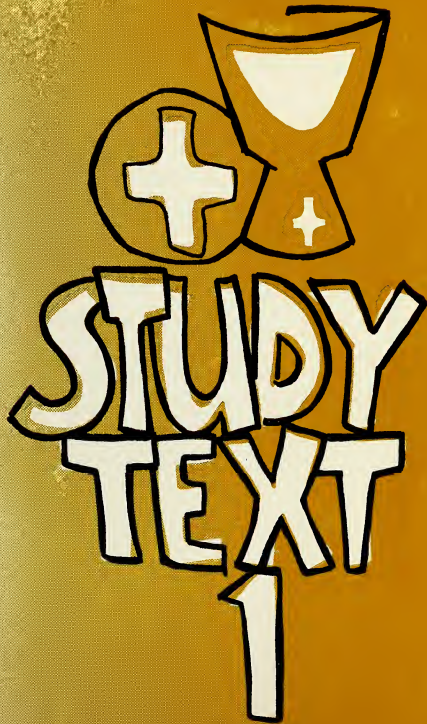


Lord's Supper

BISHOPS' COMMITTEE ON THE LITURGY



HOLY COMMUNION

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Study Text I
HOLY COMMUNION

Commentary on the Instruction
Immensae Caritatis

1973

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English translation of the

Rite for the Distribution of Communion to the Sick
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Introduction

This is the first of a series of study texts issued by the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy. Intended primarily for those who are deeply involved in pastoral liturgy, the series is seen as an educational tool in the training everyone needs in the developing field of liturgical celebration.

Study Text I addresses itself to the instruction, *Immensae Caritatis*, issued by the Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments on January 29, 1973, with the purpose of helping the faithful in the reception of holy communion.

Brief and limited in scope, this document touches upon some practical questions that had been under study for several years. It follows like a corollary to the more comprehensive instruction of 1967, *Eucharisticum Mysterium*—a text which deserves rereading and reflection.

Study Text I is designed to be a practical guide through the new document, *Immensae Caritatis*. Historical background traces out the old paths; signposts help to direct through the new terrain.

In addition to the actual text of *Immensae Caritatis* this booklet first offers a catechesis on the special minister of the Eucharist—for those men and women who, while not instituted as acolytes, are designated to assist priests and deacons in the administration of communion. The texts of the rites for the installation of such special ministers and for the giving of communion by them are appended.

Two short sections of the study text describe in detail the corresponding parts of *Immensae Caritatis* on the reception of communion more than once a day and on the mitigated eucharistic fast for the sick and aged.

Finally, a lengthy section treats the practice of communion in the hand, not authorized at the present time for the dioceses of the United States. Realizing that the practice will continue to grow, the Congregation for the Sacraments has underscored the need for reverence and for a thorough catechesis or instruction prior to its introduction. In this booklet the catechesis is intended to explain the development historically and pastorally. Questions about communion in the hand have been raised among the faithful; they need to be carefully answered.

Instruction Immensae Caritatis: Facilitating Sacramental Communion in Particular Circumstances

Christ the Lord has left to the Church, his Spouse, a testament of his immense love. The wonderful gift of the Eucharist, which is the greatest gift of all, demands that this important mystery should be increasingly better known and its saving power more fully shared. With the intention of fostering devotion to the Eucharist—the summit and center of Christian worship—the Church, moved by pastoral zeal and concern, has issued suitable laws and appropriate documents.

Present day conditions, however, demand that, while the greatest reverence toward this Sacrament¹ is constantly maintained, easier access to holy communion should be made possible. Thus the faithful, by sharing more fully in the fruits of the sacrifice of the Mass, may dedicate themselves more readily and effectively to God and to the good of the Church and of mankind.

First of all, provision must be made lest reception of communion become impossible or difficult because of insufficient ministers. The sick must not be deprived of spiritual consolation by being impeded from receiving holy communion because of the law of fast, which they may not be able to observe even though it is already very moderate. Finally, it seems appropriate to determine in what circumstances the faithful who ask to receive sacramental communion a second time on the same day may be permitted fittingly to do so.

After study of the recommendations of certain episcopal conferences, the following norms are issued:

1. Special ministers for the distribution of holy communion.

I
SPECIAL MINISTERS FOR
THE DISTRIBUTION
OF HOLY COMMUNION

2. Extension of the faculty to receive holy communion twice on the same day.

3. Mitigation of the eucharistic fast for the sick and the aged.

4. Piety and reverence to the Blessed Sacrament when the Eucharist is placed in the hand of the faithful.

There are various circumstances in which a lack of sufficient ministers for the distribution of holy communion can occur:

—during Mass, because of the size of the congregation or a particular difficulty in which a celebrant finds himself;

—outside Mass, when it is difficult because of distance to take communion, especially viaticum, to the sick in danger of death, or when the very number of the sick, especially in hospitals and similar institutions, requires a number of ministers. So that the faithful, who are in the state of grace and who with an upright and pious disposition wish to share in the sacred banquet, may not be deprived of this sacramental help and consolation, it has seemed appropriate to the pope to establish special [“extraordinary”] ministers, who may give holy communion to themselves and to other members of the faithful under the following specific conditions:

I. Local ordinaries have the faculty to permit a qualified person individually chosen as a special minister for a specific occasion or for a time or, in case of necessity, in a permanent way, or to give the Eucharist to himself or to other members of the faithful or to take it to the sick who are confined to their homes. This faculty may be used when

a) there is no priest, deacon, or acolyte;

b) these ministers are prevented from administering holy communion because of another pastoral ministry or because of ill health or advanced age;

c) the number of the faithful requesting holy communion is such that the celebration of Mass or the distribution of the Eucharist outside Mass would be unduly prolonged.

II. Local ordinaries also have the faculty to permit individual priests exercising their sacred office to appoint a qualified person to distribute holy communion on a specific occasion, in cases of genuine need.

III. The above mentioned local ordinaries may delegate these faculties to auxiliary bishops, episcopal vicars, and episcopal delegates.

IV. The qualified person to whom nos. I and II refer shall be designated according to the following order: reader, student of major seminary, male religious, woman religious, catechist, man or woman. This order, however, may be changed according to the prudent judgment of the local ordinary.

V. In oratories of religious communities of either sex the office of distributing holy communion in the circumstances described in no. I may properly be given to a male superior who does not have major orders or to a woman superior or to their respective vicars.

VI. If time permits, it is fitting that the qualified person individually chosen by the local ordinary for administering holy communion, as well as the person appointed by a priest having the faculty spoken of in no. II, should receive the mandate according to the rite appended to this instruction; they are to distribute holy communion according to the liturgical norms.

Since these faculties are granted only for the spiritual good of the faithful and for cases of genuine necessity, priests are to remember that they are not thereby excused from the task of distributing the Eucharist to the faithful who legitimately request it, and especially not from giving communion to the sick.

The person who has been appointed to be a special minister of holy communion must be duly instructed and should distinguish himself or herself by Christian life, faith, and morals: striving to be worthy of this great office; cultivating devotion to the holy Eucharist and acting as an example to the other faithful by piety and reverence for this most holy Sacrament of the altar. Let no one be chosen whose selection may cause scandal among the faithful.

2
EXTENSION OF THE
FACULTY TO RECEIVE
HOLY COMMUNION TWICE
ON THE SAME DAY

According to the discipline now in force, the faithful are permitted to receive holy communion a second time:

—on the evening of Saturday or of the day preceding a holy-day of obligation, when they intend to fulfill the precept of assisting at Mass, even though they have already received holy communion in the morning of that same day;²

—at the second Mass of Easter and at one of the Masses celebrated on Christmas Day, even if they have already received holy communion at the Mass of the Easter Vigil or at the midnight Mass of Christmas;³

—at the evening Mass of Holy Thursday, even if they have received holy communion at the earlier chrisem Mass.⁴

In addition to these circumstances, there are similar occasions which suggest that holy communion may fittingly be received twice in the same day. It is thus necessary to determine more precisely the reasons for the new faculty.

