



## **Ave Maria Catholic Church**

### **The Hospitality Ministry (Usher) Program**

*For the Training and Development of  
Our Parish Hospitality Ministers*

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**March 1, 2008**

“What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me? the psalmist asked (Ps. 116:12) It’s a question that every follower of God does well to ponder. God never demands that we pay Him vows. But doesn’t it seem reasonable that if we give gifts to friends and associates as tokens of appreciation, we ought to consider tangible ways to say thanks to God, in light of “all His benefits”?”

### **Hospitality Minister Procedures**

A Hospitality Minister is a recognized person of God who serves the Church by enhancing the worship service by carrying out their duties. As a representative of the church, they must be a member or at least a regular attendee and adherent in submission to the leadership of the church. They provide a friendly, cheerful greeting to all those who pass through and implements the instructions, policies, and procedures promulgated by the Pastor.

#### **GENERAL INFORMATION:**

1. The Ministry of Hospitality is a vital part of our church ministry. Ministers of Hospitality represent the church in a very visible way and help set the tone in preparation for the worship service, as well as assist with the smooth operation before, during, and after the Mass. With this in mind, Hospitality Ministers are asked to come prepared to minister in each and every service.
2. While people enter the church, Ministers of Hospitality should give a warm and welcoming greeting, calling people by name when/if possible, and help them with seating once the Sanctuary begins to fill up to capacity. This may include asking people who sit near the aisles to move in toward the center of the section when others come and need to be seated. It also involves being aware of where the vacant seats are within a particular section.
3. The entire Mass’ offering will be gathered from the front to the rear. Ministers of Hospitality in the church will walk together down the center aisle (at the appropriate time during the Prayers of the Faithful), and stand for the prayer adjacent to the first pews, and after the prayers conclusion and “Amen”, begin to pass the collection baskets throughout the pews.
4. The encouragement of Ministers of Hospitality who are presently serving, as well as the recruitment of future ministers is a responsibility that can be shared by all of those presently serving. Ministers of Hospitality should take time to become acquainted with other ministers with whom they are serving and always be on the lookout for men and women who would be capable of serving, asking them to pray about it, and receiving permission for their name to be given to one of the lead Hospitality Ministers(s).

5. The dress requirements for the Ministry of Hospitality may at times seem inconvenient or perhaps uncomfortable. However, not only does it add dignity to the ministry, but also provides unity as well as less of a distraction to people who are gathering to worship. A good rule of thumb: If you wouldn't wear the attire to your grandmother's house or out to a nice dinner, don't wear it to church! Remember to show the appropriate and due dignity and respect to the Lord.
6. It is the church's sincere hope and prayer that the parish possesses an adequate number of Hospitality Ministers. Each of these will consist of men and women who are committed to this ministry. This will require a certain level of discipline and determination to be faithful to the Lord and His church. Each Hospitality Minister should be diligent to pray and believe that the steps that the strengthening of this ministry will be effective, with the result of great blessing for the entire congregation that gathers at our church.
7. If you are scheduled to be a Hospitality Minister at a Mass and are unable to, you are asked to please locate a replacement before the Mass.

### **Hospitality Minister Procedures**

#### **BEFORE MASS:**

1. Arrive 15 minutes before the Mass begins.
2. Please wear the appropriate Hospitality Minister name tag to easily identify you as a Hospitality Minister to the assembly.
3. Check with the Sacristan for announcements regarding special instructions or collections peculiar to that Mass (e.g., are there any handouts to be distributed to the gathering before the Mass begins, etc).
4. Arrange the offertory baskets in preparation for the Mass' collection.
5. Enthusiastically greet parishioners and visitors as they enter with

a smile, kindly say "Hello," "Welcome," "Glad you are here," etc. Greet worshipers pleasantly, but save conversations for after the Mass. Voices in the narthex create a disturbance from those in the church praying, waiting for reconciliation, and/or preparing for the Mass.

6. Locate and ask a family or couple to take up the offertory gifts.
7. The altar servers will light the altar candles (5-10 minutes before the Mass). If you notice that the altar candles are not lit, please notify one of the altar servers to complete this task.

#### **DURING MASS:**

1. Have two ministers stand to observe the congregation for any assistance.
2. Request that latecomers wait until one of the pauses between parts of the Mass to go to their seats:
  - between the "Opening Prayer" and "First Reading",
  - between the "First Reading" and the "Responsorial Psalm",
  - between the "Responsorial Psalm" and "Second Reading",
  - between the "Second Reading", and
  - the "Gospel."

This helps to eliminate unnecessary distractions during the proclamations of the Mass.

3. Make sure that all are seated comfortably.
4. Monitor the sacristy and priest vestries by keeping the doors closed. Assist people with making emergency phone calls, if/as necessary.
5. Sanctuary doors should remain closed once the Mass begins, unless absolutely necessary (e.g., there is an overflow in the narthex).
6. Insure that the numbers for Mass Attendance are annotated.

