and by being careful not to diminish any of its dimensions or demands, we show that we are truly conscious of the greatness of this gift. We are urged to do so by in uninterrupted tradition, which from the first Centuries on has found the Christian community ever vigilant in guarding this “treasure”. Inspired by love, the church is anxious to hand on to future generations of Christians, without loss, her faith and teaching with regard to the mystery of the Eucharist. There can be no danger of excess in our care for this mystery for in this Sacrament is recapitulated the whole mystery of our salvation.¹⁶

What a blessing to be able to ponder these beautiful words from our venerable Holy Father of blessed memory, Pope John Paul II, which are meant to help you, in light of your ministry, to grow in faith, devotion and love for the Blessed Sacrament.

¹⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Encyclical Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2003), no. 61.

Chapter Eight

Preparation for Mass for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

The following segment of the instruction for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion is intended to help form a deeper understanding of the need to prepare for Mass. Knowing how to prepare for Mass is essential for the Catholic. Proper preparation allows the Catholic priest, deacon, lay man and woman to enter into the Mass with heart and mind ready to participate actively, consciously, and fruitfully. We will begin by looking at the ways the Church expects all Catholics to prepare for Mass and Holy Communion and then we will offer some additional practices which individuals may find helpful for deeper preparation.

But first, let's consider these questions with regards to preparing for Mass: "What does it mean to prepare for Mass?" "How should I prepare for Mass?" These are good questions for any Catholic to ask himself or herself on a regular basis in order to keep one's participation in the Mass active and fruitful. For some Catholics the answer to these questions can be rather basic and easy but for others the answer can be complex and difficult. Regardless of the ease or difficulty, understanding the importance of preparation is integral to the spiritual life of the Catholic.

As a layperson chosen to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion, preparation for Mass should not be much different than any other Catholic layperson. The reason is that each and every Catholic because of his or her identity has the same responsibility to prepare his or her mind and heart for Mass. To begin with, let us remember our identity as individual Catholics but also our identity as a body of

Catholics. We believe that as Catholics we are individually sons and daughters of God, since sons and daughters then brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. Through baptism, our relationship to God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, also makes us members of the Catholic Church which is the Body of Christ. Therefore, each Catholic has an individual responsibility to live his or her life according to the teachings of Christ and His Church. One of the many important responsibilities that we have as Catholics is to love God and neighbor. What is the ideal way to express our love of God and neighbor as Catholics? Certainly it is going to Mass which is the means of communion with our brothers and sisters in the Lord and with Christ!

The celebration of Mass “is the center of the whole of Christian life for the Church both universal and local, as well as for each of the faithful individually.”¹⁷ Recalling what was said in the previous section on the Eucharist, when we attend Mass we assemble with other Christians and therefore Christ is made present. We also hear Christ speaking to us in the Scriptures that are read and in the homily that is preached by the priest or deacon. And finally, when we attend Mass we actually unite ourselves to Christ in a way that allows us to participate in His sacrifice and offering. The Catholic Church officially expresses this reality in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* in the following words:

At Mass or the Lord’s Supper the People of God is called together, with a Priest presiding and acting in the person of Christ, to celebrate the memorial of the Lord or Eucharistic Sacrifice. In an outstanding way there applies to such a local gathering of the holy Church the promise of Christ: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst” (Mt 18:20). For in the celebration of Mass, in which the Sacrifice

¹⁷ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, art. 16.

of the Cross is perpetuated, Christ is really present in the very assembly gathered in his name, in the person of the minister, in his word, and indeed substantially and uninterruptedly under the Eucharistic species.¹⁸

At Mass our life becomes Christ's life, at Mass Christ's self-giving becomes our self-giving, at Mass Christ's worship of God becomes our worship of God. Each time we go to Mass we express our love for God individually but also as a member of the Body of Christ.

With the reality of who we are as Catholics and how we participate at Mass, we can then understand how important it is for each member of the Church to prepare for this great encounter with God. Regardless of one's role, whether the priest, the deacon, the reader, the cantor, the usher, the server, the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion or the ordinary Catholic sitting in the pew, each one should prepare his or her heart for the Mass which is the work of Christ, offering Himself for the salvation of the world and the glory of God. The fact that one has been chosen to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion is certainly very important but secondary to the fact that one is a Catholic Christian and because of that dignity, will be uniting oneself to Christ in the Mass. We are committed to the understanding that the person in the last row of pews is as important to the Mass as the extraordinary ministers assisting with the distribution of Holy Communion.

What the Church asks of every Catholic as a preparation for Mass

The Church expects every Catholic man and woman to prepare for Mass by making a good examination of conscience. The Church teaches that to receive Holy

¹⁸ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, art. 27.

Communion worthily, one must not be conscious of any mortal sins. The words of St. Paul cast light upon the seriousness of a frequent and thorough examination of conscience: “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself (1 Cor 11: 27-29).” When one is aware of sin that must be confessed but is unable to meet with a priest to make a Sacramental Confession, an Act of Contrition should be made with the intention of going to Confession as soon as possible.

