

Tridentine Community News

October 26, 2008

St. Josaphat Church to Celebrate the Traditional Three Masses of All Souls Day on Monday, November 3

In the Ordinary Form calendar, All Souls Day will be celebrated on November 2 as usual, even though that is a Sunday. In the Tridentine calendar, however, All Souls Day is moved to Monday, November 3 so as not to displace the Sunday feast on November 2.

For the first time in approximately 40 years, St. Josaphat Church will celebrate All Souls Day according to the old tradition: On Monday, November 3, three Masses will be said: Two Low Masses, simultaneously celebrated at each of the two side altars inside the sanctuary, beginning at 6:00 PM. Then, at 7:00 PM, a Solemn High Mass with Deacon and Subdeacon will be celebrated at the high altar, to be followed by Absolution at the Catafalque, in commemoration of all of the faithful departed.

Bination & Trination

Under normal circumstances, Monday through Saturday, a priest is permitted to celebrate no more than two Holy Masses. The celebration of two Masses on the same day is called “bination.” On Sundays and Holy Days, a priest may celebrate three Masses (“trination”) if he has the permission of his bishop or because of necessity, which is increasingly become the norm in these days of scarcity of priests.

As with many other laws of the Church, this limitation makes common sense. Priests should celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with attentiveness and devotion. The more Masses that a priest must say on the same day, the greater the possibility that he may lose focus and concentration. Holy Mass must not be celebrated distractedly, absent-mindedly, or in a bored fashion.

All Souls Day is the only non-Sunday/Holy Day in the Church Year on which a priest is permitted to celebrate three Masses. This permission is a vivid symbol by which Holy Mother Church encourages us to pray for the Souls in Purgatory. The Tridentine Missal contains three distinct sets of Mass Propers to be celebrated, should a priest be able to celebrate all three. Note that no matter how many Masses are celebrated, the faithful may receive Holy Communion at no more than two Masses per day.

Our own situation is somewhat nuanced: One priest will celebrate his Low Mass as the First Mass of All Souls Day, as that will be the only Mass he celebrates that day. Per the rubrics, the second priest will celebrate his Low Mass as the Second Mass of All Souls Day, then he will celebrate the Solemn High Mass as the First Mass of All Souls Day, as the Sung Mass of the day must be the First Mass (“First” and “Second” referring to the Mass Propers set, not the sequence in which the Masses are said). This second priest will binate, while the first priest, who will be the Subdeacon at the Solemn High Mass, will not binate, because the Deacon and Subdeacon at a Solemn High Mass are not concelebrants. Indeed, they do not need to be priests at all. Thus, we will have three Masses on All Souls Day, but we will not be using all three sets of Mass Propers because we will not have a trinating priest.

Comments? Ideas for a future column? Please e-mail tridnews@stjosaphatchurch.org. Previous columns are available at www.stjosaphatchurch.org

Side Altars

Many if not most churches built prior to 1965 incorporated one or more side altars. We are fortunate that our churches have several. Today, these altars serve mostly devotional purposes, as shrines to our Blessed Mother, St. Joseph, the Sacred Heart, and so forth. But they had and still have a primary purpose: To host the celebration of Holy Mass.



Mass may only be celebrated on an altar containing consecrated relics. Those relics are contained within an altar stone, placed in the middle of the altar. In fact, the altar stone itself is actually the “altar”, whereas the table surrounding it is properly termed the “mensa.” All of our side altars contain altar stones.

Each side altar also contains a functional tabernacle. The purpose of these tabernacles is not to serve as a primary repository for the Blessed Sacrament; that function is reserved for the main tabernacle on the high altar. Rather, these tabernacles can temporarily hold a ciborium with Hosts consecrated at the Mass celebrated at that altar until those Hosts can later be transferred to the main tabernacle; can contain pre-consecrated Hosts to be distributed at a Mass celebrated at that altar; can contain pre-consecrated Hosts needed for distribution at major event Masses that fill the church; and can serve as temporary repositories when the high altar tabernacle must be kept empty, such as during a construction project or on Good Friday.

Every priest should celebrate one Mass per day. In the era when there were multiple priests assigned to a parish, and the parish may only have had one public Mass per weekday, the side altars were the places where the other priests in the parish would celebrate their daily Masses, often at the same time as Mass was being celebrated at the high altar. Nowadays, one only generally sees this happening at churches where there are many priests, such as St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome; the Brompton Oratory in London, England; and at liturgical conferences.

This All Souls Day will mark the first time that these two side altars will have been used for public Masses in approximately 50 years.