



# Word on Worship

## True or False?

Newsletter of the Worship Office, Archdiocese of Newark, NJ

---

In This Issue:

- Revisiting the Ministry of the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion

- **“The Eucharistic ministers cannot come into the sanctuary until after the priest has received Holy Communion. Until that time they have to stay away from the altar.”**
- **“During the singing of the Lamb of God, the eucharistic ministers cannot take the consecrated hosts from one large vessel and help place them into other smaller plates or bowls. The priest must do this.”**
- **“A Eucharistic minister can no longer pour the consecrated wine from a decanter or a large chalice into smaller chalices. This can only be done by the priest or by a deacon.”**
- **“The priest has to be the first one to touch the sacred vessels. He must hand them to the Eucharistic ministers. They cannot pick them up from the altar.”**
- **“Eucharistic ministers can no longer purify the sacred vessels used for Holy Communion.”**
- **“You cannot call the people who distribute Holy Communion at Mass Eucharistic ministers, or even special ministers, you have to call them extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. You have to use the old term.”**
- **“It is preferred that priests or deacons distribute Holy Communion.”**
- **“Eucharistic ministers are now required to wear albs when exercising their ministry.”**

---

---

## REVISITING THE MINISTRY OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER OF HOLY COMMUNION

---

---

Since the publication in Latin of the new *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, statements like those above have been frequently heard. Some of those statements are true. Some are only half true. Still others are completely false.

This article will examine the role of lay ministers of Holy Communion as found in recent liturgical documents and provide guidance on the functions and responsibilities of such ministers in light of this documentation.

## HISTORY

In 1969 the Holy See began to give permission to certain countries for lay people to distribute the Eucharist. In 1971, at the request of the Bishops of the United States this permission was given to the Church in our country. Then in 1973 Pope Paul VI issued the instruction *Immensae Caritatis* (On Facilitating Sacramental Communion in Particular Circumstances). This instruction extended the permission to the universal Church.

Such ministers were to be distinguished by their Christian lives, faith, and morals, and they were to be properly trained and prepared. They were to function when there were no ordinary ministers of communion (priests or deacons) available, or when the number of those requesting Holy Communion would be so large as to unduly prolong the celebration of Mass or other service. According to the instruction, candidates for this ministry were to be carefully chosen and trained. They were then to be commissioned during a liturgical rite before beginning their ministry.

Originally such ministers were referred to as “extraordinary” ministers of Holy Communion. However, in 1978 members of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy suggested the word “special” better translated the meaning of the Latin word *extraordinarius*. The Commission pointed out that in current English usage the normal meaning of the word “extraordinary” is not that implied in the Latin word *extraordinarius*. The opposite of “ordinary” is better expressed by the word “special.” In 1985, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops issued *This Holy and Living Sacrifice, Directory for the Celebration and Reception of Communion Under Both Kinds*. This document had been approved in October of 1984 by the Congregation for Divine Worship. The document gave careful instructions on the way Holy Communion was to be distributed under the form of bread and under the form of wine.

In the Archdiocese of Newark these instructions were incorporated and further clarified by the Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of the Holy Eucharist.

## CURRENT SITUATION

In 2002 the Third Latin Typical Edition of the Roman Missal was officially published. This newest edition of the Missal includes a new General Instruction. This General Instruction had been published earlier and a study edition had been issued in the English language in 2000.

With the publication of the Third Typical Edition, the *General Instruction* came into force. This *General Instruction* is not yet available

in an official English translation. However, the bishops of the United States, after carefully studying the original document, requested certain changes for the Church in the United States. Some of their requested changes were approved by the Holy See and will be incorporated in the official English translation of the *General Instruction*.

The new *General Instruction* also required that *This Holy and Living Sacrifice, Directory for the Celebration and Reception of Communion Under Both Kinds*, be replaced with a new directory. This took place in March of 2002 when the Holy See gave official recognition to the *Norms for the Celebration and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America*. These Norms had been submitted by the Bishops of the United States.