The norm which the Church, as a provident Mother, has introduced according to venerable custom and included in canon law by which the faithful are permitted to receive holy communion only once a day remains intact. It is not permitted to be set aside merely from motives of devotion. A simple desire for repeated reception of holy communion should be answered by explaining that the power of the Sacrament by which faith, charity, and the other virtues are nourished, strengthened, and expressed is the greater to the extent that one more devoutly approaches the sacred table.⁵ From the liturgical celebration the faithful should go out to the works of charity, piety, and apostolic action so that “they may hold fast by their conduct and life to what they have received by faith and the Sacrament.”⁶

Special circumstances, however, can occur when the faithful who have already received holy communion, or even priests who have already celebrated Mass, may be present at a community celebration. They may receive holy communion again in the following instances:

1. at those Masses in which the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, anointing of the sick, orders, and matrimony are celebrated, and at a Mass at which first communion is received;⁷

2. at Masses at which a church or altar is consecrated; at Masses of religious profession or for the conferring of a canonical mission;

3. at the following Masses for the dead: the funeral Mass, the Mass celebrated after notification of death, the Mass on the day of final burial, and the Mass on the first anniversary;

4. at the principal Mass celebrated in the cathedral or in the parish on the feast of Corpus Christi and on the day of a parochial visitation; at the Mass celebrated by the major superior of a religious community on the occasion of a canonical visitation, special meetings, or chapters;

5. at the principal Mass of a eucharistic or marian congress, international or national, regional or diocesan;

6. at the principal Mass of any congress, sacred pilgrimage, or preaching mission for the people;

7. in the administration of viaticum, in which communion may also be given to the relatives and friends of the sick person.

8. Besides the cases mentioned above, local ordinaries may also grant permission *ad actum* to receive holy communion twice on the same day as often as they judge it truly justified by reason of genuinely special circumstances, according to the norm of this instruction.

First, a person to whom viaticum is administered in danger of death is not bound by any law of fasting; this norm remains in effect.⁸ Likewise in force is the concession already granted by Pius XII whereby “the sick, even if not confined to bed, may take non-alcoholic drinks and medicines in either liquid or solid form before the celebration of Mass and the reception of the Eucharist without any restriction of time.”⁹

In the case of foods and drinks taken for the purpose of nutrition, tradition is to be respected: the Eucharist should be received, as Tertullian said, “before any food”¹⁰ so as to indicate the excellence of the sacramental food.

In order to appreciate the dignity of the Sacrament and to prepare with joy for the coming of the Lord, a time of silence

3
MITIGATION OF THE
EUCCHARISTIC FAST FOR
THE SICK AND THE AGED

and recollection before the reception of holy communion is appropriate. In the case of the sick, however, it will be a sufficient sign of piety and reverence if, for a brief period of time, they turn their minds to the greatness of the mystery. The period of time of the eucharistic fast or abstinence from food and alcoholic drink is reduced to approximately one quarter of an hour, for the following persons:

1. the sick in hospitals or in their own homes, even if they are not confined to bed;
2. the faithful advanced in age who must remain at home because of age or who are living in a home for the aged;
3. sick priests, even if not confined to bed, and elderly priests, who wish to celebrate Mass or receive holy communion;
4. persons looking after the sick and the aged as well as those relatives of the sick and aged wishing to receive holy communion with them, whenever they are unable to observe the fast of one hour without inconvenience.

4
PIETY AND REVERENCE TO
THE BLESSED SACRAMENT
WHEN THE EUCHARIST IS
PLACED ON THE HANDS
OF THE FAITHFUL

Since the instruction *Memoriale Domini* was published three years ago, some episcopal conferences have sought the faculty from the Apostolic See to allow the minister of holy communion to place the eucharistic species in the hands of the faithful. As that instruction recalled, "the precepts of the Church and the documents of the Fathers amply testify that the deepest reverence and the greatest prudence have been shown with regard to the Holy Eucharist"¹¹ and should continue to be shown. Especially in this manner of receiving holy communion, some points indicated by experience should be most carefully observed.

The greatest diligence and care should be taken particularly with regard to fragments which may break off the hosts. This applies to the minister and to the recipient whenever the sacred host is placed in the hands of the communicant.

Before initiating the practice of giving holy communion in the hand, a suitable instruction and catechesis on Catholic doctrine is necessary concerning both the real and permanent presence of Christ under the eucharistic species and the reverence due to this sacrament.¹²

It is necessary to instruct the faithful that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Savior and that the same worship and adoration given to God is owed to him present under the sacramental signs.

The faithful should be counseled not to omit a sincere and fitting thanksgiving after the eucharistic banquet, in accord with each one's particular ability, state, and duties.¹³ So that participation in this heavenly table may be worthy and profitable, the value and effects deriving from it for the individual and the community must be pointed out. In this way the customary attitude of the faithful will reveal reverence, foster intimate love for the Father of the household who gives us "our daily bread" ¹⁴ and lead to a living relationship with Christ of whose flesh and blood we partake.¹⁵

Pope Paul VI has approved and sanctioned this instruction by his authority and directed that it be published, decreeing that it should enter into force on the day of its publication.

Given in Rome, at the Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments, January 29, 1973.

A. Card. Samoré, Prefect

✠ J. Casoria, Secretary

NOTES

¹ See Council of Trent, Session 13, *Decretum de SS. Eucharistiae Sacramento*, c.7; D.880(1646–1647): "If it is not fitting for anyone to approach any sacred functions except in a state of holiness, then certainly to the extent that the holiness and godliness of this heavenly sacrament is more and more known to the Christian, all the more must he take care that he does not come to receive it without great reverence and holiness, especially because of the fearful words of the Apostle which we read: 'A person who eats and drinks without recognizing the Body of the Lord is eating and drinking his own condemnation' (1 Cor. 11:29). Thus the following precept should be recalled to the one desirous of receiving holy communion: 'Let a man so examine himself' (1 Cor. 11:28). Ecclesiastical custom declares that the proving of one's self is necessary, so that no one, conscious of having committed mortal sin, though considering himself contrite, should approach the holy Eucharist without first having made a sacramental confession. This holy Synod declares that this must perpetually be observed by all Christians, even by priests, whose duty it is to celebrate Mass, as long as confessors are available. If in the case of urgent necessity a priest will have celebrated without previous confession, he is to make a confession as soon as possible." Congregation of the Council, decree *Sacra Tridentina Synodus*, December 20, 1905: *ASS* 38 (1905–1906) 400–406; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Normae pastorales circa absolutionem sacramentalem generali modo impertendam*, July 31, 1972, no. 1: *ASS* 64 (1972) 511.

² Congregation of Rites, instruction *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, May 25, 1967, no. 28: *ASS* 59 (1967) 557.

³ See *ibid.*

⁴ See *ibid.*; Congregation of Rites, instruction *Inter Oecumenici*, September 26, 1964, no. 60: *ASS* 56 (1964) 891; instruction, *Tres abhinc annos*, May 4, 1967, no. 14: *ASS* 59 (1967) 445.

⁵ See S. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* III, q.79, a.7 ad 3 and a.8 ad 1.

⁶ Congregation of Rites, instruction *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, May 25, 1967, no. 13: *ASS* 59 (1967) 549.

⁷ See *Missale Romanum, Institutio generalis Missalis Romani*, 329 a, typical edition 1970, 90.

⁸ See canon 858, § 1.

⁹ Motu proprio, *Sacram Communionem*, March 19, 1957, no. 4; *ASS* 49 (1957) 178.

¹⁰ *Ad uxorem* 2,5: *PL* 1, 1408.

¹¹ Congregation for Divine Worship, instruction *Memoriale Domini*, May 29, 1969; *ASS* 61 (1969) 542.

