

Guidelines for Ushers

One day within your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. The threshold of the house of God I prefer to the dwellings of the wicked.
Psalm 84:10

A. Introduction

1. Ushers offer an invaluable service to the faithful gathered to celebrate the Sacred Liturgy. They are agents of the Father's mercy as they serve God's people with charity, patience, compassion, and kindness.
2. Ushers cooperate closely with altar servers, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, lectors, music ministers, and all who serve the People of God gathered for the Liturgy.

B. Usher Selection and Training

3. It is important to select dedicated and trustworthy members of the parish to form teams of ushers assigned to each of the Sunday Mass times. The Mass attendance, capacity of the church and the number of aisles should determine the ideal size of the team.
4. Each Mass should have a lead usher of the team.
5. It is helpful to appoint a coordinator to manage the schedule, liaise with the Pastor and supervise the training of new ushers.
6. New ushers should be given suitable training. All ushers will benefit from periodic refreshers on their role and duties. It is highly recommended to hold regular workshops where all the ushers can come together to learn, enjoy fellowship and be encouraged.

C. Before the Celebration of Mass

Preparation

7. Ushers should arrive at the church at least 20 minutes before the celebration.
8. Each usher should arrange for a substitute if they are unable to serve at a Mass they are scheduled for.
9. Upon arrival, it is appropriate to have a time of prayer and spiritual preparation.
10. Wearing nametags is strongly encouraged.
11. The lead usher ensures that either his team or another designated person sees to it that:
 - a. Lights are turned on;



- b. Temperature is seasonally adjusted to a comfortable level;
- c. The table for the offerings is prepared and supervised by the ushers;
- d. The number of collections during the Mass is determined and the collection baskets are ready;
- e. Gift-bearers are selected for the Offertory procession;
- f. Bulletins are ready for distribution after Mass.

Entrance and Exits

- 12. The main entrance of the church is usually designated for greeting and welcoming the faithful. The priests may be joined by the deacon, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, lectors, greeters and ushers to extend a warm welcome to those arriving for Mass. A smile and courteous assistance help to set the tone for the celebration.
- 13. Ushers are assigned at the entrance(s) of the church to welcome the congregation and watch for visitors. Newcomers are welcomed in a special way to make them feel at home. A warm welcome to all who arrive will help to set the tone for the liturgical celebration; for example: "Welcome to our parish community. We are happy you decided to join us today. May I help you find a place to sit?"

If there is a designated place for people in wheelchairs, be sure to point it out to those who may need it. This location should allow for easy access to receive Holy Communion.

Ushers should know where parish registration forms are kept, in case someone asks.

- 14. The ushers are to ensure that all designated exits are kept clear at all times. In case of emergency, the ushers are responsible for directing people to the exits in an orderly manner. The coordinator or team lead usher should ensure that each usher is assigned a specific area to observe and offer assistance as needed.

Table for the Offerings

- 15. Before Mass, a suitable and secured table may be prepared at the back of the church, covered with a clean white cloth, for the gifts that will be presented during the Offertory: the ciborium filled with host, cruets for wine and water, and any other gifts for the poor according to local custom.

Gift-Bearers

- 16. Some parishes have a schedule of people to bring the gifts to the altar during the Offertory. Where this is not the case, the lead usher should be watchful, while people are arriving for Mass, for a family or group of people who are appropriately dressed to serve as gift-bearers. The lead usher should politely ask them if they are willing to bring the gifts up to the altar, and then instruct them regarding when and how to do so.



