



Ushers

Ministers of Hospitality

St. Michael Catholic Church

Gainesville, GA

As an Usher you may perceive your responsibilities as mainly helping to find seating for our parishioners and collecting the offertory gifts at Mass. These are part of an Usher's responsibility, but it is so much more than that. You are the face of St. Michael. People experience the presence of Jesus Christ through the Usher Ministry, through you.

Certainly the attitude, conduct, and even the appearance of the Usher directly affects either positively or negatively the experience of the faithful at Mass. Being a disciple of Jesus, having respect for others, discretion, friendliness, and appropriate decorum are hallmarks of an Usher.

We Ushers, as ministers of hospitality, must have the natural gift of hospitality since we are the first and last people that most of our worshiping community comes in contact with during the Mass. We must strive to see the face of Jesus in those we serve.

Our hope is that by reviewing these guidelines and procedures, as an Usher at St. Michael, you will help in St. Michael being the welcoming Christian community we want to be. At St. Michael Catholic Church we *"Receive Christ & Live as Disciples"*.

Overview before the Mass:

Ushers should arrive 20 minutes before the scheduled Mass time. We want to greet and welcome everyone as they enter the church, holding the door open for them. Welcome the children too. It is amazing what a smile can do for an individual or a family when maybe they have had a rough week. Church is a hospital for sinners like all of us, so let's be hospitable, letting them know they are at the right place at the right time.

Avoid the temptation to talk off to the side with fellow ushers catching up on the news etc. and not paying attention to our parishioners as they enter the church.

Ushers should be totally familiar with the layout of the church, knowing the locations of restrooms, where the social hall is, where the chapel is, where the gift shop is, and where the church offices are and the office for the School of Religion. Church office hours are clearly posted on the wall by the offices and in the bulletin.

Take note where a fire extinguisher is located, a first aid kit, a defibrillator.

Be very familiar with our church bulletin. The bulletin has so much information. Being familiar with the bulletin is very important to be able to point out the information in the bulletin the parishioner may be seeking. Read it every week.

Parish Registration forms in English and Spanish are located on the wall by the chapel with other brochures. Our parish website is www.saintmichael.cc and all Ushers should have visited the website and be familiar with it.

As part of the Archdiocese of Atlanta's *Safe Environment Program*, small children should be accompanied to the restroom by a parent, guardian, or older sibling. If an Usher notices a young child under the age of 12 heading for the restroom unaccompanied, the Usher should be friendly and kindly ask the child to go get their mom or dad to accompany them to the restroom. This is for our children's protection. We have signage on our restroom doors stating this.

Many of our Masses at St. Michael can be quite full and the Ushers will need to assist to find seating for parishioners. It is suggested that one Usher move up the middle aisle looking for available seating and signaling another Usher near the entrance to the Nave, (the worship space) to help direct parishioners to their seat in the pew.

For most Masses the Ushers will need to invite a couple or family to bring the Offertory gifts of bread and wine up at the Offertory. Please assist the family with the timing of such during the Mass.

During the Mass:

Ushers should try to seat late comers as soon as possible upon their arrival. At the conclusion of the first reading, as the responsorial psalm begins it is a good time to seat those that ran a little late.

Pay attention if a separate event is taking place in the Social Hall during the Mass, make sure the doors to the Social Hall and Nave are closed so not to distract the solemnity of the Mass.

As Ushers, you are attending Mass yourself. You are a participant even though you are doing "double duty" so to speak. Try your best to listen to the scripture readings, homily, and do not deprive yourself from encountering and receiving Jesus at Mass.

At many Masses we have a second collection for a specified charity of the parish, Archdiocese, U.S. Conference of Bishops, or the Holy Father. The Ushers should bring up the first Offertory collection as it is completed along with the Offertory gifts of bread and wine. The second collection takes place after this.

After the second collection an Usher should discreetly bring up the basket with the Offertory coming up the side aisle, and set it on the top step of the sanctuary area, without being a disturbance at the Mass.

Ushers should wait till immediately after Mass to retrieve the Offertory collection from the sanctuary/altar area and deposit it in the usher's room as directed there. Ushers should not do this in the middle of the Mass. This may seem like a good time to do so, but you are missing attending Mass yourself during the holiest part of the Mass, the Consecration.

Assist the parishioners to come forward in an orderly manner for Holy Communion. Please alert the priest or deacon as Communion is coming to end, if they need to bring the Holy Eucharist to a parishioner who may be disabled sitting in the pew. Please escort them to the parishioner.

Attached to this guide is a document titled, "Ushers Special Assist at Holy Communion". This document reviews how the Usher's assist to ensure the sanctity of the reception of the Holy Eucharist at Mass.

As the Mass comes to an end.

Ushers should be ready to distribute the bulletins and any other pertinent materials the priest or deacon may have directed you to do so at the conclusion of mass. After the Mass, walking throughout the Nave, straightening books up or picking up things left behind, is appreciated so that the worship space is welcoming for the next Mass. A "Lost and Found" container is in the ushers room, to deposit items left behind.

What if there is a disturbance at Mass? There are so many possible scenarios.

