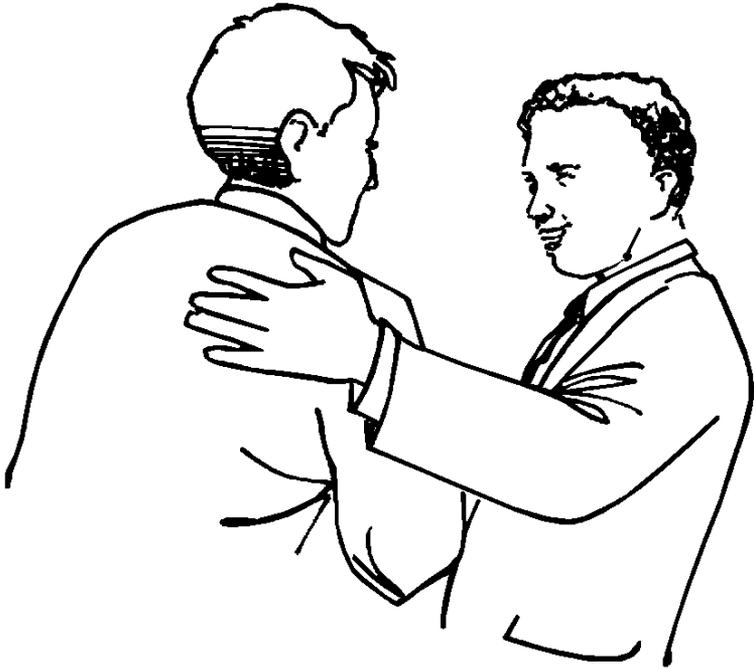


Guidelines for Ministers of Hospitality (Ushers)



*“For I was a stranger and
you welcomed me.”*

(Matt. 25:35)

Usher Prayer adated by:

Chris Walker, Julio Gonzalez, S.F. and by Fr. Joseph Jenkins.

A Prayer for Ushers & Greeters

Lord Jesus, you welcome those who seek you with a kindness and gentleness that wins souls. You welcomed conversation with the Samaritan woman. You welcomed the lame, the blind, and the broken. You were a friend of sinners that the self-righteous people rejected. You displayed the greatest love of all in that you laid down your life for your friends.



As people come to church, help me to be kind to them. Help me to give them a welcome that is worthy of your Name. Help me to display kindness in a way that will prepare the way for them to encounter you in your word, community and sacrament. Help me to set aside my preoccupations and worries so as to focus on you in them.

Allow kindness to show forth in me, blocking all negative judgment because of what a guest wears, apparent social status, or ethnic background. Allow kindness to show forth as I greet each and every person who walks in the door. Allow kindness to help me see an unspoken need and to meet it as your sentinel.

Let my ways be pleasing in your sight. May the kindness I share help a person calm down from a stressful morning and make a nervous first time visitor feel safe. May I share an expression of your love for someone who needs it today.

May the kindness I show help everyone who enters your house to be at peace.

Lord, help me to understand that while my ministry is about more than the collection basket, I have been entrusted with a sacred and not a profane task. The money collected is a sacrifice for the needs of your Church and for the perpetuation of your saving work. The offertory is an expression of our self-offering, beseeching that just as bread and wine will be changed into your body and blood, deign to transform us as well ever more and more into your likeness.

As I walk in kindness and compassion today, I will bless each guest and member who walks into our church. I want to help them to experience your presence. *Amen.*

Pastor's Appreciation to Usher Volunteers

As pastor, I want to thank all those willing to minister as ushers at Holy Family Parish. It speaks volumes about your commitment to Christ and desire to serve the faith community. You play an important role in insuring the order and beauty of our liturgies. I am mindful of Matthew 25:35 where our Lord says, "For I was... a stranger and you welcomed me." There was a medieval custom rooted in faith and folklore that monasteries received guests with the utmost solicitation, believing that Jesus might come to their doors dressed as a beggar or transient. Similarly, treat every visitor as if it were Christ knocking at the door. If they feel welcome, they may make a home with us. You can function as a true minister of evangelization.—*Father Joe*



Introduction

The mystery of the incarnation gives a human face to God. People in turn reflect something of the presence of Jesus in the ministry of the Church.

