

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

Archdiocese of St. Louis

The climax of the Eucharistic liturgy is the “breaking and sharing” of the consecrated bread and the sharing of the cup, “the blood of the new and everlasting covenant.” More than a practical necessity, the presence of communion ministers provides an image of the fullness of receiving communion. More than an individual reception of our Eucharistic Lord, this ministry reflects the “one body, one spirit in Christ” celebrated and nourished in the celebration of Mass.

1. Pastors and religious superiors need to consult with their parish council or community to determine the needs and the persons best qualified to serve the parish or institution in this ministry. After the persons accept the invitation to serve, two copies of the candidates' names are sent to the Archbishop for appointment. One copy will be returned with his confirmation.
2. Communion ministers need to possess a love of the Eucharist and be living lives consistent with the teachings of the Church. Their role is not to be visibly confused with the distinct roles of others such as the deacon, reader, cantor or servers.
3. In the Archdiocese of St. Louis the minimum age for communion ministers is eighteen (as of Oct. 1997). The ministry is open to both women and men. Published materials are readily available for the training and continuing education of communion ministers.
4. Communion ministers may exercise their ministry during Mass, and to the homebound outside Mass. When pastoral need warrants it, they may also distribute communion at a liturgy of the word. They may fulfill their ministry in any parish or institution of the archdiocese with the approval of the local pastor. They need to see their role as ministers of both the bread and the cup.
5. Priests and deacons are the ordinary ministers of communion. Extraordinary ministers assist when necessary. Parishes need to have a sufficient number of ministers to provide for the needs of the community.
6. Because some members of a parish may consider the cup a less real form of communion some parishes find it helpful to have the assisting priest distribute a cup while a minister distributes the consecrated bread. NOTE: Because some will only receive under the form of bread and only from a priest, it is important that at least one priest distribute the consecrated bread.
7. All ministers need to be properly trained in both the practice and the theology of their ministry before beginning. Communion is to be distributed according to the correct liturgical norms and with due reverence shown to the Blessed Sacrament.
8. Communion ministers are not simply distributing items to individuals but participating in an essential moment in the mystery of faith, a moment of inviting others and self to recognize and reverence the body of Christ in its many dimensions. This is reflected in the Church's regulations that ministers are to announce “The body of Christ” never “This is the body of Christ.”
9. The commissioning of extraordinary ministers of communion may take place when their appointment by the Archbishop has been received, and ordinarily it takes place during the Eucharist. The rite of commissioning will accompany the notification of appointments and is also printed in the Sacramentary.

10. With regard to the homebound, it is best for the priest to visit them to explain the service of the extraordinary ministers. The priest normally introduces the ministers to the people they will serve. This practice of bringing communion to the homebound is best exercised on the Lord's Day. A priest continues to visit them periodically to anoint them and to celebrate reconciliation.
11. In parishes where extraordinary ministers are being used for the first time, it is important that the people be given a clear explanation of the ministry beforehand.
12. The length of service for each extraordinary minister is left to the discretion of the pastor or religious superior, as long as the minister remains a member of the parish or community. It is often suggested that a "term of service" be established so others may be offered the opportunity and present ministers may resume previous activities.
13. It is important to maintain the scheduling of this ministry even during difficult vacation months lest the impression be given that the ministry is trivial or unimportant.
14. The following are additional considerations and guidelines:
 - Extraordinary ministers may be part of the entrance procession.
 - They may be seated in reserved pews as a group or throughout the assembly with family members.
 - They may be vested or dressed appropriately for their public ministry.
 - Extraordinary ministers approach the altar only after the priest has received communion, and as the "Communion Song" begins.
 - After the priest has concluded his own Communion, he distributes Communion to the extraordinary ministers, assisted by the deacon.

NOTE: Some ministers might be appointed for each Mass to care for the communion cups, seeing that they are properly purified and washed for the next celebration. Remaining consecrated wine is to be consumed; it is never emptied into the sacrarium or a common drain.

The form on the following page may be copied, completed and sent to the Archbishop in care of the office of the Vice Chancellor.

**Request for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
Archdiocese of St. Louis**

Please submit the form(s) in duplicate. One copy will be returned to you.

Dear Archbishop,

I respectfully request that you approve the commissioning of the following persons as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to serve in our Parish/Institution (or attach list):

Name	Address	Age
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Signed _____ Date _____

Parish/Institution _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

I hereby approve of the above (attached) persons as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

By order of the Archbishop

Chancery Office

Chancellor

Date

Rite for Commissioning Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (A similar Rite may be found in the *Book of Blessings*, Chapter 63)

1. The commissioning takes place during Mass, with the people present. After the homily, which should stress the pastoral reasons for this service to the Christian community, the priest presents the ministers-elect to the people in these or similar words:

Our brothers and sisters have been entrusted with the important duty of distributing Holy Communion to their fellow Christians.

You, my brothers and sisters, have been chosen for an important office and must strive more earnestly than ever to live the Christian life, to give good example, to take your faith more seriously, and to be devoted to this great mystery which beautifully signifies the unity of the Church and wonderfully brings it about: we who share this one bread become one body in Christ Jesus.

Since you are to give the Eucharist to your brothers and sisters in Christ, you must try to practice that fraternal charity which was commanded by Our Lord. He gave His body as food to His disciples and told them: "This, then, is what I command you: 'Love one another.'"

2. After the instruction, the ministers-elect stand before the priest, who asks:

Are you resolved to undertake this office of giving the Body and Blood of Christ to your brothers and sisters for the service and growth of the Church?

Ministers-elect: **I am.**

Are you resolved to reverence and care for the Eucharist which you will administer?

Ministers-elect: **I am.**

3. All stand. The ministers-elect kneel, and the priest invites all present to pray:

My brothers and sisters, let us pray to God our Father that our brothers and sisters chosen to administer the Body and Blood of Christ may be filled with His blessing. (All pray silently, then the priest continues.)

Father of mercy, source of all grace and blessing, bless **B** these our brothers and sisters. May they faithfully distribute the Sacrament to their brothers and sisters, be strengthened and comforted by it, and one day be found worthy to share in the everlasting banquet of heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **R. Amen**

4. An invocation for the newly designated ministers is added to the intercessions.
5. In the procession at the offertory, the newly designated ministers bring the bread and wine to the altar, and receive under both kinds at Communion.