



The greatest catechists...

Fr. Todd Angele

Did you ever stop to think that altar servers are among the greatest catechists of all? A catechist is a person who teaches others about the Faith. You may well object that altar servers do not teach the Faith, but you would be mistaken. Altar servers teach their parishes a great deal about the Faith.

St. Francis of Assisi had a custom of taking one or another of his brothers on a walk. He would tell the brother they were going in to town to preach. Clothed in their Franciscan garb, they would walk through the streets only to return to their monastery without having uttered a single word to the townsfolk. This is what St. Francis referred to as a walking sermon. When the people of the village saw the friars in their habits, it would make them think of God. The example of the brothers was an inspiration to the people to lead good lives.

The altar server preaches to the congregation in much the same way. Consider how many things the server teaches in his eloquent sermon. The server walks with grace and dignity. Elsewhere he might shuffle his feet, or move from place to place at break-neck speed, but in the sanctuary he carries himself with the re-

financed dignity of a brilliant statesman. This shows the faithful the holiness of the place. When the server moves around the sanctuary in a graceful manner, he reminds the faithful that the church, and especially the sanctuary, is a holy place.

The server guards his eyes during the sacred ceremonies. In this way he teaches the faithful about the recollection one should have during the Holy Sacrifice and other ceremonies of Holy Mother Church. Although often tempted to do so, the altar server refrains from looking around the church. By this means he also teaches the faithful that one should strive to avoid anything which might distract others, for the server who is constantly looking around, so much so that it looks like his head is poised on a swivel that he cannot control, is truly a distraction to those trying to follow the Holy Sacrifice.

The server teaches the faithful that they ought to have an attitude of prayer in church by keeping his hands folded properly. When the people attending Holy Mass see a server who is sloppy with his hands, they rightly wonder what the server is thinking about. When they see a server who keeps his hands folded properly, they see that he is focused on what he should be doing.

The server's attitude of silence in the sanctuary speaks to the faithful about the reverence one should have during the sacred liturgy. The servers do not laugh or joke among themselves, they do not carry on conversations, not even whis-

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Tips for Directors and Presidents

The Archconfraternity of St. Stephen is an organization that was founded for the express purpose of maintaining excellence in the Sacred Liturgy of Holy Mother Church. The Directors and Presidents of the Guild chapters have the wonderful mission of helping the servers under their care achieve this end. Let that be the first motivating factor for those running Guild chapters: the servers you train are under your care. You teach them not only how to carry out the Liturgy properly, but you also assist with the Guild's aim of sanctifying the server. It does not take much effort to see an absolute need for the grace of God in fulfilling this sublime mission. Let those dedicated people who look after the leadership of Guild chapters, then, remember to pray for the servers under their care. Ask for guidance in looking after your responsibilities as a chapter Director or President.

pered ones, because they know that what they are doing is very important and worthy of their full attention. This reminds the faithful that they too should be focused on what is happening at the altar; the liturgy is worthy of their full attention.

Altar servers do, then, teach the faithful, and they teach them quite a bit. Now there are good sermons and bad sermons. When it comes to the sermons of the altar servers the same holds true. Let the altar servers strive to ensure that their sermon is the best that it can be.

Letter to an Altar Boy

Fr. David E. Rosage

DEAR JIMMY,

Do you know that as an altar boy you are one of the most important people in the whole parish? At Mass you rate higher than the janitor and the ushers. Yes, you are even more important than the choir.

"Why is my role so important?" you ask. Let us go way back in history to the time of St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin Mary to find the answer. Our Lord wanted to come into the world. God sent the Angel Gabriel to ask Mary if she would become the Mother of Jesus. That was the way Jesus wished to come into the world.

Mary paused, and all heaven waited eagerly. Then, humbly, Mary said "Yes" in the most beautiful way anyone could have said it: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word." Because Mary gave her consent, our Lord was able to come into the world and do so much for us.

Today, our Lord wants to come to live with us. Each day He wants to come into our hearts in Holy Communion so that He may help us to be good; so that He may help us to live and work as we should. Now, the way our Lord comes into the world today is through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. At each Mass our Lord is born again just as truly as He was born at Bethlehem. Therefore, the Mass is the most important action which can take place in the whole world.

The Mass is much more important than the baseball game which will decide the world series. It is far more important than the touchdown which may determine who will win the conference pennant.

You are so important, Jimmy, because you are helping the priest to say Mass; to bring our Lord into the world each morning. You are the priest's first assistant. In fact, the Church considers you

so important that the law of the Church requires a priest to have an altar boy before he may say Mass. A priest must have special reason or permission to say Mass without a server. That's how important the Church considers you.

Whether you realize it or not, you are more important at Mass than your own dear mother, or Sister Superior at school, or a princess in a royal castle, or the mother of a bishop, or even the sister of the Holy Father.

Why? Well, you see, Jimmy, these good and holy women may answer the prayers of the priest at Mass. They may even tinkle the bell at the Sanctus and the Consecration. And they must do this sometimes when you oversleep, but they are never permitted to leave their pews and come into the sanctuary while Mass is being offered. They may not walk up the altar steps during the Mass to change the Missal from the Epistle to the Gospel side of the altar. Neither may they bring the water and wine up to the priest. That privilege is reserved only for altar boys. Yes, you are the only person who may come so close to our Lord during Mass.

So, you see, Jimmy, as an altar boy you are very important. More important, I'll bet, than you thought. Our Lord depends on you to help Him come into the world. Isn't that strange and wonderful? Our Lord, who is the Master of heaven and earth, asks you to help Him come down among men.

Each day when you serve Mass, you can look up at the Sacred Host at the Elevation and smile as you say to our Lord: "Jesus, I have helped You in my own small way to come into the world this morning. I hope my serving Holy Mass has pleased You. Thank You, Jesus, for giving me this wonderful privilege."