

## Usher Responsibilities:

Ushers perform an important role in the liturgy. As the first point of contact, you create a welcoming impression on those who enter; whether 'regular' parishioners or visitors.

Your duties during the Mass are essential for a smooth flowing worship experience and receive great honor from those you assist, particularly the clergy.

You also have a role in the safety of the worship space for those who enter.

We will also rely on you to recruit new ushers. If you meet someone who attends the same Mass regularly, male or female, teen or older, encourage them to contact the parish office to get on the schedule, and take them under your wing to give ushering a try a couple times.

### Before Mass

#### Prepare Yourself

Spiritual Preparation: Before becoming busy with tasks, it is important to pray. Take a moment in the worship space before you begin your duties.

Put on an usher name tag.

#### Prepare the Environment

Look for trip or slip hazards on the approach to the church. In the winter, the sidewalks should have been cleared before you arrive, but falling snow or freezing rain may require you to salt steps and sidewalks.

There is a remote to control the temperature of the air conditioning in the Usher closet. This MUST be stored in the usher closet AT ALL TIMES!

Watch for people who are panhandling, protesting, selling items, or distributing literature outside the church. Warmly greet them and invite them to stay on the sidewalk. Call 911 if you have any concerns about their behavior or potential impact on the coming and going of parishioners. †

#### Look for Opportunities to Help

Watch for people who need help carrying food donations, getting through the doors, etc.

Greet people as they come in. This simple act of hospitality goes a long way.

Welcome people you think are visiting, ask where they're traveling from. This is also a very important safety practice.

For a crowded Mass, assist people in finding seats. This can be done from the back by pointing out the openings, directing them to a seat if you are comfortable standing in the aisles. Do this until the end of the opening prayer.

### During Mass – Liturgical Responsibilities

#### Seating

Continue helping people find seats through the end of the opening prayer.

#### Collection

Come forward in unison, genuflect if able (or bow if not), then collect the offerings. This also gives you another opportunity to look for parishioners who may be in distress. †

At least two ushers must be present when the envelopes and cash are placed into a bank bag. The bag should be taken immediately to the sacristy and deposited in the safe via the drawer at top. Please open and close it carefully to avoid distractions (it can be loud).

### Communion

One usher from each seating area should come forward in unison, genuflect if able (otherwise bow), and dismiss people from pews. Help with raising kneelers if in the way of elderly or people carrying children.

Making eye contact with parishioners helps create a welcoming environment. This also gives you the opportunity to check in on anyone whose health or behavior concerned you. †

### Before the Dismissal

Check for any hazards that may have developed at building egresses during Mass. As before Mass, look for people panhandling, protesting, selling items, or distributing literature outside and ask them to remain on the sidewalk. Call 911 if unsure of how to proceed. †

An usher should be stationed at each of the four main exits with bulletins (near office, main double-doors, south double doors, and ramp).

### After Mass

Watch for opportunities to help people as they exit. Also welcome back anyone you identify as a visitor.

A quick patrol through the seating areas looking for items left behind (lost belongings, trash, bulletins) helps create a more welcoming environment for the next Mass.

Returning kneelers to their upright positions will help avoid tripping of people coming in later. †

Incident report: For insurance purposes, whenever there is an injury, we need to have you fill out this form and place under the door of the parish office. Even if the parishioner doesn't need medical assistance, Fr. Mike or someone from the parish office will still want to make a phone call to ensure the person is okay. Plus, it helps us to know if repairs need to be made to avoid this injury again.

A diagram sheet of the church has been put in the usher closet along with the incident report. If you see something wrong: torn carpeting, windows not shutting, problems closing doors, air conditioning leaking, PLEASE fill out the form and circle where you have noticed the problem. This will be a tremendous help to our maintenance staff on Monday morning when they come to repair. Simply place the form under the door of the parish office.

## Special Feasts

In general, on days when large crowds are expected, check to see if additional seats need to be set up in the gathering space, if overflow will be in the basement, or if seating will be offered in the choir loft.

### Palm Sunday

Palms are to be kept in storage until just before Mass begins. Once everyone is seated, Father will have you bring the palms to the table in the center aisle. He will bless them on the table (or maybe while you are holding them). Then distribute them quickly to people (no need to count, just hand them out and let the extras be shared).

### Easter Vigil

Once the Paschal Candle is lit outside and processed by with the deacon, the goal is to have people's candles lit as quickly as possible. Encourage them to light candles from each other; candles do not have to be lit from another candle of someone 'in authority' (priest, deacon, servers, ushers, Candidates for Christian Initiation, etc.). The lighting of candles should have the appearance of a fire spreading across the crowd.

### Good Friday

For the Veneration of the Cross, dismiss people as at communion. People do not have to remain standing after venerating the Cross. The cross will be venerated first in the center aisle, then taken to the north seating section.

### Christmas

Be aware that sometimes the jolly saint may come to visit at the end of Mass either on the Feast of St. Nicholas (December 6, during Advent), Christmas Eve, or perhaps even Christmas Day.