As we can see, making an examination of conscience is required but it is also beneficial for several other reasons. First, it gives the Catholic the opportunity to examine his or her own thoughts, words and actions in light of Jesus’ great love which is known by His life, death and resurrection. This in turn leads one to recognize the sins one may have committed and the need for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. By examining one’s conscience and confessing one’s sins to a priest, a Catholic is then in a state of grace (free from mortal sin) which is necessary for fruitful communion with Christ who is the victor over sin and death. Another reason why it is good to examine one’s conscience is that it gives the Catholic the opportunity to acknowledge God’s blessings and to recognize all the things for which one should be thankful.

In addition to examining one’s conscience, the Church calls Catholics to prepare for Mass by fasting from food and drink for at least one hour before the reception of Holy Communion. The Church calls for this fast as a way of increasing one’s personal hunger and readiness for the Lord in the Eucharist. It is important to note that an exception to

the hour fast is made for the elderly, those who are ill and infirm, and those who care for them. The idea of fasting has many spiritual benefits for the Catholic, in particular it helps one to become more detached from worldly goods so that one may be open to receiving spiritual goods. By fasting, the Catholic becomes ever more aware of the only thing that can truly satisfy one's deepest hunger is Christ in the Eucharist. The bodily need and desire for food is a sign to the Catholic of his or her soul's need and desire for the "Bread of Life". As a whole, confessing one's sins prepares the Catholic soul to receive the Lord, while fasting prepares the body. Each one of these practices brings into focus the Catholic's need to prepare for an encounter with Christ who is holy, and who has emptied Himself of everything for the salvation of souls. This encounter with Christ should not be approached casually and in an unprepared way but with the greatest preparation possible.

Over and above the required preparations for Mass, a Catholic may also consider several other ways to personally prepare for Mass and Holy Communion. The following suggestions are not required by the Church but are being offered for your consideration because one way or another they bring us back to the Mass which is the source of the Eucharist. Some of them might seem daunting because they relate to books used for Mass, such as the Lectionary or the Roman Missal but they are easily accessible both on-line and in several publications.

1. Read and Reflect on the Scripture Readings for Mass. The Church has arranged the readings for Mass in such a beautiful way that allows the daily Mass goer to hear most of the Bible in three years. Whether one attends Mass daily or weekly, the fact remains that the Church presents to those who attend

Mass a vast amount of Scripture. Each Sunday at Mass we hear in the following order—a reading from the Old Testament or the Acts of the Apostles, a Psalm, a letter which is typically from St. Paul, and finally a passage from one of the Gospels. With the desire for Catholics to not only know Christ in the Eucharist, the Church strives to assist the Catholic to know Christ in the Scriptures. By reading the readings for Mass and spending some time reflecting upon them prior to going to Mass will undoubtedly help one to be more attentive to the Readings while they are being proclaimed. In addition to being more attentive to the readings at Mass, one's own spiritual life will be enriched, for as St. Jerome, the great biblical scholar stated, "ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ".

2. Read and Reflect on the Prayers for Mass. The official prayers of the Mass are treasures to be discovered most especially on account of their richness. The Church designates a Collect, otherwise known as an Opening Prayer, a Prayer over the Offerings and a Prayer after Communion to Masses celebrated throughout the year. These special prayers are assigned to every Mass, but even more specifically to each and every Sunday Mass throughout the year, to daily Masses during the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter, to special Feasts, to Saint's Days, and to many other various Masses which are found in the Roman Missal. Each one of the prayers of the Mass articulates something of what we believe as Catholics. By reading and reflecting upon the prayers of the Mass one is able to prepare for Mass and grow in the

knowledge of the Catholic Faith which is articulated in the prayers. There is a Latin maxim that addresses the centrality of the Mass in the life of the Catholic Church; “Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi”. The phrase in Latin literally means the law of prayer is the law of belief. It is sometimes expanded to as, “lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi”, further deepening the implications of this truth - how we worship reflects what we believe and determines how we will live.

3. Read and Reflect on parts of the Mass. In addition to the varying parts of the Mass such as the readings and prayers for Mass, one may also consider reflecting upon Ordinary of the Mass which are fixed Sunday to Sunday. These parts of the Mass include the Gloria, the Penitential Act, the Creed and one of the several Eucharistic Prayers. These stable parts of the Mass express who we are as Catholics and they also form our faith as Catholics. Whether it is spending time with the words of the shepherds from the Gloria or the words of the early Christians in the Creed, or the words of Jesus in the Eucharistic Prayers, the one who immerses him or herself in these parts of the Mass will deepen their faith as a Catholic.
4. Spend time with the Lord at Eucharistic Adoration. Spending time in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is spending time with Jesus. Each moment that one spends in adoration is a moment of grace since it is time spent with the giver of all graces. What is beautiful about Eucharistic Adoration is the fact that one may choose to spend time with the Lord by

quietly sitting or kneeling before Him or one may take this time with the Lord praying the Rosary, reading the Bible or praying a favorite devotion.

