

## Marian Girls

### A new "Children of Mary" a Marian "Girl Guides"

**W**E need an appropriate parish "ministry" for girls to serve the congregation in the pews, during Mass and outside of Mass.

Its members would *complement* the ministry for boys who serve the priest on the sanctuary.

#### MARIAN GIRLS

Sunday Mass in most parishes would be enhanced by Marian Girls or a "Young Marian Girls' Group". The present groups of altar girls are ready at hand to supply members for a new ministry.

At Sunday Mass, such a group offers more extensive and varied roles than does the service of Altar Boys on the sanctuary.

And it's for girls only, no boys!

This idea has already proved the preferred choice of some groups of altar girls — even at a time when many Catholics are losing the ability to spiritualize albeit ordinary acts of service to others.

Mothers and female teachers are by no means radical feminists. They have been enthusiastic for Altar Girls simply because there was nothing else available. If offered an alternative, most mothers and teachers will choose it. They want their daughters or pupils to feel 'special' and 'valued' in the Church community. They are unlikely to be particular about how it is done.

#### SPIRITUALITY

The first aim of such a parish group of Marian Girls would be to glorify God by the sanctification of its members and service to the congregation.

They might pray that some of the altar boys might hear and heed a vocation to the priesthood, since promoting vocations is enjoined on all (canon 233§1).

Its spirituality and prayers could be taken from the *Angelus* and Our Lady's *Magnificat*:

- *Ecce! Behold, the handmaid of the Lord.*
- *Fiat! Be it done to me according to thy word.*
- *Magnificat! My soul glorifies the Lord.*

#### ACTIVITY 1 — vergers

A verger is more than an usher who oversees the interior of a church. Marian girls will probably like to sit in the front seats as a group, perhaps in a white uniform with blue accessories. They and their mothers are good judges.

Their reverence and deportment would edify the congregation and guide postures for the lapsed or non-Catholics. They could have their own *Marian Prayers* and be available to lead the *Rosary* or *Liturgy of the Hours* before or after Mass.

They could distribute the Sunday Mass bulletins at the door, find people seats in a crowded church, and help young mothers cope with small children.

Social functions also have their place.

#### ACTIVITY 2 — choristers

Marian Girls could form a **Choir** tutored by an organist. "Lead choirs" help congregations with Latin chants found in some editions of the Sunday Missal. Special motets suit Offertory and Communion. Longer English hymns, e.g. sequences, *Gloria* and *Credo*, suit a choir giving support to a congregation to sing the odd verses in melody, with the choir alone singing alternate verses in harmony. Choirs like a challenge, and no one is excluded.

They can encourage a diffident congregation with **Responses** made confidently, loudly and clearly.

**Announcing hymns** carefully would give people time to find the right place: "The entrance hymn is n. 7, Firmly I believe and truly, n. 7" — or Offertory Hymn, Communion Hymn, "Hymn of Praise after Communion" and the Recessional.

They can be available for the **Readings** or to make the **Petitions** for the Prayer of the Faithful.

They could organize the **Offertory procession** — or even accompany it with flowers to put near the altar.

#### ACTIVITY 3 — sacristans

As sacristans they would complement the altar boys to set up altar and sanctuary.

**Decorating the sanctuary** is doing something beautiful for God. Flowers bring people closer to God through the beauty in His creation. They enhance worship and encourage reverence for the sacred place. They help everyone rediscover the religious aspects of beauty and its historic place in Catholic worship.. Girls love flower arranging and older ladies would be a good guide for them in the work sacristy and the placement of vases on the sanctuary.

**Laundering altar linen.** is a great honour, not a chore, and a privilege once enjoyed by the nuns. There are special prayers for some items because of its intimate use with the Blessed Sacrament.

**Baking altar breads,** under strict supervision of the ingredients, is a suitable ministry for girls, even of primary school age. Rightly they thrill with deep devotion to know that it is **THEIR** bread that Our Lord will change into His Body.

#### PARISH PRIESTS

The parish priest has pastoral authority to start a **Marian Girls**, and develop it as he sees fit, with office bearers, meetings, prayer plans.

The *Prayer Book and Manual of The Children of Mary* remains a resource for setting high standards and planning recruitment of further members from the girls of a parish and its schools.

However, great pastoral charity and prudence is needed. It has been done already. It can be done again — for the glory of God and sanctification of souls. And the idea might spread to other parishes.

# Future of the Priesthood and Altar Boys

## VITAL FOR VOCATIONS

**P**RIESTS and faithful now realize that we have to make a stark choice — to help boys discover God's call to the priesthood **OR** to continue with altar girls. It is a matter of one or the other.

