EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION DURING MASS

“For as often as you eat this bread
and drink the cup
you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”
(1 Corinthians 11:26)

THE EUCHARIST

- memorial of Christ’s death and resurrection,
- sacrament of love
- sign of unity
- bond of charity
- a paschal banquet in which
  - Christ is eaten
  - the mind is filled with grace
  - and a pledge of future glory is given to us

[Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (1963) #47]

THE MYSTERY

If you are the body and members of Christ, then it is your sacrament that is placed on the table of the Lord; it is your sacrament that you receive. To that which you are you respond "Amen" and by responding to it you assent to it. For you hear the words, "the Body of Christ" and respond "Amen.”

Be then a member of the Body of Christ that your Amen may be true.

(Augustine Sermo 272)

THE MANDATE

The priest may be assisted in the distribution of Communion by other priests who happen to be present. If such priests are not present and there is a very large number of communicants, the priest may call upon extraordinary ministers to assist him, i.e., duly instituted acolytes or even other faithful who have been deputed for this purpose. In case of necessity, the priest may depute suitable faithful for this single occasion.

[General Instruction of the Roman Missal (2007) #162]

THE CALL

Let them [the faithful who are special ministers of communion] strive to be worthy of this great office, foster their own devotion to the eucharist and show an example to the rest of the faithful by their own devotion and reverence towards the most august sacrament of the altar.

[Immensae caritatis (1973) VI]
THE COMMISSION

Rite of Deputing a Minister to Distribute Holy Communion on a Single Occasion

*May the Lord + bless you, so that at this Mass you may minister the Body and Blood of Christ to your brothers and sisters.  R. Amen.*

(Roman Missal)

THE NORM

*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 instances when it is permitted, they partake of 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.*

[GIREF (2007) #85]

THE MINISTRY

Prepare

Dress neatly and modestly as befits the dignity of the ministry you are about to engage in, and ensure that your hands are clean.

Connect

Arrive early enough to indicate your presence to the presiding priest or liturgy coordinator and to ascertain where you will minister the consecrated bread or wine.

Participate

Take your place with the worshipping community and participate fully, actively and consciously in the celebration.

Come

Come forward as the presiding priest receives Holy Communion and stand at the side of the altar.

Receive

Receive Holy Communion with faith and reverence.

Accept

Allow the presiding priest to hand you the vessel with either the Body or the Blood of Christ. Normally the presiding celebrant ministers the host, assisted if needed by others, while by tradition the deacon ministers the chalice. Otherwise no distinction is made as to who distributes which of the consecrated elements.

Move

When all the ministers are ready, move reverently to your station.

Proclaim

If you are ministering the Bread of Life, hold up the host as the communicant comes before you, address them with the words “The Body of Christ”, and allow them to reply “Amen”. This is a dialogue of faith to be done with deliberation.

Minister

Place the host in the person’s hand or on their tongue, remembering that the mode of reception is for the communicant, not the minister, to choose. If on the tongue, place the host without allowing your fingers to touch the tongue.
Minister the cup

If you are ministering the chalice, hold the chalice up as the communicant comes before you and address them with the words “The Blood of Christ” and allow them to reply “Amen”. Carefully hand the chalice over to them, and allow them to take a sip of the consecrated wine and hand the chalice back to you. Be ready to render additional assistance to children and the disabled if required. Wipe both sides of the rim of the chalice with the purifier, then turn the chalice enough to present the next communicant with a fresh surface.

Conclude

Once all the Precious Blood is consumed, even if there are more communicants, leave your station and return the empty chalice to the credence table. If there is consecrated wine left over at the end of Holy Communion, take the chalice back to the altar for the presiding priest to consume the remaining Precious Blood (GIRM #284b). Be ready to assist him if requested.

Return

If there are hosts remaining, wait until the presiding priest or a minister he delegates has placed these in the tabernacle, then reverently return to your place in the church and continue your participation in the celebration.

ADDITIONAL POINTS

- The church encourages the faithful to receive Holy Communion with bread consecrated at the Mass they attend (GIRM #85).

- A worshipper, whether child or adult, may come forward in the Communion procession with arms folded to indicate their desire for spiritual rather than sacramental Communion. In that case follow diocesan directives as to the appropriate word or gesture. One option could be to hold up the host before the person and say “May Jesus Christ dwell in your heart.”

- If a communicant receives on the hand and begins to move away before consuming the consecrated host, gently intervene and ask them to complete their Communion before you.

- If you or the communicant drops the host, pick it and any large crumbs up immediately, place it aside and give a fresh host to the communicant.

- Normally it suffices to have two ministers of the chalice for each minister of the consecrated bread.

- Holy Communion is always received from a minister, never taken for themselves by communicants. They are therefore not permitted to dip the host into the consecrated wine to serve themselves Holy Communion by intinction. All are encouraged to receive the Precious Blood by drinking from the chalice offered them.
If any Precious Blood is spilt, immediately wipe it up as much as possible with the purifier (or if necessary a larger cloth such as a towel), ensure that the affected area is avoided, and leave the full cleaning to be done after Mass is over.

“... it is also permitted, especially if there are several vessels to be purified, to leave them suitably covered on a corporal, either at the altar or at the credence table, and to purify them immediately after Mass following the dismissal of the people.”
(GIRM #163)

So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.
(John 13:14-15)

Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink.
(John 6:54-55)

PRAYER

Holy God,
your Son Jesus bade us remember him
in the breaking of bread and the sharing of the cup.
We bless and praise you for these gifts
which call us into the mystery of his death and resurrection
and make of us one body, one spirit, in Christ.
May we who are called to minister
the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation
to our brothers and sisters
do so in humility and faith
and grow in thankfulness for so great a grace.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FOR FURTHER REFERENCE