Regardless though of what one chooses to do with his or her time with the Lord, devotion to Him in the Eucharist is deepened and strengthened.

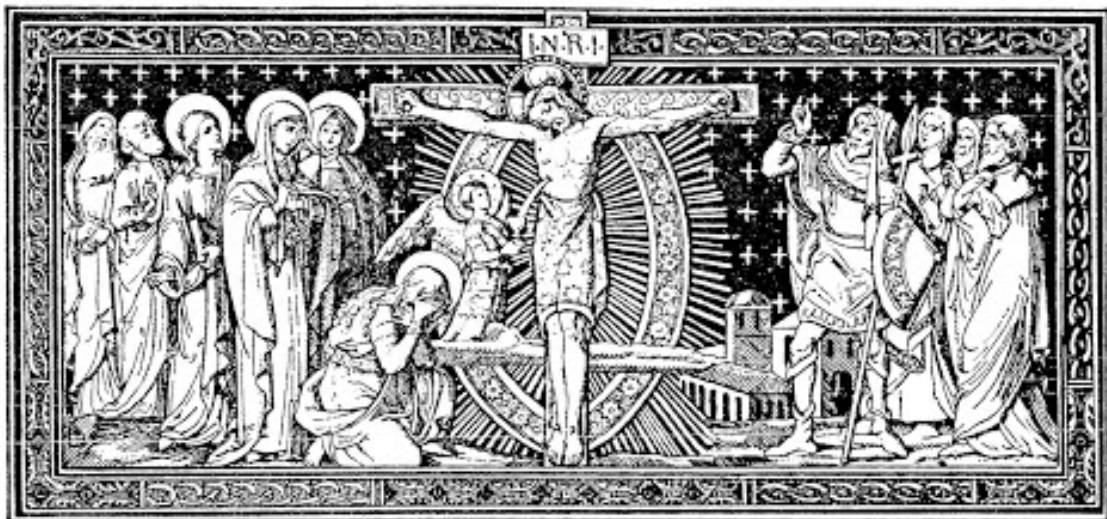
Adoration of our Lord in the Eucharist is time to know Jesus better and in knowing Jesus better one is able to live his or her faith with greater fervor and love.

5. Study the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is a practical resource which can be used by every Catholic to grow in his or her knowledge of the Catholic faith. The Catechism outlines and articulates in a systematic fashion the foundational teachings of the Church. By spending time with the Catechism, one's faith will be strengthened and one's mind will be formed in the truths of the Faith. Questions such as how to worship and how to live are answered by the Catechism. At the heart of this rich resource one will find the teaching on the Eucharist. The Catechism states: The mode of Christ's presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as "the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all sacraments tend." In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist "the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained." "This presence is called 'real' - by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not be 'real' too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a

substantial presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present.” (The Catechism of the Catholic Church: paragraph 1374) Read and study the Catechism to grow in faith and love of the Lord and His Church.

Ave Verum (Fourteenth Century)

Hail, true Body, Truly born
Of the Virgin Mary mild,
Truly offered, racked and torn,
On the Cross, for man defiled,
From whose love-pierced, sacred side
Flowed thy true Blood's saving tide:
Be a foretaste sweet to me
In my death's great agony,
O Thou loving, gentle One,
Sweetest Jesus, Mary's Son.



Chapter Nine

Instructions and Practical Application for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

In the final section of this Pastoral Instruction for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion common questions and concerns will be addressed concerning the extraordinary minister's role at Mass. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal states:

it is, therefore, of the greatest importance that the celebration of the mass or the Lord's Supper be so ordered that the sacred ministers and the faithful taking part in it, according to the state proper to each, may draw from it more abundantly those fruits, to obtain which, Christ the Lord instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his Body and Blood and entrusted it as the memorial of his Passion and Resurrection to the Church, his beloved Bride. (GIRM no. 17)

The instructions in this section have been taken from the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, which hereafter will be identified as GIRM, and from the *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America*, which hereafter will be identified as HCBK. These official Church documents are instructions on how to celebrate the Mass properly and reverently. A short "Practical Application" then follows individual or group instructions which are meant to help the extraordinary minister to fulfill his or her particular ministry at Mass with greater understanding and precision.

Included in this section are other parts of the Mass such as "Preparation of the Gifts", "The Eucharistic Prayer", "The Communion Rite", "The Rite of Peace" and "The

Fraction of the Bread”. These parts have been included to not only help the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion to enter more deeply into these parts of the Mass but also to help them to articulate to others the meaning of these parts of the Mass and how they relate to the unity of the Mass as a whole.

Duties and Ministries in the Mass

GIRM 91: All, therefore, whether ordained ministers or lay Christian faithful, in fulfilling their function or their duty, should carry out solely but totally that which pertains to them.

Practical Application: At each Mass that is offered by a priest, certain members of the parish, who have been properly trained and prepared, are typically asked to serve as readers, servers, greeters, cantors and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. As a way of encouraging and ensuring that a layperson exercises his or her ministry properly, individuals should only be expected to exercise one ministry at Mass.