### Special Collections

Throughout the year special collections are taken up. This is to be done **following communion**. Do not wait for an invitation. Once the doors of the tabernacle are closed, come forward as at the regular collection. A member of the clergy will be clearing the altar during this time; there is no need to wait for the altar to be cleared once the doors of the tabernacle are close. Deposit in the safe as usual.

### October Counts

At every weekend Mass during October, count the number of people in the church once the liturgy has begun and record on the provided log sheet.

# Health & Safety

## *People in Physical distress (before Mass)*

Watch for people that may be in some emotional or physical distress so you can offer help to them. Remember to keep an eye on these people and offer or call for help as needed. †

## *People in Emotional Distress (before Mass)*

If something seems questionable about someone's behavior, trust your hunch. Ask another usher to keep an eye on them as well. There is no harm in calling 911 and telling them that you are concerned about someone; a police officer can observe from the back without interrupting the liturgy. †

In particular, look for strangers who seem nervous, arrive late (within first 10 minutes), and try to avoid contact. †

## Monitor the Church Environment

Keep an eye on anyone who was a cause for concern when they came in (†). Pay particular attention to latecomers, especially if they are alone † This includes keeping an eye on the ramp entrance. If monitors are installed in the gathering space, you can watch both outside the ramp entrance and the ramp itself.

## *People in Emotional Distress (during Mass)*

If anyone becomes distraught during Mass (sobbing, crying) or have unruly children, do NOT intervene. Everyone is welcome and we will allow individuals to decide for themselves or family members how to best proceed. Some people will excuse themselves only when people are standing, singing, etc. Others may not want to move from their place.

Be ready to interact with anyone who begins walking around during the liturgy and offer them help.

## Fire

In the event of a fire, escort parishioners out the nearest exits:

- Half stairs near office
- Main double doors to the west
- Double doors to the south (toward Smith Funeral Home)
- Ramp exit
- If exits are blocked, parishioners can also be escorted through the sanctuary door behind the presider chair, to the right, open the dead bolted door to the basement, and then a half flight of stairs to the outside.

## Monitor the Weather

Watch the weather outside for threats of severe storms, snow piling up, or icy sidewalks.

In the event of a tornado warning, approach the altar and inform the presider that a tornado is in the area. Help escort parishioners to the basement †

## First Aid

If someone becomes ill or faint during the liturgy, help them to the back of the Church.

- A heavy-duty **medical transport chair** is located in the half-closet under the stairs to the choir loft
- A **wheelchair** is located at the bottom of the ramp entrance
- The **first aid kit** and **automated external defibrillator (AED)** are both located on the wall outside the gathering space near the St. André Bessette entrance

- **Bottled water** is in the mini-refrigerator in the sacristy
- A **high-sugar product** will be in the first aid kit for diabetics (cake decorating frosting)

There are likely a number of medical professionals present at any Mass; feel free to invite them to help. In the event of a sudden, severe problem (heavy bleeding, heart attack, suspected stroke), do not be afraid to call out "Is there a medical professional that can help" during the liturgy.

If an ambulance is needed, make sure to assign someone to make the call to 911; do not assume it has happened automatically.

If an ambulance is called, make sure someone is outside to direct them to the correct door. The paramedics may also need help managing the person down the stairs to the ambulance.

### Intrusion

In the event that people intentionally disrupt the liturgy, call 911 immediately. Politely remind those causing the disruption that others are trying to worship and invite them to leave. If they promise to calm down and ask to stay, ask them to leave anyway (they may escalate again). Do not force, leave that for the police. Be prepared to evacuate parishioners if necessary.

### *Locking doors*

St. Joseph Church is a place of worship and open to all worshippers. We do NOT lock the doors of the church once liturgy has begun.

However, if there is a disruption OUTSIDE during Mass (protestors, etc.), and there is a concern that it will spill INTO the church, it is acceptable to lock the doors once Mass has begun (but ONLY in this circumstance). Make sure police know which door to enter and have two ushers at that door ready to allow access for the police.

### Violence

If you need to address someone whose behavior is escalating, remember the following:

- **CONFIDENCE:** You are a representative of this worshipping community and may interact with them as needed.
- **CALM:** Remain calm. This can be an emotionally charged situation, but don't allow yourself to get emotional as well.
- **CREATE SPACE:** Keep your distance from the person.

Do not try to reason with people who are acting irrationally. Your goal is to buy time for the police, not diffuse the situation.

When police arrive:

- Provide a description of the person.
- If the person has left, let the police know which direction (watch them leave if it is safe but do not leave the building)
- Identify the locations of anyone that is injured

If violence should erupt in the church your priorities in this situation are:

- **RUN:** Get people out of the building and to safety
- **HIDE:** If you lose contact with the assailant, help people to find a safe place to hide.

- FIGHT: We are not equipped to fight back effectively, however, throwing hymnals at the perpetrator may distract them enough to prevent or delay causing harm to more people.

Michigan law allows active and retired police, hired security, and others to carry firearms in churches. The Diocese of Lansing does not encourage this, but it is legal. No one else is allowed to have firearms in church. Be aware that the first person of authority (who is armed) to attempt to assist may already be in the congregation.

† These are activities that can help ensure a safe, violence-free worship place for our parishioners.