



## Our Lady of Perpetual Help Standard Operating Procedures for Ushers and Greeters

As a ministry within our parish, Ushers and Greeters directly support “providing a sense of belonging to all God’s people through prayer, service, and the sharing of gifts for the praise and glory of God.” (*OLPH Parish Mission Statement*)

### **THE MINISTRY OF USHER AND GREETER:**

Ushers and Greeters are an important part of the Eucharist Celebration. They are both hosts and housekeepers for the Lord's Supper. They greet arriving parishioners and guests, make them feel welcome, assist with seating, act as first responders and ensure that the Lord's house is in order before, during, and after the celebration. Organized usher and greeter teams bring continuity to the usher and greeter ministry, providing effective and efficient operations.

### **TO BECOME AN USHER OR A GREETER:**

- Any adult male or female that are trustworthy
- Youths 16 year and above

### **INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:**

### **SPIRITUALITY AND FORMATION OF USHERS AND GREETERS**

- ***Be Welcoming:*** *When you greet people at church, you are greeting each one as a child of God, as another member of the body of Christ.* Jesus emphasized the importance of giving welcome. He knew that those who were not welcomed might feel excluded. So he taught his followers to include others, especially those they might have preferred to avoid.
- ***Discern Needs:*** *Be attentive to the needs of those who come to church.* Responding with compassion to those in need is a basic human virtue. Hospitality is sanctioned and sanctified by Christ.
- ***Be Prudent and Trustworthy:*** *When you take up the collection, you are receiving a gift that people hold precious and transferring it to an organization that represents their deepest values.* The collection also symbolizes the gift of each person at the altar with Christ. When you take up the collection, you are taking up God’s collection. Strive to live as a person worthy of trust. When you stand in front of people with a basket in your hands, you are asking them to trust you with their offering.
- ***Be Knowledgeable:*** *Know what’s going on at your parish, and be ready to share this information with others.* When you stand in the vestibule of the church, some people will ask you for information. When you pass out bulletins at the end of Mass, people may presume you know what’s in them. Take an active role in parish life and be a better model for others who come to worship.
- ***Be Part of the Team:*** *When you serve as an usher or greeter, you are part of a team of people offering their service to God.* Hospitality is everyone’s job. You are part of a team of people who model hospitality for the rest. However, avoid spending so much time greeting other liturgical ministers, such as other ushers, lectors, and priest, that you miss seeing the many people who enter and leave the church.
- ***Be Prayerful:*** *The time you take with Jesus in prayer is more important than your work as an usher and a greeter.* When you are at church, pray the Mass. Sing the songs. Make the responses. Listen attentively. Yes, you have a ministry to perform, but first be a good worshipper.

## **PROCEDURES:**

### **PRE-MASS PREPARATION (Before Mass)**

- ***Personal Hygiene and Attire:*** According to GIRM #339, Ushers and Greeters are asked to dress respectfully for this ministry by wearing “appropriate and dignified clothing.” Be sure clothes are clean, neat, and appropriate. Clothing should not be too revealing and it should show respect for yourself and for your role in the liturgical life of the Church.
- ***Arrival Time:*** Arrive at the latest 15 minutes before Mass and earlier at some celebrations like Christmas and Easter.
- ***Check in:*** Please check in with Usher Captain at Mass so that he or she knows who is present to serve. If ushers or greeters are available at Masses other than assigned ones, it would be helpful if they would check with the Captain of that mass to determine if they can be of assistance.
  - Review bulletin board in Hospitality Room for special instructions.
  - Determine usher pew section assignments.
- ***Prepare Church Facility:***
  - Take large collection basket out of the hospitality room and place it at the foot of the Altar. Position collection baskets in the main entrance of the Church.
  - Get box of bulletins from the parish Office and place bulletins under the resource rack at the entrance of the Church.
  - Ensure Social Ministry Outreach Food Buckets are available at the front of the church.
  - Turn on lights in the Church.
  - Check to see if bathroom doors are unlocked.
  - Straighten-up chairs.
  - Reserve pews, if requested.
  - Select Offertory Gift Bearers.
  - Meet, Greet and Seat parishioners
  - Identify individuals that need Communion brought to them. Share the information with the adjacent ushers as they may assist.

