

January 2023

St. MARY CATHOLIC CHURCH MANUAL FOR MINISTERS OF HOSPITALITY

INTRODUCTION

People experience the presence of Jesus Christ in the world through the ministry of the Church. The first task of the parish community is to reach out to all people in Christian love and service. Christian hospitality draws people together, opens them to participation, and sets the tone for the liturgy. Every Christian is called to ministry and gifted by the Holy Spirit. This calling is rooted in our baptism. By means of our initiation into the Church and strengthened by grace, God empowers each person with the resources for ministry. The minister of hospitality (aka Usher) is equipped for this ministry by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These gifts make that ministry effective and enable the minister to build up the Body of Christ. In their welcome and Christ-like attitude, ministers of hospitality ensure that the faithful see and experience the love of Christ. The ministry of hospitality is crucial because it is so visible in the Church. Certainly, the attitude, conduct and even the appearance of the minister of hospitality directly affects, either positively or negatively, the experience of the faithful at Mass. One consistent complaint of those who have attended a parish liturgy, then did not return is that they did not feel welcomed. Conscious of this vital ministry and its significance for the faithful, it is our goal to provide a hospitable environment at our liturgy. At St Mary, the terms 'usher' and 'greeter' may be used when describing this ministry, but these only describe parts of the overall ministry. The appropriate title is 'minister of hospitality' which encompasses the purpose and many functions of this formal ministry.

REQUIREMENTS

Those who desire to serve as minister of hospitality should be registered, active and faithful members of the Church. They should show respect for others, discretion and appropriate decorum. Above all, ministers should be noted for their care to the assembly. These qualities are found in a mature Christian – qualities that transcend chronological age.

Furthermore, the minister should genuinely like people. They should be comfortable meeting and greeting others. They must always extend a sense of welcome to others and make them feel at home. Such qualities are a blessing, especially to the stranger in our midst.

SELECTION

Men, women, and youth are invited to serve as ministers of hospitality regardless of age. Indeed, variety in and among the members of this ministry better represents the diverse nature of our Church.

SEATING

The proper place for seating of ministers of hospitality is within the assembly. Always attentive to the needs of the faithful, they should sit in those places that would enable them to best exercise their ministerial role. (i.e., designated pew, near the doors, throughout the church, etc.)

PROCEDURES BEFORE THE LITURGY

- Ministers should arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the Mass. The captain should check with the sacristan for reserved seating requirements or any special events which will necessitate assistance by the ministers.
- Greet and welcome the faithful as they gather for worship. Ministers of hospitality should be at each of the entrances of the church. They should avoid congregating in only one area of the church, as well as speaking with other ministers to the exclusion of those who are gathering for the liturgy.
- Assist with the seating of the assembly before the liturgy begins. Help latecomers quietly find a seat.
- If the minister senses the person may be new to the parish or visiting, make sure to let them know we are glad to have them as part of our community. If time permits, or perhaps after Mass, direct newcomers to the service desk in the narthex where they can get information or fill out a form for parish registration.
- The lead minister ensures the gifts are in place on the back table and selects a family from the assembly to bring up the gifts, unless a specific family has been pre-selected. Let them know they are to come to the back of the church during the prayers of the faithful.
- If there are not enough ministers for the collection, or to handle duties during the liturgy, the lead minister should solicit help from parishioners in the assembly.

PROCEDURES DURING THE LITURGY

Ministers of hospitality are part of the worshipping community. As such, they are to participate fully in the music, responses, and prayers of the liturgy. At times, however, the special duties of the minister may limit his or her ability to participate. Yet, every effort should be made by the ministers of hospitality to be models of participation in the worship of the Church. During the liturgy, ministers of hospitality should assist with the following:

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- Be attentive to those who need to find seats. The seating of latecomers will be accomplished quietly and with great understanding. We are all tardy at times. It is recommended that late seating not occur during a reading or prayer – wait until the natural breaks in the liturgy to move people in the church.
- The collection should begin immediately after the prayers of the faithful have ended. When the prayers of the faithful are eliminated (such as when there is a baptism, OCIA rite, or special commissioning), be ready to begin the collection quickly. (Note: At certain times the ministers may be called upon to distribute items at certain times during the Mass – such as pamphlets, candles, forms, pencils, etc. The ministers should be aware of any such circumstances by prior notice and confirmation by consulting with the sacristan before mass.)
- Assist the family bringing up the gifts (ciboria, cruet of wine, offertory, etc.) as needed.
- As the ministers of communion are receiving the Eucharist, two experienced adult ministers of hospitality take the basket with offerings and deposit them in the drop safe as quickly as possible. These ministers will always exit and re-enter through the interior of the church and never go outside with the offertory. Ministers will return promptly.
- Direct the communion lines efficiently and as unobtrusively as possible.
- As Mass ends, ministers go to each door and prepare to hand out bulletins. As the recessional procession begins, open the doors, distribute bulletins, and cheerfully wish everyone well as they leave.
- Ministers will quickly inspect the pews after mass for lost articles, messes, etc. And straighten up as necessary before the next mass.

