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A Word From the Chaplain



Dear Friends in Christ,

Missionaries who came to America to work for the conversion of the indigenous inhabitants were sent out by well organized Religious Houses and Colleges and were assisted in their work by other like organizations. It wasn't a one on one operation, but a highly organized thing that would rival and surpass some of the most successful companies of our own day. The key thing was that no missionary went forth in his own name but in the name of the Church. For this he had to be commissioned – just as much as Columbus had to be commissioned by Queen Isabella of Spain to take a small fleet across the ocean to discover new lands and new peoples for Christ. Once a missionary received orders from His Superior to report to a certain Mission House, he was then given orders to missionize in a given area. At the same time he was given licence to do so by the civil authorities and occasionally, he could be given a handful of soldiers to assist in defense, road construction and reconnaissance.

This applies to the Guild because we serve Christ the King in His Sanctuary, His Kingly Court. No one can enter there without authorization – they should also have proper training. This authorization comes from Christ's representative the Priest. The Guild is utilized by Priests to train the servers in Christ's court. To ensure in them due dignity and respect and to help them live a spiritual life that will honor Christ both in the Court and off the Court. Woe to us if clothed with the dignity of the vestments of Christ's Priesthood (the Altar boy's cassock looks just like the Priest's), we go out into the world and profane our body by obscene speech, laziness and bad morals.

It is clear that all of us who are associated with the Guild have a great duty to do our best to insure that the Guild is an honor to the great Army of Tradition fighting for the True Mass in the great crisis of the Faith of our modern times. Christ said: "*He who is faithful in little things, will be faithful in the great.*" This means that every little deed done in a spirit of Faith for the love of God, no matter how small, will merit for us the grace of being faithful in times of persecution and martyrdom. Mark this well, FIDELITY IN SMALL THINGS MEANS THE GRACE TO BE FAITHFUL IN PERSECUTION!

The great Jean de Brebeuf, called "Echon" by the Hurons, withstood torture of 4 hours without flinching. They burned his sides with sticks, they lit a fire around his feet, they hung red-hot hatchets in a bracelet around his neck and torso, they baptized him with boiling water and they cut out his tongue to silence his preaching and prayer. Indeed, he preached to his Christian Huron captives to have courage and he prayed frequently: "*Jesus Mercy.*" Marvelling at his courage, the Mohawk braves cut out his heart and ate it. How did he have this courage? As a young man in the seminary, he

promised in prayer: *“I would rather be ground to powder than break a single rule!”* His fidelity in these little things made him faithful in those most terrible tortures of his glorious martyrdom.

Are we faithful in the little things? Do we say the Guild prayer daily? What about our morning and night prayers? All should do this – but how much more those who are committed to serving God on His Altar! Are we getting to Mass on time? Do we keep our eyes on the altar and not let them wander around the Church? If we can’t be faithful in these things, what can we expect when we have to suffer for Christ?

My good friends, let us continue the good fight, let us fight our laziness and faults. Let us solidify our morning and night prayers. Let us be like unmovable honor guards in the sanctuary not watching the people but watching with Our Lord.

Meanwhile, as you peruse this issue, please feel free to drop a line (cf. the cover for the address) to your new chaplain to inform him of how things are going in the front lines. Your ideas and hopes will be happily received.

Cui Servire Regnare Est,



Father Timothy J. Pfeiffer



Father Timothy J. Pfeiffer was born in 1965 and raised in Kentucky where he attended and learned to serve Mass at the late Father Francis Hannifin’s chapel of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Father Pfeiffer attended Saint Thomas Aquinas Seminary (then in Ridgefield, Connecticut) and was ordained in 1989 by Archbishop Lefebvre. Father Pfeiffer was then stationed as a professor at the seminary.

In 1993, Father became the prior and retreat master at Saint Ignatius Retreat House in Ridgefield. His many years of tireless effort as its prior and expertise as a retreat master are well-known in the United States.

In 2001, Father was appointed Novice Master for the Brothers of the Society of Saint Pius X at Jesus & Mary’s Brothers’ Novitiate in El Paso, Texas, where he is presently stationed.

