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The ACOLYTE

The Magazine of the Archconfraternity of Saint Stephen



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A Word From the Chaplain

Dear Acolytes,

In this secular world which is so inimical to our holy Faith, we must often refresh ourselves with the example of the holy men who have gone before us. These are they who have fought the good fight and who have resisted successfully the attempts of the enemy to make them “worldly”. We should realize the connection between “secular” and worldly. That which is secular is tied to this world. Most of that which is in this world is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life. St. John [the Evangelist] says that these things can not be friends of God, but are his enemies.

How does God immunize His servants against “secularism”? How does God protect us from becoming worldly-minded and wholly imbued with worldly principles? Certainly, it is by the Holy Liturgy, especially the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

In centuries gone by God intervened in man’s affairs to pull his mind heavenward and to enable him to detach himself from mere worldly concerns. God gave man the Ten Commandments in great solemnity giving his people the means of being obedient to Him. At the same time He taught them through His servant Moses by what sacrifices He could be adored. Later, in the same Sinai desert, He sent to His people miraculous manna from Heaven to show them their dependence upon Him rather than upon the worldly economy of Egypt. In the days of Solomon, God descended in splendor and glory upon the temple, to show His people the majesty and beauty of His worship.

Nevertheless, none of these Old Testament events can touch the altitude and majesty of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. At Mass, the Son comes among His Redeemed in the person of His Minister and in the Sacred Species in order to renew in them the great commandment and to give them the strength to practice it. At Mass, Christ Our Lord feeds His sheep with the true manna come down from Heaven. At Mass, the splendor of the Blessed Trinity fills the ceremony and sheds its light upon faithful souls. There is no rite or ceremony or act of God more apt than the Mass to sever us from any evil ties with the world and to make us truly intent upon divine mysteries.

Now in those ancient times, God employed for His worship specially elected “ministers” who were to perform the divine service on his behalf and for the people. These ministers in turn had ministers who served them and assisted them in performing the divine offices. Thus we witness Moses praying to God while the Israelites fight against Amalec, and we see Aaron the high priest holding up his hands, while Moses’ minister Josue leads the soldiers in the battle versus Amalec. Through a chain of “sacred” ministers the victory over the world and the Devil was won!

It is in this spirit that you must remain faithful to our duties in the Archconfraternity of St. Stephen. You belong to an organization that helps the “ministers” of the ministers sanctify themselves and perform their sacred duties in the most worthy manner possible. As Moses sat on a rock while he prayed, so the Acolyte of the Archconfraternity is meant to sit on a “rock”: *i.e.*, meditate upon the ceremonies he serves and understand their meaning. For the rock on which Moses sat signified the Mysteries of Christ, for Christ is the Rock. This pertains also to the altar stone which with its five crosses represents

the Five Wounds of Christ and with its three relics of Saints represents the members of His Mystical Body the Church.

In Aaron's assistance to Moses by holding up his arms, we see an example of how the altar server must assist the priest, by performing his duties well exteriorly, and also interiorly, by thinking about and uniting himself to the Cross of Christ in his very soul. For when Aaron upheld Moses' hands, they were upheld in the form of a cross. And as those holy hands held in the form of the Savior's Cross defeated the Amalecites, so too the Cross present in the Sacrifice of the Mass defeats our adversary the Devil.

We note too how the victory over the Amalecites was followed by the miraculous manna come down from Heaven. This signifies how we must be in the state of grace, having vanquished Satan, before we can receive the "*true bread come down from Heaven.*" For this reason the daily Guild prayer reminds us to imitate the great warrior of God, St. Stephen, who vanquished Satan so completely by his preaching and by his example.

May all our Acolytes derive from the holy ceremonies of the Church the food and strength they need to vanquish their personal enemy, Satan. Amalecites there will be, and in abundance, for if you are an Acolyte, and if you strive to practice in life what you do in the sanctuary, Satan will attack you more than others. Nevertheless, resist him by sitting frequently on the rock of meditation and by holding the sign of the Cross always in your hands, that is to say in your works.

