

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Some folks have noticed that we only have boys serving the altar at Our Lady of the Rosary, Greenville. Why is that? Girl altar servers are permitted. Are we trying to be mean and oppress girls? Are we misogynists? Don't we believe in equality of the sexes?

Of course, we believe in every person's equality before God, but equality does not mean uniformity. We are equal, but as men and women we are different. Complementarity between the sexes is a beautiful part of God's creation.

We have gradually moved over to having only boys serving the altar for several reasons. First, I should say that when we had girl altar servers they did a great job, but it has been my experience that when boys and girls are in the same groups of service or society very often the boys leave. Guys are lazy. It's typical of men to shrug their shoulders and say, "If the gals want to do it, let them do it!"

This is why we first segregated the boy and girl servers. Boys served some masses. Girls served others. Eventually as fewer and fewer girls volunteered, we decided to train only boys to serve the altar.

When serving the altar is "Boys only" the boys bond together more and support one another. The older boys help to train the younger ones and they interact as brothers. At OLR we encourage them to serve at Mass by singing in one of our choirs. But there is more to it than these practical matters. Some folks have observed that the Catholic priesthood is reserved to men, so having only boys serving the altar helps to reinforce this doctrine of the church and provides an encouraging environment for boys and young men to begin considering a priestly vocation.

In our current society--where so many are confused by the results radical feminism and the sexual revolution--having activities separated by gender helps boys and girls to be clear about the differences in gender roles. Human sexuality is a complex and multi-faceted dimension of the human person and lack of clearly defined gender roles in childhood can contribute to gender confusion later on. Having boys do some jobs and girls do others helps boys and girls develop in a healthy way.

It is a joy to see our boys and girls participate so enthusiastically in worship. The boys run in to church saying, "Can I serve today, Father!" The girls turn up early to practice and sing beautifully. Together they glorify God with their youth, their beauty and their love of the Lord and so remind each one of us that to enter the Kingdom of God we must become again like little children.

Your Pastor,  
Fr. Longenecker