Presidential Tip

Advice for Chapter Presidents

In the last issue of this section, we covered the importance of a well-organized serving schedule and its inherent fruits for each chapter, as well as for the parish. Once a regular serving schedule is in place, a time frame of preparation that hinges on punctuality (as well as on good training and organization in the Sacristy as discussed in former articles) can be put into place and enforced to ensure the following:

1. the servers are properly vested,
2. the various Sanctuary and Sacristy preparations have been completed,
3. the servers have spiritually prepared themselves per the Guild prayers,
4. and that Mass begins on time.

The servers, according to their scheduled position, should be present in the Sacristy within this designated time frame before Mass (or any other type of liturgical ceremony):

- Masters of Ceremonies: 30 minutes before Mass,
- Thurifers: 20 minutes before Mass,
- All other servers (including the Acolytes at Low Mass): 15 minutes before Mass.

Each of these deadlines give the servers enough time to fulfill their particular responsibilities of preparation in this time frame:

1. **[within 2 minutes]**
Vest in cassock, surplice and medal while saying the designated prayers for vesting (which demonstrates why the cassocks and surplices must be kept in good order).
2. **[up to 10 minutes before the start of Mass]**
Complete whatever preparations are required per position (such is only possible if the servers are well-trained in their positions).
3. **[10 minutes before Mass]**
The Golden Rule Carved in Stone: led by the MC (or Ac1 at Low Mass), the servers say the designated Guild prayers (which *afterwards*, Ac1 may light the Altar candles).
4. **[after prayers]**
Line up in *Processional* formation in the Sacristy.

Of course, invariably a server will be tardy or even absent, and in these cases the MC should replace such a server 7 minutes before the start of Mass (a Thurifer though, ought to be replaced 15 minutes

before). Preferably such servers should be replaced with someone of the correct rank (e.g., a Senior Acolyte for the position of Acolyte at High Mass) and who is wearing the proper dress code (or closest to it). Furthermore, the MC should notify the President of such tardy or absent servers and with the discretion of the President and the Director, a form of punishment for not adhering to the Guild's rule of punctuality should be given.

Also as has been said in past issues of *The Acolyte*, it cannot be understated that the Guild prayers said before serving Mass are *crucial* to the spiritual preparation and recollection of the servers, hence the MC should always strive to ensure that *sufficient* time (e.g., so that the servers do not have to rush the prayers) exists for these prayers to be said.

Even after Mass, though time management is not of the essence, a routine should be regularly practiced for the sake of consistency and to insure the following:

1. the Guild's prayers of thanksgiving are said by all,
2. follow-up to training is given,
3. liturgical items no longer needed are put away and the Sanctuary and Sacristy are put into good order,
4. and the cassocks, surplices and medals are put back in order for the next Mass.

This is the after-Mass routine that we use at the Saint Vincent de Paul Chapter in Kansas City, Missouri (a chapter that has 40 + members), one which has been perfected over the years, and which in its final form the fruits have been many, hence I do hesitate to recommend that all chapters of the Guild adopt a similar, if not the exact, routine:

1. **[prayers immediately after Mass]**
Led by the MC (or Ac1 at Low Mass), the servers say their prayers of thanksgiving.
2. **[line up after prayers]**
All line up in the Sacristy and the MC briefly gives corrections for errors in serving and tips to the servers to aid them in serving better as needed (this step serves as an important follow-up to training), as well as congratulations for excellence in serving (MCs should never forget to give positive feedback).
3. **[dispensing of duties]**
Servers perform their various duties and then line up again.
4. **[line up for divesting]**
MC verifies in the Sanctuary and Sacristy that the servers have performed their duties correctly and then allows them to divest.
5. **[line up for dismissal]**

After verifying that the cassocks, surplices and medals are in order, the MC then dismisses the servers.

All of this having been said, it falls upon the Presidents to ensure that the MCs in their chapters as one man diligently follow and enforce such time frames, deadlines and routines, otherwise chaos will result and thereby in some shape or form, mediocre service will be given to God at His Holy Altar, something which the Guild obviously does not endorse.

With this in mind, dear Presidents, again, take courage and continue the struggle to ensure that God is given due honor and glory in the Sacred Liturgy, that greatest treasure of Holy Mother Church, which serves to edify us unto sanctity. May Our Lady, Mother of Jesus Christ the Eternal High Priest assist all of you in this great task!