In Our Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Fr. J. Timothy Pfeiffer'.

Fr. J. Timothy Pfeiffer

Presidential Tip

Advice for Chapter Presidents

With the nearing approach of the season of Advent the subject of the Seasonal Prayers of the Guild came to mind as an ideal subject to write about in order to increase a general knowledge of their history and significance to the members of the Archconfraternity.

Most of us are familiar with the usual *per annum*¹ prayer of the Archconfraternity (“*O God, Who does graciously accept the ministry of our service...*”), as this is usually said in preparation for serving, and because it comprises the regular daily prayer of the Guild. However, possibly very few members are aware of the existence of the Seasonal Prayers, though they have been an integral part of the Archconfraternity of St. Stephen almost since its inception in 1905.

Now before expounding further on the Seasonal Prayers, we must take a preliminary look at the *4 Rules of the Guild* to see the importance of the prescribed prayers of the Guild in general, which will allow us to see further into the significance of the seasonal invocations and how they should be implemented.

Hopefully all members of the Guild are aware that Rules #2 and #3 oblige us to say the preparatory prayers before serving Mass and the daily prayer of the Guild. Now these two rules both make use of the *per annum* prayer (or as we will mention later its Seasonal substitute), but for a different purpose:

1. Rule #2 has for its end, the spiritual preparation of our intellect and will to render our undivided service to God at the altar. This is accomplished through prayerful recollection, which is necessary to do the Lord’s work well.
2. Rule #3 however, serves to keep daily before our minds what is the greatest privilege that we possess (*i.e.*, to serve at the altar), as well as to infuse in us the liturgical spirit of the Church, which should influence all of our devotions, and in turn, guide our thoughts, words and actions².

Hence, these two rules demonstrate the Archconfraternity’s solicitude in fostering our personal sanctification³, especially through imitating and thereby observing the liturgical life of the Church, while the admonition that will be quoted shortly below builds upon this same goal, through the use of the Seasonal Prayers appointed for the various liturgical seasons (*i.e.*, Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Pentecost).

Now the various liturgical seasons of the Church each have a different emphasis and thereby message to teach us, be it the penitential preparation of Advent for the joy of the Nativity, or the severe Lenten penance to “*make ready*” for Our Lord’s glorious Resurrection, followed by the Divine Paraclete’s spiritual strengthening. So wishing to follow the spirit of the Liturgy, the Guild has had specific invocations to St. Stephen composed for each liturgical season.

As for the author of these invocations, he was none other than the famous English liturgist, Fr. Adrian Fortescue⁴. This is attested by the founder of the Guild, Fr. Hamilton MacDonald, in his “Compiler’s Preface” contained in the first edition of the *Handbook* printed in 1907:

“Special thanks [is] due... to the Rev. Adrian Fortescue, D.D., for collecting and writing the devotions for Mass and the prayers of invocation to St. Stephen...”⁵.

So it was Fortescue who compiled the devotional prayers found in the “How to Serve and Pray at Low Mass” section in the *Handbook*⁶, and the common prayers⁷ used before and after serving Mass, while he actually composed the *per annum* and Seasonal Prayers⁸, with exception to that of Pentecost, as this is derived from the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil⁹.

Now let us take a closer look at the content of the Seasonal Prayers. Their texts can be found in the Archconfraternity’s *Handbook* on pages 53 – 54¹⁰, and prefacing them we read the following admonition: “*Members of the Archconfraternity are recommended to invoke the intercession of their holy patron, St. Stephen, by the use of the following prayers in their daily devotions, according to the seasons...*”. A precursory look at them (as well as the *per annum* prayer) will show that with the exception of the prayer for the season of Pentecost, all of them share three aspects in common:

1. A mention of a desire to serve God, specifically at the altar.
2. A commemoration of an event in the life of St. Stephen as found in the Acts of the Apostles.
3. A longing to follow St. Stephen as a model of Our Lord Jesus Christ to Heaven.

