



Church of  
**Saint Mary**

# **Greeters & Ushers Guide**

## **Prayer**

Loving Father, creator of the universe,  
You call your people to worship,  
To be with you and one another at Mass.  
I thank you for having called me  
To assist others in their prayer to you.  
May I be worthy of the trust placed in me  
And through my example and service  
Bring others closer to you. Amen.

## **A Theology of Lay Liturgical Ministry**

“But you are a ‘chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises’ of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” All liturgical ministers are, first and foremost, members of the Body of Christ. Through their baptism they are the “holy people and royal priesthood” whose right and privilege it is to participate in the ministry of Christ. How the lay faithful exercise this ministry in the world varies, but the fullest and most fundamental expression of it has always been “conscious, active and fruitful participation in the mystery of the eucharist.” (General Instruction Of The Roman Missal – GIRM)

## **Introduction**

Since the celebration of the Eucharist is the “action of the whole Church” (GIRM, Introduction #5), everyone in the assembly has “an individual right and duty to contribute their participation” (GIRM #58). Some of the faithful are called to serve God's people in a more particular way through one of the many liturgical ministries that have flourished in the Church since the Second Vatican Council.

This diversity of roles, functions and ministries enriches our celebrations and assists us in our prayer. Serving in one of these ministries is both an honor and a responsibility, and those who commit to it need nurturing and support.

This workshop has been prepared to help you grow in a deeper understanding and love for the liturgy, your ministry and ultimately the Lord whom we all serve.

# THE MINISTRY OF HOSPITALITY

In the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (CSL), the Second Vatican Council teaches that Christ is present and active within the Christian community in a variety of ways:

“Christ is always present in his Church, especially in its liturgical celebrations. He is present in the person of his minister; under the eucharistic elements; in the sacraments; in his Word (and) lastly, when the Church prays and sings (CSL #7).

Most Catholics have been taught since childhood that Christ is present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist and in the priests who preside at sacramental celebrations. There is a growing awareness among Catholics that Christ is also present when the scriptures are read and preached in Church.

Also growing is the awareness of Christ present in the people gathered to pray in his name. We call this gathering of Christians for prayer and worship the “assembly” and consider participation in the assembly as the most basic right and privilege of baptized Christians. Since Vatican Council II Catholics have become accustomed to lay ministers serving during the liturgy as lectors, eucharistic ministers, cantors, musicians, altar servers and ministers of hospitality.

Though their roles and functions differ, all of these ministers serve the assembly and assist in its prayer. Ministers of hospitality—including ushers and greeters do this above all by recognizing, welcoming and caring for each member of the assembly as if that person were Christ.

## Ushers and Greeters

Just as we greet guests to our home, make them feel welcome, and tend to their needs, so do the ministers of hospitality make the members of the assembly feel welcome and comfortable as they gather each Sunday. Since ushers and greeters are usually

responsible for this during parish liturgies this handbook is dedicated to them.

Well before the liturgy begins, these ministers are on hand to make sure the church is ready for the liturgy, greet people as they arrive, give out worship aids and escort people to their seats. During the liturgy, they attend to the needs of the celebration while remaining alert to the needs of the people. When the liturgy ends, they send people on their way with a friendly invitation to return.

As members of the assembly, they have a unique opportunity to model the true meaning of "full, active and conscious participation"(CSL #14). When they listen with attention, sing with enthusiasm and pray from their hearts, they encourage others to do the same. Much is expected of our ushers and greeters. Like Martha, they are busy with many things; but like Mary, they have chosen the better part - serving God's people with generosity and kindness - and it will not be taken from them (Lk. 10:38).

### **Responsibilities of ushers include:**

1. Becoming familiar with the operation of the physical plant--lighting, heating/cooling, sound and alarm systems; location of the rest rooms.
2. Knowing how to respond to emergency situations--location of first aid kits and fire extinguishers; how to contact police, fire, ambulance.
3. Greeting and seating people and distributing worship aids for hearing impaired.
4. Verifying that Gift Bearers have signed in or selecting people to carry the gifts of bread and wine to the altar if no Gift Bearers has signed in.
5. Gathering and securing the collection.
6. Handing out bulletins at the conclusion of Sunday Mass.

7. Singing, praying and attentive listening along with the assembly.
8. Being ready to assist the assembly, especially those with special needs, in any way required.
9. Practicing to carry out these responsibilities with confidence and dignity in the space where they will serve.