### **MASS RESPONSIBILITIES**

- ***Welcoming the People.***

Welcome each person. Greet everyone arriving for Mass with a friendly "Hello" and a warm smile. Acknowledge everyone with a smile and eye contact as it gets busier. It may be tempting to converse with the people you know well, but remember that you're there to help everyone feel welcome.
- ***Distribute Worship Aids or Other Items Needed for Full Participation in the Liturgy.***

For larger celebrations, especially Christmas and Easter, worship aids are used for the overflow assembly. Worship aids are designed to enable people to participate well – to sing, respond, and follow along. It is vital that all are equipped to participate when they take their seats. On occasions they will need other items, such as palms on Palm Sunday and candles for Easter vigil. You will be responsible for distributing these as well.
- ***Gift Bearers.***

The ushers are responsible for finding parishioners who will bring forth the offertory gifts. Usually one bread container and one wine decanter need to be carried. Select the appropriate number of people to present the gifts. It can be tempting to ask the same people from week to week, but resist the temptation and ask different people each week. Pay attention to where the gift bearers sit in case you need to remind them, should they not assemble on time. Gift Bearers should assemble when the ushers start the collection routine.

- **Seating People.**  
Before Mass and after it starts, it may be necessary to direct parishioners to available seats.
  - **Placement.** Encourage people to sit near each other and to fill in the front pews.
  - **Families with Small Children.** Help families with small children to find seating they think will be best for them, such as near an exit so that they will feel comfortable at meeting the needs of their children with little disturbance to the rest of the assembly, or maybe in the front row so that the children can see the action.
  - **People with Disabilities.** Know which areas are accessible to people in wheelchairs or to those who use canes or walkers.
  - **Latecomers.** Know what to do with latecomers. Be aware of empty spaces and help them find places to sit so they can enter into the liturgy as smoothly as possible.
  - **Overflow Seating.** Know the procedures for overflow seating during busy times, such as where they can stand and not block the action of the liturgy, getting additional folding chairs and opening the sliding glass doors.
- **Use of Stanchions.** Ushers may seat parishioners until the 1<sup>st</sup> Reading is proclaimed. Use the stanchions during the proclaiming of the readings and the homily. Seating of people during the Responsorial psalms is allowed. Be mindful of empty seats, especially at the Masses that have the Children's Liturgy. Do not seat people in seats vacated by children (especially during Children's Liturgy).

## DURING MASS

- **Be a Model of Participation.** Even though you may need to be at your station to welcome and usher latecomers, you will also need to be attentive to and participate in the liturgy by singing the songs and voicing the responses. When it is time to take a seat, you join the assembly. Do not get involved in unnecessary conversation.
- **Assisting with Processions and Other Duties.**
  - **Opening Procession:**
    - Assist by guiding last-minute arrivals around rather than through the group that is processing.
    - Direct people to the side aisles so that they do not become tangled in the procession and so that the lines of sight and communication between Father and the musicians remain clear.
  - **Children's Liturgy of the Word (CLOW):**
    - Assist CLOW ministers with the orderly procession of the children as soon as Father calls the children forward by opening and closing the sliding doors for the children as they leave the Church for Children's Liturgy.
    - The return of the children to the assembly after Children's Liturgy usually occurs after the profession of faith and when the collection begins.
    - It is very important that the children are brought back in before Father begins the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
    - Make sure the re-integration of the children into the assembly is orderly and not haphazard, assisting any children that may be lost in finding their family.
  - **Dismissal of Catechumens:**
    - When there are people who have been accepted into the Order of Catechumens through the process of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) or Rite of Christian Initiation of Children (RCIC), the catechumens may be present at the Mass at which you are serving.
    - They are dismissed from the assembly after the homily so that they may spend time breaking open the Word they have just heard proclaimed.
    - Assist in the dismissal of the Catechumens by opening and closing the door.