Now corresponding to these points are these practical applications to our spiritual lives:

1. The desire to serve God at His altar reiterates the Guild’s motto, “*Cui Servire Regnare Est*”¹¹, which is the motto of Our Lord. This theme ought to be embodied by us while on and off the altar, which in turn will mold us into saints.
2. Each commemoration teaches us about the life and virtues of our patron, St. Stephen. By examining his life, we see examples to imitate, such as how to implement the gifts and virtues of the Holy Ghost. Furthermore, we see how St. Stephen’s love for Christ compelled him to act even at the price of death.
3. Finally, by conforming ourselves to Christ through imitating the life of St. Stephen, we are led to our final goal: eternal life in Heaven.

So how should the Seasonal Prayers be implemented? Well, from the admonition in the *Handbook* and by application of the liturgical spirit, we can see that the Seasonal Prayers should replace the usual *per annum* prayer when saying the preparatory prayers before serving, as well as when saying the daily prayer of the Guild¹².

In conclusion then, it is recommended that with the approach of each liturgical season the Chapter Presidents study the respective Seasonal Prayer in detail, meditate upon it¹³, and then expound its significance to their chapter members so they may better understand them and thereby benefit further from them spiritually.

FOOTNOTES

¹ *I.e.*, throughout the year, or, the Sundays after Pentecost and Epiphany.

² Hence, it is best if the daily prayer of the Guild is recited in conjunction with one’s morning prayers.

³ Which is its first Object: to sanctify the server.

⁴ 1874 – 1923. One can read the story of this amazing priest in the book of the late Michael Davies, *The Wisdom of Adrian Fortescue*.

⁵ Spanning pages viii – ix.

⁶ This section spans pages 13 – 27 of the current (1962) version of the *Handbook*. The original 1907 edition of the *Handbook* actually gave the sources of the prayers found in this section, though unfortunately, the 1962 edition has omitted these references. Interestingly, these prayers are derived from various liturgical rites, both Western and Eastern, and not just the Roman. To those who are familiar with the vast liturgical mind of Fortescue will not find this strange, since he was an expert on the Eastern Rites of the Church, a rarity in the Latin Rite. And so naturally, being familiar with them, he would desire that Roman Catholics also be exposed, and thereby benefit spiritually, from the profundity of the liturgical treasury of the Eastern Rites.

⁷ E.g., *Come, Holy Ghost, Direct we beseech thee, O Lord* (which is derived from the section in the *Missale Romanum* containing the recommended preparatory prayers for the Celebrant of Mass), the *Pater noster*, the *Ave Maria*, the Prayer Before a Crucifix (also derived from the Missal for the recommended prayers of thanksgiving), etc.

⁸ It is probably safe to assume that he also compiled and composed the prayers that make up the Enrollment ceremony, though this is not specifically mentioned.

⁹ This is attested in the current *Handbook* just after the prayer. The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil is used by the Greeks, Russians and Syrians. Each of these ethnic groups have their own namesake liturgical rites which are in turn derived from the Byzantine Rite, just as various rites of the Latin Church, e.g., the Dominican (of the religious order), Ambrosian (of Milan, Italy), and Mozarabic (of Toledo, Spain) Rites, are derivatives of the Latin Rite, the head of which is the Roman Rite. The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil is used by these Eastern Rites only on the Sundays of Lent (except Palm Sunday), Holy Thursday, Holy Saturday and the feast of St. Basil, which according to the Greek liturgical calendar is on January 1.

¹⁰ They are provided on the Seasonal Prayer Card for use while saying the prayers before Mass, and can be obtained from the Chapters' Headquarters.

¹¹ I.e., “*he who serves, reigns*”, or even, “*to serve is to reign*”.

¹² Another reason why each member of the Guild should have his own copy of the *Handbook*.

¹³ Reading the life of St. Stephen in the Acts of the Apostles is necessary to facilitate one's understanding, which in turn effects a good meditation.



per brevior **OR** *per longior* **ANNUNCIANCE**

“ . . . 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 . . .”

