

Divine Mercy Parish Usher Ministry Procedures

Forward

These procedures are meant to give ushers a general “how to” manual for performing this ministry. It may not have a procedure for every situation that might come up nor is it meant to be a strict code of operations. Ushers should remain flexible and able to address situations that might come up from time to time that can’t be predicted and require good judgment to resolve. In addition, it will be a rare occasion that an experienced usher will not be on hand and be providing an “on the job training” resource for inexperienced ushers or experienced ushers who are new to the Parish. This guideline is not meant to replace the long standing ability of ushers to react to a wide range of situations. We want that flexibility to stay, while adhering to the guidelines specified in these procedures.

We have organized these procedures around the format of our most important ministry which is Holy Mass. Right now Holy Mass is scheduled for four times on the weekend. There will be a scheduling program in use and your preferences will be taken into account as much as possible. Once you are assigned to a time you will be responsible for getting a substitute if you are unable to service your assignment. There will be a directory of phone numbers available.

Please remember that your ministry is crucial. Also keep in mind that service in your ministry is fulfilling and should be enjoyable. Sharing your ministry with others is always appropriate, so keep recruitment of new ushers in mind. We always welcome new people to our ministry.

Preparation

Please remember our dress code and prepare appropriately. We expect that you will wear an appropriate shirt and neckwear. A sport coat, blazer or suit is appropriate for this ministry. If a blazer is furnished by the parish it is recommended that gray slacks be worn for winter and tan slacks be worn for summer. Don’t forget to wear your name badge.

Leave for church early and park farther away from the church entry leaving those spaces for others who may need to be close to the entry. Also, remember that service time spacing may not allow you to arrive too early. Use judgment in this area.

Arrival

Arrive early enough to be of service to those arriving for Holy Mass. We understand that all can't be on hand ½ hour before the designated time, but that should be the goal. All usher supplies are kept in the usher's room, collection baskets, the offering basket and bulletins. Also included in the usher's room is the reserved signs, pencils, small candles, etc.

Place the collection baskets at the appropriate stations and distribute the bulletins in accordance with the current policy.

Be sure to unlock all doors which may be used as entry or exit from the church. This is a fire emergency requirement.

Before Mass

Secure volunteers for the bread and wine gifts. Bear in mind that there may be family members for whose loved one the Mass is being offered, baptism family members, anniversary family members, etc. who make excellent volunteers. The persons should be told to arrive at the gift table as the ushers are completing the collection in the center aisle. Tell them they will bring the gifts up to the altar as soon as the center aisle is clear of the ushers doing the collection and the priest has come down to the front of the church.

Provide greeting and seating services. There will be an Order of Worship to hand out. There will not be song books or liturgy books to hand out. Song books will be left in the pews and will not be collected. Please remember to hand out the Order of Worship with a smile and a kind greeting. At this point, you are Divine Mercy to the arriving person and you should be giving the best of impressions. The movement of people to the pews and filling the pews has now become a crucial part of our ministry. Please do your best to fill the front of the church first. The balcony will be available, but every effort must be made to fill the main floor before it is opened up. Ushers will need to be assisting with seating more than the greeting. Don't forget about the easy access space in the left front for wheelchairs and walkers.

It is hoped that all will be seated before the Mass begins but it is unlikely that all people will be in the pews prior to Mass. Please try to seat late comers with as little disruption as possible.

Once the seating has been completed, the ushers should take up positions as porters at the rear of the church.

Some ushers may return to the pews at this time but must be available for duties at the collection, communion and dismissal and after Mass duties.

During Mass

There are two parts of the ministry that happen during the Mass. The first is the collection. There will be ideally at least ten ushers needed for the collection: Eight ushers for the main floor and two or more for the balcony. Ushers should assemble at their collection stations at the conclusion of the homily. At the conclusion of the intercessions the collection should commence. Ushers should meet at the back of church for the combining of the collection into the offering baskets(s). As the collection is being completed the bread and wine offering should be started as mentioned above. As soon as the collection has been assembled in the collection basket, it should be taken to the altar. It is hoped that this will be completed before the priest starts the offertory prayer. However, don't be shy. If the offertory prayer has started, please proceed to the altar causing as little distraction as possible. Practically speaking, it will become usual for the collection to arrive at the altar after the prayer has started because of additional time needed to complete it. The collection baskets should be retained in the rear of church to put back in the usher's room at the conclusion of the last Mass on Sunday. At the conclusion of the collection some ushers may again return to the pews and others should remain as porters.

The second part of the ministry during Mass is helping people out of the pews for Communion. Six to eight ushers should assemble for this function at the conclusion of the sign of peace. Four ushers will be needed on the main floor and two to four ushers will be needed for the balcony. The exact design of moving the people will stay flexible until the best one emerges over time. In general the main floor will be let out first from front to back, and then the balcony. People will come down from the middle and go back up the sides. Details of this procedure may have to be modified over time. Once Communion is complete all ushers should gather at the rear of the church for their after Mass duties.

After Mass

Ushers have the responsibility for clearing the church and preparing it for the next service or closing. Part of the clearing process is the handing out of bulletins. This can be done by four to six ushers. Remember to smile and say goodbye to those leaving. They will remember that the last thing at mass that day was the nice way the ushers treated them on their way out of church.

As people leave the church ushers should be locking up the collection, inspecting and clearing the pews, putting the kneelers up, making sure that song books are evenly distributed and beginning the lock up process if appropriate.

If there is a Mass following, you only need to be sure that the church is or will be empty. Be sure that the "hiding places" are inspected and the doors around the sacristy provide exit but not entry. See an experienced usher for instruction on conducting an inspection of the "hiding places". The doors should still be unlocked in anticipation of the next Mass.

The collection should be put in the vault by two ushers who proceed to the sacristy during the closing song. No usher is allowed to gather the collection basket until after the priest has left for the processional and the singing has stopped. Please use good judgment when gathering the collection money to not give the appearance of a “money grab”. Two ushers are needed for security. Don’t forget to bow when proceeding in front of the altar. Bag the cash. Split it among several bags when the volume is high. Be sure to gather the additional baskets on sharing Sunday and use the bags marked accordingly.

If there is no Mass following, then the ushers are responsible for the inspection of the premises as well as the locking of doors, except the narthex exit doors which are the responsibility of the sacristan. These duties are in addition to the ones mentioned above.

As a courtesy to the sacristan and usher(s) should remain until all doors are finally locked. This is a security measure meant to insure the safety of the sacristan.

Emergencies

There is a first aid kit in the rear of church. There is a defibrillator in the gathering space. There are fire extinguishers at various places. Become familiar with where they are. If there is an emergency, the best way to handle it is to get professionals to the church as soon as possible. Always try to use the phone in the rear of the church when dialing 911. This way the dispatcher knows, from the number, where you are located. It save time. Try not to use your cell phone because the slows down the process. Interruption of the Mass may happen. When a person causes this we must act quickly. One usher should summon the police and others should cautiously approach the person quietly asking them to be orderly. Nothing more than this should be done until help arrives. This type of situation really needs to be played by ear. Therefore it is hard to set down specific instructions.

Sometimes the emergency may be common stomach upset. The materials needed to clean this up will be in the back of church. This happens rarely but does happen. Remember to use the gloves when applying the absorbent and when sweeping up the absorbed material.

Other things we do

The ushers sponsor and produce a pancake breakfast and raffle twice a year in October and February. We all work on this to make it a success. We have a monthly meeting and all are invited to attend. There is an annual appreciation dinner in May. We also have a Sunshine Club which provides cards when there is an illness or death among our usher family. Please contact an usher society officer if you hear any news about an usher’s health or well being.