

For Church Worship Services...

# The Greeting Ministry

ΠΙΘΕΛΨΙ ΝΤΕ ΝΙΤΑΕΜΟΥ†

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When I write about the ‘**Greeting Ministry**,’ I am referring to those few people from the congregation of the church who should wait at the entrance of the church to welcome the visitors to the church and prepare them to participate in the prayers. These greeters should have a table that has placed upon it a guest book, pens, greeting cards, prayers books, and packets to give to the visitors which include brochures about the church in general, the creed, instructions for first time visitors, the service schedule of the church, and a welcome letter from the priest of the church and the congregation.

At a deeper level, the Greeting Ministry is a ministry for the Lord Jesus Christ and encompasses the believers revealing the Lord Jesus Christ’s love to others, in order to draw others to God’s salvation and to the Coptic Church.

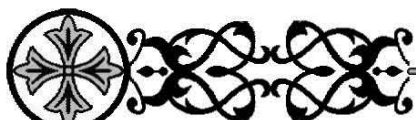
## **Objectives of the Greeting Ministry**

As servants in the greeting ministry our objectives are:

- 1) Make people feel welcome visiting the church.
- 2) Let the newcomers feel wanted, not just welcomed.
- 3) Let them feel they can be a part of the Church; not simply visitors for a day.
- 4) Help them to become familiar and feel the love of God and the spirituality of our Church.

- 5) We need to make sure that we welcome people warmly, with genuine love for them.

This reminds me of a story. This story was about a hotel owner that wanted to treat visitors with great love and her goal was to bring them to the Lord Jesus Christ. One day two woman entered the hotel, one was talking, and the other was silent. The owner of the hotel had two choices: either to neglect her or do her best in showing her the Lord Jesus Christ. The next morning, the owner welcomed her and attempted to make conversation with the visitor. After three days, the lady still had not responded to her warm welcome and so the owner decided to give her a gift and include a small brochure about the Lord Jesus Christ. The owner tried to hug her, but the lady did not return the hug. After three months had passed, the visitor wrote a letter to the owner of the hotel and told her that she had never been hugged before. She continued to talk about how her life had changed and she now knew the Lord and allowed Him to work in her life. We need to encourage the individual(s) to participate in the Divine Liturgy. Each new comer needs to receive a Divine Liturgy book in order to follow along with the worship service. We must encourage them to join in the fellowship hour after the Divine Liturgy. This is a great way to make them feel welcomed, wanted, and a “part” of the Coptic Church.



### **Other Things to Consider when greeting Visitors**

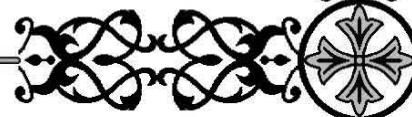
We need to know that first impressions are extremely important—the person can conclude a lot about our attitudes towards visitors in the first few minutes of entering the church building and thus can determine whether he/she will return to the Coptic Church.

1-We want to have a warm and sincere handshake, a friendly hello or welcome, or other form of greetings for the visitors, so that they know how happy we are to have them in our Church.

2-We need to realize that in order to serve others, we must enter the Church before them in order to prepare for their arrival. This means that we need to come earlier than the rest of the congregation. We must come at least 15 minutes prior to the rest in order to prepare pens, cards, a table, pamphlets, and guest book for the people that will attend that particular day service.

3-We will need at least one man and one woman seated at the greeting table in order to organize the table and help seat the visitors in the Church's nave.

4-We need to seat the visitors towards the upper-middle of the Church. The front of the Church can be quite intimidating, since they could feel that they are being watched, and the back of the Church can be noisy and full of distractions.



### **Understanding Visitors**

It is extremely important that we all should consider the visitor's different emotions and expectations that come along with entering a new, unique church, like our church. By doing so, we are able to “think” as the newcomer, and thus we are able to provide them with a blessed experience.

When a person first visits our church there are a few main things they will be looking for or thinking about or have the feeling of:

1. The church is an unfamiliar place and everyone is a stranger to him/her.
2. The visitors are looking for something spiritual—they are most likely seeking peace and joy and are looking for spiritual fulfillment.
3. The rites, hymns, prayers, language, and culture, church setting are foreign.
4. The newcomer wants to feel wanted and welcome and that he/she belongs to the church.



### **Addressing the Concerns and Needs of Visitors**

1-The first impression, usually the first few minutes, is incredibly essential to the visitor. He/she can determine a lot about the church in a short period of time, which is the reasoning behind having a clean, organized, and quiet church for anyone to enter.

2-How can I let the visitor feel our church is a very spiritual church? Sometimes we overlook this aspect of the service, when it is really something that a visitor is looking for. A good example of letting them know about our uniqueness and great spirituality would be to say, "Our worship service comes from the first centuries of Christianity and was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It may not be familiar to you, but it is a very spiritual service." We should also provide the visitor with a pamphlet telling about the "Spirituality of the Christian Orthodox Church." It is a good idea to say it this way because many people feel "Orthodox" refers to a Jewish faith or it is not a part of Christianity. We also need to provide them with a Divine Liturgy book and let them know that the screen overhead is for them to use and follow along with. Finally, we offer the option of having someone to sit with them during the Divine Liturgy to help them. All these steps kindly taken will make the visitor feel comfortable and wanted.

3- We want to make sure that we introduce ourselves immediately. It is a great idea to give them your name and welcome them on behalf of the Christian Coptic Orthodox Church and on behalf of our congregation and priests. Say something like: 'My name is ----. On behalf of the congregation and the priest(s) of the church, I welcome you to the St. ----church.' By doing so, you have extended your own personal welcome, a welcome on behalf of the entire church, and a personal welcome on behalf of the priest(s) as well.

4- After the introduction, it would be a good time to mention that there is an "information card" in the pamphlet for them to fill out, in order for the priest to personally welcome him/her to the church or give them a card to fill out and tell them this is in order to welcome them at the end of the service by the priest. It is important to get them to fill out the visitor's card, so the church can contact them later on. This card will have basic information, such as name, phone number, address, e-mail, etc. It is very important that we do not make them feel pressured in giving us their personal information.✠