Continuing from where we left off in the last issue, we now move on to the subjects of how to make the small sign of the Cross, to strike one’s breast and the placement of one’s hands while sitting.

However as a brief refresher, let us recount four “handy” principles to remember when making any liturgical gesture:

1. Keep your fingers held closely together and fully extended, except where modifications are mentioned.
2. 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).
3. When holding an object¹, do not perform any actions with your hands.
4. 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 angle².

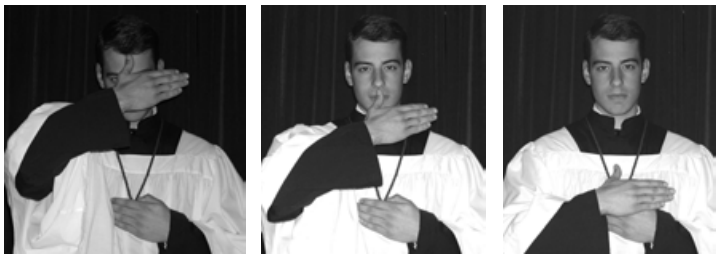
Making the small (or *Gospel*) sign of the Cross

This smaller form of the Cross is employed on the forehead, lips and heart when the *pericope*, (*i.e.*, the introduction, *e.g.*, *Sequentia Sancte Evangelii secundum...*) of the Gospel is being announced. The word *Gospel* (or in Latin, *Evangelium*) means “*good news*” or “*joyful tidings*”, and such indeed are the Gospels for they are the revelation of God in and through Christ.

So the triple sign of the Cross made preceding the Gospel beautifully demonstrates how we must keep the doctrine of Christ in our minds (exercised by our intellect, or thoughts), on our lips (exercised in our words) and in our hearts (exercised in our will, or actions). Furthermore such a gesture is highly appropriate as St. Paul teaches that the Gospel is inseparable from the Cross, calling it “*the word of the Cross*”.

It should also be noted that a variation of this gesture (making a Cross only on the lips) is used at various times during the Divine Office (the *other* part of the liturgy which compliments and surrounds the Mass), for instance while saying “*Domine, labia mea aperies*” (*i.e.*, “*O, Lord Thou shalt open my lips*”) at the beginning of Matins (the first of the eight Canonical Hours said during the day).

To properly make this sign, with your right thumb pointing upwards and your extended right hand pointing left, take the fleshy side of your thumb and make a small Greek cross (*i.e.*, an equilateral cross) on your forehead, then your lips, and



How to properly make the small Cross before the *Gospel*.

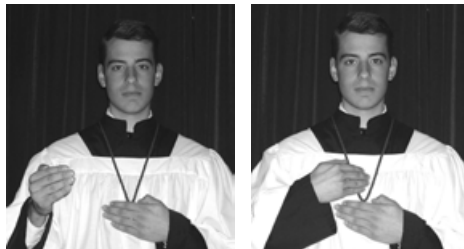
finally your chest (just above your left hand). *Do not* form your hand into a fist when making this action. Also, each cross should be distinct from the other, so this action should never bear resemblance to a squiggly line being traced from the forehead to the sternum.

While making this gesture, the server can in imitation of the prayer, *Munda cor meum*, said just previously by the celebrant (or deacon at Solemn High Mass): “*O Lord, cleanse my mind, my lips and my heart to hear³ Thy Holy Gospel.*”

Striking the Breast

This gesture is used to symbolize contrition and hence should *only* be used when appropriate to this sentiment⁴ and when applicable to the server.

In striking your breast, keep your right hand extended, but slightly cupped, and strike your breast on your sternum (just above your left hand held flat) noiselessly with the tips of fingers. *Do not* form your right hand into a fist. The only times when one strikes their breast are for these occasions:



The starting and final position of the right hand when striking the breast

1. Both *Confiteors* of the servers: at each *mea culpa*.
2. The *Agnus Dei*: at *miserere nobis* and *dona nobis pacem*.⁵
3. The *Domine non sum dignus* of the faithful: for the duration of each clause.
4. During the *Leonine Prayers* for the response “*Miserere nobis*” or “*Have mercy on us*” (out of custom, and then, *only* if the Celebrant does so).

