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**Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion,
Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Saint Thomas the Apostle,
Melbourne, Australia.**

As per CCEO Can709.2, and after due consultation, I hereby establish the *Guidelines for the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion in the Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Saint Thomas the Apostle, Melbourne, Australia.*

+Bosco Puthur



**Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion,
Syro-Malabar Eparchy of Saint Thomas the Apostle,
Melbourne, Australia.**

**I
General Norms**

1. The ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are the Bishop, Priest and Deacon.
2. An extraordinary minister of Holy Communion¹ is a religious or lay person who has been deputed by the bishop for a period of time to assist the priest and deacon in distributing Holy Communion to the faithful on those occasions where a shortage of ordained clergy makes it impossible for them

¹ Relevant canons from the *Code of Canons for the Oriental churches* (CCEO) Can 709, 1 & 2; and from the *Code of the Particular Law of the Syro-Malabar Church*, Art. 144.

to distribute Holy Communion to all the faithful in a reasonable way. It is thus a privilege to which the Church invites certain individuals under given circumstances.²

Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may be appointed in parishes, religious houses, and chaplaincies in situations of genuine pastoral need where ordinary ministers are not available or are insufficient in number:

- a. to facilitate the distribution of Holy Communion within Holy *Qurbana* when there is a large number of communicants;
- b. to allow for a more frequent, even daily, administration of Holy Communion outside of *Qurbana* to those impeded from attending *Qurbana* because of sickness or physical weakness.

3. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion assist priests and deacons in administering Holy Communion. They may not replace them, except on those occasions when the ordinary minister is impeded from administering Holy Communion because of ill health, advanced age, or other pressing pastoral obligations.

4. It is the responsibility of parish priest/chaplain/religious superior, within their respective jurisdictions, to evaluate the need for extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion and to identify worthy candidates for this service. The number of extraordinary ministers in a parish, chaplaincy or religious house should correspond to genuine pastoral need. The number should not be so few as to unduly burden any one minister, yet not so large as to make it appear that this ministry is a regular and normal expression of lay participation in the Eucharist.

5. To serve as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, persons must:
- a. be practicing Catholics, distinguished in their Christian life, faith and morals and be a registered member of the parish/mission
 - b. be at least 18 years old;
 - c. have received the sacraments of (Initiation) Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist and regularly receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation and take part in the celebration of the Holy *Qurbana*;
 - d. demonstrate a deep reverence for and devotion to the holy Eucharist;
 - e. possess the requisite abilities and temperament to carry out their assigned duties;
 - f. follow child safeguarding policies and guidelines as set by the Syro-Malabar Eparchy of St Thomas the Apostle, Melbourne, Australia;
 - g. adhere to the code of conduct of Syro-Malabar Eparchy and demonstrate positive morale in the community;

² “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” (*Redemptionis Sacramentum* No. 156).

- h. agree to undertake background check, obtain a WWCC or a legally valid equivalent approved by the State/Eparchy and complete Safer Church training in accordance with the Eparchy policy;
- i. escalate any child protection matters as per policy.

6. Ordinarily Priests or deacons take Holy Communion to the sick. If extraordinary ministers are assigned for the ministry, special care must be exercised in the choice of those candidates who will take Holy Communion to the sick. In addition to meeting the qualifications listed above, they must be persons who will deal with the sick and the aged in a compassionate and understanding manner, always conscious of the serious obligation to respect the confidence of those to whom they minister.

7. Care should be taken that the selection of extraordinary ministers reflects, as far as possible, the diversity of the community. Candidates may be lay people (men or women) or those in consecrated life. In order to make sure of selecting worthy candidates, the parish priest may seek, in secrecy, the advice of the members of the Parish Council.

8. The parish priest/chaplain should interview all candidates prior to presenting them for nomination to the Eparchial Bishop. The interview should provide the candidates with the opportunity to express their belief in the Eucharist and their understanding of their role as extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. Inquiry should be made regarding the candidates' attitude toward prayer and regular use of the Sacrament of Penance.

9. Before being commissioned as extraordinary ministers, candidates are to complete the Eparchial/Parish program of training and formation. This program provides theological and spiritual formation, as well as training in practical and liturgical skills. The syllabus prepared by the Eparchy is to be followed for the training.

10. Once candidates have completed their training, the parish priest/chaplain should write to the Eparchial Curia recommending the candidates to the Bishop with a request to appoint them as extraordinary ministers.

11. Before assuming their duties, extraordinary ministers should be commissioned according to the prescribed form, at the Sunday liturgy. The certificate of appointment and ID card are presented to the extraordinary ministers when they are publicly commissioned.