### **Responsibilities of Greeters include:**

1. Subscribe to the weekly Church of Saint Mary video posting. Review this posting before you come to Mass so that you are aware of happenings at the Parish in the coming week.
2. When you arrive, check in at the Ministry Scheduler Pro kiosk. Familiarize yourself with any Ministries, Faith Formation, Service of Hospitality opportunities occurring this weekend.
3. Be at your assigned station at least 15 minutes before Mass.
4. Be on the lookout for persons with mobility issues, the elderly, and those carrying babies or walking with small children. Proactively open the exterior doors for them.
5. Greet each person as they arrive. Avoid engaging in personal conversations with others.
6. Direct persons to worship aids such as the Sunday Missals and Children's Mass Guides.
7. Show people who are unfamiliar with the church location of the restrooms, nursery, etc.
8. Identify anyone who needs Eucharist brought to them in the pew because of illness or disability and notify the Ushers so their location inside the church is known.
9. Answer questions and assist people as necessary.

10. After communion return to the vestibule and man the exterior doors and thank each person for attending and wish them well in the week ahead.
11. Use the Ministry Scheduler Pro app to request a substitute when you know that you are not able to fulfill your scheduled obligation. Also use the app to browse the schedule for the Mass that you are attending to see if Greeter help is needed at this Mass. Arrange for a substitute from the greeter ministry list if you are unable to be at your scheduled Mass.

## **Preparation**

Those who exercise a liturgical ministry are expected to develop their skills by taking advantage of the training and formation opportunities offered by their parish or through the Office of Liturgy. In addition, they have a serious responsibility to prepare in a more immediate way for the liturgies at which they will serve.

This more immediate preparation for ushers and greeters includes:

- Arriving well in advance of the liturgy to become calm and unhurried before the liturgy begins and to check for any changes or special instructions.
- Making sure that everything needed for their duties during Mass is ready and in place.
- Dressing in a way that reflects the importance and dignity of this ministry.
- Using the Ministry Scheduler Pro app to notifying if you cannot serve when scheduled and/or arranging for a substitute.

## **DURING THE LITURGY**

### **The gathering of the assembly**

It is important that ushers and greeters arrive early enough to attend to the "housekeeping" tasks described above so that their full energy can be devoted to the gathering of the assembly. The moments when people are arriving and gathering in the church are perhaps the most important time for ministers of hospitality. Some parishes have specially designated "greeters" who meet people at the door and welcome them in the name of Christ. In some parishes ushers fulfill this function. In any case, a smile or a friendly "hello" should greet everyone who enters so that all feel welcome.

### **Seating**

The Christian assembly gathers around the table of the Lord each Sunday. Therefore, ushers should make every effort to escort people to seats in the front of the church where they can sit closest to the table. Seating people in closer proximity to each other helps them to more quickly feel like part of the community. Seats in the back and on the aisle should be reserved for latecomers or those with special needs.

No one should be seated while the readings are being proclaimed. If seats in the rear have been left empty, it is easier to seat latecomers without disturbing the assembly.

### **The preparation of the gifts**

It is not the specific function of hospitality ministers to carry the gifts of bread and wine during the presentation of the gifts. This belongs to the faithful (GIRM #101). Before the liturgy begins an usher should select people from the assembly to carry the gifts and instruct them in when and how to do this.

## **The collection**

Ushers assist in gathering the weekly collection. It is important that ushers know the parish procedures for collecting and securing the offerings, so they can follow them with quiet efficiency. In addition, ushers are sometimes asked to distribute materials to the assembly. Advance notice and clear instructions will insure that this is accomplished without disrupting the celebration.

## **The communion procession**

Uniformity in movement and posture at this time is a beautiful sign of unity that "expresses and fosters the spiritual attitude of those taking part" (GIRM #20). Ushers should know the parish procedure thoroughly so they can facilitate the graceful flow of the procession. They should be especially alert in assisting anyone who has difficulty coming to the table.

## **The dismissal**

As the assembly is dismissed the ministers of hospitality continue their friendly, helpful service. They hand out bulletins as people leave and invite them to return next week. They assist those with special needs and guide people to gatherings which follow the liturgy. They are often responsible to see that the church is left in good order--that pews are tidied and all is returned to where it belongs.

Safety, Medical and Emergency Procedures are documented in a supplemental guide for use by Ushers. A copy of this guide is located in the Usher's Closet and another copy is in the Sacristy.