



Ministers of Hospitality (a.k.a. Ushers) **January 2016**



For generations ushers, newly named Ministers of Hospitality, have enhanced parish worship by welcoming people, seating them, taking up the offering, assisting those who become ill, and distributing parish bulletins. Christian hospitality is centered in Christ. The people are coming as invited guests of the Lord himself, and hospitality is an expression of reverence for the presence of Christ in each of his guests, each member of the Congregation.

This is more than simply being “friendly” or “sociable.” Hospitality is about Christian love and concern and is rooted in the Sacrament of Baptism. True hospitality draws us together and opens us up to participate in the liturgy. An ancient Christian says it this way: “When a guest comes, Christ comes.”

The Minister of Hospitality is the first official representative of the Community that worshipers meet, the first face people see as they arrive for Mass. It is important to be welcoming and assist those entering, and communicate the sense that each person is welcome and essential to the Community’s prayer. This ministry is one of genuine joy and care for others, not just a practical matter of getting people through the door and into a seat. Thus, one important quality for a Minister of Hospitality is that he or she truly be a people-oriented person.

Dress

Because you are first of all a member of the Congregation, it is helpful if you can be attired in your own “Sunday best.” Nametag identifying a person as a Minister of Hospitality will be provided.

Participation During Mass

Another important quality for Ministers of Hospitality is having a sense of liturgical prayer. Ministers of Hospitality, like other liturgical ministers, are first and foremost members of the worshipping Congregation. As such, you should join in the act of worship in the same manner as the rest of the Congregation. Even while performing specific tasks, (e.g., taking up the offering), you remain united to the Congregation, singing and praying in an active way. Your work of service should never separate you from the rest of the Congregation. Please be present and attentive during the entire liturgy, and not just “hang around” somewhere apart from the rest of the Congregation until the next thing needs to be done.

Guidelines and Duties

Arrive

Your duties as a Minister of Hospitality begin well before the liturgy begins. Please be in place at least twenty minutes prior to the start of worship. First do a quick check of the worship space to make sure there is no clutter left from previous services. Check to be sure lights are on, inside doors open and the facility is otherwise prepared, the collection baskets with money bag(s) are placed in the back of the church, and of bread and wine are in place. Be sure bulletins are available in the gathering space.

Your primary duties are to greet and welcome people, hand out bulletins and any worship aids, and assist parishioners in finding a place to sit. By offering words of welcome, especially to newcomers and visitors, and anyone who may feel awkward for whatever reason, Hospitality Ministers help form the worshipping community.

Ministers need to be informed in advance of any special celebrations or rituals will take place during the liturgy (such as baptism, first communion, or RCIA events). In this way they can be more attentive to visitors, reserve seating areas, and changes in the normal patterns. We as Office Staff will strive to communicate this kind of information in advance.

Sign In

and check to be sure all ministers are present and signed in, and that we have altar servers signed in and ready. If you notice we are short a minister, please assist in locating someone to cover that duty. This would also include recruiting altar servers present to fill in for those absent and would include your own ministry if a hospitality minister has not shown up for duty.

Greet and Assist

If it is a crowded Mass you should assist people finding seats. Request that those already seated move to the south/left ends of the pew so open seats are easier to locate from the doors on the north/Hall side of the church. This is an area we need to be more attentive to. It is particularly important to be aware of those with special seating needs, such as for those in wheelchairs or with other physical limitations.

As much as possible, fill the front of the church first in order to leave room for latecomers in the back. When people arrive after the liturgy has begun, they should be seated after the opening prayer but before the first reading, or in between the readings, psalm, and Gospel, not during them. When there are large numbers of people present, the Hospitality Ministers should know the various options available for seating overflow crowds.

Currently, overflow seating in the Hall has not been needed except at Christmas, Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday and Easter. When it is, all seats in the church should be filled before people are seated in the Hall. Also, seating in the Cry Room is available only for adults with small children. All others should be directed to seats in the main body of the church with a gentle but clear explanation, something like *“Seating the Cry Room is only for adults with small children, please have a seat in the church itself. Thanks for your understanding.”*

Processions

Ministers of Hospitality facilitate the procession to communion as needed. Your role is to foster an unhurried and reverent sharing in the Eucharistic meal. When needed, a Minister of Hospitality assists those with limited mobility. During once-a-year celebrations such as Palm Sunday and the Triduum, well-prepared ministers are essential in facilitating special processions, the washing of feet, the Veneration of the Cross and service of light during the Easter Vigil.

