

# Guidelines for Ushers and Greeters

(revised July 2011)



Thank you for agreeing to serve the parish as either an usher or a greeter or both. The Church's liturgical books call for communities to develop these ministries in order to have a welcoming presence for all who come to worship, especially guests and visitors. Although greeters do not double as ushers, at times ushers do act as greeters. That is why the guidelines for these two ministries are brought together in one booklet.

It is important to review each year the expectations and procedures for those who are ushers and greeters. The Eucharist is the heart of our worship and you are one of the public witnesses to its meaning. It is important that this service not become merely routine but continually challenge us to grow in our own faith, our trust in God, and our appreciation for the Eucharist. You are one of the first and key ways that people see present the full, conscious and active participation toward which the Second Vatican Council asks all Catholics to strive. You are the "face" of the parish to every visitor or guest who arrives and who is seated.

# **SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR GREETERS**

## **DRESS AND DECORUM**

- As a public witness to the Eucharist, our behavior and dress should reflect a real respect for the role we perform. It is an expectation, as well, that you will be a registered member of the parish. Although there are not specific rules of dress for greeters, please keep in mind that you represent the parish to everyone who enters the doorway. Excessively casual dress is discouraged. If you wear "Sunday attire," you will be a great example to the community as a whole.

## **CHECKING-IN PROCEDURES**

- Greeters check-in by the sacristy of the Church in the room that doubles as the Reconciliation Room. Please arrive at least 15 minutes early and sign-in. If you are subbing for someone specifically, sign-in your name and then list the initials of the person you are subbing for in the column on the right titled "Subbing For."
- Greeters are encouraged to reserve a seat within the Church so that they can continue greeting through the opening hymn as late-comers arrive. You may sit, of course, anywhere in the church. It seems to work best if you reserve, or have another person reserve, a seat for you at the end of a row.

## **GREETING PEOPLE**

- Greeters: after signing in, go to one of the entranceways and begin greeting all who enter, warmly and actively.
- Greet the person(s) before jumping in with a worship aid. Whatever invites a warmth and hospitable friendliness is the key. Greeters have to be good at reading people's reactions so that you don't force people into an uncomfortable encounter, yet don't miss an opportunity to be actively welcoming.
- We always have a worship aid prepared for the liturgy. It should be offered to each person (except to children too young to read or who will just use it as a coloring book!), not just one per couple or one per family, but pay attention to reactions. We are not trying to force it on anyone, and a certain number refuse to take one, no matter what.
- After the opening hymn, please take your place in the church. Waiting till then allows you to greet some of the late-comers and give them a worship aid.

## **SOME THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND**

- If you are here early, sometimes these worship aids need some sorting through, throwing out those that have gotten very soiled or even some that are older and no longer are being used.
- Ordinarily both sets of doors should remain closed to conserve air and heat and reduce insects. If someone in a wheelchair needs the door propped open, do so, and then shut it again. NB: We now have automatic door

openers at each entrance. Please use these, rather than propping open the doors.

- Please pay attention to any special needs and call upon the ushers to help seat people.
- Greeters need to be familiar with the layout of the building (restrooms, where the parish office is located, etc.) and where certain things can be found (e.g. temporary envelopes in the literature racks).

## **SUBSTITUTES**

- Our greatest challenge with this area is making sure someone gets a substitute if you cannot be there. It is not fair to assume that someone will fill in if you don't show up. **If you cannot make it, get a substitute.**
- Questions or concerns can be directed to Pennie Grover (586.677.1609). Schedules will be handed out in the sign-in room near the sacristy (Reconciliation Room) prior to the start of the new schedule. They are also posted online at the parish website ([www.ssjohnandpaul.org](http://www.ssjohnandpaul.org)) by clicking on Liturgical Ministers schedule and then the appropriate ministry. Please listen for the announcement and take a new schedule home. Any concerns about special schedules should be directed to the parish office, which will forward them to the scheduler. If you lose your phone list of Greeters or your schedule, please call the parish office and we will send you a new one.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

- The length of term for a Greeter is one year. There will be annual opportunities to review your commitment and to sign-up for another year. We deeply appreciate those

who serve faithfully year after year. On the other hand, if your service has been irregular, please be confident of improvement before signing up for another year.