Let us now examine the role of lay ministers of Holy Communion, as envisioned by the new *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM 2000) and by the new *Norms for the Celebration and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America* (NCRHC). Since their publication these documents are liturgical law and now govern how the lay ministers should exercise their service during the celebration of Mass.

It should be noted that the term used to refer to lay ministers of Holy Communion has reverted to that originally used, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

## REASONS FOR THE MINISTRY

The NCRHC makes it very clear that extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion

are not to be considered ordinary ministers, nor are they to replace ordinary ministers at the liturgy. “In every celebration of the Eucharist there should be a sufficient number of ministers for Holy Communion so that it can be distributed in an orderly and reverent manner. Bishops, priests, and deacons distribute Holy Communion by virtue of their office as ordinary ministers of the Body and Blood of the Lord.” (NCRHC 27)

“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.” (NCRHC 28, also see GIRM 2000 162) It should be noted that according to the current Guidelines of the Archdiocese of Newark, such one time, ad hoc designation of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion is not permitted.

“Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should receive sufficient spiritual, theological, and practical preparation to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence. When recourse is had to extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, especially in the distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds, their number should not be increased beyond what is required for the orderly and reverent distribution of the

Body and Blood of the Lord.” (NCRHC 28)

### **BEFORE SUNDAY MASS**

Like all liturgical ministers, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should arrive well before the start of the liturgy. They should be properly dressed, as should all liturgical ministers. Section 119 of GIRM 2000 states that extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion and other ministers should wear albs or other lawfully approved attire. The present guidelines in the Archdiocese of Newark direct that extraordinary ministers “should be dressed neatly in a way consonant with the dignity of this role (e.g. jacket and tie for a man.)”

Extraordinary ministers may assist in preparing what will be needed for the celebration of Mass. Such ministers might see that the necessary chalices, plates/ciboria, purificators, and corporal are placed at the side or credence table and that the proper amount of wine and the correct number of hosts are prepared for the presentation of the gifts.

“Before Mass begins, wine and hosts should be provided in vessels of appropriate size and number. The presence on the altar of a single chalice and one large paten can signify the one bread and one chalice by which we are gathered ‘into the one Body of Christ, a living sacrifice of praise.’ When this is not possible, care should be taken that the number of vessels should not exceed the need.” (NCRHC 32)

“When Holy Communion is to be distributed under both species, careful planning should be undertaken so that enough bread and wine are made ready for the communication of the faithful

at each Mass. As a general rule, Holy Communion is given from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and not from those reserved in the tabernacle. Precious Blood may not be reserved at one Mass for use at another.” (NCRHC 30)

The Church’s desire that the faithful receive bread and wine consecrated at the Mass they attend is strongly emphasized in the GIRM 2000, where it states that “It is most desirable that the faithful, just as the priest himself is bound to do, receive the Lord’s Body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and that, in the instance where it is permitted, they participate in the chalice so that even by means of the signs Communion will stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated.” (GIRM 2000 85)

While such preparation of the items necessary for Mass may be the task of the sacristan or some other minister, it is prudent for the extraordinary minister to be certain that all has been prepared for the communion rite of the Mass.

As the people arrive for Mass extraordinary ministers could help to greet the assembling body of Christ. Such ministers are called not only to recognize and proclaim the presence of Christ in consecrated bread and wine, but also in the flesh and blood of their fellow parishioners.

### **DURING MASS**

Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may take part in the entrance procession of the Mass or they may come forward from the assembly during the communion rite. In either situation, such ministers should be examples of prayer

and participation during the entire celebration of the liturgy. They should sing the hymns and acclamations of the Mass. They should direct their attention to the readers and listen as the Word of God is proclaimed. They should join in the spoken prayers and responses. They should never simply wait passively for their time to minister.

The special role of the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion occurs during the communion rite. Therefore, they might come forward into the sanctuary after the singing of the Great Amen, during the exchange of the sign of peace, or during the singing of the Lamb of God.

