

Guidelines for MINISTERS OF HOSPITALITY

PROPER MINISTRY NAME: Ministers of Hospitality

Ministers of Hospitality comprise the duties of greeter and usher. These duties may be combined in the role of Ministers of Hospitality or they may be divided into separate roles of Greeter and Usher, depending upon the custom or organization of the parish. One way of involving more people in the parish is to divide the duties.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, we have known the tradition of offering hospitality to the stranger who may be a messenger of God. Ancient cultures knew the importance of hospitality for survival. Today, we recognize the importance of making people feel welcome and helping them to locate what they may need. In the name of evangelization, the best thing we can do in our role of greeter or usher is to make people feel welcome, comfortable and at-home, so that they will experience community and desire to return to worship with us.

Jesus helps us to see the importance of hospitality. He enjoyed meeting and eating with strangers, sinners, and friends who became his followers. He accepted those who were often rejected by others. He did not look down upon others, but invited them to come and see, to follow Him. Several Sacred Scripture passages come to mind. One is the story of the woman who rushed in and washed the feet of Jesus with her tears and anointed them with perfume while the actual host had not offered the customary gesture of washing guests' feet. Then there are the stories of Jesus providing food for those who came to hear him preach. He multiplied the loaves and fish and directed the disciples to bring what they could gather, and he told them to feed the people. The story of the Good Samaritan is a classic story of a stranger taking care of another stranger who had fallen victim to thieves.

We offer hospitality when we greet someone, register someone as a new parishioner, provide funeral dinners and other parish celebrations that provide food, spiritual and social nourishment. We also introduce catechumens and candidates to our parish family, liturgies, and activities.

A visit to our parish is the first impression or experience people will have of our parish. Will they feel welcome? Will they be helped to find what they need such as the restroom, an available seat, a reserved seat for special liturgies, the proper time to seek a seat if they have arrived late? We need friendly people to serve as greeters who welcome everyone warmly as well as those they know well. We need knowledgeable ministers to direct people movement, collections and traffic, to handle emergencies, to assist the handicapped and to provide first aid, as well as to pass out worship aids and bulletins.

A welcoming, friendly, accepting and outgoing personality is desirable for greeters. A friendly, trustworthy, knowledgeable, and polite but directive personality is desirable for ushering.

ELIGIBILITY

Men, women, families and children may assist with the duties of Ministers of Hospitality. Adult Ministers of Hospitality should be registered members of the parish. At times, the team of greeters could be temporarily augmented with special groups such as the youth, special needs members, RCIA candidates, Knights of Columbus, to name only a few.

Individuals need to be friendly, caring, and giving by nature. They need to be persons of good Christian witness and active in the sacramental life of the Church.

ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES

Greeters welcome, offer helpful information as needed, and pass out materials, as needed. Ushers assist with seating, collection, communion lines, emergencies, the elderly, the handicapped, and first aid needs, and distribute literature, as needed.

FORMATION and TRAINING

It is the responsibility of the designated pastoral leader to train suitable candidates to become Hospitality Ministers and to provide those ministers with a timely ministry schedule. This training may be done in collaboration with staff and/or parish Worship Commission members.

Ministers of Hospitality must be willing to enter initial and ongoing formation and be responsible for their scheduled duties. They may need to provide a substitute in their absence, but they may not ask someone who is already scheduled for another liturgical ministry the same day.

COMMISSIONING

Upon the appropriate initial formation and discernment for this ministry, the person is appointed as a Minister of Hospitality, using the appropriate ritual. They are commissioned at a public ceremony (in the midst of the Sunday assembly) for a period of three years. They may be re-commissioned after a suitable period of discernment and opportunity for on-going formation.

SPECIFIC NORMS

1. *Hospitality and Gathering* ... Ministers of Hospitality provide visitors with their first impression of the parish community. Their very presence and manner set the tone. They should dress appropriately for the celebration of liturgy which reflects the dignity of their ministry and solemn nature of the liturgy. They should arrive earlier than the congregation to assist with the comfort of the environment. The parish leadership should specify duties for any given liturgy. Some may assist with set up, straightening worship aids, setting out collection baskets, recruiting gift bearers, or other special duties. They should be attentive to the needs of the elderly, handicapped, and parents with young children. Their attitude, appearance, and friendliness provide the good news of God's welcome and his love for all.
2. *Hospitality and Liturgy* ... Ministers of Hospitality should be trained in the basic outline of the liturgy and be familiar with the special movements and needs of celebrations like the Sacred Paschal Triduum, Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion, funeral rites etc. They should know the actions of the liturgy and respect this by not seating late arrivals during the readings or the Eucharistic Prayer, for example. They should give good example by fully participating in the liturgy by singing the hymns and praying the responses and listening to the homily. They should assist the action of the assembly by instructing and directing them, as necessary.
3. *Hospitality and Departing* ... At the end of the liturgy, we are sent to love and serve the Lord. Ministers of Hospitality should offer friendly farewells and invite people to come back again. After the congregation has departed, they may be assigned other duties, as assigned by the parish leadership.
4. *Hospitality and Special Circumstances* ... Ministers of Hospitality must be trained to handle emergency situations, if specified by the parish leadership. All ministers should know where to find the first aid kit, wheelchairs and medical supplies.

ATTIRE and DECORUM

One should avoid attracting attention to oneself when serving. For example, clothing should be neat and not flashy. Ministers of Hospitality should be easily identifiable. The parish leadership will determine how best to identify the ministers.

RESOURCES

1. Ferrell, Karie and Paul Turner. *Guide for Ushers and Greeters: The Liturgical Ministry Series*. Liturgy Training Publications, 2008.
2. *Training for Hospitality: The Ministry of Ushers and Greeters*. The Liturgical Press. [Visual Media]
3. Comiskey, James A. *The Ministry of Hospitality*. The Liturgical Press, 1989, 2004.

GIRM REFERENCES

The following paragraphs of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal, Third Edition* provide further information with respect to this ministry ... GIRM #105.