



# Judge slams woman for marginalizing kids' dad

By [Michele Mandel](#), Toronto Sun  
Wednesday, August 06, 2014

TORONTO - Marco spent months arranging his oldest daughter's First Communion weekend in June and notified his ex about all the arrangements: Manicures for the girls the day before, the church service and a party the next day.

But when he went to school to pick up his

daughters, 10 and 7, their mother refused to let them leave. And then a short time later, just 24 hours before the ceremony was to begin, he got the e-mail from his ex-wife: She was unilaterally cancelling his access that weekend.

The communion and the celebration were now off.



“It was devastating for me and the whole family. That weekend was very, very tough for us,” recalls the dad, whose full name is being withheld to protect his young daughters.

For warring couples fighting over their children, it’s the kind of revenge-dripping scenario that sounds all too familiar. More often than not, we hear from the dads who complain that the courts are never on their side when it comes to resolving these disputes.

But not this time.

The Superior Court judge who heard Marco’s emergency motion slammed his ex-wife, not just for her cruel cancellation of a long-planned religious milestone, but for her repeated efforts to marginalize the dad from his daughters’

“The two girls were scheduled for manicures and pedicures; cake and dress were arranged; and the father made reservations for 30 at a restaurant. At no time did the mother ever express any issues with the First Communion date,” noted Justice Alison Harvison Young in a recent ruling.

“The mother’s abrupt cancellation of the First Communion was, in my view, shocking conduct.”

The judge found that this was not unusual during the five years of their “high conflict” estrangement. She took the mom to task for preventing the dad from speaking to his kids by phone on a nightly basis — as per their agreement — and even changing her number without giving him the new one. The children also reported that their mother and new husband called their dad “donkey” and other names.

“In summary, the mother’s conduct in general reflects a systematic attempt to minimize and marginalize the father’s role in his children’s lives, and to denigrate and degrade him in their eyes, with a lack of consideration of either their best interests or insight into the importance of a strong and healthy relationship with him to their continuing development.

“The cancellation, at the very last minute

without any warning in advance to the father, of this important milestone in (their daughter’s) life, is the most recent and most disturbing example of this.”

The judge then agreed to all the dad’s requests: The rescheduling of the First Communion, police enforcement if access is denied again, a non-disparagement order prohibiting her from involving the kids in their adult issues and child-appropriate cellphones programmed so he can always reach them.

She also ordered the ex-wife to pay Marco \$1,261 to cover his costs when she abruptly cancelled the festivities planned for the First Communion weekend. “The mother’s conduct was a serious and unjustifiable breach (of their agreement) and reflects an unfortunate pattern of conduct on her part,” Harvison Young wrote in her ruling. “It is important that it be sanctioned and that she understands such actions will have consequences.”

The mom could not be reached for comment.

Marco’s lawyer, Michael Stangarone, lauded the judge for sending a clear message that the best interests of the children must be paramount and that if the mom doesn’t change her alienating ways, her sole custody of the kids could be in jeopardy.

“It’s a warning, not just to her but to other parents, that this kind of conduct will not be tolerated. If you’re more focused on your own feelings of anger and resentment towards the other spouse, you’re not going to get access,” Stangarone says.

Marco is savouring his victory after years — and more than \$150,000 — spent fighting in the courts. “Good fathers do get the short end of the stick. Is it because we’re male or because deadbeat dads give us a bad name, I don’t know. So I was overwhelmed and shocked.”

Marco held his daughter’s First Communion late last month without incident. All is quiet in the parental war zone — at least for now.