

Sample Formation Session

Ministers of Hospitality

Recommended Resource: Guide for Ushers & Greeters by Lawrence E. Mick

I. Welcome & Introductions

II. Opening Prayer

Pray together the prayer on *Handout A*.

III. Presentation I: Family Hospitality

Leader discusses their own experience of family gatherings in relation to hospitality. How do we welcome people into our homes; how do we make people feel like they belong? The key here is to talk about times in your family when hospitality happens and when and why it is so important.

IV. Presentation II: Hospitality in the Scriptures

There are many examples of hospitality in scripture. Leader invites the participants to break into groups and choose one of the scripture passages for reflection. After 5 – 10 minutes of discussion, invite the groups to share one or two insights. (*See Handout B*)

V. Presentation III: Nitty Gritty Things to Know

(*See Handouts C & D*)

VI. Closing Prayer – Blessing of Ministers of Hospitality/Ushers

(*Sign of the Cross*)

O God of divine welcome and hospitality,
who calls us together with praise and thanksgiving in the Mass.
Bless these men and women who serve your people as ministers of hospitality/ushers,
greeting each person in a Christ- like manner,
directing processions in your honor and as a community of faith,
and collecting the gifts of your priestly people.
Form them to be prayerful, patient, helpful, and understanding in their service to others.
Gift them with a friendly and pleasant spirit to those they greet in the mass and throughout their
day.
In thanksgiving for their service as hospitality/usher ministers
we ask this prayer of blessing through Jesus Christ your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit
One God for ever and ever. AMEN

Handout A

Prayer

Welcoming and gracious God,
whose love and compassion are boundless,
place in us a desire
to greet each person we meet
with the same love, compassion, and respect
we would show to you.
Help us to see your face
in every person,
and to serve your people
with dignity and care.
Bless us as we seek to love as you loved,
and serve as you served.
We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen

Handout B

Hospitality in the Scriptures

Love Your Enemies: Luke 6:27-38

“But to you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic. Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. For if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same. If you lend money to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit (is) that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, and get back the same amount. But rather, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as (also) your Father is merciful.”

Reflection

This passage is directed to Jesus’ would be disciples. Love your enemy is a radical kind of love. It begins at home and expands outward. The kind of love that is referred to in this reading is called *agapan*, which is an action. The action looks at the best we can do for others. In the first sentence we are told how to carry out the love towards our enemies: do good, bless, and pray. We may not feel love for an enemy, but we can act in love towards them. Verse 31 speaks simply what loving action is about: “Do to others, as you would have them do to you.”

- What word or phrase struck you the most?
- What does this say to us as ministers of hospitality?
- Think for a moment of those who are your “enemies” and fill in the blank
“Do good to _____, (*who hate you*)
Bless _____, (*who curse you*)
and pray for _____ (*who mistreats you*)”
- If we are to “do to others, as you would have them do to you,” what might that look like at the parish? In our ministry?

Love is... 1 Corinthians 13:1-8

“If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, (love) is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.”

Reflection: The Corinthians quest for spiritual gifts and power is in question. Paul is trying to make the point that speaking prophetically means nothing unless one has love. While knowing all things, reflecting, and praying, there is more. Actions speak loud when grounded in love.

- When you think of love songs, which one comes to mind? What is it about the song that you like or dislike?
- What are the seven characteristics of love? What is love not?
- What is love when reflecting on the ministry of hospitality?
- Love is....
- Love is...
- Love is...
- Love is...
- Love is...
- Love is...
- Love is...
- Love is not...

Zacchaeus Luke 19:1-10

“He came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town. Now a man there named Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector and also a wealthy man, was seeking to see who Jesus was; but he could not see him because of the crowd, for he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus, who was about to pass that way. When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house." And he came down quickly and received him with joy. When they all saw this, they began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a descendant of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost."

Reflection

The name Zacchaeus means clean. He is a rich toll collector who would have been considered unclean in the Jewish culture because he worked for the Romans and was considered a sinner overcharging the Jewish people. In the story, he responds generously to God's call and is promised salvation. The folks gathering around him murmur when they hear Jesus invite himself to the "unclean" home for dinner. This murmur meant that they did not approve of Jesus eating with someone unclean. Jesus crosses or changes the culture boundary by welcoming saints and sinners into the kingdom of God.

- What word or phrase in this story jumped out at you?
- Imagine being the person who is guilty of many sins, unclean so to speak. How would it feel to have Jesus invite himself to your house?
- We are invited in many ways throughout our day into the company of others. How inviting and hospitable are we?
 - How might you rate yourself on a scale of 1-10 in this area? Why?

Martha and Mary Luke 10:38-42

As they continued their journey he entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. She had a sister named Mary (who) sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me." The Lord said to her in reply, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her."

Reflection

In view is household Christianity where women host the church in their houses. Sitting at the feet of Jesus is a sign of a disciple. The serving refers to *diakonein* and is about Christian ministry. The lesson is not about what one should be serving but rather the underlying attitude in service. That attitude must be nurtured by listening to God's word. Then we can serve others graciously and lovingly without complaint.

- What word or phrase struck you as you read this story?
- What kinds of things do you currently do to nurture your spirit?
- Think about things you could do spiritually to prepare your heart to do the ministry of hospitality with a generous and loving attitude. The following are a few ideas:
 - Read the Sunday readings ahead of time.
 - Take 5 minutes of silent time prior to serving.
 - Read a reflection from one of the daily reflection books.

Matthew 10:40

"Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me; and those who welcome me welcome the one who sent me."

Reflection: This verse is important because when we freely receive and welcome Christ into our hearts our discipleship is firm in God. We represent God to others and need to be welcoming as God is welcoming to us.

