

St. Peter Church Instructions for Ushers
IMPLEMENTATION DATE: February 28 & March 1, 2015
(Updated February 18, 2015)

Introduction

First, allow me to thank you for accepting the role of usher here at St. Peter Church. Just as we greet guests to our home, make them feel welcome, and tend to their needs, so do you ushers perform an indispensable service in making the faithful feel welcome and comfortable as they gather for and depart from Mass every Sabbath and Holy Day of Obligation. I am so grateful for your generous service. You are among my most trusted parishioners. Indeed, any usher must be a model of integrity since he or she handles the sacrificial offerings of the faithful and publicly brings order and aplomb to the liturgical rituals. May the Lord bless you in this important position.

Lastly, please note that **the instructions contained herein do not go into effect until the Easter Masses on Sabbath Masses on April 4th & 5th, 2015.**

Schedules

In order to allow even more parishioners the opportunity to serve as ushers and to assure that ushers will be present at every Sabbath and Holy Day Mass at St. Peter Church, beginning on the Easter Masses in 2015 ushers will be scheduled in teams of four for all Sabbath and Holy Day of Obligation Masses. These schedules will be mailed to each individual usher and will be based on the preferences given by the ushers themselves. Extra copies of these schedules will also be obtainable from the sacristy, the parish office, and in a downloadable format from the parish website: www.StPeterChurch.net. We realize that this is a new development and hope it will help you fulfill your ministry as ushers in an even greater way. It will also provide greater teamwork and responsibility for those ushering.

Usher Captains

An usher captain will be designated among the ushers assigned for each Mass. The captain is to oversee the other ushers in a kind and patient way at a given Mass. The captain is also the person who should seek out a family, couple, or group of individuals to bear the gifts of wine, water, and bread for the Mass.

The pastor will appoint an usher captain based on his or her dependability, knowledge, and aptitude to work with and lead others. Those who discern the capacity to serve as a captain are invited to speak with the pastor.

Substitutes

Because all ushers will be scheduled, it is vitally important that an usher find a substitute if he or she cannot fulfill their duty at a given Mass. Included in your schedules will be a complete list of approved ushers at St. Peter and their contact information. If you cannot find a substitute to replace you, please call or leave a message for Fr. Cook at (402) 341-4560 ext. 104 so we can find a substitute and be adequately prepared.

Walk-ons

In the occasion that the assigned ushers are absent for a given Mass and no formal substitutes are present, ushers who are present but not assigned are welcome and encouraged to “walk-on,” that is, to simply volunteer and assist at the Mass in need or to become a fifth and sixth usher for a Mass – see further explanations below. Walk-ons should not assume an assigned usher is absent until five minutes before the start of the particular Mass.

Occasionally ushers may not show up for their assigned Masses and no other trained and approved ushers are present to take their places. The usher captain for that given Mass – or another suitable usher if the captain is

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also absent – should search for replacements from among the congregation. Men or women known to the usher captain and who are properly dressed should be among the first invited to replace those missing.

Dress

Ushers are not ancillary to the liturgy. Even in the former, minor orders, the ministry of porter was formally acknowledged and given. The porter became the lowest of the four minor orders prescribed by the Council of Trent. This was the first order a seminarian was admitted to after receiving the tonsure. The porter had in ancient times the duty of opening and closing the church-door and of guarding the church; especially of ensuring that no unbaptized persons would enter during the Eucharist. Later on, the porter would also guard, open and close the doors of the sacristy, baptistery and other areas in the church. The porter was not a part of Holy Orders administering sacraments but simply a preparatory job on the way to the Major Orders until its suppression by Pope Paul VI after the Second Vatican Council.

Though you are not formally “porters,” you continue to serve that great need within the liturgy of fostering order and security. Because your assistance is truly invaluable and because you are akin to a liturgical minister, it is important that you provide a good example for the rest of the faithful. This first entails your full, active and conscious participation in the liturgy. Ushers should truly listen, respond, and pray within the Mass. Secondly, ushers should conduct themselves with the greatest prudence and charity. Lastly, ushers should dress in a manner appropriate to the worship of God.

