



**GUIDELINES
FOR
EXTRAORDINARY
MINISTERS
OF
HOLY COMMUNION**

DIOCESE OF LANSING

formation. At least annually a retreat day or evening of recollection should be scheduled for Eucharistic Ministers so that their ministry may be strengthened by mutual prayer, study, and sharing.

The support of the parish community for its Eucharistic Ministers is encouraged by their public commissioning, giving them a formal recognition and mission. Even on those rare occasions when non-trained volunteers may be used to assist with communion for a particular occasion, they should be commissioned for that task. Occasional prayers for the parish's Eucharistic Ministers (and all ministers) in the General Intercessions would provide both spiritual support and recognition of the ministry.

COMMUNION TO THE SICK:

An important aspect of the Eucharistic ministry is making that ministry available to those who are ill, elderly, or homebound. The purpose of Eucharistic ministry to these people is not only to "bring Jesus to them," but also to unite them spiritually to the prayers and concern of the whole community of Christians, particularly of the parish community from which the minister is sent. Eucharistic Ministers who distribute communion in hospitals, nursing homes, or private homes should be men and women who are comfortable being with those who are sick, aged, injured, or dying. They should be able to make receiving communion an unhurried and prayerful experience for the sick or homebound person.

It is clear from all this that those undertaking the ministry of bringing the Eucharist to the sick and homebound need special training and support beyond that given to those who distribute communion at Mass. This training, in addition to the spiritual and theological formation given to all Eucharistic Ministers, might include issues dealing with illness and death. Those who conduct the training might include such professionals as medical personnel, counselors, and hospital chaplains. They should inform the Eucharistic Ministers of policies and procedures in the institutions they visit which might affect their ministry.

The parish community can support these ministers by their private and public prayers for them and for the sick. Additional support for and visibility of this

important ministry could come from a weekly "sending forth" of these ministers from the Eucharistic assembly to those who are prevented by age or illness from joining in worship with the assembly.

COMMUNION SERVICES:

Another specialized part of Eucharistic Ministry is the increasing need for communion services at times when no priest is available for Mass. Like the distribution of communion to the sick and homebound, the special ministry of leading communion services demands ministers with special talents and training. They must be competent in planning, preparing, and leading worship services. If they have been appointed to offer a commentary on the readings of the day, they should have the necessary scriptural and theological knowledge to do so competently. They should be familiar with the structure and theory of the communion service as defined in the instruction *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*.

*"This cup is the
new covenant
in my blood.
Do this in
remembrance
of me."*

1 Corinthians 11:25

INTRODUCTION:

Recent decades have seen an evolution of the Church's understanding of and appreciation for the Eucharist. Since the reforms of Pope St. Pius X early in this century, frequency of communion has greatly increased. The Second Vatican Council proclaimed the centrality of the Eucharist in our Catholic faith, declaring it is the source and center of our life as Christians. Since the Council, there have been noteworthy changes such as the restoration of the practice of receiving communion under the forms of both bread and wine, and revival of the custom of the laity receiving communion in their hands.

Another significant change, expressed in the 1973 Vatican instruction *Immensae Caritatis*, was the permission for non-ordained ministers to distribute holy communion, both during and outside Mass. In the years since that permission was given, distribution of communion by lay women and men has become a well-accepted element in liturgical practice. In some places, however, there has been a lack of recognition of Eucharistic ministry as true *ministry*. In some parishes there is little or no training or support for Eucharistic Ministers. In some places there are no designated Eucharistic Ministers; whoever wishes may come forward to help distribute communion.

*“This is my body
that is for YOU.
Do this in
remembrance
of me.”*

1 Corinthians 11:24

THE EUCHARISTIC MINISTER:

“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord. . .” (1 Corinthians 12:4) The role of Eucharistic Minister, like all roles of service, is a true ministry, called forth from those who have the special gifts for that ministry. The ministry of the Eucharist is a ministry of **gift-giving**. It should, therefore, be a ministry for those who themselves are loving, generous, and self-giving people. The ministry of the Eucharist is also a ministry of **welcoming**. It should, therefore, be a ministry for those who are warm and accepting, who can look each person in the eye comfortably and without embarrassment, and who can welcome all without judging any.

The person invited to be a Eucharistic Minister should have a sense of reverence for the Eucharist that is obvious to all and which encourages an equal reverence in those receiving communion. If the Eucharistic Minister appears rushed or distracted and unaware of the sacred gift they are giving, they are not being true *ministers* of the Eucharist.

FORMATION AND TRAINING:

Formation of the Eucharistic Minister is based on a deep appreciation of the Eucharist as Jesus Christ's greatest gift to his Church. Eucharistic ministers should receive catechesis on the theological and scriptural references concerning the Eucharist and the subsequent historical developments in the Church's understanding. They should have some knowledge of the Eucharist as Sacrifice and Meal, of the meaning of the Real Presence, and how the Eucharist relates to the other sacraments. Also, the development of appropriate Eucharistic devotion should be fostered. The training of the Eucharistic Minister should also, of course, include practical information such as where to stand, when to come forward to the altar, what to say, what to do after distributing, etc.

In view of the importance of the ministry and the education it requires, a minimum of two training sessions is desirable.

In addition to that initial training, Eucharistic Ministers should receive ongoing support and

REQUIREMENTS:

Those who aspire to be Eucharistic Ministers should be people of mature and demonstrated faith. They should be effective Christian witnesses and active in the sacramental life of the Church. They must have received the Sacraments of Initiation.

Once candidates have been trained, their names are submitted to the Diocesan Office of Worship. They are then granted permission to distribute communion in their parish. This authorization is granted for a period of two years and is renewable with the expectation that continuing formation and discernment is provided. When visiting another parish, commissioned Eucharistic Ministers may be delegated, with the permission of the pastor, to distribute Holy Communion in case of necessity.

Eucharistic Ministers are to be commissioned by the local pastor or other designated authority according to the approved rite and in the presence of the liturgical assembly either within or outside of Mass.

RESOURCES:

The following resources can be helpful in the training and support of Eucharistic Ministers. They are available at the Diocesan Office of Worship.

Videos:

Making Sunday Worship Work, Franciscan Communications

Training the Eucharistic Minister, The Liturgical Press

The DeSales Program: "Our Celebration of the Eucharist" Series

Books:

The Communion Rite at Sunday Mass, Gabe Huck: Liturgy Training Publications

Holy and Living Sacrifice: A Directory for the celebration and reception of communion under both species, United States Catholic Conference (USCC)

Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass, USCC

An Important Office of Immense Love: A Handbook for Eucharistic Ministers, Joseph M. Champlin: Paulist Press

Ministry to the Sick, Nicklas: Alba House
Pastoral Care of the Sick, USCC

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