

Tridentine Community News

October 28, 2007

St. Joseph Church Tridentine Mass Commences



Today marks the first public celebration of the Tridentine Mass at Detroit's St. Joseph Church since the implementation of Pope Paul VI's 1970 "Novus Ordo" Missal. How fitting for the parish, given that for many years, St. Joseph offered the most traditional liturgy in the metro Detroit area.

Our readers in Windsor will notice the architectural similarities between St. Joseph and Assumption Churches: Both have

one central tower and are built in the Gothic style, with deep sanctuaries and ornate stained glass behind the high altar. Speaking of the high altar, St. Joseph's adds new meaning to the word, "high": There are five steps leading up to it, as compared to the usual three.

St. Joseph's reputation for reverent Masses was largely due to its longtime pastor, the late Fr. Thomas Bresnahan. In a time of liturgical experimentation, Fr. Bresnahan held fast to by-the-book liturgies at St. Joseph. (Novus Ordo) Latin Masses every Sunday, celebrated *ad orientem*. Kneeling at the rail for Holy Communion. Benediction (every week!) after the Sunday Latin Mass and after the Wednesday noon Mass. Eucharistic Holy Hours every Saturday. And a music program beyond compare, led by a great character in Detroit music history, the late Thomas M. Kuras.

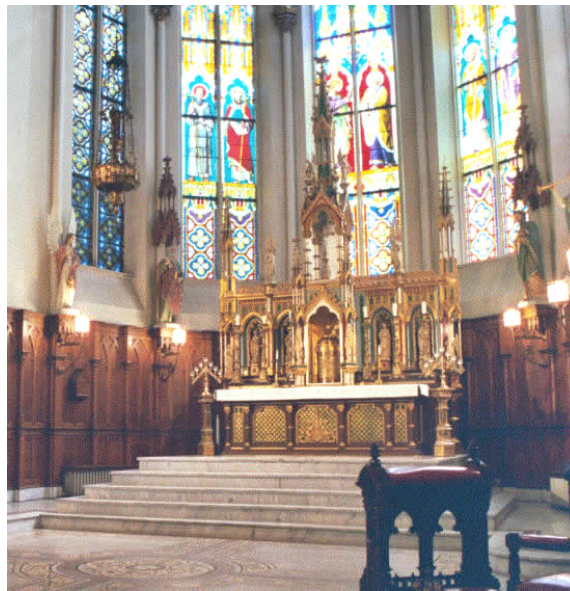
Loved by some, despised by others, controversial and argumentative, but respected by all as a great musician, Tom Kuras formed a choir in 1985 to sing regularly at the Sunday Latin Mass. Every week, a sung Introit, Gloria, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei was offered. If there was an Offertory Hymn, it was always in Latin. Orchestral Masses were organized for Christmas, Easter, and special feasts. To aid the congregation in following, participating in, and ultimately memorizing the Mass, Tom created a combination missal/Latin hymnal that was used not only by St. Joseph, but also by neighboring St. Hyacinth Parish while they offered their own Latin Mass.

Even after 40 years of the Novus Ordo, there is still only one English hand missal useful for the Novus Ordo Latin Mass: the Daily Roman Missal published by Midwest Theological Forum (www.theologicalforum.org). It is the only book that provides the Latin and English Propers side by side, in a manner akin to the myriad of Tridentine Mass hand missals we have discussed in previous columns.

Problem: That missal is expensive, obscure, and did not exist in the 1980s. Solution: With the aid of an early Apple Macintosh, Tom began to publish weekly Propers Handouts, so that the faithful could read in English what the celebrant was singing in Latin. This monumental task was complicated by the Novus Ordo's three-year cycle of readings, meaning three times the amount of work was needed to create those, versus the one-year cycle handouts we enjoy for the Tridentine Mass.

Even more ambitiously, Tom was an early user of music composition software, allowing him to integrate the music for the Responsorial Psalm and special hymns directly onto the Propers Handout.

The third member of the triumvirate setting the pace, St. Joseph's late Master of Ceremonies Dick Langrell added his own insight into the rubrics of the Mass and assembled a team of altar servers every bit as coordinated as those for a Tridentine Mass. As a result, there was an Asperges most weeks, incense was liberally used, and processions often involved dual thuribles.



One might argue that during this time period, Old St. Mary's offered a comparable music program, and Holy Family Church offered an equally traditionally celebrated Mass, albeit in a smaller building. But only St. Joseph brought all of the elements together. It was the closest thing to a Tridentine Missa Cantata that one could get in the pre-indult days.

In a series of developments that could only have come from the hand of God, Fr. Mark Borkowski, who began the process of seeking a Tridentine Indult Mass in late 2002, and who had attended St. Joseph's Latin Mass while a seminarian at Orchard Lake, was appointed Administrator of St. Joseph in 2004. For a variety of reasons, he

decided to seek the indult for St. Josaphat, all the while continuing the traditional Novus Ordo Latin Mass at St. Joseph.

The circle is completed today: In the wake of our Holy Father's Motu Proprio, Fr. Borkowski has established that every fourth Sunday of the month at noon, St. Joseph will offer its own Extraordinary Form Missa Cantata. New Music Director Michael Semaan has experience with this form of the Mass, having attended, and been a substitute organist at, both the Windsor and St. Josaphat Tridentine Masses for many years. Assumption and St. Josaphat Music Director Wassim Sarweh will assist with the music, culminating in a Christmas Eve Tridentine Midnight Mass with Orchestra. St. Josaphat's altar servers will also assist and train St. Joseph's own servers with the rubrics of the Extraordinary Form. And the Propers handouts we publish for Assumption and St. Josaphat will be adapted for St. Joseph, surely something that would put a twinkle in Tom Kuras' eye.