All ushers are encouraged to be well groomed and to wear their best clothes when attending Mass. One person’s “best clothes” may be different than another’s, but all ushers should strive to wear whatever is their “Sunday best.” This is done not to impress others but as a visible sign of love for the Divine nature of the Mass. It also adds professionalism to the usher’s activities.

Women ushers should never wear tight or provocative clothing. All dresses, skirts, or shorts must extend at least to the knees. Pants should never be form-fitting. Blouses or shirts should not be tight, nor should they be revealing. Shirts should not have inappropriate, secular sayings or images upon them. Earrings are allowed, but women ushers should not wear any other visible body piercings.

Men ushers should never wear earrings or other bodily piercings while serving at Mass. Men should always wear long pants. Shorts are never allowed. Men are ideally encouraged to wear suits or at least a collared shirt and trousers, if possible. Jeans should not be worn unless an usher has no better pair of pants. Hats are never worn by men in church. Shirts should not have inappropriate, secular sayings or images upon them.

Ushers’ Room

The former bathroom on the west side of the narthex (vestibule) is now our official Ushers’ Room. In this room you will find a standing cabinet in which can be found:

1. Ushers’ lanyards
2. Sign-in book
3. Current ushers’ schedule and additional copies
4. Metal collection baskets with handles
5. Substance to sprinkle on vomit or other unwanted fluids

To unlock the Ushers’ Room please press the code 3579. To lock the door, please press the center button with the image of the lock. This room should always be locked when not in use. If the batteries are dead or someone forgets the code, a key for this door is kept on a nail inside the closet for albs in the sacristy.

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The metal collection baskets in handles should always be returned and stored to the cabinet in the Ushers' Room when not in use. Wicker baskets that are used for the presentation of the gifts may also be stored in the Ushers' Room. Sometimes they may also be found in the sacristy above the altar boys' albs, along with giant white baskets. The white baskets should be used at any high-attendance Mass or any Mass where there are characteristically lots of cash donations.

BEFORE MASS

Sign in

Ushers are asked to arrive at least ten minutes before an assigned Mass and to immediately go to the usher's room to sign their names in the appropriate places in the binder. Substitutes or "walk ons" should sign their name next to the usher's name they are replacing.

Lanyards

Lanyards have been purchased in both English and Spanish to elevate and certify your position. Please put on a lanyard for the duration of the Mass and return it to the ushers' room after Mass.

Gift Bearers

Before Mass the usher captain should approach and ask a family, couple, or group of individuals if they are willing to carry up the gifts. Generally speaking, 2-4 people are needed to help bring up the gifts of bread, water and wine, and the filled collection basket. The same people may not bring up the gifts more than once a month. The usher captain should always ask those under consideration when they last carried up the gifts at Mass.

Moreover, children may assist in bringing up the gifts with their parents but **children are NEVER allowed to carry up the collection basket** in either the first or second collection. The collection basket is often too heavy for children and they can become confused. Only adults may carry the collection basket in the preparation of the altar and at the second collection.

Greeting

In the absence of formal greeters, any ushers are allowed and encouraged to come before Mass to act as greeters by welcoming people as they arrive and by giving them the appropriate hymn book and liturgy guides, if needed. Moreover, ushers are welcome to pass out bulletins to people at the exits after Mass. These are optional suggestions; they are not required of our ushers.

DURING MASS

Health and Protection

The tradition of ushers originated in the minor order of porter which was composed of seminarians who were entrusted to "guard" the doors and the liturgy. As a result, ushers should be among the first people to assist in the removal of unruly or inebriated individuals. Ushers should call the police immediately if someone appears dangerous.

