

SOCIETY OF ST TARCISIUS

A SODALITY FOR TRADITIONAL ALTAR SERVERS

“Fidelis usque ad mortem”

GUIDE FOR MEMBERS



Martyr of the Blessed Sacrament
Pray for Us

WELCOME TO THE SOCIETY

No ministry, except that of those who by ordination are set apart for the service of the Altar, deserves greater thought and consideration than the duty entrusted to those laymen and youths who have the office of assisting the priests of God in the discharge of their sacred functions. Willingly you have come forward to take up this exalted office, to enjoy the privilege which Holy Mother Church grants you of wearing the sacred dress of a cleric, namely, cassock and cotta, and of performing duties in the Sanctuary for which originally men were set apart from others by tonsure and minor orders. Your first impulse is a generous one. You value the high privilege and you feel a secret joy at giving yourself to it. You are going to be often in a holy place, performing sacred duties, and you will appear very publicly in the sight of all the congregation. To fulfil such an office worthily you will need to be holy in your own life, and edifying always in the sight of other people. Your great help will be Prayer, Holy Mass and the Sacraments.

Francis, Cardinal Bourne, *The Altar Server's Handbook* (1907)

The Society of St Tarcisus is a Guild or Sodality for servers of the Traditional Latin Mass. It was inaugurated on 15th May 2010, and is an association of Christ's faithful (cf. Canon 215), affiliated with the Latin Mass Society of England and Wales.

Serving at the altar is a great privilege, and is not to be undertaken lightly. It should be carried out devoutly and with precision, giving a good example to others of reverence for the Blessed Sacrament. Altar servers must ensure that they are fervent in their devotion to Our Lord, and exact in carrying out their duties on the altar.

St Tarcisus was a 12 year-old Roman acolyte, who was martyred for his defence of the Blessed Sacrament, in one of the fierce persecutions of the third century. He was carrying the Blessed Sacrament to those in prison, and was killed on the way while preventing its profanation. He is one of the patron saints of altar servers, and his example reminds us of the reverence that we must have for the Body of Christ when we are serving on the Sanctuary.

The feast day of St Tarcisus is 15th August, which is also the Feast of the Assumption of Our Blessed Lady.

Objects of the Society

1. To promote the dignified, devout, and accurate service of the altar in the traditional Roman rites, including through the training of members.
2. To promote the spiritual formation of altar servers, in the spirit of St Tarcisus, who accepted death rather than allow the profanation of the Most Holy Sacrament.
3. To maintain a list of those who are willing and able to serve at the traditional liturgy, and provide this information to those organizing traditional events, where needed.

The Society is specifically committed to the Traditional Latin liturgy of the Catholic Church, in a form no later than that which was current in 1962.

Spirituality

The Society promotes among its members a devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Members are encouraged to be devout to the Immaculate Mother of God, and to the saints.

The Chaplain of the Sodality of St Tarcisus provides spiritual oversight for the Society.

A quarterly Mass is arranged for the intention of members and supporters of the Society, living and dead.

FOUR PRINCIPLES OF THE SOCIETY

1. *Fidelis usque ad mortem*

Apocalypse 2: 10 *“Esto fidelis usque ad mortem et dabo tibi coronam vitae.”*
“Be thou faithful until death: and I will give thee the crown of life.”

This phrase from the Apocalypse of St John (The Book of Revelation) describes the perseverance of the Christian soul. It also well describes the martyrdom of our Patron, St Tarcisus, who was martyred for his fidelity to the Blessed Sacrament.

Members of the Sodality pledge fidelity even unto death - to the fulness of the Catholic faith, to the traditions and disciplines which are necessary to its maintenance, to the honour of the Body and Blood of Our Lord really present in the Blessed Sacrament.

2. *Pax Christi exultet in cordibus vestris*

Colossians 3: 15 *“Pax Christi exultet in cordibus vestris.”*
“Let the peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts.”

The service of a Christian is not an unfruitful external service, but is a service of the heart. The rites and rituals of the Catholic Church are not mere pomp and ceremony, but bring about what they signify - the Grace of God, transforming us into the image of His Son.

Members of the Sodality commit themselves not only to external precision in their service of the altar, but to maintaining a spiritual life that corresponds to what they are doing: to be servants of the altar not only for the time when they are on the sanctuary, but throughout their lives.