Encouraging laypersons to focus on one particular liturgical ministry enables that person to devote adequate time to prepare for the particular ministry he/she has been assigned. In extraordinary circumstances, when properly trained and prepared laypersons are lacking, a layperson who is trained and prepared may fill multiple roles at one Mass.

Other Functions

GIRM 100: In the absence of an instituted acolyte, there may be deputed lay ministers to serve at the altar and assist the Priest and Deacon; these carry the

cross, the candles, the thurible, the bread, the wine, and the water, or who are even deputed to distribute Holy Communion as extraordinary ministers.

Practical Application: Instituted Acolytes are men who have been officially recognized by the Bishop to serve in this role. It is a ministry that is typically associated with candidates for the priesthood and diaconate but is also granted to men who are not seeking ordination. On most occasions, when an acolyte is not present, the liturgical ministries will be filled by lay men and women who have been prepared for a particular ministry. The goal of this instruction is not to give more people more things to do at Mass but rather it recognizes that there are several particular ministries at Mass, which should be exercised by lay members of the faithful in order to increase the solemnity of the Mass and also foster greater participation for everyone. In order to have orderly processions with incense, cross and candles, individuals should be assigned and prepared to assist with these duties. For each liturgical ministry to contribute to the beauty of the Liturgy some effort must be given to the training and forming of those who will fill these liturgical ministries.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

HCBK 28: When the size of the congregation or the 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, i.e., formally instituted acolytes or even some of the faithful who have been commissioned according to the prescribed rite. In case of necessity, the priest may also commission suitable members of the faithful for the occasion." 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 minister 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.

Practical Application: As can be noted from the above instruction, the nature of this ministry, because it is associated with the Mass and the Most Holy Body and Blood of the Lord, is something which is not taken lightly but is taken with great seriousness. This Pastoral Instruction for the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion was developed primarily to assist and guide the clergy and the faithful of the Diocese of Manchester in regulating matters pertaining to this particular liturgical ministry. The spiritual, theological and practical components of this instruction are meant to assist in the building up of the liturgical life in our local Church.

The extraordinary minister of Holy Communion is one who assists the ordinary minister of Holy Communion to distribute Holy Communion at Mass when there is a legitimate need. The assistance that is given to the ordinary minister by the extraordinary minister during the Communion Rite is specifically to help distribute Holy Communion to the faithful who present themselves for the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. If an individual presents him or herself in the communion line but does not appear to know how to receive Holy Communion the minister of Holy Communion should politely and discretely tell the person to continue to follow the line back to their seat.

The Communion Rite during Mass is for the distribution and reception of Holy Communion for those who are disposed to receive the Eucharist and not for individual blessings. Individual blessings of the faithful by either the ordinary or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion during the Communion Rite are prohibited. Those who participate in the celebration of the Mass and who are unable to receive Holy Communion should be encouraged by pastors to make a Spiritual Communion.

Reverence

HCBK 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.

Practical Application: Ordinary and extraordinary ministers alike are responsible for not only reverencing the Blessed Sacrament but also promoting the reverence of the Blessed Sacrament by what they say and do. In a special way, those who are given the privilege of distributing the Body and Blood of Christ should express a sense of joy when performing their ministry; this joy should also be integrated into their lives as a whole. The joy that expressed is not meant to be seen as an overly expressive giddy or smiley joy, but a joy that authentically radiates from one's love of Christ. It is important for the minister of Holy Communion to be recognized as a person who has a devotion and a love for the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Devotion to the Lord in the Eucharist is communicated when a person stops and takes time to pray before the Lord in the tabernacle or when he/she reverently genuflects to the Blessed Sacrament when passing the tabernacle, and especially when he/she is able to articulate to others their love for the Lord in the Eucharist.

Reverence for the Blessed Sacrament does not involve bringing attention to an individual but is about recognizing the greatness of the Lord and helping others to recognize the Lord's presence. There are several ways in which ministers of Holy Communion can avoid bringing attention to themselves when performing this ministry at Mass. Dressing appropriately for Mass and wearing their best is not about a fashion show but about the dignity of the Mass. The way the ministers of Holy Communion distribute the Eucharist or the way they handle and refer to the sacred vessels speaks volumes about the dignity of what they are handling.

With regards to hygiene, ministers of Holy Communion should always wash and/or disinfect their hands prior to Mass. It is always important to have clean hands and fingernails when a person is delegated with the distribution of Holy Communion at Mass but it is not necessary to make the disinfecting of one's hands a ritual during the Mass. If a minister of Holy Communion needs to use an antiseptic he or she should do so in a discreet manner in a place outside of the sanctuary. Both men and women should also refrain from wearing strong perfumes and colognes which may be a distraction for some communicants. Certainly personal reverence for the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is revealed in a variety of ways but our appearance, gestures and words makes it very real for not only ourselves but also for others.