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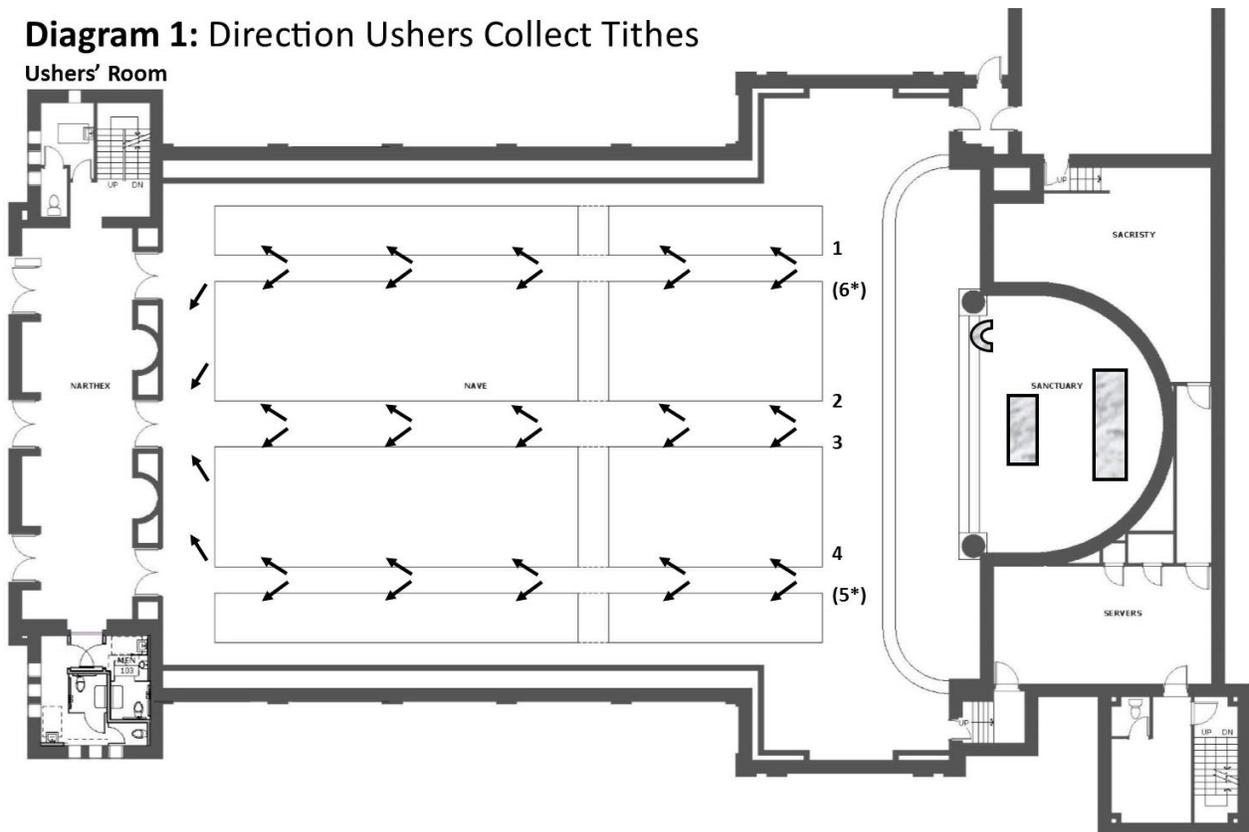
Ushers should also be among the first people to assist anyone who seems faint or gravely ill. Ushers are NOT expected to give health care but should be present to ascertain the situation, assist the person, and call an ambulance or the police, if necessary.

Collection

At the end of the Creed the ushers should walk to the narthex (vestibule) of the church and retrieve their metal collection baskets. When the Universal Prayer – the petitions – are finished and everyone sits down then the ushers walk to the front of the church. The ushers, because they are carrying their baskets, should bow at the waist simultaneously to the low altar and begin to take up the collection. **See Diagram 1** for the numbers of ushers and their corresponding aisles. Usher 1 is in the large side aisle to the west. **Ushers 2 & 3** are in the main center aisle. Usher 4 is in the large side aisle to the east. Ushers should be sure to smile and to be patient with people as they reach into their pockets and purses to retrieve a donation. Ushers use the pole on the end of their basket and slide the basket in front of the people, slowly and patiently. **Ushers 1 & 4** need to attend to the people in the pews on both the east and west sides of their aisles.

