

SAINT COLUMBA USHERS

1. All ushers should arrive at the Church 10-15 minutes prior to Mass time when possible. There should be two ushers at every Mass. Before beginning your duties give a moment to silent prayerful preparation for your ministry.
2. Ushers should make sure the cafeteria and rest room doors are open before Mass begins. Lights in walkway in back of cafeteria should be timed on and off if it is dark, e.g. 7 PM Saturday and 6 PM Sunday in winter.
3. All ushers should be familiar with the defibrillator in the cafeteria and first aid kit in the sacristy.
4. All ushers should position themselves at Church entrances to help greet people as they enter, if no greeters are at the doors.
5. All ushers should seat people when necessary, that is, at times when the Church has little room for seating due to a large attendance, eg., Christmas, Easter Masses.
6. If there is a Children's Liturgy of the Word, the ushers are vital to assist with the movement of children out of the worship space and into the cafeteria. Also ushers may be needed to alert the Children's Liturgy of the Word when the homily is over, if requested.
7. After the celebrant's homily, ushers should go to their designated collection section. At time of collection all ushers will take up the collection from front to back. *Please take note of our 2nd collections. They are announced at the beginning of Mass and are also part of every parishioner's envelope packet. We rely on the ushers to take up the 2nd collection and keep it separate from the first collection.* If there is a second collection, it should be taken up immediately after the first unless otherwise stipulated by celebrant. We have separate baskets with the tag "2nd collection." Usher should take the collection basket to front of altar with offertory family unless there is a second collection.
8. Ushers should consult the bulletin to see the Mass intentions and seek appropriate representatives to bring up the gifts, whenever possible. We also may have a signup sheet in the back of the church, in case somebody wants to be sure to be involved.
9. Ushers can sit with their families, but ideally not until after the collection has been taken.
10. At Communion time, when the Mass is crowded, the ushers should help direct communion if necessary.
11. Ordinarily ushers should make sure that the lights are out and the doors closed after the 5:00 p.m. and 10:30 am. Masses. If windows are open, please check that they are closed after the 5:00 and 10:30 Masses. Ushers should check to make sure rest room and cafeteria lights are out and that the collection basket is brought to the sacristy.

AN EXPERIENCE OF GENUINE CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY

Our deepening awareness of the need to create and maintain a climate of hospitality within our Eucharistic assemblies has certainly given a new importance to the task of ushers/greeters. Ushers have been around for a long time. In many parishes the corps of ushers includes some of the most faithful servants of the parish family. The two basic services they render to the congregation have remained constant and little touched by the liturgical changes of the '70's: they show people to their seats and they take up the collection. While other ministerial groups in parishes are publicly initiated, trained for their special services, and updated through liturgical instruction, ushers are most often allowed to languish as stepchildren of the community: their morale very low, their self—image tarnished, and their ministry little esteemed.

Ushers deserve better. No celebrating community can any longer afford to leave them outside its pastoral concern. In those too rare parishes where the traditional service of ushers has been upgraded to the status of genuine liturgical ministry, where ushers have developed their skills by training and have come to a sense of pride in striving for high standards of excellence in their ministry, their service has become a real blessing to the people and a boost to the quality of worship.

USHERS IN HISTORY

The ministry of usher is deeply rooted in Scripture and tradition. The Book of Chronicles pays particular attention to the part played by the “religious orders” of the time, not only the priests and levites but the orders of cantor and doorkeeper. These doorkeepers are our ushers today. They comprised the guild of gatekeepers, who had the task of “the guarding of the threshold of the tent”. It was evidently very early in their history that these “ushers” were assigned the task of receiving the offerings of the faithful. In the New Testament we find that ushers can see the chief exemplar of their role in John the Baptist. Like him they are heralds of the Christ of God, drawing attention not to themselves but to him. Ushers are signs pointing to the Way. The more immediate ancestors of ushers are to be found in the clerical order of porter instituted in the third century AD. In those early centuries it was the duty of ushers to guard the door of the church against any intruders. They also shared the responsibility for the maintenance of religious order during Mass. In 1972 Pope Paul VI formally abolished the order of porter. The important task of ushering has been given over to the laity. They must become in their persons a joyous invitation to worship. They are charged with becoming an “open door” to holy fellowship.

A MINISTRY TO PEOPLE

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal has opened the ministry of usher to women. These ushers are called to provide a very special service in their exercise of a true liturgical ministry. They are ministers of the Church and servants of the faith-community when it gathers to celebrate the Eucharist. Ushers especially should bring to their ministry a strong sense of community. They are Church-builders; they shoulder a large measure of the responsibility for helping the local Church realize its identity. Therefore, a prerequisite for those aspiring to service

in the role of ushers is a deep sense of being instruments of the community.

Our Sunday assemblies should always have the warmth of a family reunion. Each arrival needs the feeling of “it is good to be here.” The Lord’s Day celebration ought to be a foretaste of better things to come. The warm friendliness and open hospitality of ushers provide an essential ingredient that prepares the congregation for the work of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps more than all other ministers, ushers have to be people-oriented.

Strangers need to be put at ease, visitors need to be welcomed, the handicapped need to experience the love of the community. As servants, their place at the entrance of the church normally allows ushers the privilege of making the first contact with those who gather. Before they see the priest or hear the choir, parishioners come face to face with the ushers. An usher’s warm welcome can set the whole tone for anything that might happen within the hearts of those who gather.

Ushers have the opportunity to make personal contact with individuals even where the celebrant is at one door of the Church before or after Mass, he can greet only a few of those who enter or exit, whereas ushers, at all the doors before and after Mass can meet almost everyone. A welcome smile, a word of kindness or reassurance upon entering the church, a pleasant greeting given when the parish bulletin is placed in the hands of departing worshipers – these could combine to become the most significant personal contacts the Church makes with people on the occasion of their Sunday worship.

This significant dimension of the ushers’ ministry will fail to accomplish its purpose if it is allowed to become a dull routine. No service to people should ever become casual. Ushering is a sacred ministry, and every usher has to stand ready to bring upon its exercise all that God has given by way of nature or of grace

All the ministries of the Church depend upon each other and profit from each other/ With all who participate, the ushers are part of the sacrament and forerunners of the Gospel. The graces mediated by ministers in the sanctuary, the choir, or the pews should find more receptive hearts by reason of other graces mediated by the ushers

Acutely aware of past shortcomings, the Church today is striving earnestly to improve the quality of Sunday worship. All ministers should strive constantly for higher standards of excellence in their ministry.