



Secretariat of Divine Worship

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MEMORANDUM

To: Your Eminences/Your Excellencies
From: Archbishop Gregory Aymond, Chair
Date: 26 October 2011
Re: Holy Communion under both kinds

Many questions have been raised recently regarding liturgical law in the United States for the distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds. The attached document is provided by the Committee as a clarification and resource for your ministry.

If you have any further questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact the Secretariat at the Conference.

Prayerful best wishes in this last month before implementation of the new Missal!

In recent weeks, there have been questions regarding current liturgical law for the United States in offering Holy Communion under both kinds to the faithful during Mass. In light of these questions, it is hoped that the following clarifications will prove helpful.

In 1984, an indult was granted to Dioceses of the United States by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments allowing Holy Communion to be distributed “under both kinds to the faithful at Masses on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation...” This indult did not expire, but rather was superseded by ordinary liturgical law as now given in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 283, which states: “The Diocesan Bishop is also given the faculty to permit Communion under both kinds whenever it may seem appropriate to the Priest to whom a community has been entrusted as its own shepherd...” The real expansion from the 1984 indult to the current law expressed in the GIRM is manifest in the word “whenever” without any restriction other than catechesis and reverence for the Eucharistic elements. The indult, on the other hand, specified only Sundays and holy days of obligation.

Encouragement for Holy Communion under both kinds is found in GIRM no. 281, which states:

Holy Communion has a fuller form as a sign when it takes place under both kinds. For in this form the sign of the Eucharistic banquet is more clearly evident and clearer expression is given to the divine will by which the new and eternal Covenant is ratified in the Blood of the Lord, as also the connection between the Eucharistic banquet and the eschatological banquet in the Kingdom of the Father.

In addition, no. 21 of the *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America* reinforces this encouragement:

The extension of the faculty for the distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds does not represent a change in the Church’s immemorial beliefs concerning the Holy Eucharist. Rather, today the Church finds it salutary to restore a practice, when appropriate, that for various reasons was not opportune when the Council of Trent was convened in 1545. But with the passing of time, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the reform of the Second Vatican Council has resulted in the restoration of a practice by which the faithful are again able to experience “a fuller sign of the Eucharistic banquet.”

In accord with GIRM no. 283, each Diocesan Bishop may establish norms for Holy Communion under both kinds within his Diocese. There are three cautions given to the Bishop to help his decision in this regard:

1. The faithful should be well instructed.
2. There should be no danger of profanation of the Sacrament.
3. And there should be no danger of the rite’s becoming difficult because of the large number of participants or for some other cause.

These reasons are not new. If the Diocesan Bishop discerns these minimum requirements are met, he may allow Holy Communion under both kinds at any celebration of the Eucharist in his Diocese, weekday, Sunday or Holy Day.

Regarding the use of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, no. 24 in the *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds* observes:

In practice, the need to avoid obscuring the role of the Priest and the Deacon as the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion by an excessive use of extraordinary ministers might in some circumstances constitute a reason either for limiting the distribution of Holy Communion under both species or for using intinction instead of distributing the Precious Blood from the chalice.

No. 28 in the *Norms* then provides further clarification on this matter:

When the size of the congregation or the incapacity of the bishop, Priest, or Deacon requires it, the celebrant may be assisted by other bishops, Priests, or Deacons. If such ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are not present, “the Priest may call upon extraordinary ministers to assist him, that is, duly instituted acolytes or even other faithful who have been duly deputed for this purpose. In case of necessity, the Priest may depute suitable faithful for this single occasion.” Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should receive sufficient spiritual, theological, and practical preparation to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence. When recourse is had to extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, especially in the distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds, their number should not be increased beyond what is required for the orderly and reverent distribution of the Body and Blood of the Lord. In all matters such extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should follow the guidance of the Diocesan Bishop.

In light of *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani* 2000 (GIRM 2011), the circumstances in which Holy Communion under both kinds is allowed have actually been greatly expanded not only for the United States but for the Universal Church.

Below are further relevant citations.

