LIVING LITURGY™

Prayer Book for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

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Presented to

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in grateful appreciation
for ministering as an
Extraordinary Minister
of
Holy Communion

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(date)

USING THIS RESOURCE

Extraordinary typically refers to outstanding or exceptional. But extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are "extra"ordinary in the sense of "in addition to" the ordinary (as well as being outstanding and exceptional!). Ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are the ordained and those properly installed as acolytes, usually seminarians. In parishes today there are simply not enough "ordinary" ministers of Holy Communion, so we call forth additional ministers, referred to as "extraordinary." Imagine how long the distribution of Communion would take if only the ordained or seminarians were those who distributed! It is not only because of need, however, that we have extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. It is also by virtue of one's baptism. We parishioners are grateful that so many baptized Christians respond to the call to serve as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. In so doing we are reminded that we are all holy, and we are all called to ministry by virtue of our Christian baptism.

A Ministry of Prayer

Every ministry of the church requires regular prayer, reflection, reading, and thoughtfulness. For extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, who enter regularly into the graced encounter between communicant and the living Christ, it is important to cultivate a prayer practice that can open their own eyes and hearts to the presence of Christ. This book is intended to sustain and support ministers by providing prayers and reflection for each Sunday and for certain solemnities.

Holy Communion for the Homebound and Sick

In the New Testament Letter of James we learn about the concern and care that the early Christians had for those members of their community who were sick. Such care and concern was a hallmark of Jesus's own ministry, and it has been a Christian charism ever since. Each week there are parishioners who are not able to join us for the liturgy, and so the Eucharist is brought to them as a sign of our unity.

Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are often those who perform this ministry, and, in so doing, they extend the parish's reach to so many more fellow parishioners. This book is intended to be a resource for them as well.

Adapting This Resource for Holy Communion for the Homebound and Sick

The Communion rite (Ordinary Rite of Communion of the Sick) is provided in the front of this book. Those who are extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion have undoubtedly been made familiar with this rite as part of their preparation. This book may be adapted for use with the rite, by sharing the gospel reflection, the prayers, or even the reflection question, so that the visit becomes a true ministry. It is to be remembered that ministers are not mere functionaries. As such, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion bring not only the presence of Christ in the eucharistic species, but the presence of Christ in their very person by virtue of their baptism. So this book has been designed with that in mind, and it can be used to assist with making this a meaningful encounter and ministry.

Ongoing Formation in Ministry

Dioceses and parishes have slightly different preparation requirements for those who would be extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, but most involve both initial preparation as well as ongoing formation. We know that it is not enough to simply attend a training event and never look back. Liturgical ministers must continue to grow in their understanding of their ministry, and of the liturgy itself. Indeed, like all who participate in the liturgy, liturgical ministers grow in discipleship and the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ *through* their liturgical ministry. As Pope Francis reminded us in his apostolic letter on liturgical formation, in the liturgy the paschal mystery is "rendered present and active by means of signs addressed to the senses (water, oil, bread, wine, gestures, words), so that the Spirit, plunging us into the paschal mystery, might transform every dimension of our life, conforming us more and more to Christ" (*Desiderio desideravi* 21).

In this regard, *Living Liturgy™ Prayer Book for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion* is the ideal prayer complement to *Living Liturgy™: Spirituality, Celebration, and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities*, which provides transformative spiritual formation and liturgical catechesis for all liturgical ministers and the entire parish community. Whether used in tandem with *Living Liturgy™*, or on its own, the particular value of *Living Liturgy™ Prayer Book* is to cultivate in those who use it a prayerful spirit and a deeper sense of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

ADMINISTRATION OF COMMUNION TO THE SICK BY AN EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER

When the Most Holy Eucharist is brought to the sick by an acolyte or an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion deputed in accordance with the norm of law, the rites to be observed are found in chapter two of *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery outside Mass*. "The Ordinary Rite of Communion of the Sick," provided below, is an extract of this ritual book, which also includes "A Shorter Rite of Communion of the Sick" and "Viaticum" as administered by an extraordinary minister. Please see *Communion of the Sick*, published by Liturgical Press, for all three rites. The Pastoral Notes at the end offer important reminders from the ritual book.

