

# LIVING LITURGY™

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**

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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.

### ***Preparing for This Ministry***

Though different dioceses and parishes have slightly different preparation requirements for those who would be extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, there is preparation nonetheless. We hope that this book will be a source of reflection for such preparation, and also for ongoing reflection throughout one’s ministry. We know that it is not enough to simply attend a training event and never look back. Each ministry of the church requires regular prayer, reflection, reading, and thoughtfulness. This book is intended to assist with that process by providing prayers and reflection for each Sunday and for certain solemnities. This resource can also be used by groups who would like to share their faith with questions that prompt discussion.

### ***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 as a separate publication to this book and enclosed within. 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.



In today's gospel, Jesus invites us to stay awake as we wait for the coming of God's kingdom. For the times we have closed our eyes to the injustices of our world, let us ask God for pardon and peace . . .

### **Prayer**

God of time and eternity, bless our beginning of this new liturgical year. Make this Advent season for us a time of conversion, joy, and hope. Help us to prepare for your coming by throwing off the works of darkness and putting on Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

### **Gospel**

**Matt 24:37-44**

Jesus said to his disciples: "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. In those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day that Noah entered the ark. They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away. So will it be also at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be out in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come. Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour of night when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into. So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."

### **Brief Silence**

### **For Reflection**

In the years after the attacks of September 11, 2001, there were nonstop warnings to be alert to possible terrorist attacks. In US airports repeated public announcements from Homeland Secu-

rity advised whether the level of alert was yellow, orange, or red. People were asked to be aware and wary.

Today's second and third readings want us to move to red alert. Paul says it is time to wake from sleep. The gospel warns us to stay awake and not be caught unaware. The images of what happens to those who are unprepared sound frightening: a thief in the night breaks in; one man in a field is taken and the other one left; one woman grinding at the mill is taken and the other one left. "Be prepared," Jesus warns.

As we enter into Advent once again, we are not preparing for the coming of the Christ Child; that already happened more than two thousand years ago. Rather, in Advent, we break our normal routine and move into heightened alert to perceive more intensely the ways in which Emmanuel, God-with-us, is moving us toward that vision of peace and unity that Isaiah so eloquently describes in the first reading.

In the second reading Paul gives concrete advice about how we might do this intense preparation for the coming fullness of the peaceable kingdom. Paul exhorts Christians to "throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light."

The gospel today impresses upon us the urgency of engaging in the struggles for peace. The images of the unprepared ones whose homes are broken into or who are left behind are not meant to frighten us; they remind us that there will be an end-time when all our preparations, all our attempts to be alert, and all our efforts to disarm our hearts and wage peace will reach fruition. And we will be ready.

♦ Jesus tells us to stay awake! Where have you "fallen asleep" in your relationship with God, or in relationships with others?

### ***Brief Silence***

### ***Prayer***

The psalmist writes, "You open wide your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing" (Ps 145:16). Loving God, give us grateful hearts to receive the gifts you share, trusting you provide us with all we need. In a special way, open our hearts to the gift of yourself in this Eucharist so that we might know you more fully, love you more deeply, and serve you more faithfully in all we do.

**Amen.**



In today's gospel, John the Baptist is a prophetic voice for justice. For the times we have not used our voice to proclaim justice, peace, and right relationship, let us ask God for pardon and peace . . .

### Prayer

God of endurance and encouragement, as we prepare to celebrate the coming of your Son into the world, draw us to sincere repentance for our sins, especially those that disrupt the harmony we are called to have with you and with one another. **Amen.**

### Gospel

**Matt 3:1-12**

John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said: */ A voice of one crying out in the desert, / Prepare the way of the Lord, / make straight his paths. /* John wore clothing made of camel's hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins.

When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his



hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

### **Brief Silence**

### **For Reflection**

In today's gospel, John the Baptist is confrontational and uncompromising. He demands repentance—urgently! And people flocked to him. What did they find so attractive about John and his message?

One thing that could have had appeal was the desert locale where John was baptizing. There is a mysterious beauty to the desert where inner noise can be calmed and the senses are heightened, making one better able to discern priorities in the stark presence of the Holy One.

Another attractive characteristic of John was his wholehearted commitment to God's reign and the Coming One who would usher it in. When a person lives so completely and authentically what he or she proclaims, that witness is very compelling.

There are serious and immediate consequences if the call to repentance is not heeded. John declares that any tree that does not produce fruit is cut down at the root and thrown into the fire. Such strong language is meant to get our attention. Today's readings invite us to find a desert spot where we can sink our roots deeply in contemplative oneness with the One who comes, extend our branches in welcome to those with whom we have been at odds, and let the Spirit pollinate us for an abundant harvest of fruitful goodness.

♦ John's language to the Pharisees and Sadducees is quite challenging, but nonetheless invites them to know Jesus when he comes. Have you ever received a harsh critique that helped you grow?

### **Brief Silence**

### **Prayer**

The psalmist writes, “You open wide your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing” (Ps 145:16). Loving God, give us grateful hearts to receive the gifts you share, trusting you provide us with all we need. In a special way, open our hearts to the gift of yourself in this Eucharist so that we might know you more fully, love you more deeply, and serve you more faithfully in all we do. **Amen.**