



Reliability...

Fr. Todd Angele

One of the most important qualities a Mass server can have is that of reliability. It is important that the Archconfraternity of St. Stephen officials have confidence that the members and postulants will be present, on time, when they are scheduled to serve. It is not difficult to see why this is so important. Consider the difficulty it causes others when the appointed server does not show up, or is late. Others have to set up the altar; this often means preparing things for the Holy Sacrifice in a mad rush, rather than with the dignity of movement called for by the sanctity of the sanctuary. Then, a replacement must be found. That is often easier said than done.

Sometimes, there can be circumstances beyond the server's control that prevent him serving when appointed. This would be the case, for example, when the server wakes up in the morning and is sick. Occasionally, there can also be other commitments that prevent the server from being present at the church when scheduled. In situations such as these the Guild officials must be comfortable in the knowledge that the servers will obtain a replacement for themselves.

In finding a replacement, the first thing a server must understand is that it is his responsibility to find a replacement. Therefore, it is not sufficient that the server simply inform the President or one of the priests that he will not be able to serve when appointed. It is not the responsibility of the President or the priests to obtain the replacement; it is the server's job to look after this.

The second thing the server must understand is that he needs to be reasonably certain that his replacement will be reliable. The server does not have this certainty, if he merely leaves a message on someone's answering machine. He must speak to his potential replacement in person. The server must also understand that just because he has spoken to someone about taking his place, he has not found a replacement until that person agrees to serve in his stead. A replacement may have to get

permission from his parents before he can commit to serving. So, until the possible replacement has agreed to serve, the burden remains with the server who was scheduled.

This lets the server know what his obligations are when it comes to finding a replacement. But what about replacing others? The best and most reliable members of the Guild are those who are always ready to help others by serving in their place. Those magnificently reliable servers show that they truly understand the great privilege it is to serve at the altar. Imagine the honor which is due to a server of whom it can be said, "he has never turned down an opportunity to serve"! On the other hand, it is a shame to find a server that does not value the opportunity to serve Holy Mass. In his book *The Hidden Treasure*, St. Leonard has the following to say regarding servers who do not value as they should the opportunity that is theirs in serving Holy Mass: "Those persons are sadly astray... who require to be begged and urged to serve Mass; when, in fact, they ought to compete with each other, and almost snatch at the missal, in order to gain the honor of fulfilling a function which the very angels and blessed ones in heaven look upon with envy." (pg 72)

Reliability is, indeed, a wonderful trait. This is recognized in all walks of life. Imagine a person who is consistently late for work. Would he be surprised to lose his job? By no means! In fact, most would be surprised if such a one did not lose his job. Now, if reliability is so valued in worldly matters, where the reward is an earthly remuneration, how much more should it be valued when it regards the service of Him Who died on the cross for the love of us? At Holy Mass the server truly serves Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Being faithful to the serving schedule is a means the Mass server has within his power of showing Our Lord the love he bears Him.

How admirable is the reliable server! When the alarm goes off announcing that it is time to rise, in order to be at the church on time to serve the early Mass, it is very easy to want to simply remain in bed for a few extra minutes, especially on cold, dark mornings! The server who overcomes that

natural inclination, so that he can make sure all is in readiness for the Holy Sacrifice in due time displays wonderful devotion to Holy Mass and to Our Lord, Himself. Compared to the sacrifices Our Lord made for us this is certainly a very small one, but one that pleases Our Lord immensely. Our Lord Jesus Christ sees these little sacrifices the

server makes and readily accepts them. They bring great joy to His Sacred Heart.

Isn't that a wonderful way to start the day, or, in the case of an evening Mass, to end the day? What a wonderful opportunity for Mass servers. Let the members of the Guild bear this in mind, and be reliable for the love of the Eternal High Priest.

Letter to an Altar Boy

Rev. Fr. David E. Rosage

DEAR JIMMY,

The other day I had a little experience which really did my heart a lot of good. As I was going around the back of the church on my way to the garage, I heard the closing sentences of an argument.

Joe Brown was telling two of his companions what he thought about the language they were using. Joe is quite a boy - one of the biggest and the strongest we have among the Knights of the Altar.

"It isn't at all smart, and it's not right for an altar boy to be saying such things," Joe was telling his companions.

His two playmates looked Joe over to see whether or not he was serious. But the look on his face soon convinced them, and they didn't have much to say in reply, for all the boys respect Joe very much. It seems, Jimmy, that almost every boy runs into a period in his life when he thinks he is showing his manhood by using all sorts of bad language. Boys often think it is smart to use some kind of profanity, and even filthy and impure language.

A boy's companions are often responsible for this bad habit. First of all, these companions use foul words and expressions all the time themselves. Second, if one of their friends does not use such language, they make fun of him and ridicule him. Of course, no boy wants his friends and his gang to laugh at him, nor does he want to be called a "sissy" because he doesn't talk as tough as the rest of the gang. Did any of your companions ever laugh at you, Jimmy, for not using strong language? If they did, I am proud of you, and I know our Lord is pleased with you too.

If a man or a boy "cusses" it proves he does not know enough decent words to express himself correctly. It also proves that he wants to be tough and "show off." Really, he has nothing to show off about, so he thinks his rough talk will show the world how tough he can be. Isn't he ridiculous?

As an altar boy, I hope you will never use bad language. You have the privilege of answering the beautiful prayers which the priest uses at Mass. Isn't there something wrong with our thinking if we praise Our Lord at one moment of the day and then insult Him a little later with foul talk?

There is still another very important reason why as an altar boy you should never acquire bad habits of speech. Our Lord uses your tongue very frequently as a cushion on which to rest when He comes into your soul in Holy Communion. The offense would be the more serious if you were to use that same tongue to speak disrespectfully of Our Lord, or to abuse His Holy Name.

People expect their altar boys to be just about perfect. They expect them to be different from anyone else in the neighborhood. They are very disappointed when they hear an altar boy using the rough and tough language of the boy in the street who has never had the opportunity and the privilege of serving Mass.

Jimmy, I should like to suggest a special crusade for all altar boys. Our Lord is insulted millions of times throughout the course of a single day by the profanity and filthy language which men use. Since altar boys are the special friends of Our Lord, His Knights of the Altar, they are the very ones who should make some reparation to our Lord for all these insults.

I should like to suggest that every altar boy say a little ejaculation quietly to himself every time he hears anyone use the wrong type of language. "Praised be Jesus Christ!" would be a very fitting suggestion. A boy can say this ejaculation whenever he hears profanity on the bus, on the street, at his work, or in play. No one will know he is making atonement for the sins of men. Did I say no one? I mean no one except Our Lord.

Will you be a Crusader, Jimmy? Perhaps you can even be a captain in this crusade by suggesting the practice to your friends and other altar boys.