12. The term of office for extraordinary ministers is two years, effective from the time of commissioning. The term is renewable, but application must again be made to the Bishop by the parish priest/chaplain.

13. Extraordinary ministers are designated for service in their own parish, and therefore are not ordinarily authorized to exercise this ministry in other parishes or institutions.

14. Parish priest/ chaplain should periodically review the performance of their extraordinary ministers, at least on an annual basis, and be diligent in

providing on-going formation to deepen the ministers' Eucharistic devotion and liturgical spirituality. Annual attendance at a specially prepared occasion of spiritual renewal conducted by the parish or region is strongly recommended for all extraordinary ministers.

15. When serving, extraordinary ministers should always be dressed in a manner consistent with the dignity of their role. A neat appearance and reverential deportment are essential at all times. A special distinctive outer dress, approved by the Eparchy, is to be worn by the ministers when they distribute Holy Communion.

16. At the time of the selection of candidates, during the formation and training programs, and at the ceremony of commissioning as well as at other opportune moments, parish priest/chaplain should make every effort to instruct the faithful under their care about the nature of this extraordinary ministry and the importance of the Eucharist in their lives.

II.

Procedures for the Distribution of Holy Communion at Holy *Qurbana* by Extraordinary Ministers

17. Extraordinary ministers normally form part of the entrance procession of the Holy *Qurbana* and sit in the seats assigned to them in the assembly until the time when they approach the altar to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion.

18. Sufficient quantity of hosts and wine are to be kept in a number of Ciboria and chalices at the time of the preparation for *Qurbana*, as needed for the distribution of Holy Communion. Avoid as far as possible any distribution of the consecrated body and blood to different vessels after the consecration.

19. Extraordinary ministers together approach the altar as the priest concludes the prayers of reconciliation; and make a deep bow and wait in the Sanctuary. Extraordinary ministers of the Holy Communion should do the ritual washing of hands before and after the distribution of the Holy Communion. After the celebrant has concluded his own Communion, he distributes Communion to the extraordinary ministers, and then hands the sacred vessels to them for distribution of Holy Communion to the people. Extraordinary ministers should not take the sacred vessels from the altar themselves, but should be handed over to them by the priest.

20. Extraordinary ministers should receive Holy Communion from the celebrant before being handed the sacred vessels for distributing Holy Communion to the people. All other practices are contrary to the spirit of the liturgical laws.

21. After receiving the sacred vessels (along with a purificator), extraordinary ministers reverently and without haste go to their Communion stations.

22. When distributing Holy Communion, the extraordinary minister holds up the consecrated Host as each communicant approaches and the minister places the Host on the communicant's tongue or in the communicant's hand.

23. The communicant, including the extraordinary minister, is never allowed to self-communicate, even by dipping the Host into the chalice.

24. Holy Communion should always be distributed with the utmost dignity and reverence. The minister should avoid all haste in distributing Holy Communion. If a Host is dropped, the minister should reverently pick it up and set it aside, and wipe the spot with the purificator. The minister should also reverently pick up any particles that drop from the Host. If any of the Precious Blood should spill, the minister should use the purificator to wipe up the spill.

25. After Communion the Precious Blood that remains is to be consumed by the priest and the Sacred Hosts that remain are to be either consumed or returned to the tabernacle by the priest.

26. The Extraordinary Ministers together should then return to their place in the congregation, after making a bow.

III. Glossary

Ablution Cup: A small cup with a lid placed next to the tabernacle to purify the fingers of the priest or deacon.

Acolyte: (ശുശ്രൂഷി) A man who has been permanently commissioned to assist at the altar, and who, by virtue of his office, is an extraordinary minister of holy communion. Usually, he is a deacon or a seminarian.

Alb: (കൊത്തീന) Long outer flowing vestment used by the priests, deacons and altar servers.

Altar: (അശ്ത്താര or ബലിപീഠം): Permanent table, central location in the *Madbha* for the celebration of the Holy *Qurbana*.

Anaphora: (അനാഫൊറ) Eucharistic Prayer.

Aspergil: (കറാപ്പ്) Container for blessing the faithful, places and objects with holy water.

Bema (ബേമ): The table on which liturgy of the word is proclaimed, during the celebration of *Qurbana* and other sacraments.

Bethsahde: (ബെത്സഹദെ) The place for keeping the relics of Martyrs and saints.

Blessed Sacrament: (വിശുദ്ധ കർബാന) The consecrated body and blood of Jesus Christ, in the form of bread and wine.

Chalice: (കാസ) Sacred vessel in which, wine is kept for the celebration of *Qurbana*.

Ciborium, ciboria (plural): (കസ്തോരി) Sacred vessel with a lid for holding the small hosts for the celebration of *Qurbana*.

