

WHO MAY SERVE AS A GREETER OR USHER?

This ministry is open to all, men and women, who are truly able to welcome people to the community's prayer. Because this ministry requires an understanding of the nature of liturgical prayer, the ability to relate to people of all ages, and the capability of responding well to sometimes-challenging situations, a certain level of maturity is needed. However, when the ministry of hospitality is open to families, children often make very effective greeters.

WHAT IS APPROPRIATE ATTIRE FOR MINISTERS OF HOSPITALITY?

Because all liturgical ministers, by their demeanor and attitude, send a message about the importance of what is taking place, it is helpful if they are attired in their "Sunday best." In some parishes, ministers wear a uniform blazer for visibility so that they can be identified immediately in case of an emergency. In either case, a nametag identifying a person as a minister of hospitality would be helpful.

IS THERE A SPECIAL RITE FOR BLESSING GREETERS AND USHERS?

See the "Order for the Blessing of Altar Servers, Sacristans, Musicians and Ushers" found in the *Book of Blessings*, #1847-1870.



WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO ASSIST IN THE FORMATION OF GREETERS AND USHERS?

Guide for Ushers and Greeters, published by Liturgy Training Publications, is an excellent resource for understanding the skills and attitudes needed to be an effective greeter or usher. Two other booklets, *The Ministry of Hospitality* and *The Ministry of Ushers*, are helpful resources from The Liturgical Press. (The former is also available in Spanish.) A video entitled *Training for Hospitality* is another resource the same publisher. The Prayer, Worship and Evangelization Office has other materials as well as presenters available for the formation and training of these ministers.

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THE MINISTRY OF GREETERS AND USHERS QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



ARCHDIOCESE  OF MILWAUKEE

OFFICE FOR PRAYER, WORSHIP, AND EVANGELIZATION

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

St. Paul instructed the assembled community to “welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, to the glory of God” (Rom 15:7... The people are coming as invited guests of the Lord himself, to share in his supper as sisters and brothers. (Introduction to the Order of Mass, #23).

“Hospitality is a vital element in creating a sense of community for worship. A person who feels welcomed and valued is much more likely to enter wholeheartedly into the celebration of the liturgy, giving thanks to God for the love that God pours out on us.” (Rev. Lawrence Mick)

When people come into a public place—whether it be an auditorium, concert hall, or church building—they are able to perceive if preparations have been made for the event. This very “sensing” affects the manner (positive or negative) in which people will enter into the event. “Something important is going to happen” can be said in many ways, not the least of which is the presence of capable, poised welcomers. (Elizabeth Young)

The importance of the ministry of hospitality is clear in the above quotations. In the spirit of the ongoing renewal that liturgy requires, we present this series of Questions and Answers regarding the role of ushers and greeters.

IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN “GREETERS” AND “USHERS”?

Ushering was one of the few roles open to lay people before Vatican II. For many years, ushers helped parishioners find seats in church, took up the offering, dealt with emergencies and handed out bulletins. The liturgical renewal that followed the Council identified the importance of creating a welcoming atmosphere at the entrances of the church. In some parishes, the ushers adapted to this new understanding of their role. In other parishes, a separate group of ministers was created specifically to welcome people, not merely as a “social courtesy” but as members of the body of Christ. In reality, however, all members of the Assembly are responsible for creating a climate of hospitality.

WHY IS HOSPITALITY SO IMPORTANT?

Christian hospitality is centered in Christ. It is an expression of reverence for the presence of Christ in each member of the assembly; it is rooted in the sacrament of baptism. True hospitality draws us together and opens us up to participate in the liturgy. An ancient Christian saying expresses it this way: “When a guest comes, Christ comes.”

WHAT DO GREETERS AND USHERS DO BEFORE MASS?

They need to arrive well before other parishioners (at least 20 minutes before Mass begins). They should make sure that the worship space is free of any clutter that may have been left from a previous service. They greet people at the door (paying particular attention to those who may be visiting or in need of special seating), hand out worship aids and assist people in finding a place to sit.

DURING MASS, WHAT IS THEIR ROLE?

Ministers of Hospitality, like other liturgical ministers, are first and foremost members of the worshiping Assembly. As such, they should join in the act of worship in the same manner as the Assembly. Even while performing specific tasks, (e.g., taking up the offering), they remain united to the Assembly, singing and praying in an active way. Never should their role separate them from the rest of the Assembly. They are to be present and attentive during the entire liturgy.

During Mass, they assist in the seating of latecomers, take up the offering, help direct the communion procession if needed and deal with any disturbances that may occur. They should know the location of rest rooms, the nearest phone, the first aid kit and fire extinguishers. They may also be responsible for choosing the gift bearers.

AND AT THE END OF MASS?

Their role is to distribute the parish bulletin, direct people toward any social events that may be taking place and to do a general clean up of the worship space.

