

GUIDELINES FOR MINISTERS OF HOSPITALITY

DIOCESE OF ST. PETERSBURG

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 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.

Conscious of this vital ministry and its significance for the faithful, some parishes have created a separate ministry of greeters to help create a sense of welcome and hospitality. Others have broadened the role of usher to include all the services of hospitality.

Minister of Hospitality is used broadly to include those men and women who serve their parishes in the liturgical ministries of Usher or Greeter.

REQUIREMENTS

Those who desire to serve as minister of hospitality should be active and faithful members of the Church. They should be of godly character and reputation. Respect for others, discretion and appropriate decorum are the hallmarks of a minister of hospitality. 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 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

Although men have traditionally filled the role of “usher” in most parishes, *women (as well as teenagers and children)* are invited to serve as ministers of hospitality. As St. Paul reminds us: *For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus* (Gal. 3:27-28). Indeed, variety in and among the members of this ministry better represents the diverse nature of our Church.

Proper Attire:

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.

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., near the doors, throughout the church, etc.

PROCEDURES BEFORE THE LITURGY

- 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 their fellow ministers to the exclusion of those who are gathering for the liturgy.
- Assist with the seating of the assembly before the liturgy begins.

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:

- The seating of latecomers with as much haste and as little disturbance as possible. (Each parish needs to determine the appropriate time to seat latecomers. Many parishes seat

latecomers when there is a break in the liturgy, e.g., at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer or at the conclusion of the First Reading or Responsorial Psalm.)

- Collect the offerings of the people. Both the faithful and the offerings are to be treated with utmost dignity and reverence. The faithful should be given adequate time to deposit their gifts during the collection.
- Appoint (where appropriate) and assist those who will be taking up the gifts in the procession for the Preparation of the Gifts.
- Direct the communion procession in an orderly manner.
- Be aware of the placement of first aid supplies and an emergency telephone if the need should arise.

PROCEDURES FOLLOWING THE CONCLUSION OF THE LITURGY

Ministers of hospitality should distribute the parish bulletins and any other pertinent materials at the conclusion of the liturgy. They should also be available to assist those with special needs. Finally, they can assist in preparing the worship space for the next liturgy, making sure it is well organized and inviting.

TRAINING AND INSTALLATION

Many parishes have found that it is desirable to commission ministers of hospitality for a specified period of time. This allows the ministers to evaluate their service and determine if they wish to continue to participate in this ministry or perhaps change to another ministry at the end of their term. As with all liturgical ministries, it is best for the individual and parish if a person serves in only one ministry at any given time.

Individual parishes should develop periodic training sessions to assist and reacquaint ministers of hospitality 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.

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.”

OTHER RESOURCES

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).

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