While the NCRHC states that extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion “approach the altar as the priest receives Communion,” (NCRHC 38) it should be noted that approaching the altar is not equivalent to entering the sanctuary. The NCRHC does not indicate when extraordinary ministers should enter the sanctuary area. However, it does state that such ministers, when in the sanctuary, do not approach the altar at which the priest has been celebrating Mass until he has begun his reception of Holy Communion.

During the singing of the Lamb of God, the required number of empty chalices and ciboria or plates are then brought to the altar. “The deacon or priest places the consecrated bread in several ciboria or patens and, if necessary, pours the Precious Blood into enough additional chalices as are 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. This action is usually carried out at the altar, so that the sharing of all from the one cup is signified; in the case of large assemblies, it may be done at the side table within the sanctuary (*presbyterium*).” (NCRHC 37)

It should be noted that neither the GIRM 2000 nor the NCRHC speak of ordinary or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion bringing the reserved Sacrament from the tabernacle. “As a general rule, Holy Communion is given from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and not from those reserved in the tabernacle. Precious Blood may not be reserved at one Mass for use at another.” (NCRHC 30, also see GIRM 2000 85)

The NCRHC does not permit extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to assist with breaking of the consecrated bread or its distribution into the other vessels. These actions are reserved to the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

Extraordinary ministers are also not permitted to pour the consecrated wine into additional chalices. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops had sought an indult allowing extraordinary ministers to assist in pouring the Precious Blood into other vessels but this was denied by Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. The Congregation stated that allowing extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to assist in pouring the Precious Blood would obscure their assisting role. The former norms, known as

*This Holy and Living Sacrifice, Directory for the Celebration and Reception of Communion under Both Kinds*, published by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1985, did permit extraordinary ministers to assist in the distribution of the consecrated bread and wine into other vessels.

It is interesting to note that Archbishop Francesco Pio Tamburrino, the Secretary of the Congregation of Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments wrote to the President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in July of 2000, saying, “those instances where large numbers of chalices are required for the distribution of the Eucharist under two species, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion... may assist with the pouring of the Precious Blood into ancillary chalices during the singing of the Lamb of God.” (See August 2000 issue of *Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy Newsletter*) However, when the NCRHC was approved and published this understanding had been changed. Only ordinary ministers of Holy Communion may place the consecrated bread and wine into the required number of smaller vessels.

If there is no deacon at the Mass or concelebrating priests to assist the priest celebrant in pouring the Precious Blood into other chalices, and placing the Body of Christ into other vessels, this part of the liturgy will obviously be lengthened. In this case additional tropes may be added to the singing of the Lamb of God. (See *Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy Newsletter*, October, 2002)

## RECEPTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY 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.” (NCRHC, 38) Extraordinary ministers receive the Body and Blood of Christ from the priest or deacon. After all such ministers have received, the priest or deacon then hands the vessels containing the Body or Blood of the Lord. (NCRHC 40 and GIRM 2000 162)

The NCRHC seems to require that the extraordinary ministers receive Holy Communion from the priest celebrant, the deacon, or from a concelebrant. If the priest celebrant is the only ordinary minister present and there are large number of extraordinary ministers, it would seem that there would be a delay as the priest distributes Holy Communion under both kinds to the extraordinary ministers and then hands them the vessels containing the consecrated bread and wine for them to distribute to the faithful. However, the *Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy Newsletter* suggests this problem can be solved if the priest celebrant goes “to the first two ministers and gives them the consecrated bread. He may then give them the Precious Blood, after which they may assist him in communicating the rest of the extraordinary ministers. After all the extraordinary ministers have received Communion, the priest celebrant returns to the altar. The ministers without vessels may then approach the priest and he hands each their proper vessel.” (October 2002)

“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.” (NCRHC 39)

Extraordinary ministers, like ordinary ministers, distribute Holy Communion to the faithful using the appropriate words, “The Body of Christ,” or “The Blood of Christ.”