- Be sure you know where the group goes after dismissal, because after Mass, the friends and families of the catechumens may need directions to find the group.
- **Collection:**
  - During the “Prayers of the Faithful”, get your collection baskets and gather at the end of the side aisles.
  - At the beginning of the Preparation of the Altar, walk in unison down the side aisles to your assigned sections and pass out the collection baskets.
  - Be attentive to all the people in the row so you don’t miss anyone and be ready to give direction if someone in the pew is confused about which way to pass the basket.
  - As you collect people’s offerings, be sure to wear a friendly face. Make eye contact, smile, and remember that people are offering the gift of their treasure as well as their hearts in preparation for the next movement of the liturgy.
  - As soon as you’ve collected your section, bring your basket and empty it into the large collection basket at the foot of the Altar. Return the empty basket near gift table.
- **Presentation of the Gifts:**
  - When the collection begins, Gift Bearers should go to the gift table, usually one for the bread and one for the wine decanter. Select more if necessary.
  - The members of the assembly who carry our gifts forward represent the entire assembly, so take care to invite a variety of people in age and ethnicity to participate week after week. For example, new visitors, a couple celebrating their anniversary, those celebrating their birthday, etc.
  - Once Father stands at the Altar steps, then the Gift Bearers process to the Altar down the main aisle. The Wine is handed off first and then the Bread. If there are lei’s then they are given first before the wine and the bread. After the handing off of the gifts, the Gift Bearer is to bow at the Altar in unison before returning to their seats.
- **Communion:**
  - Just before distribution of Communion, ushers should proceed to their assigned Communion sections.
  - Wait at your stations until the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) have taken their places.
  - Direct the people to Communion one row at a time down the aisle. The usher is usually the last person to receive Communion.
  - Ask disabled and elderly individuals before Mass if they want Communion brought to them. Adjacent ushers should be made aware of these individuals’ request.
  - Be attentive to the line that finishes first and have that EMHC give Communion to the disabled and elderly individual that asked for Communion.
  - Be considerate of people who want to remain in the pews. Acknowledge their presence; don’t overlook them. Let them know if someone needs to move around them.
  - During crowded celebrations, such as Christmas and Easter, be attentive to visitors that maybe unfamiliar with the worship space and Communion procession pattern.
  - No matter how urgent the need for order always be gentle and kind as well as firm.

## AFTER MASS

- **Return to your station.** At the final blessing, move back to the location where you did your welcoming as people assembled.
- **Assist in the Recessional.** Assist the Altar servers and Clergy as they process out of the Church by keeping the main aisle clear of people until they have exited.
- **Saying Good-bye.** Do your best to ensure that everyone receives acknowledgment of his or her participation in the day's celebration: shake hands, smile, and encourage each person to come back again.
- **Events after Mass.** When there are special events after the liturgy, direct people to the next event. Don't lead the group to it. Remain at your station to direct others and to say good-by to people who aren't staying.
- **Distribute the Parish Bulletins.** Pass out the parish bulletin. Encourage everyone to take one home.
- **Clean up.** Check for lost items, return hymnals to their proper places. Collect disposable worship aids to be recycled. Pick up trash. Remove reserved signs that won't be needed for the next Mass. If someone left something valuable, let the next ushers and greeters know where to find it, in case the owner comes looking for it during the next Mass.

## SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

### DEALING WITH DISRUPTIONS:

- **Be Compassionate when Disruptions Occur.** You will need compassion for the assembly as a whole, as well as compassion for those involved in disruption.
  - A crying child isn't annoyance; he or she is one of the members of the body of Christ. When kids are noisy, it might feel intrusive to a parent for an usher or greeter to approach the pew and offer assistance. But if a parent is bringing an unhappy child to the back of the church, it would be hospitable to meet the parent there with a sympathetic word and offer of help.
  - Adults may become disruptive. Maybe the person is intoxicated, maybe emotionally unstable. Be gentle, but firm. Do your best to lead the person to a place where you can talk. Other ministers should be aware and come to help; if not, signal someone. Don't put yourself at risk by taking potentially violent person into a secluded place.
- **Responding in Emergencies.**
  - **Medical Emergencies.** Know where the phone is in case you need to call 911. Know where the first aid kit is. If you know of medical professionals in the assembly, alert them. Do not try to handle a situation that is beyond your capabilities.
  - **Natural Disasters.** Know the procedures to deal with when there is a hurricane or earthquake. Locate the safe places in the Church and know the parish evacuation plan, especially for uniting children who may be in CCD classes with parents who might be in Church.
  - **Fire.** Know where all the exits are. Know where all the fire extinguishers are and how to use them. Know the plan for evacuation in case of fire. Do not try to handle this situation beyond your capabilities.
  - **Violence.** Violence may erupt from quarrels among family or friends, mental illness, religious, racial, or ethnic hatred, or gangs. Know what procedures to follow in case a violent act or the threat of one develop.

## CONCLUSION

- The preceding pages may seem be overly detailed to those who have been active in the ministry for many years, but it serves both new and established Ushers and Greeters to help create a more standard process. By striving for procedural consistency among Ushers and Greeters, the assembly will feel more at ease, enabling them to be free from distractions and enter more deeply into the celebration.
- At times you will make mistakes in these procedures. What is most important is to maintain an attitude of reverence and worship towards the real presence of Jesus in the Word made flesh of the Eucharist and be warm and hospitable to members of the assembly.