

Tridentine Community News

June 4, 2006

Tridentine Travelogue: London, England, Part II

Today we continue our discussion of the Latin Mass scene in London. Previous columns have described the Brompton Oratory and the Latin Mass directories published by the Association for Latin Liturgy and the Latin Mass Society of England & Wales.

The quality of liturgy one encounters in London far surpasses that of the average church in North America. Elaborate music programs built around chant and orchestral Masses are fairly common. Not only are parish music programs advertised in diocesan and independent Catholic newspapers, but they also command a presence in secular publications: Several London Saturday newspapers devote a page to Anglican and Catholic music program listings. For example, pull up this web page from the Times of London, then click on "Sunday Worship":

www.timesonline.co.uk/section/0,,3933,00.html

As the Association for Latin Liturgy's directory indicates, there are even numerous grade "C" Novus Ordo Mass sites, where much of the Mass may be in the vernacular, but the music of the Mass is in Latin, usually indicating the existence of a trained choir on the premises. St. George's Cathedral in the Archdiocese of Southwark (covering the part of London south of the Thames River) holds such a Mass weekly, for example.

It is almost unfathomable that sufficient professional-caliber musicians exist to staff all of these music programs each and every Sunday. But one must remember that the educational system in England fosters appreciation for the arts to a greater extent than our own. Even those individuals whose personal preference in music may lean towards pop still by and large understand and include in their lives classical forms of music more so than their peers in other nations.

Many of these musicians likely are professionals, who are compensated for their work. That speaks significantly about the commitment of parishioners and pastors to glorifying God through sacred music.

This is not to say that Marty Haugen and David Haas, two notorious composers of modern hymns, have not made their way into British Catholic churches. Parishes outside London proper are more likely to resemble the typical North American parish in that respect. However, there is undoubtedly a link between a higher standard of education and demand for more reverent liturgy and music.

What is different in our era that our predecessors' in this regard, is that today, a more cultured populace creates demand for such liturgy. In previous years, it was Holy Mother Church who sought

to elevate the minds of the masses via her Masses. Let us pray that Rome finds ways to promote more reverent celebrations of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, according to both the Tridentine and Novus Ordo missals, so that the world at large, and not just its especially cultured cities, have access to these treasures.

St. James Spanish Place

Right after the Brompton Oratory in prominence, the church of St. James is in a fairly posh neighborhood of London where many national embassies are located (a few blocks north of Oxford Street, near Selfridge's Department Store). The name "Spanish Place" comes from a street named after the nearby Spanish Embassy. St. James is a center of activity for both Tridentine and Novus Ordo Latin Masses. On the Novus Ordo front, a professional choir sings a major choral work every Sunday at the 10:30 AM Latin Mass. This is a large, adult choir accompanied by a powerful pipe organ.

The weekly 9:30 AM Sunday Tridentine Mass is usually a Low Mass, however numerous special event Solemn Tridentine Masses are held yearly. Holy Day Tridentine Masses are regularly held.

Like many churches in England, the seating in St. James is primarily moveable chairs. This is not a modern invention but rather an architectural artifact seemingly carried over from the days when seating could and would be cleared out from the nave of a cathedral to accommodate crowds for special events.



The sanctuary has suffered a minor wreckovation in that the original high altar no longer has a *mensa*, or table portion, attached to the tabernacle. Mass is celebrated on a freestanding altar located in front of the tabernacle.

St. James is the center of special Tridentine events in London. Confirmations according to the Tridentine rite are held at St. James from time to time, for members of all of the Tridentine communities throughout London. First Masses for newly ordained priests are regularly held there.

C.I.E.L. (Centre International d'Etudes Liturgiques), an organization that sponsors academic studies of the Classical Roman Rite, has held several of their annual U.K. conventions at St. James. The peripatetic Bishop Fernando Rifan of Campos, Brazil (more about him in a future installment) was celebrant of the Pontifical Solemn Mass that opened the 2003 conference. That event was the subject of a story in the May 17, 2003 Times of London. More recently, Bishop Malcolm McMahon of Nottingham celebrated the opening Mass of the 2006 C.I.E.L. conference on Saturday, May 20.

More information about St. James may be found at their web site: www.sjrcc.org.uk