One final note about when to strike one’s breast, remember that in the Roman Rite liturgical gestures are made for a logical reasons, so, ***do not strike your breast for:***

- The *Celebrant’s Confiteor*.⁶
- The *Nobis quoque peccatoribus*.⁷
- The *Celebrant’s Domine non sum dignus*.⁸
- “*O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary*”⁹, during the *Leonine Prayers*.

Placement of hands while sitting

Before speaking of the placement of one’s hands, a few preliminaries about one’s sitting deportment should be mentioned. When sitting, one must:

- sit erect without slouching or leaning back against something¹⁰,
- not cross one’s legs,
- and have both feet planted firmly on the ground.



Position of one’s hands when sitting

Upon sitting, one should ensure that their cassock drapes gracefully over their knees and does have a “bunched-up” appearance in their lap. Then one should arrange their surplice so that the bottom hem is positioned straight across about 1-2 inches from their knees. Again,

ensure that the surplice is not “bunched-up” in one’s lap. Then place one’s hands with fingers extended and palms down on top of one’s thighs while keeping your hands within the surplice (*i.e.*, the tips of your fingers should be on the edge of the bottom hem).

FOOTNOTES

¹ This includes the Communion Plate during the recitation of the *2nd Confiteor*, etc.

² Your hand will naturally adopt about a 20° angle.

³ These are the same words the celebrant or deacon say, except “*hear*” is substituted for “*proclaim*”.

⁴ The *Consecration* action is not one of them. This action is one of *adoration* and not of *contrition*. This is why an indulgence is granted for saying in awe during the *Elevation*: “*My Lord and my God*” and not for such expressions of contrition as “*Jesus, mercy!*” which do not conform to this action’s liturgical sentiment.

⁵ But not at a Requiem Mass, as the words change, and so the meaning changes to “*may he rest in peace*”, to which a striking of the breast is not appropriate, as this gesture symbolizes contrition.

⁶ The celebrant is saying “*through my fault...*” and not “*through their fault*”, hence it makes no sense whatsoever for servers to strike themselves during this action.

⁷ This prayer is within the *Canon* during which none of the ministers make the bows or liturgical gestures performed by the celebrant as he is saying these prayers *alone* as the priest or sacrificer. Hence, the general principle is to perform only those reverences or liturgical gestures that accompany the words said *aloud* by the celebrant. However, the only reason why these three words are said slightly aloud, is to alert those in the Sanctuary of where the celebrant is at in the *Canon* (mainly the deacon at Solemn High Mass as a cue for changing position on the predella from the Gospel side of the celebrant, to the Epistle side, to assist with the removal and the replacement of the pall).

⁸ The celebrant is saying, “*Lord, I am not worthy to receive...*”, therefore it does not make sense that anyone other than the celebrant should be striking his breast. *Cf.* L. O’Connell, pg. 161.

⁹ This clause is not one begging for mercy, but rather one simply recounting attributes or titles of Our Lady, so again, there is no reason for striking the breast while saying these words.

¹⁰ Be this a wall, or a chair back. In fact, servers’ stools (nor the sedilla for the celebrant, deacon and subdeacon) should not even have backs, because technically only a bishop is allowed to have a back to his chair (called a throne) as a symbol of his teaching authority.

Letters to an Altar Boy

Originally written by Fr. David E. Rosage and printed in 1963
under the same title by Bruce Publishing Co., this letter continues the series

DON'T SAY IT

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 strongest we have amongst our altar servers.

“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.

When 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. How silly can you get?

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 using the wrong sort 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.

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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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GUILD MEMBERS TAKE NOTE !!!

A plenary indulgence can be obtain under the normal conditions on **December 26th**, the Feast of Saint Stephen, Protomartyr of the Church and Patron of the Guild.

A partial indulgence can be gained on **December 27th**, the Feast of Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist.



Santo Stefano
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Cui Servire Regnare Est

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