3. Super pauca fidelis

St. Matthew 25: 21 *“Euge bone serve et fidelis quia super pauca fuisti fidelis super multa te constituam intra in gaudium Domini tui.”*

“Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

Every action of a Christian, no matter how small, can avail to salvation provided it is undertaken for the love of Christ. Every word and action in the liturgy has importance, because through faithfulness to these small things we serve God's greater glory.

Members of the Sodality commit to a high standard of service on the altar: to achieving a precise knowledge of the words and the rubrics, and carrying them out correctly and reverently.

4. Servite Dominum in Laetitia

Psalm 99: *“Jubilate Domino omnis terra, servite Domino in laetitia, introite in conspectu ejus in exultatione.”*

“Sing joyfully to God, all the earth: serve ye the Lord with gladness. Come in before his presence with exceeding great joy.”

The service of a Christian is a service of joy and gladness, for we serve not an angry deity but our loving Father. Fervent devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and to the Immaculate Mother of Our Lord, expresses our Joy in His service.

Psalm 42: 4 *“Introibo ad altare Dei, ad Deum qui laetificat juventutem meam.”*

“I will go up to the altar of God, to the God who gives joy to my youth.”

These opening words of the Traditional Mass indicate that we should serve the Lord in a spirit of love and joy. Serving Our Lord on His altar, being present at the Eternal Sacrifice, receiving the communion of His True Body and Blood, are matters for joyfulness.

Philippians 4: 4 *“Gaudete in Domino semper iterum dico gaudete.”*

“Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.”

Serving Ranks and Progression

Tests

These are administered by the National Coordinator, the Chaplain, one of the Society's Grand MCs, or a person deputed by them. The requirements at each stage are noted below: it must be emphasised that passing requires complete mastery of the roles tested. On successful completion of each test, the candidate is presented with a certificate, with a Medal (unless the candidate has one already) and a cord of the appropriate colour. Replacement Medals and cords can be purchased from the Latin Mass Society.

Terminology

'Low Mass': Missa Privata, without singing or incense; one or two acolytes.

'Sung Mass': Missa Cantata, with singing; with or without incense; without deacon and subdeacon; MC, Thurifer, two acolytes, possibly boat-bearer and torchbearers.

(American usage: 'High Mass')

'High Mass': Missa Solemnis, with priest, deacon, and subdeacon: servers as for Missa Cantata. (American usage: 'Solemn High Mass'.)

'Pontifical' and 'Prelatial' (as in Low Mass, High Mass, Vespers, etc.): celebrated by a bishop or Cardinal respectively.

Ranks and Test Requirements

Supporter

A supporter does not feel called to serve at the Altar, but nonetheless wishes to further the aims and objectives of the Society of Saint Tarcisius. Supporters may wish to provide material support to the Society, or even more importantly pray for the spiritual and temporal needs of the Society.

Postulant

The Postulant wishes to join the Society, but does not yet meet the requirements for Junior Acolyte, undertaking training with a view to taking the necessary test. A probation period of six months is recommended, although this can be shortened or lengthened depending upon the individual Postulant's ability and commitment.

Junior Acolyte

Medal and cord: as members of the Society of St Tarcisius, Junior Acolytes are entitled to wear the Society's Medal when serving (with the permission of the celebrant). Junior Acolytes wear the medal with a green cord.

Test: to become a Junior Acolyte, a server must demonstrate a thorough familiarity with the responses at Low Mass and the following roles:

- (a) serving Low Mass by himself, or as 1st or 2nd Acolyte;
- (b) Incense-boat bearer at Sung and High Mass; and

(c) Torchbearer at Sung and High Mass.

Senior Acolyte

Medal and cord: Senior Acolytes are entitled to wear the Society's Medal with a pale blue cord.

Test: to become a Senior Acolyte, a server must demonstrate a thorough familiarity with the following roles:

- (a) 1st and 2nd Acolyte at Sung and High Mass
- (b) Crossbearer, and Thurifer at Sung and High Mass, including Requiem Mass
- (c) Assistant server at Benediction

Junior Master of Ceremonies.

Medal and cord: Junior Master of Ceremonies are entitled to wear the Society's Medal with royal blue cord.

Test: to become a Junior Master of Ceremonies, a server must demonstrate a thorough familiarity with the following roles:

- (a) MC at Sung Mass, including Requiems;
- (b) All the serving positions at Benediction;
- (c) A deeper knowledge of the roles he has already learned, include some less common variations on them, including variations for Passiontide, the Low Mass of Requiem, and Ember Days.

He will have grown in virtue and have demonstrated his self-discipline, reliability and punctuality, and his intelligence and reverence while serving.