“The faithful are not permitted to take the consecrated bread or the sacred chalice by themselves, or even less, to hand them from one to another.” (GIRM 2000 160). “The communicant, including the extraordinary minister, is never allowed to self-communicate, even by means of intinction. Communion under either form, bread or wine, must always be given by an ordinary or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion.” (NCRHC 50)

## COMMUNION FROM THE CUP

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* emphasizes the importance of communion under both kinds, that is under the form of bread and under the form of wine. “Holy Communion has a more complete form as a sign when it is received under both kinds. For in this manner of reception a fuller sign of the Eucharistic banquet shines forth. Moreover, there is a clearer expression of that will by which the new and everlasting covenant is ratified in the blood of the Lord and of the relationship of the Eucharistic banquet to the eschatological banquet in the Father’s kingdom.” (GIRM 2000 281)

“The faithful should be encouraged to desire more eagerly to participate in a sacred rite in which the sign of the Eucharistic banquet shines forth more fully.” (GIRM 2000 282)

After the distribution of Holy Communion whatever remains of the Precious Blood is to be consumed. “When more of the Precious Blood remains than was necessary for Communion, and if not consumed by the bishop or priest celebrant, the deacon immediately and reverently consumes at the altar all of the Blood of Christ which remains; he may be assisted, if needs dictate, 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.” (NCRHC 52)

“After the distribution of Communion, particular attention must be paid to consuming at the altar immediately and completely whatever may remain of the Blood of Christ.” (GIRM 2000 279) “The reverence due to the Precious Blood of the Lord demands that it be fully consumed after Communion is completed and never be poured into the ground or the sacrarium.” (NCRHC 55)

It should be noted that the need to consume whatever remains of the Precious Blood is so overriding in importance, that extraordinary ministers, other ministers, or even members of the assembly may assist in consuming what remains after the distribution of Holy Communion. As Cardinal Jorge Arturo Medina Estévez, former Prefect of the Congregation of Divine Worship and the Discipline of

the Sacraments, wrote, "Rather given the grave and overriding need to safeguard the Precious Blood, ministers of Holy Communion or other communicants may consume what remains of the Precious Blood in a dignified and reverent manner." (*Bishop's Committee on the Liturgy Newsletter*, March, April 2002) The Precious Blood may only be reserved if it is to be brought to the sick. "Only sick people who are unable to receive Communion under the form of bread may receive it under the form of wine alone at the discretion of the priest. If not consecrated at a Mass in the presence of the sick person, the Blood of the Lord is kept in a properly covered vessel and is placed in the tabernacle after Communion." (NCRHC 54)

Whatever remains of the consecrated bread is placed in the tabernacle, or like the consecrated wine, is consumed. "If there are consecrated hosts left, he (the priest) either consumes them at the altar or carries them to the place designated for the reservation of the Eucharist." (GIRM 2000 163)

While the NCRHC seems to indicate that "after Communion the consecrated bread that remains is to be reserved in the tabernacle. (NCRHC 51), it also makes provision for consuming of whatever remains of the consecrated bread after the distribution of Holy Communion. (See NCRHC 53.)

#### PURIFICATION OF THE VESSELS

The chalices and other vessels used for Holy Communion may be purified at a side table immediately after the distribution of Communion. "Nevertheless, it is also permitted, especially if there

are several vessels to be cleansed, to leave them suitably covered on a corporal, either at the altar or a side table, and to cleanse them immediately after Mass following the dismissal of the people." (GIRM 2000 163, also see NCRHC 53)

While the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* states that "The sacred vessels are cleansed by the priest, the deacon, or an instituted acolyte after Communion or after Mass, whenever possible, at a side table." (279), extraordinary minister may also cleanse these vessels.