¹² See Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 7: *ASS* 56 (1969) 100–101; Congregation of Rites, instruction *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, May 25, 1967, no. 9: *ASS* 59 (1967) 547.

¹³ Paul VI, Address *Ad Membra Consilii Eucharisticis ex omnibus Nationibus conventibus moderandis habita*: *ASS* 64 (1972) 287.

¹⁴ See Luke 11:3.

¹⁵ See Hebrews 2:14.

I

Special Minister of Holy Communion

A sign of growth is change. Growth in fact necessitates change. As this dictum is true of all phases and aspects of life, so it is equally true of the liturgical life and practices of the Church.

The last decades have been an era of great growth in the Church's understanding and practice of the Eucharist. The centrality of the Sacrament in the life of the Church and the necessity of full participation in it by the frequent reception of communion have been fully recognized by the Catholic Church.

Such a growing awareness has brought with it new needs and demands. Pius X recognized the need to allow children full participation in the eucharistic sacrifice; Pius XII revised the eucharistic fast regulations. Paul VI, at the mandate of the Second Vatican Council, restored to the laity the practice of reception of communion under both kinds.

As the sacraments are for the people, it is the task of the bishop to assure the faithful the opportunity for their fruitful reception. At times, due to particular situations, the reception of the Eucharist has been made impossible by the absence in the local community of an ordinary minister (bishop, priest, deacon). At other times, the number of the faithful has been so great that one minister could not distribute communion to all present without creating a disproportion between the length of the communion rite and the rest of the celebration. Similar situations have arisen when the ordinary minister of Communion was impeded from fulfilling his office due to age, bad health, or other overwhelming demands of the pastoral ministry.

The pastoral needs of the Church have demanded a change. With the instruction *Immensae Caritatis* the Holy See has decided to alter the regulations concerning the ministers of Communion by granting bishops the opportunity to designate, upon request

from the local pastor, laymen and women as special, auxiliary, or "extraordinary" ministers of the Eucharist.

Although this changed practice—permitting designated lay men and lay women to give communion—has been in effect in the United States for some months by special concession of the Holy See, the instruction *Immensae Caritatis* extends the concession to the whole Church and should be the occasion for renewed catechesis.

1
PASTORAL NEEDS

Who is a special minister of the Eucharist? Ordination characterizes the ordinary minister of the Eucharist: bishop, priest, deacon. The rite of "institution" qualified the acolyte to distribute the Eucharist. A lay person (non-ordained) is called the special or "extraordinary" minister when, due to pastoral needs, he has been authorized to distribute communion.

How does one become a special minister? The principal norm for a pastor requesting his bishop to appoint special ministers is objective pastoral need. This need arises:

a. When there is a large number of regular communicants at the parochial liturgy and a shortage of ordinary ministers to assist the president of the assembly in the distribution of the Eucharist. A shortage of eucharistic ministers, in such a case, causes the communion rite to be out of proportion to the total celebration. The goal is not, however, to shorten or have more efficient Masses, but to give their proper value and to avoid the rush it takes to distribute communion to everyone present;

b. when outside Mass the ordinary minister is impeded from fulfilling his office due to age, bad health, or other pastoral demands;

c. when there is a shortage of ordinary ministers of the Eucharist (e.g. in some mission countries where the catechist has traditionally led the Sunday prayer service when no priest, deacon, or acolyte was present).

The need for special ministers arises, therefore, from a *continuing* need for someone to assist the ordinary minister of the Eucharist. It is not envisioned that the extraordinary minister become a substitute for priests so as to free them for other duties

or more leisure time. After ascertaining the objective need, the pastor decides whether to make a request for ministers. Consultation with the associate pastors, liturgical committee, and parish council is expected and important.

At times extraordinary ministers will be needed, not on the basis of a continuing pastoral need, but for a specific occasion, at a single Mass, for example. The local Ordinary can permit individual priests to appoint suitable persons for such a specific occasion.

Once the need is determined—in terms of a definite required number of extraordinary ministers—the question of selection arises. Who should be selected? What criteria should be followed?

In view of the role of the special minister, the persons selected should be mature Christians, persons of excellent character who have by their actual Christian living shown that they have taken their faith seriously. They should embody the Christian life of service.

The instruction *Immensae Caritatis* indicates that consideration should first of all be given to the “reader, seminary student, male religious, woman religious, catechist, Catholic man or woman.” This order can be changed according to the judgment of the local ordinary. He may, for example, judge that there is no need in the circumstances to prefer men to women (and indeed such preference may give offense).

After the requirements and persons have been considered, it is fitting for the pastor or other priest to conduct a personal interview with each of the selected candidates. Besides providing the opportunity for him to deepen his knowledge of the individual, it offers the candidate the chance to express his belief in the Eucharist and his feelings for the role of the minister of communion.

When the persons to be designated have been selected, their names are submitted to the local bishop for his approval. It is appropriate that this be done through the diocesan liturgical

2
SELECTION—DESIGNATION
—NOTIFICATION

commission. The letter addressed should indicate the reasons for the need as well as the names of the qualified persons selected to fill it.

“Regulation of the liturgy depends on the authority of the Church, that is, on the Apostolic See and, as laws may determine, on the bishop” (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 22, §1). The local bishop or his delegate (auxiliary bishops, episcopal vicars, and episcopal delegates) can grant approval for special ministers. The pastor receives, ordinarily through the diocesan liturgical commission, a written designation or appointment of special ministers of communion. This designation or appointment is not transferable. Replacing or acquiring additional lay ministers of communion requires that the new names be submitted for the bishop’s approval.

After the formal designation has been received, the pastor notifies the individuals and makes the necessary parish announcement, indicating when the ministers will begin to fulfill their office. The individuals should undergo formation sessions prior to the fixed date, aimed to build up a self-identity by a clear understanding of their new role, as well as a deepening of their knowledge about the theology of the Eucharist.

The local community must also be prepared for the introduction of special ministers of communion by a suitable and adequate catechesis. All the skills and resources of a parish should be exerted to prepare the people of the parish for this practice. Sermons should be preached on this significant change in the pastoral and sacramental life of the people. The parish bulletin, posters, announcements should be employed as means of communication. The more parishioners are conversant with the practice, the more they will be prepared for the introduction of the new ministers.

The parish should celebrate the announcement of those selected to be ministers of communion either in the Sunday Eucharist or in a liturgical service. This service is in no sense an ordination, nor does it confer any new “power” on those who are designated to act as ministers. It does express the community’s understanding and acceptance of the new practice—and it is an occasion of prayer for the special ministers.

The frequency with which special ministers function is to be determined by the pastor in consultation with the other priests and the parish worship committee, in light of particular pastoral needs. A varying schedule of such ministry is preferable.

The liturgical role of the special ministers should not be visibly confused with the distinct roles of others such as the deacon, leader of song, reader, or acolyte. Special ministers should not assist the priest at the altar during Mass in the manner of a deacon. They should have an assigned place, however, and they may enter in procession with the priest, reader, servers, etc.

Special ministers do not wear the liturgical garb of an ordained deacon or priest, but they should be dressed neatly in a way consonant with the dignity of their functional role (e.g., coat and tie for a layman). Local usage should be followed in this matter.

The special minister is qualified to assist the celebrating priest in the administration of the holy Eucharist during Mass in churches whenever a very lengthy distribution of communion cannot otherwise be avoided.

a. During the breaking of the bread and the mingling, the minister enters the sanctuary and stands near the altar. After the priest has received communion in the usual way, he gives communion (under both kinds) to the minister if he is to communicate, then gives the ciborium or other vessel with hosts to the extraordinary minister, and both distribute communion to the faithful.

b. When he gives communion, the special minister follows the same rite as that of the ordinary minister. He holds the consecrated host a little raised for the individual communicant to see, then says: "The Body of Christ." Only after the communicant has responded: "Amen," may the minister give him or her communion.

