

Tridentine Community News

January 11, 2009

Archbishop-designate Vigneron and the Tridentine Mass

Much has been, and will be, written about newly-announced Archbishop-designate of the Archdiocese of Detroit, Bishop Allen Vigneron. Readers of this column, of course, will be most curious about his stance on the Tridentine Mass. We believe that our Holy Father's selection of this particular man bodes well for the cause of the Classic Roman Liturgy in our region.

Let's consider Bishop Vigneron's record as Bishop of Oakland, California. In the March, 2003 edition of San Francisco Faith, an interviewer asked His Excellency:

“Q: What's your opinion of the Tridentine Mass?”

A: The Holy Father has certainly encouraged the indult for Ecclesia Dei, and I certainly want to respond to the leadership of the pope in that matter.”

Bishop Vigneron followed up this statement with action: St. Margaret Mary Church near downtown Oakland had always been an impressive parish. With both Novus Ordo Latin and Tridentine Masses on the schedule, traditional architecture, and a competent music program, St. Margaret was already a home for those who prefer classic liturgy. In January, 2005, Bishop Vigneron brought in the Institute of Christ the King to assist at the parish. In addition to being made Assistant Pastor, the Institute priest was given the title “Episcopal Delegate [to the Diocese of Oakland] for the Latin Rite of 1962”. Bishop Vigneron instituted weekday Mass and permitted all of the sacraments to be celebrated according to the Extraordinary Form. A catechetical program conducted according to traditional norms was also begun.

What happened next was instructive: This longstanding home of the Traditional Mass saw their Sunday Tridentine Mass attendance increase from about 130 to over 300, essentially filling this medium-sized church. Virtually nothing about the Mass itself had changed; what was new, and obviously attractive to people, was the evident commitment of the bishop to creating a fuller traditional parish experience than just Sunday Mass.

Bishop Vigneron has participated in at least two events at St. Margaret Mary: On December 10, 2005, he celebrated the Sacrament of Confirmation according to the Extraordinary Form, then celebrated [what appears to have been from the photos] a Pontifical Low Mass. On January 23, 2008, he delivered a homily about St. Francis de Sales at, but did not celebrate, a weekday evening Tridentine Mass. For copyright reasons, we cannot reproduce the photos here, but they are available at www.institute-christ-king.org

In the kind of cross-diocese cooperation that we see here between the Tridentine Communities of the Diocese of London (Windsor) and the Archdiocese of Detroit, Bishop Vigneron and Diocese of San Jose Bishop Patrick McGrath established an arrangement where St. Margaret's Institute priest was also given charge of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Chapel in Santa Clara, south of Oakland.

This formerly schismatic chapel had been regularized with the San Jose Diocese.

The September 19, 2005 edition of Bishop Vigneron's column in “The Catholic Voice,” the Oakland diocesan newspaper, was entitled, “10 Rules for Handling Disagreement Like a Christian”. Rule #3 is pertinent to us today:

“3. The Rule of Legitimate Freedom: ‘What the Church allows is not to be disallowed.’

This rule means that in situations where the Church says that a variety of views or opinions is legitimate, I should not impose my option as a mandate on others. For example: we can receive Holy Communion in the hand or on the tongue. Either one is acceptable.”

In other words, if the Holy Father supports Latin in the liturgy, so should we. If he supports wider use of the Extraordinary Form, so should we. Liberality is not merely about permitting innovation, it is also about restoring the traditions of the Church. Again, His Excellency walks the talk: Prior to being assigned to Oakland, during his tenure as rector of Detroit's Sacred Heart Seminary, Gregorian Chant was reintroduced and a schola was formed.

We cannot imagine that Detroit could realistically have been assigned a greater friend to the Tridentine Mass, and to sound liturgical practice in general. But let us be realistic and understand that he will be the archbishop to all Catholics in the Archdiocese, and as such, support for Latin Liturgy will occupy a tiny fraction of his time. The wonderful news is that we have reason to be optimistic that His Excellency's proven sympathy and support for the Extraordinary Form will translate into additional growth of, and events involving, our beloved Traditional Liturgy.

The St. Josaphat Blog Address

The web address of the new St. Josaphat Blog was inadvertently omitted from last week's Tridentine Community News. It is: <http://stjosaphat.wordpress.com/>

You will also be able to reach the blog through a link at www.detroitlatinmass.org

The Vigil of the Epiphany

A reader had a question as to why the Mass this past Monday, January 5 at St. Josaphat was a Feria and not the Vigil of the Epiphany. The answer is that the Vigil of Epiphany, plus some other vigils, were suppressed in the 1955 Calendar changes. Pre-1955 hand missals that have been reprinted, such as the Fr. Lasance and St. Andrew Missals, contain this feast, however it is no longer celebrated.

As we have stated before, we highly recommend the use of 1955 or later hand missals, not only because they contain the 1962 Calendar that Rome requires that we use, but also because they tend to have less typographical errors than older missals.