

The Ceremony of Enrolment of Altar Servers into the Guild of St. Stephen, Deacon and Martyr.

*The ceremony may be held during Mass (preferably a Votive Mass of St Stephen when this is permissible, in which case the ceremony will begin after the homily.) alternatively the ceremony may be held outside Mass but should be incorporated into a Liturgy of the Word from the Feast of St Stephen.*

*The servers to be enrolled are called forward and stand in front of the priest.*

*The priest asks the candidates:*

Priest: What do you ask of God's Church?

Servers: The Blessing of Almighty God and enrolment into the Guild of St. Stephen for Altar Server's.

*Everyone sits - the candidates on seats prepared for them in the Sanctuary.*

Liturgy of the Word in Honour of St. Stephen

Opening Hymn:

The Hymn to St. Stephen or a suitable alternative.

Greeting & Introduction: At the discretion of the celebrant.

Opening Prayer:

Let us pray,

Help us we pray you Lord, to imitate St. Stephen, your deacon; whom we venerate as the patron of our Guild.

May we serve the Church with the same dedication, learn to love our enemies just as he prayed for those who persecuted him, we ask this through Christ your Son.

All: Amen.

Reading :

(Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59) I can see heaven thrown open

A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles:

Stephen was filled with grace and power and began to work miracles and great signs among the people. But then certain people came forward to debate with Stephen, some from Cyrene and Alexandria who were members of the synagogue called the Synagogue of Freedmen, and others from Cilicia and Asia. They found that they could not get the better of him because of his wisdom, and because it was the Spirit that prompted what he said. They were infuriated when they heard what he said, and ground their teeth at him.

But Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at God's right hand. "I can see heaven thrown open," he said, "and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God'. At this all members of the council shouted out and stopped their ears with their hands; then all rushed at him, sent him out of the city and stoned him.

The witnesses put down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. As they were stoning him, Stephen said in invocation, "Lord Jesus. receive my spirit". Then he knelt down and said aloud, "Lord do not hold this sin against them"; and with these words he fell asleep.

Saul entirely approved of the killing.

This is the word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 30 (31)

Into your hands, O Lord. I commend my spirit.

Into your hands, O Lord. I commend my spirit.

I. Be a rock of refuge for me,  
a mighty stronghold to save me,  
for you are my rock, my stronghold.  
For your names sake, lead me and guide me.

Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

2. Into your hands I commend my spirit,  
It is you who win redeem me, Lord.  
As for me, I trust in the Lord:  
let me be glad and rejoice in your love.

Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

3. Let your face shine on your servant.  
Save me in your love.  
You hide those who trust in you in the shelter of your presence,  
from the plotting of men.

Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

Gospel Acclamation:

All: Alleluia! Alleluia! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; The Lord God is our light.  
Alleluia!

Gospel:

(Matthew 10:17-22) *It is not you who will be speaking; the Spirit of your Father will be speaking in you.*

Jesus said to his apostles: "Beware of men; they will hand you over to Sanhedrin and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the pagans. But when they hand you over, do not worry about how to speak or what to say; what you are to say will be given to you when the time comes; because it is not you who will be speaking; the Spirit of your Father will be speaking in you."

"Brother will betray brother to death, and the father his child; children will rise against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by all men on account of my name; but the man who stands firm to the end will be saved".

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily: At the discretion of the celebrant.

## THE ENROLMENT

*The congregation stands - the candidates to be enrolled take their places kneeling in front of the priest.  
The candidates may be given a lighted candle to hold.*

*The Priest addresses the candidates using these or similar words:*

The worship of the Church is centred on the celebration of the Mass, but also includes other services of prayer and the administration of the Sacraments. Those who are ordained for this are Bishops, Priests and Deacons. But, from earliest times, the Church has called other Christians to assist at these services, principally to help the ordained ministers, but also to be at the service of the entire Christian Community. To be called to assist the Church in this manner is a privileged function and should be carried out to the best of one's ability.

You must always try to serve in such a way as to help everyone in the church to pray. Remember, always, the promises that you are about to make:

to serve regularly, at the times when you are asked,  
to serve with care and reverence, and; above all  
to serve with understanding.

A good server is the one who not only knows what to do, but also understands why it is being done. Try to learn more about the worship of the Church, in which you are being called to participate in a privileged way.

Priest: My dear people, let us pray for those who wish to be enrolled into the Guild of St. Stephen. Let us ask God to bless them. {Pause for silent prayer} Heavenly Father, bless these servers who have been chosen to be members of the Guild of St: Stephen. Grant that they may be faithful in their service at your Altar, and that they may grow in faith and love. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen

Priest: Will you try to say the Guild Prayer every day?

Servers: I will, with the help of God.

Priest: Will you promise to do your best to serve regularly, and particularly when needed?

Servers: I will, with the help of God.

Priest: Will you promise to serve with care and reverence?

Servers: I will, with the help of God.

Priest: will you try to understand what you are doing when you serve?

Servers: I will, with the help of God.

*The servers, who are to be enrolled, now make their solemn promise together. (It is suggested that the priest should invite other servers who are present to renew their own promise at the same time).*

Servers: I offer myself to God Almighty; to Blessed Mary our Mother and to our Holy Patron, St. Stephen;  
and I promise to do my best, to serve regularly, with reverence and understanding,  
for the glory of God, the service of His Church  
and my own eternal salvation.

BLESSING OF THE MEDALS:

Priest: Blessed are you, Lord of all creation. You have made us in your image and likeness and have placed us over all creation to use it for your glory.

We ask you to bless (+) these medals, which your servers will wear as a sign of their service at your Altar.

*The medals are sprinkled with Holy Water.*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son; and of the Holy Spirit

All: Amen.

*The candidates now come forward one by one (or in pairs). Kneel before the priest, and hand their lighted candles to him as a token of offering themselves,*

*The priest places a medal round the neck of each server, saying:*

Priest: (N).....receive this medal as a sign of your admission into the Guild of St. Stephen that, with the help of his prayers, you may lead a good and holy life,

Servers: Amen.

*The Servers return to their places standing before the priest.*

Priest: I now welcome you as members of the Guild of St Stephen.

CONCLUDING PRAYER:

Priest: Let us pray.

*Pause for silent prayer*

Lord Jesus Christ, you came into this world to serve others, rather than to be served, and showed yourself to St. Stephen in your glory at the right hand of the Father,

We ask you to grant to your Altar Servers the faith of St. Stephen, as they serve you in the Blessed Sacrament, so that they too come to see you in your glory. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

SOLEMN BLESSING:

*It is recommended that when the Enrolment Ceremony takes place*

*During Mass, this Solemn Blessing should be used as the final blessing of the Mass*

Priest: God, our Father, is the creator whom all creation serves:

May he bless you and keep you faithful in his service.

All: Amen.

Priest. Jesus Christ is the model of all who serve: May you follow in his footsteps.

All: Amen.

Priest: The Holy Spirit lives in all those who serve the Church:

May he inspire you to be good and devoted servers.

All: Amen.

Priest: And may Almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

CLOSING HYMN; - At the discretion of the celebrant.