It is of the greatest importance that the minister avoid all rush and haste. His ministrations of communion should be done with dignity and reverence.

c. After communion the minister returns to his place.

Besides distributing communion during Mass, the special

minister is qualified to give communion to himself and to other members of the faithful in the absence of an ordinary minister of communion or if such a minister is impeded by age, bad health, or the pastoral ministry. In the same circumstances he or she may bring communion to the sick—in their homes, in hospitals and other institutions, homes for the aged or for senior citizens, etc. Or he may assist the ordinary minister in bringing communion to large numbers of the sick.

When the special minister gives communion in the absence of an ordinary minister, he should follow the rite appended to this booklet. The preparation of special ministers should include a careful study of this rite. See appendix.

For the very different case of the special minister who is designated for a single occasion—and thus not formally installed according to the appended rite—the celebrant of Mass should exercise great care in choosing an individual or individuals to assist him. If the priest has himself received the faculty for this purpose from the bishop and he finds that a very large number of communicants are present, he should make certain that the minister is prepared before Mass. Then, as indicated in the rite for designating a special minister on occasion, he should give him or her the brief blessing before communion. See appendix.

4 CONCLUSION

Like the practice of reception of communion in the hand, the introduction of special ministers of the Eucharist is not a novelty in Catholic liturgical practice.

Historical documentation proves that in the early Church the practice of confiding the Eucharist to the laity was not uncommon. Although the priest-celebrant has been, since about the ninth century, the ordinary minister of the Eucharist, pastoral needs have arisen today that warrant, with proper approbation, that someone other than the priest, deacon, or acolyte be the minister of communion on certain occasions. For this reason, the role of the special minister of the Eucharist has been introduced.

“With ready Christian obedience, laymen, as well as all disciples of Christ, should accept whatever their sacred pastors (bishops), as representatives of Christ, decree in their role as

teachers and rulers in the Church. Let sacred pastors recognize and promote the dignity as well as the responsibility of the laymen in the Church. . . In this way, the whole Church, strengthened by each of its members, can more effectively fulfill its mission for the life of the world.” (*Constitution on the Church*, no. 37).

II

Holy Communion Twice on The Same Day

The new instruction from the Congregation for the Sacraments next takes up the pastoral question of communion more than once on a given day, under the heading, "Extended Faculty for Receiving Communion on the Same Day." The text of the Roman document sums up the existing rules and then adds other occasions when the rule of communion once a day no longer holds.

1
RECENT
DEVELOPMENTS

In 1963 the Second Vatican Council had stated, in the Constitution on the Liturgy: "That more perfect form of participation in the Mass whereby the faithful, after the priest's communion, receive the Lord's body from the same sacrifice, is strongly recommended" (no. 55).

Theologically and liturgically, full participation in the Mass always includes reception of the Eucharist. Communion is integral to every eucharistic celebration. The Mass is a sacrifice and a memorial in the form of "a holy meal in which—by communion in the body and blood of Christ—the people of God shares in the effects of the paschal sacrifice, renews the new covenant once made by God with man in the blood of Christ, and in faith and hope prefigures the eschatological banquet in the kingdom of the Father, announcing the death of the Lord until he comes" (Congregation of Rites, *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, May 25, 1967, no. 3).

Frequent reception of communion has long been a pastoral reality. The practice, restored by Pius X at the beginning of the twentieth century, became vastly more common in the 1950s when Pius XII eased the regulations for the eucharistic fast. Today people normally expect to receive communion each time

they take part in Mass. Not to receive communion at Mass is rapidly becoming the exception.

Now a different question has arisen. When people are at a second Mass on a given day, they almost naturally expect to receive communion again—in spite of the long tradition of communion once only on a day. Everyone would recognize the distortion of values in receiving communion over and over again, in successive Masses as if the mere multiplication of such actions could substitute for deeper faith and devotion. There is a rationale behind the tradition of one Mass on a single day—even apart from the old abuses of multiplying Masses which the Council of Trent sought to end.

The Code of Canon Law (canons 857, 858) states that no one is allowed to receive communion more than once on the same day except where there is danger of death or where a second reception of communion is necessary to prevent irreverence toward the Sacrament.

Like much of the Code of Canon Law, this regulation has been amended. The Congregation of Rites in the instruction *Inter oecumenici* (September 26, 1964) relaxed the restrictive discipline: “The faithful who communicate in the Mass of the Easter Vigil or in the midnight Mass of Christmas may also receive communion again in the second Mass of Easter and in one of the Masses which is celebrated on Christmas in the daytime” (no. 60).

Next, the May 4, 1967, instruction *Tres abhinc annos* extended the faculty of communion more than once to include Holy Thursday: “The faithful who go to communion at the Mass of Christ on Holy Thursday may receive communion again at the evening Mass of the same day” (no. 14).

When, for pastoral reasons, the Sunday Mass was often anticipated on Saturday evening (with a parallel anticipation of the Mass of holy days) another reconsideration of canon 857 was necessary. The instruction *Eucharisticum Mysterium* (May 25, 1967) stated: “The faithful who begin to celebrate the Sunday or holy day of obligation on the preceding evening may go to communion at the Mass even if they have already received communion in the morning” (no. 28).

Even these developments, however, did not get to the heart of the question for the many people who on occasion participate in two eucharistic celebrations on a given day.

In the United States the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in November 1969 passed the motion "that the Apostolic See be asked to permit the clergy and faithful to receive holy communion a second time on a given day if they take part in two Masses

- (a) which are not celebrated in immediate succession and
- (b) which are truly distinct celebrations of the Eucharist
 - (i) either because of the different rites (e.g., parish or community Mass and funeral Mass)
 - (ii) because of the differences of congregations (e.g., parish or community Mass and Mass for a meeting or conference) or
 - (iii) because of the difference of time between a morning and evening Mass."

This request was developed on the principle that when there is a true distinction between different celebrations of Mass—and not merely two Masses in succession—people may well have reason to assist at Mass twice on a single day and should not be prohibited from receiving communion a second time.

Because of the postponement of a solution to the problem by the Holy See, some American bishops gave dispensations from canon 857 under certain conditions. Dispensation from that law is not reserved to the Holy See.

More recently, the Pontifical Commission for the Revision of the Code of Canon Law published its plans for revising some of the regulations affecting holy communion. Announced in the journal *Communicationes* issued by the commission, the new law is to retain the customary prohibition against the reception of communion more than once a day except in defined cases and "unless within the eucharistic celebration which takes place with some solemnity." This norm would provide a very simple and general pattern, permitting a second reception of communion whenever some degree of solemnity would be found in the second Mass. It is of course only a projected regulation at the present time.

Nevertheless, these different attempts to steer a path between abandoning the principle of communion once a day and the principle of full eucharistic participation in every celebration illustrate the new statement from the Congregation for the Sacraments. On the one hand, the tradition of celebrating the Eucharist only once a day is respected by maintaining the long-standing prohibition of repeated communions; on the other hand, some recognition is given to the many occasions and circumstances which prompt people to take part in Mass a second time—with the proper corollary that they should then take part fully and receive communion.

While insisting that the previous norms remain intact and are not to be set aside “merely from motives of devotion,” *Immensae Caritatis* does extend the faculty of communion more than once a day to the following instances:

1. At Masses where another sacrament is celebrated (and at first communion).

2. At Masses of religious profession, bestowal of a canonical mission, and dedication of a church or altar.

3. At Masses for the dead (funeral Mass, Mass after notification of death, Mass on the day of final burial, and first anniversary Mass).

4. At the principal cathedral or parochial celebration of Corpus Christi, parochial visitation; at the Mass on the occasion of a canonical visitation by a major religious superior and at special meetings or chapters.