Seating the Congregation

17. Ushers may courteously and quietly guide the people to available seats. On special occasions like Christmas or Easter, when the church is crowded, extra patience may be necessary. When more space is needed, ushers can ask the congregation to move toward the centre aisle so that others can come in from the side aisles. There should be no standees at all if there are seats available. If all the seats are full and the church is at standing room only, standees should not block aisles, pathways or exits.
18. Congregational participation from the beginning to the end of the celebration is the ideal. People with valid reasons to arrive late, or to leave early, may nonetheless create distractions. Ushers must face this situation with tact and courtesy in order to minimize disturbances. Ushers may seat latecomers:
 - a. during the entrance song;
 - b. between the Readings and Responsorial Psalm;
 - c. after the homily but before the Profession of Faith.
19. Ushers may reserve seats for themselves at strategic locations, in order to maximize their ability to serve and to minimize unnecessary distractions while carrying out their necessary functions. Keep in mind that ushers are also to be active participants of the liturgy.

D. During the Celebration

20. Just before the entrance procession begins, the ushers ensure that the way is clear. Ushers are not to walk in the procession.
21. As soon as the celebrant greets the congregation, all ushers should be in their designated seats.
22. Latecomers may be seated when appropriate. Timing, tact and courtesy must be observed at all times to avoid distractions and disturbances. Minimal movement during the celebration is encouraged.
23. Depending on parish custom, one or two ushers may assist the children if they leave the church for their Liturgy of the Word, and bring them back when it is done. Ushers should watch for young ones that may wander or become separated from the group.

Collection

24. The offerings that people put in the collections are a sharing of their treasure, a sacrificial offering that is joined to Christ's. It is important not to embarrass anyone, especially when people require more time in taking out their offering.
25. The collection is taken up after the Prayers of the Faithful. The ushers make their way toward the sanctuary, bow in unison toward the altar, and then proceed down the aisles to receive the collection.



26. Once the collection is complete, two unrelated people are required to be present when all of the money from the collection is transferred quietly from the baskets to the money bag(s). The same two people are to secure the money bag in the safe in the sacristy or other designated location.
27. The practice of bringing the collection up to the altar is discouraged.
28. Second collections may be taken up after the Blessed Sacrament has been placed in the Tabernacle or when the celebrant begins purifying the chalice. The second collection should be bagged and deposited in the safe in the same manner noted in n. 26.

Presentation of the Gifts

29. The celebrant is usually ready to receive the gifts as the collection is ending.
 - a. The signal for the gift-bearers to prepare is when the cross bearer or another altar server walks from the sanctuary to the back of the church.
 - b. The lead usher may assist the gift-bearers by handing them the cruets and ciborium. Both cruets are to be carried by the same person.
 - c. To avoid spilling, small children should not carry the gifts.
 - d. The signal to bring the gifts forward is when the celebrant moves to the foot of the altar to receive them. The cross bearer or altar server leads the gift-bearers to the sanctuary.
 - e. Upon arrival at the foot of the altar, the gift-bearers bow toward the altar and then present the gifts to the celebrant one at a time.
 - f. The gift-bearers wait as a group for the blessing, if one is given, and then bow in unison towards the altar before proceeding back to their seats.

The Eucharistic Prayer and Communion

30. From the moment the Eucharistic Prayer begins, ushers are to participate fully in the Liturgy and avoid all unnecessary movement during this most solemn part of the Mass. If an emergency occurs during the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the ushers must use good judgement and discretion in attending to it.
31. Ushers may receive Holy Communion before the general lineup or at the end, depending on the customary parish practice.
32. The ushers should devise effective traffic patterns to maintain the flow of the lineup for Holy Communion, especially when the congregation is large. Directing the people to go pew by pew should be avoided.
 - a. Ushers should be alert to problems that may arise, such as children becoming separated from their parents, elderly persons having difficulty moving about, disabled persons needing assistance, and so on.



- b. Ushers may accompany a minister of Holy Communion who is bringing the Host to people who are unable to leave their seats.
- 33. All communicants must consume the Host in front of or beside the minister from who they received it. Ushers may be posted at specific locations to watch for communicants who attempt to take away the consecrated Host rather than consuming it immediately. If this does occur, ushers should be discrete and courteous in asking the communicant to consume the Host immediately, so as not to cause embarrassment or create a disturbance.
- 34. It sometimes happens that people will seek to leave the church immediately after receiving Communion but before Mass is ended. To help persuade them to stay, the lead usher may redirect people to their seats in a very discrete and courteous manner.

