

Extraordinary Ministers Of Communion

(Cf. General Instruction of the Roman Missal/GIRM)



Overview

- **The General Instruction of the Roman Missal makes a distinction between a formally instituted acolyte, which is a permanent ministry, and other ministers who serve the priest or distribute communion as an extraordinary minister.**
- **A formally instituted acolyte may assist the priest as an extraordinary minister in giving communion to the people. In the absence of a deacon the acolyte may administer the chalice (see nos. 187, 191)**

Communion Rite

- **The extraordinary ministers should not approach the altar before the priest has received Communion.**
- **After their Communion they accept from the hands of the priest celebrant the vessel containing either species of the Most Holy Eucharist for distribution to the faithful. (86, 162)**
- **The intention of this legislation is that extraordinary ministers of communion do not stand at the altar for the Eucharistic Prayer and that they are not confused with concelebrants.**
- **Since their ministry is to assist the priest and deacon with the distribution of communion, there is no reason for them to stand at the altar during the celebration.**
- **They do come to the altar to receive communion before distributing it to the people, following the principle that one cannot give what one has not received.**

- **This directive does not prohibit the communion ministers from taking their places in the sanctuary for the celebration, or moving into the sanctuary during the sign of peace. In this way they are ready to move to the altar to receive communion themselves so as not to delay unduly the communion of the faithful.**
- **The extraordinary ministers of communion are no longer permitted to assist the priest in breaking the bread (83), or to purify or cleanse the sacred vessels --this is reserved to a formally instituted acolyte, a deacon or the priest (279).**
- **It is not permitted to pour the consecrated wine into other chalices (83). Sufficient chalices should be brought to the altar at the Preparation of the Gifts.**
- **The priest or minister raises the host slightly and shows it to each person, saying: “*The Body of Christ*”. The communicant replies: “*Amen,*” and receives the Sacrament either on the tongue or in the hand. (161)**
- **The same procedure is followed by those ministering the Chalice, as they say: “*The Blood of Christ.*” (284-287).**

Communion of the People

- **The faithful communicate either standing or kneeling, as determined by the Conference of Bishops.**
- **When they communicate standing, however, it is recommended that they make an appropriate sign of reverence (a slight bow), as determined in the same norms, before receiving the Sacrament. (160)**
- **If the host or any particle of it should fall, it is to be picked up reverently. If any of the precious Blood spills, the area where the spill occurred should be washed and the water poured into the sacrarium.... (280)**

After Communion

- **When they have finished the distribution of Communion, the extraordinary ministers of communion return the vessels of eucharistic Bread or consecrated Wine to the priest or deacon at the altar (see no. 163).**

- **When fragments of the hosts adhere to the fingers, the ministers of the consecrated bread go to the credence table to purify their fingers, then they return to their places (see no. 278).**
- **After Communion, as circumstances allow, the priest and faithful spend some time praying silently praising God in their hearts.**
- **To complete the prayer of the people of God, and also to conclude the entire Communion rite, the priest offers the prayer after communion in which he petitions for the fruits of the mysteries just celebrated. (88-89, 45)**