5. At the principal Mass of an Eucharistic or Marian Congress.

6. At the principal Mass of any congress, pilgrimage, mission.

7. In the administration of viaticum when communion can be given to those present.

8. On any individual occasion when the local ordinary grants permission.

Immensae Caritatis does not deal directly with the general principle: everyone should communicate at the Eucharist. As far back as the sixteenth century, the Council of Trent had made the point effectively: "The holy council wishes that at each Mass the faithful who are present should communicate, not only in spiritual desire, but sacramentally, by the actual reception of the Eucharist" (Sess. 22, chapter 6). In this century Pius X reacted to the excessive rigorism of Jansenistic thinking, which attempted to limit eucharistic participation on the basis of an exaggerated personal unworthiness, and had the Congregation of the Council consider the matter. The Congregation declared that "frequent and daily communion, as a practice most earnestly desired by Christ our Lord and by the Catholic Church, should be open to all the faithful, of whatever rank and condition of life; so that no one who is in the state of grace, and who approaches the holy table with a right and devout intention can be prohibited therefrom" (Sacra Tridentina Synodus: ASS 38 (1905) 400-406).

In 1947, Pope Pius XII, in the encyclical *Mediator Dei* added that "holy communion pertains to the integrity of the Mass and to the partaking of the Sacrament; but while it is obligatory for the priest who says the Mass, it is only something earnestly recommended to the faithful" (no. 115). Finally, the Second Vatican Council defined the meaning of full eucharistic participation in the words of the Constitution on the Liturgy already quoted: "that more perfect form of participation in the Mass whereby the faithful, after the priest's communion, receive the Lord's Body from the same sacrifice, is strongly recommended" (no. 55).

While all the cited documents expected that this full eucharistic participation by the faithful would be limited to one Mass a day, it was at the same time the development of the concept of the "more perfect form of participation" that precipitated the question of communion more than once a day on certain occasions.

Obviously, the intent is not the multiplication of Masses attended, as if there were a mathematical correlation between attendance and grace. The development of such a mechanistic or mathematical attitude toward the Eucharist would only indicate the presence of distorted theological and liturgical prin-

ciples. To forestall such abuses in the past, church tradition had permitted the full participation of the faithful in only one Mass a day.

The instruction *Immensae Caritatis*, however, does admit of occasions where the faithful would desire to participate fully in more than one Eucharist. The cases enumerated in the recent instruction when reception is permitted twice on any given day are many and varied. They should serve to satisfy the sacramental needs of the people now more deeply aware of the meaning of the Eucharist.

III

Eucharistic Fast for the Sick and the Aged

1
WITNESS OF
HISTORY

The apostolic constitution *Christus Dominus* of Pope Pius XII (January 6, 1953) pointed out that from most ancient times the custom developed of administering the Eucharist to the faithful who were fasting. Saint Augustine, for example, said that “the most holy Eucharist is always received fasting, and that this usage is observed throughout the world” (PL 33.203).

Again it was the Bishop of Hippo who stated the fundamental reason for any eucharistic fast: “It has pleased the Holy Spirit that in honor of so great a sacrament the body of the Lord should enter the mouth of a Christian before any other food” (PL 33.203). Pius XII explained that “not only does this fast discharge the obligation of honor to the divine Redeemer, but it also fosters devotion; and so it can help to increase those most salutary fruits of holiness which Christ, the fountain head and author of all good, demands that we who are enriched by his grace bring forth.”

With this background, Pope Pius began the process of relaxing the period of the eucharistic fast—not to destroy it or to weaken its significance, but to facilitate frequent communion. The eucharistic fast from midnight was a venerable tradition, it had a profound spiritual rationale, but it was only an ecclesiastical law: it should not stand in the way of full participation in the eucharistic sacrifice.

By various stages the regulations for the reduced eucharistic fast—Pius XII still praised the usage of fasting from midnight when possible—were lessened. At the end of the second period of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI introduced the rule of the one-hour eucharistic fast now in force (November 21, 1964). In 1966 he insisted on its importance by stating formally

that bishops may not dispense from this law (*De Episcoporum Muneribus*, June 15, 1967, no. IX, 20).

The brief one-hour fast before the reception of the Eucharist has become the normal practice today. It is not difficult to recall the circumstances that hastened the mitigation of the previous, longer eucharistic fast regulation.

The eucharistic fast from midnight was altered for many pastoral reasons, not least among them the desire for all to participate conveniently and fully in the eucharistic sacrifice. Greater demands had been placed on priests, "numerically unequal to the task of ministering to the growing necessities of the faithful." The number of eucharistic celebrations by one priest on any given Sunday, his added apostolic labors, and at times the distance traveled to serve the faithful were all reasons urging a change in the eucharistic fast practice.

The faithful also found their circumstances radically different from previous generations of Catholics: a greater variety of work shifts, the absence of a resident priest, social life, etc.

The introduction of afternoon and evening eucharistic liturgies obviously necessitated an alteration in the existing fast regulations. After a period of experiment, one hour of abstinence from solid foods and liquids (apart from water) was considered a reasonable solution and was decided upon in 1964. The one-hour fast would not hinder the frequent reception of the Eucharist, and at the same time would recall the sacredness of the sacrament about to be received.

The sick, however, have always been given special consideration. No added burden should be placed upon them. Pius XII permitted "the sick, even if not confined to bed, to take non-alcoholic drinks and medicines in either liquid or solid form before the celebration of Mass and the reception of the Eucharist without any restrictions" (*Sacram Communionem*, 1957).

The instruction *Immensae Caritatis* of the Congregation for the Sacraments once again considers the fast required of the sick. At the same time it looks to the particular needs of the aged.

While the concession of Pius XII as stated above remains

2
NEEDS OF
THE SICK
AND AGED

in force, the length of the fast from food and alcoholic drink has been reduced for the sick and aged. Rather than requiring one hour, approximately one-quarter of an hour is now deemed sufficient "to prepare with joy for the coming of the Lord."

The sick person at home (even if not confined to bed) or in a hospital, as well as the faithful advanced in age who must remain at home or in a home for the aged, may follow the above norm. At the same time, all who look after the sick and the aged and all the relatives of the sick and aged who wish to receive communion with them may also observe the same quarter of an hour fast, if the one-hour fast would be inconvenient.

The distribution of communion to the sick and aged has mine the exact time the minister will arrive. For this reason, the some practical difficulties. It is impossible, for example, to determine of fast is "approximately" one quarter of an hour. The exact time should be no cause for scrupulosity or worry. The intent is to safeguard a period of personal reflection and preparation for the reception of holy communion.

The traditional discipline of the Church requires that everyone approaching the Eucharist should fast as part of the normal preparation for fruitful participation in the Eucharist. The retention of the law for the sick and aged, even in very abbreviated form, is evidence of the church community's desire and need to maintain this discipline for all the faithful.

The revised *Rite of Anointing and Pastoral Care of the Sick* (November 30, 1972) includes a special service for the communion of the sick: greeting, penitential rite, brief liturgy of the word, and communion itself. There is also a shorter rite for communion of the sick in hospitals, homes for the aged, etc. These rites will soon be generally available in English.

The new ritual repeatedly urges that the sick and the aged be given the attention and concern of the Christian community. In particular, it speaks of the responsibility of seeing that "every opportunity be given to the sick and elderly, even if they are not seriously ill or in danger of death, to receive communion frequently, even daily, especially during the Easter season. . . ." (no. 46). If the ordinary minister of the Eucharist is unavailable or is unable to attend to this pastoral responsibility, other qualified ministers (acolytes or special ministers of the Eucharist mentioned above) should bring communion to these important members of the Christian community. The reduced eucharistic fast period of *Immensae Caritatis*—for the sick and aged and for those who are with them on the occasion of communion—should facilitate a little this ministry.

IV

Reception of Communion in the Hand

The final part of the instruction *Immensae Caritatis* concerns the practice of reception of communion in the hand, a practice that is officially approved in some fifteen countries.

Although at the present time this usage is not authorized for the Catholics in the United States, most of the faithful have become aware of it. Large numbers have experienced the practice in Canada and elsewhere. Questions have been raised, explanations sought, justification desired.

