

## Ministers of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation: Current Canonical Norms

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The Second Vatican Council teaches that people who have been liberated from the power of darkness by the sacraments of Christian initiations die along with Christ and are buried and resurrected along with Him, receiving the Spirit and becoming His sons. They celebrate the commemoration of the Lord's death and resurrection together with the entire people of God.<sup>1</sup> These sacraments include baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist. Their theological specificity is that they in a special way include the person into supernatural life, into the life of the Holy Spirit, uniting him or her with Jesus and the community of the people of God. I will present this matter in this article in a general way. Meanwhile, the canonical specificity of these sacraments is their administration. Each of these sacraments can be administered by an ordinary minister, and, in situations specified by canon law, by an extraordinary minister as well. I will discuss the current norms related to this matter in this article.

### 1. General Characteristics of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation

The concept of "Christian initiation," which was used in the first centuries of Church history, was abandoned over the decades. This was in order to protect the Christian religion against the influences of various pagan cults and to maintain the integrity and purity of Christian liturgical worship.<sup>2</sup> The teaching of the Second Vatican Council reaches back to the sources; in other words, to the practices of the early Church, cautiously introducing the

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1 Cf. Vatican Council II, *Ad gentes divinitus* (18.11.1965), 14.

2 Cf. J. Umiński, *Historia Kościoła*, vol. 1, przygot. do druku i uzup. W. Urban, wyd. 4, Opole 1959, p. 65–66.

concept of “Christian initiation.” The first official document of the council, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, teaches about this: “The rite of confirmation is to be revised and the intimate connection which this sacrament has with the whole of Christian initiation is to be more clearly set forth; for this reason it is fitting for candidates to renew their baptismal promises just before they are confirmed.”<sup>3</sup> The Latin text of the constitution used the phrase *initiatio christiana*.<sup>4</sup> It is translated into Polish as “Christian initiation” (*wtajemniczenie chrześcijańskie* or the Polonized term *inicjacja chrześcijańska*). The term *initiatio* comes from the verb *initio, initiare*, which can be translated as “to initiate, to allow one to participate, to include in the community.”<sup>5</sup>

In the Christian understanding, “initiation” means introducing the person to participation in the mystery that is the eternal plan created by God, whose aim was for all people to come to faith and salvation, participating in the living organism that is Christ’s mystical Body, whose head and uniting element is the Savior Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup> Entering into this mystery occurs through faith that is born by accepting the words prophesying God’s plan, developing and becoming fulfilled in human history, especially in the life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus and the sending down of the Holy Spirit. The process of initiation occurs through God’s dialogue with the person. Through His word and grace, God calls upon the person to accept the truth, convert, and renew his or her life. Initiation, which occurs in the Church community, is at the same time an initiation into its life. This community leads the initiated person and provides him or her with prayer, care, and an example. In the Church community, initiation is related to introduction to the liturgy it celebrates, which is the source of its spiritual life and development.<sup>7</sup>

Through Christian initiation, the person gradually (in stages) reaches communion with God and participates in His nature. Quoting Tertullian, Pope Paul VI says: “The sharing in the divine nature which is granted to men through the grace of Christ has a certain likeness to the origin, development and nourishing of natural life. The faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation and finally are sustained by the food of

3 Vatican Council II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (4.12.1963), 71.

4 *Ibidem*, 71.

5 Cf. *Słownik łacińsko-polski*, red. M. Plezia, vol. 3: I–O, Warszawa 1969, p. 172.

6 Cf. E. Szafranski, *Podręcznik prawa kanonicznego*, vol. 3, Warszawa 1986, p. 104–105.

7 Cf. S. Czerwik, *Wtajemniczenie chrześcijańskie*, [in:] *Sakramenty wtajemniczenia chrześcijańskiego*, pod red. J. Kudasiwicza, Warszawa 1981, p. 9–10.

eternal life in the Eucharist. By means of these sacraments of Christian initiation, they thus receive in increasing measure the treasures of divine life and advance towards the perfection of charity. It has rightly been written: ‘The body is washed, that the soul may be cleansed; the body is anointed, that the soul may be consecrated [...] the body is fed on the body and blood of Christ, that the soul too should be nourished by God.’<sup>8</sup>

In accordance with the Church’s current practice, Christian initiation usually begins when one is an infant through baptism. In the age of discernment, it is complemented by the Eucharist, while the baptized are confirmed usually as adolescents.<sup>9</sup> Accepting the sacrament of Christian initiation requires appropriate preparation. It is also necessary to inform the person who wants to receive the sacrament, usually children and youths, as well as their parents or guardians about what the term “Christian initiation” means. This is necessary because today liturgical rituals are also threatened by contemporary occult practices and neo-pagan ideologies. As we have noted, in the past the term “Christian initiation” was scrapped in order to protect liturgical rituals. It seems that a better solution would be wise catechesis on this topic.

