

Hospitality Ministry Guidelines as of January 6, 2014. *Revised February 5*

Documentation

Rule of St. Benedict and Matthew 25:35 “All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: *I was a stranger and you welcomed me.*”

Romans 15:7 “Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God.”

Constitution on Sacred Liturgy #14 “The Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations called for by the very nature of the liturgy...For it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit...”
29 “Consequently, they must all be deeply imbued with the spirit of the liturgy, in the measure proper to each one, and they must be trained to perform their functions in a correct and orderly manner.”

General Instruction of the Roman Missal #111 “There should be harmony and diligence among all those involved in the effective preparation of each liturgical celebration in accordance with the Missal and other liturgical books, both as regards the rites and as regards the pastoral...aspects.”

Book of Blessings #1858 “In the body of Christ there exists a wonderful variety of ministries...ushers provide welcome and dignified order to the celebration...”

Mother Teresa: “Every person is Jesus in disguise.”
(Something from San Bernardino, from Bishop Barnes?)

Introduction

The ministry of Hospitality is the ministry in which all the baptized are called to welcome one another in all aspects of daily living. “Jesus is our model for hospitality. He had a way of welcoming in his ministry that put people at ease and engaged them to listen to his message. He was also the guest at the homes of his followers. He was very sensitive to where he felt welcomed when he came into their homes and at times challenged their spirit of hospitality if he found it lacking.” *Celebrations of Installation and Recognition CCCB*

Ushers and Greeters are among those ministers needed for our celebration of Sunday, the Day of the Lord, the day when all the faithful gather together to offer God great praise and enter into the gift of Christ’s own Paschal Mystery. Although they will primarily serve the Sunday liturgy, they are also called on to assist at other special liturgical celebrations through the year, including periodic stational liturgies with the Bishop.

The following will serve as guidelines for those who serve as Ushers and Greeters in the parishes and other locations in the Diocese of San Bernardino where and when their ministry is needed.

Qualities and Spirituality of Ushers and Greeters

The parish community calls forth those uniquely gifted to serve as these special Ministers of Hospitality. They come to their ministry filled with the humility of those who know that they are called to be the face of Christ, receiving each guest as if he or she were Christ. They will represent the diverse languages, cultures, ages, social and ethnic backgrounds and variety of vocations of the community served.

Those called to serve love the liturgy and are willing to learn more about it and are dedicated to participating in it fully and actively themselves. Hospitality ministers are **ideally** people-oriented, have the charisma of being naturally hospitable, and exhibit the ability to anticipate and discern needs - physical and spiritual. They **are thrive to be?** warm, welcoming, courteous and friendly, and **to be** always ready to offer a welcoming and appropriate assistance to everybody - child or elder, friend or stranger, rich or poor. They never call attention to self, always dress modestly, and act with dignity and reverence when moving around the assembly and altar area. They will need to be prudent, trustworthy, and knowledgeable about what is going on in the parish and know the Parish Staff . They are willing to be part of a team. They are persons of prayer and the first sign of the presence of Jesus Christ who welcomes all at his table. **(full section needs to be adjusted to the will to be...)**

Duties and Responsibilities

The Parish: The parish calls forth, trains, forms and empowers Ministers of Hospitality (Ushers and Greeters) for

this ministry. The Diocesan Office of Worship periodically offers Vicariate Hospitality Ministry formation and training workshops to assist the Parish in this regard. Parishes may also wish to arrange for someone to come to an individual parish or a cluster of parishes. Call the Office of Worship for possible presenters.

The Parish needs to assure that the unique demands of the particular church building are taken into consideration. This is especially important with regards to Emergency Preparedness. ¹

It is also helpful to appoint **either a Bilingual Coordinator or two coordinators representing the languages of the Sunday Masses celebrated each Sunday who would work/help each other for all the Masses.** The Coordinator may also work with the Pastor and Liturgy Committee to establish guidelines and job descriptions for individual responsibilities during the Masses as well as emergency guidelines. Seasonal retreats, opportunities for fellowship, and periodic updates and reminders are also helpful as the ministry and its responsibilities evolve over time. The retreats can be inclusive of all liturgical ministers. The parish may also provide name tags.

