

## **Ministry of Acolyte**

Pope St. John XXIII Seminary  
*Archdiocese of Boston*

Wilton Cardinal Gregory,  
*Archbishop of Washington*

My Dear Brothers,

The Church does not linger very long over the events of the Christmas Mystery. She hurries Jesus along from infancy to young adulthood rather quickly with our scriptural readings. Our American sentiments may be offended by not being able to bask at the childhood moments of the Lord's life. For you see, our Church considers His adulthood much more important than His childhood. Soon after Christmas and Epiphany, we begin to listen to God's Word while gathered around the dual tables that the Church prepares and like the little children we once were, we pay attention to those stories that belong to the very heart of the Church and that in turn gives hope to the Church's heart.

The origins of the Eucharist can be traced to table fellowship, ordinary tables much like those that you probably found in your own homes – not the fancy dining room tables that many of your homes may have had that were only used on rare and very special occasions, but the everyday tables that were to be found in kitchens and breakfast nooks. These tables that served as the places where you may have gathered as children, and where you were taught to pray, where you shared your fears and worries, boasted of your victories and triumphs, and on occasion received the justice that your behavior had richly deserved. Those tables where every day meals were served, that every now and

then, became desks and places that sometimes even held the family's laundry, groceries or other treasures.

The altars of our churches had such humbles beginnings as well as the rituals that we celebrate that have been perfected in and by Christ Himself had their own beginnings with such humble proto-types. Tables like those are where people who are hungry still gather to be nourished and fed. Such tables are where God feeds His people with his Word and Sacrament. This evening, a number of you are being designated servants and caretakers of the Lord's Table. You are being commissioned to assist with feeding the hungers of your brothers and sisters – the hungers that we all have for the Bread of Life.

You are being entrusted with the Ministry of Acolyte; you will become an official servant around the Lord's Altar, entrusted with caring for the vessels and implements that are used in offering the sacrificial gifts. As an Acolyte, you will also be assigned a responsibility to share the Bread of Life with God's People. Thus, you are to respond to the hungers of the human family through tonight's celebration. You are to feed the hearts of God's People with a share of the Bread of Life that responds to the yearnings that we all have for Christ Himself.

This new responsibility is intended to help you better to understand the Church's need for Jesus Christ, present in this unique Sacrament. This ministry is not so much a privilege as it is an obligation for you to be attentive to the longings of the heart of the Church. Just as Jesus often looked upon the hungry crowds and felt pity for them because they were without guidance, without hope, without direction, so must you, as Acolytes have a sensitivity for the faces and hearts of the poor and neglected. This evening, you tell the Church that you will pray and work

to become even more attentive, more loving, and more responsive to those hungers since Christ chooses you to act in His name and in the name of His Church by sharing with you this ministry and this responsibility. Thank you, for saying yes to this invitation. May the Lord who has begun a good work in you bring it to fulfillment. Amen.