Gestures and Bodily Posture

GIRM 42: The gestures and bodily posture of both the Priest, the Deacon, and the ministers, and also of the people, must be conducive to making the entire celebration resplendent with beauty and noble simplicity, to making clear the true and full meaning of its different parts, and to fostering the participation of all. A

common bodily posture, to be observed by all those taking part, is a sign of the unity of the members of the Christian community gathered together for the Sacred Liturgy, for it expresses the intentions and spiritual attitude of the participants and also fosters them.

Practical Application: For the sake of unity, order and beauty it is important for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to pay careful attention to their movement, gestures and posture. Everything that is done by an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion should be done intentionally and deliberately; not thoughtlessly or in haste. Knowing the specifics of how they are to exercise their ministry ensures very little confusion and distraction in the Mass. In exercising a ministry such as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, one should be able to participate in the Mass with mind, heart and body united to Christ. That is why it is important for each extraordinary minister of Holy Communion to know prior to the beginning of Mass which Species they will be distributing and at which location in the church they will be positioned.

Silence

GIRM 45: Even before the celebration itself, it is a praiseworthy practice for silence to be observed in the church, in the sacristy, in the vesting room, and in adjacent areas, so that all may dispose themselves to carry out the sacred celebration in a devout and fitting manner.

Practical Application: A spirit of silence before the Mass is encouraged so that everyone may have the opportunity to prepare for Mass with heart and mind focused on Christ. The priest, deacon, and layperson are encouraged to enter into the Holy

Sacrifice of the Mass by being recollected and aware of the mystery in which they are about to participate. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion can play a significant role in promoting silence in the church by being an example to their fellow parishioners. The extraordinary minister should arrive early for Mass and immediately make his or her presence known to the designated person who attends to liturgical ministries. Once they have learned which Species they will distribute and the location from which they will distribute Holy Communion they should then take their place in church and prepare for Mass in prayer which is an expectation for all parishioners.

Participation in the Preparation of the Gifts

GIRM 73: The offerings are then brought forward. It is a praiseworthy practice for the bread and wine to be presented by the faithful. They are then accepted at an appropriate place by the Priest or the Deacon to be carried to the altar. Even though the faithful no longer bring from their own possessions the bread and wine intended for the liturgy as was once the case, nevertheless the rite of carrying up the offerings still keeps its spiritual efficacy and significance. Even money or other gifts for the poor or for the Church, brought by the faithful or collected in the church, are acceptable; given their purpose, they are to be put in a suitable place away from the Eucharistic table.

Practical Application: In most parishes it is customary to have parishioners bring the gifts of bread, wine and the monetary collection to the priest in the Offertory Procession. Although the Offertory Procession is made up of only a few individuals, the individuals presenting the gifts represent each and every person present at the Mass and all that each person brings to the Mass. More specifically, each and every personal

prayer and intention should accompany the bread and wine that is given to the priest and offered to God. In a real way, the lives of the people at Mass are offered to God with Christ through the priest.

Participation in the Eucharistic Prayer

GIRM 78: Now the center and high point of the entire celebration begins, namely, the Eucharistic Prayer itself, that is, the prayer of thanksgiving and sanctification. The Priest calls upon the people to lift up their hearts towards the Lord in prayer and thanksgiving; he associates the people with himself in the Prayer that he addresses in the name of the entire community to God the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the meaning of this Prayer is that the whole congregation of the faithful joins with Christ in confessing the great deeds of God and in the offering of Sacrifice. The Eucharistic Prayer requires that everybody listens to it with reverence and in silence.

Practical Application: After the priest prays the “Prayer over the Offerings” he begins a beautiful dialogue with the congregation which leads into the “Preface” which is the introduction to the Eucharistic Prayer. In the midst of the Eucharistic Prayer the priest not only dialogues with the congregation but in a very particular way he has a dialogue with God. By listening closely to the words which the priest prays, one can recognize how intimate the Eucharistic Prayer actually is. The priest, acting in the person of Christ, invites the congregation to participate in this holy sacrifice, which is Christ’s sacrifice, speaks directly to God about the sacrifice which is being offered, and actually offers the bread and wine using the words of Jesus Christ from the Last Supper. The culmination of the entire Eucharistic Prayer is the miraculous transformation of

bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ of which the perfect response is the “Great Amen”!

Participation in the Communion Rite

GIRM 80: 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. This is the sense of the fraction and the other preparatory rites by which the faithful are led more immediately to Communion.

Practical Application: Following the Eucharistic Prayer and the “Great Amen” the congregation stands for the proximate preparations of receiving the Body and Blood of Christ. The people are invited to pray the Lord’s Prayer, which was taught by Jesus Himself. During the Lord’s Prayer the people are once again given the opportunity to examine their lives in light of Jesus’ words before the distribution of Holy Communion. Since it is a time of personal preparation the focus of each person is on one’s interior life rather than focusing on those around him or her. This personal preparation can include questions such as the following: Have I revered God and helped build His kingdom here on earth? Have I asked for forgiveness? Have I forgiven those I should forgive? Questions such as these can help determine one’s preparedness for the reception of Holy Communion.