The Code of Canon Law describes the sacraments of Christian initiation, pointing out their essential elements. Baptism is the gate for the remaining sacraments and is necessary for salvation, at least through a desire to be baptized. It makes a person a child of God, makes his or her similar to Christ, marks one with the indelible nature, and makes one a member of the Church. It is valid when it is administered through cleansing by water, saying the sacramental formula, and the minister’s proper intention (see: Code of Canon Law, 849). Confirmation particularly emphasizes the unique nature of the sacramental witness to Christ. As a result of it, those who are baptized and enter onto the road to Christian initiation are enriched by the gifts of the Holy Spirit and become united with the Church in a more perfect way. Those who are strengthened by this sacrament are obliged to bear witness to their faith in their words and in the actions, and to defend their faith (see: 879). The most venerable sacrament is the Eucharist, in which Christ the Lord Himself is present; it is sacrificed and consumed, thanks to which the Church lives and constantly grows. The Eucharistic offering, which commemorates the death and resurrection of the Lord, in which the sacrifice of the cross becomes

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8 Paul VI, *Divinae consortium naturae* (15.07.1971).

9 Cf. E. Szafrowski, *Podręcznik prawa kanonicznego*, op. cit., p. 105

eternal, is the summit and the source of worship of God and the entirety of Christian life; it brings about the unity of God's people, and through it the Body of Christ is constructed (see: Code of Canon Law, 897). The referenced terms used to describe the sacraments of Christian initiation have mostly theological overtones and so they are miniature forms of theological treatises.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. Ministers of Baptism

According to the Code of Canon Law: "The ordinary minister of baptism is a bishop, a presbyter, or a deacon, without prejudice to the prescript of can. 530, n. 1." (Code of Canon Law, 861, § 1). The hierarchical order of ordinary ministers of baptism mentioned above is justified by theology and is supported by the Church's practice and tradition.<sup>11</sup> This order of precedence has no impact on the validity of the sacrament. Canon law recognizes the parish priest as the minister of baptism, considering administering this sacrament to be among the functions that are specially given to parish priests, as they are called the parish's own pastors (see: Code of Canon Law 530, n. 1 i 515, § 1). Canon law has one more reservation with regards to the administration of baptism. When adults who are fourteen years of age or older are baptized, it is required to notify the diocesan bishop, who has priority, if he judges that doing so is recommended, in administering the sacrament (see: Code of Canon Law, 863). In such a situation, the bishop administers all three sacraments of Christian initiation to an adult upon having completed the catechumenate.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to ordinary ministers, extraordinary ministers can also administer the sacrament of baptism. In the case of baptism, canon law does not use the term "extraordinary minister." However, since it uses the term "ordinary minister," it is acceptable to call those who administer the sacrament in permissible circumstances "extraordinary ministers."<sup>13</sup> It is worth noting that the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches considers deacons to be extraordinary ministers (see: Code of Canon Law, 677).

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, p. 171.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. J. Krzywda, *Chrzest*, [in:] *Komentarz do Kodeksu Prawa Kanonicznego*, red. J. Krukowski, vol. 3.2, Poznań 2011, p. 35–65.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Obrzędy chrześcijańskiego wtajemniczenia dorosłych dostosowane do zwyczajów diecezji polskich*, Katowice 1988, 44.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. E. Sztáfrowski, *Podręcznik prawa kanonicznego*, op. cit., p. 127.