SERVICE DESK

In the fall of 2019, our parish introduced a staffed service desk in the Narthex before and after the Saturday evening Mass and all Sunday Masses. The purpose of this service desk is to allow parishioners and guests to obtain needed assistance without making a special trip during the week to the parish office.

The service desk is manned 10-15 minutes before and after each weekend Mass. Volunteers generally monitor the service desk once a month at the Mass they normally attend. There are forms available that may be distributed and/or completed for several parish services. Most importantly the volunteers warmly greet those passing the service desk and answer questions on parish activities, events listed in the bulletin and the parish website.

DRESS CODE

A neat and reverential appearance is in keeping with the minister's role as a visible example of welcome and hospitality. The minister's attire should not detract from their role as a leader in the community:

- Men: A suit or Jacket and tie are always preferred – but in exceptionally warm weather (normal in Florida) a collared shirt or polo, and slacks will suffice. The rule is always: clean, modest, and serviceable.
- Women: Dresses, skirt / blouse combinations or pantsuits are always preferred. Matching shoes or sandals. Shoulders are to be covered and no 'spaghetti straps' are allowed. Jewelry should be conservative.

TRAINING AND INSTALLATION

At various times the parish will commission ministers of hospitality. This will ensure a sense of commitment from the minister and recognition of their importance in the assembly. It is most appropriate that ministers of hospitality be commissioned for their role in accord with the rite found in the *Book of Blessings*, chapter 62, an "Order for the Blessing of Altar Servers, Sacristans, Musicians and Ushers."

All ministers are expected to serve for a minimum of two years. From time to time, all need to evaluate their service and determine if they wish to continue to participate in this ministry or perhaps change to another ministry.

We will develop periodic training sessions to assist and reacquaint all ministers with all aspects of their service. Having appropriate knowledge and training will help ministers to function effectively and bring confidence and joy to their experience.

Always be on the lookout for fellow parishioners to serve in this ministry. It is the mind of the Church that liturgical ministries come from the assembly and that we grow our numbers by attraction and invitation. Recruit your friends!

SERVING IN MORE THAN ONE MINISTRY

As with all liturgical ministries, it is best for the individual and the parish if a person serves in only one ministry at any given time. If, however, a minister of hospitality also serves in another ministerial capacity, only one ministry will be exercised during the liturgy. Service at the altar is to be given preference in cases when there is a shortage of ministers at a liturgy. In certain situations, it may be necessary to call on a parishioner to assist in hospitality ministry by helping with the collection, etc. This is actually a good way to get others involved and recruit new members.

WHAT IF...

- In the event of a health emergency in the assembly, please take appropriate steps to render aid and call paramedics. Always follow the guidance of the celebrant.
- If someone disrupts the service, let the celebrant take the lead. If asked by the priest or deacon, approach the person, and calmly but firmly ask the person to leave. If they persist, quietly inform them the police will be called if they do not comply. (Emergency numbers are posted in the ministry room). NEVER ATTEMPT TO PHYSICALLY CONFRONT ANYONE.
- Take care to avoid even the appearance of impropriety with the people's offerings. Never accept offerings apart from the collection and avoid humor as it relates to the collection – someone may take offense and question our trustworthiness. The offertory will always be deposited in the drop safe by two experienced, adult ministers.
- BE FLEXIBLE. Holy week, feasts, and other special occasions may require ministers to help reserve seats, assist in processions, and otherwise 'direct traffic.' Please be open to assisting in our liturgies as needed. Oftentimes we cannot predict what will take place and we need to be open to new direction.

RESOURCES: Diocese of St. Petersburg, *Guide for Ministers of Hospitality 2003*; *Guide for Ushers and Greeters*, Lawrence E. Mick (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1997); *Liturgical Ministry: A Practical Guide to Spirituality*, Donna M. Cole (San Jose: Resource Publications, Inc, 1996); *The Ministry of Hospitality*, James A. Comiskey (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1985)