Participation in the Rite of Peace

GIRM 82: There follows the Rite of Peace, by which the Church entreats peace and unity for herself and for the whole human family, and the faithful express

to each other their ecclesial communion and mutual charity before communicating in the Sacrament.

Practical Application: Offering the “Sign of Peace” in a sober manner to those who are near to us is meant to signify the communal bond which Christians share. The reverent gesture of a hand shake or a gentle embrace is a display of love which God has for each person, whom He has created in His image and likeness. This “sign” which is a personal contact between two people reminds everyone that God became man and it was in the form of a human person that He offered “Peace” to the world. The “Sign of Peace” also compliments the “Lord’s Prayer” by taking us from an examination of our relationship with God to an examination of our relationships with our brothers and sisters. One must be at peace and reconciled not only with God but also with one’s neighbor to be properly disposed to receive Holy Communion.

The Fraction of the Bread

GIRM 83: The Priest breaks the Eucharistic Bread, with the assistance, if the case requires, of the Deacon or a concelebrant. The gesture of breaking bread done by Christ at the Last Supper, which in apostolic times gave the entire Eucharistic Action its name, signifies that the many faithful are made one body.

HCBK 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.

Practical Application: As soon as the priest begins the “Fraction of the Bread”, which is known by the breaking of the Consecrated Host, the “Rite of Peace” ends and the “Sign of Peace” should no longer be offered. Several things begin to happen at this time. The priest places a small piece of host in the chalice, the “Lamb of God” is sung and if necessary the Consecrated Hosts are carefully distributed into the patens that will be used for the distribution of Holy Communion. Once this is complete, the priest prays quietly to prepare himself to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. While the priest offers a short prayer to Jesus Christ before receiving Him in Holy Communion, the faithful should also take this time to offer a personal prayer to the Lord. There is no mistaking that this part of the Mass is focused on Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament who is the “Lamb of God” who takes away the sins of the world. The chanting of the “Lamb of God” takes each person at the Mass back in time to the words of St. John the Baptist who directed the attention of the people to Jesus and it takes each person forward into eternity to the Lamb being adored in Heaven.

When the “Lamb of God” concludes, all the people, including the liturgical ministers, should bring themselves to their knees as a sign of humility and an act of adoration. Nothing should distract from this pivotal moment in the Mass which culminates in the words of the priest who makes the most profound announcement known to mankind, “Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.” The priest and people humbly

respond with the words of the Centurion, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.”

Mass without a Deacon

GIRM 162: In the distribution of Communion the Priest may be assisted by other Priests who happen to be present. If such Priests are not present and there is a truly large number of communicants, 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.

These ministers should not approach the altar before the Priest has received Communion, and they are always to receive from the hands of the Priest Celebrant the vessel containing the species of the Most Holy Eucharist for distribution to the faithful.

HCBK 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.

HCBK 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.

HCBK 40. After all eucharistic ministers have received Communion, the bishop or priest celebrant 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.

Practical Application: This instruction emphasizes the fact that the ordained minister is the ordinary minister of Holy Communion and the extraordinary minister is meant to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion when there is a real need such as a large number of communicants. In addition to the Celebrant, whenever there are other priests present at Mass and they are capable of assisting with the distribution of Holy Communion, they are obliged to do so unless they are unable to do so because of health or age. In the event that a priest unexpectedly arrives to assist at Mass, an extraordinary minister who expected to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion should freely defer the distribution of Holy Communion to that priest who is an ordinary minister.

When there is a need, extraordinary ministers attending the Mass are expected to

assist with the distribution of Holy Communion. After the priest has received the Sacred Host and has drunk from the Chalice, the extraordinary ministers should reverently enter the sanctuary and approach the altar. The ministers should position themselves in a way that allows each of them to receive Holy Communion from the priest in an unencumbered manner. Prior to receiving Holy Communion the extraordinary minister should bow his/her head and receive the Sacred Host on his/her tongue or in his/her hand then consume the host using their other hand. If the Precious Blood is offered in the Species of wine, he/she should again make a profound bow and gently take the chalice to receive from it, and then hand it back to the priest. After the extraordinary ministers have consumed either one or both Species, the priest should again be able to hand the sacred vessels to the extraordinary ministers in an orderly and unencumbered manner. The object here is to minimize the movement of the priest in the sanctuary when distributing Holy Communion and the sacred vessels. After all the extraordinary ministers have received Holy Communion, rather than the priest approaching each minister with the sacred vessels, they should approach the priest at the altar in an orderly manner and receive the sacred vessel from him. Once all the extraordinary ministers have received the sacred vessels from the priest, they should carefully walk to the place at which they will distribute Holy Communion.

Mass with the People with a Deacon

GIRM 171: When he is present at the celebration of the Eucharist, a Deacon should exercise his ministry, wearing sacred vestments. In fact, the Deacon: assists the Priest Celebrant in distributing Communion, and purifies and arranges the sacred vessels.

