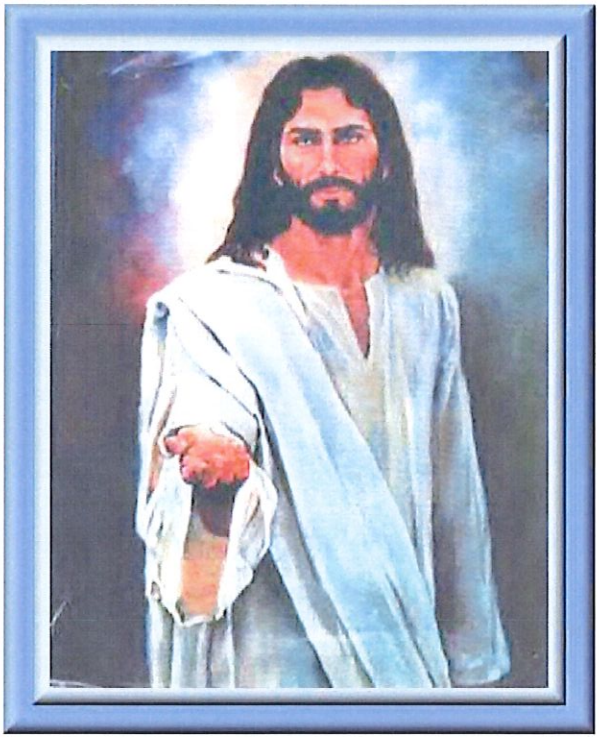
Ministers of Hospitality:

Greeters and Ushers



Saint Mary Church
Solon, Iowa

July 2019

Welcoming Jesus

Jesus was frequently a guest. So were his disciples. They all learned that some people welcomed them, while others resisted their arrival. Jesus is still a guest. He is present in the community that gathers for worship.

As an usher or a greeter, if you are on duty when someone enters your church, be on your toes. The next person who enters may be a saint or a sinner. You will know the reputation of many who pass through the door. You will know less about others. You can call some people by name, but not everyone.

As you see people enter, you may be tempted to think that you are more smartly dressed, better informed, more faithful, or more loving. But the ones who love the most are the ones who have been forgiven the most. Each one of us is a sinner, and each one of us is a child of God.

The next person who enters the church will know whether or not your offered proper hospitality. **That person is Jesus**.

A Reflection:

Jesus said to Simon the Pharisee: "Do you see this woman? When I entered your house, you did no give me water for my feet, but she has bathed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but she has not ceased kissing my feet since the time I entered. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she anointed my feet with ointment. So I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; hence, she has shown great love." (Luke 7: 44-47)

When Jesus arrived at Simon's house for dinner he had some reasonable expectations. Wouldn't you? When you are a guest, someone should welcome you. Someone should be watching out the window for you, ready to open wide the door when you draw near, help you with whatever you're carrying, and shake your hand or give you a hug. Someone should show you the way inside the house, take your coat, let you look around a bit, and help you select a comfortable chair. Someone should offer you a beverage, make sure you know where the restroom is, and start up a friendly conversation.

You should have some responsibilities, too. You might bring flowers, put a smile on your face, and wipe your feet on the doormat. Upon entering the house, you say how lovely it looks and how good the food smells. You join in the conversation and relax with your host.

Jesus expected nothing more than any other guest would. He expected water to wash his dusty feet, a kindly kiss of welcome, and a little perfume to spice up the visit. Anyone should have done this. Most people did. But Simon didn't. To make matters worse, Simon was a Pharisee. He may have been an expert in God's law, but he was failing at simple human courtesy.

Father Ron Rolheiser writes: "Saint John tells us that at the Last Supper, Jesus got up from the table and began to wash the feet of his disciples, against their protests. That gesture, washing someone else's feet, has classically been preached on as an act of humility.

It was that, but in the context of the Gospel of John, it is something more. It was a particular kind of humility, one that requires having a huge, huge heart and swallowing a lot of pride.

When Jesus washes his disciples feet in John's Gospel and tells us he is setting an example for us to imitate, he is inviting us to have the strength to bend down in understanding and wash the feet of those whom, for all kinds of reasons, we would rather not have anything to do with.

It is akin to having Pro-Life and Pro-Choice, strident conservatives and strident liberals, fundamentalists and atheists, wash each others' feet. Normally we don't have the strength to do that, there is too much pride and desire for righteousness."

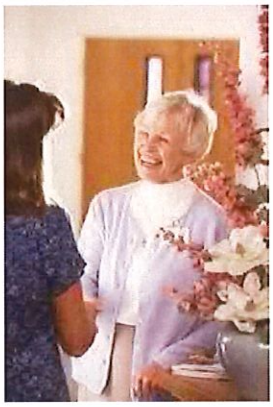
Hospitality meant something to Jesus. It was more than common custom. Hospitality showed respect for the visitor. It demonstrated the humility of the host. It avoided the temptation to sneer at the less fortunate or the less moral.

In concrete terms, being hospitable means learning people's names and professions, taking care of their simplest needs, and thinking well of them, no matter what their reputation. Yes, it means opening the door, but it also assumes you know what to do once the guest comes inside.

