



Holy Trinity Catholic Church
MINISTRY OF HOSPITALITY/USHER
GUIDELINES



The Holy Trinity Parish Community is grateful for your generosity and commitment to serving as a Minister of Hospitality (MOH) (previously referred to as Usher) at our parish.

What you do is not simply a job, but a gift of service. You have the opportunity to enhance your own and other's experience of the Liturgy through your gracious contributions each week.

As a Minister of Hospitality, you will contribute to the feeling of hospitality for all who attend Mass at Holy Trinity Catholic Church, whether they are long-standing parish members, those on business trips, or visitors/tourists visiting our community.

(Revised 07/28/06)

Historical Background:

The Ministry of Hospitality (previously known as “usher”) has been part of the Jewish-Christian tradition for a millennia.

“Keepers of the Threshold” manned the entrance to the area of worship and collected money offerings from the people (2 Kings 22:4). “Guardians of the Threshold” (1 Chron 9:22) and “gate-keepers of the camp” (1 Chron 9:18) undertook service of welcome and security. Some stood guard over the tent of the Lord. Others guarded the religious treasures, sacred utensils, furniture and choice and purchase of substances used in worship (flour, wine, oil, incense and spices), made cakes and bread, and prepared the spice mixture.

In early Christian era, doorkeepers or porters served the church in Rome and Syria. In the medieval church, the role of porter was one of four minor orders which St. Thomas Aquinas described as carrying out some of the original roles of deacons in the church.

The minor order of porter was conferred on all those seeking ordination to the priesthood, until Pope Paul VI suppressed all the minor orders in 1972. Even though seminarians were ordained as porters, the actual ministry was usually carried out in parishes by laymen who served as ushers. For generations, ushers have assisted parish worship by welcoming people, helping them find seats in church, taking up the offertory, and passing out parish bulletins. Many ushers had been serving in their role for decades before Vatican II and continued as ushers as the liturgical reforms were implemented.

Hospitality has long been a part of the Christian tradition (e.g. in caring for the sick and feeble, providing almshouses and orphanages for the destitute, refuges for pilgrims and travelers).

General Information:

Hospitality is at the basis of the MOH's ministry. The Minister of Hospitality (henceforth referred to as **MOH**) is often the first person whom worshippers meet when they arrive at a church. The MOH has the opportunity and the responsibility to represent the rest of the assembly in offering hospitality. The MOH's smile reflects the sincerity of the welcome from the community. This welcome needs to continue to be offered even though some may ignore or refuse help from the greeter.

Expectations: MOH's are expected to:

- Dress in the "**Sunday Best**" type of clothing and apparel.
- Join in the liturgy as part of the worshipping assembly!
- During the Sign of Peace, be especially alert to the presence of newcomers or visitors and extend a greeting to them.
- Be conscious of those with a physical disability or who cannot join the Communion procession. In an inconspicuous way, bring their location to the attention of a minister of Communion.
- Be prepared for emergencies: know the position of the fire extinguisher; locations of fire exits; how and where to activate emergency lighting, a telephone to contact 911 in a medical emergency, etc.
- If you will not be at your usual Mass, please let the head usher know the week before so they can find someone else to replace you.

Duties and Responsibilities:

Before the Liturgy

- Arrive at least 20 minutes before the Mass starts.
- Ensure you are easily identifiable (e.g. by name tag, etc)).
- Check that the welcoming space is clean and orderly, the church lights are on, and the entry/exit doors are opened.
- As people enter the church, identify a family or group of individuals (3 or 4 people) that would be willing to bring the gifts forward at the Offertory. The gift bearers should be advised briefly when to come to the back of the church and how to present the gifts.
- Invite the required number of people to assist in presenting the gifts to the presider and/or deacon during the Mass.
- Distribute any material needed in the liturgy and/or bulletins after the Mass.
- Greet people and introduce new parishioners or visitors to one or two familiar members.

During the Liturgy

- Escort latecomers to any available (open) pew space(s). Pull out the maroon chairs and place them in the back row, as needed.

- If the readings have begun, ask latecomers to wait at the back of the church until after all the readings are read and then assist them to find seats. Try to do this with as much speed and little distraction as you can manage, all the time treating them with reverence and respect.
- If there is a children's Liturgy of the Word, assist by opening doors and helping children who might be unsure of the venue or how to return to their families.
- The collection of money from the faithful is not just a practical matter designed to meet the financial needs of the parish, but as an integral part of the liturgy: it is their gift to meet the needs of the pastor and the church.
- During the Prayers of the Faithful, the MOHs should unobtrusively position themselves in the back of the Church, ready to distribute the collection baskets after the Presider's Closing Prayer. After the Closing Prayer, the MOHs should then assume their designated places, in the center and side aisles at the back of the church. Each minister should have the appropriate number of wicker baskets in hand and proceed down the center and side aisles immediately after everyone is seated.
- At the foot of the Altar, the MOHs should reverently bow their heads in unison, and then give one basket to the first person in each front pew. The ministers should then remain at the outer edges of pews and continue this process of circulating the collection baskets until completed. While the baskets are circulating through the pews, the MOHs should make themselves available in order to assist with any discontinuity in basket circulation.