Communion Under Both Kinds **Relevant texts**

From the 1975 GIRM:

242. At the discretion of the Ordinary and after the prerequisite catechesis, communion from the chalice is permitted in the case of:

1. newly baptized adults at the Mass following their baptism; adults at the Mass at which they receive confirmation; baptized persons who are being received into the full communion of the Church;
2. the bride and bridegroom at their wedding Mass;
3. deacons at the Mass of their ordination;
4. an abbess at the Mass in which she is blessed; those consecrated to a life of virginity at the Mass of their consecration; professed religious, their relatives, friends, and the other members of their community at the Mass of first or perpetual vows or renewal of vows;
5. those who receive institution for a certain ministry at the Mass of their institution; lay missionary helpers at the Mass in which they publicly receive their mission; others at the Mass in which they receive an ecclesiastical mission;

6. the sick person and all present at the time viaticum is to be administered when Mass is lawfully celebrated in the sick person's home;
7. the deacon and ministers who exercise their office at Mass;
8. when there is a concelebration, in the case of:
 - a. all who exercise a liturgical function at this concelebration and also all seminarians present;
 - b. in their churches or oratories, all members of institutes professing the evangelical counsels and other societies whose members dedicate themselves to God by religious vows or by an offering or promise; also all those who reside in the houses of members of such institutes and societies;
9. priests who are present at major celebrations and are not able to celebrate or concelebrate;
10. all who make a retreat at a Mass in which they actively participate and which is specially celebrated for the group; also all who take part in the meeting of any pastoral body at a Mass the celebrate as a group;
11. those listed in nos. 2 and 4, at Masses celebrating their jubilees;
12. godparents, relatives, wife or husband, and lay catechists of newly baptized adults at the Mass of their initiation;
13. relatives, friends, and special benefactors who take part in the Mass of a newly ordained priest;
14. members of communities at the conventual or community Mass, in accord with the provisions of this Instruction no. 76.

1984 Indult (Prot. CD 1297/78, 13 October 1984):

The Apostolic See, at the request of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States of America grants that in addition to the instances already foreseen in the Sacramentary, **Holy Communion may be distributed under both kinds to the faithful at Masses on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation** if, in the judgment of the Ordinary, Communion can be given in an orderly and reverent way.

This concession does not apply in the following cases:

1. At Masses celebrated in the open with a great number of communicants (e.g., in a stadium);
2. At other Masses where the number of communicants is so great as to make it difficult for Communion under both kinds to be given in an orderly and reverent way (e.g., Masses celebrated in a civic square or building that would involve the carrying of the sacred species up and down a number of steps);
3. At Masses where the assembled congregation is of such a diverse nature that it is difficult to ascertain whether those present have been sufficiently instructed about receiving communion under both kinds;

4. When circumstances do not permit the assurance that due reverence can be maintained towards the consecrated wine both during and after the celebration (cf. *Inaestimabile Donum*, nn. 13-14).

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283. In addition to those cases given in the ritual books, Communion under both kinds is permitted for:

- a) Priests who are not able to celebrate or concelebrate Mass;
- b) the Deacon and others who perform some duty at the Mass;
- c) members of communities at the Conventual Mass or the “community” Mass, along with seminarians, and all those engaged in a retreat or taking part in a spiritual or pastoral gathering.

The Diocesan Bishop may establish norms for Communion under both kinds for his own diocese, which are also to be observed in churches of religious and at celebrations with small groups. The Diocesan Bishop is also given the faculty **to permit Communion under both kinds whenever it may seem appropriate to the Priest to whom a community has been entrusted as its own shepherd**, provided that the faithful have been well instructed and that there is no danger of profanation of the Sacrament or of the rite’s becoming difficult because of the large number of participants or for some other cause.

In all that pertains to Communion under both kinds, the *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America* are to be followed (particularly nos. 27-54).

Comments and Observations

The extensive list in the 1975 GIRM reflects what would eventually be articulated in the other ritual books of the *Rituale Romanum* published later. The latest edition and translation of the GIRM merely indicates those circumstances not articulated elsewhere. In other words, most of the list of 14 circumstances from the 1975 text are indicated in current ritual books.

Some have made mention of an indult that was not renewed in 2005. This pertains only to the purification of sacred vessels by extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. In addition, the 2004 instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* changed the custom of pouring the Precious Blood into smaller chalices during the Fraction Rite. Apart from these two changes in the law, the 2003 *Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under both Kinds for the Dioceses of the United States* are still in force as particular law for the United States. These norms, with edits to reflect the changes in law regarding purification and flagons, are contained as an appendix to the GIRM in the *Roman Missal, Third Edition*.