GUILD MATERIALS AVAILABLE FROM CHAPTERS' HEADQUARTERS

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Junior & Senior Acolytes' Silver Medal	\$4.00		
Tasseled Cord with Bead (used for the President, MC and Senior Acolyte medals)	\$8.00		
Plain Cord (used for Junior Acolyte medals only)	\$4.00		
Guild Handbook	\$2.00	Certificate of Enrollment	\$0.75
Daily Guild Prayer Card	\$0.25	Before & After Mass Prayer Card	\$0.50
Seasonal Prayer Card (these prayers are excerpted from the <i>Handbook</i> and are said before Mass in conjunction with the <i>Before Mass Prayers</i> during the various liturgical seasons)	\$0.50		
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<i>The Acolyte</i> magazine back issues (please specify which issue)		\$2.00	

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per brevior **OR** *per longior*

“ . . . by instructing him the manner of observing the rites and ceremonies of the Church according to the rubrics and to the decrees of the Sacred Congregation of Rites and the interpretations of the most generally accepted authorities . . . ”

In the past, we have covered the subjects of reverences and the rules that govern when and how they are used during Mass. In this issue, let us cover the subject of liturgical gestures, that is, the various actions made with one’s hands while serving Mass.

Holy Mother Church, through the Sacred Liturgy teaches us the best way in which to pray, in thought, word or in action, either through posture (sitting, standing or kneeling) or through gesture (sign of the Cross). Hence through the minute prescriptions given in the various liturgical books for the gestures made by the Sacred Ministers at Mass (e.g., the Celebrant, Deacon, etc.), we learn how the servers (and by application the laity), ought to apply these same rules to their particular circumstances.

So let us begin with some basic rules:

General Rules

A first word that must be said is that in making any reverence or gesture during the liturgy it ought to be made in a solemn, but unaffected fashion. One’s actions, though dignified, ought to look natural and not rigid nor smack of exaggerated piety¹.

- Your fingers are always held closely together and extended for all of the gestures listed below.
- When performing a gesture with your hands, imagine taking your folded hands apart and then performing the action with a slight modification (e.g., like slightly bending the right hand).
- When holding an object², do not perform any actions with your hands (e.g., the sign of the Cross, etc.).
- When one hand is in use (usually the right hand), hold your free hand with fingers touching, palm flat against your sternum at a slight upwards angle³.

Folded Hands

This is the most basic gesture used during Mass, though inactive, since it is employed whenever the hands are not performing an action⁴ (such as the sign of the Cross, etc.)

When one’s hands are not in use, hold them with fingers extended and touching, palm to palm with the right thumb over left thumb (“*...in modum crucis...*”⁵), at about a 20° angle⁶ just in front of one’s sternum (not actually touching your chest⁷).



Hands folded

At first, it will take some practice to remember to keep one’s hands folded like this throughout all of Mass, but with time, it will soon become a good habit. It is important that *all* of the servers fold their hands like this, otherwise, the “line-up” of servers in the Sanctuary will have a lazy, ragged look, which is not very edifying.

Making the large sign of the Cross

There are two types of the sign of the Cross used in the liturgy of the Roman Rite: the large Cross (used everyday by Catholics before and after prayers) and the small (or *Gospel*) cross (used during Mass at the beginning of both *Gospels*).

While keeping your right hand fingers together, with the tips of your index, middle and ring fingers⁸ touch your forehead, then your sternum (just above your left hand), the *top*⁹ of your left shoulder, then slightly twist your wrist and touch the *top* of your right shoulder¹⁰.

The sign of the Cross is one of the most beautiful and expressive gestures made in the liturgy, and it should always be made reverently and not in a hurried fashion (e.g., appearing as if one were swatting flies). The sign of the Cross is also especially in this day and age a hallmark of Catholics and gives testimony to three beliefs of the Faith:

1. The Holy Trinity,
2. the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ,
3. and the forgiveness of sins.

So Catholics should never be ashamed to make the sign of the Cross in public (e.g., when in a public restaurant) as it is truly a sign of contradiction! Furthermore, the making of the sign of the Cross was most likely taught by Our Lord Himself to the Apostles, as it is related by Saint Luke in his Gospel (*Luke 24:50*) that during Our Lord's Ascension "...*lifting up his hands, he blessed them*", while Tertulian (the famous apologist for Christianity in the Early Church) speaks of Catholics blessing themselves with the Cross before leaving their houses, washing, eating and a multitude of other times.