The Code of Canon Law says the following about extraordinary ministers of baptism: “When an ordinary minister is absent or impeded, a catechist or another person designated for this function by the local ordinary, or in a case of necessity any person with the right intention, confers baptism licitly. Pastors of souls, especially the pastor of a parish, are to be concerned that the Christian faithful are taught the correct way to baptize” (Code of Canon Law, 861, § 2). The extraordinary minister can administer baptism when the ordinary minister is not present or is obstructed. This canonical norm is specified in the *Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of the Priest*. Reiterating the canonical norm, the instruction notes: “Care should be taken, however, to avoid too extensive an interpretation of this provision and such a faculty should not be conceded in an habitual form.”<sup>14</sup>

Canon law mentions catechists as among the extraordinary ministers of baptism. This pertains above all to people who exercise evangelizing duties in missionary territories. The provisions of the Second Vatican Council foresee a shorter baptismal ceremony for them.<sup>15</sup> In this place, the Polish translation of the Code of Canon Law uses the term *katecheta* (“catechist”). The local ordinary can provide a catechist with a place for celebrating the sacrament of baptism, especially since canon law speaks of “another person designated for this function” (861, § 2). Permanently designating missionaries, catechists, and others as extraordinary ministers of baptism should take place only under exceptional circumstances, keeping in mind the above-mentioned instruction *Ecclesiae de mysterio*. There are separate ceremonies for the celebration of the baptismal rite by the above-mentioned extraordinary ministers.<sup>16</sup>

A unique situation is making use of an extraordinary minister of baptism in the case of necessity. “[I]n a case of necessity any person with the right intention” (Code of Canon Law, 861, § 2). A typical example of the necessity of baptism occurs when the life of an unbaptized person is under threat. This danger of death can take various forms. There could be a situation in which it is direct and time is pressing. In such cases, anyone can become a minister, even an unbaptized person. However, he or she must meet three conditions, without which the baptism will be invalid: 1) the right intention, 2) pouring

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14 *Ecclesiae de mysterio* (15.08.1997), n. 12, art. 11.

15 Vatican Council II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (4.12.1963), 68.

16 *Obrzędy chrztu dzieci dostosowane do zwyczajów diecezji polskich*, wyd. 2, Katowice 1987, p. 95–106.

water over the head of the unbaptized person, and 3) at the same time properly saying the sacramental formula. The right intention means having a genuine will to do what the Church does when administering the sacrament.<sup>17</sup>

One can ask if an unbaptized person, let alone a non-believer, is capable of having the right intention in baptizing. It seems that this cannot be impossible, but in practice this is very rare. Thus even in the case of the direct threat of death the extraordinary minister of baptism should be a lay Catholic. If there is no such person available and time is pressing, another person can perform this task. The baptismal rite also foresees such a solution.<sup>18</sup> Here, it is worth quoting the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches: “In case of necessity, baptism can be administered by a deacon or, in his absence or if he is impeded, by another cleric, a member of an institute of consecrated life, or by any other Christian faithful; even by the mother or father, if another person is not available who knows how to baptize” (Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, 677, § 2). When the unbaptized person’s life is in jeopardy and time is pressing, the extraordinary minister should perform the ceremony foreseen in the baptismal rite.<sup>19</sup>

Bearing in mind the necessity of baptism for salvation, canon law recommends priests, especially parish priests, to put effort into teaching the faithful about the proper administration of baptism (see: Code of Canon Law, 861, § 2). Among those prepared to perform the function of extraordinary minister of baptism should be parents, catechists, missionaries, physicians, midwives, nurses, social workers, and domestic help.<sup>20</sup>

### 3. Ministers of Confirmation

According to the Code of Canon Law: “The ordinary minister of confirmation is a bishop a presbyter provided with this faculty in virtue of universal law or the special grant of the competent authority also confers this sacrament validly” (Code of Canon Law, 882). The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church refers to bishops as: *ministri organarii confirmationis*.<sup>21</sup> The first official Polish

17 Cf. E. Szafrowski, *Podręcznik prawa kanonicznego*, op. cit., p. 128.

18 *Obrzędy chrztu dzieci dostosowane do zwyczajów diecezji polskich*, op. cit., p. 109–110.