### **CREED TIME:**

1. When the Creed ends and the Prayers of the Faithful are to begin, move into position for taking the Collection (e.g., at the aisle end of the front two pews). Lower your head and look at your feet while bowing. Wait for the Prayers of the Faithful are finished and everyone has said, “Amen”, before starting the collection.
2. Have a minimum of 2 people per Mass collection, one per basket. Any special (subsequent) collections should immediately follow the first; unless expressly directed by the Presider.
3. After the congregation is seated, wait for an announcement about the second collection, then process to the sanctuary and bow to the altar. Lower your head and look at your feet while bowing. Note, a second collection may be taken after communion, at the discretion/direction of the presider.
4. Smile, sing, and have a pleasant presence as you assist with moving the collection baskets up and down the aisles.
5. At least two Hospitality Ministers will transfer the monies from the different collection baskets into one, larger collection basket, which will be presented and placed near (to the right side of/near the Ambo) the altar during the Presentation of the Gifts. One of the Hospitality Ministers should return all the empty smaller collection baskets to the back table(s).
6. One of the Hospitality Ministers assists the family to prepare to bring up the gifts and collection. Please hand the gifts to each member: the bowl filled with unconsecrated hosts and the flagon of wine. If necessary, be prepared to instruct where and how to present the gifts to the Priest and Deacon; in the event the family is not familiar with the procedures at Our Lady of Guadalupe.

### **COMMUNION RITE:**

1. After the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHCs) have received communion and are moving to their respective communion positions, move to the front of the church and stand in the center aisle adjacent to the first two pews. When the communion song starts and the appropriate communion ministers are in place, starting with the first pews, have the people process

out toward the center aisle and up to in front of the altar (to a communion station where the priest or an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (EMHC) is distributing communion).

2. Alert the EMHCs to the locations of disabled parishioners, who wish to receive communion in their seat(s).
3. Watch for shorter communion lines and gently ask and motion people to go to another station.
4. If you observe a parishioner walking back to their assigned pew carrying a consecrated host (versus consuming it), promptly, *but politely*, contact them and ask them to consume the host. Inform the presider of this incident after the Mass in private.
5. The Hospitality Ministers and members of the Choir are the first or last to receive communion.
6. Immediately after the Mass, take the collection baskets from the sanctuary to the appropriate location to place the monies into the approved deposit location. [Please ensure that we follow the Diocese’s policies; e.g., such handling of monies for deposit requires a minimum of two people.]

### **AFTER MASS:**

1. Pass out the church’s bulletins in the hallway. Say “Goodbye” to the congregation with “Thanks for coming,” “Have a nice weekend.”, “Come again!”, “See you soon!”, etc.
2. Hospitality Ministers should peruse the nave of the church and look for trash, lost, and found articles.
3. Hospitality Ministers should straighten up/re-organize the pews and make sure they are presentable for the next Mass.
4. Return extra bulletins to the sacristy for safekeeping.
5. Make sure that exterior doors are closed and secured after the assembly has left.

6. Check the rest rooms to be sure there are no stragglers hanging around in the bathrooms or other meeting areas.
7. Insure that the altar servers have extinguished the altar and Paschal candles.
8. Close any open windows and doors.

### **REMINDERS**

1. Please reserve the use of the church telephones for emergencies only. Do not hesitate to call the police or fire department immediately when there is a valid need (such as a medical emergency, fire, disturbance, etc.).  
  
Wear your “Sunday best”.
2. Remember the emergency evacuation procedures. Become familiar with your nearest available emergency exits, fire extinguishers, and the location of the posted evacuation procedures and route.
3. In case of emergencies, those in wheelchairs and walkers may need to be escorted out of the Church to a safe location away from danger.
4. In the case of communion to the handicapped, preference should be given to them so they can receive *first* in/at their seats before the rest of the assembly.

### **Safeguards for Handling Church Funds**



Stewardship is a necessary Christian title in our churches, but we must be diligent to see that the church practices good stewardship after the assembly has done its part. Pastors and leaders have a responsibility to properly manage funds given to the church. Careful money management and control procedures establishes credibility with the church body, as well as with those

examining the finances of the church. Sloppiness in this area leads to abuses, thefts, and mistakes and thereby invites other possible criminal activity.

#### **Procedures for Handling Offerings:**

After an offering is received and until it can be properly secured in the deposit safe, it should **never** be left unattended or with any or only **one person**.

The offering must be placed in approved deposit bags in a private, secure area (e.g., the main sacristy). While the money is being placed in the deposit bags, access to that area/room **must** be restricted to authorized personnel only (e.g., clergy or altar servers). **At least two** of the Hospitality Ministers will be tasked to put the money into the deposit bags and then place those bags into the appropriate safe/deposit device.

#### **Conclusion:**

Proper fund-handling procedures protect church funds and the reputations of those involved. The time it takes to set up proper accountability is negligible compared to the time and effort it takes to remediate situations where the mishandling of funds has created problems.

Thank you for your time, talent, and treasures you invest in this worthwhile ministry. Many times the first person a newcomer sees or greets is the church’s Hospitality Minister and the Priest. First impressions are lasting impressions. Let us be conscious of the need for fellowship and warm, friendly greetings to our Christian brothers and sisters.

May God’s peace and blessings be with you.



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