THE ORDINARY RITE OF COMMUNION OF THE SICK

THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Wearing vestments appropriate for this ministry, after approaching the sick person, the minister warmly greets them and the others present, using, if appropriate, the greeting:

Peace to this house and all here.

Other words from Sacred Scripture, with which the faithful are customarily greeted, may also be used. Then, after placing the Sacrament on a table, the minister and all present adore it.

The minister invites the sick person and others present to take part in the Penitential Act:

Brethren (Brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to participate in this sacred celebration.

A brief pause for silence follows. Then all recite together the I confess:

I confess to almighty God
and to you, my brothers and sisters,
that I have greatly sinned,
in my thoughts and in my words,
in what I have done and in what I have failed to do,

And, striking their breast, they say:

through my fault, through my fault,
through my most grievous fault;

Then they continue:
therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin,
all the Angels and Saints,
and you, my brothers and sisters,
to pray for me to the Lord our God.

Or after a brief pause of silence, the minister, or one of those present, then says the following or other invocations:

You gained salvation for us by your Paschal Mystery:
Lord, have mercy.
All: Lord, have mercy.

You never cease to renew among us the wonders of your Passion: Christ, have mercy.
All: Christ, have mercy.

You make us sharers in your Paschal Sacrifice through the reception of your Body: Lord, have mercy.
All: Lord, have mercy.

The minister concludes:

May almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life.
All reply: Amen.

THE SHORTER READING OF THE WORD OF GOD

It is very appropriate that one of those present or the minister read a brief text of Sacred Scripture. Readings may also be drawn from the Mass of the day or of the nearest Sunday, especially for ongoing ministry to sick and homebound persons.

John 6:54-58

Whoever eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood
has eternal life,
and I will raise him on the last day.
For my Flesh is true food,
and my Blood is true drink.
Whoever eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood
remains in me and I in him.
Just as the living Father sent me

and I have life because of the Father,
so also the one who feeds on me
will have life because of me.
This is the bread that came down from heaven.
Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died,
whoever eats this bread will live forever.

John 14:6

I am the way and the truth and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.
Not as the world gives do I give it to you.
Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.

John 15:5

I am the vine, you are the branches.
Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit,
because without me you can do nothing.

1 John 4:16

We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us.
God is love, and whoever remains in love
remains in God and God in him.

Another appropriate text may also be chosen from those found in *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery outside Mass*, *The Order of the Anointing of the Sick and of their Pastoral Care*, or the *Lectionary for Mass*.

HOLY COMMUNION

Then the minister introduces the Lord's Prayer in these or similar words:

Now let us together call upon God,
as our Lord Jesus Christ taught us to pray:

And all together continue:

Our Father . . .

Then the minister shows the Most Blessed Sacrament, saying:

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold him who takes away the sins of the world.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

The sick person and any others who will receive Communion say once:

Lord, I am not worthy
that you should enter under my roof,
but only say the word
and my soul shall be healed.

The minister approaches the sick person, and showing them the Sacrament, says:

The Body of Christ (or: **The Blood of Christ**).

The sick person replies:

Amen.

And receives Holy Communion.

Those present who wish to receive Communion receive the Sacrament in the usual way.

When the distribution of Communion is complete, the minister carries out the purification as usual. Then, if appropriate, a sacred silence may be observed for a while.

The minister says the concluding prayer. One of the following may be used:

Let us pray.

**O Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God,
with faith we entreat you
that the most holy Body (most holy Blood)
of our Lord Jesus Christ your Son
may benefit our brother (sister) who receives it
as an everlasting remedy
for both body and soul.
Through Christ our Lord.**

Or:

**O God, who have accomplished the work of human redemption
through the Paschal Mystery of your Only Begotten Son,
graciously grant that we, who confidently proclaim,
under sacramental signs, the Death and Resurrection of Christ,
may experience continued increase of your saving grace.
Through Christ our Lord.**

Or:

May sharing at the heavenly table
sanctify us, Lord, we pray,
so that through the Body and Blood of Christ
the whole family of believers may be bound together.
Through Christ our Lord.