Jesus said, "Whoever receives you, receives me, and whoever receives me receives the One who sent me" (Matthew 10:40).

Ushers or ministers of hospitality immediately become the face of the Parish. They are to signify by appearance and demeanor our outreach in Christian love and service to others. Hospitality is by definition a welcoming and openness to membership and participation. The usher greets visitors, not just in his own name, but as a representative of the believing community. We are a people, gifted with the Holy Spirit, as the one body of Christ. This ministry is crucial for many reasons, but it all begins with the projection of an image that will lead to a positive experience of fellowship at Mass. In other words, sour expressions and/or rude behavior will ruin people's time at church.

Background to the Ministry

The role of the usher has its roots in the keeper of the keys in the days of King David and the Jewish doorkeepers of the Temple in Jerusalem. These are the temple guards that we read about in the Gospels. Extending from the third century until just after Vatican II, the Church even established a clerical order of porter. The tradition we have at Holy Family



of the usher ringing the bell that starts Mass finds its source in this ministry now given over to the laity. Porters or ushers literally controlled access to churches and intervened against intruders and those who would disrupt services. While ushers should ideally not be bouncers, I recall a situation many years ago in the city where the men had to respond against protestors who made a scene at Mass. As a general rule, try to avoid confrontational situations. The usher is essentially a peace maker.

Requirements

- Registered and active member of the parish.
- Godly character, honesty and good reputation.
- Respect for others, discretion and proper decorum.
- Comfortable in greeting and giving directions.
- Must exhibit a sense of welcome, especially to strangers.

Selection

Although men have traditionally fulfilled the role of usher, women and older teens are also welcome.

Seating

It is appropriate that ushers or ministers of hospitality sit within the assembly. However, they should be situated in those places that best allow them to exercise their ministry, particularly at the end of pews, in the back and/or near the doors.

Procedures

- Come to church 15 minutes early; leave 5 to 10 minutes afterwards.
- Greet and welcome the faithful who gather for worship.
- Inform visitors about the bathrooms in the hall.
- Ushers should stand at the doors of the church.
- Ushers should assist with seating.
- Make sure doors stay closed to keep in heat or air conditioning.
- Ring the processional bell at the beginning of Mass.
- Encourage a quiet and reverent atmosphere in the church.
- Collect the Offertory and Special Collections (always check on how many).
- Select gift bearers for the bread and wine.
- Be aware of first aid supplies and ready to act if need be.
- Have a cell phone (off) for emergency calls (EMT or Police).

- Distribute bulletins or other materials after Mass.
- Be ready to assist those with special needs.
- Help to clean up or organize the church after Mass.

Guidance about Seating People

While it is preferable that worshippers are seated prior to the liturgy, the reality is that there are many who come late to Mass. Ushers may find it valuable to reserve chairs in the back for themselves, given that it allows for ease of movement. Ministers of hospitality also have a right to fully participate in the Eucharist; however, there may come times when they will also have to assist those who are tardy. This should be done with haste and with as little disruption to the service as possible. There are certain breaks in the liturgy that are more conducive to the seating of latecomers: at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer, at the end of the First Reading or Responsorial Psalm and possibly at the Alleluia or Gospel verse. Traditionally, if one missed the Gospel then one had not fulfilled the Sunday Mass obligation.

Guidance about the Offertory

The faithful and their offerings are to be treated with the utmost respect. Four ushers should be used per Mass and they should move slowly and in unison pew by pew, starting in the front.