The Parish encourages the ministers to an awareness that everyone comes to participate fully in the Mass. This involves more than people have traditionally understood. *“We want them to form a community by visiting with their friends in faith before and after the service. We want them to join in the singing and to pay full attention to the proclamation of the scriptures. We want everyone to participate: the priest, the deacon, the ministers, the servers, the choir, the people — and the Ushers... Ushers and greeters are hosts who put a face onto the parish. They welcome those who arrive and begin the process forming them as a worshipping body.”* ²

The Minister:

Honor your assigned date & time to serve. Arrange for a substitute when unable to serve at assigned Mass.

Come to Mass as one who has prayed at home and is ready to pray at Mass. Continue to grow in your understanding of the Mass. (*See Bibliography*) Take advantage of formation and training, as possible, through the parish and Diocese.

Know emergency procedures and be prepared to put them into use.

Before Mass

Prayer of Preparation Heavenly Father, you sent your Son as a model for hospitality & ministry. May I have the courage to walk in his ways & serve your people. Prepare my heart to love all who come through the door today. Give me eyes to see their needs & their gifts, & grace to respond wisely to each situation. I ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Arrive at least 20 minutes early to prepare the church and to affirm your responsibilities for the specific Mass in which you are serving. Determine if any areas within the church need to be reserved or if anything special is going on that requires adjustments to normal procedures. Be graciously flexible and accommodating. Always wear a name tag .

Be attentive to people-needs. Welcome all warmly as they enter the church. Provide hymnals or worship aids as needed. Be ready to receive donations for the food pantry or direct people to restrooms. Assure that someone is designated to assist persons with disabilities and families with small children. Honor their seating preferences and note where they sit, in order to respond effectively and efficiently in case of any emergency. If it seems appropriate, ask whether or not they need to have communion brought to them. Seat others as needed or as is the custom in the parish. All these actions can help to form community.

Choose a diversity of people, over time, to carry the gifts of Bread and Wine, offering the opportunity to the ones who are not usually chosen.

Know what to do with latecomers. Be aware of procedures for overflow seating. Know where people can and cannot safely stand if there are no seats available.

During the Mass

Participate yourself as fully as possible while also attending to your ministerial duties as needed. Posture, gesture, prayer responses are the same as the rest of the assembly as much as possible. Try to be inconspicuous; do not

¹ See Bibliography/Resources Section of these guidelines.

² Guide for Ushers and Greeters. LTP Used with permission.

stand on the sides or at the front. Sit when you can. Stay attentive to people movements and gestures, noticing things out of the ordinary that may be happening. *“Disturbances are bound to happen. Your help may be needed. When in doubt, act charitably. The way you act should be consistent with the message people hear in the scripture: Love one another, as God has loved you.”*³

Know the paths of processions. Seat people when it does not interrupt the Mass. For example, try not to invite people to find a seat as the readings are proclaimed. Ask them kindly to wait until people stand for the Gospel Acclamation (Alleluia). Assist the people taking up the gifts, take up the collection quickly and reverently and have it ready for the offertory procession. Be mindful that the collection has a spiritual significance. *“In offering their gifts, people are offering themselves. The gifts of bread and wine will be transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ, and the people will be transformed as well...the collection of the gifts is a prelude to what people will do during the Eucharistic Prayer.”*⁴

During the Communion Rite, guide the assembly prudently and gently into joining the communion procession, as needed, careful to ensure that the flow of the procession is not obstructed. Be attentive to those who may need special assistance.

After Mass

Be ready and in place to distribute the weekly bulletin while saying good-bye and wishing all well for their day/week. If bidding farewell to newcomers, graciously invite them to return the following week for services. Once the church is cleared, put the church in order for the next celebration of the liturgy.

