

Saint Francis Xavier Catholic Church

Ushers act as hosts and hostesses to warmly welcome the people of God to each liturgical celebration as well as perform various duties.

An Usher's Prayer

Lord, you make all kinds of people,
even people like me.
In your love, you gather them all into your Church.
As you gather your people this day,
help me to serve them in a Christ-like manner, even
as your Son served those who gathered about him.
Make me prayerful and patient, helpful and
understanding, and may I radiate the joy that
faith brings as I serve their needs.
Give me your strength to support my fellow ministers.
May all who assemble to celebrate our common
faith in the risen Savior be glad of heart for being
here and for having encountered your Son in one
another, in our priest, at the tables of the
Book and the Bread, and through the ministry of
ushers like me.
I ask this in Jesus' name.
Amen.

Ushering-What it Means

1. You are the first of Christ's faces to greet God's people as they assemble in prayer.
2. Your greeting is the word that welcomes the stranger to be at home, or the silence that makes our assembly a foreign land.
3. Your task is of discretion; knowing how to welcome, and, when and where, to seat the latecomer.
4. Yours may be the last word that ushers the community to its week of work in the Lord's vineyard.
5. You are the Lord's face and voice for those who enter and depart the holy ground Of prayer.
6. Come to your work and your post from your personal prayer; be as ready as the Lord to meet his people.
7. Let your welcome and your smile be for all who enters; remember that you have time to see your close friends later in the week.
8. Seek out the lost and confused; do not wait for them to come to you.

9. When appropriate, lend a hand and an arm to the disabled, remembering your own infirmities.
10. Greet each person as the Lord, for that is precisely whom you meet.
11. When taking up the collection, remember that it is for the work of God's people, especially among the poor, remember too, that many who make an offering are themselves poor.
12. Remember that you stand at the temple gates: some will come rejoicing, and others in fear, some will come healed, and others to seek healing.
13. Be sensitive and welcome all, as best as you can.
14. Some will rush by and ignore you: let go of your disappointment and pray for the Lord's gentle touch on their heavy hurried hearts.
15. Some may fall ill while at prayer; see to their needs, as you would have them see to yours.
16. Be slow to judge those who leave early: be glad that they have shared in our prayer and recall that only the Lord knows the reasons of the heart.
17. When your brothers and sisters thank and praise you for your work, take delight in the welcome they have found, and rejoice in the work the Lord has accomplished through you.
18. Be faithful in the work you do, for through it the Lord saves his people.

The History of Ushers

The ministry of ushers is the oldest lay ministry in the Catholic Church. The ushers of today have descended from a long line of people of God who have gone before them. During the time of Christ, the doorkeepers of the temple numbered in the hundreds and were the forerunners of today's ushers.

The more immediate predecessor of today's usher can be found in the clerical order of porter, instituted in the third century A.D. During those times, it was the duty of the porters or ushers to guard the door of the church against any intruders who might disturb the service. The porter duties were so important that they came to be included in the rite of ordination, where they were specified as "to ring the bells, open the church and sacristy, and open the book for the preacher." In 1972 Pope Paul VI abolished the order of porter and this important task was given over to the laity.

While today's ushers don't ring the bells or open the church, their primary duties and responsibilities include greeting and welcoming parishioners as they enter the church, help them find seats, take up the collection and wish everyone a good day at the conclusion of the Eucharistic Celebration.

The Order of Porter

In the Old Testament Levites were appointed to keep the gates of the tabernacle and later of the temple; they also had charge of the sacred vessels (1 Paral. 9,26). The sacredness of the house of God in the New Testament and of the vessels used for the celebration of the divine mysteries calls for at least the same care and safekeeping. The ostiarii were the doorkeepers or porters of the church. The word is derived from the Latin ostium, the door.

The office was of special importance during the times of persecution. Reliable men were needed to inform the faithful of the time and place of the divine services, to open and lock the doors, to keep out undesirables. In later times the ringing of bells sufficed for the purpose of informing the faithful of the time of the divine services, since there was no further need of informing them of the place.

Opening of the book for the preacher, mentioned as one of the duties of the porter, must also be understood in the light of earlier times. Those ancient rolls were not as handy as a modern book, but often heavy and of considerable size, and the place for reading could not be found readily. The porter, therefore, would carry the book to the ambo and open it for the preacher. In the course of time the care of the sacred vessels was also entrusted to porters, which gave the order added importance.

It seems probable that up to the fourth century porters were not ordained, but simply appointed. Sacristans, Ushers and Janitors perform these duties today.

The Ministry

The Usher - Is a person chosen to reflect the warmth and welcome of Christ himself. Always conscious of Christ's words: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me", Ushers are friendly people who are attracted to all age groups and nationalities. The Ministry of Ushers is open to all – women and men. The faith of the Ushers enables them to see Christ's presence in individuals and in the gathered community of believers. Ushers can handle emergency situations with courage and dignity.

Whatsoever You Do to the Least of My People

Stationed at the door of the church, the usher acts as hosts to warmly welcome the people of God to each Eucharistic celebration, assist in seating the congregation, support the other ministers and help in the collection.