Or:

Pour on us, O Lord, the Spirit of your love,
and in your kindness
make those you have nourished
by this one heavenly Bread
one in mind and heart.
Through Christ our Lord.

All reply: Amen.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

Then the minister, while invoking God's blessing and signing himself (herself), says:

May the Lord bless us,
protect us from all evil
and lead us to everlasting life.

All reply: Amen.

Or:

May the almighty and merciful Lord bless us and keep us,
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

All reply: Amen.

PASTORAL NOTES

This rite is for use by an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion and is taken from *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery outside Mass*. The numbered citations below come from that book. A Priest or Deacon administers Holy Communion and Viaticum to the sick according to the rites in *The Order of the Anointing of the Sick and of their Pastoral Care* (no. 55).

Pastors of souls should take care that the sick and aged, even if not gravely sick or in imminent danger of death, should be given the opportunity to receive the Eucharist frequently, even, insofar as possible, daily, especially during Easter Time (no. 14).

The faithful are to be carefully taught that, even when they receive Communion outside the celebration of Mass, they are intimately united with the Sacrifice which perpetuates the Sacrifice of the Cross, and they are participants in that sacred banquet in which, "by Communion in the Body and Blood of the Lord, the People of God participates in the blessings of the Paschal Sacrifice, renews the New Covenant made once by God with men in the Blood

of Christ, and in faith and hope prefigures and anticipates the eschatological banquet in the Kingdom of the Father, proclaiming the Death of the Lord until he comes" (no. 15).

Holy Communion may be given outside Mass on any day and at any time of the day . . . on Holy Saturday, Holy Communion may be given only as Viaticum" (no. 16).

It is first of all for the Priest or Deacon to administer Holy Communion to the faithful who ask for it. It is in every way proper, therefore, that they should give part of their time to the performance of this ministry, according to the needs of the faithful. Moreover, it is for a duly instituted acolyte, as an extraordinary minister, to give Holy Communion whenever there is no Priest or Deacon, either because of sickness, old age, or because they are prevented by pastoral duties or the number of faithful coming to the holy table is so great that the celebration of the Mass or other sacred celebration may be greatly prolonged. The local Ordinary may give the faculty of distributing Holy Communion to other extraordinary ministers, whenever it may seem necessary for the pastoral benefit of the faithful, and a Priest or Deacon or acolyte is not available (no. 17).

The minister of Holy Communion, if he is a Priest or Deacon, should be vested in an alb, or a surplice over a cassock, and should wear a stole. Other ministers should wear either the liturgical vesture traditional in their region or vesture which is not unsuitable for this ministry and is approved by the Ordinary. The Eucharist for administering Communion outside the church should be carried in a pyx or other closed vessel, with such coverings and in such a manner as is appropriate to the place (no. 20).

It is permitted to administer the Eucharist under the species of wine alone to those who are unable to receive it under the species of bread. The Blood of the Lord must be carried to the sick person in a vessel so closed as to avoid completely any danger of spillage. In administering the Sacrament, however, the more appropriate manner should be chosen, in each case, from those proposed for distributing Communion under both kinds. When Communion is completed, if any of the Most Precious Blood remains, it should be consumed by the minister, who should also take care of the necessary purifications (no. 55).

The Eucharist, which continuously represents the Paschal Mystery of Christ in the midst of humanity, is the fount of all grace and of the remission of sins. Nevertheless, those who intend to receive the Body of the Lord, should come to it with clean consciences and properly disposed souls, so that they may harvest the fruits of the paschal Sacrament . . . If there is a serious reason and no opportunity for confession, they should make an act of perfect contrition with the intention of confessing individually, as soon as possible, the mortal sins that they cannot confess at present. It is desirable that those who are accustomed to communicate daily or quite often go to the Sacrament of Penance at regular intervals, depending on their circumstances. Moreover, the faithful should look on the Eucharist as an antidote that frees them from daily faults and preserves them from mortal sins; in addition, they should understand the right way to use the penitential parts of the liturgy, especially of the Mass (no. 23).

