

Tridentine Community News

July 11, 2010

The Pontifical Solemn Mass

In anticipation of next Sunday's Pontifical Solemn Mass at 9:30 AM at St. Josaphat Church, it is appropriate to discuss the various forms of Pontifical Mass that a bishop may celebrate.

Next Sunday's Mass will be a "*Pontifical Solemn Mass at the Faldstool*". This is the most solemn form of Extraordinary Form Mass that a bishop may celebrate if he is not the Ordinary (chief bishop) of a diocese, or if he is an Ordinary but is not in his own diocese. Bishop Joseph Perry is an Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Chicago, thus this is the appropriate form for him to use while visiting here.

A faldstool is a bench or small chair on which the bishop sits. It is distinct from a throne, a more formal, large chair. A "*Pontifical Solemn Mass at the Throne*" is the form of Holy Mass that an Ordinary celebrates in his own diocese, or that a bishop with the permission of the local Ordinary can celebrate outside his own diocese. Bishop Edward Slattery of Tulsa, Oklahoma, for example, was given permission to celebrate a Pontifical Solemn Mass at the Throne at the recently held Extraordinary Form Mass at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC. You may have heard the term "pontificate" casually used to refer to someone expounding on a topic. The expression derives from the description of a bishop preaching, e.g. "he pontificated from the throne".

In both of the above two forms of Mass, the bishop is assisted by an Assistant Priest in cope, a Deacon and Subdeacon, and a Master of Ceremonies who must be in major orders. A second MC oversees the altar servers. A Pontifical Solemn Mass at the Throne gets more complicated, with Assistant Deacons and various additional servers.

The bishop uses two kinds of mitres (tall hats) at various points in the Mass, a Golden Mitre and a Precious Mitre. The latter is so named because it is encrusted with precious stones. Depending on his preferences, the bishop may also wear special gloves, Episcopal shoes, and buskins (elaborate socks). It is especially appropriate to use a crosier (the shepherd's staff) in his own diocese. All of these represent his authority.

The bishop vests before the altar before Mass, and unvests afterwards, reciting prayers from the Pontifical, a book containing the Ordinary (unchanging prayers) of the Mass. The Pontifical is then put on the altar, in place of the central altar card. The regular Altar Missal is only used for the Propers, or changing prayers, of the Mass. A bugia, or candle, is held near the books he reads.

Readers of this column may be familiar with a "*Pontifical Low Mass*", the form of Holy Mass that Bishop Earl Boyea of Lansing prefers to celebrate. The bishop has at his side two assistants, one of whom must be in major orders. He vests and unvests before the altar, before and after Mass. He gives the Pontifical Blessing at the end of Mass. Otherwise, it largely follows the same structure as a conventional Low Mass or Missa Cantata.

All of these ceremonials, and all of these elaborate vestments, serve to point out that the bishop is a shepherd and teacher of the faithful. As a successor of the Apostles, a bishop is charged with grave responsibility over souls. The reverences given to the bishop in these solemn Masses are symbolic of the reverence due our Lord. We do not reverence the man; we reverence the office, and in turn, the accountability that the office owes to God.

Special Liturgies Next Weekend Open to All

All of our readers are invited to attend the special liturgies planned for the Latin Liturgy Association Convention, **whether or not you are registered for the conference**. In addition to the Pontifical Solemn Mass on Sunday, July 18 at 9:30 AM at St. Josaphat Church, these include:

On Friday, July 16 at 5:15 PM: Vespers and Benediction in the Extraordinary Form will be held at Windsor's Our Lady of the Assumption Church. The celebrant will be Fr. Peter Hrytsyk. A four-voice male choir will chant this special liturgy from Assumption's historic choir stalls which were originally built for the singing of the Divine Office. Assumption's original historic monstrance dating from the late 1800s will be used for Benediction.

On Saturday, July 17 at 8:30 AM: A Latin Mass according to the Ordinary Form will be held at Detroit's St. Joseph Church. The St. Joseph Capella will provide music for this Mass. The celebrant will be Fr. Scott Haynes of Chicago's St. John Cantius Church. Fr. Haynes is co-creator of the artistically beautiful web sites www.cantius.org and www.sanctamissa.org. He has also provided valuable consulting assistance to Mr. Michel Ozorak as Michel has developed his series of Gregorian Chant Sheets for celebrants of the Tridentine Mass.

On Saturday, July 17 at 4:45 PM: Vespers and Benediction in the Extraordinary Form will be held at Detroit's St. Albertus Church. The celebrant will be Fr. Kenneth Myers of Pittsburgh's St. Boniface Church. A three-voice male choir will chant this service from the sanctuary.

On Sunday, July 18 at 2:15 PM: The Holy Rosary will be recited in Latin and Benediction will be offered at Detroit's Sweetest Heart of Mary Church. The celebrant will be new cluster pastor Fr. Paul Czarnota.

Registration Still Open

Some seats remain on the Bus Tour of Historic Churches. Registration for the Saturday and Sunday events is still open. Registration at the door is possible for all three days, however the Bus Tour is limited to the number of seats on the bus.

One caveat: The St. Josaphat Parish Office must have received payment by Wednesday, July 14, or else you will be required to pay again at the door. Should have sent payment to the office and must pay again at the door, your mailed-in payment will be refunded to you after it has been received.