

*Parish of Our Lady of  
Guadalupe  
Copatrons of the Unborn*



# THE MINISTRY OF USHERS



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## LEADERS OF WORSHIP

Along with the celebrant, the communion ministers, the readers, the servers, the cantors and choir, the ushers too are ministers of worship. This means that they serve God and the community, according to Christ's call to his disciples to seek to serve others, rather than to be served. To be an usher is a great honor and a great responsibility. It is not simply to perform a function, such as passing the basket, but to inspire and aid others in encountering Christ as they come for worship.

This means that first of all ushers must themselves be worshipping during the Mass, conscious of the sacred fourfold presence of Christ: 1) in the people who gather in his name, 2) in the celebrant who presides in the name of Christ the high priest, 3) in the Word of God that is proclaimed, and 4) in the Eucharist that is consecrated. This consciousness brings a sense of joy and gratitude that is communicated to others as the ushers perform their service.

The valuable qualities needed for this ministry are prayerfulness, reverence for the Word and the Eucharist, respect for the clergy, and friendliness and hospitality to whomever approaches our community. Ushers are ministers of welcoming, who make others feel at home. They help maintain order, but always in a gentle and kind manner, rather than with an authoritarian attitude. They are trustworthy caretakers of the community's offerings of money. They help people feel secure that the handicapped may be attended to and emergencies may be handled.

## PROCEDURES

**FAITHFULLY ARRIVING EARLY:** THE community depends on your presence to be ready to help it to celebrate the Eucharist without distraction. You must be properly dressed in the manner chosen to identify you as an usher. If you cannot be present at your scheduled time, please find a qualified substitute, or at least let your captain know well in advance. Ushers should be present a minimum of fifteen minutes before Mass begins. Simply choosing ushers from the congregation at the last minute is not acceptable. Before Mass ushers should pray that they may exercise their ministry well. They are to see that everything regularly needed by them or the congregation is ready in advance. Two properly dressed and consci-

entious people are to be prepared to present the bread and wine at the proper time. The ushers are available for any special functions they may be asked to perform on a given Sunday. From each door they greet and welcome people who arrive, and are ready to escort people to their places.

**SEATING PEOPLE:** As a friendly service, offer to seat people, and kindly invite them to fill the front and center seats first, although always with an encouraging, but nonthreatening manner. When the Church is filling, try to keep the aisles clear, by leading those standing there to pews and asking occupants to allow room for them. Under no circumstances are people to be seated during the Scripture readings or the homily being proclaimed from the pulpit. If possible, people entering during these times could be kindly asked to remain at the door until the reading or homily is complete. Your own attention focused on the readings should lead others to do the same. During the responsorial psalm or the Gospel acclamation (Alleluia), a few people could be seated, before the following reading.

**DOORS:** When the air conditioning is keeping the church cooler than outside, or the heating is keeping it warmer than outside, doors and windows are to be closed to keep the inner air space as comfortable as possible for the attendants at the various Masses, and to avoid wasting large amounts of costly energy in a futile attempt to keep the inner temperature within reason.

**THE OFFERTORY:** During the Intercessions, be unobtrusively ready at the back of Church with the collection baskets, so that as soon as the congregation answers "Amen" to the celebrant's closing prayer, you may start down the aisle together and be ready to begin the collection when it is time. This too is a spiritual moment in which you are helping people have an opportunity to be generous with God and with the community. A friendly smile may be fine, but it is not the time to speak to, shake hands with, or otherwise greet the parishioners. Such gestures distract and delay the congregation. If anyone requests change, apologetically let them know that you are not able to do this during Mass. When you have finished, quietly empty your basket into the single large basket. This should be done in the confessional with two or three of you present to protect yourselves from suspicion.

**COMMUNION TIME:** Usually people do not need to be escorted to communion. This is to be a sacred and prayerful time for yourselves along with the rest of the congregation. Under no circumstances are you to wave people from the pews up to communion, nor much less speak anything out loud to the people. Each individual must decide in his or her own conscience whether or not to receive communion. A signal from a minister to come forward interferes and confuses this decision for them.

**SECOND COLLECTIONS:** Second collections are not to be taken during the time of thanksgiving after communion, which is an important prayerful time. Rather, as the people stand for the celebrant's Prayer after Communion, ready your baskets, so that at the "Amen" you may quickly come forward to take up the collection. Announcements may be made while you are doing so. If there is no bag properly marked for a particular collection, please place a note inside, indicating at which Mass it was taken and for what purpose.

**PREPARATION FOR EMERGENCIES:** It is helpful for at least one usher at each Mass to have learned CPR, and for all to be acquainted with emergency numbers and first aid materials which should be kept in the ushers' room. Ushers should also take mental note of any doctors present in the congregation.

**AFTER MASS:** When possible you may greet people as they exit, or hand them items that may need passing out. Go through the Church checking for articles left behind, and collecting litter, and leaving the missalettes in order, so that the Church be ready for the next assembly.

Sincere thanks for your humble and dedicated service to God and to our community. You are a deeply appreciated sign and instrument of God's concern for his people. May you draw great profit from the special graces given you along with this ministry.