19 Cf. *ibidem*, p. 107–110.

20 Cf. *ibidem*, p. 15.

21 Vatican Council II, *Lumen gentium* (18.11.1964), 26.

translation of this term was “ordinary minister” (*szafarz naturalny*),<sup>22</sup> while the new translation is: “proper minister” (*szafarz właściwy*).<sup>23</sup> (The official English translation calls them “original ministers”). These terms are not contradictory or mutually exclusive, as on the basis of centuries-old tradition bishops are both the natural and proper ministers of the sacrament of confirmation. The 1983 Code of Canon Law calls the bishop the ordinary minister of confirmation, *ordinarius minister*. This term does not contradict the previous ones, which is why we can use all of them.<sup>24</sup>

The 1917 Code of Canon Law calls the presbyter the “extraordinary minister” of confirmation (see: Code of Canon Law, 782, § 2) and the bishop the “ordinary minister” (see: Code of Canon Law, 782, § 1). The current Code of Canon Law calls the presbyter the minister of confirmation, not calling him the “extraordinary minister.” However, he can be referred to as such, as the presbyter is a minister of the sacrament in a different way than the bishop. Additionally, this term has long been used in legal studies and is certainly better than the expression “non-ordinary minister.”<sup>25</sup> According to the quoted canon 882 of the current code, the presbyter becomes an extraordinary minister in two ways: 1) on the basis of universal law, and 2) upon authorization by the competent Church authority. On the basis of universal law, the function of extraordinary ministers is performed by presbyters who are at the same level as diocesan bishops in canon law (see: Code of Canon Law, 883, n. 1). They include: territorial prelates, vicars, apostolic prefects, and permanently established apostolic administrators (see: Code of Canon Law, 134, 368, 381, § 2). Those mentioned above can administer the sacrament of confirmation only within their territories (see: Code of Canon Law, 883, n. 1). Outside of this territory, confirmation administered by them is unimportant, unless they are bishops, which then makes them ordinary ministers. Extraordinary ministers of confirmation are also military ordinaries who do not have the status of bishops. They can only confirm those under their jurisdiction.<sup>26</sup>

According to universal law, an extraordinary minister of confirmation is a presbyter who as a result of his function or upon the diocesan bishop’s

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22 Ibidem.

23 Ibidem.

24 Cf. M. Pastuszko, *Szafarz sakramentu bierzmowania*, „Prawo Kanoniczne” 33 (1990) no. 1–2, p. 101–103.

25 Cf. *ibidem*, p. 103–104.

26 Cf. *ibidem*, p. 104–107.

request administers baptism to an adult or includes an already-baptized person into full communion with the Catholic Church (see: 883, n. 2). Someone who is seven years old or older is considered to be an adult at the time of baptism. When the presbyter baptizes such a person pursuant to the permission of the diocesan bishop, he can confirm him or her if he or she is at least fourteen years old. The Code of Canon Law requires that the diocesan bishop be notified about the baptism of an adult person who is at least fourteen years old so that, as mentioned above, he may decide whether he himself would like to administer the sacrament. If after being notified the bishop declines to administer the baptism and turns to the presbyter to take his place, then pursuant to Code of Canon Law, 883 n. 2 this presbyter can also confirm this person after having baptized him or her. Similarly, a presbyter who receives the bishop's permission to include a baptized person into full communion with the Church can also confirm him or her (see: Code of Canon Law, 883, n. 2).

Finally, on the basis of universal law, the presbyter can confirm a person whose life is in jeopardy (see: Code of Canon Law, 883, n. 3). Here, the Code of Canon Law gives a precedent, first mentioning the parish priest and later other presbyters. The parish priest is given precedence as a result of his function (see Code of Canon Law, 230, n. 2), although when confirming a person whose life is in jeopardy each presbyter has the same authority.<sup>27</sup> We can say with full certainty that the precedence in canon law does not concern the validity of the administration of this sacrament.

On the basis of a special authorization from the diocesan bishop, a presbyter becomes an extraordinary minister of confirmation if this is necessary (see: Code of Canon Law, 844, § 1). If there is an important reason, the bishop or presbyter who has the competence to confirm can in some cases select presbyters to help them administer this sacrament (see: Code of Canon Law, 844, § 2). The selection of candidates for extraordinary ministers is the diocesan bishop's task. It is recommended that they be priests who exercise an important function in the diocese. With regards to selecting extraordinary ministers in specific cases, it is recommended that they be priests who are involved in preparing candidates for confirmation.<sup>28</sup>

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27 Cf. J. Krzywda, *Sakrament bierzmowania*, [in:] *Komentarz do Kodeksu Prawa Kanonicznego*, op. cit., p. 73.

