

Have you noticed?

Some activities are so commonplace we seldom even notice them . . . even when they take place right in front of us . . . sometimes even when we interact with them one-on-one . . . even when they are important to activities we regularly participate in . . . activities we greatly value.

Virtually everyone at Mass last Sunday witnessed just such an activity. To a greater or lesser extent, depending on where you sit, you likely interacted personally with a fellow parishioner who was going out of his or her way to be helpful to you personally, or to you as a valued member of the Parish of St. Michael and St. Peter.

Hopefully, you've figured out who we're talking about, if not by name specifically, at least by the ministry he or she is actively part of.

Figure it out yet? One of these people, a fellow parishioner not unlike yourself, may be the first you interact with as you walk into Church. He or she is standing there with a broad smile and a warm greeting "Good morning" or perhaps, "Nice to see you this morning." It's typically not the start of even a brief conversation. It's just welcoming you back . . . to church, to Mass, to "your spiritual family gathering." It's nice to be "recognized" as *part of the family*, part of the community, part of *the faith community* of St. Michael and St. Peter's.

Wow! Someone took a minute to do all that with the simple, commonplace gesture of a friendly smile. It's a safe bet you never

thought "Where'd she learn to do that?" Or, "Who trained him?" Come on. What they did was as commonplace as waving to a friend as you drive down the street.

You may not have even noticed thinking about how good it felt to be recognized as part of the family, the community . . . a fellow traveler so to speak . . . a valued "disciple of Jesus Christ." Maybe, if you were really paying attention, you recognized these simple gestures as what they really were, warm gestures welcoming you and your participation in the Mass . . . a mystical reality in

which the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is renewed.

Okay! What's the big deal about greeting someone "arriving for Mass." The big deal is the Mass itself of course. It's the Mass itself that lends importance to the warm welcome you received. Sort of like getting off on the right foot in any important undertaking. Wouldn't you be surprised or even feel hurt if you were invited to a birthday party, or a company celebration, or a wedding reception, or . . . you name it, and no one even said "Hello" or "Hey, glad you could join us."



Alex DeWitt (left) and his son Gabe are greeted with a warm welcome before Sunday Mass, by Usher Maryann Page. Maryann and her family (husband Blair, and daughters Emily and Michale) usher at several Masses at St. Michael/St. Peter's.

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And these are just “parties”. Special occasions, sure. But they’re not *the mystical reality in which the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross is renewed*. They’re not The Mass.

The same people who greet you upon your arrival at Mass may also help you find a seat when the church is particularly crowded for a Mass on Christmas or Easter, for example.

During Mass itself . . .

We’ve all heard it said, perhaps



Four ushers are typically needed to “take-up” the collection at each Sunday Mass. Typically this only takes a few minutes, so it doesn’t interfere with the usher’s participation in the Mass. At some Masses, when enough ushers are not scheduled, volunteers like Matt Ryab are recruited.

even said it ourselves. “It’s all about the money.” Perhaps we’ve even used the word “tithing” on occasion. Tithing is a practice that has deep roots in religious tradition, specifically in Christianity. This practice holds significant spiritual and practical implications for believers.

That said, the fellow parishioners we are likely to notice most every Sunday, are those who “pass the basket”. You know, that guy or lady who’s hoping you’ll reach into your pocket or purse for a greenback or two, maybe a check, or that “collection envelope.”

Whether or not we tithe is between us and God, and perhaps a subject for another article. Still, it’s hard to imagine how St. Michael/St. Peter’s Parish could operate without the contributions at Mass, and these contributions need to be collected. That’s a rather simple job of course, but that doesn’t make it less important than any other ministry in the parish. Typically, at least four ushers are needed to “take up” the collection. One of these ushers will then bring the collection up to the altar as one of the “gifts,” at the same time other parishioners bring up the “gifts” of bread and wine.