"For grave pastoral reasons, the diocesan Bishop may grant to priest celebrants the faculty to permit extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to assist with the purification of sacred vessels after the distribution of Communion at Mass. This faculty dispenses from the norm of the GIRM for a period of three years." (Decree of United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, March 28, 2002, promulgation of March 22, 2002 decree of Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of Sacraments) Since in most places extraordinary ministers have been purifying the vessels since introduction of the ministry, it would seem likely that they would continue to do so. In the Archdiocese of Newark, the present Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of the Holy Eucharist permit extraordinary ministers to purify the vessels.

#### A RETURN TO THE BEGINNING

After examining the recent liturgical documentation dealing with the role of the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, we can return to the beginning of this article and state what is correct and what is not.

- "The Eucharistic ministers cannot come into the sanctuary until after the priest has received Holy Communion. Until that time they have to stay away from the altar." ONLY PARTIALLY TRUE. They may not approach the altar itself until the priest has received, but they may enter the sanctuary at an earlier time.
- "During the singing of the Lamb of God, the Eucharistic ministers cannot take the consecrated hosts from one large vessel and help place them into other smaller plates or bowls. The priest must do this." TRUE
- "An Eucharistic minister can no longer pour the consecrated wine from a decanter or a large chalice into smaller chalices. This can only be done by the priest or by a deacon." TRUE
- "The priest has to be the first one to touch the sacred vessels. He must hand them to the Eucharistic ministers. They cannot pick them up from the altar." TRUE
- "Eucharistic ministers can no longer purify the sacred vessels used for Holy Communion." FALSE
- "You cannot call the people who distribute Holy Communion at Mass Eucharistic ministers, or even special ministers, you have to call them extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. You have to use the old term." TRUE
- "It is preferred that priests or deacons distribute Holy

Communion." TRUE, provided such ordinary ministers are available.

- "Eucharistic ministers are now required to wear albs when exercising their ministry." FALSE

Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski  
Pastor, Our Lady of Czestochowa  
Jersey City  
Associate Director of Parish Life  
Worship Office

<b>Staff Editor</b> Rev. Charles Pinyan
<b>Design/Layout</b> Rev. Michael C. Santoro
<b>Editorial Board</b> Joan Conroy Sr. Sandra DeMasi, SSJ Rev. Thomas A. Dente Rev. Peter K. Funesti Dr. E. Regina Giuliani Rev. Msgr. Richard Groncki Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski Sr. Marlene Milasus, OSB Sr. Gerardine Mueller, OP Rev. Michael C. Santoro
<b>Contributors</b> Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski, and the staff of the Worship Office
<b>Subscription Information</b> One year subscription to <i>Word on Worship</i> , 4 issues, \$10.00. Special Bulk rate, five or more issues to the same address, \$8.50 per year per subscription. Foreign subscription, \$13.50 per year. To begin your subscription call 973-497-4345.
<b>Website:</b> <a href="http://www.rcan.org/worship">www.rcan.org/worship</a>

# Order Now!

## Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America

The U.S. Catholic bishops outline the methods of distributing Holy Communion to the faithful under both kinds. Having received the *recognito* of the Apostolic See, this document clearly affirms that the restoration of the distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds does not represent a change in the Church's traditional beliefs concerning the Holy Eucharist. It seeks to acknowledge this custom, which has not been universally practiced since the Council of Trent was convened in 1545.

Ideal for pastors, deacons, Eucharistic ministers, and liturgists. **Cost: \$5.95**

**To order call: (973) 497-4345, Fax (973) 497- 4348 or 4031 or mail this order form to :  
THE WORSHIP OFFICE, PO Box 9500, NEWARK, NJ 07104-0500**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PARISH \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Quantity	Item	Unit Price	Total
----------	------	------------	-------

\_\_\_\_\_ *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion* \$5.95 \_\_\_\_\_

*FOR SHIPPING AND HANDLING ADD \$1.50*

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_



Worship Office  
PO Box 9500  
Newark, NJ 07104-0500

NON-PROFITORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PermitNo. 5406  
NEWARK, NJ