



Misconceptions about serving...

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It is very rare that important things, truly important tasks, are delegated to children.

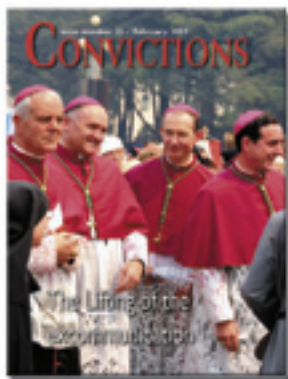
Isn't it true that the most crucial of tasks are nearly always looked after by adults? The operative words here are nearly always, for there is at least one thing, something of extreme importance, that is almost always looked after by children. The task spoken of here is the serving of Holy Mass. That the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is of paramount importance need not be proven to the Catholic mind, for all Catholics are keenly aware that the re-presentation of Our Divine Lord's sacrifice upon our altars is the central act of worship given to us by God Almighty. Padre Pio once said that the earth could sooner survive without the sun than without the Mass. In our day the Faithful who attend the chapels and Mass centers of the Society of St. Pius X make manifold sacrifices and go to great lengths to do so. To the Catholic mind the importance of Holy Mass is self-evident.

Yet, in spite of this conviction, the serving of Holy Mass, the serving of Holy Mass well is not always given the emphasis it should. The reason for this is most assuredly not due to a lack of regard for the Holy Sacrifice, so great is the love of the Faithful for the Dread Mysteries. Why, then, is a lack of excellence in serving Holy Mass found on too many occasions? Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that in our day it is most frequently the case that the serving of the Holy Sacrifice is left to boys. The modern mentality is to expect less and less of children in the way of excellence in all too many areas of life. And yet, in those places where excellence is required of the Mass servers, excellence is found to be commonplace. Indeed, boys, even very young boys, are

capable of achieving high standards in the sanctuary with the proper example and training.

Training servers in the proper execution of their duties during Holy Mass is an important task, for the Mass server, although often quite young in years, is important to the Holy Sacrifice. It is, therefore, important that one not lose sight of the importance of the Angelic Office due to the youth of the majority of those who fulfill it. It would also be a mistake to assert that men ought not to serve Holy Mass. Nothing could be further from the truth. Let it also be understood that the serving of the Dread Mysteries is available not only to single men, but also to married men. Some people labor under the misconception that married men ought to be excluded from the altar steps. Let history dispel this false information, for there have been many examples of married men serving the Holy Sacrifice. Let the example of St. Thomas More, celebrated Lord High Chancellor of England under King Henry VIII, be a sufficient example for the purposes of this article. Two errors to be avoided, then, are that the serving of Holy Mass is not particularly important, and that it ought to be reserved exclusively to boys or, at least, to single young men.

The question then arises, how is the standard of serving elevated? How does a parish go about instilling in the servers and non-servers alike the vast importance of the office of the Mass server? How does a parish instruct the servers not only in the correct manner of serving, but also in the devotion which should animate all those who kneel within the sanctuary? The best means of achieving good results in this area is the foundation within a parish of a servers' guild. A servers' guild, due to its sublime objective, would have high standards which all the servers, men



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and boys alike, would be expected to achieve. A servers' guild would have proper guidance, so that the servers would be inspired with the confidence that they could achieve and maintain that high standard, being led by competent and compassionate leaders. A servers' guild would help its members achieve the aims of the guild through regular instruction not only in the correct manner of carrying out the ceremonies of Holy Mother Church, but also in the meaning of those ceremonies. As the servers' knowledge of the Church's grand Liturgy grew, so also would their love for the Church's public acts of divine worship grow.

Is this an unattainable, utopian dream? By no means. There is just such a guild which exists. It is called the Archconfraternity of St. Stephen, and it is functioning at this very moment

within the District of Canada. The first Chapter of the Guild of St. Stephen in Canada was started by Rev. Fr. Francis Ockerse on December 26, 1999, at Our Lady of Sorrows Church in Rocky Mountain House, Alberta. That Chapter has flourished and now has seventeen members who have achieved a very high level of excellence in the sanctuary. Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Calgary started its Chapter in December of 2002, and now has forty-nine members and several postulants.

Having a successful chapter of the Archconfraternity of St. Stephen is a lofty goal, but one which is attainable for any chapel or Mass center. In the future further articles about the Guild and the Liturgy will be printed here. The more the Faithful know about these topics, the more they will love them.

Our Standard

The knights of Christendom used to march into battle with great pride under their different standards. The standard was a flag bearing the symbol of a house. The soldiers marching into battle would march beneath the banner of the lord who was over them.

The standard was so important to these great men of honor that they would give their lives to keep the enemy from bringing it down. As long as the flag was flying there was hope of victory.

The members of the Archconfraternity of St. Stephen, like the knights of old, have a standard of their own. It is the Guild medal. The medal of the Archconfraternity is not only a beautiful sign, but is also filled with symbolism. At the medal's centre are the letters XP which are the first two letters of the name "Christ" in Greek. Above these letters rests a crown which symbolizes the crown of victory given by God to all those who overcome evil. Beneath the letters are found palm branches, the symbol of martyrdom, which naturally makes members of the Archconfraternity think of their holy patron, St. Stephen.

The Latin words on the medal, *Cui servire regnare est*, are the Archconfraternity's motto. In English this phrase means "To serve Christ is to reign". In these few words the great honor the server receives in serving holy Mass is expressed. While fulfilling this angelic office, as St. Bonaventure calls it, the server is serving Christ Himself. Hence, he fulfils an office which is performed in heaven by the angels themselves—that of ministering to Our Lord around the very throne of God.

Let the members of the Archconfraternity of St. Stephen, then, understand the meaning of the medal they wear; let them wear it with pride, for to serve Mass is a great honor, and to uphold that for which this emblem stands is no small thing.

Let those who serve Mass be aware of their responsibility to give good example to the other parishioners, for "to whom much is given much is expected". Let Guild members love the medal of the Archconfraternity, and keep themselves pure so as not to cast any tarnish upon this sublime symbol, for it is our standard.