He will in addition focus on developing his character, and establishing a devotional practice to the Sacred Heart, the Immaculate Heart, or a suitable alternative.

In addition to passing the test, a prospective Junior Master of Ceremonies must present a letter of recommendation from a priest.

Senior Master of Ceremonies

Medal and cord: Senior Masters of Ceremonies are entitled to wear the Society's Medal with a silver cord.

Test: to become a Senior Master of Ceremonies, a server must demonstrate a thorough familiarity with the following roles:

- (a) MC at High Mass;
- (b) All roles at Pontifical Low Mass and at Mass in the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament Exposed;
- (c) All roles at Vespers and Pontifical Vespers;
- (d) Assisting at the Rite of Marriage, of Baptism, at Confirmation, and at Burials;
- (d) Acolyte and thurifer at Holy Week services.

In addition he will be involved in the training and development of the lower ranks, and will develop his love and appreciation of the spirituality of the Mass through spiritual

reading and prayer.

He will continue his daily devotional practices and learn and use the Prayers at Mass from the Treasury of the Sacred Heart or some suitable alternative.

Grand Master of Ceremonies

Medal and cord: Grand Masters of Ceremonies are entitled to wear the Society's Medal with a gold cord.

Test: to become a Grand Master of Ceremonies, a server must demonstrate a thorough familiarity with the following roles:

- (a) MC at the Pontifical and Prelatial High Mass;
- (b) MC at the services of Holy Week;
- (c) MC at the Rite of Marriage, of Baptism, at Confirmation, and at Burials;
- (d) All roles at Compline and other Offices when said publicly.

In addition, the Grand MC will be an authority on the spirituality of the Mass, and well established in his spiritual life.

He will be involved in the development of the lower ranks by teaching and assessing Junior MCs for progression to the rank of Senior MC.

Prayer of the Society of St Tarcisius (for private use)

Lord Jesus, I profoundly adore Thee, really present in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar. I love Thee, and desire to love and serve Thee more perfectly. I do reparation to Thy Sacred Heart, for the negligence and indifference which is often shown to Thy True Body and Blood.

I thank Thee for the great privilege of serving Thee on the Sanctuary, and resolve for the future to serve Thee with greater fervour, devotion, attention, and exactness. O Lord, let my example when on the Sanctuary never be an occasion for scandal to my neighbour, but rather encourage others to greater reverence. May I always act as I believe, and show by my example my belief in the great truths of our Faith.

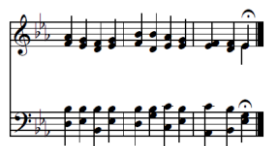
Most Blessed Mary, Mother of our Lord, obtain for me by thy prayers the grace to serve thy Son with reverence and devotion.

Saint Tarcisius, pray for me, that I may follow thy example by defending the honour of the Blessed Sacrament all the days of my life and even unto death.
Amen.

Members of the Sodality should say this prayer at the time of their enrolment, renew their commitment once a year, and are encouraged to use this prayer frequently.

Hymn of the Society of St Tarcisus

J.M. Neale's translation of the Vespers Hymn for Martyr, *Deus tuorum militum*



1. O God, Thy soldiers' great reward,
Their portion, crown, and faithful Lord,
From all transgressions set us free
Who sing Thy martyr's victory.
2. By wisdom taught he learned to know
The vanity of all below,
The fleeting joys of earth disdained,
And everlasting glory gained.
3. Right manfully his cross he bore,
And ran his race of torments sore;
For Thee he poured his life away,
With Thee he lives in endless day.
4. We therefore pray Thee, Lord of love,
Regard us from Thy throne above;
On this Thy martyr's triumph day
Wash every stain of sin away.
5. All praise to God the Father be,
All praise, eternal Son, to Thee,
Whom with the Spirit we adore
Forever and forevermore.

Verse 4 to be sung only on the feast of St Tarcisus.

MORE ABOUT THE SOCIETY OF ST TARCISIUS

An occasional update will be sent to members and supporters by email, notifying of the quarterly Masses, and of any training events or other items of likely interest.

How to Contact the Secretary

By email: tarcisius@lms.org.uk

By post: Society of St Tarcisius, c/o The Latin Mass Society, 11 - 13 Macklin Street,
London, WC2B 5NH.

Data protection

The records of the Society of St Tarcisius are covered by the Privacy Policy of the Latin Mass Society, which can be found on the LMS website:

<https://lms.org.uk/privacy-policy>