

St. James Community of Faith

Hospitality Ministry

Fall, 2016

Ministry, is first of all, receiving God's blessing from those to whom we minister. What is this blessing? It is a glimpse of the face of God.

~Henri Nouwen

The Ministry of Hospitality

"Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcome you, for the glory of God". (Rm 15:7)

1. Theology and History

When you greet people coming to church you evangelize. Pope Paul VI wrote that the Church exists in order to evangelize. Evangelization is "the carrying forth of the Good News to every sector of human race," where it will bring strength and renewal. We all share this responsibility of bringing Christ to others.

Be servants of communion and of the culture of encounter! I would like you to be almost obsessed about this. Be so without being presumptuous, imposing "our truths," but rather be guided by the humble yet joyful certainty of those who have been found, touched and transformed by the Truth who is Christ, ever to be proclaimed. - Pope Frances, Homily, World Youth Day, July 27, 2013

When you serve as a greeter, you are still not making the first move in evangelization. Something has already prompted people to come to the door. Most are coming because they are members who have attended for many years. Some come less frequently. Others are visitors. But some few are checking out a Catholic church for the first time in their lives. The Spirit has moved their hearts, and they have taken a big step. Now it's your turn. You are the face of Christ, and your welcome will evangelize.

2. Spirituality and Formation

The attitude you bring to your role is as important as the work you do. You perform this ministry at church. Your faith is its primary motivation. You believe in God. You love God. You want to serve God. You express your desire to serve in a variety of ways, and being an usher or greeter is one of them. You show the quality of your love for God in the way you greet people, tend to their needs, handle their money, and answer their questions.

An improper welcome has its consequences. When Jesus sent the Twelve out in pairs, he knew that some people would reject the message he asked the disciples to preach. "Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them." You have entered some places where you did not feel welcome. And you have probably promised yourself you'd never go back. This can happen to some who attend our church. But you can help them have a positive experience of building and its people.

After Mass and throughout the week, strive to cultivate a hospitable heart. Work on the demeanor that you will bring with you to church. This works both ways. Your service at church will also help you keep a kindly spirit at home and at work throughout next week.

People are coming to church hungry for the bread of life and the chalice of salvation. Nothing will feed them like the Eucharist. But something else happens before they begin to worship: You receive them. You sense their physical and spiritual needs.

3. *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. The Collection is serious business.

How do you handle money in your own life? Are you a good steward of it? Are you generous to those in need? How are you managing your personal debts? Do you spend more than you have?

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 the offering. All through the week - not just on Sunday - practice the virtue of honesty. Do you tell the truth? Can people trust you with their secrets? Do you avoid gossip and slander? Do people trust you to watch their children, their homes, their purse? If so, you have one of the qualities it takes to be a good usher and greeter.

4. *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. Welcome one another, as you welcome others.

Hospitality is everyone's job. Everybody come to church deserves a welcome, and this shouldn't fall to you alone to do the work. Still, you are part of a team of people who model this for the rest.

Be friendly toward the other ushers and greeters. You do not own any turf here. You are all working together. Your sincere love for one another will center your ministry.

5. *Be Prayerful*

As an usher and greeter, you have work to do. Making people feel at home at church is not easy. It requires a lot of time and attention. Your work is important to the whole church.

But something else is even more important: the time you take with Jesus. Your ministry to the church is admirable. Keep it up! But your prayer is also necessary. Don't let it slip!

Throughout the course of the week, spend time to the word of Jesus, as Mary did in Martha's home. Put down the other tasks of your life, and spend time with Jesus, who is our Lord and friend.

When you are at church, pray the Mass. Once the Mass begins, and especially during the liturgy of the word, God is speaking to the Church. Jesus is speaking in the Gospel. Nothing is more important. Everything else can wait. If you are going to be a good greeter, first be greeted by the word of God.

Sing the songs. Make the responses. Listen attentively. Observe the silences. Yes, you have a ministry to perform, but be a good worshipper. Jesus will fill your soul with wisdom, peace, and love.

Please read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. In my life, how should I be more hospitable? Should I be more forgiving, more inviting to members of my family coworkers or neighbors?

2. In my daily life, how can I be a better steward? Am I generous enough to those in need to change my habits of saving and spending?

3. At Church, how can I better be the face of Christ to those who come? It is Jesus who welcomes the Church to his table. How do I assist him?

4. Whom do I love with the love Saint Paul describes? Am I stingy with that love? Should I be showing it more gracefully to others? Who needs my love and my attention, my care?

Liturgy enables us to build our relationship with God and others. But only a few Parishioners presently have an understanding of the depth of our Faith and its practices. For example, mass concludes with The Rite of Sending Forth, but few in our Parish know that they are directed to use their Spiritual Power energized at mass to live the Gospels and serve God. Our Parishioners should understand John Chrysostom when he says: *"If you cannot find Christ in the beggar at the Church door, you will not find Him in the Chalice."* - From the St. James Pastoral Plan 2016-2018

Ministry of Hospitality – As a Minister of Hospitality you play a key role in how others see and experience Christ. You truly become the face and hands of Christ, opening His home to all those who enter. To welcome others to mass and then to see them off as they begin their week is truly a gift of yourself. To commit to making another person feel part of our community each weekend is again, a gift of yourself. Even parishioners who have been members of St. James for years and years feel more like a family when another takes just a moment to say “Good Morning, Good Afternoon or Good Evening.” And it makes the days ahead even better with the simple wishes of “It was good to see you. Have a good week. Or enjoy the day.”

The Ministry of Hospitality will be broken out into two areas:

Ushers

Arrive 20 minutes before Mass

- Work the **inside** of the Church
- Move people up front
- Tidy up the pews after mass
- Make sure to pass the basket – everyone should touch the basket
- Ushers should be chosen BEFORE mass. During communion is not the time to welcome and assign greeters

Greeters

Arrive 20 minutes before Mass

- Work the **doors** of the Church
- Welcome people
- Direct all to take and fill out a name tag
- Give bulletins out **AFTER** mass
- Tidy up the name tag table and the outside tables after mass