What is proposed here is directed primarily to parish priests who have inherited, or themselves mistakenly initiated altar girls. What is needed is "a way forward", without any fuss or an angry word or even a tear shed. **Otherwise, as we have seen for the last 40 years, boys will quit.**

It seems that unisex, now dubbed "gender equality", is linked to deprivation in psychosexual maturation. Maybe it is due to "a lack" in childhood relationships with their fathers. Boys and girls need continuing formation and example of both father and mother in the complementary sexual roles.

The feminist agenda insists on unisex. It is an ideology enforced by dictatorial decree: *Hoc volo, sic iubeo, dixi* — "This I wish, thus I command, I have spoken." They don't know or can't recognize the obvious, that boys and girls are different. It is a dead end. Experience shows that complementarity, not interchangeability, always works.

"They do err in their hearts" Psalm 95[94] and "There is a lying spirit in the mouths of all their prophets" 1 Kings 22:22.

## STRONG CORRELATION

There is strong link between future priests and youthful service of boys on the sanctuary. In altar serving, boys can gain that intimacy with Christ to hear and heed His call to be **spiritual fathers to the faithful and spiritually married to the Church**, and to seek entry into the seminary.

Of course, the usual vocation for boys is fatherhood of families. Less usual is the fatherhood of single men in a spiritual fatherhood in the lay apostolate.

Most girls will become home-making mothers or spiritual mothers as nuns. Others embrace the virginal life of spiritual motherhood in the lay apostolate.

## "BUT ALTAR GIRLS ARE PERMITTED"

They began from disobedience in the 1970s, like several other less desirable practices, e.g. Communion in the Hand and received standing.

St John Paul II forbade altar girls in *Incestimabile Donum* (on correcting abuses) 1980, n. 18; cf. Blessed Paul VI in the Third Instruction on the Liturgy 1970 n. 7.

Further, he had assured Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta that there would never be altar girls. I have a friend (now RIP), who phoned her to confirm this.

In 1994, when he was very ill, he was persuaded to implement a particular exegesis of Canon Law.

Yet on Holy Thursday, 2004, he spoke of "Altar servers... a garden of priestly vocations... a pre-seminary." Since women can't be priests, by servers he certainly meant the male sex.

Yet some still consider altar girls as normative!

## The 1994 CONCESSION VOIDED by it results

With the advent of altar girls, the boys dropped out, so the original concession is no longer valid: ... the Holy See wishes to recall that it will always be very appropriate to follow the noble tradition of having boys serve at the altar. As is well known, this has also led to a reassuring development of priestly vocations.

*Original concession for altar girls, 15-3-1994*

## BOYS & YOUTH PREFERRED

It is altogether laudable to maintain the noble custom by which boys or youths, customarily termed servers, provide service of the altar after the manner of acolytes, and receive catechesis regarding their function in accordance with their power of comprehension. **Nor should it be forgotten that a great number of sacred ministers over the course of the centuries have come from among boys such as these.** Associations for them... should be established or promoted... Girls or women may also be admitted to this service of the altar, at the discretion of the diocesan Bishop and in observance of the established norms.

*Sacrament of Redemption, (2004) n. 47*

The "associations" are for boys. The last sentence seems to hint that altar girls were a mistake. Already, in 2001, Cardinal Medina (Congregation of Divine Worship) said that no priest can be compelled to have altar girls even in dioceses where they are allowed.

## WHERE WILL OUR PRIESTS COME FROM?

Australia now depends on Asian/African missionary priests. Check! Do their countries have altar girls?

## BOYS & GIRLS are not the same

Their vital roles in life are different, but linked by their complementary sexuality, whereby all are enriched. Equality and justice demand that dissimilar things be treated dissimilarly:

They [teachers] should, together with the parents, make full allowance for the difference of sex and for the particular role which providence has appointed to each sex in the family and in society.

*VCII on Christian Education GE n. 8(c)*

... inalienable right to education ... suitable to the particular destiny of the individuals, adapted to their ability, sex and natural cultural traditions... (ibid. n. 1)

## ACCEPTING ONE'S SEXUAL IDENTITY

Everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual *identity*. Physical, moral, and spiritual difference and *complementarity* are oriented toward the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life. The harmony of the couple and of society depends in part on the way in which the *complementarity*, needs, and mutual support between the sexes are lived out.

*Italics in original: Catechism of the Catholic Church n. 2333*

## WOMEN MINISTERING to Christ & Apostles

He [Jesus] went ... preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him and also some women ... who provided for them out of their means.

*Luke 8:1-3*

Father James Tierney