28 Cf. *Obrzędy bierzmowania dostosowane do zwyczajów diecezji polskich*, Katowice 1995, p. 8.

The situation is completely different in the law of the Eastern Churches. According to the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches: “According to the tradition of the Eastern Churches, chrismation with holy myron is administered by a presbyter either in conjunction with baptism or separately” (Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, 684). Thus in the Eastern Churches not only the bishop, but also every presbyter is a minister of confirmation, which is called “chrismation” (*chrismatio sancti myri*). According to the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches: “All presbyters of the Eastern Churches can validly administer this sacrament either along with baptism or separately to all the Christian faithful of any Church *sui iuris* including the Latin Church” (Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, 696, § 1). With regards to administering this sacrament, canon law introduces certain limits. For example, a presbyter worthily administers chrismation only to Christians of his own Church *sui iuris*” (Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, 696, § 3). It should be added that in light of the referenced norms in the Eastern Churches and with regards to the sacrament of chrismation, the terms “ordinary minister” and “extraordinary minister” do not exist; there is only the “minister of chrismation.”

#### 4. Ministers of the Eucharist

When we deal with the Eucharistic minister, it should be emphasized that there is an entirely different situation with regards to the minister of the Eucharistic offering and the minister of Holy Communion and the presentation of the Most Sacred Sacrament for adoration. Only a validly ordained priest can be the minister of the Eucharistic sacrifice: “The minister who is able to confect the sacrament of the Eucharist in the person of Christ is a validly ordained priest alone” (Code of Canon Law, 900, § 1). The referenced norm repeats and recalls the Church’s traditional teaching about the minister of the Eucharistic sacrifice. At the same time, erroneous views blurs the difference between the ministerial priesthood and the common priesthood, which seems to appear in theology and canon law, yet has been rejected. It should be noted that the validity of a Mass celebrated by a priest is presented by canon law within the context of performing this function *in persona Christi*.<sup>29</sup> Naturally, a validly or-

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29 Cf. E. Górecki, *Najświętsza Eucharystia*, [in:] *Komentarz do Kodeksu Prawa Kanonicznego*, op. cit., p. 88–89.

dained bishop is also a minister of the Eucharistic sacrifice. In light of what has been said above, we can speak of ministers of the Eucharistic sacrifice without using the term “ordinary.” The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy mentions concelebration, which in the Western Church has survived in what can only be called a vestigial form, during the ordination of a priest. This constitution extended the right to concelebration.<sup>30</sup> After Vatican II, canon law gave more opportunities for concelebration. The Code of Canon Law introduced general permission for the concelebration of Mass, except in the case when the benefit of the faithful demands or recommends it (see: Code of Canon Law, 902). Priests have been given the liberty to individually celebrate the Eucharist, but not during the concelebration in the same church or chapel (see: Code of Canon Law, 902). Concelebration of the Eucharist with priests from Churches that are not in full communion with the Catholic Church is prohibited (see: Code of Canon Law, 908). Canon law also has requirements for priests to worthily celebrate the Eucharistic offering. This matter requires a separate discussion.

The 1917 Code of Canon Law spoke of ordinary and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. A priest can be an ordinary minister while a deacon, who under certain circumstances can distribute Holy Communion, can be an extraordinary minister (see: Code of Canon Law, 845). Post-conciliar canon law has kept the division between ordinary and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, making the deacon its ordinary minister and giving the lay faithful permission to be extraordinary ministers in this field. The Code of Canon Law is the culmination of the inclusion of the lay faithful into the function of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. It says that: “When the need of the Church warrants it and ministers are lacking, lay persons, even if they are not lectors or acolytes, can also supply certain of their duties, namely, to exercise the ministry of the word, to preside offer liturgical prayers, to confer baptism, and to distribute Holy Communion, according to the precepts of the law” (Code of Canon Law, 230, § 3). This norm allows laypeople to celebrate liturgical worship in certain situations described by canon law.<sup>31</sup>

Among these functions, administering Holy Communion by the faithful is mentioned. This matter is regulated by the Code of Canon Law in other canons as well: “The ordinary minister of Holy Communion is a bishop, presbyter,

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30 Cf. Vatican Council II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (4.12.1963), 57–58.