It defeats the purpose to just collect from the edges of the pews. We use baskets with extended handles for a

reason, to reach those in the pews. Parishioners should not have to pass their donations to the end of the pew. Extend the basket as far as possible, row by row, and draw it back slowly. Do not hold it front of people in an intimidating manner. Remember, while support for the church is a precept of the Church, it is still a free-will offering. When the money has been collected from the nave and choir loft of the church, it should be placed in a collection bag designated for the Mass and sealed. The bag is squeezed to remove air from the bag. It is brought up with the gifts of bread and wine. The priest will acknowledge the monetary gift or even offer a Sign of the Cross over it. Then two ushers will take the bag into the sacristy and deposit it into the appropriate lock box. There is a separate box for the offertory collection and for the second collections. One of the two ushers must always be an adult.

Installation

Once a year, or more if needed, ushers are formally commissioned and blessed at Sunday Mass. While sometimes practicality will force us to wear many hats, it is preferable that parishioners restrict themselves to one ministry at any particular time. Given the weight of good stewardship, the pastor can delegate special ushers at any time to insure the collection of the offertory.

Training

Periodic training sessions will be scheduled to assist and to reacquaint the ushers with the various aspects of their service. If interested, please contact the rectory.

Guidelines for Supporting People with Disabilities

Always speak directly to the person with a disability. Look directly at the person with the disability, not at companion(s) or support staff.

Offer assistance, but do not impose. It may take the person a little longer to manage alone, but let it remain his/her choice. Ask the person for the best way for you to assist. If it is a small child with a parent, ask the parent.

Do not pretend to understand if someone's speech is unclear. Politely ask the person to repeat or clarify. Have pencil and paper with you in case written communication is necessary.

Treat adults with disabilities as adults.

If you encounter unusual behavior, remain calm and non-judgmental. Listen carefully and offer support. Be sensitive to the fact that people react to touch differently. Some may be appreciative, others feel threatened.

As a faith community, we desire to be inclusive of those with special challenges and/or intellectual disabilities. We will tolerate a little noise so that all will know they are wanted. Do not shun "certain" people to the back of the church.

Keep information simple. Different people process at different rates.

Please help us reserve the two front pew cuts for persons who use walkers or wheelchairs and their companions.

Guidelines for Dealing with Mendicants

We have had situations with transients begging for money in the parking lot and in the back of the church. As much as we want to assist people, it must be said that everything is not always as it seems. A neighboring pastor had to call the police when a homeless person intimidated parishioners and became violent. There are some that have resources but prey upon Christian goodwill. Protect the collection as this money is not available until properly counted and deposited into the parish bank account. Watch out for your own wallet and the personal property of others. If anyone wanting help with money, food, shelter, etc. enters the church before or during worship, please let him or her know that our basic policy is that we do not provide any kind of assistance during worship or PREP classes. If you consider such persons as a serious threat, then you may ask them to leave. You can also seek to notify the pastor if he is not offering that particular Mass. If the threat seems real and imminent, you may call 911 but this is absolutely a last resort. The church provides assistance through the parish food pantry during the week. We also work closely with Catholic Charities. Ask them to contact us during weekdays when we have staff and time to properly respond. If you feel the individual or group needs help now, ask them to wait until after services. They can pray with others at Mass. However, what the pastor can do on weekends is seriously limited.

Guidelines for Special Topics

Apparel – Ushers should dress in a way appropriate to maintaining a reverent and worshipful manner: collared

shirts and pants for the men and slacks, blouse, collared shirt, dress or skirt for the women. No flip-flops or tennis shoes.

Availability – If you cannot work on an assigned date, get a substitute from the usher list.

Children – When people come with very young children, tactfully point out that infants and small children cannot be taken up to the choir loft as it poses certain challenges and dangers.

Fire – Know the location of the fire extinguishers.

Food – Remind congregants that other than a baby's bottle, food and drink is prohibited in the church.

Health Emergency – In case of illness or need for first aid, render as much assistance as possible. Know who has permission to use the automated external defibrillator (AED) or get certified yourself.

Ingress & Egress – Keep all walkways free of obstacles. This is especially an issue when we have the holiday food and gift collections. Open and close doors for people and assist those in need.