The Holy See has repeatedly insisted upon the need for an adequate catechesis prior to the introduction of this manner of reception of communion. Even though official authorization has not been requested by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, there is a need to inform the faithful about the practice in other countries. In view of the situation in our country, the present instruction on the Eucharist offers the appropriate opportunity to offer the following catechesis on the practice of reception of communion in the hand.

The practice of the communicant receiving communion in his hand is not an unprecedented development in the liturgy of the Church.

In the writings of the early Church fathers there is no exact account of the mode of receiving communion. There was no reason to explain the usual practice or to describe what people actually experienced. The most that one can find are occasional references to the practice of reception of communion in the hand during the first centuries of the Church.

I
HISTORICAL SURVEY

Cyril of Jerusalem gives us the clearest account in the fourth century. In his *Mystagogic Catechesis*, addressed to his catechumens, he stated:

“When you approach, do not go stretching out your open hands or having your fingers spread out, but make the left hand into a throne for the right which shall receive the King, and then cup your open hand and take the Body of Christ, reciting the Amen.”

The transition from the reception of the Eucharist in the hand, as described by Saint Cyril, to the introduction of the reception of communion on the tongue seems to have begun only toward the end of the eighth century.

The reception of communion on the tongue did become a matter of practicality with the introduction of unleavened hosts that no longer resembled bread. There was also a misunderstanding of the sacrality of the individual unordained Christian. The faithful approached the Eucharist with a sense of humility and reverence, as was proper, but these sentiments developed into an exaggerated feeling of unworthiness. Mortal, sinful man, it was felt, dare not touch with his hands the all-holy and powerful God unless he were ordained.

All this led to the point where by the ninth century communion in the hand was no longer the universal practice. The Council of Rouen (878), in fact, explicitly condemned the practice on the part of the laity. The tenth *Ordo Romanus*, dating from the ninth century, describes the new manner of receiving communion not only for the laity but even for subdeacons:

“Priests and deacons, after kissing the bishop, should receive the Body of Christ from him in their hands and communicate themselves at the left side of the altar. Subdeacons, however, after kissing the hand of the bishop, receive the Body of Christ from him in their mouth.”

The eighth and ninth centuries were centuries of transition from the practice of communion in the hand to that of communion on the tongue by the laity. For a long time both methods must have been in use. Now in the twentieth century the Church once again finds itself in a similar period of liturgical transition.

The modern liturgical movement revived the practice of frequent reception of communion. The Second Vatican Council summed this development up by saying that the reception of the Eucharist in the Mass is the more perfect form of participation in the celebration of the Lord's memorial sacrifice (*Constitution on the Liturgy*, no. 55). In fact, it is considered an integral part of the celebration, and today fewer and fewer people leave their part of the celebration incomplete by neglecting communion.

More recent liturgical changes, such as the use of the vernacular, the revised form of the liturgy, new liturgical texts, etc., have all contributed to the growing understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist in the lives of the faithful. Faith and reverence for the mystery of Christ's Body and Blood must find significant and meaningful expression in the liturgical celebration.

Soon after the Second Vatican Council, in various places in the world the practice of placing the eucharistic bread in the hand of the communicant instead of on his tongue was reintroduced. The Congregation for Divine Worship, after consultation with the bishops of the Latin Church, issued an instruction on May 29, 1969, on the manner of administering holy communion. This instruction announced the decision not to change the existing practice of the Latin Church with regard to the mode of reception of communion. The same document, however, concluded by indicating how the episcopal conferences could ask to restore the earlier practice of communion in the hand. Before granting the permission, the Instruction states, "the Holy See will weigh the individual cases with care, remembering the bonds which exist between the several local churches among themselves and with the entire Church, in order to promote the common good and edification and the increase of faith and piety which flows from mutual good example."

Immediately a number of indulgences were conceded to various episcopal conferences throughout the world. The actual decision to implement the indulgence, after the action of the episcopal conference and the Holy See, is left to the individual diocesan bishop. He may authorize the practice "in accord with his prudence and conscience," with the provision that there be no surprise on the part of the faithful and no danger of irreverence to the Eucharist.

It is always understood that each individual communicant, as he or she comes to the priest or other minister for communion, makes an individual choice of the manner of communicating.

The option to receive communion in the hand has been the subject of discussion for some time among the American bishops. A majority of the bishops, but not the two-thirds majority stipulated in the Roman document has approved the optional restoration of the practice. Lay groups and religious communities, as well as the national Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions have formally requested approval of this option. In numerous places the practice has been begun without authorization and the proper catechesis. Therefore, the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy has proposed that, if and when approved, the introduction of the practice should be preceded, in any diocese where it is adopted, by a thorough catechesis under the direction of the local bishop and the diocesan liturgical commission.

The practice of reception of communion in the hand is, first of all, not a matter of Catholic doctrine. The practice is in complete accord with the Catholic teaching and understanding of the reality of the Eucharist, in particular, the sacramental presence of the Body and Blood of Jesus. In no way is it intended to detract from the Christian's respect, reverence, or devotion. On the contrary, it is hoped that it will enhance personal devotion and deepen the individual's faith in the Mystery.

The mode of reception of the eucharistic species, rather than touching upon church doctrine, is a matter of ecclesiastical discipline. A modification or restoration of an earlier practice of this nature can consequently be brought about by the competent authority. In the case of the practice of distribution of communion, the competency rests with the diocesan bishop in union with the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Holy See.

The first and principal reason for a renewed interest and concern for introducing the practice of communion in the hand is a feeling for what is dignified and becoming.

The profound significance of the mystery of the incarnation

has made man aware that in Christ all of creation has been called to sanctification and indeed is sanctified by the mystery of his birth. All matter has been taken up in the new creation of Christ's Incarnation.

The Christian, furthermore, has been sanctified by his participation in Christ in a very special way through Christian initiation. In the living waters of baptism he has been cleansed, consecrated, and made to share in the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ. The Christian has a new dignity by reason of this incorporation into Christ. Taken up in Christ, he has been made holy and sanctified.

It is with his entire person that man reaches out to God in praise and thanksgiving. His worship cannot be limited to his intellect or will; he moves toward God and relates to him with his entire being—body and soul.

Kneeling, standing, raising of the hands, etc., are all symbolic gestures used to express—through the body—the praise, worship, and thanksgiving that all men must give to God.

Word and gesture, therefore, are used to express this movement. Giving and receiving are gestures of the divine-human dynamic that occurs in the mystery of Christian worship.

The external indications of reverence are related to and depend largely upon conventional acceptance which can vary from time to time and from place to place. Some gestures are more meaningful to one generation of worshipers than to another. For this reason one can find that at times a particular gesture is changed to another that is considered more significant.

The manner of reception of the Eucharist is also a symbolic gesture. Christians today have a renewed awareness of their individual sacredness and realize that no part of their being is less sacred than another. Thus for many people to reach out in a gesture of wanting and grateful receiving expresses deep Christian faith. To others, it is an affirmative gesture of faith, conviction, commitment. Upon reflection, receiving food into one's mouth from another's hand seems to many a gesture limited to the case of infants and the infirm. It is considered less becoming for an adult Christian—mature in his faith. Reception in the hand could be more natural and becoming.

Communion in the hand need never be a sign or gesture of less reverence. The reception of the host in one's hand rather than on the tongue is more dignified and becoming to any on-looker. Wherever the practice has been introduced with careful instruction and practical preparation this is the universal experience. The actions of both minister and communicant are signs of genuine reverence.

The gesture is also more convenient, less hurried and routine. It is also psychologically more adult, since the communicant feeds himself and thus acknowledges his desire to grow in strength by the Sacrament of Bread. By accepting the Body of Christ, he also accepts a mature and responsible role in the Christian community.