31 For more on this topic, see: J. Dyduch, *Udział świeckich w kulcie liturgicznym w świetle kodeksu prawa kanonicznego*, „Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny” 38 (1985) nr 1, p. 16–28, <https://doi.org/10.21906/rbl.1401>.

or deacon. The extraordinary minister of Holy Communion is an acolyte or another member of the Christian faithful designated according to the norm of *can. 230, §3* (Code of Canon Law, 910, § 1–2). “The minister of exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament and of Eucharistic benediction is a priest or deacon; in special circumstances, the minister of exposition and reposition alone without benediction is the acolyte, extraordinary minister of holy communion, or someone else designated by the local ordinary; the prescripts of the diocesan bishop are to be observed” (Code of Canon Law, 943). Thus acolytes and laypeople are the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion and of presenting the Most Sacred Sacrament for adoration. An acolyte is also a layperson and is not a priest; this function is mentioned separately because acolytes have precedence among the extraordinary ministers. The ordinary gives permission to the lay faithful to exercise the function of extraordinary minister of Holy Communion by name both in individual cases and, if necessary, permanently.<sup>32</sup> This ordinary should maintain the following order: reader, student of a major seminary, monk, nun, catechist, layperson (man or woman). This order can change upon the ordinary’s prudential judgment.<sup>33</sup> Each extraordinary minister of Holy Communion can undertake the function given to him or her in accordance with the previously mentioned instruction *Ecclesiae de mysterio*. It says that an extraordinary minister can distribute Holy Communion both during Mass and outside of it only when the ordinary minister is not present or is unable to exercise his duties. Thus he or she can perform this function when because there is a large number of faithful receiving Holy Communion and a lack of ordinary ministers, which would cause the Mass to go on for a very long time. However, the notion of many faithful receiving Holy Communion should not be interpreted liberally.<sup>34</sup> The responsibility and right to administer viaticum should belong to priests responsible for ministry to the sick. If it is absolutely necessary, this can be done by any priest, and when there is a lack of priests, it can be administered by an extraordinary minister (see: Code of Canon Law, 911).

The canon law of the Eastern Churches, while not using the terms “ordinary” and “extraordinary” ministers, allows the lay faithful to distribute Holy Communion in accordance with the regulations of particular Churches *sui*

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32 Cf. Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Immensae caritatis* (29.01.1973), I.

33 Cf. *ibidem*, III.

34 Cf. *Ecclesiae de mysterio* (15.08.1997), art. 8.

*iuris*: The priest distributes the Divine Eucharist or if the particular law of his own Church *sui iuris* establishes it, also the deacon. The synod of bishops of the patriarchal Church or the council of hierarchs is free to establish appropriate norms, according to which other Christian faithful can distribute the Divine Eucharist” (Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, 709).

Post-conciliar canonical regulations in Poland generally accept the universal regulations with regards to ministers of the Eucharist, while introducing some unique characteristics that have been discussed separately.<sup>35</sup>

## Conclusion

The sacraments of Christian initiation, which include baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist, have their unique theological traits. They introduce the person to participation in supernatural life with Jesus Christ. Meanwhile, their unique canonical features are that they can be imparted by ordinary ministers, and, in exceptional circumstances, extraordinary ministers. Post-conciliar regulations, which culminated in the Code of Canon Law in 1983 and the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches of 1990, described the competences of ordinary and extraordinary ministers of the above-mentioned sacraments.

With regards to extraordinary ministers, it appears that the process of their vocation and formation is not over. New canonical norms that would regulate these matters and a discussion of them are necessary.

## Abstract

### Ministers of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation: Current Canonical Norms

The teaching of the Second Vatican Council and the post-conciliar era gave us an adequate understanding of Christian initiation, which is embedded in the gradual inclusion of the person in communion with Jesus Christ and His Mystical Body, the Church. The sacraments of Christian initiation are: baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist, which can be administered by ordinary and extraordinary ministers in accordance with canon law. These regulations are prone to development and modification, leaving the fundamental rules of Divine origin unchanged.

**Keywords:** Christian initiation; ordinary minister; extraordinary minister; baptism; confirmation; Eucharist

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35 Cf. J. Dyduch, *Posługi liturgiczne świeckich w posoborowym prawodawstwie polskim*, „Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny” 54 (2011) nr 1, p. 21–32, <https://doi.org/10.21906/rbl.118>.

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