Humble Service

Every liturgical ministry is established to serve the worshiping assembly. All those who serve in special roles are servants of the assembly; their task is to help the assembly fulfill its vital role in the liturgy. The most important role that the usher serves is that of hospitality. The usher is the first person that worshipers meet when they arrive at church. The usher has the opportunity and the responsibility to represent the rest of the assembly in offering hospitality. People's impression of a parish is significantly shaped by the presence or absence of a welcoming atmosphere where they come to worship. Offering a smile and a word of welcome can have a profound impact on people as they arrive, especially if they are visitors to the parish. Welcoming people and making them feel at home is one way in which ushers help build up the church.

Hospitality is a vital element in creating a sense of community for worship. A person who feels welcomed and valued is much more likely to enter wholeheartedly into the celebration of the liturgy, giving thanks to God for the love that God pours out on us.

Appropriate Attire

A neat and reverential appearance is in keeping with the minister's role as a visible example of welcome and hospitality. The ministers' attire should not detract from their role.

Usher Badge

Each usher should wear the usher badges provided by the church to be identifiable to parishioners and guests.

Scheduling

The schedule for ushers is posted in the sacristy, along with all the other liturgical ministers. The schedule can also be found on our church website at www.sfxkearns.org, and then click on the "Usher" page.

Procedures Before The Liturgy

1. Arrive at the church 15-20 minutes prior to the start of Mass. Stand by the bulletin rack and greet parishioners as they arrive. A nice smile and hello or welcome, maybe even a handshake to make everyone feel welcome.
2. Before mass starts put out 4 collection baskets,
3. Assist with seating as necessary. Point out places for wheelchairs when appropriate; wheel chairs are best placed on the north side of the church pews so that the communion ministers can bring communion to them.
4. Select the gift bearers and give them any necessary instructions. When choosing the gift bearers, remember that they represent the whole assembly and should reflect the diversity of the assembly.

Gathering

1. Once the entrance procession has completed and the Celebrant greets the assembly, close all the Church doors.

Collection of Gifts

1. Once the Prayers of the Faithful have been read, that is the signal for the ushers to proceed on the main aisle and distribute the baskets.
2. After all of the collection has been consolidated into the Large Collection Gift basket, the two ushers designated to bring the collection basket to the Church safe will wait at the center aisle in back by the gift table. When the gift bearers are in place and the collection is consolidated into one basket, the ushers will let the altar server carrying the cross know it is time to start walking towards the altar, they will proceed together down the center aisle with the gift basket (holding the gift basket with both hands) will continue to the altar, bow and proceed left to sacristy and place the money bag in the safe. For safety there should always be two ushers who together, place the money in the safe.

Sign of Peace

After the Lord's Prayer each usher shall exchange the Sign of Peace with parishioners along the aisle where they are sitting. At the conclusion of the Sign of Peace the Ushers shall take their places in the center aisle and await the beginning of the Communion Procession.

Communion Procession

1. Once the priest has taken communion and has given it to the communion ministers, two ushers shall proceed to the first pew in front of the altar, and wait standing until the priest and communion ministers taking their positions to give Communion. Once the priest starts to step down from the altar to start giving communion the two ushers at the front pews shall start letting the parishioners leave the pews to receive communion
2. The communion procession will occur in the center aisle and people will return to their seats via the far right and left side aisles once they have received communion.
3. The Ushers receive communion after the congregation.
4. Once you complete your role and have received communion yourself, return via the same route that the communicants return (down the far right and left aisles of the Church) and proceed to your seat.

Second Collection

If there is a Second Collection follow the same guidelines set forth above in the collection of the gifts. Proceed up the aisles to the front of the Church as soon as the celebrant and parishioners sit down after communion and begin the collection.

Concluding Rite

After the celebrant and the recession has reached the middle of the church, the ushers should open the doors to the gathering space.

Following the Liturgy

1. Each of the four Usher's will assist each other to check the pews for items that need to be removed after your Mass, i.e. bulletins, water bottles etc., please put back any missalettes into the rack. Also any personal or valuable items left by the parishioners place on the counter in the vestibule. Anything found of significant value should be given to a priest or master of ceremonies for safekeeping.

Usher Check List

Arrival: 15-20 minutes before start of Mass

Check in-Make sure you have your Church issued Usher badges on.

Outside Doors-open the doors at each end of the gathering space as a sign of welcoming as parishioners arrive.

Select parishioners to take the Gifts to the Priest during the Preparation of the Gifts.

Lookout-Be aware of any parishioners who wish to receive the Body and Blood at their pew and direct those in wheelchairs to sit next to the pews on the north side of the church, if possible please let the master of ceremonies know before mass starts, who needs communion brought to them.

Offertory-take up the collection

Eucharist-direct parishioners to the appropriate Eucharist Location

Recession-open the doors to the gathering space

Please remember: To set an example for his fellow Ushers and parishioners by his dress, demeanor, attitude, friendliness.

In case of fire, disasters, etc., and any life threatening emergency, immediately dial 911. Comfort the injured and follow the instructions of the 911 dispatcher on the phone while you are waiting for emergency responders to arrive. Other ushers should keep a clear path for emergency personal to enter the area.

Finding a Substitute

If an usher cannot serve at his or her regularly scheduled mass, he or she needs to contact other ushers at their mass time and ask them to fill in, then let Jeremy Castellano know so the schedule can be updated.

Volunteering for Special Occasions

Several occasions like Holy Days of Obligation, Easter Week and Christmas Masses will Require extra ushers. The head of liturgical ministries will call and ask if you can fill extra spots.

For questions or concerns regarding the schedule, please contact Jeremy Castellano at 801-967-2736 or email at sfx@q.com