

INSTRUCTIONS FOR EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION AT MASS

St. Joseph (Westphalia) and St. Anthony (Folk)

last updated March, 2024

I. EXCERPTS FROM THE *COMPENDIUM OF THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*

280. In what way is the Eucharist a *memorial* of the sacrifice of Christ?

The Eucharist is a *memorial* in the sense that it makes present and actual the sacrifice which Christ offered to the Father on the cross, once and for all on behalf of mankind. The sacrificial character of the Holy Eucharist is manifested in the very words of institution, “This is my Body which is given for you” and “This cup is the New Covenant in my Blood that will be shed for you” (Luke 22:19-20). The sacrifice of the cross and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one and the same sacrifice*. The priest and the victim are the same; only the manner of offering is different: in a bloody manner on the cross, in an unbloody manner in the Eucharist.

281. In what way does the Church participate in the eucharistic sacrifice?

In the Eucharist the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his Body. The lives of the faithful, their praise, their suffering, their prayers, their work, are united to those of Christ. In as much as it is a sacrifice, the Eucharist is likewise offered for all the faithful, living and dead, in reparation for the sins of all and to obtain spiritual and temporal benefits from God. The Church in heaven is also united to the offering of Christ.

282. How is Christ present in the Eucharist?

Jesus Christ is present in the Eucharist in a unique and incomparable way. He is present in a true, real and substantial way, with his Body and his Blood, with his Soul and his Divinity. In the Eucharist, therefore, there is present in a sacramental way, that is, under the Eucharistic species of bread and wine, Christ whole and entire, God and Man.

283. What is the meaning of *transubstantiation*?

Transubstantiation means the change of the whole substance of bread into the substance of the Body of Christ and of the whole substance of wine into the substance of his Blood. This change is brought about in the eucharistic prayer through the efficacy of the word of Christ and by the action of the Holy Spirit. However, the outward characteristics of bread and wine, that is the “eucharistic species”, remain unaltered.

284. Does the breaking of the bread divide Christ?

The breaking of the bread does not divide Christ. He is present whole and entire in each of the eucharistic species and in each of their parts.

285. How long does the presence of Christ last in the Eucharist?

The presence of Christ continues in the Eucharist as long as the eucharistic species subsist.

286. What kind of worship is due to the sacrament of the Eucharist?

The worship due to the sacrament of the Eucharist, whether during the celebration of the Mass or outside it, is the worship of *latria*, that is, the adoration given to God alone. The Church guards with the greatest care Hosts that have been consecrated. She brings them to the sick and to other persons who find it impossible to participate at Mass. She also presents them for the solemn adoration of the faithful and she bears them in processions. The Church encourages the faithful to make frequent visits to adore the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle.

II. PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

What is an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion?

Bishops, priests, and deacons are *ordinary* ministers of Holy Communion. *Extraordinary* ministers of Holy Communion are lay people who have been commissioned to distribute Holy Communion in assistance to the ordinary ministers when needed.

What is the name of this role?

“This function is to be understood strictly according to the name by which it is known, that is to say, that of extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, and not ‘special minister of Holy Communion’ nor ‘extraordinary minister of the Eucharist’ nor ‘special minister of the Eucharist,’ by which names the meaning of this function is unnecessarily and improperly broadened.” (Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, no. 156)

Who may serve in this role?

Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should be practicing Catholics, confirmed, at least 18 years old, suitably trained, not living in a situation that would preclude the exercise of public liturgical roles (e.g., not married outside the Church, not a source of public scandal, etc.), and be properly commissioned by the diocesan bishop or *ad hoc* delegated by the pastor.

III. INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) Please arrive at your scheduled Mass on time. If you can't be present, please arrange for a qualified substitute. Please dress modestly and reverently. Avoid clothing with slogans, words, or distracting images.
- 2) Participate in Mass as you normally would up until the sign of peace.
- 3) During the sign of peace or as the Lamb of God (*Agnus Dei*) is beginning, come to the edge of the sanctuary. At St. Joseph, kneel (or stand if unable) at the Communion rail. At St. Anthony, kneel (or stand) at the step.
- 4) After the priest has drunk from the chalice, enter the sanctuary and cleanse your hands with the hand sanitizer on the credence table. Then approach the altar to receive Holy Communion. Please come close enough to receive Communion easily.
- 5) To distribute Holy Communion:

To the choir loft: Receive the small ciborium from the priest and go immediately to the choir loft. There, in a way that is convenient for the musicians/cantors/choir, distribute Holy Communion reverently. When finished, return to the sanctuary. Place the small ciborium on the altar and remove its lid. Cleanse your fingers in the ablution cup and dry them on the purificator. Never leave the Blessed Sacrament in the choir loft.

At the rail at St. Joseph: Receive the ciborium from the priest and go down toward the altar rail (usually on Mary's side). You may have to go to people (elderly, infirm, etc.) who are physically unable to come forward. Distribute Communion to them first. Then go to the rail and distribute Communion to those lined up at the rail, beginning from the pillar and moving toward the center aisle. When you reach the center aisle, return to the pillar and repeat.

- 6) When distributing Holy Communion:

Hold up a Host and say "The Body of Christ." The communicant responds "Amen" and receives Holy Communion (either on the tongue or in the hand, standing or kneeling, at the discretion of the one receiving).

If someone comes up with arms crossed to indicate that they will not receive Holy Communion, you may say "God loves you," or "Receive Jesus in your heart," or "May God help and protect you." Do not touch the person or make any gesture over them.

- 7) After distributing Holy Communion:

When finished distributing, return the ciborium to the altar and cleanse your fingers in the ablution cup on the credence table, drying them on the purificator.

Then return to the rail (St. Joseph) or step (St. Anthony), kneeling (or standing) until the tabernacle is closed.

Return to your place in the pews.

IV. OTHER QUESTIONS

What if a Host or part of a Host falls?

If a Host or any identifiable part of it falls to the floor, immediately pause and tell the priest. If a Host falls and lands on the Communion paten, pick it up reverently and distribute it. Be careful that no fragments of the Host are lost.

What if someone takes a Host but does not consume it?

Please ask the person politely whether they are Catholic. If not, please ask for the Host back from them, apologize for any confusion, and wish the person well. If the person is Catholic, please ask them to consume the Host. If you feel uncomfortable or do not know what to do, please tell the priest immediately. If a person simply walks off without consuming the Host, stop the person if you can and tell the priest immediately.

V. RESOURCES

From the recent Popes on the Holy Eucharist:

Paul VI, *Mysterium fidei* (3 September 1965).

John Paul II, *Dominicae cenae* (24 February 1980).

John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17 April 2003).

John Paul II, *Mane nobiscum Domine* (7 October 2004).

Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis* (22 February 2007).

From the Holy See, on extraordinary ministers:

Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments, *Immensae caritatis* (29 January 1973).

Inter-dicasterial Instruction, *Ecclesiae de mysterio* (15 August 1997), Practical Provisions Article 8.

Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (25 March 2004), 88, 133, and 146-160.

From the Holy See, on giving blessings during Holy Communion:

Letter of 22 November 2008. Protocol No. 930/08/L.

From the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

Committee on Divine Worship, *Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion at Mass* (2010).