- Any ways that you can improve our welcoming feel and look are appreciated. Sometimes little things like picking up a stray paper, paying attention to when help with the door is needed, and so forth, can make a difference.
- Please try to volunteer for all the special non-weekend liturgies when they arise: holidays, especially the holydays and the prayer for the deceased.

<h2><b>SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR USHERS</b></h2>
--

### **DRESS AND DECORUM**

- Ushers are encouraged to wear dress slacks, shirt and coat (with or without a tie). During the summer months, dress slacks and the short-sleeved parish logo shirts are allowed.

### **AS YOU ARRIVE**

- Ushers are assigned to teams. Although there is no signing-in procedure, when ushers arrive they should check the ushers' cupboard in the alcove by the restrooms for any information on special occurrences for the day. The most common one is the passing out of envelopes.

- It is very appropriate for ushers to have a seat with their families during Mass. But if you choose to do so, please have them sit toward the back of Church so that you can be attentive to what is happening in the whole church. Another option is to reserve a seat in the back row so that you can sit there when not ushering. Do NOT take a chair and place it against the back wall. That area needs to be kept free for walking and quick emergency exits.
- Make sure the main collection basket is out and placed under the gift table. If it is not there, usually it will be in the counting room with the counters. You can get it from there.
- After checking in with the other ushers, please do not congregate in the back simply talking to each other. Rather, begin ushering.

## **BEFORE MASS AND AT THE BEGINNING OF MASS**

- Ushers should divide themselves into at least three areas—the center, east, and west aisles. Pay attention to those who might need help in being seated. Encourage people to sit toward the front if there is room. If you notice that there is no greeter at one or other of the doorways and people are arriving, you are asked to step in and help greet.
- As people are coming in (as well as when you are taking up the collection), be alert for individuals who may require communion to be brought to them due to their physical condition. Often they will let you know, but not always. Politely and discretely confirm that the individual desires to have communion ministers bring the Eucharist to them

directly and whether they would want to receive both the consecrated bread and wine. Let the appropriate ushers know, especially the one who will be requesting the communion minister to come to the back at the end of communion.

- One usher finds a family to take up the gifts. Before doing so, check to see if there is a special occasion (baptism, first Eucharist, anniversary, etc.). If not, find a family to bring up the gifts, rotating it so that the same family is not used week after week. Let them know to go to the back of church, by the gift table, shortly after the collection begins. They do not need to wait for the usher to get them.
- Once Mass begins and continuing through the Opening Song, ushers need to be active in getting people seated, escorting people to open rows, especially in the front.
- After the Opening Song, ushers need to be more discreet in escorting people and finding open seats, but still continue to do so.

## **THE COLLECTION AND GIFTS**

- Ushers take up the collection once all are seated after the Prayers of the Faithful. One basket is passed on each side in the rows by the walls. Two baskets, if possible, are passed on each side of the main sections using every other row.
- If an usher finishes one area, he/she should then begin to pass the basket from the back rows in another area.
- When the collection is complete, ushers place the money/envelopes in the large basket and bring it up as

part of the procession of gifts (except at the 11:30 AM Mass, where it is brought to the counting room for the counters, and at times the 9:30 Mass if counters are already counting).

- For the gifts, please pay attention to when the priest goes toward the altar. If the family for the gifts has not yet done so, ask them to go to the back and give them the bread/wine (and basket with money if it is to be brought up and completed). At times you will need to send the family forward with the bread and wine and then have one of the ushers come up slightly afterward with the money.
- Please note that the container for wine will ordinarily have a pall (cloth-covered square) on it, to keep out flies and such. The pall does not come up with the gifts. Take it off and put it on the shelf of the gift table.
- With the new altar, the central arches are an important part of the symbolism and beauty of the altar. When placing the basket of money by the altar (or telling the family to do so), please place it in front of one of the candlestands, not in front of the arches. Thank you.
- There is no easy way to predict what the timing will be at each Mass for bringing up the gifts. Ushers need to be attentive and flexible.

## **PASSING OUT ENVELOPES**

- When passing out envelopes after communion, wait until the priest announces what the collection is for. This takes place **AFTER** the quiet time and prayer after communion, not during it.

