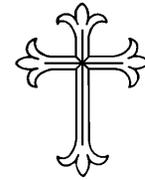


The Ministry
Of
Greeters



A Ministry
Shared By
St. Joseph's Faith Community
• Greenville, Delaware •

The Sunday Assembly



Our Sunday assemblies should always have about them something of the warm conviviality of a family reunion. A simple gladness in being together should mark each congregation as a community gathered in joyous love to rediscover the bonds of hope and faith that bind the members into a holy fellowship. Each arrival needs to experience the feeling of belonging, a sense that "it is good to be here" A keen perception of mutual acceptance should pervade the gathering so that a feeling of "group" can emerge and a spirit of brotherly and sisterly love can flourish. Hidden fears need to be laid to rest, and individuals need to be encouraged to break out of their private shells and break through that loneliness which is the thing most opposed to God.

True, no Sunday assembly will ever realize perfectly or express adequately the faith reality of Christian unity in Christ. That would be heaven on earth! Nonetheless, the Lord's Day celebration ought to be shining moment providing a foretaste and promise of better things to come when, in St. Augustine's beautiful phrase, "We shall be one Christ loving himself," in the great

Day of the Lord. Efforts in this direction tend to make Sunday Mass a heavenly experience and to authenticate the Sunday assembly as the great sacrament of Greeters and provide an essential ingredient that prepares the congregation for the recreative work of the Holy Spirit, who labors mightily in the celebration to make all who share in it "one body, one spirit in Christ."

A Ministry to Community



Such a faith vision of the Sunday assembly immediately reveals the great importance of Greeters. They, of course, must be the first to share this vision, to make it the motivating force of the service they render to the community, and to accept the challenge it presents to them. If Sunday Mass is ever to become the kind of community experience that can provide a foretaste of heaven, ever so much is demanded of Greeters. Perhaps more than all other ministers, they have to be people oriented. Strangers need to be put at ease; visitors need to be welcomed; the physically and mentally handicapped need to experience the love of the community and to realize their importance to its Christian integrity.

On Sunday it is people who are important. The gathering itself is the most significant

element of the worship environment. The greeters' task is to serve the community by helping it to become its best self. This demands of them a charity that is always willing to accept people as they are. Community never just happens. Its development is a labor of love, and none should work at it more earnestly than the greeters.

First things are always important. As servants of the worshiping community, their place at the entrances of the church normally allows them the privilege of making the official contact with those who gather for the Sunday celebration. Before they see the priest or hear the choir, parishioners come face to face with the greeters. This is an enormously important meeting, and, as far as is humanly possible, it ought to be an encounter enlivened by faith. It may well be a lively, even jovial meeting with friends and neighbors. But the eye of faith sees deeper. These are fellow citizens of the saints, brothers and sisters in Christ, assembling to hear his word and to respond with praise and thanks to his Father and ours. A warm welcome and gentle courtesy can set the whole tone for anything that might happen within the hearts of those who gather.

More than other ministers who serve the community as such, greeters have the opportunity to make personal contact with individuals. Even where the celebrant is at one door of the church before or after services, he can greet only a few of those who enter or exit, whereas greeters at the doors before and after Mass can meet almost everyone. A welcome smile, a word of kindness or reassurance on entering the church, a pleasant greeting or a sincere felicitation given when the parish bulletin is placed in the hands of departing worshipers - these could combine to become the most significant personal contacts the Church makes with people on the occasion of their Sunday worship.

A Ministry of Grace



A profound interdependence exists among the ministers of all engaged in Sunday worship. Each needs all the others. As the ushers

depend on other ministries and profit from their services, greeters themselves make an important contribution to the efficacy of their fellow ministers. Priests and deacons, ministers of the Word, of the Eucharist, and of music, all need the service the greeters render. With all who participate, the greeters are part of the sacrament and forerunners of the Gospel. Being warmly welcomed at the door by greeters is already a Eucharistic grace for the worshipers. It is given to greeters to prepare the soil for the seed of God's Word and to wet the appetites for Eucharistic fellowship. The graces mediated by ministers in the sanctuary, the choir, or the pews should find more receptive hearts by reason of other graces mediated by the greeters.