Ushers are assigned to teams of four and, minimally, four ushers should be present at every Mass: one usher in each of the side aisles and two ushers in the center aisle. However, if more than four ushers are available for a given Mass, then **a fifth and sixth usher may be added**. **See Diagram 1** again. These additional ushers, **ushers 5 & 6**, assist **ushers 1 and 4** respectively by taking up the collections on the side aisles. In the case of six ushers, **ushers 1 & 6** and **4 & 5** need to stagger themselves since the side aisles are too small for two ushers to stand side by side: one of these two side ushers should go first and then the other usher follows.

Diagram 1: Direction Ushers Collect Tithes

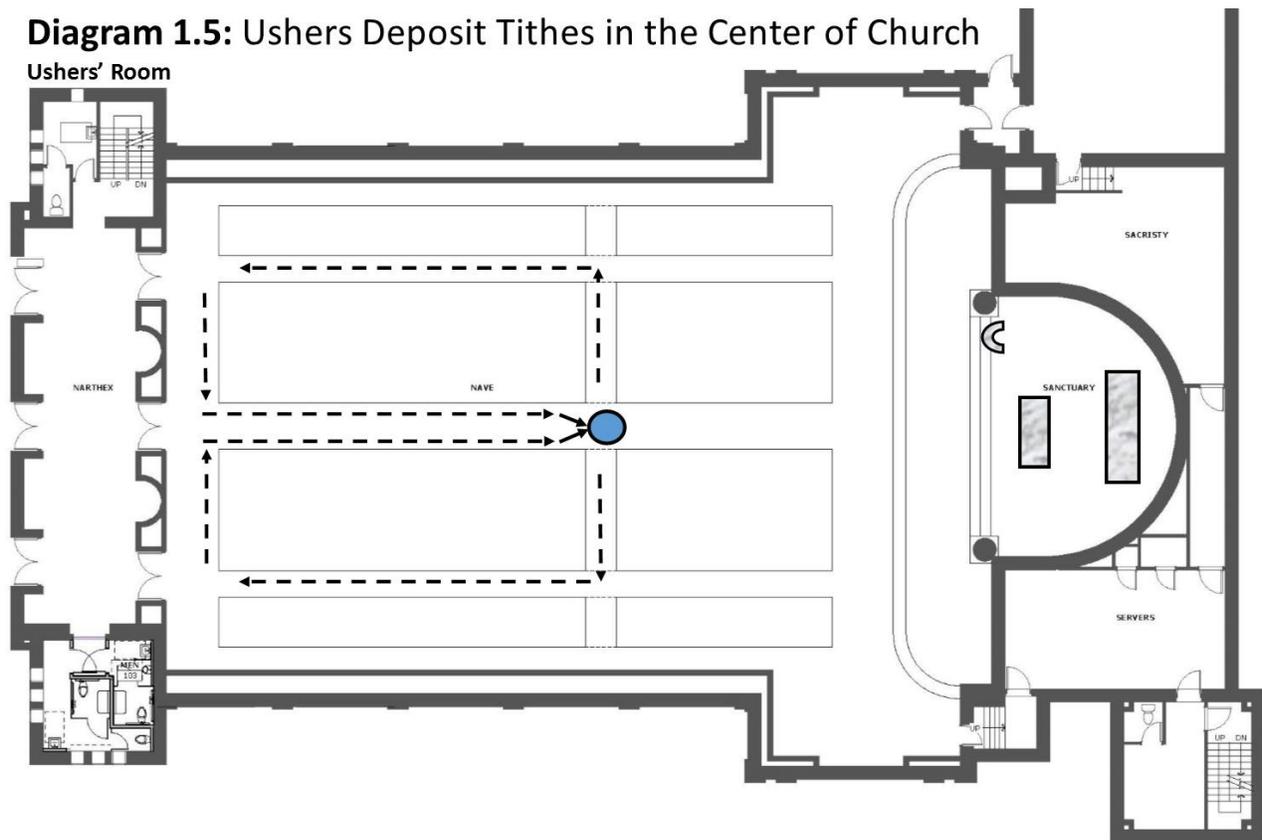


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Ushers should also be sure to give those standing in the transepts, the back of church, and in the narthex the opportunity to give a donation.

