



## Guidelines for Ushers

Information, hospitality, affability, and organizational skills typify the ushers who greet parishioners at Mass. They are present to answer questions, assist with seating, arrange for Presentation of the Gifts, take up the Offertory collection, distribute the Sunday bulletin and direct traffic during Holy Communion.

They support the Extraordinary Ministers of the Holy Communion by guiding them to communicants who are elderly or disabled. They also help in medical emergencies. The ushers are truly the unsung heroes of the weekly Mass.

**Teams-** Ushers are assigned to teams. There is one team for every Mass. A team consists of a minimum of six regular members. The ideal team is comprised of six regulars and four alternates to assist on days when attendance is high, especially on days when two collections are scheduled.

Each team is led by a Captain, whose responsibilities include communicating with the Head Usher when necessary, consolidating the collections into the money pouches at the rear of the church, delivering the collections to the counting room, and preparing the gift bearers for presentation. A Co-captain should be designated as a substitute if the Captain is not available.

Ushers are assigned to one Mass each weekend and are encouraged to assist on Holy Days of Obligation and at special liturgical events.

A handbook is provided to all new candidates and on the job training is offered under the supervision of an experienced usher until the candidate is comfortable with the discharge of his or her duties.



There are two to three meetings a year during which information is shared and thoughts and suggestions are shared that may benefit the ministry and/or the church.

Ushers are encouraged to arrive 15 minutes before the start of their assigned Masses to prepare and take their appropriate stations.

It is the responsibility of each usher to find a replacement and advise the team Captain if he/she is unavailable to serve an assigned Mass.

Guidelines for the Saint James Usher ministry are:

- **Attire** - Appearance is important part of our ministry. The focus of the liturgy is the Eucharist and any distraction should be avoided. Accordingly, the following attire is considered inappropriate:  
Women: strapless tops, shorts skirts, shorts, flip flops, spandex leggings, tight or low-cut slacks and or blouses.  
Men, t-shirts, shorts flip flops, sneakers.  
To achieve an identifiable and more uniform look, the following wardrobe is suggested:  
Women: dark skirts or slacks, and light colored blouses.  
Men: navy blue sport jacket, light colored slacks
- **Hospitality**-at every Mass, the ushers make the first impression of the parish as people enter the church or chapel. An usher or two from the serving team should be assigned to each entrance to welcome parishioners to Communion with the Lord. A smile and a welcome is a great way to begin a day of worship.



- **Seating** - Although there may be ample available seating, an usher should always be available should someone need assistance. The last row of chairs should be reserved for those with disabilities or those who require special assistance. On days when attendance nears capacity, it is imperative that ushers assist in finding available seating. If there are spaces in the pews, ask those seated to kindly shift closer to provide additional room.
- **During the Mass** - Ushers should fully and reverently participate in the Mass from their assigned stations throughout the Mass.
- **Collections** - Immediately after the Prayer of the Faithful, the ushers should proceed up their assigned aisles. Once at the altar, all should bow and then begin to pass the baskets. On days when two collections are scheduled, the alternate group of ushers should begin passing the second basket approximately 30 seconds after the start of the first collection. Demeanor is important. A smile is most appropriate as parishioners offer their gifts to God. Upon completion of the collection(s), the ushers should bring the baskets to the rear of the church where a table will be set up outside the ushers' room. The Captain will be responsible for setting up and removing the table as well as for emptying the baskets into the moneybags, which should be zippered shut and locked. The team Captain and a second should deliver the bag(s) to the counting room and sign the delivery roster located in the ushers' room.
- **Presentation of the Gifts** - Prior to the start of Mass the team should select individuals or families for the honor to carry the gifts to the altar. Gift-bearers should be instructed to proceed to the rear of the church when the collection begins, at which point, the



team Captain should give them the hosts and the cruet, and position them in the center aisle from where an altar server will escort them up the aisle to the foot of the altar.

NOTE: The deacon usually fills the dish with enough hosts to serve a typical number of communicants, based on the number of consecrated hosts in the tabernacle. It is important that the ushers are aware of the size of the congregation at any given Mass and if it appears that attendance is greater than usual, to consult with the deacon before the Offertory procession so additional hosts may be added.

- ***The Communion Procession*** - As the last Eucharistic Minister receives Communion, the ushers should proceed to the altar as a group and bow. Once all priests, deacons, and ministers are in place, ushers should begin to invite the congregation to receive Communion in a slow, reverent, methodical fashion, appropriate to this sacred time.

The team Captain should be stationed near the chairs at the rear of the church, and be responsible for directing the Eucharistic Ministers to those who are unable join the procession and need to be served Communion in their chairs.

- ***Dismissal*** – After Communion, ushers should return to their stations. As the recessional hymn begins, those stationed in the rear of the church should open the exit doors. Bulletins should be distributed as the people are leaving the church. Remember to be as pleasant when they leave as you were when they arrived.
- ***After Mass*** – Each Mass requires different responsibilities of the ushers. For example, those who are assigned the first Mass of the



day should ensure that baskets are placed at their appropriate stations in preparation for the collections.

At later Masses, teams should ensure the baskets are back in place upon their departure.

In addition, each team should do a sweep of the church, picking up any items that may have been left in the pews. Put hymnals back in place, put kneelers back in the upright position, toss out trash, and place anything of value that may have been left behind in the lost and found,

Those assigned to the last Mass of the day should help set up for Baptisms scheduled in the afternoon.

- **Emergency Situations** - Ushers should be prepared for and alert to any situation that might arise in their own stations and be prepared to take charge, soliciting the assistance of an adult usher or team Captain if needed.

**Medical emergencies** may include but are not limited to: loss of consciousness, difficulty breathing, persistent stomach or chest pain, severe bleeding, vomiting, seizures, broken bones, severe burns. Once the severity of the emergency is assessed, the following procedures should be followed:

--Remain calm and try not to disrupt the service if possible.

--Try to locate a trained medical professional from the congregation.

--If necessary, ask the presiding priest to make an announcement asking for assistance.

--Request that another usher call 911 if the situation requires

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further assistance. There is phone in the sacristy.

--Have someone waiting outside to direct the emergency personnel when they arrive.

-- NOTE: A first aid kit is available in the ushers' room.

***Fire Emergencies*** - Remain calm and try to identify the source. If evacuation is necessary, open all doors and direct people to exit quickly and safely. An usher should be stationed outside to relay any orders given by the emergency personnel.

To serve as a minister at the celebration of the Eucharist is a privilege to which you have been called. Ushers are an integral part of the Mass and our parish community. The Church of Saint James recognizes your efforts and greatly appreciates your participation.

God bless you for your generosity and devotion.