

Tridentine Community News

February 15, 2009

National Shrine of the Little Flower To Host Special Extraordinary Form Mass

In perhaps the most amazing example yet of local fruits of our Holy Father's Motu Proprio, *Summorum Pontificum*, the landmark National Shrine of the Little Flower in Royal Oak will be holding a special Tridentine Mass on Wednesday, March 18 at 7:00 PM. The celebrant will be Msgr. George Browne, who regularly celebrates the Traditional Mass not only at St. Josaphat, but also at Sacred Heart in Yale and St. Edward on the Lake in Lakeport.



Shrine is well known on a number of fronts. An art deco masterpiece, its construction was funded by contributions to the radio ministry of founding pastor Fr. Charles Coughlin. Fr. Coughlin taught at Windsor's Assumption University – yes, the one located next to Assumption Church – and was also assigned to St. Agnes Church in Detroit. When he was assigned to build Shrine, he also became host of a popular national radio show.

It is hard to imagine nowadays that a local priest could hold the country's attention via a radio broadcast. That he did, until the controversial nature of his shows resulted in him being silenced. As you drive by Shrine on Woodward at 12 Mile Road, notice the outdoor pulpit attached to the tower facing Woodward. Fr. Coughlin delivered speeches from this outdoor platform. Even today, Shrine continues as a beacon on radio, as its morning Mass is broadcast on WCAR, 1090 AM, along with a morning talk show that was, and may still be, produced from a small studio located inside the tower.

Always popular with people from our region, the church was designated a National Shrine in 1998, one of only five in the United States. Since then, Shrine has become a pilgrimage spot for people from outside metro Detroit as well.

Shrine is one of few pre-Vatican II churches to be constructed in the round. The altar is at the center of the church, surrounded by a communion rail (photo from Shrine's web site, www.shrinechurch.com). A ceiling-mounted baldachino is suspended above the altar. Seating is available on the main floor as well as in a balcony surrounding the church. One of the

Archdiocese's largest pipe organs is built into the building, with some pipes even installed below the floor. Because of these architectural details, very little was done to modify the church after Vatican II to make it possible to celebrate Mass facing the people, despite the parish's ability to afford modifications. And thus we have a church perfectly suited to the Traditional Latin Mass today.

Shrine has always had a contingent of devotees of the Extraordinary Form. This group has been quietly asking for a Tridentine Mass there since the 1990s. Many of them now attend St. Josaphat. Gregorian Chant classes have also been offered in the past. It is not surprising that the seeds of their low-key advocacy are bearing fruit. The scale was tipped when Shrine's RCIA Director, John LaCroix, decided that it would be beneficial to expose his students to a wider variety of Catholic liturgy. The Tridentine Mass in one example. He also plans to hold an Eastern Rite liturgy there soon.

What makes Shrine especially newsworthy as the site for a Tridentine Mass is that it is one of the Archdiocese of Detroit's largest parishes in terms of the number of registered families. With over 12,000 parishioners and elementary, middle, and high schools, it's a busy place. Its unique architecture and convenient suburban location make it a marvelous setting in which to expose a great number of people to the Church's Historic Liturgy.



Every Celebration of the Extraordinary Form Is to Be Commended

It is important that all Tridentine Mass celebrations be given due credit, whether regular (daily, weekly, monthly, etc.) or special occasion. Indeed, it is special occasion Masses that can create new interest in the Extraordinary Form, as more Catholics become aware of their liturgical patrimony.

We applaud the National Shrine of the Little Flower for taking this initiative. We encourage all of our readers to attend Shrine's historic Tridentine Mass on March 18.