Once any usher is finished with his part in obtaining the collection he should go to the center of the church to deposit his donations into the wicker gifts basket above the floor medallion of the anchor. Ushers do not have to wait for all of the other ushers to be done in their areas in order to approach the gift basket. **See Diagram 1.5** below. One of the ushers needs to hold the wicker gifts basket for the others as they place their contents into the basket. Ushers **NEVER** pour the contents of their metal baskets into the gifts basket anywhere other than above the floor medallion of the anchor. After depositing their collections into the main basket they walk away down the side or center aisles (whichever is most convenient), returning their metal baskets to the ushers' room. Ushers are free to pass their baskets to other ushers so that not all of them have to return the collection baskets to the ushers' room.

Diagram 1.5: Ushers Deposit Tithes in the Center of Church



Change

Ushers should **NEVER** make change for people and **NEVER** reach into their collection baskets. This policy prevents misperceptions and exists for the sake of the ushers' security and reputation.

If someone wants change because their bill is too large, then thank them for their generosity and say: "Thank you for your generosity. I'm sorry, but we can never make change during Mass. You are welcome to wait until next Mass to bring your donation."

Gift Bearers

If there are sufficient altar boys, the Master of Ceremonies (or M.C.) altar boy will come down the center aisle and lead up to the altar the gift bearers chosen by the usher captain. However, if there are not enough altar

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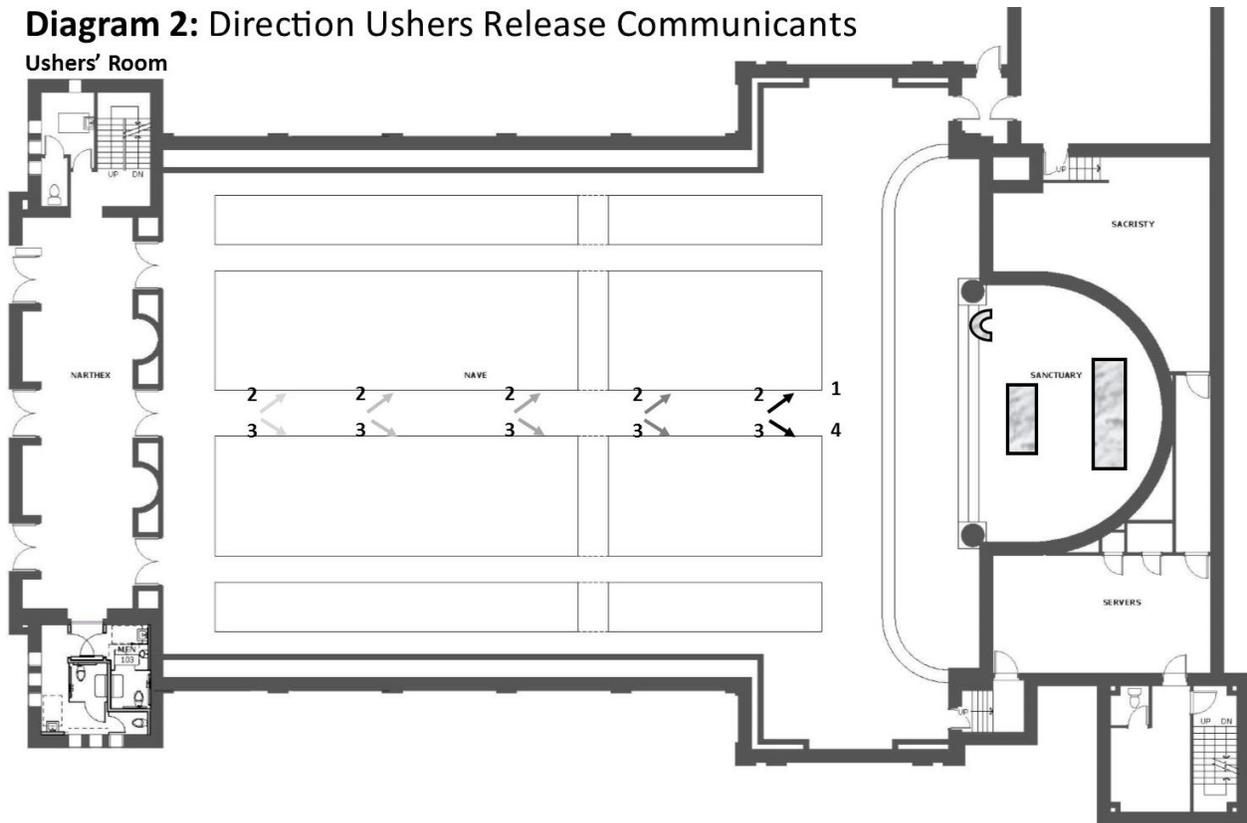
boys, the usher captain or other ushers are responsible for handing over the various gifts to the gift bearers and to send them down the center aisle in the right configuration toward the altar. The lead or first gift bearers are always those bearing the altar breads in the golden ciborium and the cruets filled with wine and water. After them walks the adult volunteer(s) carrying the collection basket. **ONLY** adults may carry up the collection basket in either the first or second collections. The usher assisting the gift bearers should not tell them to walk forward **UNTIL** the priest celebrant stands up at his chair.