- a. If an individual causes a disturbance at Mass and after being requested to leave the premises and they refuse, call Gainesville Police Dispatch at 770-534-5251 and tell them we have an individual(s) causing a disturbance and we need their assistance to remove them. This call is quicker than 911 for this instance. Let them know it is St. Michael Catholic Church at 1440 Pearce Circle, 30501.
- b. If it is a medical emergency, call 911.
- c. If a tornado were to occur and is imminent, we should calmly evacuate to the downstairs hallways. Ushers will be needed to spread/disperse people out downstairs.
- d. If an active shooter: Run...Hide.... Fight. Assist parishioners in leaving the church, hide if necessary, and the last resort is to Fight.
- e. People begging outside of church. There is a network of individuals/families that operate in Hall County. They move from church to church and come to St. Michael about twice per year. Many confuse them with being Hispanic, but they are not. They will hold signs, often with an infant. They should be directed to call SVdP for

assistance, but they often are not interested because they just want cash. They will act as if they do not know English. They should be asked to leave our property. If they refuse, we should photograph them with a cell phone and call dispatch, 770-534-5251 the Gainesville police and ask them to come to remove them if they do not leave.

- f. If someone injures themselves on church property. Try to assist with first aid and take down as much information of what occurred with their name, address, phone number and what happened. Help them as much as possible. Notify the pastor, deacon or facility manager.

Training and Recruiting of Ushers

Annually our Usher leader will hold annual training for new ushers and a refresher for existing ushers. As Usher, you are the best recruiter for your Mass, your team. Since you are welcoming parishioners every week, take note of who always attends the Mass you are at. Invite them to become part of your team. They are your best recruit. Many parishioners start with the Usher Ministry as their first ministry to get involved in at the parish. Many of our Ushers over time will become members of the Knights of Columbus, Bible study classes, St. Vincent de Paul and many other ministries. Being an Usher is a great way to meet your fellow parishioners.

Scheduling

The Masses in English covered include the 4:30pm Saturday Vigil Mass, the 7:30am and 11am Sunday Masses, and other Holy Days of Obligation. Communicate with the leader of the Ushers on your preference and availability to serve.

On weekends you may not be scheduled or for Holy Days, always check with the ushers to see if they need a hand if they are shorthanded. They will appreciate it.

To conclude this guide for Ushers, I want to share with you a letter received by a pastor at another Catholic church that shared it with us. This is what the pastor received.

The letter was marked, "Please give to Harry the Usher". Here is what it said....

"Dear Harry, I'm sorry I don't know your last name, but then, you don't know mine. I'm Gert, Gert who attends the 11am Mass every Sunday. I'm writing to ask you a favor. I don't know the priests too well, but somehow I feel close to you. I don't know how you got to know my first name, but every Sunday morning you smile and greet me by name, we exchange a few words, how good or bad the weather is, how much you like my dress. I just wanted to say thank you for taking the time to remember an old woman, for the smiles, for your consideration, for your thoughtfulness."

Now for the favor. I am dying Harry. My husband has been dead for sixteen years, and the kids are scattered. It is very important to me that when they bring me to church for the last time, you will be there to say, 'Hello Gert. Good to see you.' If you are there Harry, I will feel that your warm hospitality will be duplicated in my new home in heaven. With love and gratitude, Gert."

As you can see that Ushers, the Ministry of Hospitality is important here at St. Michael Catholic Church.

There are probably 1001 other details we could have discussed that Ushers will encounter at some time, but this is meant to be an overview for you our St. Michael Usher.

You have been called and chosen not to just say "hello" or "take up the collection". Your primary role is to see the face of Jesus in those you serve and help them to become full and active participants in our holy liturgy at St. Michael.

Thank you for being a disciple of Jesus Christ at St. Michael Catholic Church, here in Gainesville, GA....The Light On A Hill.

Yours in Christ,
Deacon Ken Lampert

Ushers Special Assist at Holy Communion

At St. Michael, Ushers also assist during the distribution of the Holy Eucharist. During more recent times, it has become necessary to safeguard the Holy Eucharist from desecration. Therefore, after receiving Holy Communion themselves, the Usher should place themselves off to the side where they can observe parishioners receiving Holy Communion. This helps to ensure that the Body of Christ is consumed and not put inside their pocket or left concealed in the cup of their hand as they return to their pew or depart the church.

The Usher should be far enough off to the side, as not to be a hindrance to those who have received Jesus and are returning to their pew, but in position to ensure Jesus was received and consumed.

Individuals who receive the Body of Christ in their hands and do not consume the Holy Eucharist usually fall into one of these categories. The first category is someone who may have a sick or elderly relative at home, and they believe they are doing a good thing by receiving the Eucharist to bring home to their loved one. The second category is an individual with an evil intent, to receive the Body of Christ to be taken home for desecration.

As Ushers, you have no idea when you observe this to know what the individual's intent is at that moment.

If you observe such an act, you should follow the individual to their pew, or if they are departing the church gently stop them in the Narthex, and ask them to "please consume the Eucharist".

If they consume the Eucharist, fine. You may say, "please next time, please consume the Eucharist as soon as you receive it."

If they say, "Oh, I am bringing it home to my sick relative", ask them to either "consume the Eucharist or return it to the Usher." Let them know we can talk to the priest or deacon after Mass and make arrangements for an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion to bring the Eucharist to their loved one.

If it is the second category, after stopping them and asking them to "please consume the Eucharist" and they just look at you, they are probably not Catholic and were sent here by someone to obtain a consecrated Host. In that case, ask them politely to please return the Eucharist to you. Afterwards, return the Eucharist to the priest or deacon after they complete distributing Holy Communion.

As Ushers, be reverent, gentle and always give the individual the benefit of the doubt.