Practical Application: Like the priest, the deacon is considered an ordinary minister of Holy Communion. When there is a deacon to assist the priest at Mass he is expected to assist at the altar by preparing it for the Offertory, with the distribution of Holy Communion, and by purifying the sacred vessels at the Credence Table following the distribution of Holy Communion. The deacon may also assist the priest by going to the Tabernacle to retrieve or return consecrated hosts when necessary.

Distribution of Holy Communion under the species of bread

GIRM 161: If Communion is given only under the species of bread, the Priest raises the host slightly and shows it to each, saying, *The Body of Christ*. The communicant replies, *Amen*, and receives the Sacrament either on the tongue or, where this is allowed, in the hand, the choice lying with the communicant. As soon as the communicant receives the host, he or she consumes the whole of it.

HCBK 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 apart, 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."

Practical Application: When the communicant and minister of Communion are before one another, the minister, while holding the Consecrated Host between his or her

thumb and index finger, says the words, “The Body of Christ”. While these words are pronounced, the minister of Holy Communion and the communicant are both face to face with the true presence of the Lord contained in the Species of bread. The only words which can be uttered by the minister of Communion is “The Body of Christ”, no other words are to be added including the communicant’s name. We must remember that any change or addition of words does not enhance the reception of Communion but rather becomes a distraction to the communicant. The minister should facilitate this sacred moment by raising the host slightly above the ciborium, say the prescribed words, then carefully place the host on the communicant’s tongue or hands. Immediately the minister of Communion should take another host between his or her thumb and index finger and be prepared for the next communicant.

Holy Communion should be distributed in a way that is not rushed and thoughtless, but reverent and focused. This moment of the Mass is the fulfillment of every Christian’s deepest desire, namely, Communion with God. Ministers of Communion are to see that the Sacred Host is consumed by those who receive Holy Communion and at all times care should be taken so that the host is not in danger of falling to the floor.

Distribution of Holy Communion under the species of wine

HCBK 284: When Communion is distributed under both kinds:

- a) the chalice is usually administered by a Deacon or, in the absence of a Deacon, by a Priest, or even by a duly instituted acolyte or another extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, or by one of the**

faithful who, in a case of necessity, has been entrusted with this duty for a single occasion.

HCBK 43: The chalice is offered to the communicant with the words "The Blood of Christ," to which the communicant responds, "Amen."

HCBK 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.

HCBK 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.

HCBK 46: It is the choice of the communicant, not the minister, to receive from the chalice.

HCBK 47: Children 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.

Practical Application: Once again, when the communicant and minister of Communion are before one another, the minister, while holding the chalice containing the Precious Blood, says the words, "The Blood of Christ". While these words are pronounced, the minister of Holy Communion and the communicant are both face to face

with the true presence of Lord contained in the Species of wine. The only words which can be uttered by the minister of Communion is “The Blood of Christ”, no other words are to be added including the communicant’s name. We must remember that any change or addition of words does not enhance the reception of Communion but rather becomes a distraction to the communicant. The minister should facilitate this sacred moment by holding the chalice before the communicant with both hands, say the prescribed words, then carefully hand the chalice to the communicant making sure that the communicant has firmly taken hold of the chalice. While the communicant is receiving from the chalice the minister of Communion should be attentive and ready to receive the chalice back. The minister of Communion then carefully wipes the edge of the chalice with the purificator in order to prepare for the next communicant.

Holy Communion should be distributed in a way that is not rushed and thoughtless, but reverent and focused. This moment of the Mass is the fulfillment of every Christian’s deepest desire, namely, Communion with God. Care should be taken so that the Precious Blood is not in danger of being spilled on the floor. Intinction, which is the dipping of the Sacred Host into the Precious Blood by the Communicant, is never allowed. In the event that a communicant attempts to dip the Host into the chalice containing the Precious Blood, the minister of Holy Communion should carefully place his or her hand over the chalice and discreetly inform the communicant that the proper way of consuming the Precious Blood is to drink from the chalice.

Mishaps during the Distribution of Holy Communion

GIRM 280: If a host or any particle should fall, it is to be picked up reverently; and if any of the Precious Blood is spilled, the area where the spill

occurred should be washed with water, and this water should then be poured into the sacrarium in the sacristy.

Practical Application: While mishaps occur from time to time, care and attention to the details of assisting with the distribution of Holy Communion greatly reduces the chance of dropping a Host or spilling Precious Blood. In the event of a Host falling to the floor or Precious Blood being spilled, the first thing to remember is reverence for the Most Blessed Sacrament. Everything should be done to avoid having people walk on or step on a Consecrated Host or on Precious Blood. In the case of a Host being dropped by either the minister of Communion or by the communicant, the minister of Communion should immediately bend down, gently pick up the host and consume it. Once this has been done, the minister of Communion should again offer the communicant Holy Communion in the prescribed way. In the case of Precious Blood being spilled, the minister of Communion should avoid anything that would cause more Precious Blood to be spilled. If the minister of Communion can easily bend down and wipe up the Precious Blood with the purificator, this should be done. If there is a greater possibility of spilling more Precious Blood by bending down with the chalice, it would be prudent to have the communicant hold the chalice while the minister of Communion bends down to wipe up the Precious Blood with the purificator. If the spill of Precious Blood needs even greater attention it would be advisable to ask a communicant to protect the area where the spill has taken place, the minister of Communion should bring the chalice containing the remaining Precious Blood to the credence table and return to the spilled Precious Blood with one or more purificators in order to absorb what has been spilled.