- After the collection is completed, the MOHs should quickly consolidate the money into one larger, wicker baskets for the Presentation of the Gifts.
- Assist in forming the procession for the presentation of the gifts at the back of the church near the baptismal font. Insure the group of gift bearers is lead to the sanctuary steps by altar servers.
- After the collection is completed and emptied into a larger, wicker basket, the gift bearers will be given the bread, wine and the collection basket to be presented to the Presider or deacon and escorted by altar server(s).
- The first two gift bearers should present the gifts to the Presider or deacon then step aside so that the remaining gift bearers can step forward. The collection basket(s) should be presented first.
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- After the presentation of the gifts, all will bow their heads respectfully in unison toward the altar and then slowly return to their seats.
- At Communion, the MOHs should again position themselves side-by-side in the back of church in the center and side aisle. It is important to note the appropriate timing and maintain a proper pace as they approach the altar.

- When the priest turns to the first Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion and presents the wine to him/her, the MOHs should proceed down the center and side aisles, bow their heads in unison toward the altar, and position themselves next to the edge of the first pew. Parishioners in the front pews are then invited to communion as soon as it is obvious that the priest and Eucharistic minister are about to come around the altar to distribute communion to the assembly.
- Proceed one pew at a time towards the back of the church inviting parishioners in each pew to communion. Remember to invite parishioners sitting along the back wall to communion.
- MOHs must be alert to identify those parishioners who, due to medical or other reason(s) are unable to come forward to receive communion. In such instances, the MOH will be responsible for identifying the parishioner(s) to a communion minister to insure they receive communion.
- The ministers of hospitality should be the last in line to receive Communion.

After the Liturgy

- Hand out bulletins as people leave and say a word of appropriate farewell.
- Invite people to stay for tea/coffee and/or donuts, when appropriate and guide them to the area.
- Ensure the Mass' offertory has been collected from the sanctuary area and stored in a safe place.
- Straighten/tidy up the worship space and church foyer.

- Check that the welcoming space is clean and orderly.
- If it is the last Mass of the day: turn off sound system; shut off the interior church lights; entry/exit doors are closed and locked, etc.
- Insure the Sacristy door is close and locked.

Scriptural Relevance:

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).*

Some Theological Considerations:

- Hospitality plays a vital role in creating a sense of community for worship. A person who feels welcomed and valued is more likely to enter wholeheartedly into the celebration of the liturgy and to return as a member of the parish community. A friendly and welcoming MOH can make God's love apparent to people as they arrive.

- Christ is present in a four-fold way in the Eucharist:
 - (1) In the meal where he gives us his body and blood;
 - (2) In the proclaimed Word of God;
 - (3) In the priest as presider; and
 - (4) In the assembled persons at the ceremony.

- When the people gather on Sundays for the Mass, it is not as a group of people praying individually, but rather as a group involved as a community of worshippers. The faithful pray together. It is their prayer. Hospitality is the first ministry of those gathering to celebrate communal prayer.

- Welcomers take the time and effort to be attentive to those who are gathering by acknowledging their presence, speaking to them, introducing people to one another. This personal contact helps each person, especially newcomers or visitors, feel welcome.

- The essence of hospitality is the quality of "being present." The invitation to relationship can transform a group of individuals into a dynamic community.

- Everything the people do in a parish (e.g., every gathering that occurs) affects the formation, growth or decline of the community. The faithful form one another in the ways they treat one another as members of the People of God. New growth happens, new things are born, in a parish where a hospitality ministry, that treats people as guests at family tables, is nurtured.
- Although all of the assembled are responsible for hospitality, MOHs are called to set an example for the assembly.
- The model for an understanding of the liturgical space is not that of a theatre or public hall, but closer to that of a home; a place characterized by warmth, friendship and hospitality; a place where all are equal before God; a place where dialogue and interaction are encouraged.
- Though Christ is the host of the liturgy, the MOH's role is that of Christ's hands and feet, the living Body of Christ, someone whose presence, conversation and actions speak a genuine desire that all who come to the liturgical event enjoy their time together.