One final note on making the large sign of the Cross, while there are rules that distribute the four points of the Cross with the words said in conjunction (e.g., *In the name of the Father, etc.*), there is not however sufficient space in this article to list these. Suffice to say though, the server should (when applicable) always perform this action in conjunction with those made by the Celebrant.



Touching the tops of the left and right shoulder



FOOTNOTES

¹ Such exaggerated piety does nothing but to attract attention to the server, and thereby distracting from the object of attention: the great Act of the Mass. J. B. O'Connell gives an excellent description of this in *The Celebration of Mass* (1962) on pg. 182 in his chapter on Liturgical Gesture.

² This includes the Communion Plate during the recitation of the *2nd Confiteor*, etc.

³ Your hand will naturally adopt about a 20° angle.

⁴ Folded hands represent a state of inactivity, so one should not perform such actions as receiving the *Lavabo* towel on folded hands, but rather in the thumbs and index fingers of one's outstretched hands.

⁵ *Rit. Cel. III, 1.*

⁶ Again, your hands will naturally adopt this posture.

⁷ The hands are held slightly away from the surplice for two reasons: 1. It looks sloppy to rest one's hands against your chest; 2. The Celebrant is instructed to do the same to prevent the front of the chasuble from becoming worn; the same is true with the surplice.

⁸ Three for the Holy Trinity. Interestingly, in the Eastern Rites, the thumb, index and middle fingers are held together (with the ring and pinkie finger closed against the palm) to symbolize the Holy Trinity.

⁹ In both cases of touching the shoulder, the server should take care to touch the top and not the front of the shoulder.

¹⁰ This over the right hand shoulder action symbolizes the throwing off of sin.

Letters to an Altar Boy

Originally written by Father David E. Rosage and printed in 1963
under the same title by Bruce, this letter begins the series



GOD'S MINUTEMEN

Dear Jimmy,

I am writing these letters to you, but I wish to address them to all the Jimmys, the Joes, the Bills, Toms, and the whole host of other boys like yourself who have joined the ranks of the altar boys.

I like to think of you as *God's Minutemen*. In the early days of our country, the Minutemen were a group of men who volunteered to defend and protect our nation. They were constantly on duty and were prepared to go into action on a minute's notice. That is how they received their name.

I salute you as God's *Minutemen*. I think you are greatest bunch of boys alive. Some of you may be little fellows, but you are the biggest men in your parish. Serving Mass is one of the most important jobs in any parish. To serve Mass is a great privilege, but it does demand sacrifice. Being "on call for duty" at all times isn't always easy. Nor is it exactly pleasant to get up to serve early Mass, especially on cold winter mornings. As God's *Minutemen* you are always prepared for duty, nor do you count the cost.

I am writing these letters to you, Jimmy, and to all God's *Minutemen* with the hope that in them you may find some encouragement to be loyal and faithful in your service of our Lord. As I write to you from time to time, I hope to drop a hint occasionally which will help you to improve your serving.

It is my hope that in these letters you will find inspiration to continue as a loyal Knight in the service of your Master. You are His boy in a very special way.

The Gospel tells us that our Lord loved His first altar boy very much. St. John, the first altar boy, was very close to our Lord at the Last Supper when the first Mass was offered. In fact, St. John was so near the great High Priest that Sacred Scripture tells us he leaned on our Lord's breast. St. John was the only Apostle who remained until the end of the first Sacrifice. Yes, he stood beneath the cross until Jesus died.

Our Lord's first altar boy was called the "*disciple whom Jesus loved.*" Surely, the same can be said today of our Lord's altar boys "*the boys whom Jesus loves.*"

The Blessed Virgin Mary had a deep love for St. John, too. Mary loved St. John because he was so faithful in the service of her divine Son. Our Blessed Lady also has a special place in her heart for all altar boys because of their generosity and devotion to her Son.

My hat is off to you, Jimmy, and to all God's *Minutemen*; Our Lord loves you; your parents are proud of you; your little brothers think you are tops; your sisters think you are princes; your pastors list you as All American in their scorebooks.

God bless each one of you His Minutemen! May you always be loyal to your divine Captain.

Cui Servire Regnare Est

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