Communion Plate: A metal plate, sometimes with a handle, which is held by an altar server to catch any fragments of the host that might fall during Holy Communion. Also called a communion paten.

Cope (കാപ്പ; ഖൈന in Syriac): is a liturgical outer vestment worn by the priest.

Corporal: (കെത്താന) Linen square which is unfolded on the altar during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The chalice and paten are placed on the corporal. It is folded in a way that captures any fragments of the host that might have fallen. Before being placed in the laundry, it is soaked, with the water being poured down the *sacrarium*.

Credence Tables: (ബെസ്ഗസ) Tables to the left and right of the altar on which are located the various sacred vessels, the lavabo bowl and towel, the water and wine cruets, etc., used during the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Cruets: Vessels on the credence table that hold water and wine for *Qurbana*.

Haikala: (ഹൈക്കല) The place reserved for the congregation in the church. It is symbol of earth

Holy Water: (ഹന്നാൻ വെള്ളം) Blessed water for blessing the faithful, places and objects.

Humeral Veil (വേദകുസ്ത) Outer garment used by priest for Eucharistic Benediction.

Kushappa (കുശാപ്പ): Silent prayers of the celebrant

Lavabo Bowl and Pitcher: A bowl and pitcher used to wash the priest's hand during *Qurbana*.

Lectionary: (പ്രഘോഷണ ഗ്രന്ഥം) books for the proclamation of the Gospel, Epistles and Old Testament during the *Qurbana* and other sacraments.

Luna or *lunula*: (ചന്ദ്രക്കല) Round glass case within which is kept a large consecrated host so that it may be inserted into the center of the monstrance.

Missal (തക്സ): Ritual book for the celebrant containing the prayers and rituals of *Qurbana* and other sacraments.

Monstrance: (അരുളിക്ക) Sacred Vessel, which holds the *luna* for exposing consecrated host for adoration and benediction.

Pall: Macblana (മക്ബ്ലാന) A square of stiff material covered by linen, which is used to cover the chalice and paten.

Pallium: (മേക്കെട്ടി) Canopy, which is held up on four poles over the celebrant during procession.

Paten: Small metal plate on which big host is consecrated during *Qurbana*.

Precious Blood: A term for the real presence of Jesus Christ under the appearance of wine.

Purificator: (സങ്കീർത്തി) Small linen cloth folded three ways, which is used to purify a chalice when communion is received.

Pyx: Small metal container used to carry consecrated Hosts when communion is taken to the sick or homebound; it is normally carried in a burse with cord around neck.

Ritual Books: (Sacramentary - തക്സ) Any official book approved by the Church, containing the rites and prayers for the liturgy and administration of the sacraments.

Sacrarium: A sink-like receptacle in the sacristy, which drains directly into the ground, rather than into a sewage system. It is used for disposing of water which may have come into contact with sacred things.

Sacred Host: (ഓസ്തി, തിരുഓസ്തി) A small wafer of unleavened bread, which is consecrated in the celebration of the Holy *Qurbana* so as to become the Body of Christ.

Sacred Veil: (ശോശപ്പ) A cloth, placed over the chalice and paten, during *Qurbana*.

Sacred Vessels: (തിരുപ്പാത്രങ്ങൾ) any vessel, which is used to hold the Blessed Sacrament.

Sacristy: (സങ്കീർത്തി) Room where sacred vessels are kept and where the priest and deacon vest when there is not a separate vestry.

Sanctuary: (മദ്ബഹാ) The most sacred space of the church building set aside for the celebration of the sacred rites. The altar is placed within the sanctuary.

Sanctuary Lamp: (മദ്ബഹാ കെടാവിളക്ക്) A fixture containing a candle or an oil lamp, usually suspended by a chain or affixed to the wall. It is located near the tabernacle. When lit, it indicates the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle

Sande: (സന്ദ) It is used to keep the cuffs of *kotheena* neat and befitting with other vestments.

Sunara: (Cincture - സൂന്ദാ) Symbol of chastity and readiness to serve the Lord with watchfulness. .

Urara: (stole - ഉറാറ) Symbol of being appointed for the sacred service. It signifies ministerial priesthood.

Tabernacle: (സക്രമെന്റി) Locked and secured place of reservation of the Blessed Sacrament.

Questroma: (കെസ്ട്രോമ) Space, between *Haikala* (Faithfull's place in the Church during the liturgical celebration) and *Madbha* (where the priest celebrates the holy *Qurbana*), where the choir assembles to sing and pray in the celebration of the holy *Qurbana*. It is one step above the *Haikala* and three steps below the Sanctuary (*Madbha*); and is the connecting link between *Haikala* (earth) and *Madbha* (heaven).
