Instructions for the Usher

Introduction

The usher is the official representative of the parish community who welcomes worshipers as they arrive. The usher attends to any special needs worshipers may have in being seated and preparing themselves for prayer and the celebration of the Mass, both during and after Mass. The usher should be ready at all times to lend assistance and preserve the reverence and good order of the liturgy and the sacred worship space. In addition, the usher helps to ready the worship space for Mass and helps to close up after Mass is over.

Scheduling

One usher will be scheduled for each Mass. Unscheduled ushers attending that Mass are asked to volunteer to assist as needed. During the peak-season, additional ushers may be scheduled. All commissioned ushers are encouraged to serve if called upon.

Arrival Time

Arrive 15 to 30 minutes before Mass and put on nametag. For Masses with an unusually large attendance (Christmas; Easter; 4th of July, Labor Day, Trailing of the Sheep, and Jazz Festival Weekends) and when congregants are known to arrive earlier than usual, ushers should arrive 30 to 60 minutes before Mass.

Main Entrance and Side (Transept) Doors: Signs

Wind down the crash bars on the main entrance door and the two side doors in the transepts (which keeps them unlocked), using the Allen key (hex key). The Allen key is attached to a short dowel and is located in the top drawer under the counter just to the left inside the sacristy.

Put out the signs asking those arriving after the Mass starts to use the main entrance. The signs are on freestanding stands and are placed where the sidewalk intersects the walkway leading to the door.

Return the Allen key to its place in the drawer in the sacristy.
**Greeting the Congregation**

Take up station in the narthex or at the entrance to the worship space and warmly greet the arriving congregation. Ushers should strive to set the proper tone of warmth and friendliness while creating and maintaining within the worship space an atmosphere of quiet joy and reverence conducive to the congregants preparing in prayer to participate in the celebration of Holy Mass. Ushers should be particularly mindful of those preparing for or in confession during the hour before the Saturday evening Vigil Mass. One may be warm and friendly, but still use a quiet voice to discourage people from congregating and visiting outside the confessional and around the holy water/Baptismal font.

**Assisted Listening Devices**

Distribute assisted listening devices (ALD’s) as needed.

**Assistance with Seating**

Assist the congregation with seating as needed.

Be alert and ready to assist those with special needs and those unfamiliar with the church and the seating in the transepts. During peak-season and at other times when the church is especially full, encourage people to fill any gaps in the pews to make room for all.

**Assisting Families with Infants and Children**

Inform families with infants and small children that they are welcome to retreat to the narthex if needed to quiet their children, where they may listen to the Mass and watch through the glass paneled doors to the nave, or to the parish hall downstairs and watch and listen to the Mass on the wall-mounted monitors.

**Overflow Space in Parish Hall**

Activate the audio/video in parish hall if requested. Press the “overflow” button on the small control panel just inside the door to the closet next to the confessional.
Assigning and Instructing Gift Bearers

Assign and instruct gift bearers: Invite members of the congregation to be the gift bearers. At least two are needed. Parents are to accompany young children. Give the gift bearers the laminated gift bearer card and review the instructions on the back of the card with them. Explain that the gift bears are to begin to process to altar when the collection baskets are retrieved by the ushers. However, during Peak Season or otherwise when the church is especially full, the gift bearers are not to wait for the collection baskets to complete the rounds. Rather, they are to begin to process to the altar as soon as they retrieve the gifts from the gift table. If the priest-celebrant is not at the front of the altar, they are to wait at first pew in front of altar for the priest-celebrant to come down from the altar platform to receive the gifts.

Assisting Those Arriving After Mass Has Started

Assist those arriving at the church after Mass begins to minimize disturbance. Those who arrive during the readings should be held at the entrance of the church until the reading is over. They may be seated between readings if such can be accomplished without excessive disruption.

Reserved Seating for Usher

Ushers take their seats at the reading of the Gospel. Reserved seats for ushers are in the last row on the left (west) of the nave.

Counting Attendance

Count attendance during the period of the Gospel and/or homily and record on sheet in sacristy.

Collection

At the beginning of the Offertory (following the Intercessions), with the assistance of additional ushers, distribute the collection baskets to the congregation. Ensure the baskets reach all congregants. Retrieve all of the baskets with the collection, bring to the rear of of the nave near the sacristy, and consolidate into one or two baskets.
Process to the altar with the collection just behind the gift bearers. Exception: during peak-season or otherwise when the church is especially full, the gift bearers will not wait for collection. When collection is complete, secure in the priest’s closet in the sacristy and close the sacristy door.

**Communion Procession**

At the time the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (EMHCs) are receiving Holy Communion, proceed with the one additional usher up the center aisle to the first pew to assist with the Communion procession. As soon as an EMHC or the priest-celebrant is in position at the station that serves that pew, allow the communion procession to begin. Hold subsequent pews until all congregants in the active pew are clear of the pew and in the aisle, noting some congregants may be coming from the transepts.

**Duties After Mass**

As the congregation leaves, offer an appropriate greeting.

Retrieve any ALDs that may have been given out at the beginning of Mass.

Bulletins are on stands or tables in the narthex for congregants to pick up. Ushers may assist as desired.

Bring in the signs directing late arrivals to the main entrance and unwind the crashbar on the side transept doors. Close the doors securely.

Walk through the *downstairs* and check that all doors are locked, lights are turned off, and no one is remaining in the bathrooms or elsewhere.

Unwind the crash bar on the main entrance door.

Return the Allen key to its place in the drawer in the sacristy.

**General Instructions for all Liturgical Ministers**

All liturgical ministers work together as a team and are encouraged to stand ready and able to assist other liturgical ministers as needed or convenient for the proper and prayerful celebration of Holy Mass.
Liturgical ministers are scheduled quarterly at the Mass time of their preference and as often as their schedule permits. If unable to serve on a scheduled date, the liturgical minister should try to find a substitute and so inform the office at least one week in advance, if at all possible. If a substitute cannot be found, the liturgical minister should so inform the office as soon as possible.

Certain Masses known to have maximum/overflow attendance will be scheduled separately with additional liturgical ministers.

Peak-season is the weekend before 4th of July through the weekend after Labor Day; the Trailing of the Sheep weekend and the Jazz Festival weekend (mid-October); the weekend before Christmas through the weekend after New Years; Presidents’ Day weekend through the end of February; and Easter Sunday. The quarterly liturgical minister schedule will indicate for each weekend whether it is in off-season or peak-season.

Any questions, comments, or suggestions should be directed to Martha Defe at 208-622-3432 or mdefe@ourladyofthesnowssunvalley.net.