Communion

While the people and the priest celebrant say, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed,” **ushers 1 and 4** walk down their respective side aisles and **ushers 2 and 3** walk down the center aisle to the front of the church. They should genuflect to the Eucharist which is now on the altar and wait standing in their respective places. **See Diagram 2** below.

After the celebrant gives Communion instructions for those who are gluten-intolerant, **ushers 2 and 3** kindly dismiss those in the pews next to each of them and send the communicants forward. After a pew is emptied the usher takes a step back and releases the next pew. **Ushers 1 and 4**, however, remain at the front of the pews on each side of the main aisle to encourage people towards the rail and to make a second line behind those already at the altar rail.

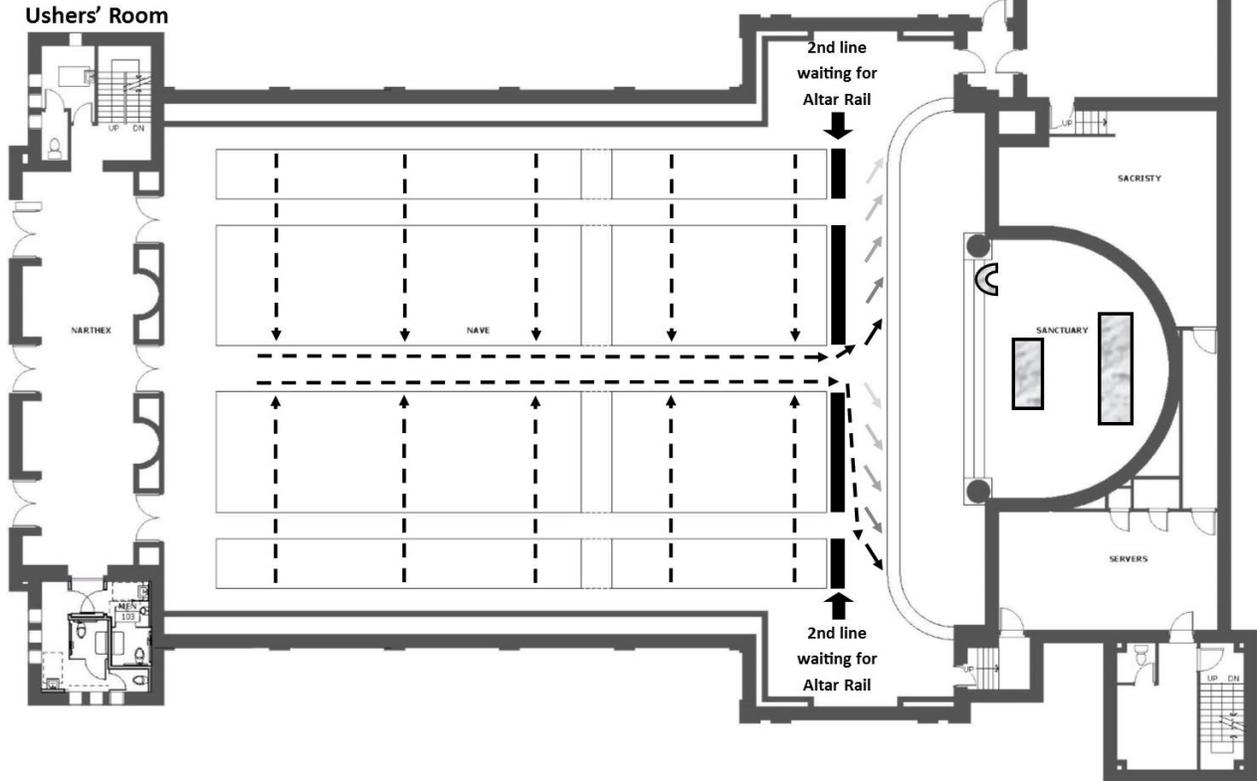
Diagram 2: Direction Ushers Release Communicants



With the exception of seniors and disabled people sitting in the smaller side pews, **ALL communicants** should come down the center aisle in two lines to receive Communion. If Communicants in the section of smaller pews on the east and west sides of the church decide to go down the side aisles, do not stop them – they may need to do this because of age or infirmity. **See Diagram 3** for the traffic flow towards the altar rail.

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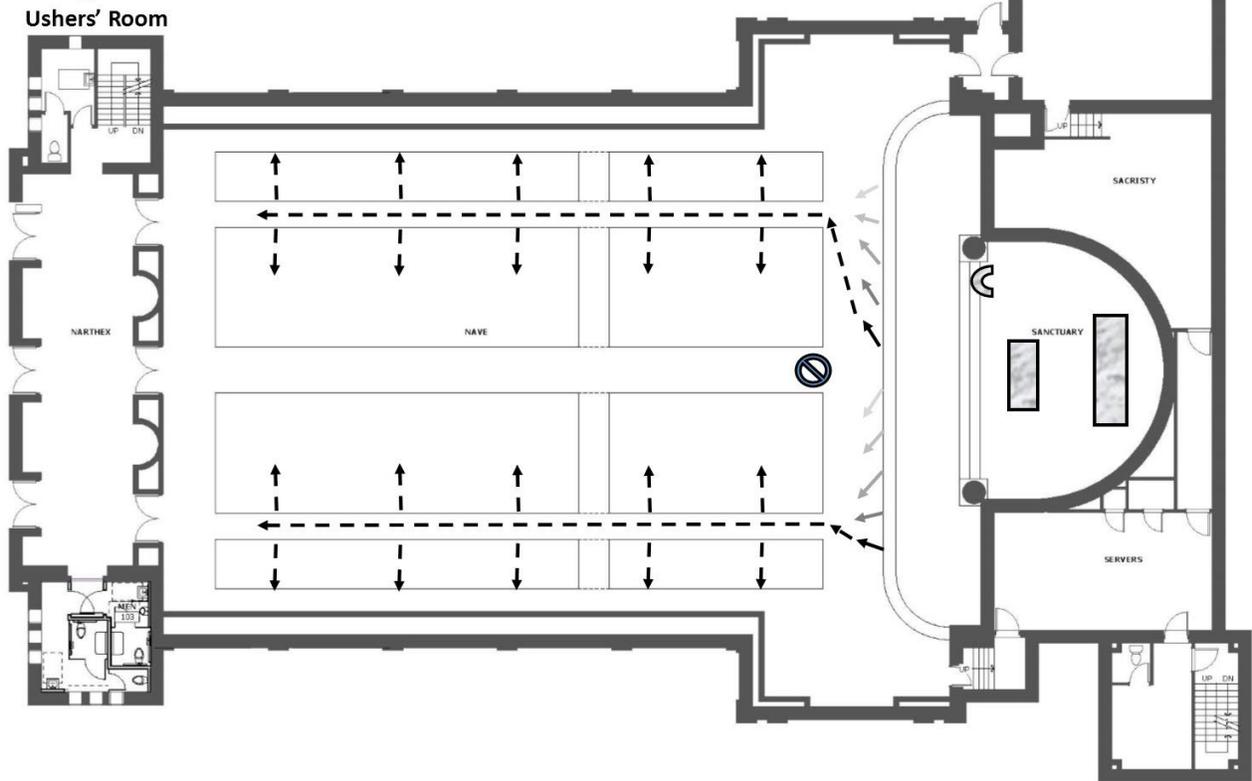
Diagram 3: Direction Communicants Approach the Altar Rail