Closely related is the desire that the mode of receiving communion express an active rather than passive participation in the liturgical celebration. Reception of the Eucharist in one's outstretched hand seems to express a more positive human response to the general invitation to "take and eat." Actual reaching out in petition and acceptance can be a fuller, human gesture.

With the proposed mode of communicating in the hand, the sign of the eucharistic meal and the fulfillment of Christ's mandate is considered to be effected in a more human and meaningful manner. At the same time, the full sharing in the celebration of the Eucharist befits and expresses a greater awareness of the Christian's dignity as a member of the Body of Christ. The hands that offer the gifts for the sacrifice are the same hands that receive the transformed gift back in communion.

4
PRACTICAL
IMPLEMENTATION

The introduction of the practice of communion in the hand offers each individual his or her choice of ways for the reception of the Eucharist. The options for each person are: (a) the reception of the Eucharist on the tongue, and (b) the reception of the Eucharist in the hand. The latter is carried out by having the minister place the consecrated bread in the communicant's outstretched hand.

The individual is always free to receive communion on the tongue if he so desires. In fact, the practice of hand communion

must never be introduced in a way that would exclude the usual practice. In other words, both possibilities should exist at the same time in the same celebration. Respect for the desires and feelings of each individual will thus always be shown.

In receiving communion in the hand, the faithful approach the priest or other minister of the Eucharist with one hand resting on the other, palm up, ordinarily the left hand uppermost. (Both women and men should have their hands uncovered.) The sacred host is placed in the extended hand after the usual words: “The Body of Christ,” and the communicant’s “Amen.” After the priest places the consecrated bread in the hand, the communicant steps to one side and immediately communicates himself, taking the host in his right hand; only then does he return to his place.

The faithful should be instructed to extend their hands in a reverent gesture as they stand before the priest or other minister of the Eucharist so that the particle can easily be placed upon the open palm. In the traditional usage, the individual does not reach out to take the Eucharist from the minister’s hand.

The communicants who wish to receive communion on the tongue simply do not extend their hands. They are not inconvenienced in any way.

In the case where communion is distributed under both kinds by means of intinction, the host dipped in the chalice is never placed in the hand of the communicant.

The role of the minister of the Eucharist is maintained throughout the liturgy.

The priest and other ministers of the Eucharist—deacons, acolytes, or lay people authorized as assistant or special ministers—retain the office of ministering communion by offering the Body of Christ to the faithful and inviting them to share more fully in the sacrificial meal.

The distribution of communion in the hand demands that all the ministers of the Eucharist fulfill their role in such a manner that their external actions reflect their inner understanding and reverence for the sacrament. The sacred bread is held momentarily before the communicant as the minister addresses the person with the words: “The Body of Christ,” and evokes a

personal profession of faith by the individual's response of "Amen."

Of great importance is the manner in which the actual reception of the Eucharist is carried out. Dignity and reverence demands each one's particular attention. Avoidance of all rush and disorder is fitting for the reception of the Body of the Lord. Children should, as in the past, be given adequate instruction prior to their full participation in the eucharistic sacrifice on their reception of first holy communion.

A careful observation of these suggestions will be a practical safeguard and precaution against any possible abuses, which are the concern of *Immensae Caritatis*. The communicants themselves will be conscious of the seriousness of their action and want to approach the Eucharist in the most dignified and fitting manner possible. Then the plurality of forms of reception will not be a source of disunity, as it will not be a cause of inconvenience.

5
DIFFICULTIES

The above are the positive reasons for the restoration of the older tradition. But many contrary reasons have also been advanced.

Some of the questions which make people hesitant about communion in the hand have been referred to and answered. Like any change, and especially a change back to a long forgotten tradition, this demands serious reflection and understanding.

The principal concern expressed by the Holy See—although it grants the permission readily and hopes the practice will "increase the people's sense of their dignity" and "strengthen their faith"—is that there may be a lessening of reverence toward the Eucharist or even positive irreverence.

A similar response has to be given to all who would find the change difficult for psychological reasons or because of strong feelings about one particular sign of reverence or simply because any change is disturbing. The freedom of all is respected in the proposal—the freedom of those who desire no change, the freedom of the increasing numbers who are aware of the positive spiritual and religious values of communion in the hand.

In any and every case, what is required is an intelligent and dignified reception of the Eucharist. The restoration of communion in the hand should be a surprise to no one. Once the practice has been adequately presented to the faithful and the individual's hesitations and questions answered, a meaningful and significant participation of the faithful in the reception of communion in the hand can be expected.

Communion in the hand may be the occasion for increasing among the people "the sense of their dignity as members of the Mystical Body of Christ, in which they are inserted by baptism and the grace of the Eucharist, and also should strengthen their faith in the grand reality of the Body and Blood of the Lord which they hold in their hands" (Congregation for Divine Worship).

Immensae Caritatis does not by itself extend the practice of communion in the hand to countries, like the United States, where it has not been adopted by concurrent action of the conference of bishops and the Holy See. Nevertheless it offers the occasion for a thorough explanation of the practice, to remove fears or misunderstandings, to enable people to appreciate the positive reasons that have prompted this change elsewhere, and to broaden somewhat the awareness of the eucharistic mystery itself.

It is possible for people to be casual or unconcerned even in the eucharistic celebration, but this is really no greater problem with communion in the hand than with some who may hurry to the altar without preparation. There will be deep reverence if the faithful have taken full part in the celebration—hearing God's word and responding with the praise and thanks of the eucharistic prayer, if they have joined in the Lord's prayer and in the communal act or sign of peace and love.

As for the actual externals of the communion rite, it is a matter of instruction to make these every bit as reverent as in the past—procession to the altar, posture of standing or kneeling for communion, other sign or signs of reverence, manner of holding one's hands to receive the consecrated bread, proper communication before leaving the altar, etc.

Occasionally cases of apparently deliberate, gross irreverence to the Sacrament have been reported in certain cultures, including superstitious practices. Some such abuses may be dis-

missed as the product of mental derangement. They may be prevented—in the rare case where such a possibility is envisioned—by care that the Eucharist is promptly consumed by the communicants before they return to their places. If there is reason to expect some such irreverence, the priest or other minister or even a server may observe the actual communion of each individual.

Another hesitation is that children may fail, through curiosity or ignorance, to consume the consecrated bread. Unquestionably this has happened on occasion where communion is received directly in the mouth. If the parents and the pastor fulfill their responsibility of judging the readiness of children for first communion and if the catechesis and very practical preparation are thorough, this need be no problem.

A number of other rather specialized objections have also been raised. For example, that elderly people find or may find communion in the hand awkward or upsetting. At the same time, some elderly people welcome the option because they dislike having to respond precisely to the hurried movement of the priest's hand to their mouth. But the basic response to this difficulty is that the practice of communion in the hand is an option and no elderly communicant or other person need abandon his or her accustomed usage.

APPENDIX

Rites Prepared by the Congregation for Divine Worship

I

Rite for Commissioning an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion

1. *The person, designated by the ordinary or his delegate for the administration of communion, receives the mandate according to the following rite. This rite may be celebrated either during Mass or outside Mass, with the people present.*

2. *After the homily, which should stress the pastoral reasons for this office in the Christian community, the priest presents the minister-elect to the people in these or similar words:*

A.
RITE DURING
MASS

Our brother (sister) N., has been entrusted with the important duty of distributing holy communion to himself (herself) and to his (her) fellow Christians and of bringing communion and viaticum to the sick and to those in danger of death.

You, my brother (sister), have been chosen for an important office and must now 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 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.'"

3. *After the instruction, the minister-elect stands in front of the celebrant, who asks him:*

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

Minister-elect: I am.

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

Minister-elect: I am.

4. *All stand. The minister-elect kneels, and the celebrant invites those present to pray:*

My brothers and sisters,
let us pray to God our Father
that this our brother (sister)
chosen to administer the Body of Christ
may be filled with his blessing.