Media – Given how mobile phones now take photos and record both sound and video, a stance must be taken about such use during services. While special presentations and/or events should be archived, the general recording of services is prohibited. Photography often requires flash and even the digital devices have the fake shutter sounds. Such distractions to the liturgy should be kept to a minimum. If

someone really has a burning desire for the pastor's picture, he will be willing to pose with him or her after Mass.

Phones – Phones should be off or on vibrate in church. If someone should decide to hold a conversation or even to text during Mass, gently let them know that such is a violation of the decorum that we expect at Holy Family. We need to respect the Lord, his ministers and the gathered assembly.

Protocol – Keep the doors to the church closed at the end of the service until the ministers reach the doors for exit and the service is completed. Do not open early because of certain people racing to be first to “escape” the church.

Safeguard the Eucharist – If a non-Catholic visitor or a congregant who is sick or confused fails to consume the host and brings it back to the pew, politely ask for the host and place it in a clean napkin or tissue. Discretely give it to the priest, deacon or extraordinary minister. Protect our Lord from possible profanation.

Security – The Prince George's County Sheriff's Office has notified us to be on guard for anyone bringing large packages into the church during services. Given what has happened in other countries, many feel it is only a matter of time until the terrorists attack American Christian churches. Keep your eyes open and be ready to quickly respond.

Talk – Keep talking between ushers during the service to a minimum. Obviously there are times when communication is needed and appropriate. Communicate quietly.

Ushers Distribute & Collect

The ushers weekly help to distribute the Parish Bulletin. *The Catholic Standard* newspaper is available bi-weekly. There may also be special flyers, booklets and handouts that will require distribution. We annually pass out the Parish Calendar. If you see new faces, do not hesitate to give visitors our Parish Registration Forms.

Besides the weekly collection and the monthly second collection, the ushers assist with the distribution of materials for the annual Cardinal's Appeal and the collection of pledges. This is quite a process. You may even be called upon to give out pencils.

We would hope to have ushers for each of the three doors in the body of the church. If there are only two ushers available, then one should stand at the glass door that leads to the ramp and the other one at the front door on the other side of the church closest to Mary's Garden and the two main parking lots.

Share Something About Our History

Visitors might want to know more than the location of the bathrooms (in the hall). They may also be curious about the parish itself. While ushers are not necessarily tourguides, it would be efficacious to have such men and women who can talk in an informed way about the roots of the parish and our current status. You can direct people to Mary's Garden between the parking lots, the old parish cemetery, to the outdoor stations of the cross and to our parish hall. You can ask visitors to look up at the odd crooked cross in the church

ceiling and remark that “Some say that the cross is wood just as it was taken from a derelict slave ship.” What follows is background information to help in regard to small talk before or after services.

Who We Are

Holy Family Church in 2015 celebrated 125 years. We began as a Mission in 1890. Construction was finished by 1892. The church quickly became the “focal point” for black Catholics in Prince George’s County who suffered the “pains of segregation and a lack of transportation” to distant parishes. Today it serves people of various ethnicities and recent immigrants, particularly from Africa and the Philippines. While the neighborhood has greatly changed from rural to suburban, Holy Family has remained a stable oasis for Catholic fellowship, faith, worship and service.

Established as a Mission in 1890

The Jesuits of White Marsh (Sacred Heart) with their experience as missionaries were needed to begin a church for the black tenant farmers in the Mitchellville, MD area. The land for the church was given by Isaac and Willie Ann Wood to Archbishop James Gibbons of Baltimore on June 8, 1889. Another acre was sold to us in 1896. On Sunday, February 9, 1890, the 1,000 lb. cornerstone was laid which began the construction of the Holy Family Mission. It was completed about 1892. Our first pastor was Fr. David Walker, SJ.

Established as a Parish in 1938

Archbishop Curley of Baltimore and Washington apportioned about 50 square miles to the east of the Nation's Capital to the care of the Josephites. This area included the Holy Family Mission. The population of the mission had grown so much that Holy Family was given resident parish status in 1938. In 1939, Ascension Parish took over the administration. The Josephites were a residential order, whose primary work was ministering to the black community and was best suited to address their religious needs. The tenant farmers began to own their farms and settle the community. The first resident pastor, Josephite Fr. John C. Albert, noted that Holy Family served an area of over a hundred square miles!

