

Ushers Pre COVID19

The Ministry of Ushering is an important part of worship, it is highly visible to all entering and leaving the church. Ushers greet and welcome parishioners at the church entrances, seat attendees when necessary, and maintain order and security at services.

The parish provides four ushers at all weekend masses, Christmas, Easter and Confirmation celebrations. Ushers direct people towards the altar to receive Holy Communion, Adoration of the Cross, receiving the Ashes and at any time directed by the Presiding Priest.

They are responsible to pick up the weekend collection and ensure that the offertory procession is properly carried out. The weekend collection is removed and deposited in the rectory.

Ushers say goodbye to parishioners as they leave the church at the end of the service and offer bulletins.

They are ready to help anyone requiring assistance and have to be aware of what is happening during and after each service, and need to be prepared when necessary.

Ushers During COVID 19

I have been a parishioner at Sacred Heart since about 1983. I have been an usher there since about 1986.

I absolutely loved being an usher, but not so much so during Covid (whenever the church was actually open).

I dislike telling/suggesting where people sit as much as I'm sure they don't like being told what to do. While I understand that it is all for our common good in the long run, like everyone else, I am tired of rules and masks and all that goes with that. I call it "zombie church" - everyone with a mask, no singing, those strange "communion stations" behind plexiglass, no opportunity to socialize before and after Mass.

When we first re-opened the church, the rules were quite rigid. Politely request if people had taken their temperature. "Fill" the church from front to back (to maintain minimum common traffic). We are all creatures of habit and you can know in advance where people/families prefer to sit. Not so easy to accommodate. In later weeks, we could offer more flexibility in where we tried to direct people to sit.

"I prefer to sit near the back". "I'd like to sit near the front" (perhaps because of hearing issues). But you just can't do that with really limited capacity. Fortunately, there were only one or two times where we had to put up the signs that said "Sorry, but the church has reached capacity". That was the very worst.

The vast majority of people were so accommodating ("I will sit wherever").

Finally, from the perspective of ushering . . . a couple of positives. In many situations, many people (including ushers) were unable to attend – perhaps because they or someone in their family could be at risk; and that is totally understandable. But it clearly resulted in a shortage of resources. That meant being scheduled more often, and often for double or triple duty (usher, Lay Reader, Eucharistic Minister at the same Mass). Also, as the ushering group, we are an aging population. It was so refreshing to see a few MUCH younger people volunteer – young people like Mary Hogan, Monica Moniz, Nicole Moniz.

Senior Altar Servers

Larry Renaud

Sacred Heart Parish always had evening Mass as well as daily Mass. We had altar servers who were school boys at the evening Mass. The evening Mass slots were getting difficult to fill with young lads. Al Bedard discussed this with Father McMahon and the Senior Altar Servers became a reality. A group of men were assembled and these men served the evening Masses. This almost immediately led to men becoming Funeral Servers in place of the young boys. These changes took place in the mid 1990's. At this point young girls were not serving Mass. Now we have young girls serving weekend Masses and women of all ages serving daily, weekend Masses and Funeral Masses.

Sacred Heart always had two Priests, but with four weekend Masses plus two in Bright's Grove, it was becoming difficult at Communion time. Father McMahon appointed Brother Patrick and Brother Gregory (Brothers of St. Louis) and several lay men to be Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist. This began around 1978, one year after we asked for volunteers as he wanted people who were unable to attend Church due to age, sickness or other conditions to receive Communion weekly and daily if they were in hospital. These volunteers could be both men and women.

I remember the day I became a Eucharistic Minister; it was the same day Katherine Lynch and Margaret Hogan also became Ministers. They were full of joy. A few years later Communion under both species was being introduced. Due to the shortage of available Priests, hospitals were no longer able to have Priest Chaplains. Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist were badly needed.