Communicants should not receive the Sacrament unless they have fasted for at least one hour from food and drink, with the sole exceptions of water and medicine. The elderly and those suffering from any kind of infirmity, as well as those who take care of such persons, may receive the Most Holy Eucharist even if they have consumed something within the hour before (no. 24).

In order that they may more easily continue the act of thanksgiving which is offered to God in a splendid way in the Mass, it is recommended that all who have been refreshed in Holy Communion should continue in prayer for a certain period of time (no. 25).

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Prayer

God of all seasons, you call us to watch and wait amid the hurry of life. Help us to find quiet space to notice your presence not far away but here and now in the ordinary moments you make holy each day. **Amen.**

Gospel **Mark 13:33-37**

Jesus said to his disciples: "Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. It is like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his own work, and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch. Watch, therefore; you do not know when the lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!'"

Brief Silence

For Reflection

The gospel that begins our new liturgical year admonishes us, the faithful, to watch and be alert. Why? Because, simply, we do not know. In this pericope what is unknown is "when the lord of the house is coming." But for each of us today, this gospel calls us to embrace the unknown, as another expression goes, and to participate, actively, in our lives of faith instead of anticipating. So in fact, the gospel is calling us, really, to not know—and to be okay with not knowing.

✦ Where, in your life, are you "asleep" to the needs of Christ and neighbor? How can you "wake up" to a new life of being attentive?

Brief Silence

Model Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)

Awake and ready to follow God's will, we turn to him with our prayers and petitions.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

For the church throughout the world: may the faithful await with joy the light of Christ and find freedom from the darkness of sin, loneliness, and suffering, we pray . . .

For greater peace in our hearts, in our communities, and among those who lead us: may we choose the mercy of Christ as we seek fellowship with our neighbors, we pray . . .

For hearts open to the suffering of those near us and those far away: may our watchfulness this Advent season open our hearts as well as our eyes, we pray . . .

For deepening of our attention and our focus: may we reject distractions and self-absorption to be truly present to those around us, we pray . . .

Almighty and ever-living God, you are the Alpha and the Omega. As we begin this Advent season, may we remember the wonder of your love through our mercy and compassion to all the world. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**



Prayer

God of promise, you make straight the path for your coming. Help us clear away what weighs us down and open our hearts to your love. Give us patience to wait calmly and the joy to welcome you when you come in glory. **Amen.**

Gospel **Mark 1:1-8**

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: / *Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; / he will prepare your way. / A voice of one crying out in the desert: / "Prepare the way of the Lord, / make straight his paths."* / John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. John was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey. And this is what he proclaimed: "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Brief Silence

For Reflection

In this gospel, John the Baptist teaches us by his words and example: how do we today prepare for the coming of the Lord? Christmas, we will recall, exists as a celebration of not only the eternal Word taking on human flesh, but of that sec-

ond coming at the end of human time. Taking John's example, we might today choose to live more simply and to more freely share with those we encounter the way our lives have been impacted by our faith and our relationship with Jesus.

✦ What can you wash away from your life this Advent, in order to make way for Christ?

Brief Silence

Model Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)

In Christ, we seek to create a new heaven and a new earth by the power of our baptism. In the hope of this renewal, we bring our petitions to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

For the church: that it may renew the earth by its faith-filled witness in the world, we pray . . .

For those who hold public office in this country and across the globe: that they may transform their civic systems to best serve God's people, we pray . . .

For those who are in need of God's mercy: that all who yearn for mercy might find courage to reach out to the God of kindness and salvation, we pray . . .

For the members of this community: that we might seek God's way with repentance, striving, and joy, we pray . . .

God of mercy, your Son, Jesus Christ, came among us in order to renew both heaven and earth in the power of his light. Hear our petitions this day and, from your merciful heart, grant us the grace to receive your forgiveness, renewal, and strength. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**