*“In concrete terms, being hospitable means learning people’s names and profession, taking care of their simplest needs, and thinking well of them, no matter what their reputation. Yes, it means opening the door, but it also assumes you know what to do once the guest comes inside. It means being aware of your own tendencies to sin, to make mistakes, and to be careless, so that you do not consider yourself above your guest and you can thus receive every visitor as you would receive Christ.”*⁵

Bibliography/Resources

An Additional Prayer Open me, Lord, to your constant presence. Make me prayerful, patient, helpful and understanding. Send forth your Spirit upon me and those who gather in your name, so that we may radiate the joy that your Gospel brings. Fill us with your merciful love, with insights into hearts hungering for welcome, with graciousness to accept the treasures everyone bears, & with courage to share the gifts that you have given us. Grant, O Lord, that we may be glad of heart for being together and for having encountered your Son in one another, so that no one will ever be a stranger in your Church, but only guests – sisters and brothers – until we share eternal hospitality with you & the angels and saints forever. Amen. Celebrations of Installation and Recognition CCCB

Order of Blessing for Ushers and Greeters Please see the **Book of Blessings**, Chapter 62, for commissioning that may take place during Mass or a Liturgy of the Word.

Guide for Ushers and Greeters Manual Para Ministros de la Hospitalidad Karie Ferrell and Paul Turner. Liturgy Training Publications. This resource, [available in English and Spanish](#), is the most current and comprehensive of all available resources on this ministry. Both language versions include Prayer of Preparation for Ministers of Hospitality. Q & A section particularly helpful. Highly recommended.

The Ministry of Hospitality El Ministro de la Hospitalidad James A. Comiskey The Liturgical Press Another pastoral and practical guide to parish hospitality. [Available in English and Spanish](#)

Introduction to the Order of Mass: A Pastoral Resource of the Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy. USCCB 2003 ISBN 1-57455-544-8

³ ibid

⁴ ibid

⁵ ibid

At Home with the Word: Sunday Scriptures and Scripture Insights Palabra de Dios Liturgy Training Publications. Available in English and Spanish. This annual booklet contains the full text of all the readings for Sunday (including the Psalm), along with insights about the readings from scripture scholars, questions for reflection and discussion, and suggestions for action steps. A wonderful resource for deepening liturgical spirituality and helping ministers to enter into Sunday Mass more fully prepared to participate.

Emergency Procedures for Catholic Parishes, Missions and Organizations: This instructional manual has been provided to each parish, with additional information on emergency preparedness, response and recovery. Additional copies, including information on requisite emergency training courses, are available from the Parish Office or Emergency Operations Collaborative (EOC) Ministry Program at the Diocesan Pastoral Center.

APPENDIX

Emergency Preparedness Suggestions *(Please share with Parish Leadership)*

BE PREPARED!

- Conduct and develop an emergency-ready assessment of the church and building, including the sacristy and immediate outer areas. Fire, earthquake, heart attacks, intruders, are more “common,” but not inclusive of, all emergencies. Periodically review and update this assessment.
- Develop and periodically rehearse a plan of action to evacuate people in an orderly manner. The scheduling of an evacuation drill once a year at Sunday Masses would be extremely helpful.
- Planning meetings with staff and liturgical and other parish leadership are recommended to establish a line of communication/responsibility that would readily be put into effect in the case of an emergency at any Vigil/Sunday Mass or other large liturgy celebrated in the Church. Before any liturgy begins, key people will know what this line of communication is for that particular liturgy. See **Duties and Responsibilities: Before Mass** above in **Hospitality Ministry Guidelines**. This defined line of communication will include as many as possible who are bilingual, and/or monolingual in the language of the particular Mass. This “chain of command” may need to be unique for each liturgy/Mass time and will be especially important during a serious emergency or disturbance. Once the person(s) best qualified for taking on particular responsibilities are identified, the parish will strive to provide any needed training.
- In addition to an annual Evacuation Drill at all Sunday Masses, the parishioners need to be provided with emergency preparedness information as well. It will be most helpful to prepare the people themselves to be ready to act effectively should an actual emergency occur.
- Hospitality Ministers need to learn charts, floor plans and flow diagrams; where emergency exits, fire extinguishers and First Aid Kits are located; the locations of turn-offs for gas, water, and electricity and how to turn them off. Instructions need to be available near these locations, in English and Spanish.
- An **Emergency Contact List** with phone numbers is to be posted in more than one designated location in and near the church building, for emergency services: Fire; Police, Ambulance, Hospital.
- Ministers need to note parishioners who are medical or emergency personnel as they come in (Police, Sheriff, Doctor, Nurse, Fire Fighter, etc.). It would be particularly helpful to periodically ask at Sunday Liturgy for those who are emergency personnel to come forward after Mass to meet the Presider and Hospitality Ministers. Once they are known, this request can be made less frequently.
- Be ready to act during unexpected situations: people with emotional problems, anger, aggressive behavior, etc., persons feeling sick, and persons apparently disturbed under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Make an effort to participate in training and simulations of emergency situations.
- All things considered, it will be the responsibility of each parish to determine the exact details and specific action plan, guidelines, procedures and persons responsible for carrying out an effective emergency response for each Sunday Liturgy, or other large parish liturgies or liturgies with the Bishop.
- There is simply NO substitute for adequate preparation before any incident or situation occurs.