Welcomed Diocesan Priests and Divided in 1972

The Josephite Society made the decision in 1972 to withdraw from the parish since the new development in the area was a heavy concentration of middle and upper-middle class whites. They believed that the Archdiocese of Washington was in a better position to offer apostolate service to the people in the Mitchellville area. The Society reconfirmed its decision to work in the black community and among the poor. Rev. Robert T. Wummer's appointment as the first diocesan pastor of Holy Family coincided with establishment of St. Edward the Confessor Church at Pointer Ridge in Bowie. St. Edward's was carved from Holy Family Parish, St. Mary's in Upper Marlboro, and Sacred Heart in Bowie.

Rev. Michael C. Kidd was appointed pastor of Holy Family Parish in June of 1982. He led Holy Family for 23 years until

his retirement in 2005. There was a brief stint during which Rev. Mark Knestout was our pastor. Our current pastor, Rev. Joseph Jenkins was assigned here in July of 2007.

Designated as an Historic Landmark in 1984

Holy Family Church was built upon donated land by volunteer labor. The black tenant workers, some of whom were freed slaves, would work a full day in the fields and then travel miles to work on the church. A number of the descendants of these hardworking and self-sacrificing families are with us to this very day. Holy Family Church is an official African-American historical site for Prince George's County.

The Prince George's Historic Preservation

Commission designated Holy Family as an historic site in 1984. This decision was based on the following criteria: (1) it had value as part of the cultural characteristics of Prince George's County; (2) it exemplified the religious heritage of the County in the establishment of a rural Roman Catholic mission for the local black community; (3) it embodied the distinctive characteristics of late Victorian ecclesiastical architecture; and (4) it represented an established visual feature in its rural setting.

Looking to the Future

The Knights of St. John, International have had a Commandery at Holy Family for over a century. Back in 2008, we instituted the Fr. Michael C. Kidd Council of the Knights of Columbus and now number 150 plus men as our brother

Knights. Fr. Kidd has regularly won awards in the six service areas from the Maryland State: Council: Church, Community, Family, Youth and the Culture of Life. Our parishioners help to feed the hungry at SOME and have volunteered, gathered supplies, and collected thousands of dollars for Shepherd's Cove Family Shelter. Our Shelter Meal Ministry operates a Parish Food Pantry and helps the poor, not just at Christmas and Thanksgiving, but all year long. We have Special Education teachers who teach weekly in the modular building— promoting inclusion for all our children. Along these lines we began Prince George's Community Resources to help older teens and adults with physical and mental disabilities. We support St. Mary of the Assumption as our regional parochial school. We also maintain a diverse music ministry. As we look to the days ahead, ours is a Parish that will both keep the faith and live it out with justice and charity. Our best days are ahead of us.



Scriptural Relevance to Your Ministry

Hospitality was at the heart of the Jewish scriptures and was highly valued by Jesus. Jesus told stories of feasts and banquets, was very relaxed in the company of public sinners, and experienced the hospitality of many including Martha and Mary, celebrated Passover with his friends, and rescued a newly married couple from poor hospitality.

Anyone who welcomes you, welcomes me; and those who welcome me, welcome the one who sent me (Matthew 10:40).

For I was a stranger and you welcomed me (Matthew 25: 31, 34, 35).

The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve (Mark 10 : 45).

In the parable of the great feast, Jesus invites the poor, crippled, blind and lame to share in the banquet (Luke 14: 14-22).

Love one another with mutual affection. Anticipate one another in showing respect (Romans 12:10).

Do not neglect to show hospitality, for by that means some have entertained angels without knowing it (Hebrews 13:2).



This booklet is prepared as an aid to assist those who volunteer and worship at Holy Family Catholic Parish, Mitchellville, MD. May it make possible a more active lay participation in our faith community.

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