- Who was one of the most unusual houseguest you or your family has ever entertained?
- How welcoming of a person are you? Does anyone make you uncomfortable?
- How might the parish be more welcoming?

Jesus washes his disciple's feet John 13: 1-17

“Before the feast of Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father. He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end. The devil had already induced Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, to hand him over. So, during supper, fully aware that the Father had put everything into his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God, he rose from supper and took off his outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Master, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me." Simon Peter said to him, Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well." Jesus said to him, "Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed, for he is clean all over; so you are clean, but not all." For he knew who would betray him; for this reason, he said, "Not all of you are clean." So when he had washed their feet (and) put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, "Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me 'teacher' and 'master,' and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do. Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than his master nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it.”

Reflection:

Foot washing was a sign of hospitality. Sometimes it was performed by the master's slaves when welcoming an important person into the house. Abraham and Isaac wash the feet of the angelic visitor, Michael. The disciples are challenged to follow the example of Jesus after he departs. We too, are called to wash feet (metaphorically speaking) as Disciples of Christ.

- What word or phrase of this story struck you the most?
- Think about people in your home, work, or community who practice the meaning of foot washing? What do they do? What is their attitude?
- Why do you think people in church sometimes do not want to do anything as intimate as the equivalent of washing feet?
- As ministers of hospitality, what does foot washing mean to you?

Nitty Gritty Things to Know

As ministers of hospitality, there are things to be aware of, procedures to know, and appropriate ways to handle certain situations. While we won't be able to address every issue and situation here, we hope to cover the basics so that as particular situations arise, you will be equipped to handle them. At the end of this section is a checklist that you can use for yourself and your parish to see how well hospitality is practiced on a regular basis.

As a Minister of Hospitality, you will never say:

"Ask someone else..."

As a Minister of Hospitality, you will say:

"I'm not sure, but I'll help you find someone who will know..."

As a Minister of Hospitality, you will never say:

"That's not my job..."

As a Minister of Hospitality, you will say:

"Yes, I'd be happy to help you..."

Always remember:

- Hospitality is not random acts of kindness, it's a lifestyle
- Hospitality is not warm and fuzzy, it's sacrificial and costly (even though act warmly and kindly)
- Hospitality always says, "You are welcome here. Come and be with us."

Be sure to know:

- Where is the phone?
- Where are the bathrooms?
- Where are all the exits?
- Where is the fire extinguisher?
- Where is the defibrillator?
- Where are the coat racks?
- Where is the sacristy?
- Where is the seating for wheelchairs?

How do you rate?

The following help us to know how we are doing.

Statement	Always 5 pts.	Often 4 pts.	Sometimes 3 pts.	Rarely 2 pts.	Never 1 pt.
I wear a name tag each Sunday until the end of Mass.					
I dress appropriately and avoid jeans					
I come to church ½ hour early and check in.					
I sit in the pews as an active participant and one or two ministers stay quietly in the back ready to help.					
My focus before and after Mass is to greet everyone.					
I am aware and assist anyone in trouble. I know where the fire extinguishers are and how to use them. I know where the church exits are.					
I seat people as necessary.					
I am ready when the collection and communion are about to begin.					
I am a friendly person and work at learning people's names. I try to learn at least one name each time I serve.					
Smiling comes easily to me.					
I am comfortable with people of all ages. I am especially welcoming to the elderly, teenagers, small children, and the disabled.					
I spend time after Mass cleaning up the pews and other responsibilities after most people have left.					
I do know the names and faces of the ushers I serve with and if there is a new person, I work at remembering them.					
People say I am a friendly and hospitable person inside church and out in the community.					
I read the Bible on a regular basis and spend time in prayer before I serve.					
I participate in other events of the parish and either participate in or attend the Easter Triduum.					
As a group, we make sure someone is bringing up the gifts and vary the ages of the participants.					
I serve in only liturgical ministry at each Mass.					
I am aware of the liturgical season changes and any special environment or ritual needing my attention.					
I enjoy being a minister of hospitality.					
<i>TOTAL POINTS</i>					

81-100 Outstanding Hospitality Minister!

61-80 Great Work in Hospitality!

40-60 Doing okay but need improvement

below 40 Needs major improvement-there is always hope or maybe a change in ministry

How Does Your Parish Rate?

It is also important to look at the parish as a whole and the ministry of hospitality.

Statement	Always 5 pts.	Often 4 pts.	Sometimes 3 pts.	Rarely 2 pts.	Never 1 pt.
Our parish has an equitable number of males and females serving as well as a range of ages participating in hospitality ministry					
Generally, ministers of hospitality serve only 3 years order that new people get a chance to serve.					
There is a regular gathering for spiritual formation for hospitality ministry and/or faith formation opportunities.					
There are articles in the bulletin and newsletter on hospitality.					
My parish recognizes the importance of the ushers/hospitality ministers.					
We are informed of any changes in the Mass that might affect our ministry such as a baptism, special blessings, and special things to hand out, etc.					
All entrances have a hospitality minister stationed there for greeting. When the weather is appropriate, ministers stand outside to greet.					
Our parish provides name tags.					
The hospitality ministers are well-trained when they begin.					
The people in hospitality are very friendly and helpful.					
The parish offers CPR training or assists the ministers of hospitality in finding a training location.					
There is good communication between the priest and ministers of hospitality.					
The parish has barrier free entrances.					
Our parish is very hospitable and especially welcomes those from different cultures.					
TOTAL POINTS					

61-75 Outstanding Parish!

46-60 Great Parish. Demonstrates a willingness to serve others

31-45 Needs improvement but there is hope. Think about getting involved and help improve the hospitality of the parish.

Below 30 Needs major improvement and faith-lift in the area of hospitality.