The church is our spiritual home. Welcome and care for everyone just as you would in your family home.

TIPS FOR GREETERS:

- Remember that you represent the parish and are most likely the first and last parishioner many will see on a given Sunday.
- Greet people with friendliness and warmth.
- **Avoid getting into converstions. Visit with your friends after Mass.**
- Welcome everyone you can, not just those you already know and not just the most outgoing.
- Direct people to the parish coat rack in cold weather so they can be more comfortable at Mass.
- **Attend to newcomers.** Introduce yourself and welcome them to the parish.
- Offer newcomers directions to the parish hall, to drinking fountains, or the restrooms, as needed.



- Try to remember newcomers' faces and, if possible, names. When you see them again, you might introduce them to parish staff or parish regulars to help them get acquainted.
- Greet children and teens as well as adults.
- Gently offer assistance to anyone who appears to need help — elderly persons, any adult with small children, or persons with a disability. Be sure to give them freedom to refuse help.
- **10:30 am — Invite young families to the childcare ministry when available.**

TIPS FOR USHERS:

- **Keep your eyes on those entering the church as well as those who are already seated.**
- Be courteous and friendly at all times.
- Ask those who need special assistance (wheelchair,
- walker, cane, etc.) where they would like to be seated.
- Lead people down the aisle to a row with vacant seats, especially after seating gets sparse.
- Seat latecomers toward the back or escort them down the **side aisles** if possible to avoid distracting others. It is also better to seat late-comers when the congregation is standing.
- Try to anticipate people's needs and questions. For example, if a person seems to be looking for something ask, "May I help you?" Offer a bottle of water to the person who can't stop coughing. Or hold the door open for a parent pushing a stroller or whose hands are full, taking out a disruptive child.
- Make a mental note of any doctors or nurses who are in the congregation in case an emergency arises. Be aware of where the AED unit is in the building.
- Be an active, participating member of the assembly during the liturgy, one who sings, prays, and listens.
- Take up the collection discreetly, not taking any note of who puts in what.
- After Mass, as needed, direct people to the parish hall for coffee or to the appropriate areas for receptions, sign-up sheets, and other parish business.
- Open the church doors for the congregation's departure after the prayer following communion.
- **Pick up litter** or any personal items accidently left behind after most of the people have gone. Arrange hymnals without disturbing those still praying.
- Put any "lost and found items" on the table between the

PROCEDURES FOR USHERS:

Before Mass:

- Arrive at least 15 minutes before Mass begins.
- Sign-in in the sacristy.
- Put on **USHER BADGE**. Badges are in the ushers' room.
- Leave the wooden doors to the worship space closed as people gather, so those in the church may pray.
- **Pay attention to people as they enter the worship space.**

- Seat people as needed. The Usher by the front can direct people to ushers in the aisles.
- Set up chairs as needed, near the baptism font or in the gathering space
- If people are seated in the gathering space, open the wooden doors so they do not feel so isolated.
- Check for family members of anyone who the Mass is being said for. If none are there, choose a family from the congregation before Mass begins. For Masses where Children's Liturgy is scheduled, the children's group will bring up the gifts.

During Mass:

- Be alert for anyone in need of help. Pay attention to small children that use the restroom on their own so they are not leaving the building.
- Count the number of people for Holy Communion.
- Check sheet in large bowl and place the proper number of hosts in the large silver bowl; place large host on top.

- Take up the collection using small baskets, then empty into large one.
- Invite the designated family to process the gifts.
- **Wait until priest/deacon and servers are standing in front of the altar before beginning the procession.**

Crossbearer
Collection
Bread and Wine

- **As you receive Holy Communion let the Communion minister near the chapel know if there are people in the back of the church to receive Holy Communion.**

After Mass:

- Open wooden church doors for smooth exit.
- Distribute bulletins; don't put them on the baptism font.
- After 10:30 mass, you may place extra bulletins on the small table by the door.
- Invite people if there is a reception after Mass.
- **Rearrange hymnals and pick up litter.**

PROCEDURES FOR GREETERS:

- **Arrive 15-20 minutes before Mass begins.**
- Dress appropriately. You are the first impression of our parish to visitors as well as our regular parishioners.
- Sign-in in the sacristy.
- **Greet people in the same way as you would greet guests at your home. Handshake? Hug? Smile!!!**
- Stand in an appropriate place to greet people:

  > Outside the main doors in good weather

  > Open the doors as you greet people

  > If the greeters are a family, your children could open the doors as you greet people in the gathering space. Please spread out a bit and try to not stand in a tight line right by the door.

- **10:30 am — Invite young families to the childcare**

A Prayer For Ministers of Hospitality:

Lord Jesus, you welcomed all who came into your presence. May I reflect that same spirit through this ministry of hospitality.

May your light shine in my heart this day. Remove from me anything that would stand in the way of radiating your presence.

As people enter this Church to worship and praise You, may they hear your voice in my words and see your love in my actions.

May my "welcome" reflect our joy at their presence and my "good-by" encourage them to return soon.

I thank you for the opportunity to serve you and ask your blessing upon all my efforts through our God who is the giver of all gifts.

Amen.

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