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Ministry of Communion Some Practical Guidelines



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First: Visit this website to find out about the vessels etc. used in the celebration of the Eucharist

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MINISTRY IN YOUR PARISH

Your ministry is a special one within the community. It is a sacred and honoured duty. Thank you for agreeing to serve. You are commissioned for to exercise this ministry in your home parish. Special circumstances may request that you minister outside of your parish: a Wedding, funeral etc.... In such situations please ask permission from the celebrant before presenting yourself for ministry. While your presence will most probably be most welcome, remember that you do not have an automatic right to minister; be conscious that there may already be people locally who are commissioned to serve in that parish. Ideally the extraordinary minister of the eucharist will fulfil his/her role at the Mass in which he/she regularly attends/participates. It is in that context that it makes most sense.

It might be an idea to have a chat to your priest before you minister to see what the expectations are re seating etc... Usually ministers come to the altar at the beginning of the Our Father. Wash your hands, and let people see you do it (this might help avoid cause for concern or criticism). After your hands are washed, one or more ministers may then go to the tabernacle and remove the ciboria. Place the ciboria near the priest on the altar – there is probably a local practise – watch and learn from other ministers of the eucharist or, if you are unsure, don't be afraid to ask.

Never refuse anyone communion (exception, children who are too young to receive. If you find yourself in this situation where you're unsure, ask the child or accompanying adult). If you have any concern mention it to your priest.

MINISTERING COMMUNION

Most importantly remember to take your time – be reverential. Dress appropriately and remain calm throughout. It is very normal to be a little nervous the first few times but try to always remember what you're doing. We all settle down as we get used to serving in this role. In the case where there are disabled people in attendance at the Mass, apart from wheelchair bound people whom you go to, let the disabled person come to you unless you are requested to go to them.

UNDERAGE CHILDREN

Children who have yet to receive their First Holy Communion will come forward. A tell-tale sign is they won't know how to receive or they won't indicate. If you are unsure if they are old enough, ask them (or an accompanying adult). Do not give communion to children or babies in arms, even if parent asks you. Children coming forward with arms folded across their chest, indicates the request for a blessing. You can use the host making the sign of the cross as a blessing.

RUNNING OUT OF HOSTS

If you are running out of hosts and there is no minister near you, it may be possible to break the hosts in half. This works if there are only a few people left. If there is a large number of people left, you may have to send them to another minister. Alternatively you can tell them to wait while you go to another minister and get more hosts.

DROPPING A HOST

If you, or a person receiving from you should drop a host (and this can happen despite all cautions taken)... clamly stop everything. The priority is to recover the host.

You can consume this host or there may be a small, covered bowl of water near the tabernacle where you can let this piece of bread dissolve. Never throw a host away. If you are unsure what to do leave it aside reverently beside the tabernacle and ask afterwards what is to be done. If the Blood should spill, use the purifier (napkin) to wipe the spill. After the Mass, the spill should be washed using a clean cloth and a vessel of water. The water used should be poured onto grass.

The New Code of Canon Law states that 'Whoever is to receive the blessed Eucharist is to abstain for at least one hour before Holy Communion from all food and drink, with the sole exception of water and medicine

COMMUNION FROM THE CHALICE ONLY

In certain situations the Church now allows people who are unable to receive communion from the host (such as coeliac who must have a gluten-free diet), to receive only from the chalice. Another instance is in bringing communion to the sick as Viaticum. If the sick person cannot receive communion in the form of bread they may obviously receive it in the form of wine.

PREPARING THE ROOM OF A SICK PERSON WHO IS TO RECEIVE COMMUNION

A table or corner of a table in the sick-room should be prepared, covered with a white cloth upon which there should be a crucifix and two lighted candles. A bowl of ordinary water and a cloth should be provided for the special minister to wash and dry their fingers after distributing Holy Communion. In addition, if a priest is bringing communion, a bowl of holy water and a sprinkler, such as a sprig of greenery, should be provided for the blessing. Reverence and respect for the Body of Christ should be present at all times.

GENERAL OUTLINE/FORMAT OF A COMMUNION CEREMONY

- In the name of the father...
- Penitential.. I confess
- Scripture reading: New Testament on the Eucharist
- 'Our Father'
- Behold the Lamb of God...
- Receive Communion
- Some quiet time
- Some favourite after communion prayer.
- In the name of the father...

REMEMBER:

- Make contact with your local priest
- You may wish to make contact with the other ministers on the same Mass as you are - tell whoever else is ministering that it's your first time
- Dress appropriately – clean hands – nothing on you (your clothes, make-up / perfume / aftershave etc.) should distract from the Eucharist itself.
- Be punctual and sit in an appropriate place near to the front

- During or at the end of the "Our Father" – go to tabernacle (check with your priest) / wash hands / open the tabernacle / bring the Ciborium to the altar / priest will offer communion under both species / go and distribute / bring back to tabernacle / bow and be seated
- Each parish has slightly different procedures – so over the next few weeks pay careful attention to what the Ministers of the Eucharist do in your parish
- You will be commissioned on Holy Thursday night (see below for the commissioning ceremony) in your parish and can perform your ministry for three years after which if you decide to continue your ministry you can be recommissioned
- Remember this is a calling to serve the Lord's body and blood to others – it is a privilege and although it may be understandably slightly nerve wrecking to begin with, it is an extremely rewarding experience which you won't regret – remember why you are doing this and try not to let the nerves worry you

**RITE OF COMMISSIONING EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF EUCHARIST DURING Mass
AS USED IN THE DIOCESE OF OSSORY**

In the homily the celebrant first explains the reason for this for this ministry and then presents those chosen to serve as extraordinary ministers, using these words:

Dear Friends in Christ, Our brothers and sisters are to be entrusted with administering the Eucharist, whenever that is necessary.

The celebrant pauses and then addresses the candidates:

In this ministry you must be examples of Christian living faith and conduct; you must strive to grow in holiness through this sacrament of unity and love. Remember that, though many, we are one body because we share the one bread and one cup. As ministers of holy communion be, therefore, especially observant of the Lord's command to love your neighbour. 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 the address the candidates stand before the celebrant, who asks them these questions:

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? **R. I am.**

Are you resolved to administer the holy Eucharist with the utmost care and reverence? **R. I am.**

All stand. The candidates kneel and the celebrant invites everybody present to pray:

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.

Pause for silent prayer. The celebrant then continues:

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 this sacrament, may they come at last to the banquet of heaven.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen

The general intercession should include an intention for the newly-commissioned ministers.