E. After the Celebration

- 35. After Mass, ushers should be at the church exits to distribute bulletins and other handouts. Other ministers may also be at the exits to thank the people for coming. Ushers should be watchful and provide assistance to people in need.

Bulletin Distribution

- 36. It is important that each family receives a bulletin because information is vital for encouraging parish involvement.
- 37. Bulletins should be distributed only after Mass, and should be kept in a designated place until the Liturgy is finished.
- 38. Bulletins should be distributed rather than left in piles for people to pick up on their own. Ushers may distribute the bulletin at the main door to the church, or at other exit doors. Bulletins should not be distributed inside the church itself.
- 39. Ushers are encouraged to greet people warmly as they hand out bulletins and thank them for celebrating with the parish community that day.
- 40. If for some reason an usher cannot stay to distribute the bulletins after Mass, a replacement must be found so that distribution can continue as usual.
- 41. Before they leave the parish, the ushers should see to it that everything is in order for the next celebration. If it was the last celebration of the day, the ushers are to help lock up the church.

F. General Considerations

Dress Code

- 42. Ushers, like all who minister at Mass, should dress appropriately for service to the Lord. "Sunday Best" is recommended.



43. Dress pants and a shirt with sleeves and collar are appropriate for men. Dresses or skirts/slacks with sleeved blouses are appropriate for women.
44. Appropriate footwear should be worn at all times, including the summer months. Sandals, flip-flops, dirty runners or slippers are not acceptable.
45. Sweaters over the shirt, blouse or dress can provide a nice accent, but overcoats should not be worn while serving as an usher. Handbags, purses, backpacks and the like should be stored somewhere safe rather than worn while serving.

Children's Room

46. Many churches provide a sound-buffered children's room ("crying room") where one parent can bring their infant or child who is acting up. This allows the parents to participate in the Liturgy while minimizing distractions for the congregation. The purpose of the children's room should not be abused by allowing whole families to be in it. When offering the children's room to a parent, an usher must act in a positive manner so as to avoid further embarrassment, especially when a child is acting up.

Public Address System

47. If a problem arises with the public address system (e.g., it is not turned on; the volume is too high or too low; there is feedback), the lead usher may attend to it if he/she has been trained on the system and has permission to operate it.

Light Switches

48. Flickering lights are a distraction to the congregation. Ushers should familiarize themselves with the locations of the light controls. Watch for children playing with the light switches or for someone inadvertently leaning against a light switch.

Washrooms and Drinking Fountain

49. Ushers should not obstruct a child who frequently goes to the washroom or uses the water fountain. Tact and courtesy may minimize the problem if the usher is observant and acts diligently without embarrassing the child or the parents.

Confessionals

50. Ushers should know the location of the confessionals and the regular times for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. People inquiring about Confession times may be given a bulletin and have the regular times pointed out to them.

Physical Comfort in the Church

51. Air conditioning, heating and fans help to make people comfortable in the church. Ushers who are trained in using the HVAC systems may turn these on as needed and shut them off after the last celebration of the day.



Smart Phones and Photography

52. Smart phones can sometimes be a nuisance when used inappropriately. People should be encouraged to turn off or silence their devices during Mass. Many people love to take photos, and there are appropriate times for doing so. There should be no picture taking, however, during the solemn celebration of the Mass.

Ushering on Special Occasions

53. Christmas, Holy Week, Easter, feast days, and special celebrations are occasions when the services of the well-trained and friendly ushers may be particularly helpful in setting the right tone for the event. Special occasions often draw people who do not ordinarily attend Mass at the parish, and ushers play a key role in making them feel welcome and comfortable in the church. Increased attendance calls for extra care, tact and courtesy. Rehearsals or training for a special occasion may be worth considering.

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