

**Life**

St. Tarcisus was an altar server born in Italy in the third century. At that time, the church faced persecution by the Roman Empire and could only hold mass in the catacombs. In order to prevent priests from being arrested and unable to celebrate mass, they could only rely on the faithful to bring the Eucharist to the imprisoned Christians. At 12 years old, Tarcisus understood that this action was very dangerous, but he volunteered to bring the Eucharist to the prison, saying that he would not be noticed because he was young. Tarcisus carefully clasped the Eucharist to his breast, but he encountered a group of peers who asked what he was hiding. When they suspected that Tarcisus was a Christian, they tried to snatch his heavenly treasure with force. Tarcisus kept protecting the Eucharist and was finally beaten to death by these youth. A guard who hid his Christian identity took the dying Tarcisus to the Catacombs of St Calixtus. He was already dead when they arrived but was still clutching the Eucharist to his breast. Tarcisus was buried there straight away. The church designated him as one of the patron saints of the altar servers. Many Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion also venerate him as their patron saint.

**Reflection**

Why did the young Tarcisus risk his life to protect the Eucharist? Because he was convinced that it was Christ. Just as Jesus endured scourging and death on the cross for his love for us, Tarcisus was also willing to respond to his love and use his body to protect Jesus until death. Do we believe, as he did, that the Eucharist is Christ? What are we thinking when we line up to receive Holy Communion during Mass? By chance if we drop the Holy Communion on the ground while receiving Holy Communion, do we really think that we have accidentally knocked Jesus over and hasten to pick him up? Let us learn from the example of Tarcisus in our attitude towards the Eucharist.

On August 4, 2010, after the public audience, Pope Benedict XVI blessed a five-meter-high statue of St. Tarcisus in St. Peter's Square. He told the faithful, about 50,000 of whom were altar servers on pilgrimage, about the saint's life and pointed out that Tarcisus' testimony "teach us the deep love and great veneration Tarcisus has for the Eucharists: It is precious, a treasure of incomparable value; it is the bread of life, it is Jesus himself who becomes our nourishment, support and strength on our daily journey and on the open road that leads to eternal life; the Eucharist is the greatest gift that Jesus bequeathed to us."

**Prayer**

Pope Benedict XVI once said that "the Eucharistic celebration is the greatest and highest act of prayer". In the above-mentioned activities, he reminded the altar servers and other believers how to participate in mass and let Christ's presence be seen on earth: "do not enter a church for the celebration with superficiality but rather, prepare yourselves inwardly for Holy Mass! Assisting your priests in service at the altar helps to make Jesus closer, so that people can understand, can realize better: he is here. You collaborate to make him more present in the world, in every day life, in the Church and everywhere. Dear friends! You lend Jesus your hands, your thoughts, your time. He will not fail to reward you, giving you true joy and enabling you to feel where the fullest happiness is. St Tarcisus has shown us that love can even bring us to give our life for an authentic good, for the true good, for the Lord. Martyrdom will probably not be required of us, but Jesus asks of us fidelity in small things, inner recollection, inner participation, our faith and our efforts to keep this treasure present in every day life."

Let us learn from the virtues of St. Tarcisus, treasure the Eucharist,  
and use our words and actions to help people experience Christ's presence in their lives.  
Let us also pray for the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. St. Tarcisus, Pray for us.