After receiving Communion at the altar rail, Communicants should return to their pews **ONLY** by way of the side aisles. **Ushers 1 and 4** can help explain to people that they should use the side aisles to return to their pews in case they try to return by way of the main aisle. **See Diagram 4** to see how communicants should return to their pews after receiving Communion. Ushers should fall into the Communion line **AFTER** all others receiving the Host are in front of them and **BEFORE** those who are gluten-intolerant.

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Diagram 4: Direction Communicants Return to Their Pews



Second Collection

Any second collections will be published in the bulletin and mentioned by the priest celebrant earlier in the given Mass. Whenever there is a second collection, the ushers should walk back to the narthex (vestibule) of the church after receiving Communion and retrieve their metal collection baskets. When the Prayer after Communion is finished and all are instructed to be seated again for the second collection, the ushers walk to the front of the church. The ushers, because they are carrying their baskets, should bow at the waist simultaneously to the low altar and begin to take up the second collection in the same manner as the first.

Once the ushers are finished with the collection they all meet in the center of the church above the floor medallion of the anchor and pour the contributions from their metal baskets into the one wicker basket that will be brought up to the server. The ushers return their metal baskets to the ushers' room.

As soon as the second collection is readied, an adult, if not the usher him or herself, carries the basket to the front of the church where he or she bows to the altar boy receiving it and bows to him again afterwards and before returning to his or her seat. Again, children are **NEVER** allowed to carry the second collection basket. Do not wait for the altar boy to be in place before presenting the second collection; the altar boy will intercept the person bearing the second collection at the altar rail gates. If no altar boy is present then the second collection basket should be set down on the floor of the sanctuary directly behind the altar rail near the gates.

NOTE: The person carrying up the second collection should never walk or approach the altar while a guest is speaking from the ambo. In such circumstances the person waits until the speaker is finished and leaves the sanctuary before carrying up the second collection basket.

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After Mass

After Mass ushers are invited to walk through the pews and to collect any hymnals and liturgy guides that need to be put away and to throw away any large pieces of garbage or paper. Valuable or personal objects left behind should be brought to the sacristy for the lost and found box.

If a Mass is the last Mass of the day or the last Mass for a lengthy period of time, ushers are encouraged to lock the panic bars on the doors on the west, south and east sides of the church using the key found in the closet in the sacristy. The church door key must always be returned to its nail in the sacristy.

Prayer

We recommend that all ushers learn and say the following prayer adapted from an ancient Celtic prayer attributed to St. Patrick. It will deepen your service to your neighbor and heighten your relationship with Christ.

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise, Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me, Christ in the eye that sees me, Christ in the ear that hears me. Amen.