

Ministry Formation - Hospitality

The ministry of hospitality is ancient. The biblical stories of welcome are compelling. For instance, Abraham and Sarah welcomed three strangers into their home and fed them. In return, he and Sarah were richly rewarded with a son.

At liturgy, the goal of hospitality is the unity of the assembly. The Eucharistic Prayers, following the consecration, pray: "Grant that we...may become one body, one spirit in Christ (E.P. III). In our time, Walter Cardinal Kasper has written about Eucharist as the "sacrament of unity." Augustine called it a "sign of unity, a bond of love. Aquinas, "the Sacrament of ecclesiastical unity." In the Jewish tradition, to invite someone to a meal is to welcome them into your family, so close is the relationship. This is the unity we seek in our worship assembly.

The ministry of hospitality is shared by all the assembly. We are all responsible for being warm and welcoming. Why? Because:

- Christ has chosen to dwell within us and is present in the assembly (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* #7).
- We are all baptized into Christ and recognize Christ in others. St. Teresa was able to work with people who were dying of hunger, old age and AIDS because she said: "I see in them the face of Christ."
- We are part of something larger "Local churches exist only in and out of the universal church" (*Lumen Gentium* #23)
- To welcome those who come to worship is to welcome Christ. To ignore those who come to worship is to ignore Christ.

Ushers and greeters assist the larger community as ministers of hospitality through duties that include: greeting, assisting those in need, taking up the collection, cleaning up before and after Mass.

Key guidelines for hospitality ministers before Mass:

- Be attentive to needs of the people.
- Be warm and welcoming.
- Be focused on others, not yourself; keep personal conversations to a minimum.
- Be visible, be positive, be polite.

Key guidelines for hospitality ministers during Mass:

- Pay attention and participate in the liturgy.
- Be a model, not a distraction.
- Don't move unnecessarily during times of silence, prayer, song.
- Move between sections of the liturgy or when other movement takes place.
- Move confidently and gracefully when movement is necessary.

Pay special attention to: the stranger; the elderly, youth, children.

A community's five steps of hospitality: 1-Smile; 2-Say hello; 3- Move to the middle of the pew; 4-Invite someone to sit with you. 5-Be aware of others and be present to them.