

# ANNUAL ADDRESS TO THE AGM OF THE ARCHCONFRATERNITY OF ST STEPHEN.

Reverend Fathers, Deacon Michael, members of the Archconfraternity,

It is always my privilege at this Annual Meeting to say a few words, and as always I am very glad to do so.

I want to start this year rather differently though by saying how glad I am – and I feel sure I am speaking for all of us – how glad I am to see Mr Nicholas Tilbury at the helm. Nicholas has had what I think he would agree with me - a bit of a bumpy year! But through God's grace, his own fortitude and the support of a "good woman" (his dear wife Elizabeth) he is getting back to full fitness and it is great to see him here.

And now on to other matters: It has been a wonderful year for the Archconfraternity – not least because of the blessed visit of our Holy Father to our land. The events were wonderful and the response amazing, but for us as a Guild the highlights were the opportunities offered to a representative few to serve the liturgies which Pope Benedict presided over.

The serving was tremendous and does our Guild great credit. The very fact that His Holiness commented, on his return to Rome on the quality of the liturgies, reflects on our Archconfraternity – for such services simply fail to materialise if the servers are not 'beaver-ing-away' in the background.

I was delighted, though not surprised, at just how well the Mass was conducted at Westminster (I would not expect anything less) but I would like to comment in particular on the witness of our younger servers at the beatification Mass of Blessed John Henry Newman in the Archdiocese of Birmingham. There they were, smartly kitted out and with their Guild of St Stephen medals clearly visible for all the world to see. I was deeply proud to be the National Director on that day, and I would like to take this opportunity of recording my thanks to Fr Jan Nowotnik (our Diocesan Director in Birmingham) whom I suspect had a great deal to do with the organising of that great and holy occasion. Yes, it has been a quite a year for the Archconfraternity!

So now to the future: The arrival of the new missal, which I spoke of last year, has not quite got here!! Nothing surprising in that, and those who are in charge of such matters are still awaiting the final *ratio* on one or two elements of the new liturgy before they can go to press. I believe the elements yet to be approved are those in relation to the National Propers – naturally of great importance to us all. But the date for us to start practicing is now set (though I use the term loosely for who knows what might happen) for the first week of September with implementation for Advent 1 next year.

This is going to be a great challenge for all of us, and I have no doubt we will constantly be caught out!! But the congregation look to us to lead by our

example, so I would like to invite all MC's to take the opportunity of going on line to the 'site' of the American Bishops conference and perhaps even download some of the forms we will be using so as to be prepared with their servers for the day of launch!! Let's try, in our important and vital role to help our priests in leading the people of God.

On a different subject, I was a little concerned some months ago to read of the launch of a new society for altar servers for the Extraordinary Form; the Guild of St Tarcisius – concerned because I firmly believe we are all trying very hard to perfect the quality of service at the altar of God. Our aims are the same, even if the needs are slightly different. Since then some very positive contacts have been made and we look forward to an even closer bond between us. Mr Nicholas Tilbury and I spent a most enjoyable and fruitful time in Reading at the latest training session for servers for the Extraordinary Form and were made most welcome by the Secretary of this new organisation, and by The Rev Fr de Malleray FSSP who was leading the day. As I have just said the needs of our groups may be slightly different, but we are all there to serve the glory of God, so I will keep you informed but have high hopes that a closer affiliation will be achieved between us.

The Archconfraternity continues to flourish throughout the world and branches continue to be added to our number - which again is wonderful. It was our joy to welcome Dr Hahnen earlier this year to one of our meetings and we look forward to strengthening our links. This link with the servers in Germany will continue to flourish, not least because our President, Mr Nicholas Tilbury and I have been invited to attend the annual Altar Servers Conference in Germany next year – *Deo Volante* we will both be there. It promises to be a fascinating visit and of great benefit to both of our organisations both pastorally and spiritually.

Finally it is my greatest pleasure to take this opportunity of thanking you all – on behalf of our Superior General – and I suspect all other priests throughout the country who benefit from the wonderful work that you do – for your witness of service to Christ and His Church throughout the year. Without you there would often be chaos at our altars; our priests need you and we are grateful to you.

God bless you and may our Archconfraternity continue to flourish and grow.

The Revd Fr Dennis F.P. Touw-Tempelmans Plat M.A. (Canon Law)  
National Director