All pray silently for a brief period. Then the celebrant continues:

Father of mercy,
source of all grace and blessing,
bless ✠ this our brother (sister).
May he (she) faithfully distribute the Sacrament
to his (her) brothers and sisters,
be strengthened and comforted by it,
and one day be found worthy to share
in the everlasting meal of heaven.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

5. *An invocation for the newly designated minister is added to the general intercessions.*

6. *In the procession at the offertory, the newly designated minister brings the vessel with bread to the altar. At communion he or she may receive under both kinds.*

7. *After the faithful have assembled, an appropriate song is sung. The celebrant greets the people, and a brief liturgy of the word should ordinarily follow. The readings and chants are taken in whole or in part from the liturgy of the day or from the texts provided below.*

8. *The rite continues as in nos. 2 - 3 above.*

9. *The celebrant blesses the people who are present and dismisses them. The celebration is concluded with an appropriate song.*

II

Rite for the Designation of a Minister of Holy Communion on a Particular Occasion

10. *It is desirable that persons who in the case of true necessity are designated on a particular occasion as ministers of communion receive the mandate according to the rite which follows.*

11. *During the breaking of the bread and the mingling, the one who will distribute communion goes to the altar and stands before the celebrant. After the Agnus Dei, the priest blesses him:*

May almighty God bless you ✠ for the distribution of the Body of Christ to your brothers.

Minister: Amen.

12. *After the priest has received communion in the usual way, he gives communion to the minister if he is to communicate.*

Then he gives him the ciborium or vessel with hosts, and both go to minister communion to the faithful.

III

Rite for Administration of Communion by a Special Minister

13. *The special minister who is to give holy communion should either wear the liturgical garb customary in his country or area or he should wear garb which is suitable for this ministry.*

14. *In giving communion during Mass, the minister takes a host for each communicant, raises it a little, and shows it, saying:*

The Body of Christ.

The communicant answers:

Amen.

After communion, the minister washes his hands and then returns to his place.

15. *In giving communion outside Mass, the special minister follows the rite in the Roman Ritual.*

IV

Texts for the Rite Outside Mass

	<i>Lectionary for Mass</i>
OLD TESTAMENT	1. Gen. 14:18-20 170
	2. Ex. 16:2-4, 12-15 114
	3. Ex. 24:3-8 169
	4. Deut. 8:2-3, 14b-16a 168
	5. 1 Kings 19:4-8 904
	6. Prov. 9:1-6 120
NEW TESTAMENT	7. Acts 2:42-47 44
	8. Acts 10:34a, 37-43 43
	9. 1 Cor. 10:16-17 168

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|---|-------|--|
| 10. 1 Cor. 11:23-26 | 40 | |
| 11. Heb. 9:11-15 | 169 | |
| 12. Ps. 22:1-3a. 3-4. 5. 6 | 31 | RESPONSORIAL PSALMS |
| 13. Ps. 33:2-3. 4-5. 6-7. 8-9. 10-11 | 33 | |
| 14. Ps. 77:3,4bc, 23-24. 25. 54 | 114 | |
| 15. Ps. 144:10-11. 15-16. 17-18 | 111 | |
| 16. Ps. 147:12-13. 14-15. 19-20 | 906.7 | |
| 17. John 6:57 | [908] | ALLELUIA AND
VERSE BEFORE THE
GOSPEL |
| Just as the Father who has life sent me
and I have life because of the Father,
so the man who feeds on me
will have life because of me. | | |
| 18. John 6:58 | [908] | |
| This is the bread that came down from heaven.
Unlike your ancestors who ate and died nonetheless,
the man who feeds on this bread shall live forever. | | |
| 19. John 6:35 | [] | |
| Jesus explained to them:
I myself am the bread of life.
No one who comes to me shall ever be hungry,
no one who believes in me shall ever thirst. | | |
| 20. John 6:51-52 | [168] | |
| I myself am the living bread
come down from heaven.
If anyone eats this bread
he shall live forever;
the bread I will give
is my flesh, for the life of the world.
At this the Jews quarreled among themselves, saying,
"How can he give us his flesh to eat?" | | |

GOSPEL	21. Mark 14:12-16, 22-26	909
	22. Luke 9:11b-17	909
	23. Luke 24:13-35	793
	24. John 6:1-15	909
	25. John 6:24-35	909
	26. John 6:41-52a	909
	27. John 6:51-59	909
	28. John 21:1-14	909

V The Distribution of Communion to the Sick

A. THE ORDINARY RITE

GREETING

Peace to this house

or

The Peace of the Lord be with you.

The Sacrament is placed on a table and all pause momentarily in adoration.

Sprinkling with Holy Water: optional

Let this water call to mind
your baptismal sharing
in Christ's redeeming passion and resurrection.

PENITENTIAL RITE

My brothers and Sisters,
to prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries,
let us call to mind our sins.

After a brief silence, all say:

I confess to almighty God,
and to you, my brothers and sisters,
that I have sinned through my own fault

They strike their breast

in my thoughts and in my words;
in what I have done,
and in what I have failed to do;
and 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.

The minister adds:

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

The people answer:

Amen.

Other forms of the penitential rite are optional.

One reading is selected from the following:

John 6:54-59

LITURGY OF THE
WORD

“He who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood
has life eternal,
and I will raise him up on the last day.
For my flesh is real food
and my blood real drink.
The man who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood
remains in me, and I in him.
Just as the Father who has life sent me
and I have life because of the Father,
so the man 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 died nonetheless,
the man who feeds on this bread shall live forever.”
He said this in a synagogue instruction at Capernaum.

John 14:6

Jesus told him:
“I am the way, and the truth, and the life;
no one comes to the Father but through me.”

John 14:23

Jesus answered:

“Anyone who loves me will be true to my word,
and my Father will love him;
we will come to him and make our dwelling place with him.”

John 14:27

“Peace’ is my farewell to you,
my peace is my gift to you;
I do not give it to you as the world gives peace.
Do not be distressed or fearful.”

John 15:4

“Live on in me, as I do in you.
No more than a branch can bear fruit of itself
apart from the vine,
can you bear fruit apart from me.”

John 15:5

“I am the vine, you are the branches.
He who lives in me and I in him,
will produce abundantly,
for apart from me you can do nothing.”

I Cor. 11:26

“Every time, then, you eat this bread and drink this cup,
you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes!”

I John 4:16

“We have come to know and to believe
in the love God has for us.
God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God,
and God in him.”

COMMUNION RITE

Lord's Prayer:

Let us pray with confidence to the Father
in the words our Savior gave us:

Our Father . . .

The minister shows the host to the sick person saying:

This is the Lamb of God
who takes away the sins of the world.
Happy are those who are called to his supper.

He adds, once only, with the people:

Lord, I am not worthy to receive you,
but only say the word and I shall be healed.

The Body of Christ.

R. Amen.

After communion has been distributed, the minister purifies his hands if needed, and pauses momentarily in silence. Then he continues with the following closing prayer:

Let us pray:

Father,
almighty and eternal God,
our brother (sister) has received the eucharist
with faith in you and in your healing power.
May the body and blood of Christ
bring him (her) lasting health in mind and body.
We ask this in faith and in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

B. SHORT RITE

The rite begins in the church, chapel or in the first room of the sick with the recitation of the following antiphon:

Through this holy meal
in which Christ is received,
the memorial of his passion is recalled,
our lives are filled with grace,
and a promise of future glory is given us.

The minister addresses the sick in each room with:

This is the Lamb of God
who takes away the sins of the world.
Happy are those who are called to his supper.

He adds, once only, with the people:

Lord, I am not worthy to receive you,
but only say the word and I shall be healed.

The Body of Christ.

R. Amen.

The concluding prayer can be said in the church, chapel, or in the last sick room visited.

Let us pray:

Father,
almighty and eternal God,
our brothers (sisters) have received the eucharist
with faith in you and in your healing power.
May the body and blood of Christ
bring them lasting health in mind and body.
We ask this in faith and in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