## COMMUNION

- Remember which persons will need communion to be brought to them, and whether they want both the bread and the wine. Generally people sit in the same area at the Mass they attend, so it is not too difficult to get into the pattern of identifying those who have this special need and where they sit. This is an important part of the ushers' ministry.
- Generally people are familiar with the procedures for the distribution of communion. But there are many occasions when we do get a number of non-parishioners for Baptisms, First Eucharists and special anniversaries, etc., who are not familiar with our procedures. Please be especially attentive to such situations.
- The ushers coordinate the flow of people to receive communion. Usually two ushers on the inside of the center aisle will direct the people row by row, beginning with the front rows. It is not necessary to wait until one row is complete before stepping back to the next. The idea is to get people flowing in a continuous line.
- After all the rows in the center aisles (including the center back rows behind the baptismal font if applicable) have been directed toward communion, the ushers at the side aisles direct the people from the side, starting with the back rows there.
- At some Masses the side west rows (by the choir section) are sparsely populated and the people simply cross over to the center aisle row. Don't worry about such an occurrence at the smaller Masses. Be flexible and patient. In general, as long as the people proceed

to communion in an orderly manner, the goal has been accomplished.

- At Masses where the choir is present, the choir will proceed from the back and up the west side of the center aisle on their own so that they can be the first to receive communion and return to their singing. Once the last of the choir has received communion, the usher at the west center side should proceed as outlined above.
- The ushers receive communion at the end. If there is a person who needs communion brought to them, the usher will let one of the communion ministers know and direct them to the person. Please try to communicate with the other ushers. There is no reason for two ushers to bring two separate communion ministers to the same person.

### **AT THE END OF MASS: BULLETINS AND CLEAN UP**

- At the end of Mass, the ushers who will be passing out the bulletins at each entrance should make sure sufficient bulletins are on hand.
- Both sets of doors may be opened at that time unless it is extra cold or windy.
- After passing out the bulletins, please place 10-20 on the table by each entrance so that they are easily available for those arriving for the next Mass.
- Close both sets of doors at each entranceway and do a quick check to see if anything needs to be straightened or picked up.

- If a staff member has not done so, ensure that the envelopes and loose money from the collection have been retrieved from the altar area and properly secured (i.e., turned over to the money counters or a member of the parish staff).

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

- At times people faint or other emergencies arise. Ushers can help keep the situation calm by getting people to make room for the ill person, moving chairs to provide space on the floor, etc.
- We have many nurses and doctors in the parish. Usually there is someone at every Mass with advanced medical training. They should be the ones to assess what to do.
- If you know of such a person at the Mass, get them to come over. Otherwise call the priest's attention to the situation so he can ask for a qualified medical person to assist and make an assessment.
- Try not to move the person who is ill or do too much until an assessment is made.
- If a phone call needs to be made, there is a phone in the kitchen.
- If more extensive treatment is needed, such as CPR or using the defibrillator, only someone trained to do so should intervene. The AED is kept in the alcove by the restrooms, next to the water fountain.

## **SOME THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND**

- Before Mass, please be attentive to the people coming in: wheelchairs, walkers, larger families. At times ushers are congregating in the back of the church and talking, as though their ministry doesn't begin until the Mass starts. There should be ushers in each of the aisles, encouraging people to come toward the front.
- If there are no bulletins on the table by the entrance, you might want to put a few there. It is alright for people to read the bulletins before Mass. We want people to review all the information in them.
- At the Greeting of Peace, please do not offer each other or other members of the assembly the greeting of peace until invited to do so by the priest or deacon. Remember: it is a greeting of Christ's peace to one another, not simply a hello or best wishes to another.
- Please do not presume that other ushers will cover your time. We have been short of ushers at some Masses. Try to get a sub or let the captain of the group know you won't be at the Mass.
- All questions for ushers should be directed to Ken Partyka (by calling the parish office at 586.781.9010 and leaving a message for him there.)
- Thank you for volunteering for this liturgical ministry. Encourage other men and women to join.

*SS. John and Paul Church, Washington, Michigan*  
*Ph: 586.781.9010 Fax: 586.781.7061 email: ssjohnandpaul@sbcglobal.net*