Depending on the amount of Precious Blood that was spilled the purificators which were

used to absorb the Precious Blood should be either placed on the credence table or placed in the sacrarium (a special sink that drains directly into the ground) located in the sacristy. Once the distribution of Holy Communion has ended the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion should notify the priest or the deacon of the Mass.

At the Conclusion of the Distribution of Holy Communion

GIRM 163: 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 on the Eucharist.

Upon returning to the altar, the Priest collects the fragments, should any remain, and he stands at the altar or at the credence table and purifies the paten or ciborium over the chalice, and after this purifies the chalice, saying quietly the formula, and dries the chalice with a purificator. If the vessels are purified at the altar, they are carried to the credence table by a minister. Nevertheless, it is also permitted to leave vessels needing to be purified, especially if there are several, on a corporal, suitably covered, either on the altar or on the credence table, and to purify them immediately after Mass, after the Dismissal of the people.

GIRM 183: When the distribution of Communion is over, the Deacon returns to the altar with the Priest, collects the fragments, should any remain, and then carries the chalice and other sacred vessels to the credence table, where he purifies them and arranges them as usual, while the Priest returns to the chair.

Nevertheless, 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.

HCBK 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, standing at the altar, “immediately and reverently consumes all of the Blood of Christ that remains, assisted, if the case requires, by other Deacons and Priests. When 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.

Practical Application: At the end of the distribution of Communion to the faithful it is important that the remaining Consecrated Hosts, Precious Blood and the Sacred Vessels which were used for their distribution be handled properly. Ministers should return to the altar in a uniform and orderly manner for the collecting of the Consecrated Hosts by the priest and the consuming of the remaining Precious Blood. In the Diocese of Manchester, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion have the permission of the Bishop of Manchester to consume any remaining Precious Blood. Like the priest and deacon, the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion should only consume the remaining Precious Blood once they have returned to the altar and have come to a complete stop. Extraordinary Ministers should face the altar either at its side or in front of it but not from behind where the priest and deacon normally stand. Ministers of Holy Communion must never consume the remaining Precious Blood while walking back to the altar.

Once the Consecrated Hosts have been collected and the Precious Blood consumed at the altar the patens and chalices may either be left at the altar or brought to the credence table to be purified. Both the returning of the remaining Consecrated Hosts and the purification of the sacred vessels is reserved to the ordained minister.

It should be determined by individual pastors when and how the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should return to their places after the Sacred Species have been collected.

Purification of the Sacred Vessels

GIRM 279: The sacred vessels are purified by the Priest, the Deacon, or an instituted acolyte after Communion or after Mass, in so far as possible at the credence table. The purification of the chalice is done with water alone or with wine and water, which is then consumed by whoever does the purification. The paten is wiped clean as usual with the purificator. Care is to be taken that whatever may remain of the Blood of Christ after the distribution of Communion is consumed immediately and completely at the altar.

Practical Application: As an extension to the service that the priest, deacon and acolyte have at the altar, it is also their responsibility to ensure that the sacred vessels used for the distribution of Holy Communion are carefully purified. The purification of the vessels which can be done either after the distribution of Communion or after Mass ensures that all of the Sacred Species have been properly and reverently consumed.

After the sacred vessels, such as the patens, ciboria and chalices, have been purified by the priest, deacon or instituted acolyte they may then be carefully cleaned by

an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion or the sacristan in preparation for their next use. The sacred vessels, because of the Body and Blood of Christ which they hold, should be handled and referred to with great care at all times and even the act of cleaning the vessels after they have been purified should be done with reverence.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

In his opening message the Bishop stated that “The Eucharist is the greatest gift that Jesus Christ has given to the world!” and since it is the greatest gift the Bishop has the greatest obligation to cherish this gift in his Diocese. This Pastoral Instruction for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion is one more way in which proper care and reverence may be given to the Holy Eucharist in the parishes in the Diocese of Manchester.

Those who read and reflect upon the contents of this instruction will hopefully grow in their understanding of the role of the liturgical ministry of the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion at Mass. Although the teaching and instruction offered in these pages may not answer every question or touch upon every concern with regards to this particular ministry may it assist in leading many to a fuller participation in the Holy Mass and to a deeper understanding of Jesus Christ’s real presence in the Holy Eucharist. For as Pope Francis notes:

It is in our celebration that Christ fills us with his grace, so that our lives may be consonant with our worship of God in the Liturgy. Let us live the Eucharist in a spirit of faith and prayer, with the certainty that the Lord will bring to fulfillment all that he has promised.

—General Audience, St. Peter’s Square, February 12, 2014

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