Count attendance

Please be sure a count is taken at each Mass and written on the form provided. For Mass with overflow, please list separate counts for the church, hall and cry room.

Collection

The Ministers of Hospitality are responsible for gathering the collection. This is to be done in an unhurried fashion, and with respect and dignity. People’s monetary offerings are a symbol of their willingness to offer themselves and their resources to Christ, and are presented along with the bread and wine. When arriving at the front pew, bow towards the altar, but don’t genuflect. If there are people in the Hall and cry room, be sure to pass the collection basket there as well. When the collection is complete, combine all the collection basket contents into the security bag that is in the large collection basket. Pull off the paper strip under the red stripe and also place that paper strip in the bag with the collection before sealing. Please sign/initial in the appropriate space on the Bag Tracking form.

You may select people, families or individuals, to bring forward the gifts of bread and wine, with an awareness of the diversity of the entire community, and not always just relying on the same people week after week. If no one has volunteered or agreed to bring up the gifts for any of the Masses, the Ministers of Hospitality will bring up the gifts.

Special collections - are taken up shortly after the regular tithe collection starts. When the tithe collection baskets are about 4 pews down the ushers should start the baskets for the 2nd collection, so the ushers would need to bring up 2 baskets each. Bag this collection in the same manner as the regular collection and have both bags brought up with the gifts.

After Mass

Secure the collections

If the assigned money counters or another Parish Staff member have not taken the collection to the Office, take it to the sacristy immediately after Mass, then to the Office for deposit in the safe. This is especially so if we have a visiting priest. Whoever takes the bag to the office is to sign their name in the appropriate space on the Bag Tracking form.

Bulletins. Pass out bulletins as the people depart, but not until the procession of ministers has left the sanctuary.

Clean church. When the church has emptied, check kneelers to be sure they are up. Check pews for bulletins and other items left behind, and be sure song books are in place. Check the Hall and return any books left in that area to the table in the vestibule. Please also collect any papers or bulletins left in hall area.

Blow out candles. Check to be sure candles are out. Votive candles in their stand stay lit.

Turn lights off. Be sure lights are out in the church, choir loft, hall, restrooms and downstairs if nothing else is happening in those areas. Check restrooms to be sure toilets are flushed and lights out. If Religious Ed is in session they will check these things after class.

Inclement weather. In the event the tornado sirens ever go off during Mass, Fr. Dan will instruct everyone to evacuate to the lower level of the hall *immediately*. Do not hesitate to get this done. He will halt Mass at that point and continue when it is all clear. Use rooms that have no windows and if they are full, keep people away from windows if at all possible.

Emergencies

In the event anyone becomes seriously ill during Mass please be ready to assist them in getting to the hall. If they go in a restroom check on them. The Ministers of Hospitality should know the location of first aid kits, fire extinguishers, telephones and cleaning supplies. Training in CPR and general first aid, as well as defibrillator training would be useful in addition to general ministerial training. Call 911 in case of an emergency. If possible, know which parishioners present in the Congregation have medical training in case their assistance is needed.

A Vision for the Ministry of Hospitality

Think about the different people who gather at our Parish on any given Sunday. Several may be searching for a church to call their own. Some of them are Catholic but are new to the area and are trying to decide which parish to join. Others may not be part of any church but are visiting different

churches to find a community of faith to join. Others may be visitors on vacation or on work assignments. They are not seeking to become Parish members, but they hope for some sense of being 'at home' among their Catholic brothers and sisters.

Among those who are members of the Parish, some are arriving after a frantic hour of trying to get the children dressed and out the door. Others may be coming to church directly from work or may be going to work after Mass. Some are feeling battered by unpleasant interactions with people at work, in the neighborhood, or even at home. Others who live alone may not have had any contact with another human being for several days. Some come with a deep sense of gratitude to God, ready to give thanks. Others are there just because it is expected by their parents or their spouse or church law. Still others come bearing a heavy weight of loss and grief.

Despite all their differences, however, all these people bear Christ within them, and all of them deserve to be welcomed in His name. As a greeter, you have the privilege and opportunity to give a gift to each person you meet at church. You can give them a sense of dignity and importance, a sense of welcome and a sign of the love of Christ that binds us into one body.

Thank you for your important service to our Parish Community!

Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels.

Hebrews 13:2