Line of Communication (Chain of Command) as needed and keeping in mind the unique event and circumstances. There will be times during a liturgical celebration when it will not be possible or even necessary for the Presider to respond to certain emergencies. This means that others in the line of communication will need to step forward and take responsibility (Hopefully, all hospitality ministers will be willing to learn, as noted above, where the emergency lists/numbers are posted, who the emergency personnel in the assembly are, how to check out the fire alarm, where flashlights/light sticks are located, how to assist with orderly evacuation, etc.

Three possibilities for Chain of Command

1. Presider, Deacon, Head Usher, Other Ushers, Reader, Music Minister, Audio Visual person
2. (Presider) MC, Deacon, Head Usher, Other Ushers, Reader, Music Minister
3. Head Usher, Reader, Other Ushers, Music Minister

There may also be certain situations when a qualified member from the assembly will step forward and effectively take leadership. Common sense will dictate when this is appropriate and helpful.

Please see the Manual “Emergency Procedures for Catholic Parishes, Missions and Organizations,” available through the parish or Ann Marie Galant, Disaster Preparation and Response Director at the Diocesan Pastoral Center: 909-475-5441, for more thorough and detailed information.

Possible Questions and Recommendations for Emergency Preparedness in Certain Situations

1. **What should I do if incense (or something not fire-related) sets off a fire alarm in the church?** For each gathering some hospitality ministers need to know the location of the fire alarm and the procedure for checking it to determine whether or not it is a false alarm. If it is determined that it is a false alarm, they need to know and follow the procedure for turning it off. If it is not a false alarm, the procedures for what to do in case of fire are to be followed: Presiding Priest will normally give strong direction from the microphone, with calmness and authority, that evacuation is necessary. Ushers and/or other designated persons will stand at the exits as people leave through nearest exit.
Attend to disable persons as needed. Once all are out of the building, continue to move people away from the building. Two designated Ushers will report to the Pastor for further instructions once all have been cleared out of and away from the building. Call 911 with appropriate information, including address of the church.
2. **What should I do if someone has a medical emergency?** Remain calm. As possible, follow the chain of command. Contact 911 emergency services, if needed. Contact someone who is trained in First Aid/CPR (**Emergency Contact List** – see above). Disperse crowd as needed; if 911 is called, send someone outside to direct the emergency team.
3. **How do I respond to disturbances and distraught individuals?** This often requires special training and knowledge. The manual, “*Emergency Procedures for Catholic Parishes, Missions and Organizations*”, mentioned above, will be helpful as will resources from County Mental Health Services, which can indicate how to approach people who may actually be mentally ill, deeply fearful and/or under the influence of drugs/alcohol. Hopefully, your **Emergency Contact List** will include professions who have been trained to respond appropriately. In the absence of such a person, and if safely able, escort the person outside, talk/listen as needed, and keep an eye on the person. Call 911 if necessary. Ushers should never act alone when dealing with disturbances or distraught individuals.
4. **What do I do if I become aware that a weapon has been brought into the church?** Call 911 immediately and follow their instructions.

Again, there is simply NO substitute for adequate preparation before any incident or situation occurs.

God of Glory, your beloved Son has shown us that true worship comes from humble and contrite hearts. Bless our brothers and sisters who have responded to the needs of our parish and wish to commit themselves to your service as ushers and ministers of hospitality. Grant that their ministry may be fruitful and that together with them our worship may be pleasing in your sight, through Christ our Lord. Amen
from Blessing for Ushers/Ministers of Hospitality, Book of Blessings