

Welcome...

They're highly visible. We know most of them by sight if not by name. If we need a seat, a bulletin, a place to deposit our collection envelope or directions to a cry room or restroom, they are our go-to guys (and occasionally girls and youngsters).

They are our ushers.

The full-time ones number 38, and there are six or so who serve as subs. But the word is that new ushers are both welcomed and encouraged. Jim Dettling, officially head of the group, but self-described as "more of an administrator," says the ideal situation would be to have 8 ushers at each weekend Mass.

So what does it take to be an usher? Jim says it's spelled out in the group's mission statement, which states in part that ushers are to "greet, welcome and assist parishioners and visitors to our church with a spirit of Christian hospitality." It also says that ushers "desire to serve" the religious staff as well as "parishioners and guests with respect and dignity while valuing their safety and welfare."

Further, Jim says, "there should be a respect for the faith" (shown in the usher's manner); they should dress appropriately (women with modesty, men usually with a jacket, but not necessarily a tie); and they should be outgoing and friendly.

Besides weekend Masses, ushers help on special occasions such as First Communion, Confirmation and events like Lessons and Carols where larger crowds are expected.

Additionally, ushers:

- Arrive at church 20 to 30 minutes before Mass
- Check their announcement board for special instructions
- Pass out Breaking Bread books
- Identify parishioners to present the gifts of bread and wine to the celebrant
- Guide people in Communion lines
- Distribute bulletins
- Clear exterior steps and walkways of snow and ice (if not previously removed) and apply salt if required
- They also may opt for certified training in CPR when the parish offers it.

Ushers meet with Fr. Valencheck once a year to review their mission statement and "hear any details Father has to pass on," says Jim.

Anyone interested in joining the ushering ranks can approach an usher when they come to church or contact Jim at 330-576-6130 or meandjg@outlook.com.