Following Mass, these same ushers will sort and process the



One of the brief tasks of our ushers is performed by usher Sam Molinari . . . that of simply organizing the result of the collection taken up at Mass. It is typically completed even before all parishioners have departed.

“collection” before securing the church itself after everyone has departed . . . close and lock doors, turn off lights, etc.

With any given celebration of Mass at least four to eight ushers/greeters are needed. That means on a typical weekend St. Michael/St. Peter’s could use 12-24 ushers/greeters. All together the usher/greeter responsibilities typically take 20-40 minutes if we count during, before and after Mass.

We hope you will consider joining our usher/greeter team, if only for one Mass a month. To do so, all you need to do is reach out to any one of the ushers/greeters you see at Mass or contact Debbie or Andy Butler, our Usher/Greeter Ministry coordinators, at: 315-469-8415 or via email at dbutler18@twcny.rr.com. ■

The Page family speaks from experience

Blair, Maryann, Emily and Michale are one of the families who serve our parish in the Ministry of Ushers & Greeters. When asked for their thoughts about this important ministry they began by noting that “Ushering is a great way to contribute to the Church through a minimal time commitment. “We help out around 15 minutes before and after the Masses that we attend anyway,” they said, noting that, “ushering is something our whole family can do together.”

Blair adds, “If your kids are too small to help with the collection, they can still help with greeting and handing out the *Bulletins*.”

The Pages suggest that for families whose children are in parish youth activities, ushering is great for a “long-term service activity” needed in preparation for Confirmation. All this is not to suggest that volunteers for the Ushers and Greeters Ministry need to come as families. “Having a diverse group of volunteers (men, women, and children from the young to the young -at-heart) especially when greeting people is a great way to show that our church is welcoming to everyone,” notes Maryann.

Debbie and Andy Butler, Usher/Greeter Coordinators at St. Michael/St. Peter’s, suggest “If we can recruit just a handful of volunteers for each weekend’s Masses the commitment of volunteers can just be one Mass each month. “And,” they note, “If things come



Father Michael always reminds us to pick-up (and read) the SUNDAY BULLETIN. Our ushers and greeters make it easy to get a “Bulletin” to take home.

More than meets the eye

Greeting and welcoming fellow parishioners and visitors as well as taking up the collections isn’t all the ushers & greeters are responsible for doing. Most of us don’t think about it, but someone has to see to it that the church, the building itself, is ready for those who will participate in the Mass.

When you do think about it, you realize someone has to unlock the electronic and mechanical doors. Someone needs to see to it that such things as the elevator and hearing aids are ready for parishioners who need them. Who makes certain that heating or air conditioning are operating? Who’s available to help those who need special seating accommodations, a restroom, or the children's play area?

And, don’t forget, someone has to be available to manage/organize the collection taken-up during the Mass.

Who? You guessed it, our Ushers and Greeters. That could include you . . . or even your family.

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The Page family

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up that you need to be away for your regular weekend, swapping with another Usher(s) is generally very easy to coordinate.”

The Pages add, “Because the collection is taken up after the Creed, your prayer/reflection time is largely the same whether you usher or not and, it’s fun seeing familiar faces, getting to meet new people, and helping to build the community of our parish.

Maybe interested?

If this sounds like something you might be interested in doing, you can try it out before making a firm commitment. You are welcome, indeed encouraged to join any Usher team for a Mass to see what it’s like. Just come to Mass a few minutes early and let the greeter know you’d like to help out on that particular Mass to see what it might be like to become an usher and or a greeter. He/she will take it from there. ■



The Page family

You, too, could serve as an usher/greeter

To find out more about how you can help out feel free to call Debbie or Andy Butler, Usher and/or Greeter coordinators or simply drop this form in a collection basket.



More info please:

Just fill out this form and drop it in the collection basket the next time you attend Mass.

Andy or Debbie will give you a call, anxious to answer your questions.

Your Name: _____

Your Phone Number: _____